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Tracing “Taiwanization” Processes in Taiwanese Presidential Statements in Times of Cross-Strait Rapprochement

Lutgard LAMS and Xavier Li-wen LIAO

Abstract: Over the last few decades, Taiwanese society has witnessed processes of localization/ Taiwanization/ de- and re-Sinicization (Sinification), all vying for legitimacy. These trends in the nation-building process are played out on the state as well as the civil society level. It can thus be useful to examine whether societal (de-)localization trends are paralleled in any ideological repositioning of official and/or media discourses after a change in ruling party. The current article investigates an important discursive site in Taiwan’s public space, the presidential discourse of the new Kuomintang (KMT) (Guomindang) era, starting from the inauguration address by President Ma Ying-jeou (Ma Yingjiu) on 20 May 2008.

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Introduction

Over the last decade, Taiwan has witnessed two changes in ruling parties. The first time was in 2000, when the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) dethroned the Kuomintang (KMT) (Guomindang) from its position as one-party ruler for nearly 50 years. The second time was the comeback of the KMT in 2008. Both changes in ruling parties, based on the rise and fall of one of the major political formations in Taiwan, have often been linked to the emergence and decline of different national identification trends. That relation has given rise to an ethnic-political-cultural inclusion/ exclusion formula, applied both in domestic and international affairs. A caveat to consider here is that thinking in terms of binary distinctions risks reducing the fluidity and complexity of identification phenomena, which shift along a continuum. Yet, we wish to build our argument on what used to be most saliently present within Taiwanese discourses on identity – namely, polarized modes of thinking. This binary formula has emerged in mainly three arenas within the public sphere in Taiwan, i.e.

- the ethnic identity sphere: mainlanders (外省人, *waishengren*), local/native Taiwanese (本省人, *benshengren*), Hakka, Austronesians;
- political partisanship: pan-blue (KMT, New Party (NP), People First Party (PFP)) vs. pan-green (DPP, Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU));
- the cultural sphere: Greater China's cultural inheritance vs. newly born Taiwanese multiculturalist characteristics.

Within this binary mode of thought, every element at the three levels of dichotomies represents a driving force to counter its antagonist. At the core of this driving force lies a self-identification quest vis-à-vis the self and the outside world. An illustration of this negotiation of identities can be identified in Taiwan over the last three decades, in which we find various societal processes of localization/ Taiwanization/ de- and re-Sinicization (Sinification) at work.

After the second alternation of Taiwan's party politics, the issue regarding the relation between partisan identification and national identification begs the following interrelated questions: Are inter-ethnic relations and issues of identity still deemed relevant in Taiwanese politics given the re-election of the KMT in 2008? Under President Ma's current

rapprochement policy with China¹, has the previous self-identification process transcended or moved beyond identity or has it, on the contrary, rekindled cleavages along ethnic and/ or civic lines?

Hence, this paper advances the specific question of whether the Taiwanese democratization process – in particular, in the field of political official discourse – has shifted away from the localization/ Taiwanization versus (re-)Sinicization dichotomy in the aforementioned ethnic, political and cultural arenas to a new phase of “Taiwanized consensus”. The latter notion could be conceived of as the crystallization phase in which the political parties might be perceived as having adopted the notion of “Taiwan as homeland with Taiwanese characteristics” as common ground to continue its domestic democratization and self-identification in the international realm.

Concretely, we aim to examine political statements made after the second change in ruling party (from March 2008 onwards). These will be taken from speeches by current ROC President Ma Ying-jeou (Ma Ying-jiu), who serves concurrently as the KMT chairman. Presidential speeches are discursive sites par excellence to check the extent to which the national identification issue is still an important component of contemporary political discourse and if it is still played out along antagonistic lines. As an object of investigation, we chose the English-language statements to trace the projection of domestic trends for foreign consumption.² After an initial review of concepts like Taiwanization and (re-)Sinicization, the findings of the English-language speech analysis will be outlined in the following section.

Whither Taiwanization?

The question “Whither Taiwanization?” sounds like an alert to a current crisis and a quest into the future state of this process, not unlike the cry for a rebirth by the Left’s imaginary in the post-1968 period. At that moment, the Marxist Left faced a major failure to capture both the imagination of the traditional constituency and that of burgeoning new social movements. Marxist Left scholars, later called post-Marxist, de-

1 In this paper, the terms “China” and “mainland China” are used interchangeably so as not to make a political statement in privileging one term over the other.

2 In a future research phase we intend to compare the English- and Chinese-language versions of Ma’s speeches to trace any divergences taking into account audience or local constituency accommodation, but this is beyond the scope of this article.

voted themselves to looking for a general survival strategy from an upstream-then-downstream self-identification process to answer the “whither Marxist Left?” question. Antonio Gramsci’s (1971) political theory on hegemony sparked a new sense of future for the dying Marxist Left movement.

In light of this comparison, the “Whither Taiwanization?” query reflects the anxiety not only of the political pan-green camp but also of the entire Taiwanese pluralist society in the post-2008 era. On the one hand, the political pan-green camp has been marginalized in view of the KMT’s “complete (majority) ruling” (完全執政, *wanquan zhibizheng*) on both executive and legislative powers in Taiwan’s domestic politics. On the other hand, President Ma Ying-jeou’s administration-led “rap-prochement” policies with China (like the renewed interest in the “1992 consensus”, “diplomatic truce”, Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) project, etc.) also shifted Taiwanese society into a phase of self-adjustment and challenges on the question of self-positioning vis-à-vis China’s rise on a regional and global scale. Following the Essex school’s experiences, the “Whither Taiwanization?” question seems to tackle similar challenges of finding a common project for the future of Taiwan and its people. Simplistic options are, for instance, to completely erase the current Taiwanization–Sinicization dichotomous structure and just invent a new imaginary future from a virgin ground zero, or to keep the existing structure and seek manageable dynamics to steer it into new orientations.

The query into the state of Taiwanization necessarily leads us to the question of how the meaning of this term has been interpreted by looking at the literature and different positions underlying Taiwanese official statements over the years. While not intending to provide an exhaustive review of the literature on this aspect of the identification process, the following section offers some insights into how the process evolved and was conceived of over several periods in Taiwanese contemporary history.

Defining Taiwanization: A Bird’s Eye View of Its Genetic Process

We define Taiwanization in a broad sense as a general self-identification process of Taiwanese people and their polity in time and in space. The meaning and the objective of this self-identification process can be un-

derstood as a wish to attain the stage where a large domestic social cohesion will have become visible and a sovereign entity will have reached a clear profile in international society. This self-identification process has relied on an inner rivalry structure and enjoys self-empowerment as a consequence of this struggle to move itself forward to the next stage of the process. The inner rivalry consists of a narrow sense of Taiwanization as a counterpart to the Sinicization process. Such a narrow sense of Taiwanization has precise lines of conduct, agendas and strategies to reach a fixed objective and can be identified more clearly when contrasting it with Sinicization. It is in this narrow sense that Taiwanization has generally been understood since the beginning of the democratization process. The question is, how we are to view the state of Taiwanization in the current era? Therefore, the following subsections first take a look at how the signifiers “Taiwanization”/ “Sinicization” could be interpreted in a historical context, while all the same not purporting to provide a full survey of historical interpretation and use.

