

# Towards the End of a Long Journey: Assessing the Debate on Taiwanese Nationalism and National Identity in the Democratic Era

Gunter Schubert\*

## Summary

The era of democratization which began in the mid-1980s has caused a new process of identity formation in Taiwan. Although the academic literature on this issue is abundant today, current research still struggles with a precise definition and concept of Taiwanese identity, in particular in terms of *national* identity. This paper assesses the debate on contemporary Taiwanese nationalism and national identity. In general, it confirms the observation made by many scholars that the island's history and political development have led to contending or competing identities. This 'identity split' has not impeded Taiwan in becoming a nation in its own right, however. The ongoing process of nation-building on the island is essentially based on an overarching quest for sovereignty and the desire on the part of the people to soundly identify with their liberal democratic state. More recent trends, though, suggest that Taiwan's national identity may gradually be closing the gates to the prospect of 'one China,' transforming it from 'civic' into 'civic-cum-ethnic.' The PRC faces a dilemma in this respect: if it maintains its pressure on Taiwan, it will fuel Taiwanese nationalism even further. Should China choose to modify its position on the 'one China' principle and become more flexible, however, then it will encourage Taiwanese nationalism to consolidate the existing 'identity divide' between the island and the mainland, thus strengthening the Taiwanese nation.

## I Is Taiwan a Nation? National Identity in the Taiwan Studies Field

In one of her more recent writings in the field of Taiwan studies, Shelley Rigger pointed out three critical issues that have been investigated by academic research on Taiwanese national identity: (1) the Taiwan people's understanding of their identity as Taiwanese or Chinese; (2) their relationship to the Taiwanese state; and (3) ac-

---

\* The author is Professor of Greater China Studies at the Institute of Chinese and Korean Studies, University of Tuebingen, Germany. He is grateful to Jean-Pierre Cabestan, Thomas B. Gold and Wu Yu-shan for their comments on an earlier draft of this article presented at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in January 2004. He also likes to thank two anonymous reviewers for their useful suggestions to revise the article.

ceptable solutions to the cross-strait conflict according to the Taiwanese people.<sup>1</sup> The first point may be modified by saying, that it is not really the understanding of oneself as Taiwanese *or* Chinese, but rather the understanding of oneself as Taiwanese *vis-à-vis* Chinese, that has stimulated much qualitative and quantitative research in the past decade. Rigger did not elaborate in detail on the findings concerning Taiwanese national identity,<sup>2</sup> but pointed out some important features of this research: Firstly, earlier studies assumed that national identity was closely connected to the rise of Taiwan's opposition movement and the process of democratization. National identity was said to have been constructed for the purpose of establishing political claims.<sup>3</sup> It was also regarded as an ephemeral phenomenon to be replaced by other issues (e.g. class) once the opposition had assumed control and Taiwan's democracy been consolidated. Whilst many scholars agreed that the reason behind Taiwan's quest for national identity was a politically-induced constructivism which would soon disappear, others like A-chin Hsiao were more prudent in foreseeing the phasing out of this idea. Instead, they hoped that the ethno-centrist undercurrents of Taiwanese (cultural) nationalism would at least be softened by the "recent promotion of the values of multi-culturalism and ethnic equality".<sup>4</sup> As it seems today, the 'identity complex' will determine Taiwan's domestic politics for still much time to come.

Secondly, studies on national identity have been related to Taiwan's democratization and democratic consolidation. Some authors were worried that the domestic national identity conflict between the so-called unificationists and the advocates of Taiwan

<sup>1</sup> Rigger, Shelley, "Political Science and Taiwan's Domestic Politics: The State of the Field", in: *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 4/Vol. 39, No. 1 (December 2002/March 2003), pp. 49-92 (62).

<sup>2</sup> She did so, however, in an article published some years before. See Rigger, Shelley, "Social Science and National Identity: A Critique", in: *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Winter 1999-2000), pp. 537-552.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Wachman, Allan, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization* (Armonk/N.Y. 1994). Wachman was also one of the first to emphasize that the KMT itself was a promoter of Taiwanese national identity: "By emphasizing qualities that the KMT could offer Taiwan rather than addressing the needs of the greater Chinese state, perhaps the KMT unintentionally has been drawn into accepting that Taiwan, not some greater China, is the state. By addressing the citizens of the island, rather than all Chinese, the KMT has unwittingly shifted its focus to the populace of Taiwan as the only citizens of the republic. In terms of its actions and behaviour, the KMT has long since abandoned the role it claims to desire as the sole legitimate government of China and *has accepted the reality that Taiwan itself is the nation*" (p. 257). See also his "Competing Identities in Taiwan", in: Rubinstein, Murray A. (ed.), *The Other Taiwan. 1945 to the Present* (Armonk/N.Y. 1994), pp. 17-80, a concise depiction of the discursive construction of national identity in contemporary Taiwan.

<sup>4</sup> Hsiao, A-chin, *Contemporary Taiwanese Cultural Nationalism* (London 2000), p. 187. Hsiao also underlined the close connection between politics and identity in contemporary Taiwan: "The politically-inspired construction of a particular Taiwanese national culture has relied heavily on pro-independence humanist intellectuals' efforts in reclaiming history, reviving language, and creating collective symbols. This symbolically marks the difference between 'us' (Taiwanese) and 'them' (Mainlanders/Chinese). Establishing a national cultural particularity by representing Taiwanese literature, language, and history as distinct from China's, pro-independence humanist intellectuals provide answers to the questions: Who am I? What could I be? Who do I want to be? A nation was thus crafted discursively" (p. 184).

independence may have had negative effects on the process of democratic consolidation. As stated by Chen Wen-chun, whilst the old ethnic conflict between the Mainlanders and Taiwanese had been alleviated through the process of democratization, the very same process darkened the future prospects for democratic consolidation:

In Taiwan, the demarcation between the 'Taiwanese we group' and the 'mainlander they group' has become indistinct. Instead, the Taiwanese and mainlanders in Taiwan have formed a 'Taiwanese we group', distinguishing themselves from a 'mainland Chinese they group'. The ethnicity problem has evolved into Taiwanese nationalism which favors the creation of a new nation-state. That the unification/independence controversy has been integrated with the tussel between the two major political forces is a potential threat to Taiwan's democratization process.<sup>5</sup>

The intriguing point in this argument was the author's connection of *both* the unification and independence stance in contributing to the rise of a distinct (Taiwanese) national identity. While most Taiwanese support independence, most Mainlanders opt for eventual unification. At the same time, Mainlanders consider themselves as a community, not only different from the Taiwanese, but also from the mainland Chinese. Ironically, both groups – Taiwanese and Mainlanders – "have revealed an intention to establish a nation-state" different from the PRC.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, they differ in their national identifications and, consequently, are in dissent with each other to the detriment of Taiwan's democratic consolidation.<sup>7</sup> This analysis is substantiated through the latest presidential elections held in March 2004 which produced a new DPP-administration focusing strongly on the identity issue. Nevertheless, Taiwan's democracy has remained stable, and it is reasonable to argue that

<sup>5</sup> See Chen Wen-chun, "National Identity and Democratic Consolidation in Taiwan. A Study of the Problem of Democratization in a Divided Country", in: *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (April 1997), pp. 1-44 (39).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 28. Referring to the complex pattern of national identity on the part of Taiwan's Mainlanders, Stéphane Corcuff has written that they "have a pluralistic figuration of national identification first and foremost with China, as the country where the province or local birth place is situated and with the ROC as long as it sticks to the official reunification line; this is complemented by the particular phenomenon of a sentiment of belonging to the sub-national or quasi-national that is Taiwan-as-a-part-of-China." Corcuff nicely shows how the Mainlander's national identity oscillates between different concepts or feelings – ethnic or cultural identification with China, personal and national-civic identification with Taiwan – which are not yet reconciled with one another. However, it is equally clear that the Mainlanders perceive their national identity as something distinct from the Chinese mainland. See Corcuff, Stéphane, "Taiwan's 'Mainlanders', New Taiwanese?", in: Corcuff, Stéphane (ed.), *Memories of the Future. National Identity Issues and the Search for a new Taiwan*, (Armonk/N.Y. 2002), pp. 163-195 (182).

