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Cross-Strait Relations of China and Taiwan:
Analyzing Legitimacy of Kuomintang's Policies
2008 – 2013

Master's thesis

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Abstract

The following research will take a closer look at the cross-Strait relations of mainland China and Taiwan starting from the 2008 (presidential and legislative) elections in Taiwan, when the Nationalist Party Kuomintang and their presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou came to power. During the course of the work the political actions and statements of the leaders of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of China (ROC) and the representatives of the relevant institutions such as the Taipei-based Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Beijing-based Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) will be reviewed while cross-referencing information about the concurrent public opinion surveys on Taiwan. This will help understand the public's response to the KMT policies and therefore to deduct if the policies can be called legitimate.

Introduction

The term legitimacy is known to everyone who is interested in history or has followed domestic or international politics in the news. It is often used to bolster one's position by claiming it to be legitimate or to discredit someone else's by calling it illegitimate. Because of such popular usage, the specific meaning and connotations of the term vary. Nonetheless, it is clear that the rulers of established democratic countries – political parties, presidents, governments – take it as a given that they enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of the general public even though their decisions are not always popular. This general public refers to the local domestic population and also the wider international audience.

The international system however doesn't only consist of established (democratic) countries. There are many actors, which function as states, but have features, which set them apart from others. The Republic of China (ROC) or Taiwan as it is called to better distinguish it from the People's Republic of China (PRC) ruling on the mainland, is one of the examples of such actors. The ROC fills the state's criteria when it comes to the fixed territory of the islands of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, Matsu where it has effective public authority over its population. The people living there also have a growing sense of distinct Taiwanese identity. However, the ROC has never claimed independence from the

mainland part of China, but rather still claims rights over the mainland part due to the continuity of the government dating back to 1912. Also, the government on Taiwan still relies on the constitution, which came into effect in 1947 during the Chinese Civil War. Furthermore, the government on the island keeps using the official name of Republic of China, not Taiwan. In addition, the people under the *de facto* rule of the ROC aren't actually that eager to become officially independent from the mainland China. Conversely, however, they also do not want to reunite with it, either.

The current Taiwanese ruling party Kuomintang (KMT) is known for its rather pro-unification stance in comparison to the opposition's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), who favors independence. However, based on the public opinion surveys more people favor (eventual) independence than (eventual) unification. The paradox is that the current Taiwanese ruling party KMT has found a way to navigate such conflicting public sentiments since it came to power in 2008 by winning both legislative and presidential elections. The President Ma Ying-jeou was re-elected for a second term in 2012 and in the legislative elections of the same year, the KMT won the most seats (compared to other parties) in the Executive Yuan again. The following research aims to study this phenomenon of KMT's balancing act of policy making and how the citizens of Taiwan have reacted to it. The research will chronicle the major cross-Strait events of the years 2008 – 2013 and analyze the various public opinion polls of that time in order to estimate the popularity of KMT's policies. The hypothesis is that since the KMT came to power in 2008 and as the cross-Strait relations intensified, the "one China principle" has become more popular and the KMT's policies are enjoying high degrees of legitimacy. The level of popular support to the policies and to both president and KMT in general will be a further indication of the legitimacy of the ruling party's course of action.

The following research will in large part continue where Sobel, Haynes and Zheng (2010) left off. They studied Taiwan public opinion trends during the years 1998 - 2008. The main focus of their study was on the preferences of the Taiwanese on the question of unification vs. independence. The current research will have a more comprehensive approach and will try to not only chronicle the changes in public opinion on the question

of independence, but to tie these changes in with the other developments and changes in people's outlook on economy and their trust in the KMT party and incumbent president.

The author will also rely on the research by Chen and Stockton (2014), who analyzed how identity affects people's partisan preference and voting choice by constructing an index of Taiwan identity and checking for party identification and candidate preferences. They found that the level of Taiwan identity played a statistically significant role in voter choice in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections. The people with a "high level Taiwanese identity" were more likely to vote for DPP, but half of the people with a "median level of Taiwanese identity" were likely to vote pan-Blue (led by KMT). However, in the 2012 elections this correlation no longer appeared. They also checked for correlations between ethnic backgrounds and voter preferences: in 2004 and 2008 the ethnic background was not a statistically significant variable, but in 2012 mainlanders were more likely to support KMT candidate.

As the following research will also take a look at some developments in Taiwan's economy, the study by Keng, Chen and Huang (2006) about the question if individual "rational interests" eventually overwhelm the pull of "affective identity" is of interest. Their results showed that "affective identity overwhelms rational interest as the primary determinant of individual views on cross-Strait issues" (p. 238).

The volume "Political legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral authority" (Alagappa 1995) features case studies of different regimes and analyses which tools they use in order to attain legitimacy. Although not all of this applies to democratic Taiwan, there are several elements brought out in the book, which also help study legitimacy of KMT's actions: their normative goals, the performance of the government, charisma of the political leaders.

The author will make use of these findings and will study how the KMT has implemented conciliatory policies towards China without alienating the people who identify themselves as Taiwanese. Also, the developments in Taiwan's economy, approval ratings of both President Ma and KMT and the public opinion on the cross-Strait relations will be used in order to understand the people's response to these policies.

The work is organized as follows: the first chapter explains the historic developments, which lead to the cross-Strait relations between China and Taiwan as they are today. The second chapter reviews the different aspects of the concept of legitimacy, which will be important in assessing the KMT's policies. Then in the third chapter a short overview of the methodological approach will be outlined. The fourth chapter includes the secondary data used for this research: the information about cross-Strait exchanges of the time and their reception in the form of public opinion surveys. In chapter five the numerous used datasets are summarized and finally, in chapter six, some relevant recent developments of the year 2014 are discussed. After this, conclusions will be highlighted as the final chapter.

1. A brief history of the current cross-Strait conundrum

As is the case everywhere else in the world, the cross-Strait relations of today have its roots in a history filled with wars and conquests. Taiwan first became a unit within the Qing Dynasty's imperial administrative system in 1689. It remained a frontier for more than a century and the central government initially didn't concern itself with the locals. (Bush 2013) In 1895, Japan defeated the Qing Dynasty and the island of Taiwan was ceded to Japan in the Treaty of Shimonoseki. The Taiwanese used this brief transitional period and proclaimed the Republic of Formosa (Democratic State of Taiwan). It only had a very short-lived existence for 5 months before the Japanese took the island. The Japanese rule that followed – albeit harsh – brought economic and social development to the island.

On the mainland in 1912 the nearly two-century-long rule of the Qing Dynasty ended as it was overthrown by the Chinese nationalist party Kuomintang, who then founded the Republic of China. As World War II ended in 1945 and Japan was on the losing side, Taiwan was then returned to the Republic of China under KMT. However, the United States didn't „return” Taiwan to China, but authorized Chinese army to exercise provisional control over the island as a „trustee on behalf of the Allied Powers” (Chellaney 2010, p. 259). Subsequently a civil war ensued in China which the KMT lost to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949 and moved the ROC government to the island of Taiwan. At the same time, the CCP established the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland and claimed that the ROC no longer existed. To secure control over the little land it still had, the ROC government declared martial law on the island, which officially lasted until 1987. As CCP then became occupied with the Korean War and the United States became more interested in the island due to it being a valuable geopolitical ally against the Communists, the island remained under the control of KMT. Since then, both the PRC and the ROC have insisted that there is only “one China”, which encompasses both Taiwan and the mainland. However, they disagree on which is the legal government of that China. „Beijing insisted that it held all legal rights belonging to “China,” including its seat in the United Nations and power over Taiwan. But without

actually taking over Taiwan, the CCP couldn't declare complete victory in the civil war. The Taiwan issue is therefore to date a critical interest of the CCP" (Chen 2009).

Since the standoff started in 1949, the CCP has tried different tactics in handling the cross-Strait relations: reducing Taiwan's international space, increasing economic integration across the Strait, encouraging cultural contact and also using military deterrence to keep vehement independence proponents on Taiwan as a minority. (Chen 2009) The isolation strategy was growing in effectiveness as China's economy took off in the 1980s. Since then mainland has bested Taiwan in "money diplomacy" competition, which means offering financial support to countries in exchange for diplomatic recognition – or in some case – threatening with suspending investments and/or donations. (Bergsten, Gill, Lardy et al 2007, p. 114-115) During the Nixon presidency in the '70s, China and the U.S. started to see each other as strategic partners in dealing with the Soviet Union, which meant more difficult times for ROC. (Copper 2009)

Taiwan's international space started to diminish as a consequence: it lost its membership in the United Nations and other international organizations such as IMF, IBRD, WHO and UNESCO (Li 2006) whereas the mainland was expanding its clout by normalizing its relations with the U.S. However, the U.S. could still appreciate the strategic importance of Taiwan. „In secret talks in 1972, President Nixon assured PRC Premier Zhou Enlai that the United States viewed the status of Taiwan as “determined” and it was a part of one China. The PRC's December 1978 statement on normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States said that the Taiwan question “has now been resolved between the two countries.” However, the U.S. statement of December 1978 on normalization stated the expectation that the Taiwan question “will be settled” peacefully by the Chinese themselves. The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) also stipulated the U.S. expectation that the future of Taiwan “will be determined” by peaceful means.” (Kan 2013, p. 6). Therefore, although the U.S. initially appeased China fully in recognizing Taiwan as under its jurisdiction, it then backtracked and took the position that the issue was yet undecided. Since then, the number of countries recognizing Taiwan has fluctuated around 23 with a brief spike during the 90s. (Gang 2013)

China's economic reforms also led to an adjustment of Beijing's Taiwan policy. China's top leaders reached the consensus that their nation's fundamental interest is to maintain a stable and peaceful environment for the sake of economic modernization. (Chu 2005) Deng Xiaoping – the paramount leader of China in the 80s – then set out two important principles in handling Taiwan: “one country, two systems,” and „peaceful reunification”. (Chen 2009)

Taiwan-China economic exchanges therefore started to be promoted in the '80s. During that time the Taiwanese companies were losing international competitiveness whereas China's cheap labor and a common language provided incentives for Taiwan businessmen to open factories on the mainland. Demands to expand trade and investment in China put growing pressure on the then Taiwan's President Lee Deng-hui. Even though Lee did not agree with the Chinese proposed “one country, two systems” model, he decided to pursue breakthroughs in the cross-Strait relationship and he opened communications with China. (Bush 2005 via Chen 2009)

In order to help the cross-Strait negotiations, Taiwan set up the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) in 1990. In 1991, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS), the counterpart to SEF on the mainland, was established. In 1992, a historic meeting between SEF and ARATS took place in Hong Kong, during which the representatives of the two sides decided that either side would have its own interpretation of the “one China principle“. This later came to be called the 1992 Consensus. This led to opening up of discussions over nonpolitical topics such as technology and economics. (Chen 2009)

In the summer of 1995 a serious setback in the cross-Strait relations occurred: the then ROC President Lee Deng-hui visited his alma mater Cornell University. China highly disapproved of the fact that the U.S. gave Lee the visa to visit and make the speech as it looked like Taiwan's attempt to pursue international recognition with U.S. help. A weeklong missile test off Taiwan's northern coast was the Chinese response to the event in order to warn Taiwan and its allies the U.S. and Japan against pursuing independence. (Chu 2004) China continued this power play as the second round of missile tests was launched around Taiwan's presidential election to send a message to Taiwan's voters

against re-electing Lee. The U.S. sent the 7th Fleet to the Strait to stabilize the situation, which constituted the strongest U.S. military presence in the region since the Vietnam War. The intimidation by China failed as the Taiwanese reacted more outraged than scared: Lee won 54 % of votes and the election.

A further disappointment for Beijing was that the Taiwan identity and independence movement has been promoted since Lee's time in office. Jiang's military threats slowed this trend for a moment, but deepened the overall anti-China sentiment among Taiwanese. (Chu 2004) From the U.S. reactions to the crisis, China drew its conclusions that U.S. support is a key factor in Taiwanese thinking and Beijing also has to adjust its relations with the U.S. accordingly. From then on, Jiang worked on improving the U.S.-China relationship during his visit to the U.S. in 1997. He asked the Clinton administration to reconfirm its "three no's" policy: no support for Taiwan's independence, no support for two Chinas (or one China, one Taiwan), and no support for Taiwan's membership in international organizations. Clinton complied. (Chen 2009)

In February 2000, as the next presidential election in Taiwan was nearing, the PRC reverted to scare tactics once more by issuing its second White Paper on Taiwan. Although it reaffirmed the peaceful unification policy, it added a new precondition for the use of force: „As one of "Three Ifs," the PRC warned that even if Taiwan just indefinitely refuses to negotiate a peaceful settlement, the PRC would be compelled to use force to achieve unification. No deadline was issued. The White Paper warned the United States not to sell arms to Taiwan or pursue any form of alliance with Taiwan, including cooperation in missile defense“. (Kan 2013, p. 19)

This time also the scare tactics didn't bring the desired outcome to China as in 2000, the pro-independence opposition party DPP won the presidential election on Taiwan and Chen Shui-bian, a lawyer who was involved in Taiwan independence movements in the 1980s, was elected. As could have been expected, Chen's eight-year presidency brought Taiwan's relationships with China and the U.S. to historic lows. Chen didn't shy away from making pro-independence remarks, he abolished the National Unification Council and held two referendums in 2004 and 2008 that sought popular support for his pro-independence agenda. (Chen 2009)

In return, China denied or rejected almost everything that Chen and his administration did or said, and isolated Taiwan internationally as best it could. When George W. Bush became president in 2000, he said that the U.S. should do whatever it took “to help Taiwan defend itself“, but after the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks, the U.S. saw China as an important partner in the fight against terrorism and actively pursued cooperation with Beijing. Given Chen’s provocations, Washington and Beijing worked to marginalize Taiwan to minimize the harm it could do to their bilateral relationship. (Chen 2009)

In March 2005 China adopted the “Anti-Secession Law”, which further exacerbated the cross-Strait relations. (Kan 2013, p. 3.) Its Article 8 reads: „In the event that the „Taiwan independence” secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity” (China.org).

China’s did however learn some lessons from the events of the past decades. Most important may have been that hard line measures alienated the Taiwanese. Although some 1600 missiles are currently still deployed against Taiwan from across the Strait, China has changed its approach to offer more economic incentives to Taiwan. Beijing also approached the KMT to establish an alternative channel to SEF-ARATS negotiations. This was realized with the visit of Lien Chen, KMT honorary chairman, to China in 2007, and the meeting between then ROC Vice President Siew Wan-chang and Chinese President Hu Jintao at the Boao Forum in 2008. (Chen 2009)

This complex history explains the very heterogeneous population: the first inhabitants of the island – the aboriginal people - originated from the Philippines. The ethnic Chinese immigration continued during 1500 – 1800. Because the island remained largely out of reach for the administrative control of the emperor on the mainland, Taiwanese started to identify themselves as distinct from the other peoples on the mainland or the surrounding islands. Therefore the brief-lived Republic of Taiwan came to be. Then followed the strong Japanese influence under Japanese colonial rule during 1895 - 1945. After the WWII when China regained control over the island, Chinese culture was re-introduced

under KMT's rule. The democratic presidents Lee Teng Hui and Chen Shui-bian however, had a more pro-independence stance, which again favored rising Taiwanese identity. Since 2008 under Ma's leadership another wave of re-sinicization has ensued. Despite Ma's and Beijings's efforts to remind people of the common cultural heritage, the polls show that the percentage of people who identify themselves as only Chinese has steadily decreased staying under 4 % for the past years. The percentage of people saying they are both Chinese and Taiwanese has historically been the largest around 45 %. However, starting from 2008 the percentage of people identifying themselves as only Taiwanese has started to increase rapidly, reaching 57 % in 2013 (see Fig. 1). Therefore, it is clear that re-sinicization hasn't had the effects Beijing has hoped for. One main cause naturally has less to do with the past 5 years than the fact that Taiwan has been de facto separated from the mainland for half a century and the young Taiwanese born after the martial law was lifted, feel they have less in common with mainland China than they do with Taiwan proper. Also, due to this diverse cultural and ethnic background many people on Taiwan don't see any need to unify with the mainland.

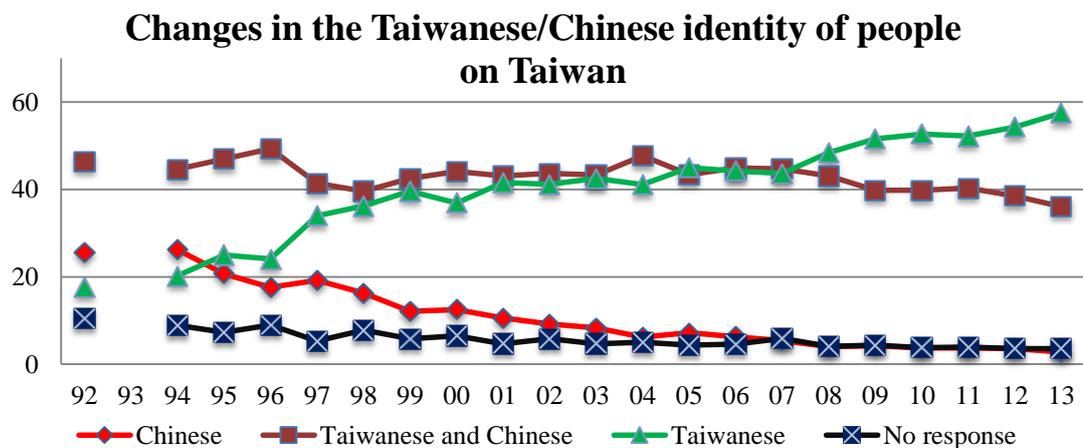


Figure 1. The figure shows changes (in percentages) of how many people on Taiwan identify themselves as only Chinese, both Taiwanese and Chinese and only Taiwanese during the years 1992 – 2013. The survey was conducted by the Election Study Center, NCCU. The data was gathered from people living in the Taiwan area (excluding the islands of Kinmen and Matsu) aged 20 and older. The sample sizes had big variations from one year to the next: from 1209 to 34854.

2. The concept of legitimacy

The following research is based in a large part on the concept of legitimacy. In order to understand its relevance and importance in the study, a brief overview of its meaning is necessary.

“Max Weber's famous definition of the state as „a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory gives prominence to legitimacy“. Statehood is not only built on monopolized force (that is on means of enforcement and coercion at the hands of the rulers), but also on legitimacy (that is on consensus of the ruled). Every form of domination „attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy“. Legitimacy can thus be understood as grounded in the belief of people in certain actors' right to govern, to build peace, to take and implement political decisions, and the belief of people in the rightfulness of certain acts of governance” (Boege 2014, p. 2).

What the people find reasonably acceptable and what amounts to the consensus of the ruled, has undergone continual historical transformation. What exactly is the relationship between legitimacy and consensus and how can the latter help define the former? What are the sources of legitimacy and how can the rulers affect if the people perceive them and their actions as legitimate? These are some of the questions this short excursion into theory will try to answer.

Hurd (2008) defined legitimacy as “an actor’s normative belief that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed” (p. 7). He stated that legitimacy “is a subjective quality, relational between actor and institution, and is defined by the actor’s *perception* (italics in the original) of the institution [---]. Such a perception affects behavior, because it is internalized by the actor and helps define how the actor sees its interests. Once widely shared in society, this belief changes the decision environment for all actors, even those who have not been socialized to the rule, because it affects everyone’s expectations about the likely behavior of other players” (ibid).

In more general terms, legitimate states enjoy the support of citizens “not because of fear or favor, but in light of their considered views of what is best from a public perspective” (Gilley 2006b, p. 502). The people subjectively perceive their government to be acting in

the people's best interest and therefore they obey. "The legitimation of power relies in the conviction of the governed that their government (whether democratic, monarchic, communist, theocratic, or authoritarian) is morally right and they are duty-bound to obey it. In the absence of such conviction there can only be relations of power, not of authority, and political legitimacy will be contested" (Alagappa 1995, p. 2).

