

CHAPTER 2

Taiwan's Globalizing 'Narrative of Unfolding'

This chapter will look at the ways in which identity can be a salient feature in the one's conception of cross-strait situation — as seen among Taiwanese and Chinese people. We will look at the role of globalization on Taiwan's 'narrative unfolding', a factor that has been argued to be an agent in defining identity and political choices, and analyze the significance of globalization on the legitimation and significance, as well as change, of foreigners' attitudes on Taiwan.

2.1 The Construction of Cross-Strait Identity Politics

In Taiwan and in China, the discourse on the cross-Strait relations has focused significantly identity politics and international politics, each with its particular nuances, but the commingling of the issues has gained significant scholarly attention. My objective in the next few paragraphs is to provide a brief introduction of how identity manifests politically by locals in a very particular and localized way, and for locals, their motivations for supporting one political orientation over another regarding the cross-Strait situation can be seen as quite distinct from foreigners.

A-chin Hsiao, a fellow at Academia Sinica noted, “unlike the cultural nationalism of the Jews within the Russian Empire, the Slovaks within the Habsburg Empire, the Greeks within the Ottoman Empire, and the Irish within the British Empire, the cultural work of Taiwanese dissident humanist intellectuals does not play the role of midwife to

political nationalism.”⁵ This suggests that the Hsiao does not necessarily agree with the notion that Taiwan nationalism sprung from a common experience with free market institutions and (more recently) a relatively democratic form of government. While some researchers have pointed out that the Kaohsiung Incident was crucial to the emergence of Taiwanese nationalism in literary circles, it has been contended that the seeds of it had been sown earlier. In fact, for scholars like Hsiao reckon that the writings of Yeh Shih-t’ao and Ch’en ying-chen — about the nature and future of the literature developed on the island — actually represented the internal clash between the pro-independence group and the pro-reunification group within the advocates of hsiang-t’u literature camp.

Namely, says Hsiao, the divide’s latency can be attributed to the fact that open conflict was avoided because the two groups realized they had to act with caution under the KMT’s rigid political control and cooperate with each other in order to take on the KMT. It was after the Kaohsiung Incident that the apparent harmony between the two groups was disturbed.”⁶ For Hsiao, the Taiwanese nationalist movement came about almost spontaneously following the 1979 Kaohsiung Incident, acting as a “catalyst to change” the KMT’s systems of political power, “arousing national sentiments in Taiwanese dissident writers, literary critics, historical scholars and language revival activists”.⁷

For Melissa Brown sentiments of Taiwanese nationalist sentiments were the result of a ‘narrative unfolding’ in which governments and ethnic leaders have attempted to construct the narratives of history, which can be distinguished from “the totality of what is actually known”; they have also attempted to create an “inevitable unfolding of one’s own nation.”⁸ This is bolstered by Croucher’s contention that, “ethnic identity formation and differentiation emerge from complex processes of interaction, reaction, self-identification and institutional categorization — all of which play out in specific economic, political, and sociocultural contexts.”⁹ Daniel A Bell shows how specifically,

⁵ A-chin Hsiao, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 178.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁸ Melissa J. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?* (London: University of California Press, 2004), 5-6.

⁹ Shiela L. Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging: The Politics of Identity In a Changing World* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 136.

Taiwan's economic history and development has led to more pluralistic concepts that seemed to reject the type of nationalism as perpetuated by the KMT.

The prospect for a political arrangement that is fair and workable with the People's Republic of China, Daniel A. Bell notes, "cannot ignore the fact that many Taiwanese now think of themselves as sufficiently distinct to seek some form of self-administration, if not complete independence. But this is a non-issue if one accepts the official Chinese view that the Taiwanese are not a distinct cultural grouping."¹⁰ What is important to glean from these examples of Taiwan identity formation is that, although Brown applied the theory of 'narrative unfolding' with identity formation in the late 1970s and 80s, its applicability to describe modern identity and politics is also noteworthy. According to Swaine, "Taiwan's leaders significantly shape, and not merely reflect, the island's sense of self-identity and its population's move toward self-determination."¹¹

In China too this intermingling of conceptions of Taiwan identity Chinese verses Taiwan identity also unfolds in the domestic ideological narrative, which evident by the sentiments of its decision makers. Wang Guanwu points out that in China, "[t]he theme of reunification is at the heart of the restoration of nationalism. Restoration is not only an essential part of the structure of legitimacy, the supremacy of continental interests. It is also the best defense against other threats to the sanctity of China's borders."¹² For Michael D. Swaine, Taiwan's independence would "establish a dangerous precedent for other potentially secession-minded areas of the country, such as Tibet, Xingjiang, and Inner Mongolia." Swaine believes that or China's leaders, the manner in which the Taiwan independence issue gets resolved is intertwined and related to China's own self-respect and regime survival. "Beijing regards the eventual reunification of China and Taiwan as essential to China's recovery from a century of national weakness, vulnerability, and humiliation, and to its emergence as a respected great power."¹³ "With the disappearance of an immediate threat of invasion and the emergence of dynamic

¹⁰ Daniel A. Bell, "Is Democracy the 'Least Bad' System for Minority Groups," in *Democratization and Identity: Regimes and Ethnicity in East and Southeast Asia*, ed. Susan J. Henders (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004), 28.

