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A Comparative Survey of

*DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT*

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How Are the Taiwanese Divided:  
National Identity or Generation Gap?

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# **Asian Barometer**

A Comparative Survey of Democracy, Governance and Development

## **Working Paper Series**

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# **Taiwan's Polarization: National Identity or Generation Gap?**

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## **Abstract**

Like many countries, Taiwanese politics has seen the rise of polarization; unlike many of them, however, the rift is not caused so much by the competition between left and right but by the conflict of national identities. This paper argues that national identity is indeed a major source of Taiwan's polarization, but time will gradually change the essence of this cleavage. As people in Taiwan are predominantly born in Taiwan and called by the mainland Chinese as a Taiwanese, the decline of the Chinese identity is natural. Meanwhile, growing economic inequality will raise the living cost of people at the beginning of their career. Since national identity and generation gap are both time-related, this paper will use two waves of Asian Barometer Survey to detect the causes of Taiwan's polarization. This conjecture is confirmed by the empirical analysis.

Keywords: polarization, Taiwan, national identity, generation gap, Asian Barometer Survey

*“Deserts Chang, a singer-songwriter born in a mainlander family, was criticized by a student from the People’s Republic of China as an advocate for Taiwan independence, for she displayed the national flag of the Republic of China.”*

– Manchester, November 2, 2013

## **Introduction**

Polarization, the divergence of political attitudes among the public, is salient when the society is divided between two extreme positions along a major cleavage. The division is strengthened in a two-party system because the large parties have a common interest to increase their powers by criticizing each other and thus diminish the voice of the moderates. Polarization can happen anywhere—e.g. the United States—but nascent democracies are especially sensitive to disruptive issues that can tear the society apart. To make an uninterrupted observation of polarization, we should focus on a society that has experienced electoral democracy for a considerable period of time. These two conditions make Taiwan a good case.

Taiwan has been holding elections for the national office-holders for more than two decades, but the tension of national identity is embedded in the Constitution of the Republic of China (ROC) currently implemented in Taiwan. The ROC Constitution was made in and represents the whole China; in practice, the electorate of the ROC President is confined to Taiwan and its offshore islands.<sup>1</sup> The conflict over national identity is institutionalized by the presidential elections and has been Taiwan’s dominant cleavage. That Taiwan has been split into two groups holding divergent imagination of statehood is best exemplified by the divided government lasted from 2000 to 2008. Supporters of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) were able to help their candidate win the presidency twice—in the second time, gaining more than half of the popular votes—while the anti-independence camp headed by the Kuomintang (KMT) still controlled the majority of the legislative seats. Clearly, the Taiwanese voters were able to give one of the two camps the supreme executive position, with the other side playing the

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<sup>1</sup> Taiwan started its constitutional reform in 1991 right after the Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion was abolished. The ROC is divided into the “free area” and the “mainland area” but the amendment of the ROC Constitution and the election for the ROC President are restricted to people residing in the “free area” (Taiwan and its offshore islands). See [http://www.judicial.gov.tw/constitutionalcourt/p07\\_2.asp?lawno=47](http://www.judicial.gov.tw/constitutionalcourt/p07_2.asp?lawno=47) for the additional articles (accessed on August 6, 2014).

challenger's role.

Nevertheless, blaming Taiwan's polarization to partisan conflicts over national identity is only looking at the surface of the problem. It is true that followers of the anti-independence pan-Blue camp and the pro-independence pan-Green camp distrust each other. Why people living in the same political space can have incongruous national identities is more complicated than the two images of statehood embodied by the constitution. It is reasonable to presume that younger generations—especially those socialized after Taiwan was democratized—have a more homogeneous identity than the old ones. Meanwhile, inequality in an age of rising living cost will gradually make generation another source of social discontent. Combined, these two factors will transform the nature of Taiwan's polarization.

Since time matters in the evolvement of Taiwan's polarization, this paper will use two waves of Asian Barometer Survey to tract the underlying causes. To build a theoretical foundation of the empirical findings, a literature review will show that existing studies tend to attribute Taiwan's polarization to the competing forms of national identity but rarely address how the tension may change over time. A dynamic model of the formation of national identity across generations will then be presented. The conclusion will discuss the implications of this study.