The concept of political legitimacy is therefore an inherent part of political science because "it pertains to how power may be used in ways that citizens consciously accept" (Gilley 2006b, p. 499). There are also different political entities, whose legitimacy is analyzed and discussed. "The nation-state, the regime, and the government are the three political institutions that power holders commonly seek to legitimate" (Alagappa 1995, p. 30). The state, its regime and the policies of the government, however, all have different sources and aspects of legitimacy. In some instances, It may even occur that the three don't enjoy the same (level of) legitimacy as the others. "Shared identity is crucial for the legitimation of the nation-state, shared norms and values for regime legitimation, and conformity with established rules and performance for government legitimation" (ibid).

At first look, it may seem that legitimacy may be more important to the public as the people would not want to fill the orders of those who they don't feel share the same values. However, it is important to note that most rulers also want and need to believe „they are serving the national interest or a moral cause" (Alagappa 1995, p. 4). They want to see the public supporting them, even if it necessitates white lies or actually deceiving the public. „Self-justification in moral terms is crucial for most rulers" (ibid).

When it comes to self-justification, the governments want to be supported both by the representatives of the other countries in the international community and by the local population. "The actors within international society are engaged in endless strategies of *legitimation*, in order to present certain activities or actions as *legitimate*" (Clark 2008, p. 2). This is true even of authoritative regimes even though the level of international support they may receive is quite low. Ian Clark has even stated that legitimacy has been fundamental to the conduct of international relations: "The core principles of legitimacy are based on a social agreement about who is entitled to participate in international relations, and also about appropriate forms in their conduct" (ibid).

This indicates that there are different audiences for actors' legitimacy and therefore different arenas in which the legitimacy is conveyed: one arena's legitimacy is dependent on, but not determined by the other's. These two arenas are the international and domestic. Clark also refers to them as „an inward and an outward dimension” (2008: 2f.). He also goes on to affirm that the two have a reciprocal relationship as domestic legitimacy is the backdrop for allowing collective acts of (international) recognition. Although the international legitimacy doesn't translate into domestic legitimacy, it has frequently been the case that international legitimacy has done much to bolster the domestic legitimacy of individual regimes. (Boege 2014, p 3; Clark 2008: p. 2f.)

If states and governments are considered legitimate by their peers in the international system of states, they enjoy international legitimacy. They are recognized as „sovereign equal members of the international community of states” (Boege 2014, p 3). This type of recognition, however, says nothing about the efficiency or competence of the government or the quality with which the country is run. “States which enjoy international legitimacy can still be extremely fragile (if they lack domestic legitimacy), and states which lack international legitimacy can nevertheless be resilient and stable if their citizens hold a firm belief in their legitimacy (that is they enjoy domestic legitimacy)” (ibid).

According to Muthiah Alagappa (1995), who studied political legitimacy of different regimes in Southeast Asia, there are five types of rationales, which can be used to gain support for the legitimacy claim of a government, regime or state. These are normative goals, performance of the government, charisma of the political leaders, the occurrence of a politically defining moment and international support. The normative goals cover a wide spectrum and can be ideological (such as building a socialist state), pertain to national liberation, ethnic protection or just building a good society. (Alagappa 1995) Performance as a means for legitimation covers all the important sectors of the government's tasks such as security, welfare, economy and justice. According to Alagappa performance is less important in influencing legitimacy in well-established democratic regimes. This means that if the people aren't happy with the current leaders' actions and policies, this just results in them not winning at the next elections, but it doesn't call the legitimacy of the incumbent government into question. In an established

regime, the procedural (in some literature “process”, see Boege 2014) element – the elections and other power transitions - is usually more significant than performance. Alagappa showed, however, that this hierarchy doesn’t hold, if the norms and values the government abides by are not widely shared in the society. In this case, the other elements indeed such as performance, normative goals, charisma of the political leaders and international support will become more significant for political legitimation of the incumbent government. (ibid)

As previously established, legitimacy is subjective and is based on the consensus of the people. The legitimacy of different institutions derives from various sources and is important to both the rulers and the ruled. Due to its subjective and somewhat elusive criteria, there has been criticism of if and how legitimacy can even be used as an indicator in the study of (international) politics. Alagappa summarized that although any direct cause-and-effect relationship in changes in perceived legitimacy and for example, regime change, may be difficult to establish, this doesn’t mean that legitimacy has no explanatory power. “By establishing a frame of meaning, it can contribute to the clearing up of puzzles and queries” (Alagappa 1995, p. 7). He further went to say that “Therefore, the claim to legitimacy and its contestation are a central feature of politics and worthy of study independent of their impact on stability, performance and such variable” (Alagappa 1995, p. 6).

In the following study both procedural (process) and performance legitimacy play a part. People notice and take account the procedures of how cross-Strait relations are institutionalized and what sort of impact it has on their daily lives. During the past five years the procedural legitimacy of KMT policies encompasses people’s responses to the signing of new agreements, creating institutionalized links across the Strait and the elections of 2008 and 2012. The performance legitimacy of the KMT policies derives from the perceived effects of those signed agreements and institutionalized links, which the Taiwanese people notice – to name a few - as increased freedom and ease of travel, larger market for exports, but also increased competition for workplaces. However, following the reasoning set forth by Alagappa (1995) due to the fact that the pro-unification values of KMT are not widely shared – we can posit that therefore the

performance, normative goals, charisma of the political leaders and international support are more important for political legitimation of the incumbent government than the procedural. This is the case even though Taiwan with its democratic rule is more similar to established democratic countries than to developing countries.

In order to start measuring something, it is necessary to have a scale for it. “While in the common language of rulers and ruled, legitimacy is used as a dichotomous term, in political science the term is most often used in terms of degrees, as a continuous variable” (Gilley 2006b, p. 501). Another approach is to view legitimacy as distinctive of a certain area and therefore manifesting differently depending on the location: Walzer (2002) talks about the existence of “locally legitimate” regimes, which “fit or at least accommodate the local political culture and a set of authorities, independent of themselves, who are capable of governing the country and who command sufficient popular support so that their government won't be massively coercive.” Gurr spoke of the “intensity” of legitimacy, which further illustrates the gradual nature of the concept. (1971: 186 via Gilley 2006b, p. 501)

Based on these references, the underlying premise of the following research is that the local regime and its policies are more legitimate, the higher the percentage of people who agree with them. This is the approach which underlies the following research: the people’s attitude towards KMT’s actions and interactions regarding the cross-Strait relations reveal if and how legitimate the current path of warming relations and deepening integration is among the Taiwanese. Therefore, the following study will focus on the domestic arena of KMT’s policies, which the people notice through the process of the policy making and its effects on their daily lives. The level of the general public’s agreement with those policies and their trust in the president and the KMT reflects the local legitimacy of them. Although some aspects of the international response to ROC’s actions will be discussed, the main focus will be on the views of the domestic audience on Taiwan.

Furthermore, in order to take into account the various basis of legitimacy, the research will try to take into account the normative goals, the performance of the government and also the charisma of the political leaders. During the past 5 years there was no politically

defining moment, which could have been employed by the KMT to sway the public opinion towards more support. However, the possibility of this coming in the near future will be discussed later.

Such approach and the results of the research will help determine what the future course for cross-Strait relations would be. Wallner (2008) explained the implications of the legitimacy question as follows:

„Public policies are inextricably linked to society’s confidence in the fairness and suitability of their government. And, while illegitimate policies rarely lead to the complete breakdown of the state’s authority, such policies can damage the specific party in power during their implementation, thus eroding its status before societal actors. The legitimacy of public policies can, therefore, affect whether a government achieves its stated goals and objectives, as well as its capacity to maintain public stability and support aiding its future endeavors” (p. 423).

Accordingly, if the people on Taiwan find the KMT policies are not upholding their interests, this could have a generally detrimental effect on the cross-Strait relations and further diminish the prospects of eventual unification as KMT is the stronghold of the pro-unification Taiwanese. However, positive trends in the support numbers to policies and the respective party identification will indicate that the people on Taiwan are becoming more favorable of unification with the mainland.

The next question, which then arises, is how to best find a representative sample of the people, whose consensus would be relevant to estimating legitimacy. Although in democracies it is said that people’s votes weigh the same, the opinions of some still matter more. Gilley summarized this problem and proposed a solution as follows:

“[---] it is best to weight the views of all citizens equally in measuring legitimacy. This is not to take such equality as a stylized fact (which it is patently not in any state), but rather to take it as a good estimation across the contingencies of politics. Even if we know that the views of citizens are not all equally important, it may still be a closer approximation to weight them as such than to try to guess the relative strengths of various potentially powerful special players. For not only is there a diversity of potential ‘trump players’ in most polities, but their

influence is constantly evolving. Arriving at some valid weighting of different groups would be difficult if not impossible” (Gilley 2006b, p. 501).

Taiwan is a democratic country and there are presidential and legislative elections being held every four years. It could be deducted that if the party and the president were re-elected for a second term, the citizens support the implemented policies. However, the public opinion of a substantial amount of people regarding their voting preferences formed immediately prior to the elections. (Lynch 2012a, 2012b) Therefore it is necessary to take a closer look at the major changes and developments in the cross-Strait relations and the public opinion surveys about them in order to understand to what extent the Taiwanese agree with the implemented and suggested policies. In this research the generic public opinion polls conducted by various organizations will be used to study the public sentiment on Taiwan in regard to the KMT policies over the course of the years 2008 - 2013.

3. Methodological framework

As established in the previous chapter, there are no norms or acts, which are inherently legitimate. (Clark 2008) Claiming something to be legitimate is a subjective act. Legitimacy of a government and its policies arises from a popular consensus. Clark (2008) illustrated based on historical events that “What makes any position or action legitimate is its adherence to the consensual position. Any appeal to values and principles beyond this will be destructive of the consensus, and of social cohesion, and is to be avoided” (p. 165).

Therefore, one method to use for determining the legitimacy of the government’s policies would be to investigate the existence of a consensus of the ruled: the domestic support for those policies. Furthermore, in order to understand and correctly interpret the public opinion, the concurrent events and context need to be taken into account. Legitimacy is a „social practice, an outcome of the interaction between ruler and ruled; hence it must be framed in the sociopolitical and economic context of a specific society at a specified time” (Alagappa 1995, p. 11).

The normative goal of the KMT is the eventual unification with the mainland. Although this had not been the immediate focus for the past 5 years, it is known as the underlying idea of KMT to people on Taiwan. The changes in people’s views on unification will help shed light on the compatibility of KMT’s goals with the public sentiment. Furthermore, the satisfaction with the performance of the government will be analyzed through the public opinion polls on how people assess their economic situation and how big part of the people are happy with the outcomes of the various cross-Strait agreements. The charisma of the political leaders will be evident in President Ma’s trust and approval ratings. In addition, the trust rating of KMT as well as the changes in people’s party identification will be reviewed in order to find trends about the direction of overall legitimacy of the course of action and policies of KMT.

The methodological approach will be to use qualitative analysis whereas the data will be gathered from written documents such as newspaper articles, press releases, summaries of high level meetings, surveys of public opinion and referenda. Qualitative analysis will

be applied to the topic due to the in depth analysis needed and the type of the raw data: written documents and summaries concerning various policy decisions, their implementation and reception. This background information will be used to analyze and put the various survey results into context. Therefore, the research will make use of secondary data: various texts and statistics from public opinion polls.

The Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council has chronologically summarized major exchanges across the Taiwan Strait. These were taken as the basis for the narrative of the development and the reception of KMT policies. As MAC however is a cabinet-level administrative agency on Taiwan, then in order to get another perspective on the events, the information on the MAC website was also cross-referenced with the summaries of the cross-Strait events in "China-Taiwan relations quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations" (published online by the Washington D.C. based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies). This background information will be used to try to explain the public opinion survey results on Taiwan during the years 2008 – 2013.

The amount of data will be great as it covers the events of 5 years. Qualitative analysis will make possible to organize the information into "readable narrative descriptions with major themes, categories and illustrative case examples extracted through content analysis" (Patton 2002, p. 5).

The results of numerous public opinion polls, which are the second important part of the research, have been gathered from the MAC website and from Professor Emerson Niu of Duke University. The surveys include annually repetitive themes such as people's stance on independence and/or unification with the mainland and if the people support conducting cross-Strait relations in the current institutionalized manner. In addition, there are also questions about specific current events, for example the relevant round of talks between the SEF and ARATS (Chiang-Chen talks) and its outcomes.

Much of the survey data concerning the various aspects of the cross-Strait relations has been well indexed and linked to on the Mainland Affairs Council and KMT websites. Although most of the surveys have been commissioned by the MAC, they were administered by university and private research organizations. These include the Election

Study Center of the National Chengchi University in Taipei, China Credit Information Service Ltd., Center for Public Opinion and Elections Studies of the National Sun Yat-Sen University, Center for Public Opinion and Public Policy of the Taipei Municipal University of Education. Additional information was gathered from the datasets of Global Views Survey Research Center and Taiwan National Security Survey.

Regarding the romanization of the names of people and places, no specific system is used in the study. The name forms will be adopted from the already romanized English texts and most of these texts are of Taiwan origin. In the academic writing and media, the names of public figures of ROC seem to be used without significant variations.

4. Narrative of the development and the analysis of the reception of KMT policies

The following information about the cross-Strait relations is taken from the MAC website, which has chronicled the hundreds of events meticulously. The author studied the summaries of events, signed agreements, remarks of high level officials and the corresponding public opinion polls about cross-Strait exchanges in order to create a narrative of the development and the reception of KMT policies. In the next chapter the results of the surveys will be summarized in order to better illustrate the developments over time. Also, the findings of some other recent studies will be reflected upon in order to better understand the public sentiment towards the implemented KMT policies.

4.1. 2008 events

On the 12th of January 2008 legislative elections were held on Taiwan. The KMT won more seats than the other parties and the newly created coalition held a supermajority. This was a clear indication from the people, that they are ready for a different course when it comes to cross-Strait relations. However, it is important to note, that at the time, there was no real competition for votes as the main rival DPP had been involved in a series of corruption and other criminal allegations during the run up to the elections. Also, the people were disappointed in how the DPP had (mis)handled economy in the previous 8 years they were in power. (Copper 2012)

In 2007 and early 2008 the ROC was still vehemently battling PRC over the latter's attempts to exclude Taiwan from all World Health Organization related proceedings. However, January 2008 was already the starting point for the intensified rapprochement of the two sides of the Strait. Although the initial goals weren't high, the planned exchanges had the prospect of making a significant improvement for the ordinary people's daily lives. Even the seemingly most natural thing as allowing Chinese tourists to enter Taiwan was first proposed only for the mainlanders coming with international cruise liners via a third country. The "Rhapsody of the Sea" was the first cruise ship approved by the MAC and it brought about 70 Chinese tourists to Taiwan stopping there on February 11th and 12th.

In January 2008 Germany affirmed to the then Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi that it will continue to follow the “one China policy” and therefore also firmly oppose Taiwan’s referendum on joining the United Nations. The latter had become a hot topic as the DPP had announced a referendum to take place during the presidential election to ask if the Taiwanese people would support Taiwan joining the UN under the name of Taiwan. Understandably, mainland China was rallying up opponents to this.

In February the ROC officially recognized Kosovo’s independence, which further angered the PRC: firstly, it didn’t support Kosovo separating from Serbia and secondly, under the “one China principle” according to which the PRC is the sole legitimate government representing the whole China, ROC could and should not make such political announcements. Interestingly, Kosovo did not return the gesture of goodwill and has not recognized neither the PRC nor the ROC to date.

Regardless of some continuing tensions in the official correspondence, another noteworthy development for the common people took place at the beginning of the year: TAO on the mainland announced that it would be possible for the Taiwanese doctors to practice medicine in China. This started the highly important thread of negotiations for the two-way flow of personnel and industries.

Regarding the concept of “one China”, although it is now a cornerstone of the cross-Strait relations, before Ma came to power, it wasn’t a given that it would turn out to be an inherent part of the negotiations. In a March 2008 press release, the MAC stated that “Taiwan’s consistent position had been that both sides across the Strait should resume interactions and dialogues as soon as possible without setting any political conditions. However, China has unilaterally established political precondition of the “one China principle” and the “one country, two systems” framework for a future outcome.” (MAC website: Cross-Strait Exchanges) The MAC voiced its discomfort with such restrictions and expressed doubt that the coming developments could be based on parity. It was known that the “one country, two systems” was an unpopular framework in the eyes of the Taiwanese: the latest poll from December 2007 revealed that more than 71% (71.2) of the people didn’t think it to be an applicable formula for solving the problems across the straits. A few days after the press release the next survey results were released, which

showed the disapproval having risen to even 81.7 %. (MAC website: Opinion Post) After August 2008 when the negative votes reached 81.8 % the polling for that question stopped and President Ma notably set a different course with the 1992 Consensus. This still meant adhering to the concept of “one China”, but it gave both sides room to maneuver in order to save face in front of their respective domestic audiences.

The cross-Strait relations then soon embarked on the road of growing institutionalization: in March 2008 the Cross-Strait Emergency Service Center was established under the SEF. Taking into account the frequency of natural disasters like typhoons in the region, such an organization was highly valuable and relevant.

President Chen Shui-bian reminded everyone in his last months in office why the cross-Strait relations had been so uncordial during his presidency. In March 2008 he stated that “Taiwan is not a part of China, nor is it a province of the PRC. The PRC and Taiwan are countries independent of each other and they have no jurisdiction over each other.” (MAC website: Cross Strait Exchanges) He played on the independence sentiment of the Taiwanese people and clearly distanced himself from the PRC’s “one China principle”. This meant that the two sides couldn’t have any common views if Chen continued as president. On the same day of the address, the MAC released a statement that “the government cannot accept the “one China” precondition unilaterally preset by Beijing. [---] The government hopes that the Beijing authorities will completely remove their “one China” framework and promptly resume the currently stalled negotiations on various issues” (ibid).

On March 22, 2008, the KMT party candidate Ma Ying-jeou won the presidential election in the ROC. Ma would take office in May. Similarly to the January legislative elections, there were no strong candidates running against KMT and the victory came with a landslide 58 % of the votes. This also encouraged Beijing to hope for more cooperative action from Taipei.

Therefore, despite the President Chen’s recent strong statements regarding the “one China principle”, tourism was further enlivened starting from April 2008 as Taiwanese were allowed to depart on up to week-long trips to the mainland through the islands of Kinmen

and Matsu: daily 600 and 80 tourists respectively. This was no small feat as up until then only Taiwanese businessmen who operated in China could travel like this.

Also, in April 2008 the tone of the MAC official statements already started to shift in respect to the „one China policy“. Whereas previously, by following President Chen’s example, the existence of “one China” framework was downplayed and the statements on the topic were of a negative nature, it started to change and there was again talk in Taipei about the mainland and Taiwan belonging to one China. However, instead of referring to the “one China framework”, the 1992 Consensus was brought into focus. The MAC commented on the Consensus followingly: „China needs to formally recognize on international occasions the statement of „one China, with each side having its own interpretation“. Beijing picked up on the queues and soon after that a TAO spokesperson said that the cross-Strait relations should be resumed on the basis of the “1992 Consensus” whereas the negotiation status of the two sides would be equal. This statement was reaffirmed in the end of April 2008 by the then President of the PRC Hu Jintao.

In April 2008 – although not at their respective official capacities – the then PRC President Hu Jiantao held a meeting with the then ROC’s vice-president elect Vincent Siew as chairman of the Cross-Straits Common Market Foundation during the Boao Forum for Asia. This was a significant sign of diplomatic goodwill at that time, although they didn’t address each other with the titles referring to the respective governments they were subject to.