Sinicization during the First KMT Rule from 1945 until the Beginning of the 1970s via a Top-down Language Policy

Excluding the historical past of the first wave of Chinese migrants’ settlement, the Dutch and Portuguese maritime hegemony era and Japanese colonial occupation, the historical clash between *waishengren* and *benshengren* after the 228 Incident in 1947 defined boundaries in terms of an “us/ them” distinction. This distinction was rapidly expanded in the cultural sphere under the control of the KMT rule. The nationalist regime, led by mostly *waishengren*, promoted Mandarin (北京話, *Beijing hua*) as the unique national language (國語, *guoyu*) in the Free China zone, ran efficient and massive communication and educational campaigns to marginalize local languages, (like Hoklo, which was spoken by the majority of the Han ethnic natives in Taiwan, and Hakka, spoken by a smaller group of the Han ethnic natives), contributing to their being viewed as lower social class dialects. The sort of state-driven “Sinicization” movement enacted as well as fortified a defensive and preventive value system from the mainlanders to exclude the natives from Taiwan’s political and cultural society. Proof of this boundary creation can be found in the study *Language Choice and Ideology in Multicultural Taiwan* (Wei 2006). The author states that

language choice in a language policy seen as choice is a statement about the nation's past and future, the state's response to tensions between globalization and indigenization, and the way we see others and ourselves. [...] Taiwan's historical ties to China and the contention among its ethnic groups are heightened as political representation and resources face challenges (Wei 2006: 89).

To take an illustration from the cultural sphere, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) party-state machine explicitly promoted Mandarin language and cultural activities and forbade the appearance of local (mainly Hoklo) language and cultural performances. Examples of the latter can be found in the investigation of Liao (1999) on the golden age of Taiwanese (Hoklo-dialect) opera films (台灣歌仔戲電影, *Taiwan gezixi dianying*) from the end of the 1950s to the beginning of the 1960s. In the golden age of Taiwanese opera films, during which more than 800 Taiwanese-Hoklo movies were made, the KMT government provided significant financial incentives to encourage the production and distribution companies to subtitle their Taiwanese films in Chinese or dub them into Mandarin when the company asked for a screening license. The Government Information Office (GIO) also charged more taxes on the movie theatre when a pure Hoklo movie was screened. Not surprisingly, this Sinicization process fuelled feelings of us/ them dichotomies and accelerated the Taiwanization process since most of the local audience for these movies were the Hoklo-speaking natives. They were forced to watch movies played by well-known Taiwanese actors based on well-known folklore legends or dramas subtitled or dubbed in what was to them a foreign language: Mandarin.

Taiwanization in the 1970s and 1980s

In the 1970s, the cultural sphere seemed to be where the elites in Taiwan led the new momentum of Taiwanization from the bottom-up to seek cultural self-identification. The well-known "Nativist Literature Debates" (鄉土文學論戰, *xiangtu wenxue lunzhan*) reflected first of all Taiwanese intellectuals' growing consciousness of their endangered Chinese cultural identity vis-à-vis Taiwanese society's massive accommodation of Western culture and literature. A group of critics began to publicly renounce the foreign-influenced, modernist work and to advocate a nativist, socially responsible literature. As for this nativist literature, it was rooted as a creative genre during the Japanese colonization era, from which it inherited the dominant nationalist spirit. Its main features were the use of

the Taiwanese dialect, depiction of the plight of country folk or small-town dwellers caught up in economic difficulty, as well as resistance to the imperialist presence in Taiwan. The nativist literature champions of the 1970s were deemed to have their own political agenda as well (The Republic of China 2001). After the outbreak of two virulent nativist literature debates in 1977 and 1978, “the so-called Nativist Literary Debate was finally brought to an end in the middle of 1978 as a result of threatened government intervention” (The Republic of China 2001). In 1979, several key figures of the nativist camp, like Wang To, exited the literary scene and became directly involved in political protests.

Indeed, in the late 1970s, a new generation of indigenous Taiwanese intellectuals began to demand their rights of political participation and representation in the state, freedom of speech, and the lifting of martial law. In a sense, the articulation of dissident views during the Nativist Literary Debate paved the way for more intense struggles toward democratization, which rapidly accelerated in the early 1980s. The elites complained about the KMT’s violations of human rights and used new magazines such as *Xiachao* (夏潮, *China Tide*, 1976- 1979) to resurrect struggles against despotism, which began during the Japanese occupation of Taiwan. A new kind of literature focusing on the lives of indigenous Taiwanese people emerged. KMT opponents gradually got organized in a *Tangwai* (黨外, outside the KMT party) political group to challenge the KMT in elections. United through their native Taiwanese language and culture, this new generation of intellectuals forged an ethnic alliance among native Taiwanese family businesses and the new middle class, and laboured against the mainlanders’ KMT in the late 1970s and 1980s (Chen 1997). The Republic of China *Taiwan Yearbook* (2001) notes:

Eventually, with the formation in 1987 of an opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party, literature was largely relieved of its function as a pretext for political contestation.

Meanwhile, the “Sinicization” line did not lose its popularity, especially in the cultural sphere. One of the most famous songs from the folk song movement on college campuses (校園民歌運動, *xiaoyuan minge yundong*) – “Descendants of the Dragon” (龍的傳人, *long de chuanren*), written in 1978 by Hou Dejian (侯德健) – addressed all Chinese as the descendants of the dragon and stimulated a significant popular nationalism.

Facing the bottom-up emergent claim for democratization from the native/ local Taiwanese, the KMT leader, Chiang Ching-kuo (Jiang Jing-

guo), tried to encourage ethnic Taiwanese to enter the party so as to avoid being locked out of power if ethnic divisions should emerge as the dominant mobilizing factor. The term “Taiwanization” thus originally meant appointing people from sub-ethnic groups other than the mainlanders to government positions – in other words, localizing and indigenizing domestic politics under the flag of the Republic of China in Taiwan. This process was considered a strategy to survive the KMT’s (Chinese Nationalist Party) legitimacy and power in Taiwan politics.

Taiwanization and the Lee Teng-hui Post-Martial Law Era

The Taiwanization of governmental bodies gradually opened up room for localization and indigenization of ROC politics. The complexity of the lexical variants “localization/ Taiwanization/ indigenization” are laid out in Lams (2005). The term “indigenization” refers to the shift in identity allegiance of the mainlanders from mainland China to Taiwan. This led to the next stage in the evolution, namely the coining of the term “New Taiwanese” (新台灣人, *xin Taiwan ren*) by former President Lee Teng-hui (Li Denghui) (KMT), who launched this label around the mid-1990s as a pacification strategy for dealing with ethnic division. Lee interrelated democracy and Taiwanese national identity in his book, *The Road to Democracy: Taiwan’s Pursuit of Identity* and stated that “a national identity – that ‘we are Taiwanese’ – will be born out of that participation and provide the basis for a democratic culture in Taiwan” (Lee 1999: 62). President Lee’s discursive strategy domesticated or co-opted the opponent political force into the KMT’s sphere of influence and thus started a new democratization phase by attempting to shift the dynamic of ethno-nationalism to civic nationalism.

However, the “New Taiwanese” discourse happened to exacerbate polarities within the Taiwanization-Sinicization nexus due to the advantageous position of the initiator of the new term. The side effect of this top-down “New Taiwanese” discourse, promoted by President Lee Teng-hui – who not only held the most powerful position as the head of the ROC government on Taiwan and the chairman of the ruling party KMT but also carried a special status as the first native Taiwanese to hold such influential positions – was that it inadvertently opened up the identity debate for both *waishengren* and *benshengren* ethnic communities in the cultural and social spheres. As Allio (2000) noted, the KMT had influenced people’s perception of their identity for 40 years in Taiwan, the ruling authorities thus continued to play a significant role in this

meaning construction even after the democratization process had started. *Waishengren* on Taiwan started constructing images of themselves, their “lost homeland”, and the antagonists (the CCP and Taiwan nationalists) who prevented them from achieving nationhood. Similarly, imaginations by *benshengren* of themselves, their “desired motherland”, and the perceived antagonists (*waishengren*-dominated KMT rule) fanned the flames of a growing Taiwan nationalist sentiment.

From a past-oriented perspective, it could be argued that the “New Taiwanese” discourse served to comfort and convince the mainlanders to make Taiwan their new *homeland*, while all the same harbouring China in their heart as their *motherland*. With such a hope to reconcile and unify people of different origins in Taiwan, the “New Taiwanese” discourse, as a new imaginary jumping-off point for a possible common project of the Taiwanese citizenry in the 1990s, failed to meet its objective and instead intensified the divergence of Taiwanization and Sinicization in Taiwanese society.

