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Constructing Taiwan: Finding Agency in a Contested Sovereignty

By Noah Lee

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Faculty Advisor: Dr. Dali Yang

Preceptor: Dr. Kara Ann Hooser

Abstract

What does it mean to act or produce agency for a contested sovereign state? Typically, contested sovereign states are thought to produce agency through a call and/or fight for independence. However, I theorize that contested sovereign states can produce a stronger form of agency by performatively constructing their identity and producing counter-narratives that sustain themselves against other sovereign state(s) that claim sovereignty over the contested sovereign state. Using the Taiwan case study to explicate my goals, I perform content analysis on Taiwanese presidents since democratization as well as on specific Taiwanese responses to the Third and Fourth Taiwan Strait Crises. In this pursuit, I find that Taiwan has successfully produced and sustained their identity counter-narrative(s) against the mainland and have thus produced a stronger form of agency than directly claiming or fighting for independence. The Taiwan case study illustrates an important example of how contested sovereign states can produce agency through identity rather than a fight for independence.

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Introduction

Overview

Taiwan stands at an inflection point for Sino-US relations and the Asia Pacific region, as the potential for conflict increases. Conventional security discourse surrounding the island has revolved around topics like Taiwan's key role in the semiconductor industry, the potential for a Chinese invasion, and the uncertain future of Taiwan's contested sovereignty. These events situate Taiwan within a traditional great power conflict between the US and China as both seek to cement their power and influence over this critical geopolitical region. However, Taiwan may have more agency over its future than some analysts credit it.¹

What does acting or producing agency in a contested sovereignty mean? Agency has typically been conceived of in international relations scholarship as the ability of a state to influence or control the behaviors within the state itself and among external actors such as other states or international organizations. However, a contested sovereign state lacks the implicit recognition from the international community that it does have agency. Further complicating this status is an often looming threat of invasion or military occupation for most contested sovereign states. Another attribute associated with contested sovereign states is the evolution of these states' nationalist pulse, a force often associated with pushing any state, not just contested sovereign states, to the use of force. Remarkably, Taiwan has managed to stave off this hawkish sentiment and found limited international recognition through participation in international organizations like the World Trade Organization, as well as recognition from other similarly situated small island states. At the same time, Taiwan lacks formal diplomatic recognition from

¹ See for example, John F Copper, "Believe Realist Theory and Say Good-Bye to Taiwan?," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 21, no. 2 (2014): 151-161; Henry A. Kissinger, "The Future of U.S.-Chinese Relations: Conflict Is a Choice, Not a Necessity," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 2 (2012): 44-55; John J Mearsheimer, "Taiwan's Dire Straits," *The National Interest* no. 130 (2014): 29-39.

more prominent players in the international system. The mainland also continually blocks it from entering other, more prominent international organizations like the UN.

What is it like to exist in a world where most states in the system do not acknowledge that you exist? For any contested sovereign state, this usually entails forcing the international system to recognize that you exist through a fight for independence. Fighting and claiming independence draw attention to the dilemma of contested sovereign states. At the same time, alternative strategies exist to draw attention to this issue. Shelley Rigger, one of the preeminent scholars on Taiwan, characterizes Taiwan's dilemma through the "international birdcage" metaphor.² Rigger notes that so long as Taiwan does not claim national independence, Taiwan can manage its affairs and have substantive relations with the rest of the world.³ Despite this small allowance of diplomatic relations, Taiwan has paid a high price for these relationships and continually faces affronts to its sovereignty from the mainland. Notably, Taiwanese nationalism poses a particular threat to maintaining peace for Taiwan. Yet, nationalism can also further reinforce and construct the uniqueness of Taiwan's identity in contrast to the mainland's imposition of Chineseness on Taiwan.

Past scholarship on Taiwanese nationalism has focused on its postcolonial development⁴ or the effects Taiwanese nationalism has on Taiwan's security and sovereignty problems.⁵ The

² Shelley Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, (2011).

³ Rigger, 186.

⁴ See for example, Ping-Hui Liao, "Postcolonial Studies in Taiwan: Issues in Critical Debates" in *Postcolonial Studies* 2, no. 2 (1999): 199–211; Stephen J. Hartnett, Patrick Shaou-Whea Dodge, and Lisa B. Keränen, "Postcolonial Remembering in Taiwan: 228 and Transitional Justice as 'The End of Fear'" in *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 13, no. 3 (2020): 238–56; James Lin, "Nostalgia for Japanese Colonialism: Historical Memory and Postcolonialism in Contemporary Taiwan" in *History Compass* 20, no. 11 (2022): 1–11.