¹¹ Michael D. Swaine, "Trouble in Taiwan," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 2 (2004): 46.

¹² Wang Gungwu, *The Chinese Way: China's Position in International Relations* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995): 2.

¹³ Swaine, 40-41.

economic centers along its eastern coast, China's security policy in the 1980s shifted from simply ensuring survival in a hostile world to preventing international instabilities from undermining its prospects for continued economic development."¹⁴

Moreover, Baogang notes that "Containing Taiwan's independence remains a major task for Chinese nationalism, since no one in the leadership cares to even suggest that Taiwan be given the right to self-determination."¹⁵ But as Swaine and others suggests, such prerogatives of the state can be seen as belonging within the context of a grand strategy relating how it perceives its national security, seeking to defend against external threats, preserve domestic order and attain geopolitical influence.¹⁶ For Zheng Bijian, seen as the architect of China's 'peaceful rise' strategy, a term reiterated by China General Secretary Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao three months later in February 2004,

"The rise of a major power often results in drastic change in international configuration and world order, even triggers a world war. An important reason behind this is [that] these major powers followed a path of aggressive war and external expansion. Such a path is doomed to failure. In today's world, how can we follow such a totally erroneous path that is injurious to all, China included? China's only choice is to strive for rise, more importantly strive for a peaceful rise."¹⁷

Certainly these narratives of unfolding in both Taiwan and in China are complicated further by a new and globally aware narrative of unfolding of the present. For Brown, "these narratives of unfoldings change as a result of societal change, changes in political goals as well as changes in the international environment."¹⁸ Nations, through its control of power, that is, through political means can actively seek to define identities. For example in China, as David M. Lampton illustrates, the changes can be seen in the shifting focal points of power in the national security policy-making process. The author cites "thickening" of the elite — namely that "previously peripheral actors are becoming more numerous and more proximate to the decision-making arenas" and that "the actions

¹⁴ Mark Burles, *Chinese Policy toward Russia and the Central the Cenral Republics* (Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation, 1999), 174.

¹⁵ Baogang He, "China's National Identity: A Source of Conflict Between Democracy and Nationalism" in *Nationalism, Democracy and National Integration in China*, ed. Leong H. Liew and Shaoguang Wang (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 185.

¹⁶ Michael D Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 2000).

¹⁷ Robert L. Suettinger, "The Rise and Descent of 'Peaceful Rise,'" *China Leadership Monitor* 12 no. 1 (Fall 2004): 2.

¹⁸ Brown, 6.

of somewhat autonomous Chinese individuals, groups, and localities increasingly generate issues and problems and exert pressures to which the central foreign policy elite must respond.”¹⁹ Thus he observes that Beijing now speaks with “multiple voices” in its myriad dealings that tend toward “global and professional norms” against the backdrop of national interest and *realpolitik*.²⁰

2.2 Foreigners and the Narrative of Unfolding

The narrative unfolding is thus continually changing, and does so dynamically, and we would argue that an undeniable aspect of the narrative of unfolding in Taiwan is that of globalization. While the resilience of the nation-states remains an important aspect in the constructing of national identity qua identity several, other factors are helping to further define one’s identity, and thus globalization can thus be seen as a significant aspect that both shapes and acts as a conduit for the narrative of unfolding. Dissident voices are a mere manifestation of the process, in a globalizing, capitalist and democratic system.

For foreigners in Taiwan, because of the immediacy of how political objectives of the state’s development policy can affect them personally, such as immigration policy, the narrative unfolding and its effects on identity formation in the 1980s and 1990s have gained almost revolutionary character. Kather N. Rankin and Kinishka Goonewardena elaborates on these changes particularly in respects to political and economic liberalization, and thus illuminates how we are in fact in a narrative unfolding that is both unidirectional and multidimensional.