President Ma had run his campaign based on the three noes of no unification, no independence and no use of force. He began repeating that mantra as soon as he started his first term in May 2008. He also reaffirmed that he will be „putting Taiwan first for the benefit of the people“. There is a good reason why Ma chose to emphasize the political slogan “Taiwan first”: by 2008 more than 90 % of the people identified themselves as Taiwanese, although 50 % of them also believed they are Chinese as well. (TNSS 2008) This means Ma tailored his statements to appeal to the majority of the people on Taiwan.

In May 2008 the so called second track of party-to-party relations was opened as the heads of the two ruling parties Hu Jintao (general secretary of the Communist Party of China)

and Wu Poh-hsiung (KMT Chairman) met for the first time as heads of the ruling parties of the respective sides of the Strait. The both sides agreed that the “1992 Consensus” is the basis for the cross-Strait negotiations. In June 2008 the two sides announced that the SEF and ARATS have resumed negotiations on the basis of the “1992 Consensus”. The result of the first direct talks in decades was the signed agreement that direct flights between the two sides would begin on July 4th and that Taiwan would allow entrance of up to 3000 visitors daily from the PRC side.

In June President Ma set forth his vision of the new phase in cross-Strait relations in a meeting with the former US Secretary of Defense William Perry and a delegation from the National Committee on United States-China Relations. He said that the improvement in relations with mainland China will first begin in the realm of economics and gradually progress to seeking more international space for Taiwan. He added that, ultimately, the two sides could in the future discuss a peace treaty.

At the end of June the Executive Yuan of Taiwan approved measures to open up cross-Strait financial exchanges and on June 30th 2008 the Bank of Taiwan began buying and selling renminbi – the official currency of the PRC - on Taiwan. This made a huge difference to the mainland tourists, because the two currencies were previously not exchangeable through official channels, except for in small amounts on several of Taiwan's outlying islands.

In August 2008 President Ma Ying-jeou started to advocate for opening of cross-Strait education. Ma explained that this could improve mutual understanding among young people on both two sides of the Taiwan Strait. This would itself be conducive to future cross-Strait peace. Furthermore, Taiwan was looking for a solution for the issue of student enrollment shortfalls and accepting mainland students would have filled the gap.

In August 2008 the contaminated baby formula scandal started to unfold. Promptly the respective counterpart institutions were designated on both sides for handling cross-Strait food health issues. The Taiwanese however saw the Chinese government (representatives) as responsible for the melamine contaminated products reaching Taiwan or at least that the information had been kept secret by them. Therefore, although the

majority of the Taiwanese people wanted the cross-Strait negotiations to continue (the second Chiang-Chen talks had been scheduled), they wanted that mainland China issue a public apology over the export of the contaminated milk to Taiwan before the chairman of ARATS would be allowed to visit Taiwan. This was the public sentiment even after officials from TAO and the Premier Wen Jiabao had publicly apologized to the victims. Taiwanese were expecting a specific outreach towards them. Some of this tension came to an abrupt climax in October when the Vice President of ARATS was visiting a temple in Tainan in his official capacity. Pro-independence activists attacked him, but he was escorted to safety before serious harm was done.

Despite this incident, the second Chiang-Chen talks were held in November and - based on the principle of alternating locations – this time in Taiwan. The two sides signed four agreements on direct cross-Strait air transport, direct cross-Strait sea transport, postal cooperation, and food safety. In addition, they discussed ways to promote mainland tourists' visits to Taiwan, how to cooperatively respond to the international finance crisis, and how to strengthen cross-Strait economic exchanges.

4.2. 2008 survey results

On March 28 the MAC released the results of its first public opinion survey after the presidential and legislative elections in which KMT came to power. The results showed the optimism of the people: 68.7 % of the public believed that cross-Strait relations would become more relaxed over the coming year, while only 5.5 % of the public believed that relations will become tenser. Very significantly, over 91 % (91.1%) of the people advocated maintaining the *status quo* defined in a broader sense (see Fig. 2). This means they either wanted to keep the *status quo* indefinitely or make a decision on the question of unification some time later in the future.

At the end of August the MAC released the results of the next public opinion survey. According to it, the majority of the people believed that cross-Strait relations had become more stable since the new government came into office in May. The survey results also indicated that over half of the public (50.6 %) had confidence in the government's ability to maintain cross-Strait peace and stability; and over half of the public (52.2%) believed

that cross-Strait relations have eased up as compared to a year ago. Regarding the arrangements for cross-Strait negotiations, the survey indicated that 73 % of the public agreed with the policy Ma had advocated from the beginning that economic issues should be handled first and political issues should be discussed later.

In October 2008 the survey results indicated that over 70 % of the public supported the institutionalized mechanism for negotiations across the Taiwan Strait. Between 70 % and 80 % of the public also felt satisfied with the four agreements signed during the latest round of cross-Strait talks, and over 60 % of the public believed the concrete results of the talks would have a positive impact on Taiwan's economic development.

At the end of the year the MAC released the results of another public opinion survey on the newly established direct transport links. The survey indicated that almost 68 % (67.9 %) of the people agreed that cross-Strait direct transport links are conducive to the enhancement of Taiwan's competitiveness and 61.7 % believed that the direct transport links will have a “positive impact” on Taiwan's economic development.

When looking at the survey results starting from the end of 2007 (Fig. 2) it is visible that the percentage of people supporting the *status quo* indefinitely started to rise.

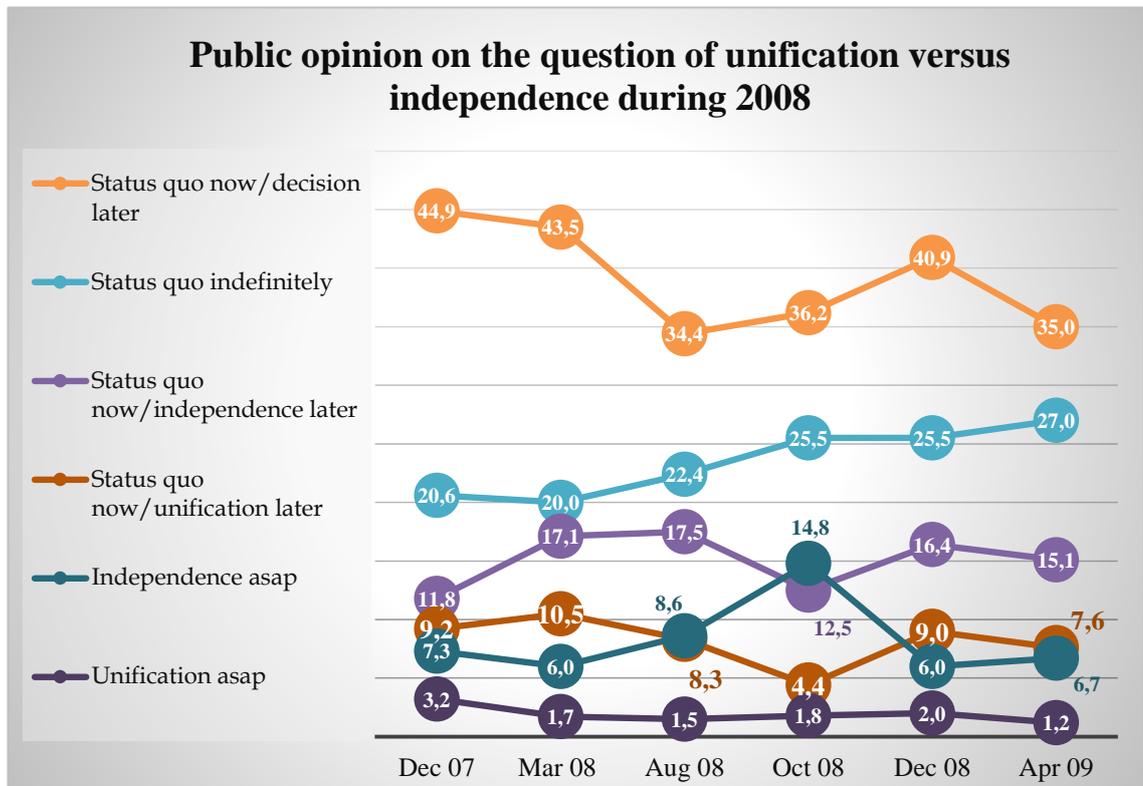


Figure 2. The figure shows public opinion changes among the people on Taiwan on the question of unification versus independence during 2008 with the last data of 2007 and the first data of 2009 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the Election Study Center (August 2008, April 2009), Burke Marketing Research Ltd. (December 2007) and China Credit Information Service Ltd. (March 2008, October 2008, December 2008). The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviewers. The final data was taken from the MAC website.

Interestingly, in the second half of the year there was a sharp dip in the percentage of people both wanting to keep the *status quo* for the time being, but ultimately move towards unification and also those who wanted to keep *status quo* now, but eventually to have unification. When taking into account the events of the summer 2008 it can be suggested that the contaminated milk scandal, which the DPP used to criticize mainland China publicly and to activate the pro-independence movement, pushed some people, who ultimately wanted independence anyway, to want it sooner as the *status quo* had had obvious negative effects on the wellbeing of the people on Taiwan. The dip in the percentage of people wanting to keep the *status quo* and have unification later is harder

to explain. However, looking at the increase of the amount of people favoring the *status quo* either indefinitely or just prolonged until the final decision will be made, it is possible that these people changed their minds from wanting unification as the end solution to being more undecided.

Eventually, as the two sides still continued the cross-Strait negotiations, which during the second round concluded in November was especially advantageous to the common people on Taiwan (affecting ease of travel, postal service and also helping avoid food health related cross-Strait incidents in the future), the percentage of people who wanted independence as soon as possible decreased sharply from 14.8 % in October to 6 % in December. The results of the 2008 Taiwanese National Security Study (TNSS) also validated this trend. The people were asked „Some people say that Taiwan is already an independent country. Its name is the Republic of China and there is no need to seek further independence. Do you agree with this view?“ A total of 64.3 % of the respondents agreed (this is the sum of “somewhat agree” 22.9 % and “strongly agree” 41.4 %), which altogether counted for a significant amount of people wanting to keep the *status quo*. (Niou 2009)

In accordance to the trend of more people wanting to keep the *status quo*, the percentage of people who thought that the pace of cross-Strait exchanges was either just right or even too fast also increased (Fig. 3). The percentage of people finding the pace of the cross-Strait exchanges to be too slow kept decreasing throughout 2008.

Public opinion about the pace of cross-Strait exchanges during 2008

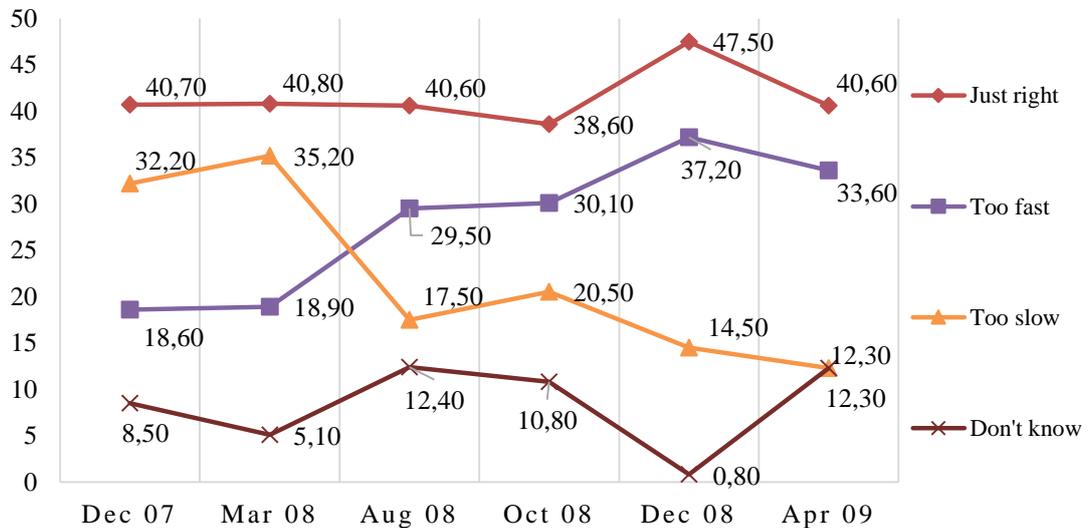


Figure 3. The figure shows changes in public opinion on the pace of the cross-Strait exchanges (percentages). During 2008 with the last data of 2007 and the first data of 2009 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the Election Study Center (August 2008, April 2009), Burke Marketing Research Ltd. (December 2007) and China Credit Information Service Ltd. (March 2008, October 2008, December 2008). The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviewers. The final data was taken from the MAC website.

As soon as the cross-Strait negotiations started to gain momentum, there had already been indications of increasing trade by signing additional agreements with mainland China. However, there was also a fear among the public about mainland China using its economic leverage to coerce Taiwan into closer political rapprochement. Therefore, among those who preferred independence, only 32.8 % wanted to increase trade with China. (Table 1) Most of the respondents who preferred independence, were more likely to be against increasing trade with China (51.0 %). (Niou 2009) Still, due to the realities of the hardening economic situation on Taiwan, the local people understood that it would be necessary to increase trade with mainland although they'd prefer not to.

	increase trade	decrease trade
independence proponents	32.8 %	51.0 %
status quo proponents	70.4 %	13.0 %
unification proponents	89.3 %	7.9 %

Table 1. The table shows distribution of the public opinion on whether Taiwan should strengthen or reduce economic and trade relations with the mainland based on the respondents' views on unification versus independence. Source: The author based on the TNSS 2008 data from Niou 2009.

4.3. 2009 events

Although the two sides had resumed negotiations based on the 1992 Consensus, the Chinese President Hu Jintao still made a statement that during the new year, mainland China will adhere to the guiding principle of "peaceful unification and one country, two systems" and the eight-point proposal on developing cross-Strait relations and promoting peaceful unification of the motherland. Also, the Chinese Ministry of Defense spokesperson stated that the Chinese People's Liberation Army's sacred duty is to achieve the complete unification of the motherland and maintain national sovereign security and territorial integrity. This of course was very conflicting with the Taiwanese people's interpretation of the cross-Strait relations.

In 2009 the preparations for an economic cooperation agreement accelerated as the global recession had also had a dramatic negative influence on the cross-Strait trade. From the beginning the ROC government made efforts to reassure its public that the future agreement would not dwarf Taiwanese sovereignty and it would not jeopardize the local jobs. In the light of this sharp public and media attention even the proposed name for the agreement was changed: from Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement to Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement. (Brown 2009a)

The question of Taiwanese sovereignty and economic (inter)dependence still rapidly became the source of many heated debates in Taiwan. On the one hand – as in 2009 the exports, which make up about 70 % of Taiwan's GDP – declined and most sharply on the Chinese direction, there was a pressing urgency to sign the ECFA. On the other hand, this

led to more criticism from the DPP that Taiwan is too dependent on the China market. (Brown 2009a) Among the general public on Taiwan there was a conflicting sentiment as people believed that China will use these closer economic ties to strong-arm Taiwan into unification, but the majority of people still thought that it is necessary to establish these ever closer ties with China. (TNSS 2008 results) All in all, both the DPP and the ruling party KMT published competing polls, which showed public opinion to favor their respective points of view on the ECFA. (Brown 2009a)

In April the third Chiang-Chen talks were held and they were located this time again on the mainland. This round resulted in signing of the Cross-Strait Joint Crime-Fighting and Judicial Mutual Assistance Agreement, Cross-Strait Financial Cooperation Agreement, and Cross-Strait Supplementary Agreement on Cross-Strait Air Transport. The two sides also reached a consensus on jointly promoting Mainland investment in Taiwan. The big step forward regarding the growing economic (inter)dependence itself took place on the 1st of May 2009 when Chinese investors could start to invest in Taiwan's money markets. This had not been possible from the beginning of the ROC-PRC rift.

At the end of April Taiwan was finally invited to participate in the World Health Assembly (WHA) meeting as an observer. The invitation was a result of consultations between Taipei and Beijing. Although it didn't mean permanent inclusion in WHA from then on, it was still more than Taiwan had had until then. Related to that development was the question of how Taiwan would be referred to in international organizations. In March 2009 President Ma summarized that in terms of titles, the first choice was the "Republic of China." If this was not possible, "Taiwan" would also be acceptable, and that "Chinese Taipei" would be the third acceptable name. The third option was eventually also used when Taiwan participated in the WHA meeting. The next big goal announced by Taiwan was then to seek participation in UN specialized agencies rather than UN membership, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). (Brown 2009b)

Although Ma kept to the mantra of addressing economic issues first and political issues later, he said in May 2009 in an interview to the United Morning Post and Straits Times that if he is re-elected in 2012 and the urgency of political issues demands negotiations,

he will not exclude the possibility of touching on such issues. However, in June this was followed by the MAC's statement that Taiwan currently has no plans to negotiate political issues with mainland China and the two sides should first deepen exchanges and accumulate mutual trust through institutionalized negotiations.

Ma also started to emphasize more - similarly to Beijing - the cultural and educational ties between the two sides of the Strait. The mainland's goal is to counteract the rise of the separate Taiwanese consciousness, which has been increasingly evident over the last two decades. (See chart 1; Brown 2009b) In June, Ma made several statements concerning the use of simplified (more common on the mainland) and traditional (more common on Taiwan) Chinese characters, suggesting that both sides start to learn the other sides' language in order to better implement cross-Strait educational exchange. There were already plans to gradually open Taiwan universities to mainland students and on the other hand, to recognize some degrees and credits earned by Taiwanese students at mainland universities.

In July 2009 Ma was elected Chairman of KMT. This meant from then on he had even more power and cohesive control in order to lead the cross-Strait relations in a desired direction. Also in July two new direct air routes were agreed upon meaning more ease of travel for the people on both sides of the Strait.

Regarding Taiwan's international space, as mentioned above, Taiwan turned its attention from UN membership to being included in UN's specialized agencies. In September at the opening of the UN General Assembly Taipei for the first time since 1993 didn't ask its diplomatic allies to present a resolution on its behalf. (Brown 2009c) A further positive example of Taiwan's attitude regarding Beijing and advances in international space was the cooperation and communication during the H1N1 outbreak. The pandemic didn't produce public controversy or anger as had been the case six years ago during the SARS pandemic. (ibid)

Another interesting development took place in October 2009 as mainland China was selected for the first time as the theme country for the Frankfurt Book Fair, the world's largest book exhibition. The Chinese book display also included a section on Taiwan area

publications. A green sticker stating “Any claim denying the one-China Principle in this book will be rejected” was placed on every book in the Taiwan section. In addition to publicly denouncing the denial of the “one China principle”, Beijing also didn’t let up the military deterrence. In August the ROC’s Ministry of Defense released a report stating that Beijing already had 1500 short- and medium-range missiles pointing towards Taiwan. (Brown 2009c)

At the fourth round of talks between the leaders of the SEF and the ARATS in December 2009, the two sides signed three agreements – the Cross-Strait Arrangement on Cooperation of Agricultural Product Quarantine and Inspection, Cross-Strait Agreement on Cooperation in Respect of Standards, Metrology, Inspection and Accreditation, and Cross-Strait Agreement on the Cooperation in Respect of Fishing Crew Affairs. This meant SEF and ARATS had to date signed 12 agreements and reached one consensus.

