Taiwan and the 'China Impact'
Challenges and opportunities

Edited by Gunter Schubert

5   The China impact on Taiwan's generational politics

Shelley Rigger

The chapters in this volume emphasize the ways in which Taiwan's deepening engagement with mainland China since the late 1980s has affected the island. As important as that trend has been, it is but one of the forces that helped transform Taiwan at the end of the twentieth century. Taiwan's society also experienced accelerated economic development and, perhaps most importantly, democratization. These three trends' roots are intertwined; each helped drive the others in complex ways, and together they reshaped the island's ideological and institutional landscapes. The Taiwan that today's young adults inhabit is utterly different from the one in which their parents grew up. Where their parents endured privation, they enjoy prosperity. Where their parents experienced political repression, they participate in democracy. And where their parents saw danger across the Strait, they see opportunity (and also risk). As result, today's young people constitute a distinct political generation. But theirs is not the only identifiable political generation in Taiwan.

In a 2006 publication, I described four political generations in Taiwan. Now, seven years later, it is possible to describe a fifth (Rigger 2006). This chapter uses data drawn from the Taiwan Elections and Democratization Surveys from 2012 and 2008 to reveal the distinctive attitudinal patterns that characterize each of these five generations.[1] It pays particular attention to the fifth generation, the group shaped most strongly by the cross-cutting influences of democratization and the China impact.

The 'national identity' conundrum

Students of Taiwan's democratic politics have identified national identity as the primary cleavage shaping public opinion and driving political allegiances. Definitions and measures of 'national identity' differ, but most focus on a set of traits that appear – based on history, logic and some empirical evidence – to align in consistent ways. According to conventional wisdom about Taiwan politics, five traits – provincial origin; self-identification as Taiwanese, Chinese, or both; preference regarding unification and independence; partisan leanings; and attitudes toward mainland China – constitute a complex of attitudes that are associated with different national identities.

Provincial origin is the foundation of this complex – it is an objective characteristic that social scientists have found useful for explaining the subjective preferences that constitute national identity. Provincial origin is not an attitude; it is a demographic label that describes how an individual's family fits into the linguistic and historical landscape of Taiwanese society. It differentiates between *benshengren* – Taiwanese whose families arrived on the island before the Japanese colonial era – and *waishengren* – islanders who arrived with the Nationalists after the Japanese surrender, between 1945 and 1949.

Until the early 1990s, provincial origin was an official demographic datum defined and policed by the Taiwanese government. Taiwanese were categorized according to where their paternal family was living in 1945. *Benshengren* used identification documents that listed their province of origin as Taiwan. Each *waishengren* carried a document identifying him or her as a native of one of China's mainland provinces. Ironically, while the official categories disaggregated *waishengren* into their respective provinces, they merged Taiwan's indigenous cultural and linguistic groups – Hakka, Minnan and Aborigines – into a single category – *benshengren*.[2] Although this information is no longer printed on identification cards, most Taiwanese know whether they are *waishengren* or *benshengren*.

Research on public opinion in Taiwan has found that the remaining traits that constitute 'national identity' are correlated (albeit loosely) with provincial origin. While individual variation is substantial, by and large *benshengren* are more likely than *waishengren* to self-identify as Taiwanese, prefer independence as Taiwan's ultimate status, support the Democratic Progressive Party or other 'green camp' parties, and hold Sino-sceptical (or even Sinophobic) attitudes. Those whose provincial origin places them in the mainlander (*waishengren*) demographic are more likely than *benshengren* to self-identify as Chinese, prefer unification with the mainland, support the Kuomintang or other 'blue camp' parties, and support engagement with mainland China (Lin 2004).

Linking these individual dimensions in order to construct competing Taiwanese and Chinese national identities allows scholars and pundits to simplify their measurements. For example, some scholars use respondents' preferences for independence or unification to measure national identity, while others measure that concept by recording respondents' self-identification as Taiwanese, Chinese or both (Hsieh 2004). However, assuming that these two phenomena are reflections of a single underlying preference is problematic. For one thing, the correlations among these traits are weak and growing weaker. Provincial origin, the presumed basis on which the attitudinal distinctions are constructed, is far less relevant today than it was 60 – or even 20 – years ago.[3] Also, while carefully-designed academic studies explain their assumptions, methodologies and limitations, such precautions are regrettably rare in popular discourse.

Many journalists and policy-makers have extrapolated from the correlations in the scholarly literature and take self-identification and the independence/unification preference as two sides of a single coin, which leads them to view an increase in Taiwanese self-identification as evidence that Taiwan is moving

toward a pro-independence position (Johnson 2005, Carpenter 2005). A further inference that is often made is that increases in Taiwanese self-identification benefit the DPP. A single sentence in a 2000 report to the Australian parliament perfectly captured the cascade of assumptions that constitute this multidimensional national identity logic:

> The [2000] elections boiled down to a race between the Kuomintang or affiliated movements representing the status quo in Taiwan politics and, on the other hand, the pro-independence DPP [Democratic Progressive Party] which represented the aspirations of a growing number of young people who identified themselves as Taiwanese, not Chinese.
>
> (Klintworth 2000)

Prior to 2008, observers who worried about the potential for trouble between Taiwan and the PRC, which could be sparked by a rise in pro-independence sentiment, took solace in the fact that none of the national identity indicators seemed to be moving strongly in that direction. Support for independence was flat, and equal numbers of survey respondents identified as Taiwanese and 'both'. However, since 2008, the percentage of Taiwanese identifying themselves as Taiwanese has surpassed the percentage identifying as 'both', with the most recent surveys showing 'Taiwanese' leading 'both' by approximately 20 percentage points (Election Study Centre 2014). This finding alarms those who assume that self-identification as 'Taiwanese' is equivalent to support for independence, despite the fact that the percentage of Taiwanese expressing support for independence has barely risen. In short, in an atmosphere where policy-makers and security planners are constantly scanning for trends that could destabilize the Taiwan Strait, the assumption that each of these attitudes can act as a proxy for the others contributes to alarming – albeit erroneous – conclusions. A more nuanced approach to these trends is therefore urgently needed.

