

Cross-Strait Relations and Public Opinion on Taiwan

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This paper considers the political significance of the attitudes of the people on Taiwan toward unification and independence, drawing implications for cross-Strait relations. The opinion pattern displayed by the people of Taiwan on the independence/unification issue appears on the surface to remain stable over time. Classifying people according to the underlying forces that affect their attitudes on the issue, however, reveals that the number of people taking a rational approach—i.e., basing their decisions on the direction of the changing environment—has increased. At the same time, the number of respondents affectively supporting unification has decreased while those affectively supporting independence have increased. These evolving opinion patterns set the boundaries for Taiwan's cross-Strait policies and national identity issues. This article discusses the political implications that these attitudes have for domestic politics as well as cross-Strait relations.

KEYWORDS: Taiwan independence; rational/affective classification scheme; public opinion; cross-Strait relations; national designation.

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Research on cross-Strait relations mainly focuses on interaction at the elite level—mostly analyzing important speeches by leaders and policy

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initiatives by governmental officials—or changes in military, political, and economic structure.¹ The role of public opinion has often been overlooked. At present, this oversight is more glaring in the case of Taiwan, since the power structure on the island is now determined by democratic elections held at regular intervals. In democratic countries, political leaders must always be aware of public opinion as they design regulations and programs.²

Empirical studies of U.S. politics confirm that there is indeed considerable congruence between public opinion and domestic policies,³ indicating that the government is generally responsive to public opinion, especially on domestic issues related to the daily lives of the people. Scholars have also demonstrated that public opinion plays an important role in influencing U.S. foreign and national defense policies as well,⁴ having helped guide U.S. governmental actions during the Iran-Contra affair, the Gulf War, the Vietnam War, and the admission of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the United Nations.⁵

¹Yun-han Chu, "Making Sense of Beijing's Policy Toward Taiwan: The Prospect of Cross-Strait Relations During the Jiang Zemin Era," in *China Under Jiang Zemin*, ed. Hung-mao Tien and Yun-han Chu (Boulder, Colo. and London: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 212-32; Tung Li-wen, "The CCP's Political Reform and Cross-Strait Relations," *Dongya jikan* (East Asia Quarterly) (Taipei) 28, no. 4 (1997): 53-71; Jia Qingguo, "The Making of Beijing's Taiwan Policy," in *Inherited Rivalry: Conflicts Across the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Tun-jen Cheng, Chi Huang, and Samuel S.G. Wu (Boulder, Colo. and London: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 97-110; George W. Tsai, "The Making of Taiwan Policy in Mainland China: Structure and Process," *Issues & Studies* 33, no. 9 (September 1997): 1-30.

²Carroll Glynn, Susan Herbst, Garrett O'Keefe, and Robert Y. Shapiro, *Public Opinion* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999); Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, *Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American Policy Preferences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

³Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy," *American Political Science Review* 77, no. 1 (March 1983): 175-90.

⁴David A. Deese, ed., *The New Politics of American Foreign Policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Thomas Harley and Bruce Russett, "Public Opinion and the Common Defense: Who Governs Military Spending in the United States?" *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 4 (December 1992): 905-15; Alan D. Monroe, "Consistency Between Public Preferences and National Policy Decisions," *American Politics Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (January 1979): 3-19. Note, however, that the degree of responsiveness to public opinion in foreign and national policies might be somewhat less than in domestic policies.

⁵Glynn, Herbst, O'Keefe, and Shapiro, *Public Opinion*; Richard Sobel, ed., *Public Opinion in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Controversy over Contra Aid* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993).

By the same token, political parties and leaders in Taiwan must also be responsive to public opinion on cross-Strait related policies. Politicians must sustain popular support in order both to win elections and maintain their mandate to enact policies. Although not always having to respond to public preferences, the government does face enormous pressure and criticism from both the public and the opposition parties. For example, both the Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨) and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨) governments have been under pressure to open up restrictive policies regarding the "three links" (*santong* 三通), "no haste, be patient" (*jieji yongren* 戒急用忍) trade guidelines, and the banning of 8-inch chip manufacturer investments in China. There are political costs to bear for not responding to popular sentiments; politicians must pursue a strategy of "crafted talk" to change public opinion in order to offset the potential political costs of not following the preferences of average voters.⁶ Imperative, therefore, is to understand the opinion formation of the Taiwan public on cross-Strait related issues.

This article attempts to analyze the underlying reasons that influence people's attitudes toward the unification/independence issue, hoping to enhance our understanding of both the general environment and particular constraints that leaders face in dealing with cross-Strait issues. The paper adopts the following structure in order to study the effects of popular attitudes on cross-Strait relations. Section one looks at the public opinion distribution on the unification/independence issue and discusses changes and continuities over time, noting where traditional public opinion analysis has missed key nuances. Section two introduces a rational/affective typology which classifies voters based on the underlying forces that affect their attitudes on cross-Strait issues—*affective* or *rational*, and traces related changes over time. Section three examines the attitudinal and policy differences among types of respondents, pointing out implications for domestic policies. Section four relates these findings to current af-

⁶Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro, *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), xiii.

fairs, such as adding "Taiwan" to the cover of the ROC passport and changes in the GIO (Government Information Office 行政院新聞局) emblem.

The typology introduced here not only enhances our understanding of the underlying reasons that affect the attitudes of the people on Taiwan toward cross-Straits issues, but also helps us to make predictions on future trends and developments both domestically and across the Taiwan Strait. Voters of different types demonstrate clear attitudinal differences on issues related to cross-Straits policies and national identity. The opinion patterns set the boundaries for what the government can and will do given electoral considerations and the need for domestic stability. The general finding of this paper is that the "Republic of China" designation has become the common denominator and stabilizing symbol domestically. The author argues that, due to the need to maintain electoral competitiveness and cross-Straits stability, the DPP government will implement localization measures symbolically rather than substantively in the short run. However, there is a chance that Taiwan might be overly optimistic in relying on U.S. support or similarly overestimate Beijing's level of tolerance, thereby leading to accidents not within the government's plan. Also, from the composition of public opinion on the island, wise would be for Beijing to attract Taiwan through China's own development rather than resorting to the use of military threats.