Although these agreements were not controversial as ECFA, there were still demonstrators protesting against the general direction of President Ma’s cross-Strait policy, against ECFA and against the lack of transparency of the ongoing negotiations. (Brown 2010a) Although the majority of the people favored continuing the cross-Strait negotiations in the current institutionalized manner, non-partisan polls indicated that public trust in Ma had declined substantially and since October 2009 (Fig. 4) for the first time the percentage of people who distrusted him was higher than the percentage of those who trusted him. (ibid)

The satisfaction ratings with KMT legislators in the Legislative Yuan were constantly even lower. However, the opposition party DPP was even less popular than KMT. The public poll results also reveal that although the people expressed their distrust towards Ma, they still found the cross-Strait relations advancing in a way and direction favorable to the Taiwanese. Also, they often suggested DPP should be more open and cooperative towards the mainland as KMT is. (The Global Views Survey Research Center, GVSRC)

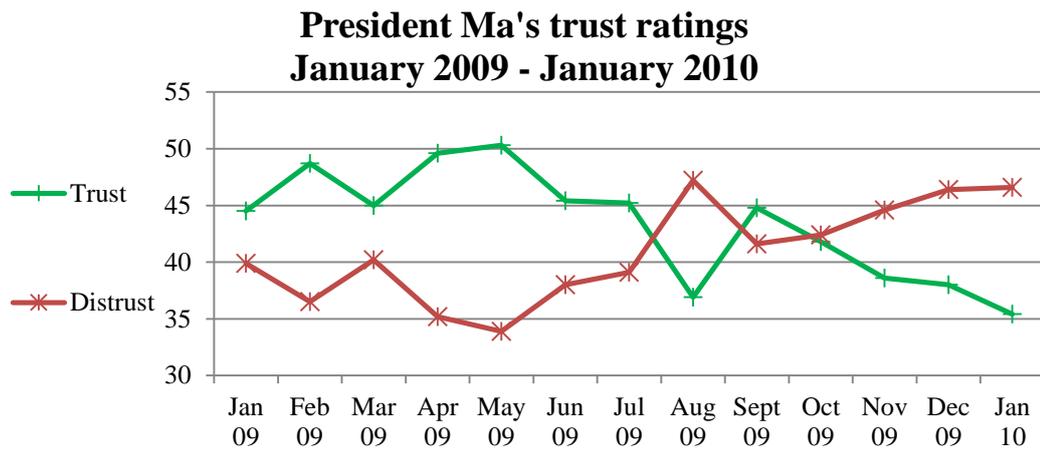


Figure 4. President Ma's trust ratings January 2009 – January 2010. Source: Global Views Survey Research Center.

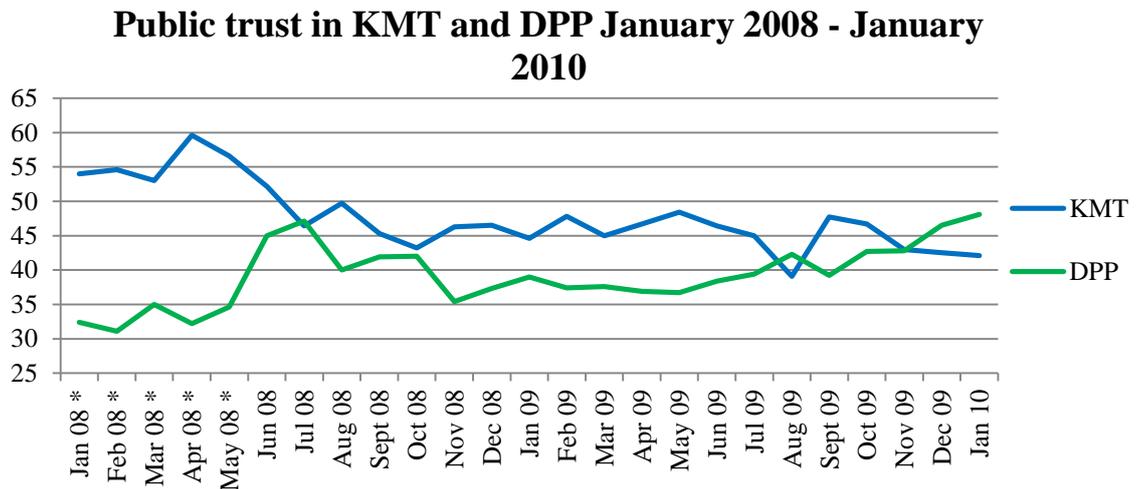


Figure 5. Public trust in KMT and DPP January 2008 – January 2010. Source: The Global Views Survey Research Center.

* The results until May 2008 correspond with the time DPP was still the ruling party and KMT was in opposition.

4.4. 2009 survey results

In April 2009 the MAC announced the results of the next public opinion survey: 70 % of the public believed that it was necessary for Taiwan to sign a cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with mainland China, while 60 % of the public believed that an ECFA would be conducive to promoting the internationalization of Taiwan and enhance the competitiveness of Taiwan products in the Mainland market.

Slightly more than a half of the public (55.9 %) believed that the ECFA will have a positive impact on Taiwan's economic development. However, as explained previously, the people who thought that the ECFA should be signed in order to better Taiwan's economic situation, did not necessarily think that it didn't have any negative effects on Taiwan.

Over 73 % (73.8 %) of the people supported handling cross-Strait exchange issues through institutionalized negotiations between the two sides. Over 62 % (62.8 %) of the people were satisfied with the overall outcome of the third Chiang-Chen Talks and believed that the three agreements and one consensus reached during the talks would have a positive influence on Taiwan's economic development.

In September the survey results showed that 60 % of the public approved holding the fourth cross-Strait negotiations in Taiwan before the end of the year. Furthermore, on the issue of Taiwan's international participation, the majority (60 %) believed that improved cross-Strait relations were conducive to expanding Taiwan's international space. In addition, over 75 % (75.5 %) of the public supported the government to give priority to participating in specialized agencies of the United Nations.

As in December 2009 the fourth Chiang-Chen talks were to be held, the next round of public opinion survey was conducted: the results indicated that 60 % of the public supported the handling of cross-Strait issues through institutionalized negotiations, while over half of the public held a positive attitude towards the four negotiation issues to be discussed during the fourth Chiang-Chen Talks. 68 % of the public believed institutionalized negotiations were conducive to the peace and stability of cross-Strait relations; 65 % approved of continuing cross-Strait negotiations; and 63 % also agreed that the establishment of communication channels between the competent authorities of the two sides will aid the handling of issues stemmed from cross-Strait exchanges.

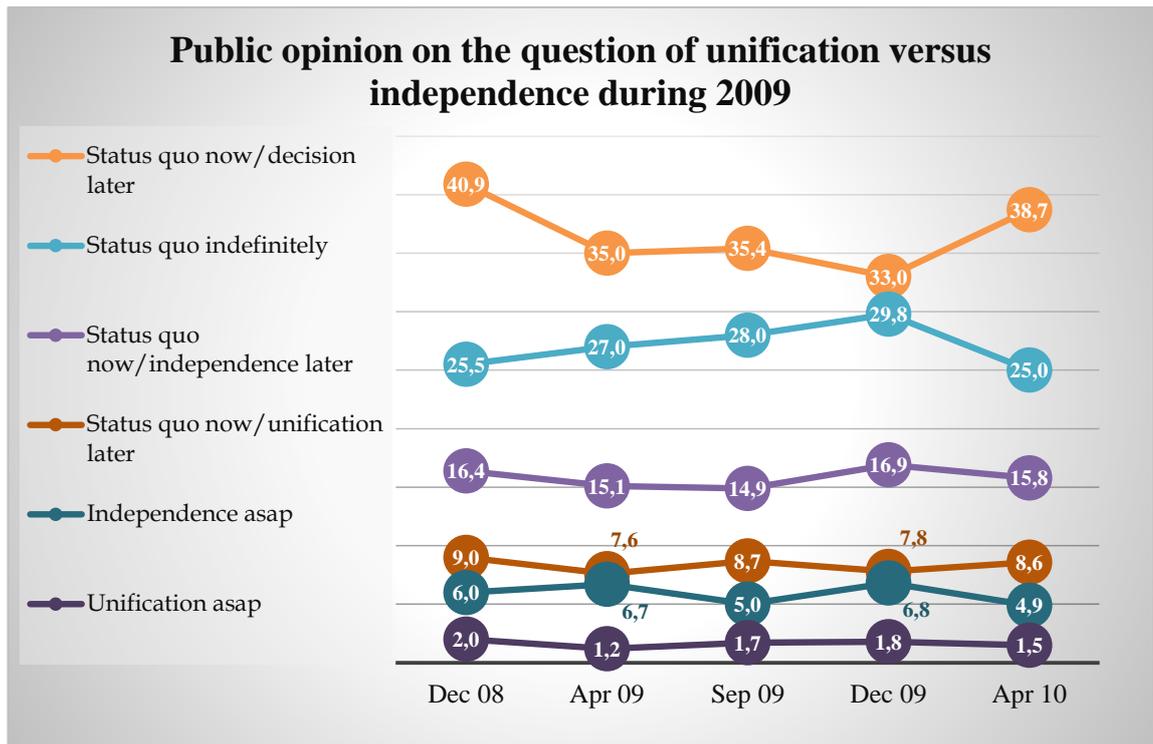


Figure 6. Public opinion on the question of unification versus independence during 2009 with the last data of 2008 and the first data of 2010 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the China Credit Information Service Ltd. (December 2008), Election Study Center (April 2009, September 2009, April 2010), e-society Research Group (December 2009). The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviews. The effective sample sizes for these surveys were from 1068 to 1131. The final data was gathered from the MAC website.

During 2009 there were no drastic shifts in people’s views on unification and independence (Fig. 6): the majority of the people still favored *status quo* (over 60 %) either indefinitely or until any decision is made some time in the future. Proponents of immediate unification were still the smallest portion of respondents, with the proponents of immediate independence being the second least popular view (both of them well below 10 %).

Public opinion on the pace of cross-Strait exchanges during 2009

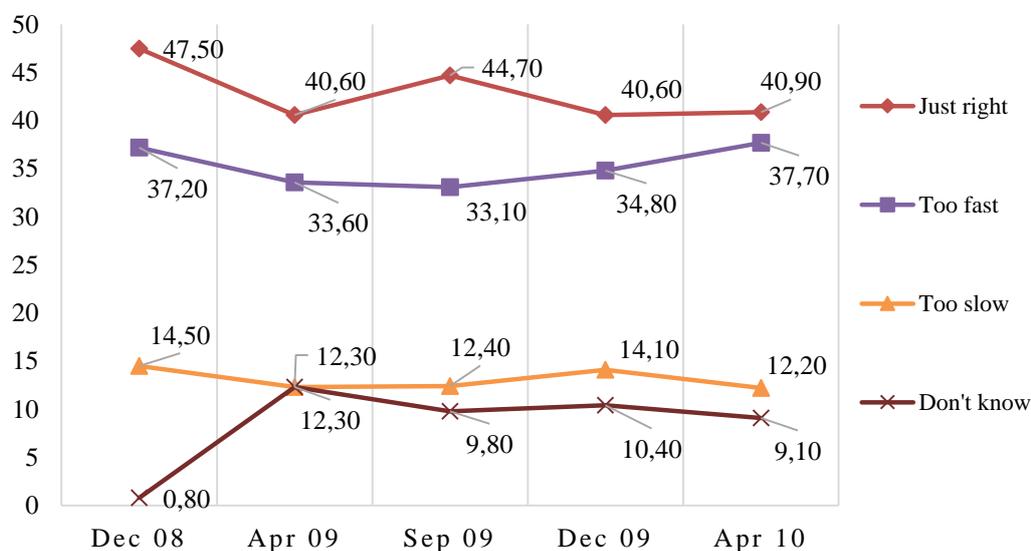


Figure 7. Public opinion on the pace of cross-Strait exchanges during 2009 with the last data of 2008 and the first data of 2010 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the China Credit Information Service Ltd. (December 2008), Election Study Center (April 2009, September 2009, April 2010), e-society Research Group (December 2009). The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviews. The effective sample sizes for these surveys were from 1068 to 1131. The final data was gathered from the MAC website.

The majority of the people continued to perceive the pace of the cross-Strait exchanges as either just right or too fast (Fig. 7). The percentage of people who were unsure about how they feel about the pace had risen after December 2008 and remained stable around 10 %. When comparing the changes in percentages of people who thought that the pace was too fast with the people who wanted to keep the *status quo* and make a decision later, nearly correspond with each other (Fig. 6 and 7). This shows that over a third of the people were still unsure about what they want for Taiwan in the future. Therefore they were also unsettled by the new course of rapprochement and the speed of it.

4.5. 2010 events

Although the U.S. had just reassured China its commitment to the „one China” policy, the difficult economic situation meant that the U.S. couldn’t sacrifice a good deal in order

to appease China: on January 30th, the U.S. announced it intended to sell \$6,4 billion worth of anti-missile systems, helicopters, mine-sweeping ships and communications equipment to Taiwan. Although the sale had been long-expected as it was already announced at the end of the Bush administration, China's response was to suspend military exchanges with the U.S. They were not resumed until as late as November that year.

On June 29th the SEF Chairman Chiang Pin-kung and the ARATS Chairman Chen Yunlin officially signed the landmark Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) and the Cross-Strait Agreement on Intellectual Property Right Protection and Cooperation. Although there were severe protests to signing the ECFA from the DPP's side, the proceedings still went forth. China's political bottom line in cross-Strait economic integration has been well known and in order to alleviate concerns over selling-out sovereignty, the MAC made it clear that the ECFA is purely a trade agreement, which has nothing to do with sovereignty. This was countered by China with their own emphasis: „To echo the MAC's statement, the TAO in China also announces that the ECFA is strictly an economic arrangement and not a political one. But the TAO's chosen word of “arrangement” rather than “agreement” is itself a political intent, given that trade “agreement” between governments implies “state-to-state” relations, which is against the PRC's “one China principle”“ (Huang 2010, location 796).

All in all, after signing the ECFA Taiwan was able to get some more leeway from Beijing when it came to signing free trade agreements (FTAs) with its other trade partners. On August 5, Singapore and Taiwan announced that the two would start exploratory talks on entering into a “WTO-consistent economic cooperation agreement” (Brown 2010b).

There had been another cross-Strait agreement, which took a long time to move from the planning stage to implementation: accepting PRC students and degrees on Taiwan. DPP had been delaying or blocking the legislation by at times even provoking physical confrontations in the Legislative Yuan. Finally in August the amendments to legislation were passed, which allowed PRC students to be accepted to Taiwanese universities (quotas were set) and also begin recognizing PRC university degrees earned by Taiwan students (only certain degrees and universities). (Brown 2010b)

Although the Chinese missiles pointing towards Taiwan have been a highly effective deterrent, in July 2010 China's Ministry of National Defense spokesperson said that missile withdrawal is not of major difficulty, but the main thing is to uphold the "one China" principle. China's leader Wen Jiabao added that the removal of missiles deployed against Taiwan will ultimately be realized. Although Taiwan welcomed such news, the official position was that mainland's missile removal shouldn't be attached to the "one China" premise. In the same time, Taiwan also went on to purchase hardware and services to upgrade radars for the Indigenous Defense Fighter and the Po-sheng Joint Service (C⁴ISR) programs to which Beijing's public response was this time only a *pro forma* statement by the Foreign Ministry spokesman. (Brown 2010b)

After the ECFA had been signed as a landmark comprehensive trade agreement, there was much talk of the negotiations starting to move towards more political issues. Already in July the PRC Defense Ministry spokesman said that the time is ripe for cross-Strait military confidence building measures (CBMs). This, however, was countered by the MAC with reaffirmations about their continuing focus on economics. "Despite this caution, a cross-Strait maritime search and rescue (SAR) exercise was held in the waters between Xiamen and Kinmen in September. [---] This initiative was possible because emergency SAR operations in the area have been handled on a pragmatic humanitarian basis for some time. In addition, the Beijing media downplayed the Coast Guard involvement by describing the exercise as between the two sides' SAR associations and by noting that it was held under the umbrella of the ARATS-SEF maritime agreement, rather than describing it as a military trust-building step" (Brown 2010b, p. 4). In Taiwan, this news was covered in the same way: announcing it in the context of earlier agreements between SEF and ARATS.

In September, the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands topic rose to attention again: a Chinese fishing boat was intercepted and its captain arrested by the Japanese coast guard near the disputed islands. Although Japan controls the islands, they are also claimed by both China and Taiwan. The ROC's Foreign Ministry reaffirmed ROC's claim to the Diaoyutai repeatedly as the events surrounding the arrest were covered in the media, but also made

clear that its claims and actions are unilateral and not in cooperation with the PRC. (Brown 2010b)

4.6. 2010 survey results

In May the MAC announced the results of another public opinion survey. Up to nearly 70 % (69 %) of the people affirmed that cross-Strait institutionalized negotiations were conducive to the peace and stability of cross-Strait relations. Moreover, over 57 % (57.4 %) of the people agreed that cross-Strait economic and trade exchanges and negotiations would help Taiwan's economy further develop in Asia and the world. As for the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), about 2 months prior to its signing nearly 59 % (58.9 %) of the people believed that signing of the ECFA would be conducive to Taiwan's economic development, and over 53 % (53.1 %) of the people supported the government in negotiating and signing the ECFA with mainland China.

The MAC released new public opinion survey results in July. These indicated that 79.3 % of the respondents supported the handling of cross-Strait exchange issues through institutionalized cross-Strait negotiations, while 61.1 % of the respondents felt satisfied with the overall results of the ECFA negotiations. In addition, 73.1 % of the respondents were satisfied with the Cross-Strait Agreement on Intellectual Property Right Protection and Cooperation.

In September next public opinion survey results were released. 40.3 % of the respondents continued to think that the pace of cross-Strait exchanges at the time was “just right” (Fig. 9). The great majority of the public (86.2 %) supported “maintaining the status quo defined in a broader sense”. The “broader sense” encompasses the people wanting to keep *status quo* indefinitely or until any decision is made some time in the future and therefore only excludes the people who want either independence or unification as soon as possible. Therefore, this aggregate number for the proponents of the *status quo* in the “broader sense” continued to be stable and well above 80 % (Fig. 8).

In December the MAC released the results of the year end public opinion survey. Over 70 % (73.0 %) of the public supported dealing with cross-Strait exchange issues through

institutionalized cross-Strait negotiations, which were still believed to be conducive to peace and stability in cross-Strait relations.

Regarding the public opinion about the question of unification versus independence, during the first half of the year there was a decrease among the people who ultimately favored independence and a corresponding increase among the people who favored *status quo* indefinitely. As there continued to exist a considerable percentage of people, who thought that because the ROC already enjoys so many rights of a sovereign country, the actual proclamation of independence is not that necessary anymore (based on the TNSS survey results 2008, 2011, 2012), these changes likely had to do with the signing of the ECFA and the promise of FTAs with other countries.

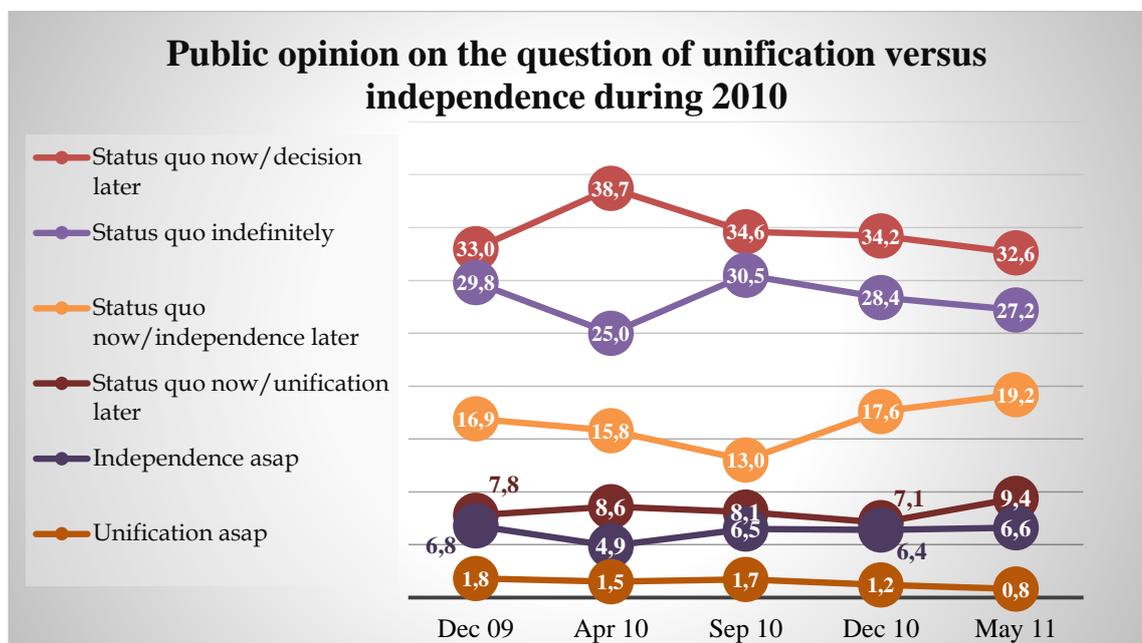


Figure 8. This figure shows the changes in the percentages of people’s views on the question of unification versus independence during 2010 with the last data of 2009 and the first data of 2011 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the Center for Public Opinion and Public Policy. (December 2009) and the Election Study Center (April 2010 – May 2011). The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviews. The effective sample sizes for these surveys were from 1070 to 1099. The final data was gathered from the MAC website.