Generational politics and national identity

Upon reaching middle age, human beings across time and space have cherished the conviction that young people nowadays are *different*. This idea has a firm hold in democratic Taiwan, but in this case the evidence suggests it may be true, and measurable. When it comes to the island's central political debates, the attitudinal patterns observed in Taiwanese people of different ages *are* different, in important ways. These patterns are far more complex than simply young-versus-old, and they raise interesting questions. What explains the differing attitudinal patterns across age groups? Do they reflect generational shifts, or secular changes associated with the life cycle? Can we use them to anticipate future voters' political preferences? In addition to these questions, this chapter also considers the question raised by the mandate of the China Impact Study: how does interaction with mainland China affect the views of Taiwanese citizens and how it will affect them in the future?

Generational politics theory holds that historical experiences can bond an age cohort in ways that distinguish it from others over time. A competing theory holds that attitudinal differences across age cohorts reflect the stages that each cohort passes through in turn. Generational politics theory envisions each generation as a surfer, riding its particular wave to the beach. Life cycle theory sees age cohorts as a line of buoys, all tethered to the ocean floor, bouncing up and down in succession as time's swells pass beneath them.

The attitudinal patterns we observe in Taiwan incline us toward a generational politics model rather than a life cycle approach because the correlations between age and attitudes are not consistent across different attitudinal measures. For example, as Figure 5.1 shows, neither self-identification nor attitudes toward cross-Strait economic cooperation have a linear relationship with age. Moreover, while the relationship between Taiwanese identity and age curves upward for the youngest and oldest Taiwanese, like a smile, the relationship between age and optimism about cross-Strait economic cooperation looks more like a frown. A life cycle approach would predict that 'matching' values should vary in synch across age groups; a generational model is better able to explain the non-linear and contradictory patterns in Figure 5.1.[4]

Karl Mannheim first introduced the idea of political generations in his 1928 essay entitled 'The Problem of Generations'. He blended ideas drawn from a number of disciplines into an analytical framework that has proven persuasive and durable. According to Mannheim, generations form when individuals born close together in time and space (an age cohort) pass through events and experiences that destabilize the norms in a society just at the time when the political views of these individuals are being formed – between the ages of 18 and 25. Destabilizing events bond these similarly-aged individuals into a political
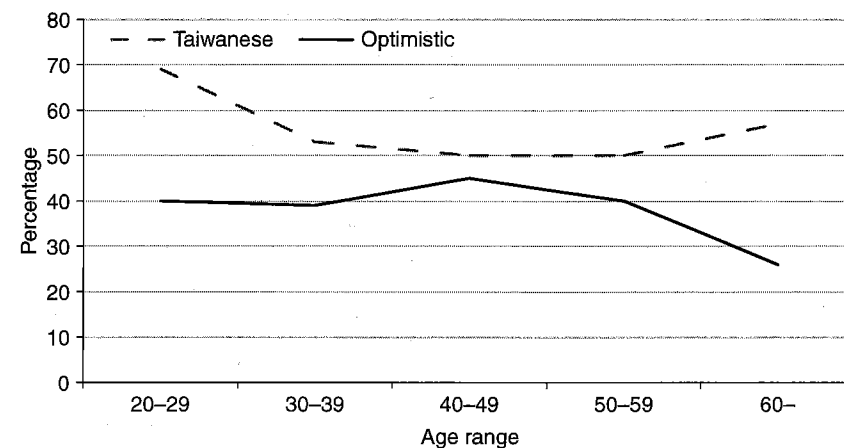

Figure 5.1 Self-identification and attitude toward the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) by age, $N = 1,826$ (source: TEDS 2012). 'Optimistic' refers to respondents who said that Taiwan's economy had gotten better since the signing of the cross-Strait ECFA.

generation. In Mannheim's words, it is through 'participation in the common destiny' of their society during their 'formative years' that generations are born (Mannheim 1952: 303, 283). Mannheim did not claim that all members of a generation would think alike, only that the distribution of attitudes within a political generation would differ from the distribution of attitudes in other age cohorts.

Eventful politics thus can be expected to encourage generational formation, and Taiwan's politics over the past seven decades has been nothing if not eventful. Modern Taiwan hit its first historical inflection point in 1949 when the island settled into a 'new normal' after the brutal disruptions of the 1940s. The stable Japanese colonial rule that had defined *benshengren* life for half a century was over, while *waishengren* faced violent displacement from their homeland. For the next 20 years, the Kuomintang-led ROC government devoted itself to solidifying its monopoly on power through a concerted programme of authoritarian governance and state-led economic development. Its policies toward the outside world focused on resisting the PRC's claim to represent China internationally and building sufficient military strength to 'recover' the mainland. The generation that came of age in the cauldron of ideological rigidity, ethnic tension, political repression and forcible mobilization that characterized those first two decades – Taiwanese born between 1932 and 1953 – developed a political outlook that differed from that of their parents, whether *bensheng* or *waisheng*.