Public Opinion on Cross-Straits Relations

The independence/unification issue has long been on Taiwan's political agenda. From the perspective of domestic electoral politics, safe is to say that this has been the dominant area of contention over the past few decades. The importance of this issue even transcends the allocation of local political power, having great influence on the security as well as the future of the nation. There is no shortage of opinion polls probing people's attitudes on the issue. Table 1 shows the results of a survey series on voter independence/unification attitudes as conducted by the Election Studies

Table 1
People's Attitude Toward the Independent/Unification Issue (1994-2001)

Time	Independence ASAP	Maintain status quo and lean toward independence	Maintain status quo and decide later	Maintain status quo forever	Maintain status quo and lean toward unification	Unification ASAP	No opinion/ Don't know	N	Method*
Jan.-Feb. 1994	4.3	8.1	32.1	12.5	23.2	4.2	15.7	1,600	F
April 1994	4.0	8.3	43.1	12.8	18.3	2.5	11.0	820	T
July 1994	3.2	8.4	42.2	9.9	17.2	3.5	15.6	1,193	T
Jan.-Feb. 1995	3.6	9.8	33.6	10.8	22.9	4.0	14.9	1,369	F
April 1995	3.1	7.5	29.8	16.2	16.1	2.7	24.8	1,216	T
July-Aug. 1995	5.9	9.9	35.4	11.1	22.7	2.8	12.1	1,633	F
Aug. 1995	3.6	8.3	24.0	15.3	20.3	2.4	26.2	15,258	T
Nov. 1995	3.5	10.4	32.5	12.4	23.8	1.9	15.5	1,151	T
Dec. 1995	2.8	9.1	33.6	15.3	22.0	1.9	15.3	2,542	T
Jan.-Feb. 1996	3.0	10.1	33.0	14.3	20.2	3.9	15.4	1,485	F
Feb. 1996	4.2	8.2	31.8	15.9	21.9	1.7	16.3	1,154	T
March 1996	3.7	9.5	31.6	17.0	19.6	2.0	16.6	1,105	T
March 1996	3.6	12.0	27.6	17.7	20.1	1.8	17.4	1,085	T
March-Apr. 1996	3.4	14.6	34.6	10.7	19.6	2.8	14.3	1,396	F
Apr.-May 1996	6.5	11.8	31.0	12.8	23.9	2.9	11.1	1,075	T
Oct. 1996	5.5	10.9	30.4	15.5	22.6	2.2	12.9	1,205	T
Nov. 1996	4.8	10.2	35.7	9.3	25.4	3.3	11.3	1,205	T
Feb. 1997	4.6	13.8	38.8	11.0	18.1	2.4	11.2	1,610	F
May 1997	4.9	12.5	32.8	15.2	19.3	2.8	12.5	1,211	T
Feb. 1998	4.8	11.7	30.7	17.3	18.3	2.7	12.9	1,233	T

Table 1 (Continued)

Time	Independence ASAP	Maintain status quo and lean toward independence	Maintain status quo and decide later	Maintain status quo forever	Maintain status quo and lean toward unification	Unification ASAP	No opinion/ Don't know	N	Method*
June 1998	5.0	10.8	30.3	15.9	14.9	2.3	20.9	3,450	T
June 1998	5.4	15.1	33.4	5.3	16.5	2.9	11.4	1,604	T
Aug. 1998	4.9	12.9	34.9	15.8	16.5	1.9	13.1	1,098	T
Aug. 1998	7.4	12.9	30.5	15.3	14.9	0.8	18.3	1,097	T
Oct. 1998	6.9	11.6	29.6	17.3	17.1	2.5	15.0	1,210	T
Jan.-March 1999	5.3	14.3	32.6	14.0	20.3	3.7	9.7	1,207	F
June 1999	4.6	13.6	30.8	19.4	14.1	2.4	15.2	3,343	T
July 1999	5.7	14.0	30.4	18.0	18.2	1.8	12.0	1,087	T
Dec. 1999	4.7	14.4	35.5	14.7	14.6	1.9	14.1	4,447	T
Feb. 2000	4.4	14.8	36.2	15.1	18.1	1.8	9.5	1,647	F
April 2000	3.9	14.6	30.2	21.1	16.2	2.7	11.3	1,085	T
June-Sep. 2000	3.7	11.1	37.9	11.2	19.4	3.1	14.8	1,181	F
Jan. 2001	2.9	9.8	38.3	17.9	18.4	2.8	9.9	1,148	T
June 2001	4.5	11.9	36.4	14.7	17.7	2.9	11.9	1,069	T
Average	4.5	11.4	33.3	14.4	19.2	2.6	14.4		
(Standard deviation)	(1.1)	(2.3)	(3.9)	(3.2)	(3.0)	(0.7)	(3.8)		

Source: Except for the last row, this table is reproduced from Sheng Shing-yuan (盛杏媛), "The Unification/Independence Issue and Taiwanese Voting Behavior: An Analysis of the 1990s" (Paper presented at the 2001 Electoral Research Seminar held by the Election Studies Center, National Chengchi University, November 2001).

*Method refers to interview method, with T standing for telephone interview and F for face-to-face interview.

Center of National Chengchi University (國立政治大學選舉研究中心) since 1994.

At first glance, the stability of people's responses to the issue appears to be the most impressive feature of these surveys. Within the past eight years, respondent attitudes on the issue remain quite stable, as indicated by the small standard deviation listed in the last row. On the average, 4.5 percent and 2.6 percent of the respondents favor immediate independence and immediate unification, respectively. Roughly 78 percent of the respondents prefer maintaining the status quo. When further probed, 47.7 percent of the respondents did not show a directional preference on the issue, taking a wait-and-see attitude (33.3 percent) or wanting to maintain the status quo forever (14.4 percent). Approximately 11 percent of the respondents lean toward independence and 19.2 percent lean toward unification. These numbers indicate that the opinion curve on the issue resembles a normal distribution, with the majority of the people in the middle and very few at either extreme. This stable distribution serves as a stabilizing force in Taiwanese politics. Whenever there are single-member district elections (such as for president or for Taipei/Kaohsiung [台北市/高雄市] mayor), there are tremendous centripetal forces pushing candidates toward wooing the median voter. This stable public opinion distribution curve for the most important electoral cleavage issue in Taiwan sets the tone of Taiwanese electoral politics. For cross-Strait issues, there are more policy similarities than differences among electoral contenders, with the only caveat being that candidates are going to magnify these differences during campaigns in order to differentiate and attract votes. No matter the electoral outcome, the ruling party will enact middle-of-the-road policies—not only in order to stabilize cross-Strait relations but also to maintain the party's domestic electoral competitiveness.

Quite misleading, however, would be to conclude that the patterns of public opinion on cross-Strait issues have not changed over the years. For instance, the meaning of the terms "independence," "unification," as well as "maintaining the status quo" might have changed over time. Before martial law was lifted in July 1987, admitting a political predisposition in support of Taiwan independence or the opposition camp was regarded as a

taboo. "Taiwan independence" (台獨 or *taidu*) was labeled by the ruling party as "Taiwan poison" (台毒 or *taidu*) due to their similarities in pronunciation. Therefore, polls conducted during that period on the subject cannot accurately reflect people's actual viewpoints. Given the democratic reforms that have taken place gradually since the early 1990s, Taiwanese citizens are now more open to speak their minds on the subject.

