

Abstract

The Republic of China (ROC), also known as Taiwan, has been the haven of the Kuomintang (KMT) since its defeat at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1949. Taiwan has long been the subject of control by foreign powers, which has created a unique history for the autonomous region. Historical circumstances have created a space for a distinct Taiwanese culture that has diverged from that of the mainland. This paper examines the role of this newfound culture on civic engagement, specifically regarding the sentiment for separatism or lessened ties with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). I examine the history of the island by first discussing the evolution of Taiwanese culture over the 20th and 21st centuries. I take a closer look following Taiwan’s democratization, which developed a deeper cultural cleavage that is politically salient. Cultural cleavages have only increased the nationalist sentiment of the Taiwanese people in pushing for greater separation – if not full-fledged independence – from the PRC. The results of my historical analysis argue the relevance of culture theory on the growing divide between Taiwan and China. In addition, this paper provides a perspective the effects of identity politics in Taiwan and its effect on cross-strait relations.

Methods

Research Questions:
What circumstances have afforded the Taiwanese the ability to fully express their political culture? How has a distinct Taiwanese identity translated into any particular cross-strait policy?

- definition of culture, political culture and culture theory in comparative political analysis, discussion of nationalism
- Historical analysis

Theory

“Cultures differ, among other ways, in how people view authority relations, in their members’ commitment to particular religious or ideological views, and in the content and salience of their historical memories.”

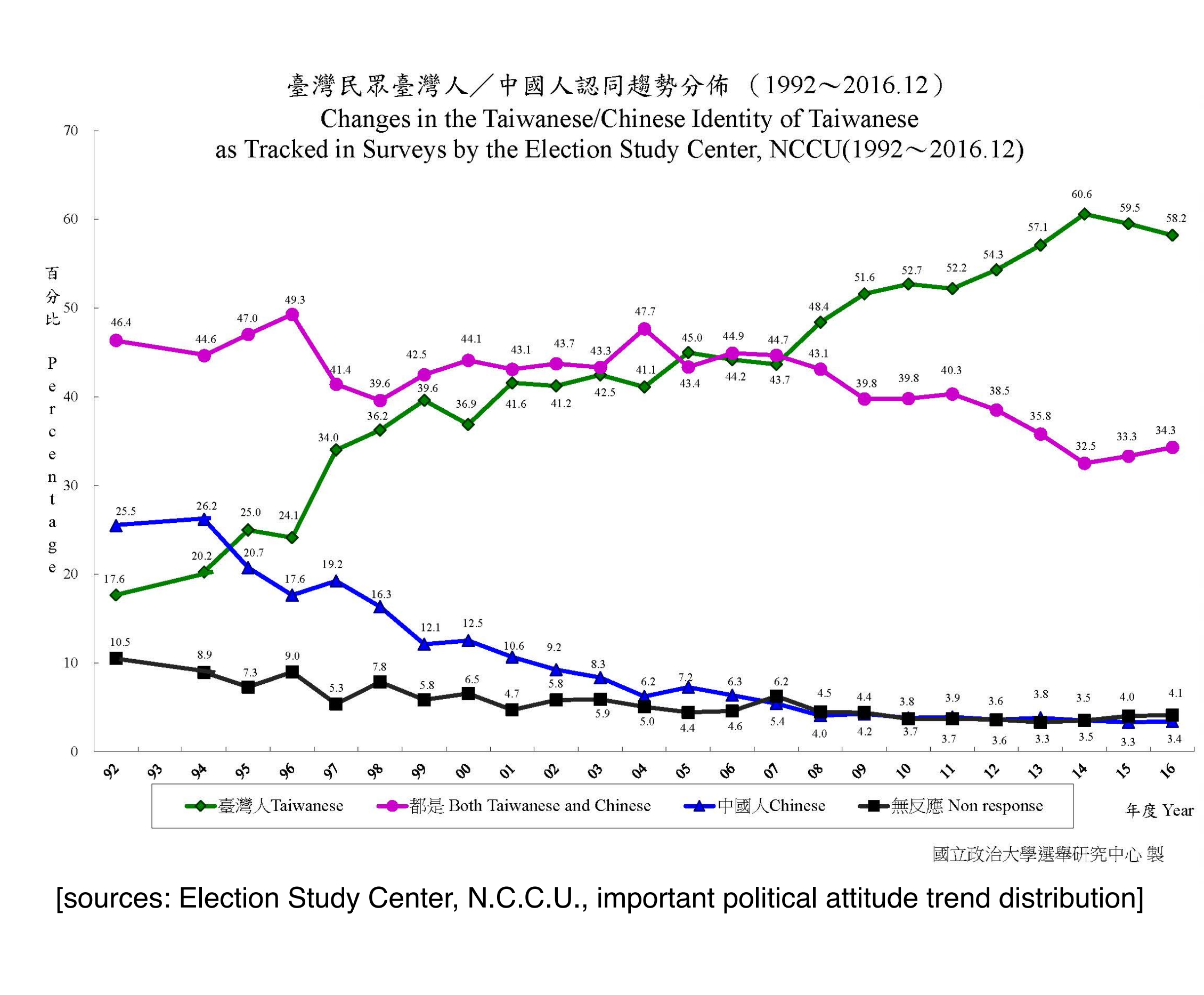
- Weber’s action theory of political culture
- Interconnected concept of Taiwanese consciousness and political culture
- Taiwanese nationalism and newfound national identity
- Taiwanese consciousness must be defined in relation to cultural identity, political culture, and national identity