### **The Sources of Polarization**

Polarization cannot exist without extremism. Depending on the process of nation building and the evolvement of party system, extremism can emerge in the form of territory, religion, or class (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In the last one hundred years, the cleavage between socialism and capitalism has dominated Europe, with political parties representing conflictive ideological positions. Even today, most European parties can be identified along this left-right dimension. Still, the traditional cleavage has gradually lost its appeal, making subjective perception a major determinant of the degree of polarization (Dalton 2008; Curini and Hino 2012). For example, using two waves of Comparative Study of Electoral Systems survey, Dalton and Tanaka (2007: 218) find that the effect of the left-right scale is receding, implying the influence from other cleavages.

In any case, the European-style left-right dimension can hardly explain the source of polarization in East Asia (Jou 2010). For example, Shin (2013) proposes that culture makes East Asia different. Yet culture is a broad term that may have covered a deep-rooted cleavage. Taiwan, an East Asian democracy, is a good case to disclose the hidden split. On this issue, most studies find the conflict over national identity the underlying cause of Taiwan's polarization (Dittmer 2004; Fell 2005). Moreover, this tension is institutionalized by Taiwan's hybrid constitutional system

and mixed-member majoritarian electoral system (Huang 2000; Shyu and Chang 2004; Shen 2005; Yang 2005; Chang and Shyu 2007; Wu 2009; Huang and Liao 2009; Stockton 2010; Rich 2014), especially the regularly held presidential elections (Wu 1999).

Nai-teh Wu (2002), a pioneer of the study on Taiwan's national identity, pointed out more than a decade ago that this issue emerged after Taiwan's democratization transformed the ethnic tensions in the authoritarian period into distrusts between believers of competing national identities (Wu 2002). Thereafter, questions exploring the respondent's national identity become popular in Taiwan's social surveys. Asking whether a respondent is a Taiwanese, a Chinese, or both, a researcher can correlate the answer with other variables (Wu 2005; Tsai et al. 2007; Chang and Huang 2011; Chen et al. 2012; Tang 2013), discuss the ways to reframe the question (Niou 2004, 2005), or address its implications (Li 2013). These authors share the view that national identity is Taiwan's major cleavage.<sup>2</sup> A related question is Taiwan's statehood: is independence or unification the best choice (Wu 2011; Chu 2011; Gunter and Braig 2011; Balderas and Stockton 2013; Chen 2013; Meng 2014)? Asked whether a respondent prefers "independence", "reunification" or "keep the status quo", "keep the status quo" has always been the most popular options (Chu 2004; Rigger 2006).

Evidently, existing works indicate that national identity and statehood choice are critical elements of Taiwan's polarization. However, these factors may be more complicated than what they appear to be. For those who regard national identity to be responsible for polarization, the increasing homogeneity is a puzzle. Even more puzzling is the choice of statehood. Whether Taiwan can claim independence will seriously affect the relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC), making the answer distinguishable from national identity (Hsu 2010; Qi 2012). Most notably, the attitudes of many people can shift between "status quo" or "independence" by whether Taiwan independence would incur armed conflict across the strait (Wu 2004; Wang et al. 2011). The conditional response to the question of statehood preference makes it difficult to spot the true attitudes by a one-dimensional space (Niou 2005; Keng et al. 2009; Liu et al. 2009; Hsiao and Yu 2012; Yu and Lim 2013).

In sum, the Taiwanese are becoming more homogenous for their national identity and more realistic for their choice of statehood. Meanwhile, the worry about polarization is still rampant, making national identity an insufficient answer. The following analysis will show that national identity is time-related: with the progress of time, young people have a natural tendency to recognize themselves as Taiwanese, in