<sup>7</sup> Chen does not elaborate on the difference those Mainlanders within the new 'Taiwanese we group' see between themselves and the 'mainland Chinese they group'. As both Mainlander groups are supposed to support unification, this point demands clarification. However, the author makes clear that even if the unification/independence divide suggests a confrontation between Chinese and Taiwanese nationalism in present-day Taiwan, both camps are united by their common desire to establish a national identity (and a nation state) that sets Taiwan apart from the surrounding world (including mainland China). This means that Taiwan's Mainlanders cannot be easily counted as the force "spreading the gospel" of Chinese nationalism – like the Beijing government wants to have it.

the 'identity divide' on the island has not severely undermined the political system so far.

Recently, Allan Chun stated that Taiwan's democratic crisis had "coincided with a crisis of legitimacy in terms of both national identity and state authority".<sup>8</sup> During the authoritarian era, the KMT had forced a totalizing culture upon the Taiwanese people in order to bring them into the orbit of the Chinese nation, embodied politically by the Republic of China. The opposition, in contrast, had engaged in a nationalist counter discourse that was closely attached to its fight for democracy. Thus, by becoming democratic, Taiwan was doomed to become a separate (Taiwanese) nation. As the KMT gradually modified its concept of the Chinese nation to allow for more political representation of the Taiwanese, and finally turned towards a two China policy during the Chiang Ching-kuo and Lee Teng-hui eras, the DPP responded with even stronger appeals to a new Taiwanese ethnic nation which was to be distinct from China. According to Chun, both parties have become stuck in a nationalist discourse that disables them "to transcend the stereotypical nineteenth century forms of the nation-state and other archaic vestiges of tradition and empire", making it impossible for Taiwan to become a truly post-modern and globalized nation.<sup>9</sup> Chun's main argument was that the main hindrances to the whole project of democratization were due to the continual influence of ethnic and cultural nationalism on Taiwan together with the failure of both the KMT and the DPP to establish policy agendas that would tackle urgent social and economic problems. However, this point is debatable. Although the 'identity fever' is a burden for Taiwan's domestic politics to this very day, it has not hampered the firm hold of democracy on the island. In this sense, both processes – national identity formation and democratization – may have not been as closely linked during the period of democratic consolidation as compared to the period prior to and during the times of democratic transition.

Thirdly, academic research concerned itself with the evolution of the internal identity struggle of the Taiwan people after the demise of the authoritarian era. This debate, which started in the early 1990s, focused at first on the rise of a new ethnic self-understanding or consciousness (*zuqun yishi*) within endogenous groups, such as Fulaos, Hakkas and aborigines. Upon their political emancipation, these groups, which had been politically and culturally subjugated during the reign of the KMT, now experienced a strong desire, to assert their cultural heritage and identity.<sup>10</sup> This

<sup>8</sup> Chun, Allan, "Democracy as Hegemony, Globalization as Indigenization, or the 'Culture' in Taiwanese National Politics", in: *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2000), pp. 7-27 (9).

<sup>9</sup> Chun, Allan, "Democracy as Hegemony", p. 24. 'Postmodern' and 'globalized' meant here for Taiwan to become "the first quasi-national entity whose successful existence is attributable largely to the global economy, the flow of transnational capital, and the deterritorialized identities involved therein" (ibid.).

<sup>10</sup> Good accounts of this debate are e.g. Chang Mao-kui et al., *Zuqun guanxi yu guojia rentong* (*Ethnic Relations and National Identity*), Institute for National Policy Research (Taipei 1993); Shih Cheng-feng (ed.), *Zuqun zhengzhi yu zhengce* (*Ethnic Politics and Political Strategy*) (Taipei 1997); Shih

reconstitution process was followed by an endeavour to create a multiethnic society – as outlined in Chang Mao-kui's concept of the Four Great Ethnicities (*sige da zuqun*) – in which the Mainlanders, now treated as an ethnic category in itself, could also find their place.<sup>11</sup>

As a matter of fact, the discourses on ethnicity and national identity (*guojia rentong*) can be understood as consecutive phenomena in post-authoritarian Taiwan: The former was preparing the ground for the conceptualization of a new political community of islanders that would later be named the 'New Taiwanese' (*xin Taiwanren*). This was a community of fate (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*) founded upon ethnic pluralism, cultural diversity, and a growing identification with the values of liberal (civic) nationalism.<sup>12</sup> The Taiwanese nation as an 'imagined community' must also be connected to the efforts of Li Teng-hui, Hsu Hsin-liang and other members of the political elite, who had grounded the idea of a Taiwanese nation based upon a specific history of suppression, survival, Western influence and multiculturalism, a struggle for democracy and the assertion of the people's national dignity.<sup>13</sup>

The evolution of the national identity discourse is also closely connected to another important insight articulated in the literature, i.e. the observation that the Taiwan people apparently distinguish between a political and a cultural dimension of their national identity. The formula "politically Taiwanese, culturally Chinese" illustrates that, on the one hand, the people identify with their democratic state and insist on its political sovereignty. On the other hand, they also identify with their Chinese cul-

---

Cheng-feng (ed.), *Zuqun yu minzu zhuyi. Jiti rentongde zhengzhi fenxi (Ethnicity and Nationalism. A Political Analysis of Collective Identity)* (Taipei 1998). See also the special edition on *Ethnic and national identities in Taiwan*, introduced by Allio, Fiorella, "The Dynamics of the Identity Issue in Taiwan", in: *China Perspectives*, No. 28 (March-April 2000), pp. 43-50.

<sup>11</sup> Chang Mao-kui, "Taiwande zhengzhi zhuanxing yu zhengzhide 'zuqunhua' guocheng (Taiwan's Political Transformation and the Process of Political Ethnicization)", in: Shih Cheng-feng (ed.), *Zuqun zhengzhi yu zhengce (Ethnical Politics and Political Strategy)* (Taipei 1997), pp. 37-71.

<sup>12</sup> Tu Wei-ming, "Cultural Identity and the Politics of Recognition in Contemporary Taiwan", in: *The China Quarterly*, No. 148 (December 1996), pp. 1115-1140; Schubert, Gunter, "The Discourse on National Identity in Contemporary Taiwan", in: *China Perspectives*, No. 25 (September-October 1999), pp. 44-59; Wong, Timothy Ka-ying, *The Rise and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Nationalism*, Occasional Paper No. 116 (Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies 2001).