Also important to bear in mind, however, is that the substantive meaning of the options may have changed over time. In the past, supporting independence implied a willingness to officially declare independence, a move which would involve a change of national designation, flag, and anthem. More recently, however, supporters of independence might be more attracted to the spirit of localization (本土化 or *bentuhua*) rather than the pursuit of national identity changes. By the same token, a preference for maintaining the status quo might have implied a neutral attitude on the issue in the past, but may now also reflect a preference for independence held in check by a desire to avoid cross-Straits conflict.

To sum up, although the figures in table 1 remain relatively stable over time, opinion patterns among the people might have experienced considerable transformation due to changes in the meaning of these terms. In order to understand the more delicate aspects of voter attitudes toward Taiwan independence, we therefore have to explore deeper into the driving forces that affect how respondents form their opinions.

A Rational/Affective Typology of Independence/Unification Voting Basis

People's attitudes on the independence issue derive from either *affective identification* or *rational calculation*. The affective respondents insist on their original predispositions, no matter how the environment changes. The affective independence advocates, for instance, would not desire to unify with the mainland even if China became democratic and affluent. By the same token, the affective unification advocates would not adjust their attitudes even if China remains economically underdeveloped and politi-

cally authoritative. The rational calculators, on the other hand, would adjust their attitudes as the surrounding environment changes. A rational independence supporter would change his/her position if declaring independence would lead to war or if China upgrades her democratic and economic performance. A rational unification supporter would also change his/her position if Beijing took no issue with Taiwan's declaration of independence, or if China failed to improve on her political and economic reforms. Understanding the makeup of the attitudes of the people on Taiwan toward the independence/unification issue can therefore enhance our understanding of the possible future development of cross-Strait relations.

There are two questions in a survey on the 2000 presidential election funded by the National Science Council⁷ (行政院國家科學委員會 Serial: NSC89-2414-H-031-009-SSS) that can be used to classify respondents into the different types according to the above schematic. Respondents were asked if they agree or disagree with the following statements:

1. If a peaceful relationship can still be maintained with China after a declaration of Taiwan independence, Taiwan should then declare independence and become a new country.
2. If the economic, social, and political conditions between China and Taiwan converge, then the two sides should unify.

Responses to these questions are presented in table 2. The majority of the public agreed to both statements: supporting Taiwan independence if peace can be maintained (62 percent) and supporting unification under similar socioeconomic conditions (56 percent). According to their responses to these questions, voters can be classified into nine types (see table 3). This is the classification scheme employed by Wu Nai-teh (吳乃德)⁸ and Yang

⁷This research project was headed by Professor Huang Show-duan (黃秀端) of the Department of Political Science at Soochow University.

⁸Wu Nai-teh, "Liberalism, Ethnic Identity, and Taiwanese Nationalism," *Taiwan Political Science Review*, 1996, no. 1:5-40; Wu Nai-teh, "National Identity and Partisan Support: The Social Basis of Taiwanese Party Competition," *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan minzuxue yanjiusuo*

Table 2
Frequencies of the Two Classification Questions

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	Total
Taiwan independence if peace can be maintained	870 (62%)	382 (27%)	158 (11%)	1,410
Unification under similar socioeconomic conditions	783 (56%)	459 (33%)	168 (12%)	1,410

Table 3
Nine Types of Respondents

		Declare Independence if Peace Can Be Maintained				Year
		Agree (%)	No opinion (%)	Disagree (%)	Total (%)	
		I	II	III		
Unification Under Similar Economic, Social, and Political Conditions	Agree (%)	19.2	9.0	29.2	57.4	1992
		24.4	4.9	26.5	55.9	1993
		28.8	4.9	20.4	54.1	1995
		39.0	3.3	16.9	59.1	1996
		35.4	3.8	16.5	55.7	1998
		34.3	2.2	19.0	55.5	2000
	No Opinion (%)	IV	V	VI		
		4.1	16.4	4.3	24.8	1992
		2.3	21.1	2.1	25.5	1993
		4.0	17.1	2.4	23.5	1995
		2.7	12.4	4	15.5	1996
		4.7	8.9	1.5	15.1	1998
		2.3	8.4	1.2	11.9	2000
	Disagree (%)	VII	VIII	IX		
		7.2	2.2	8.5	17.8	1992
		9.9	1.6	7.2	18.6	1993
		14.7	1.5	6.3	22.5	1995
		21.2	1.4	2.8	25.4	1996
		22.0	1.5	5.7	29.2	1998
		25.1	0.6	6.9	32.6	2000
	Total (%)	30.5	27.6	42.0	(1,618)	1992
		36.6	27.6	35.8	(1,398)	1993
		47.4	23.4	29.1	(2,093)	1995
		62.9	17.1	20.1	(1,406)	1996
		62.1	14.2	23.7	(1,798)	1998
		61.7	11.2	27.1	(1,410)	2000

Chia-rong, (楊嘉容).⁹ Wu used these questions to classify respondents into three main types: Chinese nationalists, Taiwanese nationalists, and rationalists. Yang traced the changes of these different types of citizens across time from 1992 to 1998, and analyzed the demographic composition as well as the voting behavioral differences of these various types. Following their classification scheme, this author would like to extend the research into the year 2000 and conduct a more in-depth analysis with the most recent election data.

This paper's analytical perspective will shift from Yang's demographic and voting choice breakdown, however, to an attitudinal analysis on issues related to cross-Strait relations. Another major difference with the earlier research is that Wu and Yang group type 1 voters as rational thinkers; voters from types 4, 7, and 8 as affective Taiwanese identifiers; and voters from types 2, 3, and 6 as affective Chinese identifiers. Their classification of type 2 and type 4 voters is questionable and warrants further discussion. The type 2 respondents agreed to unification under similar conditions but had no opinion on whether Taiwan should declare independence if peace could be maintained. This type of citizen should be regarded as rationally pro-unification rather than as affectively identifying with China because their pro-unification stance is conditional. By the same token, the type 4 respondents who agreed to independence under peaceful conditions but had no opinion over unifying under similar socioeconomic conditions should be regarded as rationally but not affectively pro-independence. With this revised classification scheme, the author grouped respondents into two broad categories (rational and affective) and five subcategories (see table 4). Types 5 and 9 are left off subsequent analysis because type 5 respondents (8.4 percent) expressed no opinion on both issues, and type 9 respondents (6.9 percent) disagreed with both statements, making difficult any meaningful interpretation of the attitude

Jikan (Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica) (Taipei), no. 74 (1992): 33-61.

⁹Yang Chia-rong, "An Analysis of Taiwanese Independence/Unification Attitudes and Voting Behavior" (M.A. thesis, Department of Political Science, Soochow University, 1998; in Chinese).