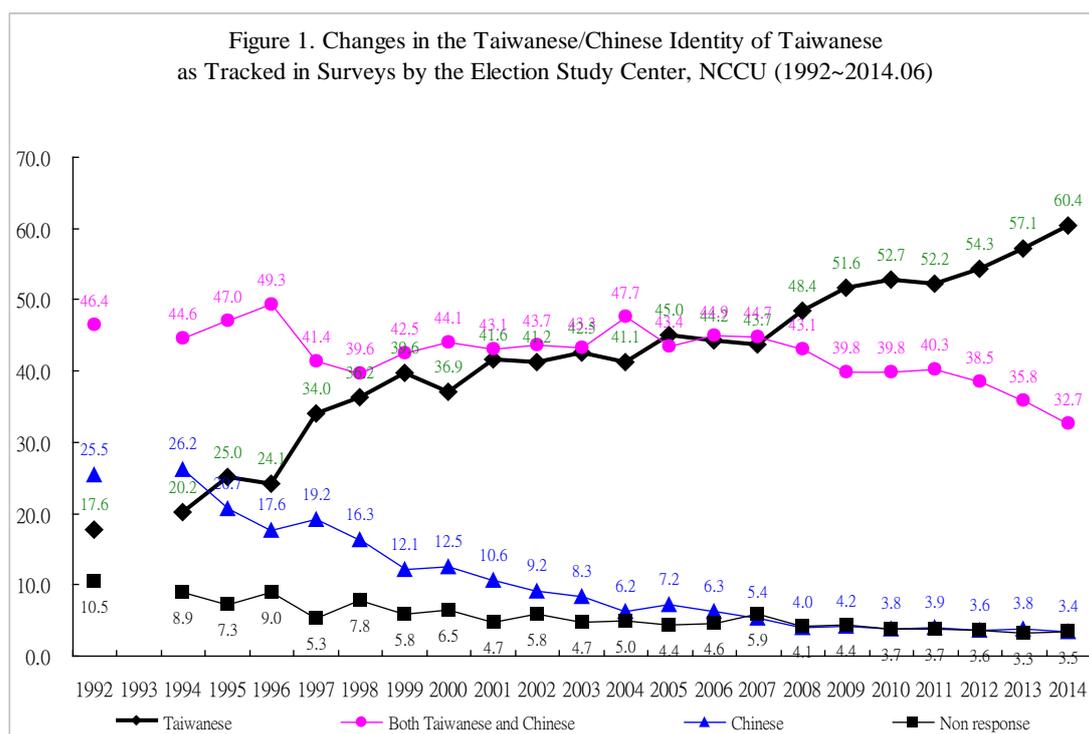
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<sup>2</sup> It is not a surprise that some conflicts can be captured by a principal cleavage. For example, Yang (2007) points out that working class and ethnic consciousness are deeply correlated in Taiwan. Even in the US, race is an important element of its "cultural war" (Fiorina and Levendusky 2006).

contrast with the intransigent national identity of their parents. However, injustice in wealth distribution will soon make generation another source of division.

### A Model of Polarization

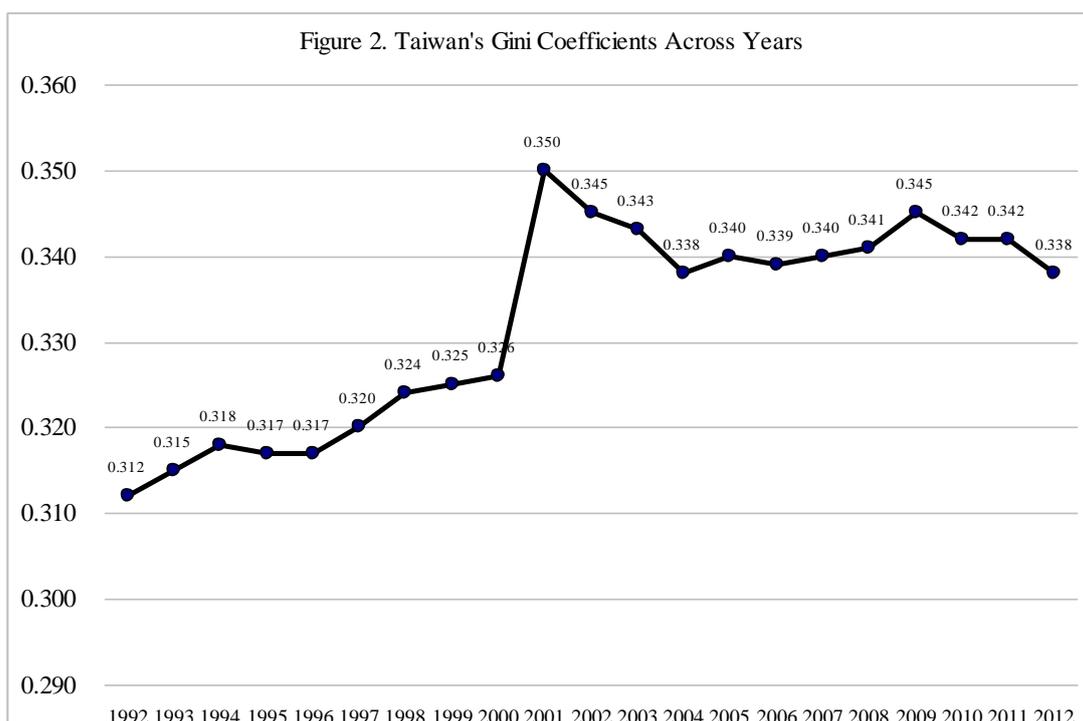
Why does generation matter when explaining Taiwan’s polarization? At least three reasons are worth thinking. We begin by assuming national identity to be the major source of polarization. As depicted in Figure 1, the percentage of Taiwanese identifiers grows by time. As in most areas of the world, the formation of a new identity takes time. First generation immigrants tend to have a stronger identity with their homeland than their offspring. It follows that the increase of the Taiwanese identifiers over time is quite natural. Concomitantly, contacts with the mainland Chinese precipitates the decline of the Chinese identifiers: nowadays Taiwan residents travel to the PRC as tourists or businessmen and are treated as “Taiwanese people”. We thus expect a negative correlation between the percentage of Taiwanese identifier and a respondent’s age.



Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University

Secondly, age also matters if polarization is caused by social inequality. Figure 2 uses the Gini coefficient to illustrate Taiwan’s inequality. The picture shows that the inequality of Taiwan’s household income rises significantly since 2001, the second year marking the first regime turnover, and remains high since then. The Gini

coefficient is a rough index but can succinctly reveal the long-term trend of wealth distribution. A related indicator is the ratio of house price to income: for the Q1 of 2014, Taiwan's score is one the world's highest.<sup>3</sup> The message is clear: very few young people at the start of their career can afford to purchase a house in Taipei, the capital of Taiwan. In contrast, buying a house is much easier when their parents are young. If people spend most of their income on house loan, the burden goes up as one becomes younger. In Taiwan, generational justice is an emerging (and perhaps an emergent) issue.



Source: Report on the Survey of Family Income and Expenditure, 2012, Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, ROC., pp.23-24

Thirdly, if people can be grouped by their different views on democracy, generation is an important factor. In Taiwan, the major institutional change took place in 1991, when the Temporary Provisions were abolished and the first constitutional reform was initiated. This is a remarkable change, because it marks a transition from authoritarianism to democracy. The Temporary Provisions, adopted by the National Assembly in 1948 right after the ROC Constitution was implemented, impose the presidency above the quasi-parliamentary system stipulated by the Constitution. In this sense, the abolishment of the former opens the new way of democratic

<sup>3</sup> See the Global Property Guide (<http://www.globalpropertyguide.com/Asia/Taiwan/Price-History>) (accessed on August 6, 2014).

governance. In fact, the abandonment of the Temporary Provisions can be partly attributed to the lifting of the Order of Martial Law in 1987, after which new parties can be legally formed. Generation matters because Taiwanese growing up under different regime types will be predisposed to distinct attitudes toward the government and the people.<sup>4</sup>

Seen together, these three factors exert considerable impact on polarization.<sup>5</sup> First, increasing homogeneity of national identity does not necessarily reduce its significance, unless the variance is dwindle. This explains the puzzle raised earlier. Second, in contrast, the burden of young people is directly augmented by the widening of inequality. That is, if inequality elevates by time, so is the importance of generation. Third, if generation is marked by a fixed year, the percentage of people educated in the democratic period will be growing, giving generation more roles to play as time goes by. In sum, national identity is always an important variable, it changes over time by its composition rather than its significance; in contrast, the other two factors are becoming more important because social inequality increases by time, and so is the number of respondents educated in the democratic period.

After delineating how generational factors may become relevant, the next question concerns the measurement of polarization. One simple strategy is to identify the position of political parties and see how they are clustered (Grofman and Kline 2012). Nevertheless, what this paper wants to examine is the position espoused by political parties rather than how they are close to each other. In other words, political party is the dependent variable, which can only be studied by locating the position taken by their followers. Following this logic, a useful indicator of polarization is how the followers of each party distrust each other. If the trust on political parties is low, it must be that the distrust on the parties in the opposite camp is high because parties are supposed to represent divergent interests. In contrast, a political institution receiving high trust is unlikely to speak for the extreme positions.

The Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) contains these questions.<sup>6</sup> Table 1 displays the number and percentage of respondents who trust the selected political institutions in 2004 and 2008 (surveyed in 2006 and 2012). The trusts on political parties are surprisingly low, and those on the Legislative Yuan are only slightly higher. In

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<sup>4</sup> The role of generation varies by regime. In the advanced democracies, the new values of the young voters may dissuade them to vote (Blais and Rubenson 2012). In Taiwan, a nascent democracy, young voters may still come out to vote because important political questions remain to be solved.

<sup>5</sup> Here we give a note of statistical significance. In statistics, the significance of a variable is determined by the probability of rejecting the null hypothesis that there is no correlation. The general rule is that the larger the coefficient and the smaller the standard error, the more likely to reject the null hypothesis. This algorithm suggests that the significance of a variable can be limited even if its distribution is close to the mean—implying a small standard error—if the coefficient is also small.