<sup>13</sup> It was Taiwan's former president and KMT leader Li Teng-hui who prominently sponsored the concept of the New Taiwanese which he defined as people who loved Taiwan and would work and die for Taiwan, no matter what their "ethnic" background was. His idea comported to considerable degree with former DPP president Hsu Hsin-liang's definition of the Taiwanese as a New Rising People (*xinxing minzu*), a community of fate that has been crafted by cultural fusion, a trading mentality and the spiritual and physical resistance against foreign intrusion over the centuries. See Li Teng-hui, *Taiwande zhuzhang (engl. Originaltitel: With the People Always in My Heart)* (Taipei 1999); Hsu Hsin-liang, *Xinxing minzu (engl. Originaltitel: The New Rising Nation)*, (Taipei 1995). On Li Teng-hui's contribution to the formation of a Taiwanese national identity see also Wu Rwei-Ren, "Toward a Pragmatic Nationalism. Democratization and Taiwan's Passive Revolution", in: Corcuff, Stéphane (Hg.), *Memoirs of the Future. National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan* (Armonk/N.Y. 2002), pp. 196-218.

tural heritage (or ethno-cultural bonds).<sup>14</sup> Three further observations have been made along the lines of this finding:

1. Taiwanese national identity is not based on (the invention of) a unique Taiwanese culture which is distinct from the Chinese culture.<sup>15</sup>
2. Taiwan's national identity is civic in nature and is not primarily based on primordialist or cultural criteria.<sup>16</sup>
3. Taiwan's national identity does not necessarily produce a quest for formal independence.

The last inference has been grounded on survey data giving evidence of a constant relative majority of so-called status quo-proponents who would neither opt for immediate unification nor immediate independence but postpone the final decision on Taiwan's political status to some distant day in the future. If at the same time those statistics are factored in which show that a majority of respondents consider themselves as "Taiwanese only" or both "Taiwanese and Chinese", far outnumbering the "Chinese only" category, it becomes clear that feeling "Taiwanese" and supporting the status quo – instead of opting for clear-cut independence – go easily together in present-day Taiwan. Of course, this leaves open the question why exactly people opt for the status quo – a contextual and methodological problem that can hardly be solved by refining the methods of gathering data, i.e. via introducing new sub-categories as 'status quo, independence later', 'status quo, unification later', and 'status quo indefinitely'. According to survey figures published by the Election Study Center of Taiwan's National Chengchi-University in December 2004, only 6.1 percent of all respondents declared to be "Chinese" while 43.7 percent claimed to be "Taiwanese" and another 44.4 percent to be "both Taiwanese and Chinese". At the same time, only 1.2 percent opted for "unification as soon as possible", 5.2 percent for

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Hughes, Christopher, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism* (London 1997); Rigger, Shelley, "Competing Conceptions of Taiwan's Identity: The Irresolvable Conflict in Cross-Strait Relations", in: *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 6, No. 15 (1997), pp. 307-317; Wong, Timothy Ka-ying/Sun, Milan Tung-wen, "Dissolution and Reconstruction of National Identity: The Experience of Subjectivity in Taiwan", in: *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1998), pp. 247-272; Chiang Yi-hua, "Is Taiwan a Nation? On the Current Debate over Taiwanese Nationalism and National Identity", Paper presented at the conference on "Nationalism: The East Asian Experience", Sun Yat-sen Institute for Social Sciences and Philosophy, Academia Sinica, Taipei (25-27 May 1999); Chu Jou-Juo, "Nationalism and Self-Determination: The Identity Politics in Taiwan", in: *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2000) pp. 303-321; Lin Chia-lung, "The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism", in: Corcuff, Stéphane (ed.), *Memoirs of the Future. National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan* (Armonk/N.Y. 2002), pp. 219-241.

<sup>15</sup> Only a minority thinks otherwise. See e.g. Schneider, Axel/Schubert, Gunter, "Sind wir Taiwanesen oder Chinesen? – Taiwan im Konflikt konkurrierender nationaler und kultureller Identitäten (Are we Taiwanese or Chinese? Taiwan's Conflict of Competing National and Cultural Identities)", in: *ASIEN* (Hamburg), No. 62 (January 1997), pp. 46-67.

<sup>16</sup> In both Chiang Yi-hua's and Lin Chia-lung's contributions cited in footnote 14, the territorial/political (civic) foundations of Taiwan's nationalism and national identity (vis-à-vis the primarily ethnocultural/primordial foundations of Chinese nationalism) are particularly emphasized. See also Wong, Timothy Ka-ying, *The Rise and Changing Nature of Taiwanese Nationalism*.

"independence as soon as possible and a combined 85.9 percent for the different status quo categories."<sup>17</sup>

All these observations have been grounded on comprehensive survey data.<sup>18</sup> In the two most conventional approaches, national identity is measured in terms of the interviewee's choice of response on the *tongdu*-issue (pro-unification or pro-independence) or through the interviewee's self-ascription to being Taiwanese, Chinese or both. Many studies combine these approaches, such as Lin Chia-lung's recently published article on "The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism" (see below). A third method sets up conditionality, as in Wu Nai-teh's often-cited 1993 study on "Provincial Origin Consensus, Political Support and National Identity".<sup>19</sup> Wu posed two questions: 1. "Some people say: If after Taiwan has declared independence it could still maintain peaceful relations with the PRC, then Taiwan should become an independent and new country. Do you agree?"; 2. "Some people say: If the economic, social and political conditions in Taiwan and the PRC are similar, both sides should reunify. Do you agree?". Hence, conditionality means that the unification-independence bias is mediated by a "softened" choice that accounts for the respondent's order of preferences. Contrary to Lin Chia-lung, Wu Nai-teh assumed the unification-independence divide as the main indicator of his respondents' national identity. The answers to his questions were grouped into different types of national identity:

1. Taiwan nationalists (*Taiwan guojia rentongzhe*): Respondents who said yes to the first and no to the second question (9.3 percent), were defined by the author to be advocates of independence.
2. Chinese nationalists (*Zhongguo guojia rentongzhe*): Respondents who said no to the first question and yes to the second question (38.0 percent), were defined as advocates of unification.
3. National "optionalists" (*guojia xuanzezhe*): Respondents who said yes to both questions (25 percent), thereby advocating both independence and unification.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The respective figures can be easily obtained via the Election Study Center's webpage (<http://www2.nccu.edu.tw/~s00/eng/data/data.htm>; 9-11-2005).

<sup>18</sup> There are a couple of methodological problems intertwined with quantitative and qualitative approaches to this kind of data gathering that cannot be dealt with here in detail. Generally spoken, the way questions are asked must be critically assessed, as they frequently influence if not pre-determine the answers given and often enough expose the scholar's personal stance on Taiwan's national identity. For a critical note on methodology concerning research on Taiwanese national identity see also Rigger, "Social Science and National Identity. A Critique".

<sup>19</sup> Wu Nai-teh, "Shengji yishi, zhengzhi zhichi he guojia rentong (Provincial Origin Consensus, Political Support and National Identity)", in: Chang Mai-kui et al. (ed.), *Zuqun guanxi yu guojia rentong (Ethnic Relations and National Identity)* (Taibei 1993), pp. 27-51. The article draws on data gathered in 1992.