Therefore, it may be that the dip in the percentage of people wanting eventual independence and the corresponding rise in the proponents of *status quo* meant that the people were content with the new opportunities and found it to be less important to have actual independence. However, as it became clear that the ECFA wouldn't have much implications on furthering the sovereignty of the ROC, the percentage of the people who had briefly swayed away from ultimately wanting independence, increased again.

The roughly 8 month long freeze in the military cooperation between the U.S. and China didn't seem to have a great influence on the people to favor immediate independence. Although the results of the Taiwan National Security Survey 2008 indicated that the Chinese military deterrence is an important factor in why the people on Taiwan reject or postpone independence, the time when the U.S. had no amicable military relations with China did not have a great increase in the percentage of people wanting independence.

Public opinion on the pace of cross-Strait exchanges during 2010

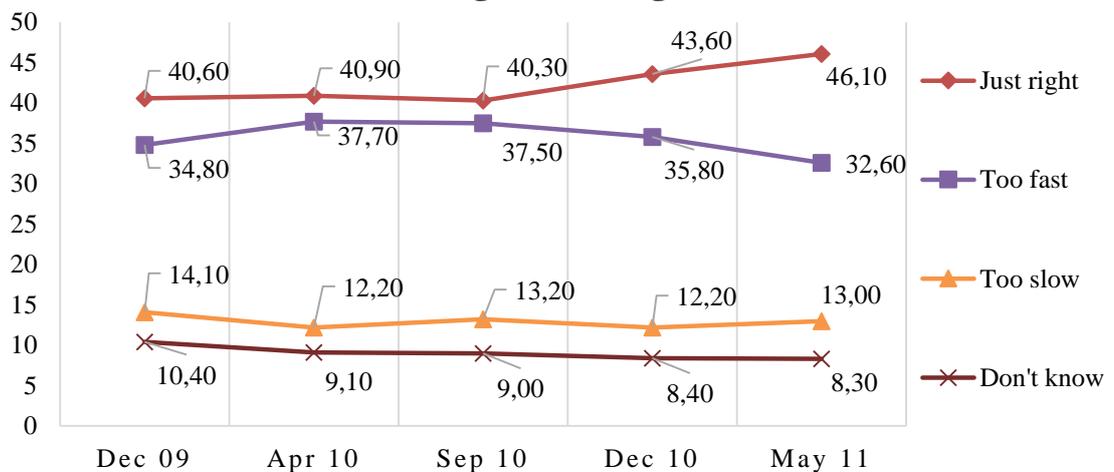


Figure 9. The figure shows the changes in the percentages of the people's views on the pace of the cross-Strait exchanges during 2010 with the last data of 2009 and the first data of 2011 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the Center for Public Opinion and Public Policy. (December 2009) and the Election Study Center (April 2010 – May 2011). The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviews. The effective sample sizes for these surveys were from 1070 to 1099. The final data was gathered from the MAC website.

Compared to the previous year the percentage of the people who were undecided about how they feel about the pace of cross-Strait relations and the ones who thought them to be too slow, remained more stable (see Fig. 9; changes no more than 1 %). A change of opinion took place among many people who had previously thought the pace of the cross-Strait exchanges to be too fast: starting from September they found the pace to be just right. All in all, the percentage of the people, who found the pace to be just right continued to be the highest (40.9 % in April to 43.6 % in December 2010).

President Ma's trust and approval ratings June 2008 - December 2010

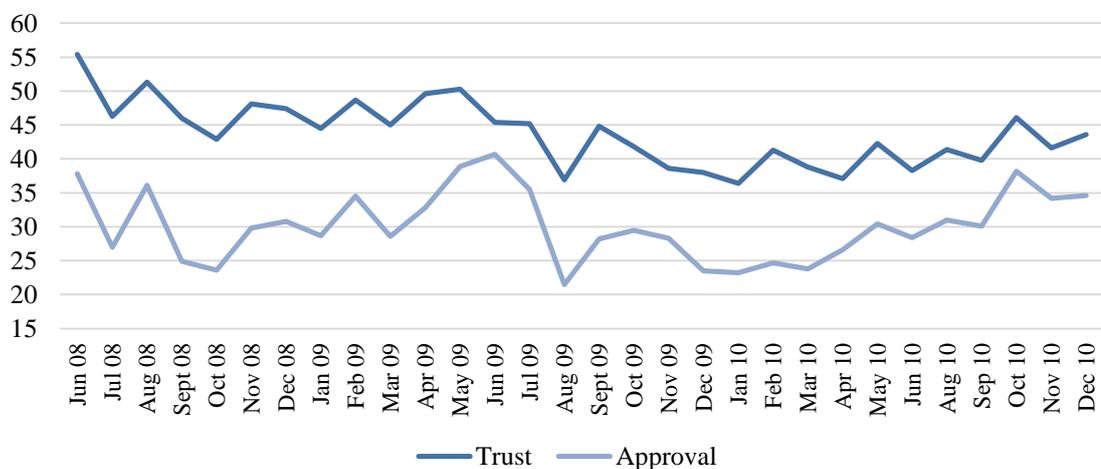


Figure 10. The figure shows the percentages in changes of President Ma’s trust and approval ratings from June 2008 to December 2010. The survey was conducted by the Global Views Survey Research Center. The final data was gathered from the National Policy Foundation website.

Despite the majority’s content with the developments in the cross-Strait relations, President Ma’s trust and approval ratings had continued to decrease since the 2008 elections (see Fig. 10). He won the elections with 58 % of the votes, but now he only had the trust of around 40 % of the people and the approval of even fewer. These developments have to do not with the successes of the cross-Strait negotiations, but how these have been explained and shared with the general public. The people on Taiwan continue to suspect the government of making deals, which will eventually bring Taiwan under such a strong influence of the PRC that it will be much the same as an actual unification. Also, people have been disappointed by Ma’s handling of several domestic

issues such as fears about the H1N1 vaccine and the beef containing ractopamine imported from the U.S. Furthermore, the government's handling of the typhoon relief efforts in August 2009 was seen as too little-too late. (Rigger 2010)

4.7. 2011 events

In January 2011 the Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Committee (CSECC) was established. The CSECC would then start implementing the ECFA and work as an overall forum for developing cross-Strait relations. The organization itself would include the officials of SEF and ARATS, but it also provided a platform for direct contact between officials from the two sides and therefore represented a significant milestone in cross-Strait rapprochement. (Brown 2011)

After the ECFA had been signed, there was more speculation about when the cross-Strait negotiations would shift towards political issues. In April 2011 President Ma said in an interview with CNN that he has no immediate plans to meet with the mainland Chinese leader and that the time is not yet ripe for them to meet. He also said that Taiwan doesn't feel safe enough yet to stop buying military equipment from the U.S.

In May, despite the good relations, there came a new move from the mainland side to reduce Taiwan's international space. The World Health Organization (WHO), where the PRC is a full member, required that the ROC should be referred to as "Taiwan, Province of China" in its internal documents. Mainland's public statement about it was to indicate that it had been mainland's goodwill in the first place, which led to the WHO Secretariat inviting Chinese Taipei's Department of Health to participate in the WHA. In the public President Ma still went on to reaffirm that the cross-Strait relationship is based on mutual non-recognition of sovereignty and mutual non-denial of authority to govern.

In August TAO floated the idea that a cultural agreement should be considered. This was however quickly countered by the MAC with a public statement, that at the current time – as the relations were closer than ever – there was no urgency for such an agreement. In reality, Ma's administration feared that the opposition party DPP would portray the agreement as promoting Chinese culture at the expense of Taiwanese. (Brown 2011)

At the end of August an incident fueled tensions on the other side of the Strait, but also in Taiwan: DPP 2012 presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen openly denied the validity of the „1992 Consensus“, which prompted the SEF to issue a statement that not only does it create problems for the implementation of present agreements, but also makes future negotiations impossible. This sent a strong warning signal to the Taiwanese voters who understood the prospective outcomes of electing DPP’s candidates in the upcoming presidential and legislative elections.

The public also continued to scrutinize Ma’s efforts to re-sinicize Taiwan. His goal comes to fore in his speeches where he refers to Dr. Sun Yat-sen, one of the founders and first president of the ROC, and in the same breath also adds that the mainland needs to advance in the direction of a free, democratic and equally prosperous country in order to narrow the gap between the two sides of the Strait. This was a clear indication of Ma’s continued pro-unification attitude, with integration and assimilation being the stepping stones to it.

In October 2011 Ma brought up the possibility of an eventual peace agreement again, although he had distanced himself from it since 2008 when he last discussed it in public. This seems to have had a lot to do with the approaching elections as Ma was trying to keep the mainland side interested in him as an asset and an ally. However, he said the government would never go through with such an agreement unless it had strong public support and it would be truly necessary to the ROC, also the entire process would have to be subject to legislative oversight. According to Ma the signing of a cross-Strait peace accord would institutionalize the *status quo* of cross-Strait peace. In the same time the MAC distanced Taiwan’s government from the “one China principle” that the mainland side actively proposes in saying that the institutionalized cross-Strait negotiations were not premised on the mainland’s “one China principle” and that the ROC has never accepted this premise.

In October the SEF Chairman Chiang Pin-kung and the ARATS Chairman Chen Yunlin signed the Cross-Strait Nuclear Power Safety Cooperation Agreement. This had been increasingly important to Taiwan after the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in March 2011 as China has nuclear plants along its eastern coast north and south of the Taiwan Strait and also plans to build additional ones.

4.8. 2011 survey results

In January 2011 the MAC issued a press release that according to its latest public opinion survey, public support for institutionalized cross-Strait negotiations had remained high: 72 % of the public supported the handling of cross-Strait exchange issues through institutionalized negotiations, while nearly 62 % of the public believed that the Cross-Strait Agreement on Medical and Health Cooperation signed at the Sixth Chiang-Chen Talks was conducive to promoting the development of the medical and biotech industries on both sides.

In June the MAC announced the results of the next public opinion survey. The survey indicated that 62 % were satisfied with the results of negotiations on cross-Strait agreements. Over half of the public believed that the government had upheld Taiwan's interests, while over 63 % believed the improvement of cross-Strait relations had helped expand Taiwan's international space.

Already in July another round of survey results were released: nearly 69 % (68.7 %) of the public believed that the government's move to allow mainland tourists to travel independently to Taiwan would help promote Taiwan's economic development, and over half (56.1 %) of the public supported the government's plan to implement the independent travel policy for mainland tourists visiting Taiwan in a gradual and orderly manner. On the achievements of the 15 agreements signed by the two sides through institutionalized negotiations, nearly 58 % (57.6 %) of the public believed the agreements were conducive to Taiwan's overall development. Over 55 % (55.5 %) approved cross-Strait negotiations and the signing of an agreement on nuclear power safety cooperation.

In September the MAC again announced public opinion survey results. According to these now nearly 78 % (77.6 %) of the public supported the handling of issues related to cross-Strait exchanges through institutionalized negotiations between the two sides. Furthermore, over 49 % (49.4 %) of the public identified with the government's position on the “1992 Consensus of one China, respective interpretations”, with “one China” meaning the Republic of China”.

In a press release in November the MAC stated that as high as 84.8 % of the public supported the government's continued handling of cross-Strait exchange issues through institutionalized negotiation mechanisms. Besides, 71.3 % of the public were satisfied with the results of negotiations on the Cross-Strait Nuclear Power Safety Cooperation Agreement. The survey also indicated that over 60 % (60.9 %) of the public believed that the 16 agreements signed between the two sides through institutionalized negotiations have upheld Taiwan's interests, while 56.3 % believed they have protected Taiwan's national sovereignty.

During 2011 the percentage of people wanting independence as soon as possible, decreased 2.5 percentage points (Fig. 11). Also, there was a decrease in the percentage of the respondents who wanted to keep *status quo* for the time being and have independence later. In the meantime, the percentage of people who wanted to keep the *status quo* until a decision would be made some time later increased from 32.6 % to 34.2 %. There was also a very small increase of the percentage of people who wanted unification immediately: from 0.8 % to 1.4 % in September and with a slight drop to 1.3 % in November

Overall during 2011 there was a dramatic drop in the percentage of the people who thought the pace of cross-Strait exchanges was too fast (Fig. 11): from 32.6 % to 25.7 %. In the same time, the percentage of people not having an opinion on the topic rose from 8.3 % to 13.3 %. Also, the percentage of people thinking the pace was just right increased slightly from 46.1 % to 48.1 %. November 2011 also had the highest percentage of people wanting to keep the *status quo* irrespective of the eventual decision (94.2 %). Altogether only 5.8 % wanted to immediately move away from the current situation (1.3 % towards immediate unification and 4.1 % towards immediate independence).

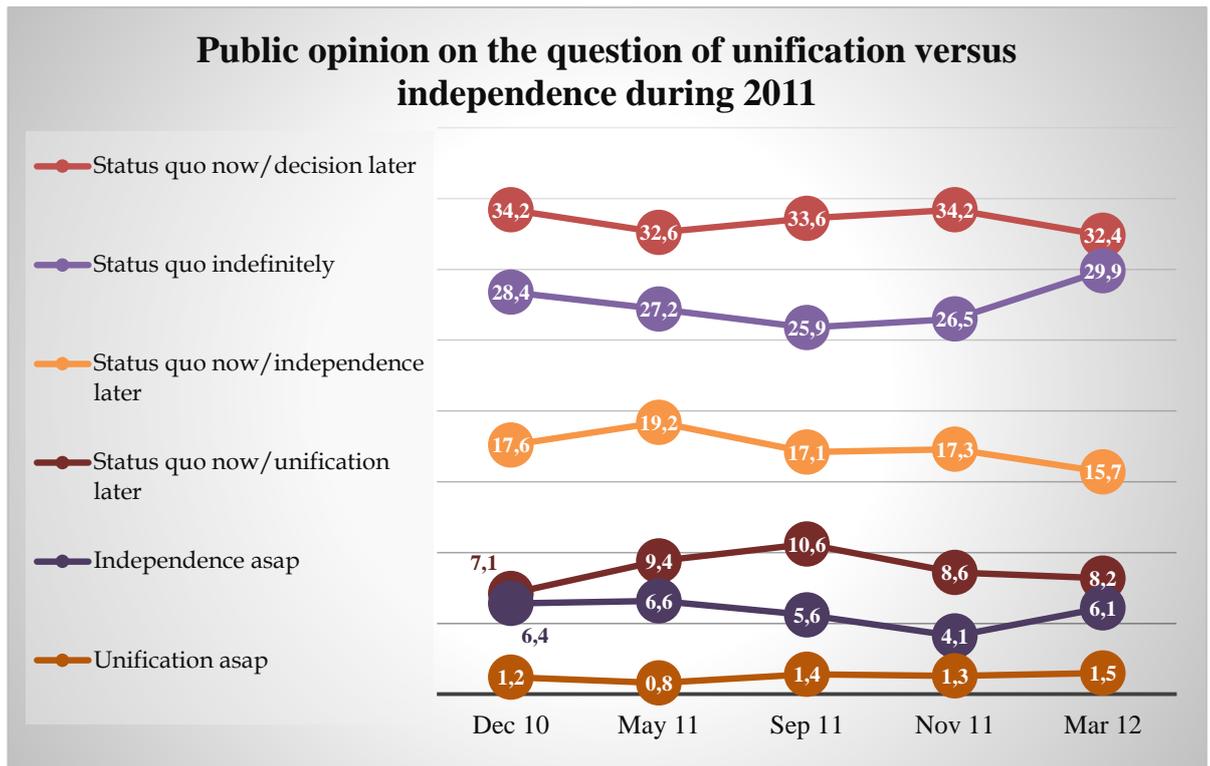


Figure 11. The figure shows changes in the public opinion (percentages) on the question of unification versus independence during 2011 with the last data of 2010 and the first data of 2012 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the Election Study Center. The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviews. The effective sample sizes for these surveys were from 1075 to 1099. The final data was gathered from the MAC website.

In December the next results of public opinion surveys were released: over 70 % of the public were satisfied with the government's policy to open direct cross-Strait transportation links and continue to increase the number of flights and flight points. Additionally, 72 % of the public believed that the government's policy to allow mainland tourist visits to Taiwan is helpful to Taiwan's economy. Regarding the current pace of cross-Strait exchanges (Fig. 12), almost half of the people surveyed (48.1 %) still believed it is “just right,” higher than the ratio believing it is either “too fast” (25.7 %) or “too slow” (12.9 %).

Public opinion on the pace of cross-Strait exchanges during 2011

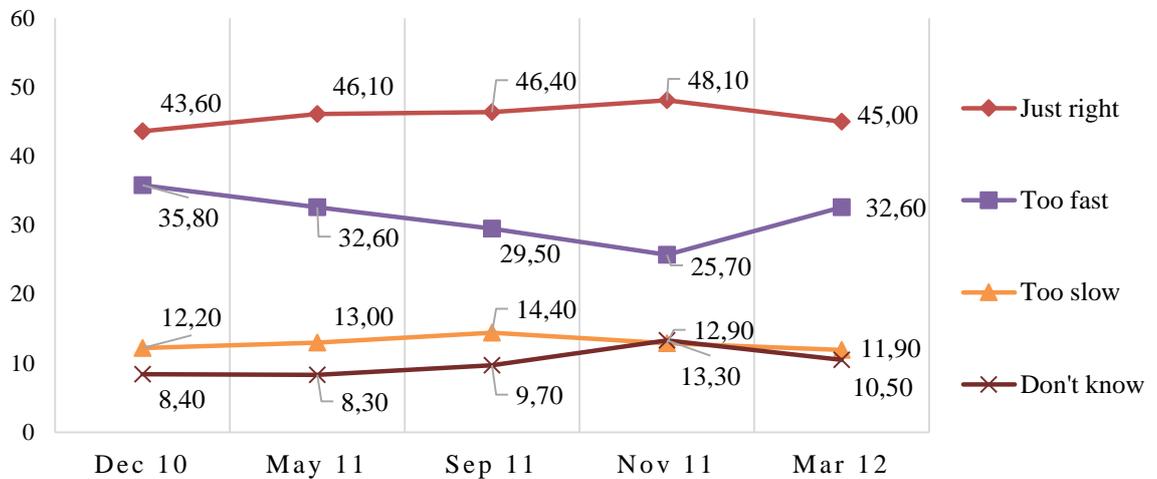


Figure 12. The figure shows the changes in the percentages of the people’s views on the pace of the cross-Strait exchanges during 2011 with the last data of 2010 and the first data of 2012 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the Election Study Center. The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviews. The effective sample sizes for these surveys were from 1075 to 1099. The final data was gathered from the MAC website.

4.9. 2012 events

On January 14 2012 Ma Ying-jeou was re-elected president with 51.6 % of the votes. While the margin was larger than had been predicted, winning only with 6 % was much below his 17 % lead in 2008. In the Legislative Yuan elections, the KMT retained its absolute majority, but also not as overwhelmingly as in 2008.