Table 4
The Rational/Affective Classification Scheme

		Type	N	%	%
Rational	No-predisposition	1	484	41	47
	Pro-unification	2	31	3	
	Pro-independence	4	32	3	
Affective	Pro-unification	3, 6	285	24	54
	Pro-independence	7, 8	362	30	
Total			1,194	101	101

of these respondents. The "type" column in table 4 corresponds with the typology in table 3, while the frequencies N are from the 2000 presidential election survey data mentioned above.

Table 4 shows that, roughly speaking, about half of the respondents determine their orientations on the independence/unification issue by rational calculation, while the other half are affectively oriented. The implication for future cross-Strait relations is that future Chinese social, economic, and democratic development would influence how Taiwanese people feel about their future choices. The threat of war would also deter rational thinkers from pursuing independence. Unfortunately, the data on hand does not allow us to differentiate between the relative influence of Chinese military deterrence vs. rapid socioeconomic development. Judging from the result of the high percentage of rational thinkers, quite likely is that China would continue to resort to both measures in the near future.

Table 5 examines the cross-tabulation of these five types of respondents and their self-expressed position on the independence issue. For all types of respondents except the affective pro-independence type, the plurality choice is to maintain the status quo. The affective pro-independence respondents favor independence over maintaining the status quo by a small margin. Due to the way the variable is coded, however, misleading would be to conclude that most respondents would favor maintaining the status quo. Breaking down the maintaining status quo option into more detailed categories reveals that most respondents do have a directional inclination on the issue (see table 6).

Table 5
Cross-Tabulation of Respondent Type and Position on
Independence/Unification

	Independence	Maintain status quo	Unification	Don't know/ No response	Total
Rational No-predisposition	100 (20.7%)	241 (49.8%)	114 (23.6%)	29 (6.0%)	484 (100%)
Rational Pro-unification	4 (13.3%)	13 (43.3%)	6 (20%)	7 (23.3%)	30 (100%)
Rational Pro-independence	6 (18.8%)	15 (46.9%)	0 (0%)	11 (34.4%)	32 (100%)
Affective Pro-unification	7 (2.4%)	152 (53.1%)	115 (40.2%)	12 (4.2%)	286 (100%)
Affective Pro-independence	173 (47.9%)	155 (42.9%)	17 (4.7%)	16 (4.4%)	361 (100%)
Total	290 (24.3%)	576 (48.3%)	252 (21.1%)	75 (6.3%)	1,193 (100%)

Table 6
Cross-Tabulation of Respondent Type and Position on
Independence/Unification (For those preferring the status quo)

Type of Respondents	Prefer maintaining status quo, but if status quo cannot be maintained, respondents would prefer...			Total
	Independence	Unification	Don't know/ No opinion/ No response	
Rational No-predisposition	117 (48.5%)	93 (38.6%)	31 (12.9%)	241 (100%)
Rational Pro-unification	2 (14.3%)	4 (28.6%)	8 (57.1%)	14 (100%)
Rational Pro-independence	7 (43.8%)	2 (12.5%)	7 (43.8%)	16 (100%)
Affective Pro-unification	23 (15%)	105 (68.6%)	25 (16.3%)	153 (100%)
Affective Pro-independence	109 (69.9%)	23 (14.7%)	24 (15.4%)	156 (100%)
Total	258 (44.5%)	227 (39.1%)	95 (16.3%)	580 (100%)

Most respondents who identified themselves as preferring to maintain the status quo do have a directional preference when further probed. Out of the complete set of respondents ($N = 1,194$), there are only 8 percent (95/1,194) who did not state a directional preference (or did not wish to reveal their preferences) on the matter. The rational no-predisposition type respondents favor independence slightly over unification, while the affective pro-unification and affective pro-independence type respondents favor unification and independence at 68.6 percent and 69.9 percent, respectively. This shows that the fact that most respondents desire to maintain the status quo does not imply that they do not have directional preferences; these respondents only hold these preferences with a lower intensity. Taking these directional preferences into account, roughly 46 percent of the population as a whole lean toward independence and 40 percent lean toward unification, with only 14 percent not revealing any directional preferences.¹⁰

There are several important conclusions we can draw from these tables. First, affective identifiers have stronger directional predispositions on the independence issue than the rational thinkers. Forty percent of the affective pro-unification respondents favor unification while 48 percent of the affective pro-independence respondents favor independence. Their opinion curve resembles a J-curve, with most respondents concentrated at both one end and the middle of the curve with very few respondents concentrated at the other end. These affective respondents hold strong beliefs on the issue and form the basis of political confrontation in Taiwan on most cross-Straits as well as national identity issues.

Second, for the rational thinkers, the main reaction toward the issue is to maintain the status quo. Their opinion pattern resembles a bell-shaped curve with most people concentrated at the middle and few respondents at either extreme. This group forms the stabilizing force in Taiwanese politics and plays the role of arbitrator given that they are also the pivot voters. Therefore, the makeup of the rational types of respondents has a great in-

¹⁰Independence: (290+258)/1,197; Unification: (252+227)/1,197; No preference: (95+75)/1,197.

fluence on the distribution of opinion on any related issue.

Third, since 1993, the patterns of change include that the rational no-predisposition type (i.e., type #1) has increased over time, the affective pro-unification type (#3) has decreased, while the affective pro-independence type (#7) has also increased. Over the years, fewer Taiwanese people are inclined to favor unification based on affection, while more and more respondent decisions are based on rational considerations and affection toward independence. Whether this trend will continue to grow remains to be seen.

Fourth, the fact that about half of the respondents belong to the rational type (47 percent) has implications for both domestic politicians and the Chinese government. These respondents are subject to persuasion, and are most likely the middle voters who control the pivot votes that decide the electoral fate of different candidates or parties. From the data in table 7, we can clearly see that in the 2000 presidential election, 59.9 percent of the affective pro-unification type respondents supported James Soong (宋楚瑜) and 63.3 percent of the affective pro-independence type voted for Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁).

The third row in each cell reports the standardized residuals, which tell us the magnitude of deviation from the null hypothesis that these variables are independent for each cell. Figures with absolute value greater than two imply that this cell is contributing significantly to the Chi-square value and, thus, to the statistical relationship between the variables. For example, for the affective pro-independence voters, the standardized residual of -4 for Soong and +5 for Chen imply that, compared with the sample as a whole, these voters supported Chen at a much higher proportion while favoring Soong at a much lower proportion. Standardized residuals can assist us in identifying the statistical patterns more easily and will be reported in all subsequent analysis. The rational no-predisposition type respondents voted almost identically with the sample as a whole. The evidence indicates that they are indeed the pivot voters and have great importance in influencing the results of domestic electoral politics. The above analysis has shown that this respondent classification scheme does have theoretical and practical significance in Taiwanese politics.