From a future-oriented viewpoint, we maintain that just as the notion “New Taiwanese” was coined in an attempt to eclipse ethnic rivalries, it was also meant to create a new civic nationalist collective identity to differentiate itself from the Chinese (communist) “other” on the mainland. The construction of China as the outsider is obviously a complex process. One way of implicitly constructing China as this new out-group was President Lee’s highlighting of the link between democratization and his “New Taiwanese” concept and his emphasis on the “existence” being the key to Taiwan’s isolation in the realm of foreign relations under China’s constant oppression.

It is only to hold firmly to the principle that Taiwan exists. Taiwan’s existence is a fact, and as long as Taiwan exists, there is hope. For any democratization or economic development to come about, Taiwan must first ‘exist’ (Lee 1999: 95).

The state-driven (party-driven) Taiwanization movement thus tapped into a process of “otherization”. From the perspective of international politics, Taiwan had indeed been facing a military threat and diplomatic blockades by the PRC. Taiwanization at this stage could thus be viewed as a discursive construction of a common denominator for collective identification of a group that is seen as different from the constructed “out-group”, which is depicted as a threatening stranger – in this case, the PRC, depriving the in-group of international breathing space.

What President Lee brought to the scene, as a new perspective – challenging the previous antagonisms, which were based on ethnicity – was the “Taiwan vs. China” antagonism. This relates to the framework of defining the “nation” and drawing boundaries/ collective identities in the face of challenge. Without intending to argue that Taiwanization was only state-driven and only served political contingencies, (as surely it grew within a historical trend with ethnic and cultural dimensions, as outlined above), the state enabled the movement to become a political trend. This view is also supported by Corcuff discussing Lee Teng-hui’s legacy in an interview with the *Taiwan News* (Pan 2003).

The “otherization” process from the Lee Teng-hui era onwards can indeed be observed through a series of state-driven democratization operations, like neutralizing political symbols and doctrines which were implemented under the KMT ruling period, revisiting the sensitive ethnic identity issue by confronting varying versions of Taiwan history narratives in the secondary education textbooks. Corcuff (2002) noted that

a political regime functions with a wide range of political symbols acting as sources of legitimacy, indications of policy directions, tools of political socialization, or objects of national identifications (Corcuff 2002: 73).

Examples of changes in national identity-related symbols under Lee’s rule from 1988 to 2000 are well documented in Corcuff (2002). After the direct popular election in 1996, as Corcuff contends,

the tridemism (三民主義) was no longer necessary to legitimize a head of state that had, until then, suffered from an uncertain political legitimacy with regards to democratic canons. By the end of 1987-1997 decade, references to the founder of the Republic of China and his doctrine had totally vanished from Taiwan’s political speeches (Corcuff 2002: 79).

A second example, suggested by Corcuff, concerns the political use of education, given the state’s monopoly in printing textbooks. The reform of the history and society textbooks was related to the new junior high school curriculum, called *Knowing Taiwan* (認識台灣, *renshi Taiwan*). The reform was announced in June 1997, a year after President Lee’s inauguration. Both the titles and the contents of the textbooks demonstrated an ideological orientation toward “Taiwan subjectivity”.

By claiming “We are all Taiwanese”, the society textbook manuals, according to Corcuff, insisted that Taiwan’s ethnic pluralism had pro-

duced a “Taiwanese consciousness”, and that Formosans inherited from past generations a “Taiwanese soul”.

The end of the manual, dealing with Taiwan’s future, did not mention eventual reunification with China, and said that on the eve of the twenty-first century, the word ‘Taiwanese’ had already become a ‘nationality name’ for all Formosans going abroad (Corcuff 2002: 88).

The above political neutralization and social assimilation operations carry two parallel implications for the perception of the Taiwanization process. The proactive – to some, offensive – element in the move toward Taiwanization with the purpose of reconciling the ethnic differences in the Taiwanese society by forging a Taiwan subjectivity stimulated the defensive perception of the trend as “de-Sinicization” from the Chinese ethnic group since it minimized the political, ethnic and historical links between Taiwan/ Taiwanese (ethnicity, history and culture) and China/ Chinese (ethnicity, history and culture). These varying perceptions and definitions of localization and Taiwanization gave rise to heated debates in the media and international conferences on Sinology (Lams 2005). For example, Lee Yuan-tseh (李遠哲, Li Yuanzhe), Nobel laureate and president of Taiwan’s Academia Sinica, suggested that “localization” of Taiwan does not necessarily involve de-Sinicization (Lee Yuan-tseh’s speech at the 3rd International Conference on Sinology, held in Taipei in June 2000). The double-edged neutralization operations stimulated self-identification feelings and these trends were – and are still – closely monitored and mapped in statistical surveys, conducted by several groupings and regularly published by the Mainland Affairs Council. The self-identification feelings engendered sentiments of the self and the other with a significant impact, especially on the *waisbengren*, who were now facing a dilemma of their identity representation. The mainlanders’ identity question is discussed in *Mirrors and Masks* (Li 2002). The author rightly contends that human actors often employ the ethnic identity strategically and are not only passively cast into an ethnic category (Li 2002: 103). On the one hand, the mainlanders in Taiwan can be said to project their emotional liaison with China, the motherland/ hometown, to reflect their sense of belonging, while on the other hand, they can be seen to strategically manage their assimilation into the host society to live or to survive, just like wearing a mask.

In summary, peak periods in the enforcement of Taiwanization/ Sinicization processes came at moments of identity or political crisis. Under the condition of the KMT authoritarian rule, the sense of identity

crisis was mostly emphasized from the bottom up by elites from different ethnic and cultural communities with the demand for a clearer recognition and for the future sense of orientation of each community in the face of massive, strong foreign influence. Various dichotomies can thus be seen: Western versus Chinese, mainland Chinese versus local Taiwanese allegiances. From the Lee Teng-hui era onward, political change was facilitated in a top-down move in that the government played an important role in intensifying the democratization process and thus creating a new outsider, the non-democratic other across the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwanization during the DPP Era (2000-2008)

The shift of executive power in 2000 broadened the horizons of historical interpretation. Collective, but subdued, memories of critical moments in Taiwan history, such as the 228 Incident, found a creative space for political reformulation and negotiation. The importance of 228 in defining and maintaining boundaries lies in the fact that the incident was instrumental as a catalyst for the “us/ them” framing. Since the change of ruling party in 2000, the DPP administration has initiated projects to secure the release of the classified files about the 228 Incident, which were archived in the former Taiwan Garrison Command, to establish the 228 Incident Truth Commission, and to pay “indemnity” (賠償, *peichang*) to the descendants of the 228 Incident victims who mainly suffered from “White Terror” under the KMT rule.³ It is interesting to note the difference in Chinese terminology when compared with the KMT’s “compensation” (補償, *buchang*) version (Government Information Office 2007a: 59), promoted by the former Minister of Justice Ma Ying-jeou (1993-1996).

Stefan Fleischauer (2007) warns of a certain danger that “an excessive political exploitation of 228 might lead to a new rift in Taiwan’s society – a rift delineated by political rather than ethnic affiliation” (2007: 394). The 228 Incident is indeed often taken as one of the major factors underlying the Taiwanization discourse. Its prominence in academic literature and media discussions during the DPP era reinforces arguments of the danger of presenting overly partial narratives of the island’s contemporary history amidst competing constructs of history in Taiwan’s ongoing process of nation-building, as also pointed out by

3 Authors’ translation of the term used by President Chen Shui-bian in a Formosa TV interview (Government Information Office 2007a).