<sup>20</sup> There were another 27.3 percent of respondents who Wu did not label, as their answers – no opinion on one or both of the questions or opposing both unification and independence as defined by the author (11 percent) – gave an unclear picture. Wu's problematic sidelining of this huge residual cate-

Lin Chia-lung, for his part, presented one of the most diversified and empirically substantiated typologies. Investigating the Taiwan people's relationship to national identity and (Taiwanese) statehood, Lin constructed a survey composed of two questions: 1. "In our society, some people regard themselves as Taiwanese and some regard themselves as Chinese. Do you think you are Taiwanese or Chinese?"; 2. "Some people in our society advocate that Taiwan should be an independent country and some advocate that Taiwan should unite with the Mainland: Do you support Taiwan independence or Chinese unification?".<sup>21</sup> He then identified the following types of nationalism in contemporary Taiwan:

1. *Taiwanese nationalists*, who identify themselves as Taiwanese and support Taiwan's independence,
2. *Chinese nationalists*, who identify themselves as Chinese and support Chinese unification,
3. *Independentists*, who support Taiwan's independence but possess some degree of Chinese identification,
4. *Unificationists*, who support Chinese unification but possess some degree of Taiwanese identification,
5. *Realists*, who advocate maintaining the status quo, regardless of their national identities, and
6. *Passivists*, who have either no opinion or find Taiwan's independence, Chinese unification and the status quo equally acceptable.<sup>22</sup>

Taking his findings one step further, Lin correlated the so-called "nationalists" and "non-nationalists" with the ethnic affiliation of his respondents – Holos, Hakkas (which he named the "New Taiwanese"), and Mainlanders – to carve out a complex national identity structure in Taiwan as it evolved throughout the 1990s. Through these results, it was readily observable that over time, the *Realists* had become by far the largest group amongst both the Taiwanese and the Mainlanders, amounting to 43 percent and 52 percent respectively in 1999.

---

gory stood out rather oddly and induced other authors – including Wu himself in a couple of later papers – to modify his framework. The result were more refined typologies in which, for instance, the "optionalists" were re-labeled "pragmatists" and those opposing both independence and unification named "conservatives".

<sup>21</sup> Lin Chia-lung, "The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism", pp. 220-222. Interestingly, the author distinguishes between national identity and statehood, which is rather unusual given the fact that statehood normally figures as an integral component in the concept of national identity. However, according to Lin's definition, national identity (*nationhood*) "is a sense of identity shared among people who believe in their belonging to the same nation but do not necessarily demand that the nation builds a sovereign state". Statehood, on the other hand, "refers to a sovereign state whose people can be of different ethnic and/or national origins"(ibid.).

<sup>22</sup> Lin Chia-lung, "The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism", p. 221.



**Table 1: Changes of Attitudes on Nation-State Building over Time, by Ethnicity (percent)**

	New Taiwanese								
	Holo			Hakka			Mainlander		
	1993	1996	1999	1993	1996	1999	1993	1996	1999
Taiwanese Nationalist	9	16	17	5	5	9	0	2	2
Independentist	7	7	9	7	3	10	3	3	4
Realist	12	40	43	11	52	43	5	40	52
Unificationist	18	11	11	17	15	13	14	22	17
Chinese Nationalist	15	7	3	21	9	6	60	23	15
Passivist	39	20	17	40	17	18	19	11	10

Source: Lin Chia-lung, "The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism", p. 223. \*

The important question remains, however, what these typologies exactly tell us about Taiwan's national identity and its future course. And to what extent can one speak of an existing Taiwanese nation today? Obviously, much of the answer is a matter of interpretation or even a matter of plain belief. Concerning the civic nature of Taiwan's nationalism, for instance, the authors who take to a more "traditional" definition of national identity, viewing it as congruent to the nation and the state, can interpret the strong intermediate categories of status quo-advocats and "both Taiwanese and Chinese" self-identifiers as evidence for Taiwan's "identity split". Other scholars, with a more flexible approach towards the theoretical distinction between the nation and the state, may find that the intermediate categories are not necessarily pragmatic "optionalists" (or political realists), but rather supporters of liberal (civic) nationalism. Nevertheless, others will still claim – although this is more debatable – that by distinguishing between politics (sovereignty) and culture, and by allowing different conceptions of national identity to be discussed, Taiwan is heading towards a 'post-nationalist' future or a stage of 'post-modern' maturity, in which flexible pragmatism and democracy become more important than the quest for national identity *per se*.<sup>23</sup>

Hence, the answer to the question as to whether Taiwan is or is not already a nation, largely depends on one's definition of national identity as well as on the research methodology applied. Generally speaking, the more flexible approach has prevailed in the field of Taiwan studies, as the residual or intermediate categories have become the object of growing academic scrutiny and are being disaggregated ever more systematically.<sup>24</sup> Here, it has been discovered a vast middle ground for those

<sup>23</sup> See e.g. Hughes, Christopher, "Post-nationalist Taiwan", in: Leifer, Michael (ed.), *Asian Nationalism* (London 2000), pp. 63-81; Wong/Sun, "Dissolution and Reconstruction of National Identity".

<sup>24</sup> One good example is Wang, T.Y./Liu, I-Chou, "Contending Identities in Taiwan. Implications for Cross-Strait Relations", in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (July/August 2004), pp. 568-590.

"pragmatists", "realists", "conservatives" or "passivists" who have abstained from dealing with the issue of national identity either for purely political reasons (fearing the 'China threat' or domestic turmoil) or because they have gone beyond the unification/independence and Chinese/Taiwanese dichotomies. These islanders, it may be claimed, would like to be part of a Taiwanese nation that is flexible in determining its cultural essence and political form. This hypothesis, however, still needs to be substantiated by further research.

Most scholars tend to refrain from making a definite judgement on Taiwan's rising or consolidating national identity, but instead emphasize the transitory nature of the current identity-building process on the island. Others, however, have been bold enough to make a clear positive statement on Taiwanese national identity – only to relativize their stance through "pan-China statements" following suit. For instance, Stéphane Corcuff contends that "there is no doubt that the Republic of China is an independent and sovereign regime, both *de facto* and *de jure*".<sup>25</sup> However, he then states, "Taiwan is at the same time going through a nation-building movement and thinking about a postnational form of association with China".<sup>26</sup> Not only does this second contention undermine the strength of his first hypothesis, it also raises the question as to whether the author assumes that the Taiwan people can jump over the historic stage of national identity-formation to embrace what Jürgen Habermas has called the post-national constellation.<sup>27</sup> Is it really possible that a human community can directly transgress into some form of "post-nationality"?

Even if Taiwan's national identity formation is still in a transitory stage, the fuzzy concept of postnationalism does not seem to be the most viable option for the future. To the contrary, it must be said that the ongoing domestic struggle between the 'pan-blue' and 'pan-green' camps over the best way to tackle the PRC and its continuing military threat, Taiwan's quest for national identity is far from becoming obsolete within today's age of globalization. As a matter of fact, the island republic finds itself in an interesting intermediate state, in between what Anthony D. Smith has defined as the ethnic and the civic nation:

Ideal typically, in the 'civic nation', members are related through territorial birth and residence; they possess citizenship in a territorial political community, and are integrated by a unified legal system and a mass, public culture (usually in an official language). In the 'ethnic' nation, members are related through myths of common descent, and are distinguished from outsiders by vernacular languages and customs, traditional religions and a strong essence of native history.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Corcuff, Stéphane, "Conclusion. History, the Memories of the Future", in: Corcuff, Stéphane (ed.), *Memoirs of the Future. National Identity Issues and the Search for a New Taiwan*, pp. 243-255 (246).