<sup>6</sup> Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study (TEDS) and Taiwan Social Change Survey (TSCS) are two other commonly used surveys.

comparison, about half of the respondents trust the public servants. Political parties are indeed what we should observe. Note that the percentages do not change much in the two survey period, making their comparison robust over time.

Table 1. The Number and Percentage of Trust on Major Political Institutions

Year	2006	2012
Political parties	244 (15.37)	224 (14.07)
Legislative Yuan	308 (19.41)	304 (19.10)
Public servants	835 (52.62)	769 (48.30)
Total	1587	1592

Note: Brackets are percentages of respondents saying “trust”

Sources: Asian Barometer 2006, 2012

If polarization can be found in party identification, “satisfaction with the incumbent leader” is a straightforward test because this variable is strongly affected by the partisan background of the leader in question. There is a caveat, however. If a follower believes that the incumbent leader has failed to satisfy his/her goal, he/she can also be a strong criticizer of the government and dampen the statistical significance of the independent variables. Alternatively, we can consider two other indicators to show how people choose rather than just what they think.

The first alternative explores how the respondents evaluate the legislative capability to check the executive. Since the two ABS surveys were conducted when the government was divided or unified, the answers should vary accordingly. When the DPP controlled the executive branch but the KMT headed the legislative majority (between 2000 and 2008), the KMT supporters should see the legislature as a capable institution to check the former. The situation reverses under the unified government. The second option is to link vote choice and polarization. As the result of an election may determine the controller of the government—hence the policies to be made and implemented—no matter the voters like it or not, this indicator tests the comparison among candidates and should have the most salient impact on polarization. In sum, vote choice may produce the most significant effect on polarization, followed by the legislative capacity to check the executive, and then the satisfaction with the government.

The next section will discuss the database, define the variables, and derive

hypotheses from the model of Taiwan's polarization. The empirical analyses will follow.

### **Database and Hypotheses**

This paper will use ABS data to conduct the empirical study because it is the only social survey that explores the trust on political institutions, from which the dependent variable of polarization is derived. Since the fourth wave of ABS (which asks the 2012 presidential election) is just being cleaned up, this paper will focus on the second and third waves data. The time lag between the two waves of ABS is about four years, but they are nicely separated by the divided government (2000 to 2008) and the unified government (after 2008), making it possible to detect from the two datasets whether regime type will make a difference. .

To facilitate analysis, “do not understand the question”, “can't choose”, and “decline to answer” will be lumped together as missing data. The following are the recoded ABS questions that the model of polarization may want to ask.

#### **I. Dependent variables**

- V1. Satisfaction with the incumbent. “*How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the [name of president, etc. ruling current] government?*” is a continuous variable with high score indicating strong dissatisfaction.
- V2. Legislative capacity to check the executive. “*To what extent is the legislature capable of keeping government leaders in check?*” is a continuous variable with low score meaning high capability.
- V3. Vote choice. “*Which parties (or candidates for president if it was presidential race) did you vote for?*” is a categorical variable with “1 = DPP in 2004 or KMT in 2008” and “0 = others”.

#### **II. Independent variables**

- V4. Ethnicity. “*Father's ethnicity*”, “1 = mainlander” and “0 = others”. This question shows how most studies define a person's ethnicity, which is correlated with but independent of national identity.
- V5. National identity. “*In our society, some think themselves as Chinese, some think themselves as Taiwanese. Do you think you are a Taiwanese, a Chinese, or both a Taiwanese and a Chinese?*” This is a continuous variable with “1 = Taiwanese, 2 = both, and 3 = Chinese”.
- V6. Statehood choice. “*There are debates here about Taiwan's future (reunification-independence). Some prefer “Taiwan independence” in the future, some prefer “reunification across the strait” in the future, some prefer “keeping the status quo across the strait” (neither reunification nor independence). What is your opinion on this issue?*” The answer to this question is recoded as a

continuous variable, with “1 = Taiwan independence or status quo then Taiwan independence”, “2 = status quo”, “3 = reunification or status quo then reunification”.<sup>7</sup>

V7. Birth year, a continuous variable.

V8. Generation 1965, a categorical variable with “1 = birth year  $\leq$  1965” and “0 = birth year  $>$  1965”. Respondents born in 1965 were 22 years old—the last year of their formative years—in 1987 when the Order of Martial Law was lifted.