Wachman (1994) and Fulda (2002). Hence, the causality link between the 228 Incident and the solidification of Taiwanese identity and national sentiment should not be over-weighted since this kind of mechanical historical sufficiency masks the connection between the event and its interpretation and narrative production (Edmondson 2002).

The “democratized Taiwan vs. authoritarian China” dichotomy involved an inclusion/ exclusion positioning process for which Taiwan could self-identify in the international realm. An example can be found in the formulation of the strategic objective of the normalization in cross-Strait relations, as expressed by Chen Ming-tong (陳明通, Chen Mingtong), vice-chair (2000-2004) and chair of the Mainland Affairs Council (2007-2008) under the two terms of President Chen Shui-bian (Chen and the Taiwan Security Research Group 2006: 82). The term “normalization” has been used and promoted by the DPP since 1999, striving to “make Taiwan a normal country” in the eyes of both domestic and international audiences (Chen and the Taiwan Security Research Group 2006: 82). As Chen et al. argues,

in order to safeguard Taiwan’s dignity and existing development and bring true peace to both sides of the Strait, we must promote the normalization of cross-strait relations (Chen and the Taiwan Security Research Group 2006: 85).

The authors emphasize that this normalization strategy of the DPP administration echoed the goals that the DPP proclaimed in the 1999 Resolution Regarding Taiwan’s Future:

The normalization of the cross-Strait relations is based on the historical fact and current reality that Taiwan is sovereign and independent, that it is called the Republic of China according to the current (ROC) constitution, and that *neither Taiwan nor the PRC belongs to the other* (Chen and the Taiwan Security Research Group 2006: 85) [emphasis added].

The “democratic Taiwan vs. authoritarian China” dichotomy also related to attitudes regarding the (re-)unification with and independence from China within Taiwanese society. In his speech at the twenty-fifth anniversary dinner of the establishment of the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA), President Chen proclaimed an explicit “four

wants and one without” discourse⁴ and referred to his moves to issue the new ROC passports with the additional word “Taiwan” on it in 2002. He concluded his speech as follows: “Taiwan has no ideological division on left or right stances but only on the unification-independence issue” [authors’ translation] (Government Information Office 2007b: 15).

The Taiwan versus China binary was once again underpinned by the mainlanders-natives, KMT-DPP antagonism. The salient local division is also translated by Wang and Chang (2006) into the degree of “political tolerance” during the DPP rule (2000-2008) due to the core external factor, China. Wang and Chang argue that criticism of those who support Taiwan’s unification with China as an act of “betraying Taiwan” and/ or “selling out Taiwan” can be an illustration of “intolerant attitudes” which may lead to intolerant political behaviours and impede the development of the idea of a “loyal opposition” – a loyal opposition being critical for democratic stability (Barnum and Sullivan 1989; Gibson 1998; 1992; 1989; Sullivan et al. 1981). In the light of the normative approach, Wang and Chang (2006) argue that China constitutes the external key factor for such domestic “intolerance” in Taiwan. The China factor was also used for political expediency during the former KMT era. The perceived threat emanating from China was meant to deter the Taiwanese citizenry from electing a DPP candidate (Lams 2008).

Clearly China is still a major divisive factor in contemporary Taiwan and remains instrumental for both political camps, especially at electoral times. Tangible evidence of the polarizing Taiwanization process can be seen in the semiotic and symbolic realm of imagery attached to actual objects, such as postage stamps and tourist information on Taiwan. During the DPP era, the stamps, for example, became a medium for promoting the idea of a Taiwanese identity distinct from a Chinese one (Wang and Chang 2006; Ho 2007; Deans 2005; Horowitz and Tan 2005). As for the ideology underlying lexical choice-making, Chang and Holt (2009) contend that President Chen enacted a clear struggle of Taiwan’s national identity by alternating between the referential terms “Taiwan” and the “ROC” to strike a balance among conflicting ideas about the two names. Indeed, a “Taiwan discursive era”, in which a rhetorical move of centralizing Taiwan and treating the ROC as peripheral to

4 The four wants are “independence, name change, a new constitution and development”; the one without is that “Taiwan has no problem of the Left vs. the Right” 台灣沒有左右的問題 [authors’ translation].

China has been in process for some time (Chang and Holt 2009; Lams 2006). This move was marked as well as unimaginable during the KMT’s rule, since

the concept of Taiwan was naturally subordinated to the ROC, the symbol of Chinese authenticity, a position endorsed by supporters of KMT and its allies, chiefly the People’s First Party (Chang and Holt 2009: 302).

It is precisely this subordination which triggered the emergence of a DPP-supported Taiwanization against the residuals of the previous Sinicization period. It culminated in the official attempt to enter international organizations under the name “Taiwan”.

Chen’s administration was also keen on neutralizing the political symbols inherited from the KMT-dominant era, like changing the name and the function of the former Chang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei to National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall on 19 May 2007, the date the martial law was announced by the KMT administration in 1949. As for the ethnic issue, President Chen reacted to Ma Ying-jeou’s 2008 “long stay” presidential campaign and criticized it on the occasion of the 43rd Hakka Cultural Festival in Pingtung by saying that “only ‘our people’ can understand our hometown/ mother-town (故鄉, *guxiang*) affairs, have feelings and emotions about our hometown/ mother-town” [authors’ translation] (Government Information Office 2007c: 1209).

In the cultural sphere, one remarkable phenomenon was noted in Muiyad’s (2009) study relating to the development of Taiwan-centred cultural policies together with the opening of new museums throughout the territory (i.e. the Museum of Prehistory in Taidong, the Museum of Ceramics in Yingge, the Museum of Taiwanese History in Tainan). As Muiyad contends:

In Taiwan, after a long period of neglect of the local culture by the authorities – which favoured the Chinese high-brow elite culture and Chinese identity imported and imposed by the Kuomintang on the island population after WWII – the development of Taiwan-centred cultural policies together with the opening of new museums throughout the territory [...] have characterized national and local governments’ actions since the mid-1990s (Muiyad 2009: 10).

This quote illustrates how Taiwanization also gained more terrain in the cultural sphere during the DPP era between 2000 and 2008.

To conclude, the Taiwanization process, which had been growing underneath the surface before 2000, became ever more salient during the DPP rule and was made explicit in its official discourse. The Taiwanese identity was promoted from the top as a move to gain more international recognition and to be treated by the international community on an equal footing with the outsider, China.

Re-Sinicization and Re-Taiwanization during KMT Rule from 2008 Onward

After the second change of ruling party, Taiwan returned to KMT rule in mid-2008. An obvious re-Sinicization (“normalization”) campaign was noted immediately through several actions launched by President Ma Ying-jeou’s administration. Illustrations are the instant elimination of the word “Taiwan” on the webpage of the presidential office of the Republic of China, which kept only “ROC” where the DPP version consistently used “ROC (Taiwan)” or just “Taiwan” (Ko 2008). Similarly, the logo on the webpage of the Office of the President was instantly modified on inauguration day to the national flag of the ROC instead of an image of a green Taiwan island (DPP’s symbol and colour). Other examples are a series of denotational revisions of the names of several public institutions and monuments by either eliminating completely or at least reducing the presence of the word “Taiwan”. For example, the Taiwan Post was re-baptized the Chunghwa Post. The Taiwanese Postal Company, which was previously named the “Chunghwa [literally ‘Chinese’] Post Company”, changed its name to the “Taiwan Post” in the DPP era on 8 February 2007. On 28 May 2008, the minister of transportation claimed the name change to “Taiwan Post” was illegal and that the official name would be changed back to “Chunghwa Post” in August 2008 (Lu 2008: 4; Shan 2008: 1).

However, in the face of the tumbling popularity of the president and his KMT party due to several local social incidents and political events, such re-Sinicization practices slowed and made way for a re-Taiwanization trend, redressing the balance. The word “Taiwan” re-emerged on the webpage of the Office of the President, but only within parentheses after the ROC, making it hierarchically inferior to the former denomination. An image of the Taiwanese island has made its way back to the upper left part of the webpage banner, but in blue (KMT’s symbol), pointing to its semiotic significance. In this way, it can be argued

that Sinicization and Taiwanization processes have lost their antithetical force and can go hand in hand, at least on a symbolic level.