⁵ See for example, Hans Stockton, "National Identity, International Image, and a Security Dilemma" in *The "One China" Dilemma*, ed. Peter Chow (New York: Palgrave MacMillan US, 2008), pp. 99–115; Martin Boyle, "Huadu: A Realist Constructivist Account of Taiwan's Anomalous Status," in *The Social Construction of State Power: Applying Realist Constructivism*, ed. J. Samuel Barkin (Bristol University Press, 2020), 73–100; Robin Duncan Verrall, "The Visual Politics of Taiwanese Nationalism: Contested National Identities in the Imagery of the Sunflower Movement," PhD Dissertation, York University (2021).

latter body of literature characterizes the dilemma of Taiwan's sovereignty through a security crisis, whereas the postcolonial literature primarily focuses on Taiwan's development as a postcolonial society. These literatures often dance around the issue of Taiwan's contested sovereignty and diverts its attention to the seemingly more significant questions facing Taiwan. Within the field of international relations more broadly, the question of whether states can produce agency within a contested sovereignty is also largely ignored. Perhaps this is due to the contradictory notion of agency and contested sovereignty; however, Taiwan represents an apt case study that explores whether these terms can paradoxically co-exist and if Taiwan has achieved this paradoxical existence. However, whether a contested sovereign state can produce agency is not unique to Taiwan. Prominent examples of such include states like Kosovo and Palestine. I explicate a theory by which contested sovereign states can produce agency without outright resorting to the use of force that is particularly applicable to Taiwan. However, I also explain some dynamics operating within other contested sovereign states.

In this thesis, I establish a general theoretical framework to explain how states can produce agency in a contested sovereignty. My theory highlights the central issue of identity afflicting contested sovereign states and how Taiwan has addressed this issue through a performative construction of identity rooted in an evolving crisis of identity playing out on its domestic and international fronts. In this context, Taiwanese elites construct a "Taiwaneseness"⁶ through discourse that dually addresses conflicting identity narratives and produces agency by distinguishing itself from mainland China's more dominant narratives on Taiwan's status and identity. Taiwaneseness serves as a counternarrative to the mainland's territorial and identity

⁶ Chan, Tina. "National Identity Formation in a Post-Colonial Society: Comparative Case Studies in Hong Kong and Taiwan." (2013).

claims over Taiwan while also conferring Taiwan with the ability to produce agency in its ability to distinguish and claim its own identity.

This thesis will begin with a brief literature review of agency, sovereignty, legitimacy, and nationalism and present my contribution. The primary divergence from this body of literature is how I privilege a contested sovereign state's identity as a bonding agent for the interrelated concepts of agency, sovereignty, and legitimacy. Ultimately, a contested sovereign state's identity needs to be distinguished for this type of state to produce agency and legitimacy. In contrast, complete sovereignty is unattainable without a retraction from states that claim sovereignty over the contested sovereign state. Nationalism serves as a catalyst by which contested sovereign states frame and control their identity(s) through domestic and foreign policies. Next, I will dive further into my theory to establish an identity matrix by which a performative construction of identity can produce agency in a contested sovereignty. Following this, I will overlay my theory on the Taiwan case study with a brief history of Taiwan's political environment to highlight the centrality of identity in Taiwan's dilemma. Analyzing inaugural addresses from Taiwanese presidents since 1996 and key policies from each administration will showcase how the identity matrix produces agency for Taiwan. The penultimate section will provide a holistic overview of how my theory explains Taiwan's ability to produce agency in a contested sovereignty. Finally, I will offer some concluding remarks to discuss what further research on this topic should tackle and the implications for how other states with a contested sovereignty can produce agency.

Agency

One of the core questions within international relations scholarship is who can act and what it means to act in international politics.⁷ The main areas of research focus on actors such as states, elites, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations, as well as the forms of agency these actors typically utilize.⁸ While this thesis employs the term agency to describe the capability of actors to act, not all relevant scholarship utilizes this term.⁹ Furthermore, the study of agency has traditionally faced three main problems: the levels of analysis problem that seeks to understand who the agents are, the agent-structure problem that seeks to understand what it means to act in the face of structural constraints, and a relationist account of agency that focuses on how agency is produced and sustained through actor relationships.¹⁰

Agency is commonly defined as the capability of a state to exert power, and power is commonly defined as a state's ability to influence or control the actions or behaviors of other actors. There are multiple definitions of what constitutes power, whether it be military power, economic power, soft power, and more.¹¹ I conceive of producing identity as another mechanism by which power or agency can be wielded by a state, especially a contested sovereign state, to

⁷ See for example, Beth A. Simmons, "International Law and State Behavior: Commitment and Compliance in International Monetary Affairs," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 4 (December 2000): 819–35; Ian Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics," *International Organization* 53, no. 2 (1999): 379–408; Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations," *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999): 699–732; Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, "Power in International Politics," *International Organization* 59, no. 01 (January 2005): 39–75.