The early 1970s were a second turning point in Taiwan's history. After the United States president visited Beijing, and Taiwan lost the Chinese seat in the United Nations, the KMT could no longer ignore the global momentum that was building towards recognizing the PRC. Once the PRC emerged intact from the Cultural Revolution, the KMT could no longer make a persuasive claim to legitimacy based on its promise to unify China under the ROC flag. These external challenges shook the ruling party's confidence and emboldened its opponents. The result was a struggle for political reform that lasted from the first internal KMT party reforms in 1972 until the creation of an opposition party in 1986. The Taiwanese people who reached their formative years during this period – those born between 1954 and 1968 – thus came to political awareness at a time when the established verities of Taiwan's political life were being challenged and contested from many directions.

After 1986, Taiwan's democratization proceeded relatively smoothly. In 1987, the regime lifted martial law, a move which opened the political system to multi-party competition and extended civil rights to the entire population. In 1991 and 1992, the Taiwanese elected their national representative bodies and, in 1996, they directly elected their president for the first time. In 2000, the opposition Democratic Progressive Party won the presidency, marking the first time in Chinese history that a challenger party captured executive authority through a democratic process. Changes in cross-Strait relations paralleled Taiwan's domestic transformation. In 1987 Taipei lifted restrictions on travel to the mainland, and by the early 1990s the two governments were communicating regularly through quasi-official emissaries. Unfortunately, interaction did not guarantee better relations: the mid-1990s saw some of the tensest moments between the two sides since the civil war.

These three turning points – the late 1940s, the early 1970s and the mid-1980s – constitute precisely the kind of destabilizing moments Mannheim said could create a generational 'break'. They divided Taiwan society into four generations (for a statistical justification for this periodization, see Chang and Wang 2005a). Taiwanese who were born before 1932 were past their formative years when the KMT settled on Taiwan; they constitute the first generation. Those who were born between 1932 and 1953 experienced their formative years when the authoritarian regime was at its height (between 1949 and 1971); they are the second generation. The third generation includes the Taiwanese whose political formation occurred during the period of rapid political change, both domestic and external (1972 to 1986), that is, those born between 1954 and 1968. The fourth generation – Taiwanese born after 1968 – grew to political maturity in a democratic Taiwan.

Table 5.1 shows how broad attitudinal trends are distributed across generations. For each generation, the distribution of attitudes on each issue area is compared with the overall distribution of attitudes on that issue in the sample. Where preferences are distributed roughly equally in the entire sample and a particular generation, that generation is 'neutral' on that issue. Where a particular generation's responses differ notably from the sample, the direction of that difference is recorded. For example, first-generation Taiwanese tend to self-identify as 'Taiwanese' in relatively high numbers, express preferences on the independence/unification issue similar to those of Taiwanese overall, prefer the KMT in greater numbers than other generations, express relatively sceptical views about the effect of cross-Strait economic engagement on Taiwan's economic prospects, and perceive the PRC's military threat to Taiwan as benign, compared with the sample as a whole.

The table is heuristic rather than quantitatively precise, but it reveals two interesting phenomena. First, Taiwan's generations cannot be divided into blue and green. Most generations show a mixture of blue and green attitudes, especially if we observe that the sample overall is more blue than green, so that 'neutral' views tend to reflect that overall blue inclination. Second, there is one exception to the previous observation: the second generation – Taiwanese born between 1931 and 1953, those who reached their formative years during the era of deep authoritarianism – show a distinct green colouration. In fact, one could reasonably describe the second generation, unlike the others, as possessing precisely the complex of traits analysts typically have in mind when they talk about Taiwanese national identity.

Provincial origin introduces an additional dimension into this analysis. Because *benshengren* and *waishengren* experienced many historical events from different sides, attitudes within generations differ across the two groups – especially in the older generations, for which provincial origin was an especially salient force shaping their experience of historical events. Mannheim's theory accounts for this development. When history delivers destabilizing events, he

Table 5.1 Patterns of attitudes across major issues by generation

Generation	Self-identification	Independence/unification	Party	Cross-Strait economic ties	Cross-Strait military threat
First	Taiwanese	Neutral	KMT	Pessimistic	
Second	Taiwanese	Independence	DPP	Pessimistic	Neutral
Third	Both	Neutral	KMT	Neutral	Neutral
Fourth	Both		Neutral		Neutral

Source: TEDS 2008. Light shading indicates that the generation has a green tilt on a particular issue, relative to the sample as a whole. Dark shading indicates a blue leaning. The absence of shading indicates a neutral position relative to the sample.

observes, members of newly-forming generations will 'take sides' (Mannheim 1952: 301). He calls the resulting subgroups 'generation units':

> Youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems may be said to be part of the same actual generation; while those groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways constitute separate generation units.
>
> (Mannheim 1952: 304)

As Mannheim reminds us, because provincial origin is an important factor determining *how* Taiwanese 'work up the material of their common experiences', we should expect *benshengren* and *waishengren* within a generation to differ in their views.