<sup>26</sup> Corcuff, "Conclusion. History, the Memories of the Future", p. 247.

<sup>27</sup> Habermas, Jürgen, *Die postnationale Konstellation. Politische Essays (The Post-national Constellation. Political Essays)* (Frankfurt 1998).

<sup>28</sup> Smith, Anthony D., "Theories of Nationalism. Alternative Models of Nation Formation", in: Leifer, Michael, *Asian Nationalism*, (London 2000), pp. 1-20 (16).

Like most nations, contemporary Taiwan contains both civic *and* ethnic elements of a nation, with the latter still being hotly contested due to the remnants of the old 'provincial conflict' between Mainlanders and Taiwanese. Most islanders share a feeling of belonging to Taiwan, a country in which they were born and in which they live as equal citizens of a liberal and democratic state. At the same time, they feel a sense of belonging to a community of fate, or *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, with its own history of resistance against outward domination and threat, and the experience of overcoming internal conflict by successful democratization and ethnic reconciliation. They do not subscribe to the idea of a distinct Taiwanese culture incompatible with the Chinese culture, but they stand united against the PRC's variant of Chinese nationalism and its claim to sovereignty over the island. Consequently, whilst Taiwan may develop a stronger civic national identity in the future, both the confrontation with the PRC and the dynamics of Taiwan's electoral politics may at the same time produce a new and more radical ethnic nationalism. This possibility has become even more probable since the second half of the first DPP-administration under Chen Shui-pian. A new brand of Taiwanese ethnic nationalism has evolved since then which discounts Chinese culture by strongly emphasizing Taiwan's historical uniqueness and the growing political antagonism between the two sides of the Taiwan strait.<sup>29</sup> This ethnic nationalism forces the GMD to distance itself ever more from the unification ideal, while at the same time the Taiwanese (ethnic) nation prepares for severing its links with the Chinese nation.<sup>30</sup>

## II Party Politics and National Identity

Throughout the last decade, remarkable ideological adjustments have taken place within Taiwan's two major parties, KMT and DPP. This has led to rather similar mainland policy agendas as well as a common general outlook on the 'one China'-principle.<sup>31</sup> As a matter of fact, *both* parties have long been engaged in the Taiwanese nation-building process. The KMT, under Li Teng-hui and Lien Chan, has sponsored the idea of a sovereign Taiwanese state (called 'Republic of China') and a civic

<sup>29</sup> For Taiwan's new (ethnic or "de-sinifying") nationalism see e.g. Chang Bi-yu, "From Taiwanisation to De-sinification", in: *China Perspectives*, No. 56 (December 2004), pp. 34-44.

<sup>30</sup> Since the DPP has taken over power, Taiwan has certainly been shifting to the ethnic side on the civic-ethnic continuum, which according to Smith characterizes every nation: "Closer inspection suggests that many nations fall into this mixed category and that therefore we are dealing not so much with exclusive types of nationhood but with a complex continuum which mingles several variables and along which particular instances can be ranged only for analytical purposes. This is important because given instances of nations may change 'type' over time, moving back and forth, from the 'civic' end of the spectrum on one variable to the 'ethnic' on another, combining elements in various permutations according to context" (Smith, "Theories of Nationalism", p. 17).

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. Wang, T.Y., "'One China, One Taiwan': An Analysis of the Democratic Progressive Party's China Policy", in: *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 35, No. 1 (2000), pp. 159-178; Sung Tung-wen/Ch'a Ch'ung-ch'uan, *Minjindang dalu zhengce yanbian de zhengzhi jingji fenxi (A Study of the Political Economy of the DPP's Mainland Policy Transformation)*, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Occasional Paper No.112 (Hongkong 2000).

nation of 'New Taiwanese,' supporting the 'one China' principle and eventual unification. However, latest developments during the 2004 presidential campaign have shown, that the former ruling party has been forced to distance itself from the 'one China' policy in order to avoid political marginalisation. The DPP, for its part, has dramatically accelerated its campaign for a Taiwanese ethnic nation since the second half of the first Chen administration. It has now gone beyond the claim for unconditional sovereignty of an independent Taiwanese state (yet called 'Republic of China') by more or less overtly rejecting the 'one China' principle and pursuing a 'one China, one Taiwan' agenda.

### *The KMT's Mainland Policy Since the End of the Li Teng-hui Era*

When Li Teng-hui in July 1999 declared that Taiwan and the PRC would enjoy 'special state-to-state relations', he brought to an end a decade-long process of national self-assertion by the KMT, which he himself had pushed forward energetically.<sup>32</sup> Although he was not authorized by his party to do so, Li had the intention of sealing the cross-strait relationship with a 'two China' policy which the KMT had officially rejected up to this point. Strongly negative reactions from Washington and Beijing then forced Li to step back from this initiative, impeding his 'two states theory' (*liangguolun*) in becoming official KMT policy. However, the damage had already been done to the party's fragile unity. After Lien Chan's disastrous failure in the 2000 presidential elections, Li Teng-hui was sidelined and his party membership was finally revoked in September 2001. He then became the driving force behind the Taiwan Solidarity Union, a new political party that pursued a strong nationalist agenda and soon became the DPP's main coalition partner in the 'pan-green' camp. Li's ideological evolution changed the ruling party tremendously. He started as a successor of the late Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988 and a defender of the KMT's policy to represent the whole of China, then became a protector of Taiwanese sovereignty under the roof of 'one China' during the 1990s, advanced to a 'two China' policy towards the end of that decade, finally dismissed the 'one China' principle and now supports Chen Shui-pian's 'one China, one Taiwan' policy. When Li departed from office and was ousted by his party, the KMT was left in conceptual disarray regarding its mainland policy.

On the surface, the party fell back on the so-called '1992 consensus' of 'one China, two interpretations' and on the 1991 Guidelines for National Unification, which provide for a three-stage model of political rapprochement between Taiwan and the mainland including eventual unification. Since Lien Chan's failed attempt to enshrine a confederation model into the party charter in 2001,<sup>33</sup> the KMT has pursued

<sup>32</sup> For a more detailed account of the Li Teng-hui era see Dickson, Bruce J./Chao Chien-min (eds.), *Assessing the Lee Teng-hui Legacy in Taiwan's Politics* (Armonk/N.Y. 2002).