Influence on Perceptions of Other Cross-Strait Issues

The breakdown of the rational/affective types as gleaned from the above survey regarding unification/independence is not only theoretically interesting *per se*, but also has practical importance because these attitudes affect the formation of other important political inclinations—which can have implications for government policy. For example, respondents were asked whether they think of themselves as "Taiwanese" (台灣人), "Chinese" (中國人), or "both Taiwanese and Chinese" (台灣人也是中國人). Roughly 56 percent of the affective pro-independence voters identify themselves as "Taiwanese," while most of the respondents belonging to other types think of themselves as "both Taiwanese and Chinese" (see table 8).

Table 7
Cross-Tabulation of Respondent Type and Vote Choice

Type of Respondents	Respondents' Vote Choice (For those voting)					Total
	James Soong	Lien Chan	Li Ao	Hsu Hsin-liang	Chen Shui-bian	
Rational	143	71	1	2	187	404
No-predisposition	(35.4%)	(17.6%)	(0.2%)	(0.5%)	(46.3%)	(100%)
	-.6	-.3	.9	.3	.6	
Rational	7	4	0	1	11	23
Pro-unification	(30.4%)	(17.4%)	(0%)	(4.3%)	(47.8%)	(100%)
	-.5	-.1	-.1	.3	.3	
Rational	3	4	0	0	13	20
Pro-independence	(15%)	(20%)	(0%)	(0%)	(65%)	(100%)
	-1.6	.2	-.1	-.3	1.4	
Affective	145	61	0	1	35	242
Pro-unification	(59.9%)	(25.2%)	(0%)	(0.4%)	(14.5%)	(100%)
	5.8	2.6	-.5	.0	-.7	
Affective	72	41	0	0	195	308
Pro-independence	(23.4%)	(13.3%)	(0%)	(0%)	(63.3%)	(100%)
	-4	-2	-.6	-1.1	.5	
Total	370	181	1	4	441	997
	(37.1%)	(18.2%)	(0.1%)	(0.4%)	(44.2%)	(100%)

Table 8
Cross-Tabulation of Respondent Type and Ethnic Self-identification

	Think of Self as Taiwanese or Chinese?						Total
	Taiwanese	Chinese	Both	Other	Don't know	No response	
Rational	159	36	283	3	2	2	485
No-predisposition	(32.8%)	(7.4%)	(58.4%)	(0.6%)	(0.4%)	(0.4%)	(100.0%)
	-1.6	-2.5	3.3	.5	-1.7	.4	
Rational	6	3	19	0	3	0	31
Pro-unification	(9.4%)	(9.7%)	(61.3%)	(0%)	(9.7%)	(0%)	(100.0%)
	-1.9	-.1	1.0	-.4	4.9	-.3	
Rational	11	0	18	0	2	1	32
Pro-independence	(34.4%)	(0%)	(56.3%)	(0%)	(6.3%)	(3.1%)	(100.0%)
	-.1	-1.9	.4	-.4	3.0	2.8	
Affective	46	66	169	1	2	0	284
Pro-unification	(16.2%)	(23.2%)	(59.5%)	(0.4%)	(0.7%)	(0%)	(100.0%)
	-7.8	8.5	8.5	-.4	-.6	-1.1	
Affective	202	15	140	2	3	1	363
Pro-independence	(55.6%)	(4.1%)	(38.6%)	(0.6%)	(0.8%)	(0.3%)	(100.0%)
	9.6	-4.5	-6.4	.2	-.4	-.2	
Total	424	120	629	6	12	4	1,195
	(35.5%)	(10.0%)	(52.6%)	(0.5%)	(1.0%)	(0.3%)	(100.0%)

Chi-square = 206.058; **Sig.** = .000.

This shows that affective pro-independence type respondents have a stronger ethnic Taiwanese identification than the rest of the population.

There are still other examples that can illustrate the different attitudes of various types of respondents. When asked if they are worried about a military threat from the Chinese Communists, the rational no-predisposition type respondents were quite evenly split, with 50.5 percent being unconcerned while 48.2 percent expressed worry (see table 9). In contrast, 56.5 percent of the affective pro-unification type respondents were worried about a Chinese military threat, while only 39.3 percent of the affective pro-independence type were so concerned. A similar pattern can also be seen in the response to the question asking respondents whether they worry about the likelihood of the United States lessening support for Taiwan (see table 10). The affective pro-independence respondents exhibited less

Table 9
Cross-Tabulation of Respondent Type and Concern over Military Threat

	Worry about Chinese Communist Military Threat?						Total
	Strongly worry	Somewhat worry	Not worry	Not worry at all	Don't know	No answer	
Rational	69	165	148	97	5	1	485
No-predisposition	(14.2%)	(34.0%)	(30.5%)	(20.0%)	(1.0%)	(0.2%)	(100.0%)
	-1.2	2.0	1.5	-2.6	.1	-.6	
Rational	5	5	16	2	1	2	31
Pro-unification	(16.1%)	(16.1%)	(51.6%)	(6.5%)	(3.2%)	(6.5%)	(100.0%)
	.0	-1.8	2.9	-2.3	1.3	6.0	
Rational	3	7	7	13	2	0	32
Pro-independence	(9.4%)	(21.9%)	(21.9%)	(40.6%)	(6.3%)	(0%)	(100.0%)
	-1.0	-1.1	-.8	2.3	3.0	-.3	
Affective	64	97	74	49	1	0	285
Pro-unification	(22.5%)	(34.0%)	(26.0%)	(17.2%)	(0.4%)	(0%)	(100.0%)
	3.5	1.4	-1.0	-3.0	-1.3	-1.1	
Affective	48	94	92	124	3	1	362
Pro-independence	(13.3%)	(26.0%)	(25.4%)	(34.3%)	(0.8%)	(0.3%)	(100.0%)
	-1.6	-2.4	-1.4	5.6	-.4	-.2	
Total	189	368	337	285	12	4	1,195
	(15.8%)	(30.8%)	(28.2%)	(23.8%)	(1.0%)	(0.3%)	(100.0%)

Chi-square = 108.361; **Sig.** = .000.

concern than the affective pro-unification respondents. Once again the affective pro-unification type respondents demonstrated a higher level of pessimism when compared to the affective pro-independence respondents. The pattern of response to these questions shows that various types of respondents differ significantly in their assessments of the probabilities of events. Overall, respondents of the affective pro-independence type are more optimistic while the affective pro-unification type are more pessimistic over the issue of a Chinese military threat and the possibility of change in U.S. Taiwan policy. This sense of insecurity is possibly both the cause and effect of the latter group's attitudes toward independence, and has important implications for how they would react to future cross-Straits policies.