### III. Control variables

V9. Education. “How many years of formal education you have received?” is a continuous variable with values indicating years receiving formal education.

V10. Economic wellbeing. “Household income”, a continuous variable.

Several notes should be emphasized here. First, the dependent variables play different roles. V1 (satisfaction with the incumbent government) comes from a political value generated by socialization, which tends to last long. The purpose of V2 (legislative capacity to check the executive) is to test whether divided government changes one’s evaluation of the legislative-executive relationship; those giving positive answers are partisan-based. V3 (vote choice) contrasts V1 by showing how much satisfaction leads to the choice for the same party. Second, the above list does not include party identification because most dependent variables are strongly affected how one looks at a particular party. Consider these variables together may create an endogeneity problem. Third, among the independent variables, V4 (ethnicity) has been shown to be an effective predictor of one’s partisan identification (Hung 2014). The empirical analysis will compare models with or without V4 to show its impact. The effect of the other variables will follow the aforementioned discussions, as stated in the following.

H1. When explaining V1, the effects of V4, V5, and V6 are positive in 2004 and negative in 2008, those of V8 are negative in 2004 and positive in 2008 (with V7 having the reverse sign), that of V9 is positive, and that of V8 is positive in 2004 and negative in 2008. In terms of statistical significance, V4, V5, and V6 are high in two surveys, V7 and V8 is higher in 2008 than in 2004, V9 and V10 cannot be derived from theory.

The discussion on the model of polarization has shown why national identity and age cohort are important explanatory variables. H1 expects to find similar results when explaining the satisfaction with the incumbent leader by adding ethnicity and statehood choice to the model and differentiating age cohort into birth year and generation 1965. A reasonable assumption is that people born after 1965 are in average more supportive of democracy than those growing up in the authoritarian

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<sup>7</sup> V5 and V6 only appear on the Chinese version of ABS.

period, so that more of the young people are in favor of the DPP than their predecessors. Still, this assumption is based on the likelihood comparison between two generations and by no means implies that the DPP is gaining an upper hand in the elections. As for the variant degrees of statistical significance, the previous section has explained why generational factors matter more in 2008 than in 2004 but national identity remains the same across time.

H2. When explaining V2, the sign of the independent variables is the same as what H1 depicts. In terms of significance, V4, V5, and V6 do not change much, but V7 and V8 will be more significant than what H1 describes.

H3. When explaining V3, the effects of all independent variables are positive in 2004 and 2008 (with V7 having the reverse sign). In terms of significance, V4 to V8 are the highest in the three hypotheses.

As said, the independent variables affect V2 and V3 in the same direction as V1 does (some signs have to be reversed to fit the dependent variable), but statistical significance increases because H2 and H3 involve a comparison between two parties. Respondents are more likely to take a partisan position when posed with these questions. Therefore, vote choice sees the most noticeable impacts of the independent variables, and the legislative capacity to check the executive is to some extent significant because the two partisan camps play some roles to distinguish the legislative and executive branches. In this sense, the explanatory power of the model on incumbent evaluation is weak because the respondents are not required to make a comparison across parties. The next section will examine how well the ABS data fit into these hypotheses.

### **Empirical Findings**

The ABS team collected the second wave data between January 14, 2006 and February 15, 2006, two years before the DPP's President Chen Shui-bian finished his second term. The third wave data was gathered between January 16, 2010 and February 28, two years after the KMT's President Ma Ying-jeou started his first term. When Chen was the president, the KMT was leading the anti-independence "pan-Blue" camp; after Ma was elected president, the KMT has obtained the majority of seats in the Legislative Yuan. These two time periods make it possible to observe the difference between the divided government and the unified government.

Each test will compare two models. Model 1 tackles variables beyond one's control—ethnicity and birth year—to demonstrate how inborn conditions affect the political attitudes he/she takes as an adult. Model 2 examines how acquired characteristics (except generation) are associated with the three indicators of polarization. Both models will use "generation 1965" to replace "birth year" for

reasons discussed above. Another reason is that these two variables are highly correlated. Since V1 (satisfaction with the incumbent leader) and V2 (legislative capacity to check the executive) are continuous variables, OLS regression is the most commonly used tool to show the direction and significance of the coefficients. V3 (vote choice) is a dummy variable, making the binary logistic regression model the most typical model.