<sup>33</sup> For details see International Crisis Group, *Taiwan Strait IV: How an Ultimate Political Settlement Might Look*, ICG Asia Report No.75 (Beijing-Taipei-Washington-Brussels: 26 February 2004), pp. 8-10.

a 'Taiwan-first' approach and insists as unequivocally – as does the DPP – on the ROC's unquestionable sovereignty in all of the party's relevant mainland policy documents.<sup>34</sup> The party has fought hard to reconcile the 'one China' principle with its quest for Taiwanese sovereignty, although due to strategic reasons, it still remains as ambiguous as possible with respect to these quite irreconcilable stances.<sup>35</sup> However, the latest presidential election revealed that this approach has failed to win the support of a majority of the people. The KMT's attempt in finding a middle ground between the PRC's version of the 'one China' principle and the DPP's 'one China, one Taiwan' policy has proven to be futile and obviously demands modification. At the same time, by firstly insisting on its own version of 'one China' along the lines of the '1992 consensus' (which Beijing contests), secondly rejecting the Hong Kong formula of 'one country, two systems', and thirdly, by postponing unification indefinitely whilst simultaneously advocating Taiwan's future sovereignty and political equality with the PRC, the KMT has actually engaged in a 'two China' policy. It has thereby reflected and strengthened Taiwan's quest for national identity and contributed to the widening gap between the two sides of the Taiwan strait since the mid-1990s.

This paradox was brought to the foreground in December 2003 by Lien Chan's affirmative remarks on Chen Shui-pian's 'one country on each side' formula. His remarks were widely interpreted at the time as the beginning of the end of the KMT's pro-unification stand. Even if Lian's statement that "one country on each side is no problem"<sup>36</sup> was more of a tactical statement in a heated presidential campaign, it clearly exposed the dilemma of the KMT vis-à-vis the DPP's outspokenness on the *tongdu*-issue. Since the December 2004 parliamentary elections, this outspokenness has been scaled down as the 'pan-green' camp failed to win an absolute majority in the Legislative Yuan – which would have meant ample opportunity to push its 'Tai-

<sup>34</sup> The KMT's current mainland policy is most prominently spelled out in a document called "A National Blueprint for the Country. A New Taiwanese Force (*guojia xin lantu, Taiwan xin dongli*) (<http://www.kmt.org.tw>). For a collection of speeches by former KMT chairman Lien Chan see Zhongyang zhengce weiyuanhui (KMT Central Policy Commission), *Zhongguo guomindang dalu zhengce cankao ziliao huibian* (*Collection of Reference Materials Concerning the KMT Mainland Policy*) (Taipei: Zhongyang zhengce weiyuanhui, August 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Concerning this 'strategic ambiguity', Su Qi – former head of the Mainland Affairs Council under Li Teng-hui – told this author: "Our concept of ROC sovereignty is certainly ambiguous. ROC sovereignty can refer to the whole of China or just the territory of Taiwan. If the Beijing government is behaving constructively, we talk about the whole of China and unification. If Beijing gives us pressure, we restrict the ROC's sovereignty to Taiwan. This may be a problematic stance in terms of international law. But it is also a pragmatic approach that fits the difficult political situation that we face in the Taiwan strait" (personal communication, December 12th, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Moreover, KMT heavyweight Wang Chin-p'ing was reported saying that the 'pan-blue' alliance of KMT and PFP would not rule out Taiwan independence for the future. See "Chen adds Mongolia to strait debate", *Taipei Times* (22 December 2003); see also "The Strait Grows Wider", in: *Far Eastern Economic Review* (4 March 2004), pp. 24-27.

wanisation agenda' even further.<sup>37</sup> However, this has not substantially changed the KMT's basic dilemma: The nationalists may or may not support the idea of a Taiwanese nation; but they will not be able to avoid the trap of Taiwanese nationalism if they reach out to the 'one China' principle and Taiwanese sovereignty at the same time. Even if the KMT adheres to the principle of Taiwan and the mainland being equal parts of a common Chinese nation and therefore expresses support for the longterm establishment of a common nation-state, it would still be forced by the dynamics of Taiwan's domestic politics to partake in the construction of a distinct Taiwanese-ness. Consequently, the 'pan-green' camp will be at ease to exploit the KMT's dilemma to build a new Taiwanese nation while defying the 'one China' principle.

### *The DPP's Mainland Policy Since the Inauguration of the First Chen Shui-pian Administration*

When recalling the first DPP presidency under Chen Shui-pian, two points immediately come to mind: Firstly, his efforts to talk the Beijing authorities into new cross-strait negotiations through his announcement during his inauguration speech in May 2000 of the 'five Nos'; and his suggestion in various occasions thereafter, that the 'one China' principle could be discussed in future negotiations;<sup>38</sup> secondly, his rejection of the 'one China' principle, displayed by initially speaking of "one country on each side" in August 2002, and then rejecting it explicitly in July 2003.<sup>39</sup> It is fruitless to argue that the latter position was always the intention of Chen, and that he had never been serious about a compromise on 'one China'. What counts is the simple fact, that the DPP has driven the nation-building process in Taiwan to a new stage since its takeover, and that the 'one China' principle was made obsolete during

---

<sup>37</sup> The december polls, in which the 'pan-blue' camp prevailed by a narrow margin of 3.3 percent of the votes and 13 seats were widely interpreted as a KMT victory and a plebiscite against Chen Shui-pian's political course of strengthening Taiwanese nationalism. See e.g. "Saturday not a defeat for DPP, analysts say", in: *Taipei Times* (13 December 2004).

<sup>38</sup> At his first inauguration, Chen stated that he would *not* declare independence, *not* change Taiwan's official name 'Republic of China', *not* write the 'two states theory' into the ROC constitution, *not* promote any referendum on the political status of Taiwan, and *not* abolish the National Unification Council and the Guidelines for National Unification. See Sheng Lijun, *China and Taiwan. Cross-Strait Relations under Chen Shui-bian* (Singapur: Institute of International Relations, 2002), pp. 52-53.

<sup>39</sup> In an interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review* Chen said "that those groups in Taiwanese politics who advocated acceptance of 'one China', they are now nearly scared silent. And those who insist on Taiwan's sovereign independence, those people and groups who are for Taiwan first, can assert themselves more forcefully, and to say more loudly that what we want is Taiwan and China, one country on each side. We don't want Taiwan to be a second Hong Kong. We reject 'one country, two systems'. And we oppose 'one China'. [...] The point I want to make is that, under the so-called 'one China' principle, it is impossible to have negotiations or discussions on direct links. This being the case, direct links cannot be realized under the 'one China' principle." See "Political Pugilist", in: *Far Eastern Economic Review* (online edition) (31 July 2003). However, Chen had always been very consistent in his view that the 'one China' principle could not be a pre-condition of any bilateral talks between Taiwan and the PRC, but would rather be a matter of discussion in these talks.

this process.<sup>40</sup> Important events of this development were Chen's proposal for a referendum law that was passed by the Legislative Yuan in November 2003<sup>41</sup> and his announcement in September 2003 that the DPP government intended to draft a new constitution. Chen proclaimed that the new constitution was to be adopted by an island-wide referendum in 2006 and enacted thereafter in 2008.<sup>42</sup>

It is difficult to ignore the fact that the underlying motive of these initiatives was to prepare the ground for the abolition of the final existing links between Taiwan and the 'one China' principle. For the DPP, which recognizes the ROC as the name of Taiwan's official state due to a 1999 resolution (in which, however, the party also confirmed its commitment to pursue *de jure* independence for the island republic),<sup>43</sup> a new constitution would seal the existence of an independent and sovereign Taiwanese nation-state.<sup>44</sup> Even though this project was halted after the latest parliamentary elections in December 2004, when the DPP failed to win a convincing mandate to bypass the legislature and fight for a referendum, as had been originally intended by Chen Shui-pian, constitutional reforms have since then still made their way in his direction: Amongst other outcomes, the June 2005 decision of the National Assembly to self-abolish and submit future constitutional reforms to a referendum (on a draft adopted by the Legislative Yuan before) makes such plebiscites possible in the future.<sup>45</sup>

All which has been so far offered to the Beijing government by the DPP are negotiations between two independent states on the long-term perspectives of political

<sup>40</sup> As a matter of fact, the 'one China' principle had already been defunct as a serious conceptual foundation for any cross-strait deal in the latter part of the Li Teng-hui era. See e.g. International Crisis Group, *Taiwan Strait I: What's Left of 'One China'?* (Beijing-Taipei-Washington-Brussels: ICG Asia Report No.53, 6 June 2003), pp. 9-17.