Aside from the attitudinal differences mentioned above, respondents

Table 10

Cross-Tabulation of Respondent Type and Concern over U.S. Attitude Change

	Will the United States lessen support for Taiwan?						Total
	Strongly worry	Somewhat worry	Do not worry	Do not worry at all	Don't know	No answer	
Rational	56	168	170	81	8	1	484
No-predisposition	(11.6%)	(34.7%)	(35.1%)	(16.7%)	(1.7%)	(0.2%)	(100.0%)
	-.6	1.0	2.1	-2.0	-2.4	-.9	
Rational	4	11	7	4	4	2	32
Pro-unification	(12.5%)	(34.4%)	(21.9%)	(12.5%)	(12.5%)	(6.3%)	(100.0%)
	.1	.2	-1.2	-1.0	3.1	5.2	
Rational	1	10	12	7	4	0	34
Pro-independence	(2.9%)	(29.4%)	(35.3%)	(20.6%)	(11.8%)	(0%)	(100.0%)
	-1.7	-.5	.5	.2	3.0	-.4	
Affective	45	89	91	49	10	1	285
Pro-unification	(15.8%)	(31.2%)	(31.9%)	(17.2%)	(3.5%)	(0.4%)	(100.0%)
	2.1	-.7	.1	-1.2	.5	-.2	
Affective	40	117	99	93	11	1	361
Pro-independence	(11.1%)	(32.4%)	(27.4%)	(25.8%)	(3.0%)	(0.3%)	(100.0%)
	-.8	-.3	-.21	3.6	-.1	-.5	
Total	146	395	379	234	37	5	1,196
	(12.2%)	(33.0%)	(31.7%)	(19.6%)	(3.1%)	(0.4%)	(100.0%)

Chi-square = 70.246; **Sig.** = .000.

also differ significantly on cross-Strait related policy positions. For example, when asked whether they support a characterization of cross-Strait relations as a "special state-to-state relationship," the response of the rational no-predisposition type was almost identical with the entire sample, while the affective pro-unification type strongly opposed the idea and the affective pro-independence type strongly supported the proposal (see table 11). Reasonable to assume is that this pattern is generalizable to other related policy proposals.

We can draw several conclusions from the above analysis. First, the rational no-predisposition type respondents have increased over the years (see table 12). The number peaked in 1996 and has leveled off since 1998. This change might reflect the Chinese military exercise and missile threat of 1996, prompting more citizens to base their decisions on rational con-

Table 11
Cross-Tabulation of Respondent Type and Opinion on "Special State-to-State Relationship"

Opinion on "Special State-to-State Relationship"									
	Not applicable	Strongly support	Support	Oppose	Strongly oppose	No opinion	Never heard of	Total	
Rational									
No-predisposition	0 (0%) -1.7	33 (6.8%) -2	201 (41.4%) 2.1	104 (21.4%) -6	17 (3.5%) -2.2	77 (15.9%) 1.1	44 (9.1%) -1.5	9 (1.9%) -3	485 (100.0%)
Rational									
Pro-unification	0 (0%) -3	0 (0%) -1.5	9 (29.0%) -1.0	3 (9.7%) -1.7	1 (3.2%) -5	7 (22.6%) 1.3	8 (25.8%) 2.8	3 (9.7%) 3.1	31 (100.0%)
Rational									
Pro-independence	0 (0%) -3	3 (9.1%) .5	7 (21.2%) -2.0	1 (3.0%) -2.7	0 (0%) -1.4	11 (33.3%) 3.1	11 (33.3%) 4.3	0 (0%) -8	33 (100.0%)
Affective									
Pro-unification	2 (0.7%) 1.2	8 (2.8%) -3.2	64 (22.5%) -6.1	109 (38.2%) 7.4	32 (11.2%) 5.3	36 (12.6%) -1.0	28 (9.8%) -5	6 (2.1%) .1	285 (100.0%)
Affective									
Pro-independence	2 (0.6%) .9	40 (11.0%) 3.6	172 (47.4%) 4.5	51 (14.0%) -4.6	12 (3.3%) -1.9	43 (11.8%) -1.7	37 (10.2%) -4	6 (1.7%) -6	363 (100.0%)
Total	4 (0.3%)	84 (7.0%)	453 (37.8%)	268 (22.4%)	62 (5.2%)	174 (14.5%)	128 (10.7%)	24 (2.0%)	1,197 (100.0%)

Chi-square = 177.540; Sig. = .000.

Table 12
Respondent Type Across Time, 1992-2000

		1992	1993	1995	1996	1998	2000
Rational	No-predisposition	26	34	38	46	41	41
	Pro-unification	12	7	6	4	4	3
	Pro-independence	5	3	5	3	6	3
Affective	Pro-unification	45	40	30	20	21	24
	Pro-independence	13	16	21	27	28	30
Total		100	100	100	100	100	101

siderations rather than on affective feelings. These citizens agree to independence if peace can be maintained, and agree to unification if cross-Strait social, economic, and political conditions are equivalent. This group does not have strong ideological predispositions and is receptive to different solutions as the environment changes.

From subsequent political attitudinal analysis, we also found that these respondents are the median and pivot voters in Taiwanese politics. The affective type respondents, no matter whether inclined toward independence or unification, are relatively rigid and predictable in their attitudes on cross-Strait related policies and national identity issues. This group is less likely to be persuaded and is the major force involved in domestic political confrontations. While the extreme opinions balance each other out, the rational thinkers represent the mainstream viewpoint in Taiwan. In nearly all of the issues examined, the opinion of the rational no-predisposition type respondents resembles the general opinion of the entire sample. Therefore, the changing percentage of these respondents among the population should have significant influence on cross-Strait relations. If the number of people classified as the rational type continues to grow, domestic tension or confrontation among parties should be effectively lessened. The government could therefore be more flexible in dealing with issues related to cross-Strait relations. Theoretically interesting as well as politically important would be to keep track of the percentage of the rational type respondents over time.

Second, the affective pro-unification type has decreased and the af-

Table 13
Cross-Tabulation of Respondent Age and Type

Age	Rational no-predisposition	Rational pro-unification	Rational pro-independence	Affective pro-unification	Affective pro-independence	Total
20-29	124 (40.5%) .0	3 (1.0%) -1.8	3 (1.0%) -1.8	53 (17.3%) -2.4	123 (40.2%) 3.2	306 (100%)
30-39	140 (43.8%) .9	2 (0.6%) -2.2	11 (3.4%) .8	71 (22.2%) -6	96 (30%) -1	320 (100%)
40-49	124 (45.4%) 1.3	12 (4.4%) 1.8	4 (1.5%) -1.2	61 (22.3%) -5	72 (26.4%) -1.2	273 (100%)
50-59	50 (38.8%) -.3	3 (2.3%) -.2	4 (3.1%) .3	33 (25.6%) .4	39 (30.2%) .0	129 (100%)
60 and above	47 (28.1%) -2.5	11 (6.6%) 3.2	10 (6.0%) 2.6	68 (40.7%) 4.4	31 (18.6%) -2.7	167 (100%)
Total	485 (40.6%)	31 (2.6%)	32 (2.7%)	286 (23.9%)	361 (30.2%)	1,195 (100%)

Chi-square = 87.836; **Sig.** = .000.

fective pro-independence type has increased over time. Over the past decade, "Taiwanese consciousness" and "the spirit of localization" have become the politically correct ideology, and are gaining increasing support over time. China's militant attitude toward Taiwan might also contribute to the trend of growing Taiwanese consciousness and declining Chinese affective identification. The affective identifiers are the most adamant and vocal among the population, and are most likely to participate in political activities. If more people become the affective type, there will be more domestic confrontation as well as less flexibility for leaders in terms of making cross-Straits policies.