The China impact on generational politics

Taiwan's political generations coalesced in response to developments in domestic politics and external relations; inevitably, the China impact on each generation has been significant. Tables 5.2 through 5.6 detail the attitudinal

Table 5.2 Self-identification and generation (*N*=1,238)

Generation	Taiwanese	Both	Chinese
First	57.45	25.53	6.38
Second	53.89	36.14	6.54
Third	43.08	49.49	2.82
Fourth	45.83	47.08	4.38
Total	47.5	44.18	4.52

Source: TEDS 2008. Cells contain row percentages. 'Don't know' and other non-responses are omitted.

Table 5.3 Independence/unification preference and generation (*N*=1,238)

Generation	Leans independence*	Status quo**	Leans unification***
First	14.89	46.8	14.9
Second	20.56	44.54	11.83
Third	18.2	57.95	16.15
Fourth	19.37	63.75	14.17
Total	19.14	56.3	14.21

Source: TEDS 2008. Cells contain row percentages. 'Don't know' and other non-responses are omitted.

Notes
* Combines 'immediate independence' and 'status quo now, independence later'.
** Combines 'status quo now, decide later' and 'status quo forever'.
*** Combines 'immediate unification' and 'status quo now, unification later'.

Table 5.4 Partisan preference and generation (*N*=1,238)

Generation	KMT	DPP	NP	PFP	TSU	None
First	38.3	17.02	0	0	0	44.68
Second	28.04	24.3	1.56	0	0.31	44.55
Third	42.05	22.05	1.79	0.26	0.51	32.31
Fourth	36.25	24.58	0.83	0	1.67	35.63
Total	36.03	23.42	1.29	0.08	0.89	37.24

Source: TEDS 2008. Cells contain row percentages. 'Don't know' and other non-responses are omitted.

Table 5.5 Consequences for Taiwan of opening cross-Strait economic exchanges (*N*=755)

Generation	Better	Worse	Same	Don't know
First	29.63	25.94	11.11	18.52
Second	29.3	30.23	12.56	16.28
Third	42.98	24.38	16.94	7.44
Fourth	51.66	18.08	22.51	2.21
Total	41.72	23.84	17.48	8.48

Source: TEDS 2008. Cells contain row percentages.

Table 5.6 Are you worried about a military threat from the PRC? (*N*=755)

Generation	Very	A little	Not too much	Not at all
First	7.41	29.63	40.74	14.81
Second	11.63	30.23	41.4	10.23
Third	9.5	34.3	42.98	11.16
Fourth	6.27	38.75	47.97	5.9
Total	8.87	34.57	44.24	9.14

Source: TEDS 2008. Cells contain row percentages. 'Don't know' and other non-responses are omitted.

profiles of each generation on five individual measures: self-identification, independence/unification preference, partisanship, outlook toward economic cooperation with the mainland, and concern about the PRC military threat. Based on these tables, I construct a profile of each generation and explain how that generation's make-up reveals the impact of China.

The first generation

Asked to self-identify, the first generation is more likely to choose either Taiwanese or Chinese, and it embraces 'Taiwanese' identity more enthusiastically than any other generation. At the same time, the most elderly Taiwanese are the least likely of any age group to express a preference for independence. These

findings seem contradictory if we accept the logic that Taiwanese identity and support for independence 'go together', but if we consider the historical circumstances that shaped this generation, they are anything but surprising.

The Taiwanese in this age group formed their political identities before the confusing circumstances of the post-war era set in. The *Benshengren* in this generation experienced less indoctrination in Chinese identity than those educated later, under the Kuomintang, while the *waishengren* (who came to Taiwan as adults) clearly perceived themselves as Chinese. While their sense of themselves as Taiwanese or Chinese is stable, these elderly men and women show little appetite for the risks and dangers associated with a formal change in Taiwan's status.

On the political question of partisanship, a plurality of elderly Taiwanese rejects all parties, but they are twice as likely to lean toward the KMT as the DPP. These trends, too, are consistent with the generation's historical background and experience. While the necessities of business (and the blandishments of land reform) did win the KMT some support in this generation, most *benshengren* in this age group avoided active political engagement, especially on the opposition side, thanks to the 1947 political purge and subsequent White Terror. The first generation also includes surviving members of the nationalist government and military who moved to Taiwan in the 1940s, a highly KMT-identified group. Still, preferring the KMT and leaning in its direction on the independence/unification issue does not mean that this is a Sinophilic generation. Their attitudes toward mainland China are mixed. Asked whether increasing cross-Strait economic interactions are likely to benefit Taiwan's economy, they are relatively pessimistic, but they are no more worried about China's military threat than other age groups.

There is no question that 'China' has influenced the first generation's attitudes on a range of issues. The *benshengren* in this group passed through their formative years under Japanese colonial rule; for them, China was a distant abstraction until their early adulthood, at which point 'China' – in the form of the Republic of China government, its Nationalist (KMT) ruling party and its *waishengren* elite – dropped onto Taiwan like an alien spacecraft. That alien China imposed itself on Taiwan by force, completely displacing the political leaders and institutions under which the *benshengren* had grown up.

Because they were adults in the 1940s, the first generation also received relatively little of the Chinese-identity-reinforcing education and indoctrination to which Taiwanese born later were subjected. It is not surprising, then, that the most elderly Taiwanese are likely to view self-identify based on their provincial origin. In the 2008 Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study (TEDS) survey, 70 per cent of first-generation *benshengren* identified as Taiwanese; only 14 per cent identified as both Taiwanese and Chinese. That is a sharp contrast to the younger generations, especially the third and fourth, in which the *benshengren* were equally likely to self-identify as Taiwanese or 'Both'.