To conclude this contextualization of the Taiwanization/ Sinicization nexus, we note a red thread of polarities running through the previous sections of this paper. Taiwanization and Sinicization have been presented as inseparable but mainly polarizing elements of a nexus in which Taiwan’s identification took shape in the spheres of domestic and international self-positioning. The following part looks into the state of both elements in the official Ma Ying-jeou English-language statements.

Tracing Taiwanization/ Sinicization in Discursive Practices after the Second Change of Party Rule

The above analysis has identified elements of polarization in Taiwanese society based on allegiances to ethnic origin, a more or less China- or Taiwan-centric cultural identity, and partisan preferences (blue versus green alliances). Hence, from this contextualization of the Taiwanization-Sinicization nexus, we can distill three major dimensions in Taiwan’s public sphere for this connection to maintain and self-empower its progressive dynamic over time. These three dimensions are, as explained in the introductory pages, the issues of ethnicity, political partisanship and culture. In light of these distinctions, our empirical analysis examines the extent to which both driving forces of the nexus still exist and maintain their antagonistic interaction or whether they have disappeared in the new era of KMT rule under President Ma. External factors, for example globalization, probably play a role in the current state of Taiwanization. The second part of this paper thus presents findings of an analysis of official discourse since May 2008, in particular the English-language statements by ROC President and KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou.

As for method, the text analysis followed the analytical scheme developed by Lams (2006) to identify the salience of certain discursive themes and strategies of symbolic construction. Focus lay on an examination of global meaning constructs, such as argumentation patterns. On the micro level, lexical choice-making and predicational strategies in describing social groups or particular individuals were looked at. According to social identity theory (Tajfel 1981), groups tend to draw boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. A polarizing discursive activity highlights the negative aspects of the other and the positive attributes of the self while marginalizing the positive features of the other and the negative actions or characteristics of the self. Outsiders’ features must be con-

trusted unfavourably with our own. The analysis thus focused on the way the self and the other were presented in order to inform us about the state of the Taiwanization/ Sinicization process.

The set of texts analysed comprised official statements by the ROC president, who concurrently serves as the chair of the KMT, the party that boasts a parliamentary majority. Samples of presidential speeches were chosen on the basis of their symbolic weight in terms of historical significance, such as the inauguration speech (ROC Office of the President 2008a); the presidential inauguration press conference (ROC Office of the President 2008b); the 2009 New Year's Day celebratory message (ROC Office of the President 2009a); the president's remarks at an international conference on 30 years of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA; ROC Office of the President 2009b); the foreign press conference on the anniversary of the inauguration (ROC Office of the President 2009c); and the 2010 New Year's Day speech (ROC Office of the President 2010). Elected presidents usually use significant moments like inauguration (and its anniversaries) and New Year's addresses to express their ideational vision and executive plans to demonstrate their institutional empowerment by law. These speeches, addressed to both domestic and foreign audiences, were given in Chinese and then translated into English and posted on the website of the ROC Office of the President. We take published documents from the Office of the President (OOP), in whatever language, at face value. As they are specimens of direct communication between the OOP and the outside world, this paper does not deal with the analytic dimension of translation, which would require a different approach.⁵ The other two speeches, the 30th TRA anniversary speech and the inauguration anniversary foreign press conference, were chosen because they addressed the foreign audience directly, as they related to issues of Taiwan's special status in international politics and Taiwan's willingness to be connected with the world. These speeches were made in English, thus precluding the need for translation.

After an introductory examination of key discursive strategies in general, we zoom in on how the Taiwanization/ Sinicization process manifests itself in the three dimensions: the ethnic, cultural and political realms.

5 In a future research phase, a comparison between Chinese- and English-language statements will be made. Fine-tuned lexical choices between, for example, *huaren* (華人) and *Zhongguoren* (中國人) might then come to the fore.

Strategies of Symbolic Construction: Positioning the Self and the Other

At the winner’s moment, the vanquisher enjoys the most legitimacy to condemn the adversary and is empowered to “refresh” the memory and build up a new moral value system. This discursive strategy of articulating the negative past of the previous DPP era is most salient in President Ma’s inauguration speech. In a firm and self-confident fashion, he distinguishes “right” from “wrong” in relating how Taiwan’s democracy had been treading down “a rocky road” but how it has “finally won the chance to enter a smoother path” (ROC Office of the President 2008a). This “positive self” and “negative other” discursive strategy seems not only to revel in the electoral failure of the DPP presidential campaign team and the former DPP administration, but also to promote a restoration of the old order by reinforcing the pan-blue partisanship and the creation of a new value system. A year later, Ma continues the same line of “positive self” presentation and declares,

Although we have come a long way since the last time we met on May 20th one year ago, Taiwan’s new journey has just begun. But, it makes me proud to stand here before you and say with a great certainty that this journey has started on the right path. From the first day of my inauguration, I had one grand vision for Taiwan and its people, which is to establish Taiwan at the forefront of global trends. This means taking a responsible stake in upholding international peace and security, revitalizing our economy and re-infusing it with some of the most innovative technologies, and re-strengthening the political and social fabric of our society for the benefit of our people and those who would look to us for inspiration (ROC Office of the President 2009c).

By 2010, Ma’s administration faces a decline of confidence, described by Rigger as Ma’s “midterm malaise” (Rigger 2010). Rigger characterizes this as reflecting the public sentiment that political leaders have not responded well to domestic crises. In response to this criticism, the president defends his administration in his New Year Day’s message of 2010 and states that because of the cooperation and hard work of the central and local governments and the people, a myriad of difficulties (financial tsunami, economic recession, increasing unemployment and natural disasters) have been overcome (ROC Office of the President 2010). Therefore, the “positive self” line is maintained, but from a more defensive approach. It could be argued that because the KMT has the majority rule, which entails accountability, Ma and his administration have be-

come more careful in the negative “other” framing and have started treating political issues from the perspective of rational policy-making rather than ideological positioning. Obviously, further analysis needs to be conducted to support this argument.

Taiwanization/ Sinicization along Three Dimensions: The Ethnic, Cultural, Political Realms

When President Ma Ying-jeou led his presidential electoral campaign, three pillars were highlighted: a revival of the economy, rapprochement with China combined with the fight against corruption, and a strong commitment to Taiwan’s sovereignty and identity. Concerning the latter, Ma called for politics of national reconciliation after eight years of partisan polarization. Instead of calling for Chinese reunification or presenting a Chinese nationalist programme, President Ma, as Muyard noted,

launched a campaign centered on *his own Taiwanese identity*, the defense of Taiwan’s sovereignty as the Republic of China, and his commitment that Taiwan’s future must be decided only by the 23 million Taiwanese [emphasis added] (Muyard 2010: 19, 2008; Lynch 2008).

However, a close reading of Ma’s speeches after his presidential campaign suggests that the ethnic and cultural issues are subordinate to Ma’s policy priority of economic development and the cross-Strait issue. In fact, the domestic ethnic and cultural division issues are often minimized and unclearly mixed. They are used to serve a higher hierarchical goal of establishing an imaginary Taiwanese identity, of improving Taiwan’s economy and maintaining peaceful and stable relations with China. This new imaginary Taiwanese identity can be compared with the notion and the problematic implementation of the “New Taiwanese” discourse promoted by President Lee Teng-hui. The notion “New Taiwanese”, according to Vickers,

seeks to promulgate the idea that Taiwan, like the United States, can assert a right to determine its own separate destiny on the basis of shared principles and experiences (Vickers 2010: 94).