“Opening national economies to financial integration has entailed not merely the removal of restrictive national protectionist regulations, not merely de-regulation, as neoliberal ideology would have it. Rather, it has involved the construction of legal frameworks to insulate from public scrutiny new economic institutions within and beyond states (e.g., WTO, ASEAN) has argued within the debates about globalization and state capacity, ‘it is the *nation*-state that is losing its salience, not the state itself,’ as national regulation shifts from ‘national coherence to enterprise competitiveness in a global market.’ Asian states making the transition to democracy or attempting to maintain established democratic

¹⁹ David M. Lampton, “China’s Foreign and National Security Policy-Making Process: Is It Changing, and Does It Matter?” in *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy: In The Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, ed. David M. Lampton (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

regimes are doing so at a time when statecraft has been streamlined and steamrolled by transnational forces, with scant respect for either political party ideologies — which in any case exhibit all signs of neoliberal convergence — or popular will.”²¹

Thus in the era of globalization, where countries and communities are becoming more interconnected by migration, trade and the global division of labor as well as technological breakthroughs in communication and transportation, the political voice of not only foreigners in Taiwan but also diasporas worldwide are gaining salience. It is an era when issues like nationalism, ideology, kinship ties, aren't necessarily fading into the pale, but becoming re-interpreted using a pluralized and global perspectives as the linkages between one self and the fields are becoming more inevitable. The experience of local identity in Taiwan from the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a major reworking, according to Brown: “With the political and economic transformations of the 1980s and 1990s, Taiwanese identity has changed dramatically, becoming increasingly inclusive, proud, and nationalist. During the 1998 Taipei [sic] mayoral campaign, Lee Teng-hui publicly articulated the new Taiwanese identity as embracing both the ethnic Taiwanese and the Mainlanders.”²² Thus in Brown's view, the effects on identity in this shift in the ‘narrative of unfolding’ was real, as the authors notes, because of “its basis in actual social experiences, contribut[ing] to the increasing numbers of Taiwanese who approve of the calculated risk of angering China in order to win the international support for Taiwan's sovereignty.”²³

If political changes are an integral part of the ‘narrative unfolding’, we argue here that in light of Taiwan's development strategy and with globalization, Taiwan's increasingly connectedness to the world and its population's exposure to transnational ideas, have helped integrate foreigners into Taiwanese society, but only up to a certain extent. A relaxation of immigration or labor policies could have significant effects on the development of a distinctive identity for foreigners — a defining marker of this experience is dependent on their outlook on the cross-strait relationship. Analyzing what

²¹ Katherine N. Rankin and Kinishka Goonewardena, “The Political Economy and Cultural Politics of Ethnic Conflict,” in *Democratization and Identity: Regimes and Ethnicity in East and Southeast Asia*, ed. Susan J. Henders (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004), 98.

²² Brown, 12.

²³ *Ibid.*, 13.

shapes their globalized voice regarding the issue within these systems of power gives us insights how the cross-strait situation is being projected onto expats in Taiwan, who not only look at the situation through foreigners eyes, but whose views are also shaped by some sense of what Taiwan is like, it's history, it's politics, its way of life. Sallie Westwood and Annie Phizacklea look at specifically the dynamism embodied by tension created by both the physical, political and psychological stage these attachments are played out:

“In theorizing the nation and national identities we want to suggest that there are key sites in which these are produced. Very briefly, the first of these, following Anderson, is the imaginary and way in which imagining nations provides the context in which national identities are called forth. The second site, articulated with the first, is the body as a site for the play of powers so crucial to the management, discipline and identification of processes of nationalism and nation identities. But imaginary and embodied nations are lived through the discursive practices of everyday life elaborated in the popular with which we are primarily concerned in this chapter. Finally, the spatial, from the power of maps to symbolize nation to the sense of place offered by localities, is another key site. These sites produce a series of articulations which both generate a fragile consensus — a central nation — which simultaneously fracturing the nation, contributing to the deterring of the national.”²⁴

Moreover, as aliens staying in Taiwan, they must abide by the legal institutions, which help to define what the author sees as the dynamic that exists between the ‘polis’ and the ‘demos’.