Elderly Taiwanese, especially the *benshengren*, also are less likely than others to interact with mainland China today. More than 87 per cent of first-generation respondents in the 2008 TEDS survey had not visited the mainland in the previous

five years, compared with 76 per cent in the sample overall. It is not surprising that this group is less willing than the other generations to give answers to questions about cross-Strait engagement. Nor is it surprising to find their responses less consistent across the two dimensions, economic and military. In short, the most elderly Taiwanese are, fundamentally, the product of pre-war socialization and a post-war adulthood spent adjusting to life in the Republic of China on Taiwan, experiences that meant very different things to the *benshengren* and the *waishengren*.

The second generation

The second generation – the Taiwanese who grew up during the 'high tide' of KMT single-party authoritarianism – conforms the most closely to the stereotype associated with Taiwanese nationalism. It has a strong Taiwanese self-identification, especially compared with the younger generations. It is more pro-independence than other generations, and the gap between independence-leaning and unification-leaning individuals is wide. Competition between the KMT and DPP for support in this generation is tight; it is the only generation that is more pro-DPP than Taiwanese overall. It also is the most Sino-sceptical generation; for example, it is the only one in which more respondents believed that increased economic interactions harm Taiwan's economy.

The second generation's 'green tilt' is consistent with the cohort's formative experiences. The generation came of age when KMT authoritarianism was at its most rigid and repressive. For the *benshengren*, the 1950s and 1960s were decades of fear and humiliation. Schoolchildren were punished for speaking their mother tongue and prevented from learning about their homeland; their childhood was suffused with Chinese nationalist propaganda that denigrated Taiwan and exalted the mainland. The *waishengren* in this generation were raised in an atmosphere of tragedy, charged with a sacred mission that they were incapable of accomplishing, and living, in most cases, isolated and segregated from the *benshengren* community.

Mainland China had little direct impact on the second generation's political formation, because during its formative years (the 1950s and 1960s) Taiwan was entirely cut off from the mainland; there was no economic or social exchange across the Strait. Interactions between the two sides were hostile, even militarized. The KMT government constructed the Chinese Communist Party and the PRC state as enemies of the Chinese nation that would have to be destroyed for the ROC's destiny to be fulfilled. Mainland China as a socio-economic reality – as opposed to a political symbol – was entirely absent from Taiwan people's lives. Even abroad, Taiwanese rarely encountered 'the other China', thanks to the PRC's autarkic policies in those decades.

In short, when the second generation was growing up in Taiwan, 'China' meant the China inside Taiwan – the ROC. For the *benshengren*, the anger and wounded pride created by the KMT's repressive policies was directed at that China. For the *waishengren*, China was the longed-for China of the past – and an imagined future. For both groups, the mainland was both the source and the

target of fear and hostility. As Taiwan opened itself to interactions with the PRC, the suspicion and negativity with which the second-generation Taiwanese viewed China – both the China within and the China on the other side of the Strait – diminished but did not disappear, leaving this cohort Sino-sceptical overall, and some of its members deeply Sinophobic.

The stereotypical view of Taiwanese national identity as a complex of attitudes that 'go together' is popular in part because it seems logical, and it conveniently compresses a complex reality. Another reason it is influential, however, is that it characterizes well some of contemporary Taiwan's best-known political personalities. The second generation includes the two most recent presidents, Chen Shui-Bian and Ma Ying-Jeou. The core leaders of the democratic movement and its successor, the DPP, are in this group, as are the KMT leaders (with the exception of the first generation member, Lee Teng-Hui) who have governed Taiwan in the democratic age. The contrasting viewpoints offered by these leaders and captured in the party platforms they have crafted reflect patterns of attitudes that are characteristic of their generation. One of the challenges they face, however, is that those viewpoints do not align as well with those of other Taiwanese – especially younger voters.

The China impact on the second generation is complex. As Tables 5.7 and 5.8 show, it is nearly as polarized as the first generation when it comes to identity

Table 5.7 Self-identification by five generations (N=1,826)

Generation	Taiwanese	Both	Chinese	Don't know
First*	60.00	22.86	8.57	8.57
Second	60.64	29.79	5.32	2.98
Third	51.19	40.04	5.67	1.65
Fourth	49.66	46.22	2.52	0.23
Fifth	68.25	29.67	0.89	0.59
Total	56.57	36.64	4.00	1.59

Source: TEDS 2012. Cells contain row percentages.

Note
* First-generation respondents formed less than 2% of the sample.

Table 5.8 Independence/unification preference by five generations (N=1,826)

Generation	Unification	Status quo	Independence	No response
First	14.29	37.14	25.71	22.86
Second	13.62	50.00	23.4	12.98
Third	15.17	64.53	16.64	3.66
Fourth	13.04	62.47	22.65	1.83
Fifth	6.82	59.94	31.45	1.78
Total	12.71	58.93	22.73	5.64

Source: TEDS 2012. Cells contain row percentages.

and the independence/unification debate – despite the fact that its members are among the most active participants in cross-Strait economic interactions. In 2008, 71 per cent of second-generation TEDS respondents said they had never been to mainland China – the lowest percentage of any generation.[5] This generation also included the largest percentage of respondents reporting three or more visits to mainland China in the previous five years: 16.5 per cent.[6] The explosion in cross-Strait economic ties coincided with the second generation's moment of greatest professional productivity and influence, so it makes sense that the second generation would constitute a substantial proportion of the Taiwanese working and living in the PRC.