⁸ See for example, Beth A. Simmons, "International Law and State Behavior: Commitment and Compliance in International Monetary Affairs," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 4 (December 2000): 819–35; Ian Hurd, "Legitimacy and Authority in International Politics," *International Organization* 53, no. 2 (1999): 379–408; Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations," *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999): 699–732; Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, "Power in International Politics," *International Organization* 59, no. 01 (January 2005): 39–75.

⁹ Benjamin Braun, Sebastian Schindler, and Tobias Wille, "Rethinking Agency in International Relations: Performativity, Performances and Actor-Networks," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 22, no. 4 (December 2019): 787–807.

¹⁰ Braun, Schindler, and Wille, 790–793

¹¹ Holsti, K. J. "The Concept of Power in the Study of International Relations." *Background* 7, no. 4 (1964): 179–94.

influence other states' behaviors. Typically, agency is not something that is "produced." However, a contested sovereign state is not afforded the implicit sovereignty recognition afforded to a more typical state that *has* agency. Thus, a contested sovereign state must produce agency rather than *have* agency since the paradox of being in a contested sovereignty does not provide the implicit recognition that a state *has* agency. Naturally, the question arises as to whether a contested sovereign state can produce agency in the first place.

The means of producing agency emerge from a state's domestic politics and shape how it views itself and desires other states to view it. To these ends, a conceptualization of identity as producing agency requires the acceptance, recognition/affirmation, or rejection of the proposed identity of a state. Additionally, the proposed identity ultimately wields influence over other states' behaviors by categorizing a state in a contested sovereignty as legitimate or illegitimate based on this acceptance, recognition/affirmation, or rejection of the proposed identity. This legitimacy dimension allows a contested sovereign state the room to act within the international sphere and influence other states' behavior.

Essentially, a contested sovereign state's primary tool to produce agency is from within. These states must secure their sense of self, or identity, by making others recognize, reject, or accept that identity. Imagine there is an exclusive club that many people wish to join. Some individuals are granted entry if they "fit in," but only a select few with desired characteristics are provided membership. In this analogy, this exclusive club represents sovereign states while the individuals trying to get in represent everyone else, including contested sovereign states. Individuals trying to join the club must market themselves as club members. Marketing means mimicking their norms, actions, principles, and how they carry themselves. Essentially, an aspiring member of this exclusive club must present an identity that meshes with the ideal club

member identity. Once enough members accept this individual's status as desirable, entry is granted. However, entry is not the same as full membership. “Entry” for a contested sovereign state means that this state has been afforded acknowledgements that they mesh well enough with the rest of the club, but do not yet earn the privilege of becoming a member. Perhaps this is because they still have some undesirable characteristics, or maybe another member of the club is blocking their ability to achieve membership. This “entry” status ultimately confers a contested sovereign state’s ability to produce agency. These states must work and prove that they are just like the other club members, thus conferring that they must produce agency (entry) instead of the club members already *having* agency (membership). A discussion of sovereignty will better situate my conceptualization of agency for a contested sovereign state.

Sovereignty

A discussion of sovereignty is warranted since the distinguishing factor between producing and having agency is whether or not a state’s sovereignty is recognized.

Sovereignty has been traditionally characterized as a basic rule of coexistence within the international system and is frequently called upon as an institution that must be protected and defended.¹² Sovereignty also provides the basis for justifying state actions like the use of force when states feel as though their sovereignty has been violated.¹³ Therefore, sovereignty is an inherently social construct where state claims to sovereignty create an environment that allows interaction among an international community, while mutual recognition of sovereignty claims is

¹² Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge University Press, 1996): 1-22.

¹³ Biersteker and Weber, 1-3.

an essential aspect of the construction of states.¹⁴ At a general level, sovereignty can be defined as a normative belief in the principles of nonintervention and mutual recognition among states.¹⁵

Further defining sovereignty enters a deeply entrenched literature beyond this thesis's scope. For analytical clarity, I employ Biersteker and Weber's definition of state sovereignty, which separates the territorial state from sovereignty. The territorial state is a geographically-contained structure whose agents claim ultimate political authority over their domain.¹⁶ Sovereignty, then, is the external recognition of these agents' capability to exercise final authority over their affairs.¹⁷ I expand upon these factors of territory and authority to include identity as another intrinsic aspect of state sovereignty. What distinguishes one sovereign state from another is not the basic claim to sovereignty or external recognition of such, but the specific identity proposed by each state implicit within these claims and recognitions. Internal and external affirmations of state identity would be significant indicators in determining the agency of a state.