<sup>41</sup> The law was passed by the KMT/PFP majority in a scaled-down version on November 26<sup>th</sup> of that year in order to counter alleged presidential plans to draft a new constitution via referendum. For details see International Crisis Group, *Taiwan Strait IV: How an Ultimate Political Settlement Might Look* (Beijing-Taipei-Washington-Brussels: ICG Asia Report No.75, 26 February 2004), appendix A.

<sup>42</sup> "Chen Counts on A New Constitution", in: *Far Eastern Economic Review* (4 December 2003), pp. 14-16.

<sup>43</sup> See "Taiwan qiantu jueyiwen" (Resolution on Taiwan's Future), <http://www.dpp.org.tw>.

<sup>44</sup> The leitmotif behind a new constitution has been spelled out most straightforwardly in a publication of Taiwan Advocates, a research institute close to Li Teng-hui and the 'pan-green' camp: "Consequently, a new constitution has become an essential component for Taiwan to shatter the delusion of 'one China' and fully realize its sovereignty and independence. Particularly today, when the political structure has changed greatly, with the new replacing the old, a new constitution is far more symbolically meaningful than an old constitution that can hardly be remedied through amendment. It is also richer in practical value, because a new constitution, rather than a series of fixes for the shortcomings of the old constitution is more effectual in declaring a determination to break with the past, and more conducive to the establishment of a new sovereign and independent Taiwan (own emphasis)." See Taiwan Advocats, *Taiwan Agenda in the 21st Century* (Taipei 2003), p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> However, any reform leaving the Legislative Yuan needs a 75-percent quorum there. After that, the referendum requires a simple majority of eligible voters to make the constitutional amendment valid. See "DPP leaders summarize wish list for stage 2 constitutional reform", in: *Taiwan Journal* (17 June 2005).

integration to be based upon the principles of freedom and democratic consent on both sides of the Taiwan strait.<sup>46</sup> It is important to note here that contrary to the early 1990s, when the DPP lost an important national election on a highly controversial independence platform which thereafter forced the party to moderate its policies, the DPP's present outspokenness today is much less controversial within Taiwanese society. Although at this time the DPP was considered a radical organization by most of the islanders, this is no longer the case. The reason for this has much to do with the evolution of the KMT's stance on Taiwan's national identity and cross-strait relations throughout the 1990s. After Li Teng-hui had successfully convinced the KMT to acknowledge that the ROC's sovereignty was restricted to Taiwan and its adjacent islands, and that this sovereignty was undebatable, the DPP's later efforts to drive the internal nation-building process forward were met with much less resistance, if not outright support by the people. Strictly speaking, the early Chen administration merely continued what the KMT under Li had systematically undertaken throughout the 1990s: the emancipation of Taiwan from the 'one-China' principle. The major difference between the two parties was one of strategy concerning their respective mainland policies. In terms of national identity formation, however, both are heading in the same direction for many years already. However, whilst the DPP is actively engaged in strengthening the Taiwanese nation, the KMT is dragged along this path.

This said, the second Chen administration is in rather quiet waters as long as it stays with the status quo-majority and abstains from pursuing formal independence. In actual fact, the DPP does not need this symbolic act in consolidating the Taiwanese nation. It suffices for the party to proceed with the current strategy of insisting on sovereignty and *de facto*-independence, while at the same time offering negotiations with the PRC on the basis of unconditional parity in order to keep the larger part of the status quo-majority on its side. Hence, the 'one China'-principle is not mentioned anymore and unification no longer considered a realistic option. The KMT has found itself forced to follow suit for the sake of sheer survival in the political arena. Even though the mainland visits by leading 'pan blue'-politicians Lien Chan and Song Ch'u-yu in April and May 2005 have briefly stirred up a "China fever" in Taiwan, these "historic events" will not – as it seems – turn the tide: Neither the KMT

---

<sup>46</sup> Chen Shui-pian mentioned the term 'political integration' (*zhengzhi tonghe*) in his 2001 New Year's Eve speech and at some more occasions thereafter, but later backtracked from it. Still, 'integration' has become a catchword in the current debate on cross-strait relations in Taiwan, as it promises a conceptual compromise between unification and Taiwan independence. However, this debate reaches an impasse each time the critical relationship between integration and sovereignty has to be dealt with. For a comprehensive theory of integration applying European experiences to the cross-strait case and also dealing with the problem of Taiwanese sovereignty see Chang Ya-chung, *Liangan tonghelun (Theory of the Integration of the Two Sides of the Taiwan Strait)* (Taipei 2000).



nor the PFP can politically hold on if their firm stand on Taiwan's sovereignty and *de facto*-independence loses credibility amongst the islanders.<sup>47</sup>

### III Sovereignty and the One-China Principle

Given the current situation across the Taiwan strait, the question still remains, as to how Taiwan's ongoing nation-building process can be reconciled with a peaceful resolution of the sovereignty dispute. Many proposals have been made over the years, although most of them are flawed as they ignore the fact, occasionally with intention, that a distinct Taiwanese national identity has evolved since the end of the authoritarian era. Today, no peaceful solution on the cross-strait conflict is imaginable that disclaims Taiwan's quest for sovereignty, one of the most obvious manifestations of national identity.<sup>48</sup> Consequently, all efforts in finding a compromise should be concentrated on "some fresh thinking on the notion of sovereignty".<sup>49</sup> It is necessary to find a mutually acceptable formula for both Taiwan and the PRC in order to enable bilateral negotiations on military de-escalation and political rapprochement. Clearly, the Hong Kong model of 'one country, two systems' is not acceptable to Taiwan, since it denies the island genuine sovereignty and is perceived there as offending the people's feelings in belonging to a Taiwanese nation.<sup>50</sup> Also unacceptable is any truce proposal which promises the island republic limited and temporary sovereignty before unification eventually settles the issue.<sup>51</sup> Even the most sophisticated models which try to reconcile Taiwan's quest for sovereignty with Beijing's 'one China' principle are doomed to failure, because they stick – at least implicitly – to a unification teleology which the majority of the Taiwanese find unacceptable.<sup>52</sup> Proposals for some sort of Chinese confederation<sup>53</sup> or Chang Ya-

<sup>47</sup> This interpretation is certainly debatable and seems to be at odds with reports in the international media identifying a political rapprochement between China and Taiwan in the aftermath of the Lien and Song visits. However, I believe that these reports do insufficiently factor in the longterm significance of sovereignty for the majority of the Taiwanese public. There is also much speculation on a cross-strait compromise after 2008 when the next Taiwanese president is elected and new KMT leader Ma Yingjiu stands a fair chance of winning. However, Ma's precondition for any cross-strait deal is quite strong: "If Beijing doesn't redress June 4, we can't talk about reunification", he was quoted in Hong Kong television in early November 2005. See *Associated Press*, 2 November 2005.