Table 2. Satisfaction with the Incumbent Leader (OLS Model)

	2004				2008			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.
Ethnicity	.306 (.052)	.000			-.304 (0.054)	.000		
National identity			.271 (.037)	.000			-.267 (.039)	.000
Statehood choice			.246 (.038)	.000			-.153 (.024)	.000
Generation 1965	-.224 (.039)	.000	-.013 (.044)	.762	.068 (.039)	.079	.058 (.045)	.195
Education years			.038 (.006)	.000			.001 (.006)	.805
House income			.022 (.017)	.192			-.008 (.018)	.661
Constant	3.092 (.030)	.000	1.646 (.108)	.000	2.768 (.029)	0.000	3.404 (.091)	.000
N	1587				1592			
Adj. R-squared	.042		0.166		.020		0.100	

Source: Second and third waves of ABS

Note:  $\beta$  is coefficient, bracket is standard error

The first part of the empirical analysis focuses on the direction of the impact. Table 2 shows the result when the dependent variable is V1 (satisfaction with the incumbent leader). The result confirms H1 well. Ethnicity, national identity, and statehood choice all display the expected sign in both elections, suggesting that mainlanders and anti-independence respondents are much more likely than the others to give the KMT government a positive evaluation. The signs of Generation 1965 are consistent with the prediction, but the overall significance is not very strong (to be

discussed later). Two implications follow. First, very few mainlanders endorse Taiwan independence, but a considerable number of native Taiwanese also share the same position. Second, a plausible explanation for the weak generational effect is that some senior KMT loyalists may well be the party's critics. We will use other dependent variables to verify this conjecture.

Table 3. The Legislative Capacity to Check the Executive (OLS Model)

	2004				2008			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.
Ethnicity	.116 (.048)	.015			-.161 (0.048)	.001		
National identity			.061 (.036)	.093			-.106 (.036)	.003
Statehood choice			.040 (.038)	.295			-.060 (.022)	.007
Generation 1965	-.085 (.036)	.017	-.060 (.043)	.163	.176 (.035)	.000	.159 (.041)	.000
Education years			.009 (.006)	.130			-.003 (.005)	.624
House income			.030 (.017)	.071			.004 (.016)	.792
Constant	2.486 (.027)	.000	2.256 (.108)	.000	2.503 (.026)	0.000	2.773 (.085)	.000
N	1587				1592			
Adj. R-squared	.006		.008		.022		.032	

Source: Second and third waves of ABS

Note:  $\beta$  is coefficient, bracket is standard error

Whether the respondents are in favor of a unified government or not is shown in Table 3. Except education and house income, the signs of the coefficients are consistent with H2. Indeed, mainlander and the anti-independence respondents are more supportive of the legislature when the government is divided, but much less so when the government is unified. Most interesting is the generation gap. The difference between people born before and after 1965 is more significant in 2008 than in 2004. The second part will elaborate why generation becomes more critical.

Table 4. Vote Choice (Binary Logistic Regression Model)

	2004				2008			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.	$\beta$ (s.e.)	sig.
Ethnicity	1.284 (.154)	.000			1.174 (0.170)	.000		
National identity			1.056 (.135)	.000			.821 (.123)	.000
Statehood choice			.743 (.078)	.000			.565 (.074)	.000
Generation 1965	.254 (.118)	.031	.583 (.157)	.000	.483 (.110)	.000	.770 (.141)	.000
Education years			.052 (.022)	.019			.033 (.018)	.073
House income			.058 (.062)	.346			.149 (.055)	.007
Constant	-.781 (.092)	.000	-4.626 (.398)	.000	-.246 (.080)	0.002	-3.153 (.306)	.002
N			1587				1592	
Cox & Snell R-squared	.059		.223		.054		.170	

Source: Second and third waves of ABS

Note:  $\beta$  is coefficient, bracket is standard error

Table 4 displays the empirical findings when the dependent variable is V3. As expected, all signs confirm H3. The chances of voting for the KMT candidate goes up when the respondent is a mainlander, thinks him/herself a Chinese, and opposes Taiwan independence. Most interesting is the generational factors: when people born before 1965 are compared with those born after that year, the odds of voting for the KMT candidate to that of the non-KMT candidate in the 2008 presidential election is 2.160. That is, when explaining the vote choice, generation is as significant as national identity, and this is a new phenomenon.

That brings out the second part of the analysis: how strong are the correlations? Table 5 shows the statistical significance of the six model 2 analyses. Although statistical significance should not be compared across models, the table still tells the overall picture. According to H1, which aims at explaining V1, the significance of V5 and V6 should remain high, and V8 should be higher in 2008 than in 2004. These expectations are all satisfied by the significance of the coefficients. H2, seeking to

explain V2, is also confirmed except the coefficient of V6 (statehood choice) in 2004. Especially impressive is V8 (generation 1965)—its importance rises significantly from 2004 to 2008. As for H3, the results match the expectations perfectly—national identity, statehood choice, and generation 1965 are all linked to vote choice in a significant way.