In doing so, thus defines the groupings that exist between minority and majority groups, enforcing political and ethnic groupings that cast significant meaning on one's ability to mobilize. The author points out:

“The negotiation of laws establishing electoral systems; representative institutions; and the boundaries, rights, and duties of citizens, for instance, require decisions about the boundaries, membership, and values of the *polis* and the *demos*. These have important effects on the constitution of ethnically inclusive identities. Gladney points out that the maintenance of democratic political power also requires the making and reproduction of majorities for such purposes as (re)creating electoral coalitions, redistricting electoral boundaries, and (re)producing interest groups. If these collectivities are defined on narrow ethnic

²⁴ Phizacklea, *Trans-nationalism and the Politics of Belonging*, 41.

grounds, ethnic identities may become a focus of political mobilization both for the ‘majority’ and those excluded from it.”²⁵

2.3 Foreigners’ Outlook in a Changing Political Context

As residents, they are foreign “specialists”. Although their inclinations may be heavily influenced by what’s at stake for them, it is argued that an understanding of their political inclinations here will broaden our understanding of the effects of transnational socialization. Therefore, what this paper sets out to describe, is what aspects of the transnationalization are most influential in describing their political inclinations. As transnationals, the expression of what constitutes self for them works under the framework of social and political institutions of power. The discourse based on this interconnectedness perpetuated by history, and in our case globalization in particular, has the potential to change the whole notion of what constitutes the nation all over the world. As Smith sees it,

“In Western Europe, too, the ‘fraying at the edges’, found in the received national identities of the older Western national democracies, has also cooperated within clear limits. The influx of large numbers of immigrants, *Gastarbeiter*, refugees, ex-colonials and aliens, has certainly altered the present character of French, British or Dutch ‘national identities’. They can no longer be described in the simple, relatively homogeneous terms characteristic of the pre-war period. There are today several more ‘faces’ of national identity in France, Britain and the Netherlands ... Yet the historical, numerical and sociological preponderance of the long-established, hegemonic ‘core’ communities has largely determined the boundaries and much of the character of the changing identities of these national states — in the mores of their public life, the nature of their legal codes and institutional norms, their languages of education and politics, the content of much of the history of literature taught in their schools, and in the traditions of their culture and political life ... In all these areas, aliens, refugees, ex-colonial and immigrant communities have made vital contributions whose cumulative effect has been to modify the received character of older national identities and give them a greater fluidity and diversity of expression.”²⁶

For the author, “Only by grasping the power of nationalism and the continuing appeal of national identity through their rootedness in pre-modern ethnic symbolism and

²⁵ Henders, 7.

²⁶ Smith, 110.

modes of organization is there some chance of understanding the resurgence of ethnic nationalism at a time when ‘objective’ conditions might render it obsolete.”²⁷

In this light, there’s no question that the government cares a lot about how foreigners think already; one need not look further than government-sponsored programs like IMTS that aims, among other things, to give foreign students a favorable view of Taiwan. The GIO’s advertising activities are also part and parcel of this process. In light of these circumstances, Taiwan, like no other country, should care about how the foreign residents living here feel than most other countries because, ultimately, they will be like little ambassadors of Taiwan, for better or for worse. Understanding them better would help in efforts to devise a strategy that is in Taiwan’s interests.

But why does all this matter anyway? In a word, *globalization*. There is no question that a small country like Taiwan — or even a big country like America — must come to terms with it. Increasingly, with its pursuit of global competitiveness, Taiwan has been utilizing foreign workers as a major facet of its development strategy. While we do not mean to over-generalize, the overwhelming majority of foreigners working in Taiwan originate from a handful of countries, and one can usually predict with some degree of accuracy their line of work or purpose in Taiwan based on their country of origin.

Namely, people from Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam are usually domestic workers/caretakers or manual workers. Those people from English-speaking countries such as Canada, the United States, England, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa are more often than not teaching English, and several are learning Chinese or engaged in some sort of educational activity. Moreover, foreign workers are in Taiwan on a contract basis, meaning that if they do not find work or fulfill other stringent visa requirements, they must leave. Of course, there are many other foreigners in Taiwan that do not originate from the countries mentioned above and these people could be engaged in a variety of activities, both legal and illegal. For instance, foreign brides from China are a recurring phenomenon in Taiwan. Moreover, multi-national corporations with branches in Taiwan often hire from abroad for their foreign expertise. But, as a whole, Taiwan strict immigration and labor policy

²⁷ Ibid., 7.

has been formulated in a way that helps to prevent foreigners from taking away job opportunities from local residents.