<sup>48</sup> See also Schubert, Gunter, "Taiwan's Political Parties and National Identity. The Rise of an Overarching Consensus", in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (July/August 2004), pp. 534-554.

<sup>49</sup> Cabestan, Jean-Pierre, "Is There a Solution to the China-Taiwan Quarrel", in: *China Perspectives*, No. 34 (March-April 2001), pp. 4-6 (5).

<sup>50</sup> The support rate for the Hong Kong model has always been very low in Taiwan and stood at just 10.9 percent in May 2005 according to survey figures regularly published by Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (see <http://www.mac.gov.tw>).

<sup>51</sup> See e.g. White, Lynn T. III, "War or Peace over Taiwan?", in: *China Information*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2000), pp. 1-31.

<sup>52</sup> See e.g. Paltiel, Jeremy T., "Dire Straits. Rescuing the Taiwan Problem from the Zero-sum game of International Sovereignty", in: *China Perspectives*, No. 34 (April 2001), pp. 19-34. Both White and Paltiel assume that for most Taiwanese people it is more important to enjoy far-reaching internal autonomy or domestic sovereignty than risking a military confrontation with the mainland by insist-

chung's concept of introducing a "third subject" at the international level<sup>54</sup> might be more promising as a mutually acceptable formula, but even these models are very critically viewed upon in Taiwan – and by far not only among 'pan green' supporters – since they are linked to the vision of a unitary Chinese state.

A reconciliation between Taiwanese and Chinese nationalism cannot be achieved by compromising Taiwanese sovereignty, but must rather be achieved by a more flexible version of the PRC's 'one China' principle. Only if the Beijing government allows for some form of divided sovereignty under the symbolical roof of 'one China' and abandons the threat of using force against Taiwan, can the ultimate strength and sustainability of the Taiwanese nation be tested. Through this, the rise of an uncompromising Taiwanese (ethnic) nationalism – as witnessed since the DPP's takeover – may simmer down while the Chinese components of the Taiwanese nation may gain new momentum. This will then open the minds of the people to political integration with the mainland. Political integration, however, is only feasible if *both* parties to be integrated enjoy unquestioned sovereignty *first*. It is a theoretical and political mistake to believe that economic integration inevitably leads to political integration. As a matter of fact, without the determination of all entities in lifting economic integration to the political level, political integration will not materialize. Taiwan's support for integration demands the foregoing recognition of its sovereignty by the Chinese government. Concurrently, 'one China' can only be created as a reintegrated China, which – for its part – depends on the mutual consent of *both* sides of the Taiwan strait, should a *peaceful* solution end the cross-strait impasse. Before this can happen, the world must come to terms with a Chinese nation *and* a Taiwanese nation – the latter of which not necessarily in terms of international recognition, but

---

ing on full-scale sovereignty at the international level. However, this assumption may be grounded on a misperception of the political attitudes held by the so-called status quo-majority. Given current survey data, this majority might be flexible concerning the ultimate outcome of any peaceful deal with the mainland – unification or Taiwan independence – but it seems to lose this flexibility if any such deal is based on an 'unification logic'. Only if the final outcome is truly open and left to the long-term development of cross-strait relations, unification becomes a viable option for the Taiwanese.

<sup>53</sup> Jakobson, Linda, "A Greater Chinese Union", in: *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2005), pp. 27-39. Jakobson's model conceptualizes a federacy in which Taiwan would be demilitarized, but at the same time guaranteed international representation as a junior partner of the PRC in the UN General Assembly and with a separate identity as "Taiwan, Greater Chinese Union" in the UN's sub-organizations and other international bodies.

<sup>54</sup> National Taiwan University professor Chang Ya-chung has suggested to solve the sovereignty problem between the PRC and Taiwan by establishing a third subject called 'the whole China' (*zhengge zhongguo*) which would be an independent member of the United Nations to represent them both. It would be the task of the third subject to take over ever more responsibilities from the respective UN missions of the PRC and Taiwan until these two entities disappear and the 'third subject' becomes the new China. This proposal reflects the author's neo-functional approach to cross-strait relations laid out in his above-cited *Liang'an tonghelun*. See also Chang Ya-chung, "Liang'an tonghelun yu 'disan zhuti' de jianli (Integration across the Taiwan Strait and the Establishment of the 'Third Subject')", in: *Zhongguo shiwu (China Affairs)*, No. 5 (July 2001), pp. 56-67; for a more detailed discussion of recent proposals to solve the cross-strait conflict see Schubert, Gunter, "Becoming Engaged – The European Union and Cross-Strait Relations", in: *ASIEN*, No. 89 (October 2003), pp. 5-25.

certainly with respect to the identification of the Taiwan people with their community.

## IV Conclusion

Taiwan's national identity formation stems from its colonial past, its democratization experience, its electoral politics and – the most important driving factor – the PRC's uncompromising 'one China' principle that denies the island political sovereignty and threatens it with military invasion. The early post-authoritarian stages of this identity formation process were characterized by the overcoming of the old Mainlander-Taiwanese divide and the invention of a new political community known as the "New Taiwanese". Taiwan's domestic politics, by the seeming antagonism of a pro-unification and a pro-independence camp, to many observer suggests that the island republic's national identity is "confused" or that there are competing identities stuck in indissoluble contradictions. However, such an interpretation fails to understand what is really going on. Firstly, the confrontation between the so-called unificationists and the advocates of Taiwan independence is based more on political strategy than on national identity, as even the Mainlanders in the 'pan-blue' camp perceive themselves as different from their "compatriots" in the PRC. Secondly, no matter how large the differences in terms of politics and national identity may be, all Taiwanese desire undisputable sovereignty for their country, which they primarily relate to Taiwan's specific history and democratic system – and less to its cultural heritage which most Taiwanese accept as predominantly Chinese. All Taiwanese stand firmly together against the Beijing government's claim that Taiwan is a part of the PRC. At the same time, the Taiwanese nation is primarily civic in nature when looking at the relationship of the different "ethnic groups" amongst themselves and to their liberal constitutional state. However, under the current pressure of the PRC and upon the consolidation of the DPP as a ruling party, the Taiwanese nation may soon start to close the gates before the PRC – all efforts of the 'pan-blue' camp to establish a "track-2" diplomacy with the Chinese government notwithstanding.

Taking into account its past and present, Taiwan seems to be at the end of a long journey, which took the island from the backstage of colonial history to modern nationalism, incited as much by the Taiwan people's political emancipation from authoritarian rule as by its demand for dignity via international recognition. If the PRC continuously fails to acknowledge this journey and refuses to respond positively to the civic character of the Taiwanese nation by recognising its liberal state and its quest for sovereignty, a more assertive Taiwanese nationalism will take hold on the island. Should this be the case, further conflict and antagonism lie ahead in the Taiwan strait.