The expectation that familiarity makes Taiwanese feel more favourable toward China is an important part of Beijing's strategy for winning hearts and minds on the island. The hope is that a sense of connection and shared interest with the mainland will gradually erode the Taiwanese people's feeling of separateness, opening the door to political unification. However, the attitudes of second-generation Taiwanese (at least those who live in Taiwan, within reach of TEDS pollsters) provide little evidence to support that logic. Instead, they are consistent with studies by Keng Shu and others which argue that engagement with the mainland does not diminish the sense of a separate identity held by Taiwanese – even among those with very close interactions with the mainland (Keng and Lin 2013). It seems, then, that the impressions of China that second-generation Taiwanese developed during their formative years have changed very little in the decades since.

The third generation

The contrasts between the second and third generations are sharp. While the second generation grew up in an era of authoritarian hegemony, the third reached political maturity in the midst of rapid change, in an unprecedented atmosphere of freedom and possibility. As a result, the rigidity and ideological tendencies of the second generation are replaced in the third by flexibility and pragmatism. The changes that began in the early 1970s were not uniformly positive; on the contrary, the 1970s and 1980s were decades of deep instability and insecurity. Nonetheless, these changes enabled – and in fact required – Taiwan to confront the reality of its unsustainable global role and to reform its political institutions and social practices.

Moderation, flexibility and pragmatism are hallmarks of the third generation. They choose a dual identity by the widest margin of any generation. They are more willing than other generations to commit to a political party, and they prefer the KMT by a wide margin – which is not surprising if we recall that this generation has no memory of the White Terror but does remember the economic boom and political decompression that the KMT engineered in the 1970s and 1980s. Their relatively moderate views also help to explain why, although they share other generations' preference for the status quo on the independence/unification issue, they are slightly more willing than other generations to entertain unification as an option for Taiwan. Even many who support the DPP tend toward moderation on these issues. The Democratic Progressive Party's fundamentalist wing is peopled largely with second-generation politicians, while its pragmatic, election-oriented politicians – people such as Chen Chi-Mai, Bi-Khim Hsiao, Duan Yi-Kang and Su Chia-Chuan – are disproportionately from the third generation.

The China factor plays a very different role for the third generation than for the second. Chinese nationalist propaganda was a central theme in the third generation's education, but it was not unchallenged. In the 1970s and 1980s, new ideas began to compete with KMT ideology just at the time the ruling party's certainty and confidence were beginning to flag. The speed with which the democratization movement gathered momentum testifies to the readiness of Taiwan society for new political institutions, and the ease with which third-generation Taiwanese seized opportunities in the mainland after 1987 reflects their openness to China. During their youth, the idea of the 'Communist bandits' as implacable enemies to be destroyed was replaced by a more realistic image of the mainland as a neighbouring country whose global stature and domestic development were on the rise. Even on Taiwan, it was impossible to ignore a global trend away from 'Taiwan-as-China' in favour of the idea that 'China equals the PRC'.

The fourth generation

The fourth-generation Taiwanese grew up with democratization and reached political maturity in a democratic Taiwan. They have never voted in an election without multi-party competition, and they have been able to travel freely to the mainland, in most cases since childhood. Neither Taiwan independence nor any other idea has ever been declared off-limits to them by the government; the only presidents they have known are elected ones. In contrast to the third generation, which was taught to be ashamed of *benshengren* identity, the fourth generation has grown up thinking of Taiwanese cultures and languages as fashionable and cool. The openness of Taiwan's society during the formative years of these young people has allowed them more scope for self-definition and the opportunity to develop hybridized identities.

Democratization altered profoundly the way Taiwanese could talk and think. It thus gave rise to a generation of young people who identify with the homeland in which they were born and grew up. The confusion over how to define that homeland – as Taiwan or as the Republic of China – that plagued earlier generations was much less acute for the fourth generation, not because it was resolved (it was not) but because it was openly discussed, and an important choice – Taiwanese – was for the first time one of the options under discussion. Many members of this generation experienced a Chinese nationalist education, so they are not immune to the claim that Taiwan is Chinese. Nonetheless, they were exposed to a wider range of views on the identity issue than previous generations; those views are reflected in the high proportion in this generation whose

responses to questions about self-identification and the independence/unification debate are moderate (that is, they identify as both Taiwanese and Chinese, and they prefer the status quo).

On political issues, too, the fourth generation is more pragmatic than ideological or emotional. Its support for the status quo in cross-Strait relations is the strongest of any age group. When it comes to unification and independence, it is more pro-unification than the Sinophobic second generation and more pro-independence than the stability-conscious third generation. Fourth-generation Taiwanese are more willing than other age groups to express a preference for a political party, and while they prefer the KMT, they are not nearly as pro-KMT as the third generation: they are more willing than the third generation to give the DPP a chance. They are also more optimistic about China than the other generations. In 2008, more than half the TEDS survey participants in this age group said they thought cross-Strait economic ties were beneficial to Taiwan's economy.

A fifth generation?