On the backdrop of the decreasing approval ratings over the first 4 years in office, it is important to point out that the elections coincided with the time when Taiwan was finally starting to come out of the big economic recession that started at the end of 2008. “In early 2011, the government announced that unemployment, year-on-year, had dropped 1 percent to 4.29 % - the lowest since October 2008” (Copper 2012, p. 161). Also, the consumer confidence index reached a new record level the average monthly wage rose to an all-time record. Furthermore, Taiwan’s GDP passed the NT\$15 trillion mark for the first time ever. (ibid) These improvements to the better were an important source of additional votes for the KMT and President Ma.

Following the election, Ma said that the further accumulation of functional cross-Strait agreements would be useful in consolidating cross-Strait peace, even absent a specific peace agreement. TAO officials appear to have a good understanding of the constraints on President Ma and appreciate that if he moves too quickly he will lose public support and potentially open an opportunity for the DPP to return to power. On the other hand, there were indications of growing doubts in Beijing about Ma's willingness to make significant steps forward towards negotiations on political issues. (Brown 2012)

Two important cross-Strait meetings took place that spring. Firstly, on March 22, KMT's Honorary Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung met General Secretary of the Communist Party Hu Jintao in Beijing. Secondly, on April 1, Taiwan's Vice President-elect Wu Den-Yih met Li Keqiang, the then presumed next Peoples Republic of China (PRC) Premier at the Boao Forum. As Ma Ying-jeou had said repeatedly that he would only meet PRC leaders in his capacity as president of the Republic of China, there was no prospect of Ma personally meeting Hu in the coming years. (Brown 2012)

Beijing's proposal to establish the Pingtan Comprehensive Experimental Zone had been a source of cross-Strait controversy at the beginning of the year. This proposal envisaged a zone on Fujian's Pingtan Island that would be jointly designed and operated by people from Taiwan and the mainland. Most of Fujian is administered by the PRC. However, the archipelagos of Kinmen, Matsu, and Wuqiu are under the control of the ROC. There has been criticism in Taipei of the idea that Taiwanese would be hired as government employees in China to help run the zone, which in turn also focused attention on the broader issue of other Taiwanese working in various government capacities in China. Some saw this as indicating a political rather than economic purpose. Elements in the DPP have even viewed it as a step toward implementing Beijing's "one Country, two systems" proposal. (Brown 2012) The MAC countered the criticism by saying that the mainland had over-interpreted the concept of "joint-planning" which is not the overall policy position of Taiwan. The ROC government assured that the Pingtan Comprehensive Experimental Zone should be an economic zone and not embody the concept of cross-Strait "jointness" (MAC website: Cross-Strait Exchanges).

The highly anticipated President Ma's inaugural address in May 2012 mentioned no new initiatives, confirming that this would be a year for consolidating relations rather than making breakthroughs in cross-Strait negotiations. Beijing had previously expressed hopes for an indication that relations could move forward in some politically significant way. However, President Ma avoided giving any signs that progress would be sought on political issues. He reiterated the "three noes" policy in standard terms and also retained the no unification element, which had been expected to be left out during his second term. In talking about "one China," Ma said that his policy was grounded in the ROC Constitution that envisaged the ROC having two areas – a free area on Taiwan and a mainland area. He also said that the signed 16 agreements constitute an important portion of the institutionalization of cross-Strait reconciliation and therefore there would be no pressing need to start negotiating a peace agreement with the PRC. All in all, Beijing was given no hope for any advancement of cross-Strait relations into political realm. (Brown 2012)

In July the Politburo Standing Committee member Jia Qinglin addressed the eighth KMT-CCP Forum. He stated that the core of the "one China framework" was that both the mainland and Taiwan belong to "one country." The use of "one country" was new as the usual wording was that the mainland and Taiwan belong to "one China." This raised different questions such as if this wording was just a different way of expressing "one China" or did this signal a significant shift in emphasis or policy? Was it a message for Ma or for the DPP? Regardless, Jia's wording provoked considerable discussion in Taipei. (Brown 2012)

This new hope for conciliation was short lived. As had been the norm in cross-Strait relations: if there was progress in some area, which might indicate giving in to the other side's demands, the government of that respective side would make it understood in some other area of policy that their sovereignty has not been affected. The mainland China had been issuing new passports since May which included maps of disputed territories and images of two Taiwan tourist sites. The MAC made public protests and official requests to remove the controversial images, but these concerns were brushed off as invalid from the ARATS side.

Eventually, after months of postponing, Beijing did see progress on a somewhat political issue of establishing reciprocal SEF and ARATS institutions on the both sides of the Strait as in November 2012 President Ma stated that one of the main tasks for future cross-Strait relations would be the establishment of such institutions. Taipei hoped that these offices could be established by the end of 2014 as it would also require amending the Act Governing Relations between the Peoples of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area. (Brown, Scott 2013)

4.10. 2012 survey results

In March the MAC commissioned another public opinion survey. The results showed that 70 % of the public supported the government's position of maintaining the *status quo* in the Taiwan Strait under the framework of the ROC Constitution and the principle of “no unification, no independence, and no use of force.” Moreover, 71 % of the public supported the government's policy to continue addressing problems related to cross-Strait exchanges through institutionalized negotiations. In addition, the great majority of the public (86.2 %) continued to advocate maintaining the *status quo* defined in a broader sense (Fig. 13).

MAC Minister Lai Shin-yuan stated that public opinion surveys by academic institutions over the years have showed that President Ma's mainland policy of maintaining the *status quo* has enjoyed the steady support of the majority of the people of Taiwan during the past four years. Moreover, 70 % of the public have supported institutionalized negotiations. The results of the latest MAC-commissioned public opinion survey conducted by the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University further demonstrated that 86.2 % of the public supported President Ma's emphasis on maintaining the *status quo* of “no unification, no independence, no use of force” in the Taiwan Strait under the framework of the ROC Constitution.

Public opinion survey results from May showed that over 70 % of the people believed that in the process of cross-Strait exchanges, Taiwan's values of freedom and democracy have had a positive impact on the mainland; and 67 % of the people agreed that participation of both sides in international organizations and activities can foster benign

cross-Strait interactions. On the negotiation issues for the Eighth Chiang-Chen Talks, about 70 % (69.1 %) and almost 79 % (78.8 %) of the people approved of the government's negotiation and signing of the cross-Strait Investment Protection Agreement and a customs cooperation agreement, respectively.

In December the MAC announced the results of the next public opinion survey. About 70 % (70.9 %) of the public supported the government's continued handling of cross-Strait exchange issues through institutionalized negotiations. Moreover, over 57 % (57.2 %) of the public continued to support the government's approach in promoting cross-Strait negotiations of prioritizing economic issues and leaving political issues for later. Furthermore, over half (55.5 %) of the people polled identified with the government's policy position of "1992 Consensus of one China with respective interpretations, in which one China is the Republic of China."

When looking at the overall trends, unification as a long term goal is steadily becoming less popular. The amount of people who were considering unification under certain conditions has decreased and the amount of people who reject unification under any conditions has almost doubled since 2003. (Niou 2013) President Ma as the proponent of closer cultural ties with China, is therefore also losing in popularity as he is seen as ultimately wanting unification with the mainland.

However, the main reasons behind the plummeting approval ratings – even so shortly after the elections, again had more to do with domestic politics. One of the top officials of KMT was caught in a bribery scandal. This did not bode well for Ma, who ran his second campaign pledging to fight corruption after former president Chen had been convicted of taking bribes and sentenced to serve time in prison in 2010. This led to the approval ratings to fall below 20 % only a few months after the being re-elected.

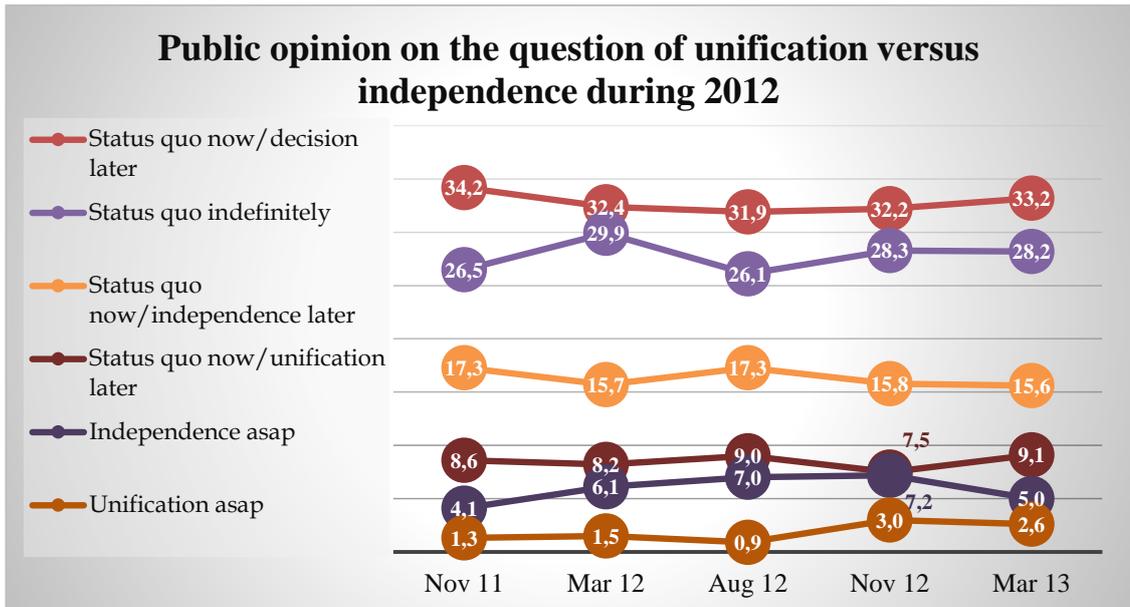


Figure 13. The figure shows changes in the public opinion (in percentages) on the question of unification versus independence during 2012 with the last data of 2011 and the first data of 2013 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the Election Study Center. The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviews. The effective sample sizes for these surveys were from 1070 to 1079. The final data was gathered from the MAC website.

Satisfaction with Ma's overall performance as President Dec 2011 - Nov 2012

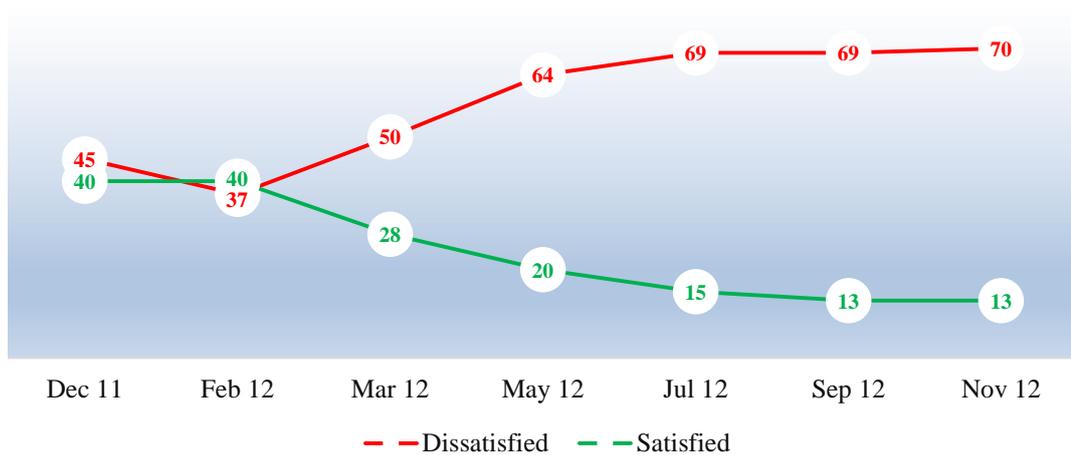


Figure 14. The figure shows the public's satisfaction (in percentages) with President Ma's overall performance from December 2011 – November 2012. The surveys were conducted by the Television Broadcast Satellite (TVBS).

During that time, as outlined previously, the people's support to cross-Strait negotiations and government actions in this field remained high. In order to explain these apparent contradictions in public opinion, it is necessary to understand the rational self-interest of the people on Taiwan when it comes to the cross-Strait relations. Among the eligible voters about 1/6 of them have family members doing business in China, from which a rough estimate means 1 million Taiwanese businessmen in China. The income of each businessman naturally affects the livelihood of the whole household. On average that's about 3 votes, which totals to 3 million votes. Taiwan has roughly 12 million eligible voters, so a quarter of the voters are directly influenced by their personal business interests in mainland China. (Niou 2013) Therefore, although the people were extremely disappointed and disillusioned by the KMT and their chairman Ma, this didn't mean they didn't want him at the helm when navigating the cross-Strait issues. Furthermore, the bribery scandals showed that both the KMT and DPP are much the same when it comes to moral and ethics. This further indicated that the main thing the political parties can be judged and compared on, is the results their policies bring.

In 2012, as high as two thirds of the surveyed people believed that if the economy overly depends on China, then China might use this economic leverage to coerce Taiwan to make political concessions. (TNSS 2012) However, ca 55 % of the respondents still said they want to trade more with China. Therefore, as explained before: due to the high dependency of the Taiwan's households' incomes on continued closer (economic) relations with the mainland, the people still continue to support the close cross-Strait relations, but not necessarily the politicians handling these relations.

Interestingly, at the end of the 2012, for the first time since nearly four years, the percentage of people thinking the pace of the cross-Strait exchanges was too slow, started to rise and reached 17.80 % by November (Fig. 15). The corresponding drop is visible in the percentage of people, who thought the pace was "just right".

Public opinion on the pace of cross-Strait exchanges during 2012

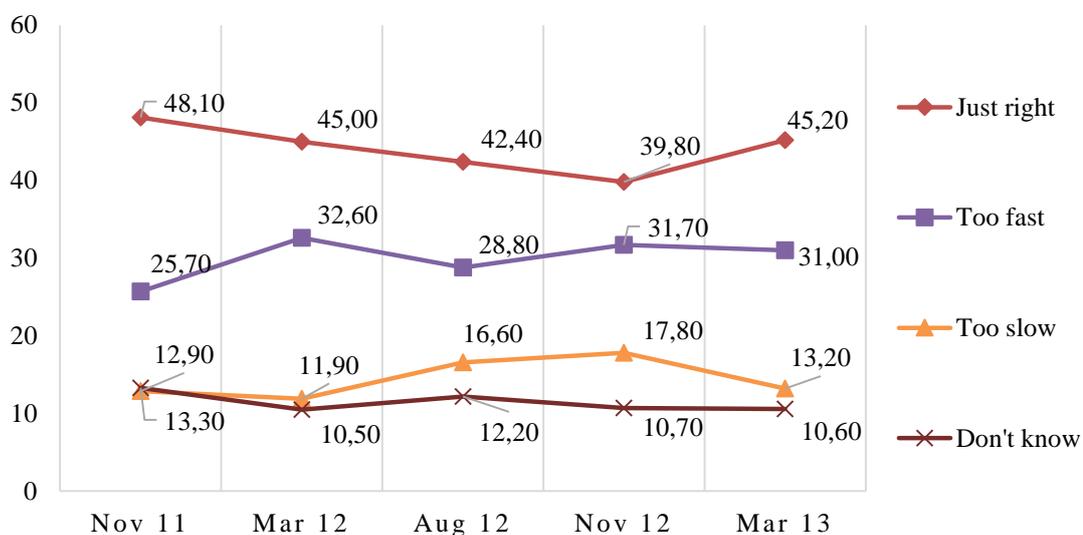


Figure 15. The figure shows changes in the public opinion (in percentages) on the pace of cross-Strait exchanges during 2012 with the last data of 2011 and the first data of 2013 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the Election Study Center. The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviews. The effective sample sizes for these surveys were from 1070 to 1079. The final data was gathered from the MAC website.

4.11. 2013 events

TAO Director Zhang Zhijun brought up a valid point which had been lingering in the minds of the people for a long time: that although there are some political disputes, which can be put aside temporarily, they cannot be avoided in the long run. Therefore, the approach of “only addressing economic matters, but not political ones” is not sustainable.

However, this year saw some successful cooperation on health questions based on the 2010 Medical and Health Cooperation Agreement. The bird flu outbreak was a good example of efficient cooperation and a clear sign that Beijing had learned from its mistakes in its handling of the 2003 SARS outbreak. (Brown, Scott 2013)

The 18th CCP Congress called for the two sides “to jointly explore political relations.” Beijing had been talking more about the need for replacing the differing interpretations of the 1992 Consensus by a “one China framework”, which would mean finding a

common understanding of what “one China” means. (Brown, Scott 2014) This will prove to be difficult as it has been exactly the inability to agree on the meaning of “one China”, which inhibited cross-Strait negotiations during the many decades of frozen relations. Taiwan has therefore continued to ignore these attempts from Beijing and kept reaffirming its adherence to the 1992 Consensus: “This difference also appeared in the exchange of telegrams on the occasion of the KMT’s Congress in November, with the CCP mentioning the “one China framework” and the KMT referring to the 1992 Consensus.” (Brown, Scott 2014, p. 1)

Furthermore, not only is Beijing stating that there should be discussion on political issues, there have already been hints at interest in government-to-government contacts. However, when TAO minister and MAC chairman met briefly in October and also addressed each other with their respective official titles, the mainland media did not report on it and instead continued Beijing’s practice of not mentioning the official titles of Taiwan government agencies or officials. On Taiwan, however, this was covered in the media as a breakthrough of Beijing accepting the reality of the ROC. (Brown, Scott 2014) All in all, this shows a shift in Beijing’s position which has previously been that all contacts between officials should take place in the ARATS-SEF framework to avoid implying recognition. (ibid)

In 2013 the internal tensions and strives of KMT had a further negative effect on its popularity. President Ma moved to expel Wang Jinping from the KMT for allegedly meddling in a legal case. There was public criticism as the veteran politician Wang enjoyed broad support in the legislature and throughout southern Taiwan. KMT didn’t grant Wang a legally required 20-day appeal period and immediately notified the Central Election Commission about Wang’s party membership being revoked, due to which Wang took the matter to court, who also ruled in favor of him. Eventually he was able to retain his KMT membership. The standoff itself contained elements of a constitutional crisis: the executive branch of government is attempting to expel the head of the legislature, but is being prevented from doing so by the judiciary. (Brown, Scott 2014) By the public this was seen as Ma getting rid of a political rival as Wang had been a close second in the elections for the KMT Chairman seat.

Around that same time the most controversial agreement since the ECFA was signed: the Cross-Strait Agreement on Trade in Services (TiSA). This is aimed at expanding the economic cooperation initiated by ECFA to services. This is expected to make it easier for the businesses to expand to the territory across the Strait. However, many people on Taiwan believe this will not be conducive to Taiwan's economy and will open the island up for further political influence of Beijing.

In September the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) invited Taiwan to attend their next assembly as guest. This was the second UN organization after the WHA in which Taiwan was able to participate in since 1971. One other event concerning Taiwan's international space took place at the end of the year. This was, however, a negative one: Gambia announced they would terminate diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The president of Gambia had repeatedly asked for \$10 million in cash without giving any details for its intended use. As Taiwan refused on several occasions, this eventually led to the termination of the relations initiated by Gambia. Interestingly, PRC has not yet accepted Gambia's proposal to re-establish mutual diplomatic relations.

Although this diplomatic good will gesture from the PRC was welcomed in Taipei, at the end of the year Beijing again showed it doesn't always consult with Taiwan before making important decisions, which affect the cross-Strait relations: in November Beijing announced its East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), which overlaps with a large part of the ROC ADIZ. There was no prior warning or discussion about this between the two sides and Taipei was caught by surprise. This move undermined the political mutual trust, which Beijing had seemingly been striving towards. (Brown, Scott 2014)

4.12. 2013 survey results

In March the MAC released the results of the latest round of public opinion survey. According to these nearly 80 % (79.3 %) of the public supported continued cross-Strait exchanges in mass communication fields such as television, movies, radio, and news to promote the cross-Strait flow of information. Furthermore, close to 70 % (69.8 %) of the public believed that the mainland's censorship of Taiwanese news websites has a negative

influence on the free flow of information across the Taiwan Strait. Regarding other cross-Strait issues observed over the long term by the MAC, the survey indicated that the great majority of the public (86.1 %) still are in favor of maintaining the *status quo* defined in a broad sense, an opinion that has remained substantially stable (Fig. 17). Furthermore, nearly 69 % (68.7 %) of the public supported the government in continuous handling of cross-Strait exchange issues through institutionalized negotiations.