In contrast, a contested sovereign state lacks the recognition of its agency from other sovereign states. Accordingly, a contested sovereign state must seek out ways to not only distinguish itself from state(s) that claim a contested sovereign state within its territory but also find informal and formal recognition that it does have agency. Rather than characterizing sovereignty and agency through security, a contested sovereign state finds security and agency by recognizing its unique identity. While this process is not unique to contested sovereign states, its significance is elevated precisely because a contested sovereign state is confronted with an

¹⁴ Biersteker and Weber, 1-2.

¹⁵ Hurd, 393.

¹⁶ Biersteker and Weber, 2.

¹⁷ Biersteker and Weber, 2.

attack on its very identity. As such, a contested sovereign state will emphasize addressing these contested identity issues more than a sovereign state.

Returning to the previous analogy of the exclusive club, an aspiring member must prove to themselves that they do fit into the club. If an aspiring member does not believe they fit in, it would be much harder for them to gain entry or membership. On the other hand, if an aspiring club member feels that their identity matches up well with an ideal club member, they likely have an easier time gaining entry or membership. These dynamics represent how a contested sovereign state affirms its identity internally.

Assuming an aspiring club member believes themselves to be a good fit to become a club member, the aspiring individual must now prove to already established club members that they are a good fit. Likening to the external affirmation of a contested sovereign state's identity, established club members judge the aspiring applicant as acceptable, undesirable (rejection), or recognize/affirm that the aspiring member's identity matches well enough with the club's ideal member.

Concurrent with the dimensions of agency and sovereignty is legitimacy, the means of attaining it for a state, and its relationship with contested sovereign states.

Legitimacy

Orbiting the previous discussions of sovereignty and agency is the concept of legitimacy in international relations. To be a sovereign state and thus to *have* agency means that such a state is recognized as legitimate. In contrast, a contested sovereign state must also produce agency to construct its legitimacy for its populace and the international community.

In his seminal piece on legitimacy and authority, Ian Hurd defines legitimacy as “the normative belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed.”¹⁸ Hurd examines the normative power of legitimacy on influencing actor compliance or noncompliance, particularly through an examination of why the principles of sovereignty are well-respected and generally adhered to as the status quo.¹⁹ While this delves into a divergent yet interrelated research topic, Hurd’s theory of legitimization through norm internalization has pertinent applicability to the case of contested sovereign states. A contested sovereign state paradoxically adheres to the norm of sovereignty to achieve legitimacy, just as any other sovereign state would act, according to Hurd. Where I differ in this conceptualization of legitimacy is how a state can achieve its legitimacy. Simply adhering to the norm of sovereignty is not enough for a contested sovereign state to achieve legitimacy. Usually, this process of state legitimization entails a fight for independence; however, another mechanism of state legitimization can be the internalization and externalization of a contested sovereign state’s identity. Despite the seemingly inherent binary of legitimacy, the definition of legitimacy exists on a spectrum whereby actor legitimacy can be attained within the co-existence of acceptance and rejection. There will never be a true universalization of a “legitimate state.” As such, achieving the status of legitimacy for a state is bound within a more vague conceptualization where legitimacy is produced as a byproduct of the norm of sovereignty. Utilizing Hurd’s definition of legitimacy as a basis, I define legitimacy for a contested sovereign state as the ability to achieve the internalization and externalization of its identity. This can be achieved within the paradoxical existence of acceptance, recognition/affirmation, and rejection of a contested sovereign state’s identity.

¹⁸ Hurd, 381.

¹⁹ Hurd, 394.

Legitimacy operates alongside agency as a production of a contested sovereign state's actions. Returning to the exclusive club analogy, granting entry to an aspiring member confers a semblance of legitimacy to these individuals. Full legitimacy is attained through membership, but being given entry into the club is the next most legitimizing action. This legitimacy emerges as the product of an individual's ability to market their identity and attributes as desirable for the club. In this sense, a contested sovereign state cannot achieve legitimacy and sovereignty without declaring independence and usually fighting for that independence. Resting in the space between mere existence and full sovereignty is the space that contested sovereign states occupy.