Generational politics theory suggests we should expect to see new political generations form in response to major political changes. Few political changes are as significant as the first exchange of executive power in 50 years, so it is reasonable to hypothesize that Chen Shui-Bian's election to the presidency in 2000 would be a generation-making event. Not only was his the first national victory for the opposition, but the positions he took differed profoundly from those of his predecessors. His presidency initiated a sea change in political rhetoric, and his administration introduced new educational curricula that emphasized Taiwan's subjectivity. Assuming that Chen's presidency represented a large enough rupture with the past to spark a new political generation, Mannheim's 'formative years' rule of thumb advises us that the members of that fifth generation would be the Taiwanese people born after 1982 – the eldest of whom were entering their formative years when Chen was elected in 2000.

If it is true that the politics of the Chen Shui-Bian era shaped a new political generation, how would we expect this generation to look, compared to the others? Under President Chen, being Taiwanese was more than fashionable; it was encouraged by the state. So we can expect the fifth generation to identify more strongly as Taiwanese. During the Chen years, there was also more open talk of Taiwan independence as an option, so we would expect young people reaching political maturity during his presidency to lean more toward independence than older Taiwanese, most of whom grew up with tight restrictions on pro-independence speech. Given Chen's success, the Taiwanese choosing partisan attachments in the early 2000s would have recognized the DPP as a viable contender in a way that previous generations would not, which we can expect to lead to an increase in support rates for the party among this group. Finally, the first eight years of the twenty-first century saw extremely rapid growth in cross-Strait economic ties but also an increase in

military tensions. Those trends, too, should be reflected in the fifth generation's attitudes.

The 2008 TEDS survey included very few members of a potential fifth generation (just under five per cent of the survey respondents), so in Tables 5.1 through 5.6, individuals born since 1982 are included in the fourth generation. Tables 5.7 through 5.12 break out these potential fifth-generation respondents and test the propositions in the previous paragraph.[7] Table 5.7 shows that the first proposition is supported: while the percentage of respondents claiming a Taiwanese identity increased in all groups between 2008 and 2012, those whose formative years coincided with the Chen presidency are substantially more likely than those in any other age group to identify as Taiwanese; the biggest gap is between the fourth and fifth generations. Table 5.8 shows similar results: as expected, the fifth generation favours independence far more strongly (and is more sceptical of unification) than the others. Likewise, Table 5.9 offers support for the expectation that growing up with a DPP president would make 'Gen Fivers' more willing to express support for the DPP than previous generations.

The data presented in Tables 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 reveal the fifth generation to be relatively green: Taiwanese in identity, open to independence, and more pro-DPP than other generations. However, as Tables 5.10 and 5.11 show, this green outlook does not imply hostility toward mainland China. Unlike the similarly-green second generation, which was evenly divided over whether cross-Strait economic exchanges would make things better or worse for Taiwan, respondents

Table 5.9 Partisan preference by five generations (*N*=1,826)

Generation	KMT	DPP	New party	PFP	TSU	None
First	51.4	22.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.7
Second	33.2	26.6	0.9	0.6	1.5	37.2
Third	46.4	25.6	1.0	1.1	0.9	24.9
Fourth	39.6	30.9	0.7	1.1	0.7	27.0
Fifth	37.1	32.3	0	1.5	0.3	28.8

Source: TEDS 2012. Cells contain row percentages.

Table 5.10 Consequences for Taiwan of opening cross-Strait economic exchanges (*N*=755)

Generation	Better	Worse	Same	DK
First	29.63	25.94	11.11	18.52
Second	29.3	30.23	12.56	16.28
Third	42.98	24.38	16.94	7.44
Fourth	57.89	17.89	16.84	2.11
Fifth	49.46	17.93	25.00	2.17
Total	41.72	23.84	17.48	8.48

Source: TEDS 2008. Cells contain row percentages.

Table 5.11 Are you worried about a military threat from the PRC? (N=755)

Generation	Very	A little	Not too much	Not at all
First	7.41	29.63	40.74	14.81
Second	11.63	30.23	41.4	10.23
Third	9.5	34.3	42.98	11.16
Fourth	6.32	33.68	50.53	9.47
Fifth	5.98	41.30	45.65	5.43
Total	8.87	34.57	44.24	9.14

Source: TEDS 2008. Cells contain row percentages. 'Don't know' and other non-responses are omitted.

in the fifth generation were far more favourable, with 50 per cent saying exchanges would have positive consequences for Taiwan, and less than half that number (18 per cent) predicting a negative outcome. The fifth generation reported a moderate feeling of threat from the mainland; the percentage reporting feeling 'very worried' about the PRC military threat was half that of the second generation, but a higher percentage reported feeling worried (either 'very worried' or 'a little worried') than in the survey overall.

The fifth generation defies the stereotype that Taiwanese identity and Sino-scepticism 'go together'. Among the youngest Taiwanese, attitudes toward Taiwan's domestic issues are largely decoupled from feelings toward the mainland. Generational politics logic can help to explain why. Unlike earlier generations, the youngest Taiwanese did not grow up confused by the gap between government rhetoric and day-to-day reality. 'Republic of China' was (and is) still heard, of course, but much less frequently than in the past. Taiwan's junior high schools adopted the textbook *Renshi Taiwan* (*Get to Know Taiwan*) in 1997, displacing 'China' from the centre of school curricula and giving Taiwanese youth permission to focus on their homeland. This generation also grew up in a Taiwan that interacted continuously with a PRC that had come to define 'China' in the international community. It is hardly surprising that they think of 'China' as mainland China – the China on the other side of the Strait – and therefore of themselves as Taiwanese.