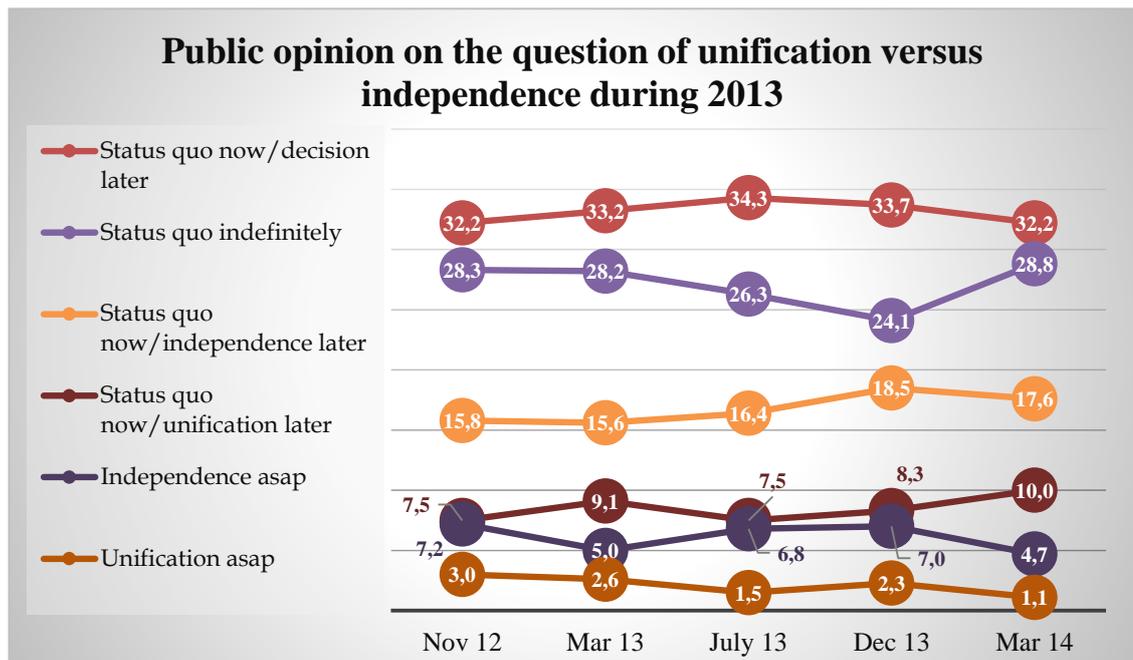


Figure 16. The figure shows changes in the public opinion (in percentages) on the question of unification versus independence during 2013 with the last data of 2012 and the first data of 2014 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the Election Study Center. The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviews. The effective sample sizes for these surveys were from 1070 to 1085. The final data was gathered from the MAC website.

As for views on the current pace of cross-Strait exchanges, 45.2 % of the public believed it to be “just right,” followed by the percentages believing the pace to be “too fast” and “too slow” at 31 % and 13.2 %, respectively (Fig. 16). During 2013 the percentage of people who thought the pace of the cross-Strait exchanges was too fast increased from 31 % to 36.3 %. Correspondingly, the percentage of people thinking the pace to be just right decreased from 45.2 % to 37.1 %.

Public opinion on the pace of cross-Strait exchanges during 2013

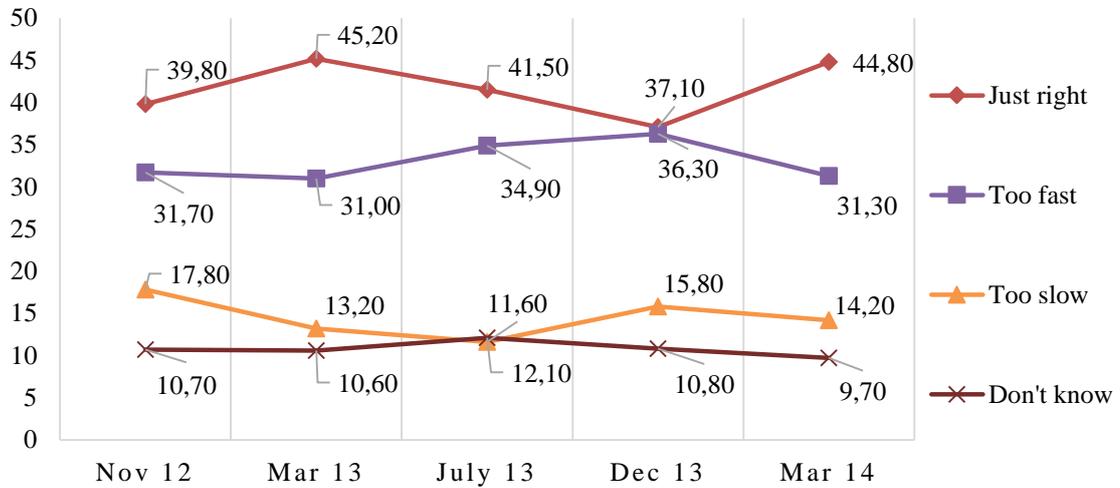


Figure 17. The figure shows changes in the public opinion (in percentages) on the pace of cross-Strait exchanges during 2013 with the last data of 2012 and the first data of 2014 showing as reference points. The surveys were conducted by the Election Study Center. The respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviews. The effective sample sizes for these surveys were from 1070 to 1085. The final data was gathered from the MAC website.

In June the public opinion survey results on the establishment of reciprocal institutions between the SEF and the ARATS were released. Over 71 % (71.1 %) of the public endorsed the government's policy to promote reciprocal institutions establishment between the SEF and ARATS on both sides and felt that this would be beneficial to mutual understanding and would reduce hostility across the Strait (75.4 %). Moreover, nearly 79 % (78.7 %) of the public thought that functions of the SEF institutions in the mainland should include the issuance of travel documents, notifications and visits to Taiwanese people whose freedom has been restricted through coercive measures in the mainland. Additionally, 72 % of the public supported submitting the draft statute of establishment of reciprocal SEF and ARAT branches in to the Legislative Yuan for review in advance so that future negotiations between the administrative agencies and the mainland would be subject to congressional oversight.

The survey results also showed that 64 % of the public endorsed direct appointment of government officials from either side to carry out business operations in their reciprocal institutions under the principle of reciprocity.

5. Summaries of public opinion surveys

Alagappa (1995) noted that there are two routes to the creation of ideological unity: imposition and transformation. „In the first the ideology of the dominant group is imposed on other groups. Unity is achieved through absorption and neutralization of the interests of the other groups with the aim of preventing them from opposing the hegemony of the dominant group” (p. 16f.). In the second route „hegemony relies on the creation of „collective will” through transformation. It involves the disarticulation of the ideologies of subordinate groups and rearticulation of the relevant elements into the ideology of the dominant group” (ibid).

In the case of the ROC, the KMT has been unsuccessful in creating ideological unity both via imposition and transformation. Taiwan’s society has enjoyed high degrees of freedom and democracy for the past decades, so its people would not accept imposition. Therefore, it is understandable, that the path the KMT needed to follow, was the one attempting at transformation. President Ma made attempts to remind the Taiwanese of their shared history and cultural heritage with the Chinese, but to no avail. The Taiwanese identity grew ever stronger and more common during KMT and Ma’s past 5 years of rule (see Fig. 1).

The aggregate results of public opinion surveys, which have detailed the Taiwanese views on the most important political questions yearly, don’t show dramatic developments in any direction. The distribution of people favoring unification or independence has remained relatively stable since 2008 with minor changes during the years (Fig. 18). However, only looking at the opinions on unification doesn’t shed light on the full complexity of the situation. Taiwan National Security Survey (TNSS) tries to find out the people’s motivation more precisely. For example, instead of just asking if a person favors Taiwan’s unification with mainland China, the other question posed is under which conditions unification or independence would be acceptable.

Unification or independence

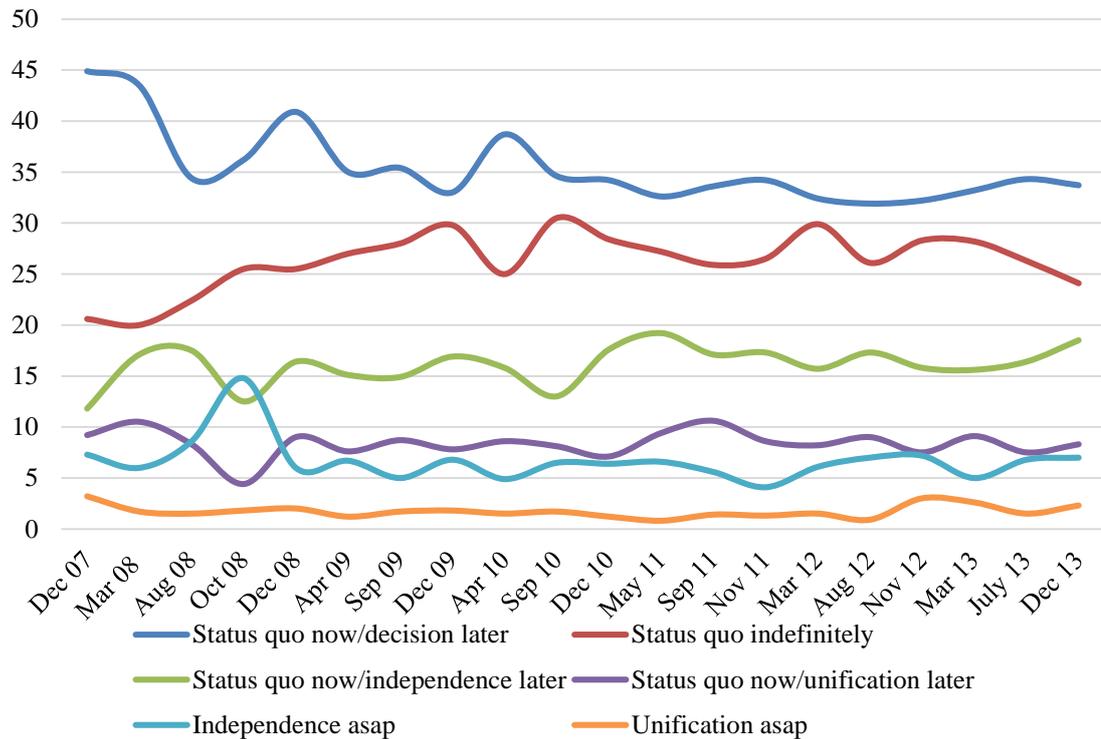


Figure 18. This figure shows the aggregate data for the changes in Taiwanese public opinion (in percentages) on the question of unification versus independence from December 2007 as the reference point to until December 2013 under KMT’s rule. The data was taken from the MAC website.

These results show that the number of people, who would not accept unification with mainland China even if China and Taiwan become politically, economically and socially more compatible, has been steadily increasing (Fig. 19). Therefore, even though the percentage of people, who support the government’s actions in fostering closer relations with the mainland, has been stable and high, the KMT’s underlying goal of making unification more acceptable by decreasing the differences between the two sides, has not become more popular.

The total percentage of people who either oppose or strongly oppose unification has increased from 43.2 % in 2008 to 57.4 % in 2011 to 57.8 % in 2012 (Fig. 19). During the same time period the total percentage of people who favor or strongly favor unification if China and Taiwan become more similar decreased from 43.7 % in 2008 to 34.4 % in 2011 to 32.9 % in 2012. This shows that fostering closer cultural ties, increasing trade and also

promoting democracy in China does not influence the people on Taiwan to want unification.

If China and Taiwan become politically, economically and socially compatible, would you favor unification?

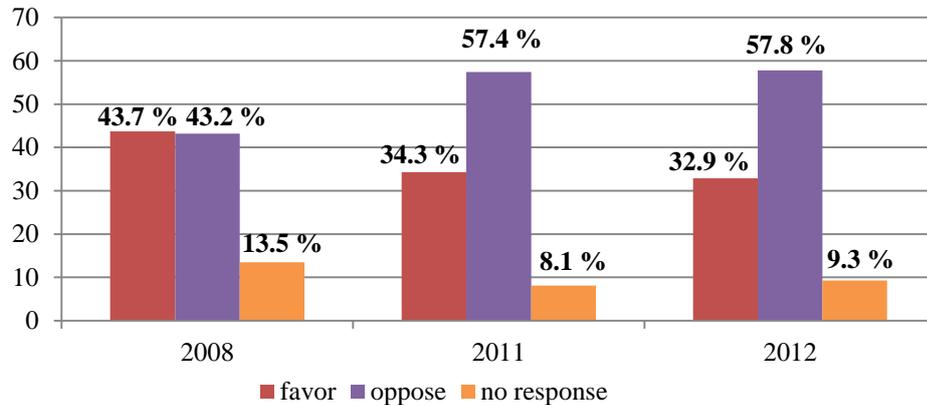


Figure 19. The surveyed people were asked: “If China and Taiwan become politically, economically and socially compatible, would you favor unification?” Source: Author based on the 2008, 2011 and 2012 Taiwan National Security Survey results.

There had also been different opinions regarding the influence and effectiveness of the military deterrence by China. There was much discussion if the people on Taiwan would be more prone to push for independence if China promised not to use military force or try to implement the Anti-Secession Law in case Taiwan declares independence. TNSS results reveal that the deterrence is indeed an effective one. In 2011 and 2012 over 70 % of the respondents said they would favor independence if the mainland would not attack Taiwan as a result (Fig. 20). That number also almost corresponds with the percentage of the people identifying themselves as only Taiwanese. This is a clear indication of the mismatch of the KMT’s goal and what the majority of the people on Taiwan would actually want. However, the same survey results also reveal that the majority of the people are realistic and don’t actually expect to have independence (TNSS 2008, 2011, 2012).

If Taiwan's declaration of independence would not cause the mainland to attack Taiwan, would you favor independence?

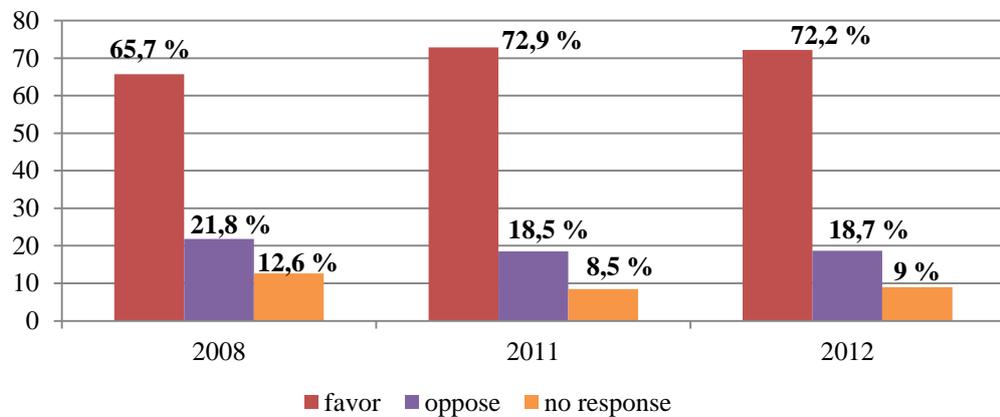


Figure 20. If Taiwan’s declaration of independence would not cause the mainland to attack Taiwan, would you favor independence? Source: Author based on the 2008, 2011 and 2012 Taiwan National Security Survey results.

However, there are also other factors besides mainland’s military deterrence, which affect the preferences on the unification versus independence question. These are the predispositions originating from the ethnic identity and party identification. The findings of recent research (see Chen, Chen, Wang 2013) indicate that symbolic attitudes have statistically significant effects on the individuals’ preferences on the independence – unification scale. People who identify with the DPP are also more likely to favor independence. Also, the people who identify themselves as only Taiwanese are more likely to favor independence. (ibid) Identity is also significant as Beijing sees Taiwan’s identity politics as deviating from the “One-China principle,” and it interprets the actions of any Taiwanese leaders to foster this local identity as implicit moves toward independence. (Wang 2013, p. 96)

Changes in party identification and percentages of people identifying as only Taiwanese in the course of the past 20 years

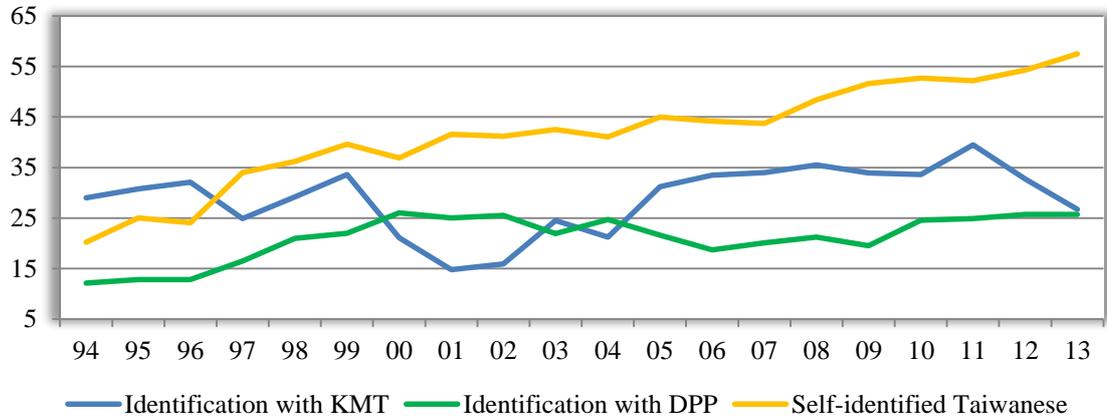


Figure 21. The figure shows the trends of changes in party identification and Taiwanese identity in the course of the past 20 years from 1994 to 2013 (in percentages). The author composed the graph based on the data from the Election Study Center (identity) and the GVSRC (identification with KMT and DPP).

If the percentage of people identifying with KMT continues this decreasing trend (Fig. 21), the DPP will likely overtake it on the next elections. It is also visible that the percentage of people identifying with DPP has been more stable and in the past years has even increased slightly. In the year 2000 when there was a similarly steep drop in the percentage of people identifying with KMT, the DPP eventually won more seats in the legislative elections of 2001. This can be an indication of the coming 2016 election results if KMT can't find a way to appeal to the public. This effort should now be more oriented towards the domestic politics as this has been the weak side of Ma's performance and the main cause for the low approval ratings.

However, also the rational calculations of costs and benefits of policy outcomes influence the policy decisions of the people on Taiwan. (Chen, Chen, Wang 2013). Therefore the main lever which the KMT could and also try use to influence people's attitudes is economy. Despite the opening up of new business opportunities, the better cross-Strait relations hasn't convinced the voters that this has all been in their best interest. People on

Taiwan were expecting too much from opening up of the cross-Strait trade relations as it had previously been very heavily regulated and highly criticized. The general public as well as opinion leaders held a too optimistic expectation over the prospects of cross-Strait transactions: “It sounded like a cure-all of every problem Taiwan faced at the time. But as Ma took office and made everything previously expected happen, people finally found that they were too optimistic” (Keng, Lin 2013, location 5214).

Now as the regular people have noticed no dramatic improvements in their economic well-being, they are growing more skeptical of the course the KMT and Ma are leading them down. The numbers of Taiwan’s consumer confidence still haven’t returned to the levels of year 2000. In Taiwan, consumer confidence survey measures consumers’ expectation of the economic situation in the coming six months. The survey covers six indices: domestic business condition, employment opportunities, family economic conditions, investment in stocks, inflation expectations and willingness to buy durable goods. The overall index is an unweighted average of the six sub-indices. A value between 0 and 100 indicates pessimism, while a value between 100 and 200 indicates optimism. (TradingEconomics.com) Since the beginning of the gathering of this data in 1999, the Taiwan consumer confidence index has never been in the positive range (above 100). The highest value was 97,52 in January 2000, the lowest was 48,42 in February 2009 (Fig. 22).