Nonetheless, “such vision”, as Vickers argues,

competes with two more totalizing ones: the old KMT (and current Chinese Communist Party (CCP) view of Taiwan as culturally, ethnically and historically inseparable from the Chinese “Motherland”; and a mirror image of the latter constructed by some advocates of Taiwan

independence, emphasizing the primordial roots and manifest destiny of a “multicultural”, non-Han, but nonetheless essentialized “Taiwan-ness” (Vickers 2010: 94).

Seeing the failure of the centripetal “New Taiwanese” project facing these two powerful centrifugal forces, it is understandable that, since President Ma’s campaign promise focused on the reconciliation of the polarized society, he preferred to shun a direct confrontation on the ethnic and cultural sphere. Instead, the superficial harmonious pragmatism under the ideational objectives like harmony, prosperity, peace and stability had to prevail.

Ethnic and Cultural Dimension

Concerning the ethnic issue, in his inauguration speech, the president advances a new term, “ethnic harmony”, for his ideal Taiwanese society. This promotion of “ethnic harmony” presupposes an initial doubt about the peaceful nature of cohabitation of the various ethnic groups in Taiwan. He promises to

endeavour to create an environment that is humane, rational and pluralistic, one that fosters political reconciliation and coexistence. We will promote harmony among sub-ethnic groups and between the old and new immigrants (ROC Office of the President 2008a).

In the following quote, the boundaries are carefully drawn into an inclusive formula by defocusing on each subgroup’s ethnic origin and articulating the settlers’ new territorial acquisition. Ma prepares the ground for his conceptual metaphor of the homeland, which he will make explicit toward the end of his speech.

Taiwan is not my birthplace, but it is where I was raised and the resting place of my family. I am forever grateful to society for accepting and nurturing this post-war immigrant. I will protect Taiwan with all my heart and resolutely move forward. I will do my very best (ROC Office of the President 2008a).

The speech indeed ends with President Ma’s explicit reference to the homeland metaphor: “My dear compatriots, from this moment on, we must roll up our sleeves to build up our homeland [家園]” (ROC Office of the President 2008a).

The metaphorical reference to the “rebirth” of the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC Office of the President 2008a) carries first of all a recognition of the fact that the legal entity of the Republic of China

and its institutions moved from the place of its first implementation, mainland China, to the offshore islands Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen and Mazu without any emphasis on the ethnic or cultural liaison between the two hosting places. Second, the “rebirth” metaphor also enables President Ma to underline the Chinese mainland’s origin of the ROC. In the following extract, Ma distinguishes between Taiwan and the ROC, while all the same pointing out their intertwined destinies:

The Republic of China was reborn on Taiwan. During my presidency, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of China. This democratic republic, the very first in Asia, spent a short 38 years on the Chinese mainland, but has spent nearly 60 years in Taiwan. During these last six decades, the destinies of the Republic of China and Taiwan have been closely intertwined (ROC Office of the President 2008a).

Two notions, which to a certain extent are presented as new cultural values or new “national” characteristics, are highlighted – namely, “Taiwan’s dignity” and “Taiwan spirit” – in order to boost Taiwan’s image in the world. Although “Taiwan spirit” was also advocated by former President Chen, Ma Ying-jeou defines “Taiwan spirit” in terms of re-discovered “traditional core values of benevolence, righteousness, diligence, honesty, generosity and industriousness” (ROC Office of the President 2008a). He thus revives core notions with a clear echo of Chinese traditional Confucian values. By linking “Taiwan Spirit” with Taiwan’s comparative advantages and following the principles of “putting Taiwan first for the benefit of the people”, President Ma justifies his wish to “transform the homeland – Taiwan, Penghu and Mazu – the envy of the world” (ROC Office of the President 2008a). Here, we note how the Taiwan-centric emphasis seems to take centre stage. Arguably, this may have less to do with ethnic issues and more with benefitting the nation by branding Taiwan in a new fashion to a global audience. Within the same speech, Ma clearly privileges the ethnic Chinese (華人, *hua ren*) character of Taiwan; though, he does mention the pluralistic character of its society. His emphasis on Taiwan being ethnically Chinese is re-affirmed in the following rhetorical repetition:

On the day of Taiwan’s presidential election, hundreds of millions of *ethnic Chinese* worldwide watched the ballot count on TV and the Internet. Taiwan is the sole *ethnic Chinese* society to complete a second democratic turnover to power. *Ethnic Chinese* communities around the world have laid their hopes on the crucial political experiment. By

succeeding, we can make unparalleled contributions to the democratic development of all *ethnic Chinese* communities (ROC Office of the President 2008a) [emphasis added].

Although it might be relevant to look at the words used in his Chinese speech, the essence here is that the insistence on the term “ethnic Chinese” stands in sharp contrast to the discourse prevalent in the DPP era, which de-emphasized Chinese ethnicity.

The common Chinese heritage is also highlighted when Ma discusses cross-Strait relations. As he puts it:

In the light of our common Chinese heritage, people of both sides should do their utmost to jointly contribute to the international community without engaging in vicious competition and the waste of resources. I firmly believe that Taiwan and mainland China are open-minded enough to find a way to attain peace and co-prosperity (ROC Office of the President 2008a).

A return to a Chinese-centric stance thus appears in contrast with the self-professed Taiwan-centric attitude.

We argue that the emphasis on “ethnic harmony” relates to President Ma’s recognition of the tension among the various ethnic groups in Taiwan society. According to Muiyad,

a major problem with Ma’s pro-Chinese rhetoric [...] is that it goes against the evolving Taiwanese identity and the public perception of China. Opinion polls results even seem to indicate that the more the KMT government leans toward China and cosies up to the PRC officials, and the more the Taiwanese meet Chinese people, the greater the public identifies as Taiwanese and as different from the Chinese (Muiyad 2010: 19).

At the time, former President Chen Shui-bian emphasized an equal-footing recognition of each ethnic group and its own culture to advance his multiculturalist – but not necessarily conflictive – ethnic cohabitation vision. In contrast, Ma mobilizes “harmony” as a moral incentive and as an operational framework to promote a certain sort of communitarian cohabitation. However, his Chinese-centric approach, which highlights the grandeur of the Han Chinese ethnic culture may silence other ethnic subgroups in Taiwan by granting them fewer rights of voice. Similar inclusive rhetoric can be noted throughout ancient Chinese history. When “barbarian” neighbours invaded China, it is thanks to the greatness of the typical values of the Han race, like “harmony” and “toler-

ance”, that those “cruel” foreign intruders could be accommodated, assimilated or domesticated. Hence, it can be argued that the projects of the two presidents for managing the hybridity of the ethnic and cultural landscape are different. President Ma clearly intends to seek the middle ground and to consolidate the unity of the country. He emphasizes, at least on the rhetorical level, that the government will be for all the people and will remain non-partisan. This inclusive attitude was also stressed by President Chen Shui-bian and is endemic in inaugural presidential speeches addressing an utterly divided electorate. Ma recycles President Lee Teng-hui’s “New Taiwanese” and even President Chen’s “Taiwan’s identity” to demonstrate a Taiwan-centric attitude. As President Chen stated,

We should not try to tackle the Taiwan identity issue based on political stance or a sense of ethnic belonging, since our future as well as our descendants’ futures will lie on this soil [authors’ translation] (Government Information Office 2004: 5).

However, the attempts by the two former presidents to transform the current homeland to the future motherland as a way to consolidate feelings of belonging is completely missing in President Ma’s discourse. He uses the homeland but not the motherland metaphor for Taiwan. As he neither clearly defines “ethnic harmony”, nor concretizes his proposal, it feels like both elements (homeland as a referent for Taiwan, motherland for the mainland) are made to coexist separately rather than blend together, as was the case in the discourse of his predecessors. In fact, this distinction between homeland and motherland deserves further investigation in its own right, but goes beyond the scope of the research question of this paper.