Historical Analysis

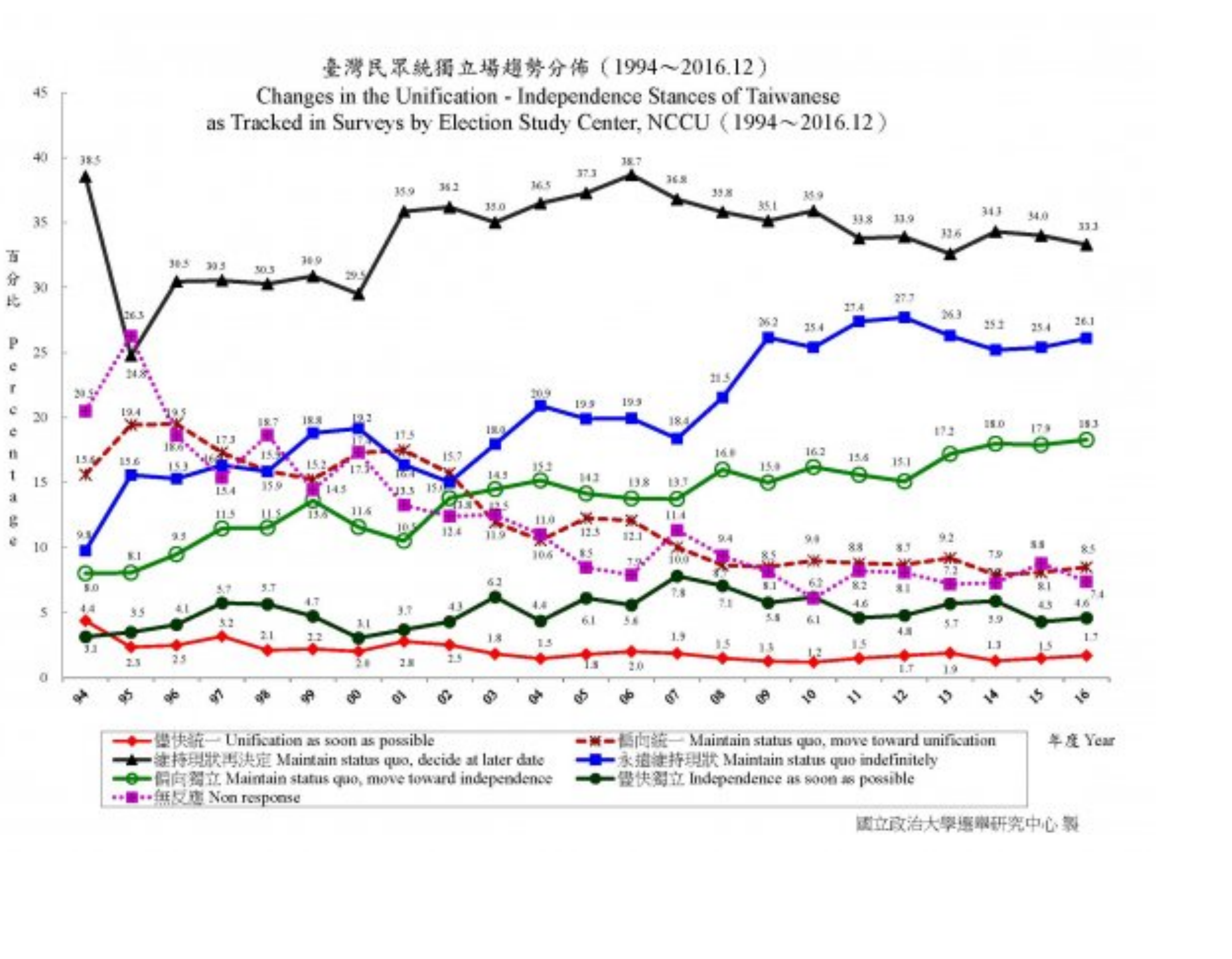
- Era of Foreign Rule
 - Dutch Colonization
 - Trading Post 1642-1661
 - Qing Dynasty
 - Zheng Cheng-gong (1661-1683)
 - Shi Lang conquers Taiwan (1683)
 - Qing Dynasty Rules Taiwan and sets up a predominantly Han Chinese culture
 - Japanese Colonization
 - Taiwan is ceded to the Japanese in the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1895)
 - Kuomintang (KMT) Rule
 - Cairo Declaration and Potsdam Declaration hand Taiwan back to the KMT
 - February 28, 1947 Incident
 - Chiang Kai-shek loses the Chinese Civil War and relocated the ROC capitol to Taiwan
 - Martial law declared (1949-1987)
 - Chiang Kai-shek dies (1975)



The Evolution of Taiwanese Identity (1996-2016)



Findings



Current Implications

Taiwanization is likely to continue under the current Democratic Progressive Party regime. Cross-strait relations, with the exception of a call for full fledged independence, will remain at status quo leaning toward seperatism.