Table 5. Statistical Significance of the Major Variables

V	V1		V2		V3	
	2004	2008	2004	2008	2004	2008
5. National identity	.000	.000	.093	.003	.000	.000
6. Statehood choice	.000	.000	.295	.007	.000	.000
8. Generation 1965	.762	.195	.163	.000	.000	.000
9. Education years	.000	.805	.130	.624	.019	.073
10. House income	.192	.661	.071	.792	.346	.007

Source: Second and third waves of ABS

Note: Only Model 2 is considered

Aside from the variables discussed above, how about education and income? As mentioned earlier, the widening generation gap is partly contributed by the rise of social inequality, which is operationalized by how much the respondent's family earns. Although house income does not appear to be a strong factor, data in table 5 is still noteworthy. Note the sharp increase of the statistical significance of house income in the presidential election of 2008. The message of this result is that Taiwan's economic equality has deteriorated to such an extent that the KMT became unpopular among the losers of economic growth. Young people who are at the start of their career should be especially sensitive to the economic environment that may hinder the accumulation of their wealth.

## Conclusion

Without doubt, Taiwan has been suffering from the ill consequences of polarization, but why the society is divided remains to be a puzzle. Those who associate Taiwan's divergent partisan attitudes to the rivalry between two imaginations of national identity have to answer a question: why is polarization growing when believers of national identity are becoming more similar? To answer this query, this paper points out the temporal dynamics underlying the formation of national identity. When most Taiwanese (and their parents) are born in Taiwan and called by the people of the PRC as a Taiwanese, the identity of being a Taiwanese evolves as time goes by. If polarization is still a trouble, political parties representing

different options of statehood choice must be connected to some other cleavages. What this paper finds is generation. Younger Taiwanese are more likely to be a Taiwanese identifier: in their mind, China is a far-off land challenging what they have learned at schools. In the meantime, the escalating living cost—especially the price to buy a house—aggravates their dissatisfaction with the vested interests. Generation gap is further enlarged by the fact that young people grow up in a democratic Taiwan, in which authoritarianism is seen as a restriction on freedom rather than a necessary cost of economic development. These factors make generation an emerging source of Taiwan's polarization.

Polarization is disentangled into three indicators to gauge how much generation matters: how people evaluate the incumbent leader, whether the legislature is capable of checking the executive, and the actual vote choice in presidential elections. Through these measures, we are able to tell the consequence of socialization, the attitude toward unified/divided governments, and the choice determining the power holders. Empirical analysis shows that vote choice is most sensitive to the causes of polarization: no matter how a respondent criticizes the incumbent president or the executive, presidential election is the eventual test of his/her political loyalty. The reason is simple: only the presidential election decides the allocation of political powers, no matter one likes the result or not. National identity and statehood choice remain the dominant sources of polarization, but the role of generation gap increases by time. The cofunctioning of these variables changes the nature of polarization. As time goes by, ethnic identity is gradually substituted by the preference for democracy when the question of national identity is posed to a respondent; inequality will further alienate the young people who are more sympathetic to the disadvantaged group. These divisions all converge to a generation gap. Nowadays a young person has a higher probability of identifying him/herself as a Taiwanese, especially when he/she is dissatisfied with social injustice, even if he/she is born in a mainlander family.

Looking ahead, this paper yields an important message. Since 1965 is a fixed year, the percentage of people growing up in the democratic period will increase in the future, and so is their electoral decisiveness. This trend gives politicians an incentive to rephrase their slogans regarding Taiwan's national identity and statehood choice. More emphasis will be put on the preservation and improvement of Taiwan's democratic system than an ethnicity-based nation building. Interestingly, the most likely lingua franca of the pro-independence supporters will be a mixture of mandarin and local Taiwanese instead of a language beyond the comprehension of the mainlanders. A related trend is that the homogeneity among the new generation will increase; in the end, most people have a vague memory about the authoritarian days. However, similarity among the young people by no means implies the disappearance

of the generation gap. Some factors may still divide different age groups. What we can see now is the government's swelling deficit and the persistent low birth rate. This means that the financial burden of the young generation will be much higher than their parents, especially when economic inequality is rising. Given the dispute over Taiwan's statehood across the strait, national identity will continue to be a major source of conflict. But the quest for social justice will gradually define what an ideal nation looks like.

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