Political Dimension

As documented in the first section, the Taiwanization-Sinicization nexus has been a most polarizing factor in the arena of Taiwanese politics. The analysis thus investigates to what extent these elements (re-)appear in President Ma’s speeches regarding his vision for domestic and international affairs, as well as for cross-Strait relations.

Lee Teng-hui expanded the meaning of Taiwanization into the political domain of Taiwan’s democratization (versus communism on the mainland) as the driving force to improve political representation and participation of the local citizens in Taiwan’s democracy. Chen Shui-bian

focused on issues of social justice, such as transitional justice (mainly related to the truth investigation of the 228 Incident), indigenous rights and other social matters as the substances to continue this democratization process. Ma Ying-jeou reaffirms the importance of Taiwan’s democratization and especially emphasizes the success of Taiwan’s democracy thanks to the second alternation of party rule. However, Ma projects a negative image of former President Chen’s family’s corruption scandals and the DPP’s mishandled cross-Straits policies by stressing that “the people have chosen clean politics, an open economy, ethnic harmony, and peaceful cross-Straits relations to open their arms to the future” (ROC Office of the President 2008a). He wants to “better Taiwan’s democracy, enrich its substances, and make it more perfect” and promotes the improvement of Taiwan’s democracy by “relying on the Constitution to protect human rights, uphold law and order, make justice independent and impartial, and breathe new life into civil society” (ROC Office of the President 2008a).

At the discursive level, we first note how the articulation of a positive self and a negative other revives the old antagonistic positions. Second, vague terms, such as “democracy”, receive different interpretations concerning the core constitutive elements, such as “justice”. Ma Ying-jeou approaches the notion of democracy in a more or less legal sense, whereas for Chen Shui-bian, it was the social sense that prevailed. As to party politics, the blue/ green dichotomies do not appear in the presidential discourse since, as the ROC president, Ma stresses that “the new government will be for all the people, remain non-partisan and uphold administrative neutrality” (ROC Office of the President 2008a). The following paragraphs outline some salient political themes emerging from his speeches.

A *Political Economy: Taiwan’s Economic Identity in the World, ECFA and Challenges of Globalization*

Concerning international affairs, Ma underscores the daunting challenges of globalization and uses the concepts of “Taiwan’s responsibility and dignity” in international society to face global trends. Challenges from globalization are related to economic issues as well as to Taiwan’s self-presentation. First, in the economic arena, Ma advances some directives concerning the need for Taiwan to “upgrade its international competitiveness and recover *lost* opportunities” [emphasis added] (ROC Office of the President 2008a). Obviously, “recover lost opportunities” intertex-

tually refers to the negative other. A year into his term, Ma evaluates his cross-Strait rapprochement programme and asserts that it has “reverberated beyond cross-Strait relations to also benefit the entire region and all those who have a stake in it” (ROC Office of the President 2009c). A positive-self articulation strategy is thus maintained. In the New Year’s Day message of 2010, the period of the perceived “midterm malaise”, Ma discursively defends his approach to these global challenges, by insisting that “Taiwan must grasp hold of current trends in the global economy, participate in the regional economic integration of East Asia, and explore and develop new markets” (ROC Office of the President 2010) to justify his policy.

It can be argued that by stressing the challenges of “globalization” the securitization rhetoric paves the way for the legitimization of Ma’s proposal to sign an economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) with China. In contrast with former President Chen’s “Exquisite Taiwan, Connect Globally” strategy, which focused on attracting foreign investment to Taiwan to consolidate Taiwanese sustainable competitiveness in a globalized and liberalized world economy, Ma argues that ECFA, as a starting point, can help Taiwan “fight for a fair international environment to ensure that our enterprises are able to compete on equitable terms”. And he continues, stating that “only through such linkages [ECFA with China and FTAs with other trading partners] can [we] accelerate our involvement in East Asian regional economic integration and remain competitive” (ROC Office of the President 2010). However, Ma’s ECFA proposal remains a most problematic issue, given the skepticism it has encountered within Taiwan civil society.

B Taiwan’s Responsibility to Bring Regional Peace and Prosperity

Apart from Taiwan’s economic identity in the world, Ma also emphasizes “Taiwan’s dignity” as yet another self-profiling tenet. As he contends, “Taiwan doesn’t just want security and prosperity. It wants dignity” (ROC Office of the President 2008b). Moreover, as a respectable member of the global village, Taiwan should follow guiding principles of “dignity, autonomy, pragmatism and flexibility” to develop its foreign relations (ROC Office of the President 2008a). Ma further defines such “dignity” in terms of recognition of Taiwan’s “international credibility” (ROC Office of the President 2009b). To underscore his concern about Taiwan’s international image, President Ma states that

as we improve relations with the mainland we will also become active and responsible peacemakers in the region. This will have two major effects on expanding our bilateral relations with the rest of the world. First, Taiwan will certainly improve its international credibility. And, second, our “surprise-free” attitude will shed Taiwan’s former “trouble-maker” image and assure the world that our policies are internationally responsible (ROC Office of the President 2009b).

While taking credit for the improved international image, the president can repeat his discursive tactic of implicitly casting the former administration in a negative light. The same line of thinking can be found in the following statement:

At the same time, we are committed to cross-Strait peace and regional stability. The ROC must restore its reputation in the international community as a peacemaker (ROC Office of the President 2008a).

On the first anniversary of his taking office, he expresses the following laudatory comments: “Our ‘Flexible Diplomacy’ has embedded Taiwan’s engagement with the rest of the world in the ideals of mutual trust, respect and responsibility”, and he further credits his new approach for having “won the applause of the international community, which has welcomed Taiwan back into the World Health Assembly after 38 years of exclusion” (ROC Office of the President 2009c). Apart from the endeavour of tackling the transnational global warming issue, Taiwan’s “responsibility” is especially positioned in its contribution to bringing peace and prosperity to the region. Obviously, the genre of presidential public addresses is conducive to this type of rhetoric in which general visions are outlined without concrete content.

C *Taiwan’s Role in Improvement of Sino-Taiwanese Relations*

As concerns cross-Strait relations, Ma states explicitly that “what matters is not sovereignty but core value and ways of life” (ROC Office of the President 2008a). This is how he can revive the notion of the so-called “1992 consensus” (“One China, respective interpretations”), which, according to him, is a driving force that can spur the development of cross-Strait relations. He sincerely hopes that “the two sides of the Taiwan Strait can seize this historic opportunity to achieve peace and co-prosperity” (ROC Office of the President 2008a), and he immediately links this argument with Taiwan’s mainstream public opinion wishing to

maintain the status quo. It is debatable whether the two concepts “peace” and “status quo” are interchangeable. The current status quo still involves a situation in which mainland missiles are pointed towards Taiwan. But Ma empowers himself by insinuating that mainstream public opinion in Taiwan about keeping the status quo means that the island should have peace with the mainland, a stance which he repeats explicitly the following day during a press conference (ROC Office of the President 2008b). He further associates a peaceful external environment with economic development and social harmony, which he believes is “the common desire of people across the Taiwan Strait” (ROC Office of the President 2008b). The relationship between economic development and social harmony is not further developed.

As for military affairs, Ma refers to his “simple policy” of not engaging in an arms race with the mainland based on reasons such as it being “not only in Taiwan’s interest but [possibly] unaffordable for Taiwan” (ROC Office of the President 2008b). The argument is then continued in the following contradictory terms:

What we are trying to do is build a small but strong deterrent force so that the mainland would not even consider using force against Taiwan if they are not able to quickly win the preliminary battle. We still need defensive arms for that purpose, and we will continue to carry out arms procurement programmes with other countries concerning defensive arms (ROC Office of the President 2008b).