There are, however, also positive outcomes of the KMT’s efforts. No question, due to the increasing trade, tourism, culture and education links across the Strait, less people on Taiwan perceive Beijing as hostile towards the ROC or its people now as they did before Ma took office. Although the decrease has been quite marginal, the people on Taiwan feel that the mainland side’s government is not as hostile towards them as was the case 5 years ago (Fig. 23). Still, despite the warmer and closer cross-Strait relations, in December 2013 more than 56 % (56.8) % of the surveyed people on Taiwan thought that Beijing is hostile towards ROC government.

Taiwan consumer confidence index December 2008 - April 2014



Figure 22. The index is based on a telephone survey of around 2,400 randomly selected adults over the age of 20, which is conducted nationwide in the third week of each month. The research was conducted by the Research Center for Taiwan Economic Development (RCTED) and the final data was taken from the website www.tradingeconomics.com.

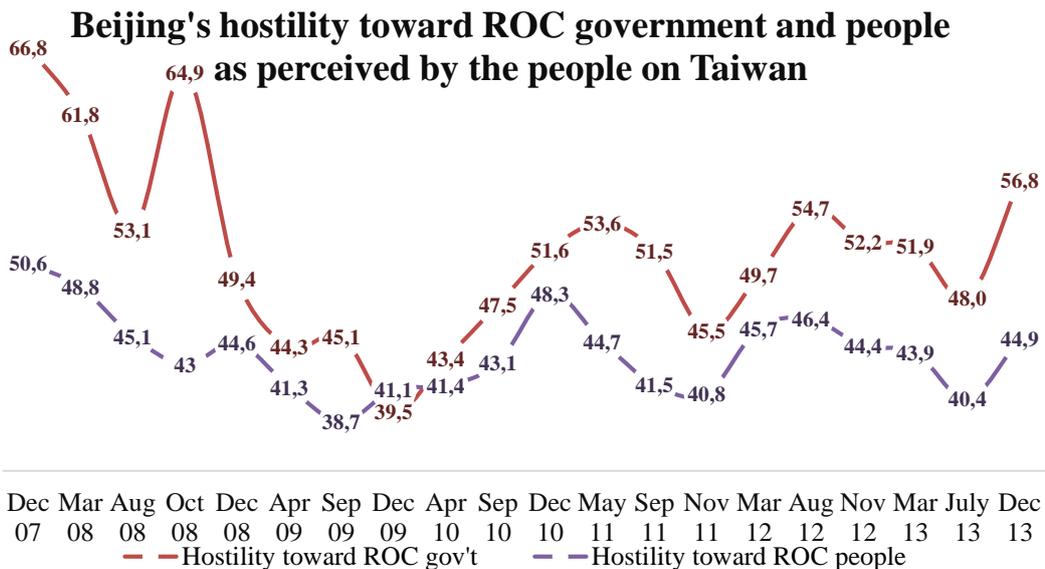


Figure 22. The figure shows how the people on Taiwan perceive PRC's hostility towards the people and the government on Taiwan (in percentages). The surveys were conducted by the Election Study Center (August 2008, April 2009, September 2009, April 2010 – December 2013), Burke Marketing Research Ltd. (December 2007), China Credit Information Center (March 2008, October 2008, December 2008), Center for Public Opinion and Public Policy (December 2009). Respondents were Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviewers. The final data was taken from the MAC website.

6. Recent developments

In February 2014 the first official high level meeting between China and Taiwan since 1949 took place. The heads of the mainland's TAO and Taiwan's MAC met at their official capacities in the mainland city of Nanjing. The closed-door meeting resulted in no agreements, but they were a landmark diplomatic step in the cross-Strait relations. There has also been talk about President Ma wanting to meet with the Chinese President Xi Jinping, but there is still much domestic opposition to this.

Another topic, which recently fueled tensions on Taiwan was the resurfacing of President Ma's green card scandal. He had previously held a U.S. green card and there was much controversy over the fact if it may still be valid. The allegation already made rounds during the campaigning prior to the 2008 presidential election. In 2009 as the Legislative Yuan passed an amendment to the Nationality Act banning anyone with permanent residency in a foreign country from holding public office, Ma was suspected of still owning a valid green card. Only now in May 2014 the controversy was finally ended by the U.S. State Department, who confirmed that Ma hasn't had a living permit for the U.S. for a long time. Still, during the years this room for speculation did no good for Ma's trust ratings as the people suspected him of taking an easy way out by emigrating to the U.S. in case the political and/or economic situation on Taiwan worsens.

President Ma's approval ratings have shown a continuing downward trend. At the end of 2013 the number reached a record low and according to one survey (poll conducted by ERA Survey Research Center) even went down to 9.2 %. The causes to Ma's unpopularity are manifold. Firstly, the common people don't feel they have benefitted from the opening up of the economic relations with the mainland. This is despite the fact that Taiwan's purchasing power parity has continued its steady increase after the stagnation during the 2008 economic crisis. The consumer confidence has risen since the crisis, but is continuingly revealing pessimism. Keng and Lin (2013) posited that this is due to the fact that the people on Taiwan were expecting too much from opening up of the cross-Strait trade relations. They referred to the survey results immediately prior to the signing of the ECFA and in the following years: whereas 48.1 % of the people were initially expecting to see a change for the better due to this, only one year later, the percentage of people

thinking everything will remain the same had risen (back) to 48.3 % and the percentage of people expecting an improvement was (again) only 25.5 %. (Election Study Center Data via Keng, Lin 2013)

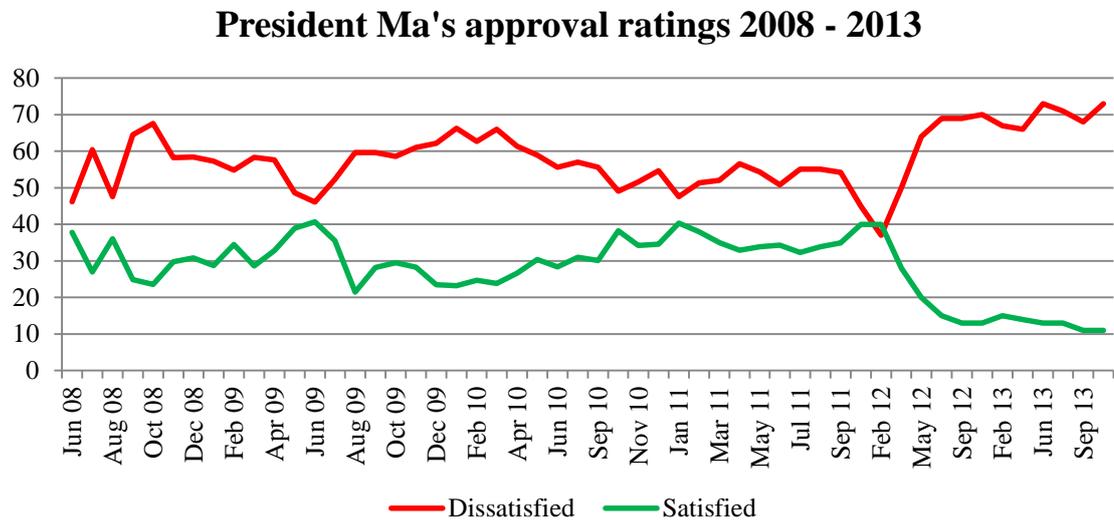


Figure 23. President Ma’s approval ratings 2008 – 2013 (in percentages). The data until September 2011 was taken from the Global Views Survey Research Center (GVRSC), the data starting from December 2011 comes from Television Broadcast Satellite (TVBS) poll data.

Discontent with the Cross Strait Service Trade Agreement also continues: on March 18 hundreds of people broke into the Legislative Yuan building complex and took control of the legislative floor for nearly a month in order to stop the ratification of the agreement. The public protests popular among university students were called the Sunflower Movement, which has now grown into a new opposition-type grassroots movement.

In addition to this, there is much public disappointment with the democratically elected representatives due to the proposed amendments to the law of how to recall public servants. A nonsensical situation was planned to be written into law that the documentation requirements to submit a recall were much higher than the ones to elect these public servants.

Conclusion

Taiwan is a great example of the complexity of international relations. Taiwan is not recognized as a state by most other states in the international system, but *de facto* functions as such. Although according to the survey results most of its permanent residents want to keep the *status quo*, other research reveals that this is in large part due to China's military deterrence. If China would not attack Taiwan, already more than 70 % of the people polled in 2012 wanted to have independence.

Taiwan's current leadership under KMT took a sharp turn in comparison to their predecessors of the DPP when it comes to the attitude towards PRC, which is now more cooperative. KMT and President Ma have stressed to the public that they do not strive towards unification or independence and would like to continue building trust and cooperation across the Strait without disrupting the *status quo*. The recent developments, however, hint at the coming political agreements with President Ma showing interest in meeting with the Chinese President Xi and talking about conditions under which "one China framework" could be accepted.

The relations of the two sides can be viewed as a careful balancing act: both sides make certain concessions and positive remarks towards one another, but then go on to reaffirm to the international or domestic audience that they have not changed their positions and explain how the new development fits in with the bigger picture in a way favorable to them. Also, for the mainland side it has been characteristic to come forth with some sort of infringement on Taiwanese international space as soon as any rapprochement was made: 1. Shortly after the first indications of improving cross-Strait relations came, China demanded that Taiwan not participate in the Seoul International Book Fair under the name "Taiwan" – Taipei Book Fair Foundation then withdrew their participation; 2. Taiwan was demoted from member to associate member in the International Textile Manufacturers Federation after the direct flights were re-instated after decades; 3. China didn't actively meddle in the 2012 legislative or presidential elections in Taiwan, but started to depict Taiwanese landmarks in Chinese passports during that time.

Despite the decreasing approval and trust ratings for Ma and KMT the overall satisfaction with the cross-Strait relations has remained stable and high. This can be explained by three aspects: firstly, people on Taiwan have noticed some improvements resulting from the cross-Strait agreements in their personal and business lives although they fear Beijing's growing influence; secondly, China and the U. S. support President Ma and KMT due to the stability they have brought to the region; thirdly and most importantly, there is no alternative as DPP has nothing better to offer.

Party identification numbers show that KMT has lost a significant amount of supporters, whereas DPP support numbers have remained more stable. This can mean that as DPP has been moving away from actively pushing for independence and is trying to align its party ideology more with the people's current opinion of keeping the *status quo*, the people disillusioned by the KMT are returning to them. The KMT is losing its appeal as it may seem that they have offered everything they can short of actual unification. As there are less and less people identifying themselves as only Chinese or Chinese-Taiwanese and the amount of people identifying themselves as only Taiwanese is steadily increasing, this will also make it more difficult for KMT to attract and hold public support. The easy apolitical issues of cross-Strait relations have been nearly exhausted and Beijing is pushing for a written agreement on the "one China framework" and also for more political contacts.

Beijing's actions and public statements are not coherent or reliable: whereas Beijing high level officials make statements about the value of amicable close cross-Strait relations and striving towards building mutual trust, in reality the PRC often unilaterally makes decisions with considerable negative impact to the ROC. This negative trait of unreliability and unpredictability is also present in Ma and the public has noticed it, too: he has often made statements about dramatic new courses (signing a peace agreement with the mainland China), but then backtracked or added confusing or even unattainable preconditions to fulfilling his plans.

When it comes to assessing the legitimacy of KMT's policies it can be summarized that indeed the majority of the public have agreed with the major steps taken in cross-Strait relations, which have brought the two sides closer together. The people have appreciated

the agreements as they have made their everyday lives easier. However, when it comes to the sustainability of the KMT's policies it is clear that the level of support cannot continue for long: the people are essentially supporting the *status quo*, but it is unrealistic to hope this can be the official party line for long taking into account Beijing's pressure. Also, the amount of people rejecting unification is growing every year and the amount of people seeing themselves as Taiwanese has increased to nearly 60 %. Furthermore, the less controversial apolitical issues have been nearly exhausted and this can only mean that KMT cannot continue to postpone taking a stance on the more fundamental political issues. The hypothesis was that the "one China principle" has become more popular since the KMT came to power in 2008 and that the KMT's policies are enjoying high degrees of legitimacy. This was indeed the initial impression when looking at the survey data the government institutions displayed. However, when taking into account the changes in people's identity, approval ratings of President Ma and identification with the KMT, it is clear that the people's goals do not line up with the KMT's. In addition, in an ideal situation, where the mainland side would pose no military threat, over 72 % of the people on Taiwan would actually want *de jure* independence. This shows that if the KMT and President Ma further push for unification, they distance themselves from the actual popular sentiment and their policies can no longer be called legitimate.

Kokkuvõte

Hiina ja Taiwani väinaülesed suhted: Guomindangi poliitika legitiimsuse analüüs 2008 – 2013

Selle töö eesmärk on uurida Taiwani saarel alates 2008. aastast võimul olnud Guomindangi partei väinaülesete suhete poliitika legitiimsust. Hüpoteesiks on, et Guomindangi valitsusperioodil on „ühe Hiina printsiibi“ populaarsus Taiwani elanike hulgas kasvanud ja valitsuse elluviidavatele poliitikatele on suur avalik toetus.

Hiina Vabariik on rahvakeeles pigem tuntud kui Taiwan. Selle praegu *de facto* iseseisvana eksisteeriva saareriigi tekkelugu sai alguse Hiina Qingi dünastia lagunemisest tingitud võimuvõitlustest. 1912. aastal kuulutati dünastia kukutatuks ja selle asemele loodi Hiina Vabariik Guomindangi juhtimise all. Veidi rohkem kui kümme aastat hiljem algas uus konflikt: Hiina kodusõda. Selles sõjas oli Guomindang aga kaotavaks pooleks ning senine valitsus koos paari miljoni lojaalse mandri-hiinlasega taandus kommunistliku Mao-Zedongi armee eest Taiwani saarele. Mandril kuulutati 1949. aastal välja Hiina Rahvavabariik. Sellest ajast peale on püsinud väinaülene konflikt: mõlemad pooled väidavad, et just nemad on õigusjärgsed kogu Hiina – nii maismaa kui saarte – valitsused.

Aastakümneteks kadus kontakt nii poliitilisel kui eraisikute tasandil: puudus võimalus vastastikku turismireise teha, ärisidemete loomisest rääkimata. Muutused hakkasid tekkima 1980. aastate lõpus, mil seni autoritaarselt ainuvalitsenud Guomindang hakkas lubama poliitilist opositsiooni ja kodanikualgatusi. 1987. aastal tühistati saarel ka lõpuks erakorraline seisukord (ingl *martial law*). Samal aastal hakati Taiwanlastel lubama ka mandri-Hiinat külastada.

1991. aastal loodi Hiina Rahvavabariigi poolele ARATS (ingl *Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits*) ja Hiina Vabariigi poolele SEF (ingl *Straits Exchange Foundation*) kui väinaülesed küsimusi ja suhteid arutavad organisatsioonid. Nende kaudu hakati arutama kõiki tavainimeste eluolu puudutavaid kokkuleppeid, sest otsesed ametlikud kontaktid kahe poole võimuesindajate vahel puudusid jätkuvalt.

1992. aastal jõuti SEF'i ja ARATS'i kohtumisel suulisele kokkuleppele, et nii maismaa kui Taiwan on ühe ja sama Hiina osad, kuid mõlemal poolel on õigus seda "üht Hiinat" käsitleda endale sobival viisil. Seda diplomaatilist konstruktsiooni hakati kutsuma 1992. aasta konsensuseks ning sellel on väinaülestes suhete paranemisel olnud väga suur roll. Selle olulisus seisnebki tema sisus: mõlemad pooled said nüüd võimaluse teha vastase suhtes sõbralikke poliitilisi avaldusi, ilma et see oleks tähendanud vastasele alla vandumist ning oma seisukohast taganemist.

Aastal 2008, kui taas tuli võimule maismaaga ühinemist pooldav Guomindang ja nende kandidaat ka presidendivalimised võitis, hakkasid väinaülestes suhted kiiresti paranema: avati otseleenu ja lubati mõlemasuunalised turistidevoolud. Peagi hakkasid Taiwani pangad ostma ja vahetama mandri-Hiina rahaühikut renminbit (rahvakeeles jüaan), Kaks korda aastas hakkasid toimuma ARATS'i ja SEF'i vahelised nõupidamised, mille jooksul sõlmiti üha uusi väinaülest läbikäimist hõlbustavaid kokkuleppeid.

Kuigi need kokkulepped on inimeste argipäeva mitmeti mugavamaks muutnud, ei taha inimesed, et Hiina Rahvavabariigi valitsus seeläbi nende üle üha suuremat mõjuvõimu saab. Lisaks kahtlustatakse Guomindangi koos nende parteist pärit president Ma'ga aegamööda Taiwani suveräänsuse ära andmises. Seepärast on oluline uurida, kuidas Taiwani avalikkus Guomindangi poliitikatesse ja eesmärkidesse suhtub. Kui mandri-Hiina tõesti suudab läbi järk-järguliste lepingute aastakümneid *de facto* iseseisvana ekstsisteerinud saare enda poliitilise mõju alla saada, näitab käesolev töö tavainimeste suhtumist sellesse arengusse.

President Ma on aga viie aasta jooksul jätkuvalt rõhutanud, et esmajoones tegeletakse lihtsate ja majandust puudutavate küsimustega ning raskemad ja poliitilised teemad tuleb jätta hilisemaks. Pärast enam kui viit aastat ja 19 mahukat kokkulepet hiljem on aga üha keerulisem poliitikast rääkimist edasi lükata. Seda tajuvad nii Taiwanlased kui ka mandri-Hiina valitsus. Viimasel ajal ongi olnud juba kuulda plaane Ma ja Hiina Rahvavabariigi president Xi kohtumise korraldamisest. Veelgi enam, Guomindangi poolt lähtub juba signaale, et uuritakse mandri-Hiina uue kontseptsiooni „ühe Hiina raamistiku“ (ingl *one China framework*) ülevõtmise võimalikkusest. Kõik see viitab Hiina Vabariigi ja Hiina Rahvavabariigi poliitilisele lähenemisele. Kuigi Guomindang on taasühinemist

propageerides viidanud 1947. aasta konstitutsioonile ning sellest lähtuvalt, et just praegu Taiwanil olev valitsus peaks taasühinenud tervet Hiinat valitsema, on tänapäeva tegelikkus ilmselgelt Rahvavabariigi kasuks.

Taiwani rahvusvaheliselt ebakindel olukord muudab inimeste poolehoiu olemasolu ja määra oluliseks. Kuna (suures osas) puudub rahvusvaheline tunnustus, on Taiwani valitsusele väga oluline, et oleks olemas kohalik poolehoid. Avaliku arvamuse uuringud kinnitavadki esmapilgul, et Taiwanlased soosivad Guomindangi kõiki sõlmitud ja plaanitavaid väinaüleseid kokkuleppeid ning et inimesed tahavad praeguse olukorra ehk *status quo* jätkumist. Kui aga uurida sama ajajärgu muutusi inimeste identiteeditunnetuses, Guomindangi ja presidendi poolehoiu näitajaid, on näha, et teatud läbirääkimiste ja lepingute pooldamine ei tähenda maismaaga ühinemise soovi. Vastupidi, *Taiwan National Security Study* 2012. aasta andmed näitavad, et olukorras, kus puuduks mandri-Hiinalt tulev sõjaline oht, pooldaks juba üle 72 % iseseisvuse välja kuulutamist. Seega, kui Guomindang ja president Ma jätkavad Taiwani mandri-Hiinaga ühinemise poole suunamist, eemalduvad nad tegelikust avalikkuse soovist ning nende poliitikaid ei saa enam pidada legitiimseks.

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