Third, in order to speculate on the future composition of these typologies, we can break down the respondent types by their age (see table 13). The youngest respondents are more affectively pro-independence and less affectively pro-unification, while the oldest respondents are more af-

fectively pro-unification and less rational than the population as a whole. Combining these two trends, we might expect the whole population to be more affectively pro-independence and—at the same time—more rational in the near future. In other words, there will be fewer people affectively attached to the unification appeal as time goes by. This speculation is based on the generational assumption of the age factor, assuming that each generation has different life experiences and inclinations. On the other hand, if the chronological assumption better suits reality, then maybe the younger generation would change their attitudes as their age advances, sustaining the current opinion formation pattern. Which of the two age assumptions can better predict future opinion changes remains to be seen. This author speculates that the generational assumption might work better in this case, meaning that there will be more affective pro-independence and rational identifiers in the future.

Last but not least, different types of respondents possess very different evaluation functions toward the same event. The affective pro-unification type citizens have a more pessimistic outlook on issues regarding the cross-strait relationship. They are more worried about a potential Chinese military invasion and that the United States would become less protective of Taiwan. On the other hand, the affective pro-independence type citizens are more optimistic and worry less about these events taking place. The data available here does not permit a sorting out of the causal relationship between respondent types and their political attitudes. However, a logical derivation would be to generalize the findings here to other cross-strait issues. The affective pro-independence type would be more likely to discount the possibility of Chinese military action and support more progressive localization policies, while the affective pro-unification type would be more cautious and not support initiatives that might provoke a Chinese military response.

Further Implications for Cross-Strait Relations

Now that we have presented the new typology, discussed its implica-

tions for public opinion in Taiwan, and drawn general implications for cross-Strait relations, this section will extend our analysis by discussing more directly the interaction between public opinion and government policy vis-à-vis China, and will close with a mention of key differences in public opinion exhibited by people on Taiwan vis-à-vis their counterparts in the United States.

The current administration is trying to continue to promote localization and Taiwanese consciousness in order to raise Taiwanese political identity, while doing nothing dramatic to endanger cross-Strait political and military stability. In December 2000, for example, Taiwan's embassies and overseas representative offices were told to replace any national emblem with the national flag or the national flower because the emblem was too similar to that of the KMT's.¹¹ The new rule would apply to all invitation cards, nametags, banquet tags, envelopes, and notepaper issued by these overseas institutions. More recently, the government has been considering changing the names of overseas representative offices and embassies to titles starting with "Taiwan" or "Taipei."¹²

Another related foreign affairs example would be the government's decision to append the word "Taiwan" on the cover of the new version of Taiwan passports, alongside the country's formal designation of "Republic of China." This change is scheduled to be carried out before the end of the year 2002.¹³ Two other recent examples involve the Government Information Office (GIO). The GIO replaced its emblem featuring an image of China and ROC national flag with a new emblem featuring a bridge, symbolizing the role of GIO as a bridge between the government and the public.¹⁴ The GIO also released a new version of the movie footage that accompanies the national anthem preceding the running of movies or

¹¹ Monique Chu, "MOFA to Ditch Symbols of the Past," *Taipei Times*, December 5, 2000.

¹² Monique Chu, "Name-Change Idea Angers China," *ibid.*, February 27, 2002.

¹³ Lin Mei-chun, "'Taiwan' Will Be Added to Passports," *ibid.*, January 14, 2002.

¹⁴ Monique Chu, "GIO Ditches its Old Emblem to Remove Reference to China," *ibid.*, December 30, 2001.

school events, which will replace the old version starting from 2002.¹⁵ The new anthem film promotes the theme of "Taiwanese Vitality," which includes historic scenes featuring footage of tea-picking girls, disaster relief teams, industrial workers, Taiwanese opera actors, and team members of the Red Leaf Junior Baseball Team (紅葉少棒隊).

According to GIO Director-General Su Tzen-ping (蘇正平), this new version portrays a sense of warmth that emanates from the relationship between the land and its people, and he hopes that this film will awaken the audience's collective awareness of a shared history.¹⁶ The most unusual feature of the film is that it presents only the music of the national anthem, leaving out audio and subtitled lyrics. Perhaps the spirit of these changes was best summed up by Minister of Education Ovid Tzeng (曾志朗), who encouraged all national universities to establish departments and graduate institutes of Taiwan history to promote Taiwan-oriented values—as opposed to Chinese-oriented cultural education.¹⁷

The government offered nonpolitical reasons for all of the actions taken above. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Katharine Chang (張小月) explained the consideration behind adding "Taiwan" to the passport cover: "The purpose of doing this is to prevent Taiwanese travelers being mistaken for Chinese ones."¹⁸ The GIO emblem was abolished because many overseas visitors to the GIO offices express confusion over the China map.¹⁹

These moves have, however, attracted attention from both China and domestic groups. On June 27, 2001, China warned that the plan to add "Taiwan" to ROC passports was a "very risky action," adding the move was "creating a split or leading to Taiwan independence."²⁰ In addition, domestic critics have charged that the change in the GIO emblem is indicative

¹⁵Sandy Huang, "'Anthem Movie' Unveiled," *ibid.*, January 1, 2002.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Sandy Huang, "Tzeng Says Colleges Must Help Taiwanization Effort," *ibid.*, October 16, 2001.

¹⁸See note 13 above.

¹⁹See note 14 above.

²⁰Monique Chu, "'Taiwan' to Appear on New Passports," *Taipei Times*, December 16, 2001.

of the ruling party's attempt to promote Taiwan's growing alienation from China.

Generally speaking, the public at large is supportive of these changes when a plausible nonpolitical reason is offered. According to a survey conducted by the Foreign Ministry, more than 60 percent of the respondents supported the proposal to add the word "Taiwan" to ROC passports.²¹ Proposals of this sort will most likely be supported by the affective pro-independence type citizens and opposed by the affective pro-unification type citizens. The key is that most of the rational calculators would also support these changes if they are perceived to bring pragmatic benefits and would not disturb cross-Straits relations.

Natural is for the ruling party to enact policies to promote its ideological preferences, as does every democratic ruling party around the world. However, there are two constraints unique to Taiwan that the ruling DPP must face. First, the majority of the public would favor localization policies under the premise that such moves do not harm cross-Straits stability. Therefore, the DPP government has to be careful in testing the level of tolerance both internally and externally, as both aspects would interact with each other. In order to maintain domestic stability during the process, the government must not take actions that strongly offend the affective pro-unification type citizens.