The fifth generation's attitudes toward independence, unification and partisanship reflect the influence of a DPP presidency. The proportion supporting unification is the lowest by far of any generation, and the percentage supporting independence is the highest. Unlike many older Taiwanese, who remember when pro-independence activism was a crime, 'Gen Fivers' do not hesitate to express an opinion on the issue. Still, their preference for independence does not reflect a desire to wholly reject the PRC, as Table 5.10 shows.

To sum up, separating out a fifth generation allows us to observe interesting and meaningful differences between those who came of age under President Lee Teng-Hui and those who came of age under Chen Shui-Bian. But as Table 5.12 summarizes, the youngest Taiwanese – like all generations except the second – are neither consistently green nor consistently blue. One example of the fifth

Table 5.12 Patterns of attitudes across major issues by generation

Generation	Self-identification	Independence/unification	Party	Cross-Strait economic ties	Cross-Strait military threat
First	Taiwanese	Neutral	KMT	Pessimistic	Optimistic
Second	Taiwanese	Independence	DPP	Pessimistic	Neutral
Third	Both	Neutral	KMT	Neutral	Neutral
Fourth	Both	Neutral	Neutral	Optimistic	Optimistic
Fifth	Taiwanese	Independence	DPP	Optimistic	Pessimistic

Source: TEDS 2012 (Self-ID, Independence/Unification and Party) and 2008 (cross-Strait economic ties and military threat).

generation's approach to politics is the Sunflower movement that erupted into the headlines in spring 2014. The Sunflower activists who occupied Taiwan's legislative chamber for a month were not affiliated with any political party, nor did they take a position on the question of whether Taiwan should deepen its economic engagement with China. Instead, they advocated a more transparent and democratic decision-making process and called on leaders to protect the economic interests of Taiwan's middle class.

Conclusion

Generational politics is less a statistical phenomenon than a heuristic device for understanding differences in political behaviour across time. Thus my goal in this chapter is not to prove that modern Taiwan has four or five political generations, but to use Mannheim's theory to illuminate two mysteries in Taiwan politics. The first is the tendency of Taiwanese attitudes to seem inconsistent, even contradictory. What does it mean, for example, when the percentage of islanders claiming a strictly Taiwanese identity grows steadily while the percentage preferring independence remains flat? A generational approach allows us to see the relationship between these two preferences in new ways. The link between identity and independence may be strong for those who grew up convinced that the only way for Taiwan to become the subject of its own history was to reject the idea that Taiwan is part of China. It may not be strong for those whose life experiences teach them that Taiwan is already the subject of its own history, a history in which 'China' is part of 'Taiwan'.

The second mystery that a generational analysis can help to unravel concerns the origins of political preferences. About 85 per cent of Taiwanese *benshengren*, yet only a little over half call themselves 'Taiwanese' and fewer than 20 per cent support formal independence. Clearly, provincial origin alone does not explain Taiwan politics. But filtered through the specific experiences of particular Taiwanese – both *benshengren* and *waishengren* – unfolding over time, political preferences can be rendered coherent.

Taiwanese who came of age in authoritarian Taiwan were forced to choose between identifying with Taiwan or with China. 'Gen Fivers' have never been asked to make that choice. For them, identifying with Taiwanese is natural. But so too is engaging with China. For their second-generation grandparents, 'China' – the China within Taiwan even more than the China on the other side of the Strait – was a cauldron of confusion and regret, hope and humiliation, anger and fear. To the 'Gen Fivers', China is just a nearby country that offers both opportunities and risks, ones they are free to explore from the secure platform of Taiwan, their home.

Notes

1 The chapter uses data from both surveys because while the 2008 survey included questions about attitudes toward mainland China that are critically important to my analysis, the 2012 survey included a much larger number of fifth-generation respondents.

2 The Aboriginal community is comprised of more than a dozen linguistically and culturally distinct groups, most of which enjoy state recognition.
3 For example, among the older respondents in the Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study (TEDS) 2012 survey (those born between 1932 and 1953), 55 per cent of Hakka, 85 per cent of Minnan and 37 per cent of *waishengren* said that their spouses were from the same background as they were. Among younger respondents, those born between 1969 and 1981, the corresponding percentages were 23 per cent, 52 per cent and 9 per cent, suggesting a much higher incidence of intermarriage.
4 Panel studies provide the most persuasive evidence for political generations, because they allow researchers to compare the same individuals over time. They can determine which is predominant: attitudinal changes over the life cycle or persistent differences between age cohorts over time. We do not currently have data that would allow us to conduct such a study in Taiwan.
5 Percentage of each generation reporting zero visits to mainland China (excluding Hong Kong and Macao): first, 87 per cent; second, 72 per cent; third, 75 per cent; fourth, 78 per cent; fifth, 90 per cent (TEDS 2008).
6 The third generation came in second on this measure, with 14.5 per cent reporting three or more visits.
7 Tables 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9 use TEDS 2012 data in order to maximize the number of fifth-generation respondents. Tables 5.10 and 5.11 use TEDS 2008 survey, which has fewer fifth-generation respondents but included valuable questions that were not in the 2012 questionnaire.

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