While foreigners are not allowed to vote in local elections, the intensification of their political participation as members of civil society in the future should not be ruled out, in the process of globalization helping to bring interconnection of interests and solidification of diasporaic demands and the emerging problems caused by the institutionalization of capitalism within the globalization process. This comes as Taiwan's democratization has significantly broadened the scope of civil society and their demands have helped nurture their organization. According to Ching-Ping Tang, the resolution of the Hsiangshan Tidal Flat Development Project in Hsinchu city represented a watershed that showed how civic associations were able to easily coalesce around the issue of blocking an environmentally degrading industrial development with the "installation of practical administrative regulations regarding how policy information should [be gathered] and shared by the public ... and how the decision [could] be scrutinized."²⁸ This example helps illustrate the potential power of civil society groups, groups outside the scope of citizenship, which can affect change. As Ernst Gellner refers to civil society as

"that set of diverse non-governmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state and, while not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of keeper of peace and arbitrator between major interests can nevertheless prevent it from dominating and atomizing the rest of society."²⁹

Namely, the common themes running through the civil society concept, is according to Bowen, is that fact that "Civil society is not a standalone entity; rather, it functions in a balanced interdependence with the state."³⁰ Thus, civil society according to Antonio Gramsci, civil society is the sphere in which "capitalists, workers, and other engage in political and ideological struggles and where political parties, trade unions, religious bodies and a great variety of other organizations come into existence ... [It is] the sphere of all the popular-democratic struggles which arise out of the different ways in

²⁸ Ching-Ping Tang, "Democratizing Urban Politics and Civic Environmentalism in Taiwan," *China Quarterly* 176 (2003), P. 1030-1.

²⁹ Ernst Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals* (New York: Allen Lane, 1994): 1.

³⁰ Brett Bowden, "Civil Society, the State and the Limits of Global Civil Society," *Global Society* 20, no. 2 (2006): 158.

which people are grouped together — by sex, race, generation, local community, region, nation and so on.”³¹ “Gramsci also recognized that the social relationships of civil society are relations of power just as much (though in a different way) as are the coercive relations of the state.”³²

D. Minkoff has suggested a form of ‘global social capital’ is generated and accumulated in global civil society.³³ “This line of argument is associated with the assertion that the agents of these organizations-cum-movements — be they women, the working class, or other — mobilize in the belief that the same groupings exist as potential political agents in all countries of the world. This motivational factor is important, ‘even if the ideal of internationalism is not realized practically in the form of organizational links, there remains in most expressions of civil society n awareness of comparable experiences elsewhere in the world.’”³⁴

What this means for Taiwan, is that on the one hand, in its pursuit of global competitiveness, Taiwan’s labor and immigration policy has been allowing for more and more foreigners to come to Taiwan to work, but on the other hand, those workers who have legal status to be here originate from less than ten countries and are allowed to only work in the industry specified by their visa. (For instance, a foreigner here on a study visa is not allowed to work). These unique policies of Taiwan, the allure of Taiwan’s economic opportunities as well as its way of life, we will argue, help to crystallize foreigners’ own sense of identity about themselves as the “other” — that is, members of the foreign community who would have more in common with other foreigners with similar jobs, regardless of their respective countries of origin. Namely, although a foreigner’s national identities will continue to resonate as a major source of self-identification, which helps to shape their worldviews and in particular their political inclinations regarding the cross-strait relationship, their respective legal working statuses helps them to perpetuate a sense of community with other foreigners doing similar jobs. That is, the fact that they have similar jobs would also make them likely to speak the

³¹ Roger Simon, *Gramsci’s Political Thought: An Introduction* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1982), 69.

³² Simon, 72-73.

³³ Deborah Minkoff, “Producing Social capital: National Social Movements and Civil Society,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 40, no. 5 (1998): 606-19.

³⁴ Alejandro Colas, “Putting Cosmpolitanism into Practice: the Case of Socialist Internationalism,” *Millenium: Journal of International Studies* 23, no.3 (1994): 513-34.

same language; earn approximately the same in income; have similar levels of education and face similar frustrations regarding living and working in Taiwan.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has analyzed how identity has become intricately interwoven in the cross-Strait debate. It analyzed the ways in which ethnic and national identities have expressed themselves among both the Taiwanese and the Chinese people. In these cases, the differences on identity and nationality have created a faultline where divergent political opinions regarding the cross-strait situation can arise. According to scholars like Brown, who argues that a ‘narrative of unfolding’ helps to construct identity and influence political preferences, the era of globalization reveals itself in a need to conceptualize a new globalized narrative of unfolding. As conduits for globalization, their increasing role in Chinese society, which is enforced by Taiwan’s unique positioning vis-à-vis global economic interdependence, the political voice of foreigners is becoming increasingly a unique one.

In the future, the force of foreigner’s political voice in Taiwan will, no doubt, be influenced by factors like economic integration and the persistence of nationality. Moreover, immigration policy also significantly affects the deepening of foreigner’s presence in Taiwan, which in some may plant the seed for foreigner’s political participation through methods like civil society. Thus the significance of foreigner’s political inclinations will be constantly changing and will be substantially influenced by the global labor supply chain, the government’s policies toward foreigners (including immigration laws) and tensions in socialization brought about by one’s homeland identity and one’s experience with Taiwan.