Given the internal and external constraints the DPP government is facing, we would expect that in the short run (before the year 2004) all changes related to national identity will be more symbolic than substantive. The passport example can illustrate the point. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs chose to add "Issued in Taiwan" at the bottom of the passport cover, which is a practical change having nothing to do with altering the national designation of "Republic of China" placed at the top of the passport. By choosing to announce the policy at the FAPA's (Formosan Association for Public Affairs 台灣人公共事務協會) annual meeting in Taipei, however, President Chen politicized the issue and magnified the symbolic meaning

²¹ See <<http://www.mofa.gov.tw/newmofa/sdo/stat2.htm>>.

of the action, which would help to solidify fundamentalist support.²²

Second, the attempt to build a new national identity takes time. As the latest electoral outcome in December 2001 has shown, the vote share distribution between the "Blue" and "Green" camps is roughly 50 percent to 40 percent.²³ The DPP has not gained the support of the majority so far. Therefore, changes related to nation-building must proceed with skill and caution. The successful completion of the localization policy will largely depend on the outcome of the presidential election in 2004. If the DPP can remain in office, the forces of domestic opposition should decrease considerably, and more substantive changes can be completed during Chen's second term. The main focus then would shift to cross-Strait interaction, and cross-Strait stability would depend on how the Chinese government reacts to these changes. If the opposition force (i.e., the "Blue" camp) captures the presidency, however, then the problem at hand will be more domestic than external.

Finally, the above-mentioned constraints on government action by no means *guarantee* stability across the Taiwan Strait in the near future. The government and people on Taiwan might overestimate the level of Beijing's tolerance, thereby implementing changes that are interpreted by China as declaring independence. On the domestic front, moreover, possible is for "accidents" to happen that are beyond the government's control. For instance, DPP legislator Trong Chai (蔡同榮) is pushing for the passage of referendum laws permitting plebiscites. Although having long supported such proposals, the DPP is presently displaying caution and downplaying any urgency.²⁴ Despite the reservations of the ruling party, however, legislator Chai continues to push for the law. If somehow the referendum law is passed without limiting its applicability to national and local public policy issues, there is no knowing how China would react to such a legis-

²²See note 13 above.

²³The "Blue" camp refers to those parties—the KMT, the People First Party (PFP 親民黨), and the now defunct New Party (新黨)—that have a pro-unification orientation. The opposing "Green" camp is comprised of the DPP, the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU 台灣團結聯盟), and the Taiwan Independence Party (TAIP 建國黨).

²⁴Stephanie Low, "DPP Cautious on Referendum Law," *Taipei Times*, March 1, 2002.

lation. Therefore, the government should take great care to ensure that there are no surprises in policy areas related to cross-Strait relations and national identity.

Finally, Taiwan may also overestimate U.S. tolerance levels as well—with important implications for cross-Strait stability. According to the National Opinion Ballot Report (2001) conducted by the Foreign Policy Association, which was based on a poll of 30,472 opinion leaders rather than a representative sample of the population, respondents were asked a series of questions about the role of the United States in relations between China and Taiwan.²⁵ Most respondents would like China and Taiwan to avoid confrontation; 75 percent agreed that "China and Taiwan should reach an interim agreement preserving the status quo." However, if and when conflict cannot be avoided, most respondents would not want the United States to get involved, preferring to give trade interests priority over political considerations.

Respondents were asked "Which of the following is better for the U.S. national interest: defending Taiwan or letting China proceed with reunification efforts?" Thirty-one percent supported the proposal to defend Taiwan, while 43 percent would prefer to let China proceed with reunification. Another important question asked respondents whether they agree or disagree that "the United States should make an explicit pledge to defend Taiwan against an invasion from the mainland." Seventy percent of the respondents disagreed, up from 51 percent in the year 2000 and 42 percent in 1998. On the other hand, 52 percent of the respondents disagreed that the United States should urge Taiwan to enter into reunification talks with China, and 57 percent disagreed that the United States should link trade with China to that country's human rights record. These contrasts show that the American public would prefer China and Taiwan to maintain the status quo and avoid confrontation. Most Americans would like to treat commercial issues separately from political issues, and do not want the United

²⁵National Opinion Ballot Report—"Great Decisions 2001," conducted by the Foreign Policy Association, 470 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016-6819.

States to make an explicit commitment to defend Taiwan. This view is in stark contrast with Taiwanese public opinion mentioned earlier where 50 percent of the respondents are not worried about U.S. lessening support for Taiwan. The comparison here shows that Taiwanese public opinion might be too optimistic on the likelihood of U.S. support. Whether this perception gap is the cause or effect of policies by the Taiwan government—and whether these differences in views may result in giving Taiwan a false sense of confidence that may lead to trouble in the triangular relationship between the United States, Taiwan, and China—are questions beyond the scope of this paper, but deserve the attention of future research.

Conclusion

The analysis above has shown that the percentage of the people on Taiwan supporting unification is declining over time, and quite likely will continue to dwindle. This does not necessarily imply that the people on Taiwan will favor political independence over unification since the number of people who base their choices on rational evaluation is also on the rise. These rational calculators comprise about half of the population and are the stabilizing forces in Taiwanese politics. They are also the pivot voters during elections and the arbitrators of policy disputes as the extreme opinions balance each other out. Their decisions on electoral outcomes and policy preferences are not significantly different from the population as a whole. This public opinion pattern sets the boundary for Taiwan's cross-Strait policies and issues related to national identity. At present, localization policies must be packaged to be nonpolitical in order to gain majority support; therefore, all proposed changes are bound to be more symbolic than substantive. If the proportion of rational calculators remains at a high level, quite unlikely would be for any political leader to implement dramatic measures either pursuing unification or independence.

Socioeconomic and political developments in China as well as Beijing's use of threats of military force will be the two deciding factors influencing the formation of domestic public opinion in the short run.

Therefore, Beijing's best strategy is to attract Taiwan through China's own development rather than by resorting to the threat of force. Utilizing military threats could serve to deter the rational thinkers from supporting independence in the short run, but in the long run is going to have a recoil effect by decreasing the proportion of the people on Taiwan affectively favoring unification or even by increasing the proportion of voters affectively supporting independence.

Finally, given developments over the past decade, the "Republic of China" has become the common denominator used by the general public, accepted if not embraced by supporters inclined toward either independence or unification. No matter which party takes over the government in the future, quite likely is that the current national designation will be honored in order to garner political support. Therefore, we can expect most future changes to proceed under the "Republic of China" framework. This sets an environmental constraint on the boundary of possible future changes. Public opinion will continue to play a vital role in influencing the cross-Strait relationship and should therefore be monitored closely.