In seeking to “transform the underlying dynamics of Taiwan-mainland China relations”, the Ma administration is said to have unilaterally announced the “mutual non-denial” policy as “a middle road between mutual recognition and mutual non-recognition”, and to have declared “a diplomatic truce with the Chinese mainland in the international arena” (ROC Office of the President 2009c). Equally noteworthy here is that President Ma replaces the term “status quo” with “dynamics of Taiwan-mainland China relations”. This is how he can credit the current KMT administration with having “transformed the Taiwan Strait from a dangerous flashpoint to a conduit for peace and prosperity”. The “positive self” framing can thus continue along the following lines: “In the eyes of our important allies, Taiwan has become a peacemaker and responsible stakeholder in the region” (ROC Office of the President 2009a). It is precisely at these moments of public speeches that the ROC president enjoys full legitimacy to defend his visions and policies toward mainland China.

In a nutshell, the most important elements of Ma’s proposed policy changes are summarized in the following statement at the presidential press conference the day following his inauguration:

As I stated in yesterday’s inaugural address, the most important things for me to do are to revitalize the economy, rebuild a clean government, and promote social harmony and cross-Strait peace. As for our foreign relations, we will work to renew mutual trust with countries like the United States and to achieve peace and co-prosperity with mainland China by resuming the interrupted negotiations with the mainland on the basis of the ‘92 consensus (ROC Office of the President 2008b).

To conclude this section of Ma Ying-jeou’s discourse in the political sphere, we can argue that many components of President Ma’s speeches tend to be antithetical to those of former President Chen in the political arena. On domestic issues, the former and current presidents both emphasized justice, yet approached it from different angles – “social” justice on the one hand (Chen), and the liberal principle of the rule of law on the other hand (Ma). Regarding the challenges of globalization as well as Taiwan’s diplomatic isolation in the international realm, both party chairmen expressed their desire to connect Taiwan with the world and were devoted to seeking “Taiwan’s dignity” economically and politically as Taiwan’s self-profiling principle. Chen insisted on consolidating Taiwan’s local economy before entering the globalized economy, which can be interpreted as a self-profiling strategy in the narrow sense of “Taiwanization”, i.e. projecting a Taiwan-centric subjectivity in keeping with the “Taiwan first” ideology. Ma, as an ethnic Chinese, post-war migrant to Taiwan, as well as a member of the global village, has fewer burdens to detach himself from (in terms of getting attached to Taiwan as the “homeland”) on his path to achieving a satisfactory goal of peace and prosperity. Therefore, President Ma highlights the fact that taking China as a middle land/ the former motherland in order to integrate/ re-Sinicize Taiwan’s economy into a China-centric Asian regionalization as a pragmatic foreign policy tactic would be to the benefit of Taiwan.

A large aspect of Ma’s re-Sinicization discourse is situated within the global and regional context – or shall we call it “pretext”, as suggested in an editorial of the Chinese-language daily *Liberty Times?* (*Liberty Times* 2009). Regarding cross-Strait relations, we argue that Ma clearly attempts to wipe out the feeling in Taiwanese society that China is a threat by stressing the “national benefit” with an economic orientation rather than

“national interests”, which would have a security connotation. On the basis of the selected speeches, we can conclude that President Ma has a pronounced China-friendly attitude. The sovereignty issue is explicitly bypassed in favour of soft themes. This stands in stark contrast with President Chen’s Taiwan-centric stance:

Taiwan is part of the world but absolutely not part of China. Taiwan should wipe out the narrow-minded “One China” or “cross-Strait” framework in order to reconfirm/ reaffirm Taiwan’s appropriate status and international personality (Government Information Office 2008: 3).

Final Remarks

To conclude, we return to the basic question “Whither Taiwanization?”, which we assume finds its origin in the general anxiety about the current state of Taiwan and a query into its future after the second change of ruling party in 2008. The social psychological issue can be traced back to a long-standing antithetical, exclusionary dynamic between a Taiwan-centric Taiwanization and a Chinese-centric Sinicization in Taiwan’s democratization and self-identification process. The polarizing dichotomy has left clear marks on Taiwan’s society in the ethnic, political and cultural arenas for several decades. In defining the notion of Taiwanization, we identified the process as one of the key political forces underlying Taiwan’s democratization and stimulating the search for national identity. We also narrowed down the larger definition to a more specific Taiwan-centric approach to Taiwanization, which can be understood as a counterforce to the China-centric Sinicization, particularly in the past self-identification process. Within this narrow definition, the two driving forces were found to be antithetical and exclusionary, due to a lack of equal-footing competition ground in the old KMT era. In the last stage, we broadened the definition again to allow for a more inclusive approach, letting the narrow definitions of Sinicization and Taiwanization go hand in hand, synthesizing them into a “Taiwanized consensus”.

In the analysis, we tried to see whether ethnic and cultural polarities with their zero-sum positioning games had been softened to open up a new era of “Taiwanized consensus”, creating room for a larger sense of Taiwanization, which could include Sinicization aspects. Throughout the investigation of President Ma’s public statements at several important occasions, (from his inauguration in 2008 until 2010), we found several

elements which would point in the direction of our wider definition of Taiwanization. In Ma’s “ethnic harmony” proposal, the president emphasizes traditional core values and the “Taiwan spirit”. Yet, his explicit and repetitive China-centric ethnic emphasis about his family’s migrant experience in Taiwan, the stress on the cultural closeness between China and Taiwan, on Taiwan’s importance in the worldwide Chinese communities, the metaphor of the migrant’s “homeland” rather than the Taiwanese “motherland” reveals a (Chinese) patriotic idealism. The term “Taiwan” seems to be the keyword in Ma’s rhetorical strategy, which blends the inclusive ethnic communitarian framework and Chinese-centric cultural articulation. Politically, President Ma underlines the importance of following the will of the 23 million Taiwanese citizens and points out “Taiwan’s dignity” in the international arena to fulfil the project of raising Taiwan’s “international responsibility and credibility”. This reveals a certain tendency toward Taiwanized self-identification. However, Ma’s regionalist and internationalist stance re-Sinicizes Taiwan’s position in the post-2008 era, as he emphasizes the proposed ECFA deal with China as the solution to face the challenges of the globalized economy. This deal has given rise to such a debate within the Taiwan civil society that some voices wonder whether globalization under Ma’s policy means integration with China. This “globalization factor” seems to indeed have become an extra constituent of the discourses, thus answering one of our research questions: whether the development of Taiwan domestic politics can still be captured by the Taiwanization-Sinicization nexus alone.

Just like the current blending of symbols that puts cultural allegiances up against each other because of their strong semiotic significance, like an image of the island’s silhouette in the blue KMT colour rather than the former green of the DPP era, or the combination of the terms “ROC” and “Taiwan” on the government website – albeit in a hierarchical order, “ROC (Taiwan)” – we note how, in Ma’s discourse, polarizing positions in the cultural sphere have been masked or softened by ambiguous or empty signifiers. This is how the concept of Taiwanization is broadened to allow for an inclusive perspective and to embrace the internal hybridity of cultures. At least on the discursive level, Ma Ying-jeou seems to have reached a “Taiwanized consensus”, but in reality, cleavages still exist and come to the fore at electoral times or through the divergent perspectives taken in the Taiwanese media.

Finally, it has to be mentioned that undoubtedly the three dimensions – ethnic, cultural and political – are interrelated, and the division made in this paper is only an artificial one made for practical purposes. Since Ma's inauguration, the ethnic and cultural dimensions have been blended and together play a matching role to the political dimension. This encompassing formula may provide the impulse to create a new "them", i.e. the group that rejects the "our", Chinese-centric, harmony-stressed, inclusive, blending framework to serve political utility. The degree of interaction between the three dimensions seems to lie in the degree of this utility to gain electoral votes for a certain political party or alliance (in this case, the KMT and its leader) as well as to advance Taiwan's popularity in the world. To further support the usefulness of our new formula, "the Taiwanized consensus", this pilot research project on the presidential discourse might be complemented with a comparative account of Chinese- and English-language versions of Ma's statements as well as with the authors' ongoing research of voices within the Taiwanese media.

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