In this process of identity recognition to achieve agency and legitimacy, a contested sovereign state will invoke nationalism to dually construct the uniqueness of its identity in a self-other relationship and combat against the extension of another state's identity over it. Both sovereign and contested sovereign states utilize nationalism to broadly achieve these identity-distinguishing aims. Identity is constructed through discourse, but nationalism also serves to solidify how identity becomes dispersed and claimed more generally from the initial discursive construction. Nationalism is thus the driving force behind how a contested sovereign state can produce its own identity and extrapolate that to find agency within the international realm. The following section will discuss how nationalism is a force multiplier in a contested sovereign state's pursuit of agency and legitimacy.

Nationalism

The literature on nationalism is vast and likely one of the more popular research areas in political science and international relations. Accordingly, defining nationalism can adopt a narrow or broad outlook depending on the relationships the literature seeks. More broadly,

nationalism can describe a set of political beliefs that hold that a nation should have its own state.²⁰ For this thesis, I utilize Hans Stockton's definition of nationalism: a shared history of struggle among an in-group against an out-group that unites those involved in a common cause and establishes an understanding of what is possible and permissible in the future evolution of the identity.²¹ The broader nationalism literature also generally agrees upon two types of nationalism: civic, which seeks sovereign representation of the state and citizenship for its members, and ethnic or cultural, which seeks a more restrictive form of representation and citizenship based on bloodline or lineage.²²

Equally important is the process of constructing nationalism. Stockton describes this process as an elite struggle to implement an agenda that ensures self-rule and civic or cultural allegiance to the state.²³ In doing so, an in-group/out-group dichotomy places the culture of the other into imagined communities of liberal/illiberal, capitalist/communist, democratic/authoritarian, and so on.²⁴ The in-group/out-group or self-other relationship comprising nationalism emerges as a collective consciousness that defines the national identity and the nation.²⁵ Constructing nationalism can be further dichotomized between rational or liberal nationalism and irrational or illiberal nationalism, whereby the elites' legitimization is constituted under institutionalized popular sovereignty (rational) or power consolidation in societies lacking political pluralism (irrational).²⁶ Through this understanding of nationalism, the

²⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, "Lecture on Napoleonic Wars and the Great Transformation," University of Chicago, Chicago, 2025.

²¹ Stockton, 100-101.

²² See, for example, Ernest Haas, "Nationalism, Liberalism, and Progress" (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997)

²³ Stockton, 101.

²⁴ See for example, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, England: Verso Books, 2022); K. E. Boulding, "National Images and International Systems," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3, no. 2 (1959): 120-31.

²⁵ Yu, Fu-Lai Tony, and Diana Sze Man Kwan. "Social Construction of National Identity: Taiwanese versus Chinese Consciousness." *Social Identities* 14, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 33-52.

²⁶ Stockton, 101.

process of creating a civic or cultural nationalism and the character of that process become highly salient factors in analyzing state behavior and understanding how identity materializes within a state's domestic and foreign politics.

Within the nationalism literature, there is a general understanding that nationalism has pertinent effects on how a state develops its foreign and domestic policies. Furthermore, this relationship is often characterized as unidirectional rather than intertwined and constitutive. Mykonos and Kuo argue for such a constitutive relationship and describe it as endogenous, interactive, or exogenous.²⁷ Foreign policy choices characterize an endogenous relationship as the trigger for national self-identification, which is often most visible after a war.²⁸ An interactive relationship can be best described by Bloom's national identity dynamic, where international events are presented to the public in a manner where they perceive a threat to their identity or an opportunity to enhance it.²⁹ This dynamic then creates a mobilization effort to secure, protect, and improve the national identity while also threatening domestic political factions as they seek to appropriate the national identity dynamic to their political benefit.³⁰ An exogenous relationship can be characterized by how nationalist attitudes can influence individual policy preferences, which can shape public opinion that in turn shapes foreign policy.³¹ This relationship is also characterized by internal dynamics on how nationalism influences foreign policy outcomes, as nationalist factions compete for power, and external dynamics on how the relationship between various national identities can also affect foreign policy.³²

²⁷ Harris Mylonas and Kendrick Kuo, "Nationalism and Foreign Policy," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (2017): 1–27.

²⁸ Mylonas and Kuo, 6-9.

²⁹ Mylonas and Kuo, 6-9; See also, Bloom, W, "Personal identity, national identity, and international relations" Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press (1990).

³⁰ Mylonas and Kuo, 6-9; See also, Bloom, W, "Personal identity, national identity, and international relations" Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press (1990).

³¹ Mylonas and Kuo, 6-9.

³² Mylonas and Kuo, 6-9.

Jiyoung Ko expands upon these concepts by exploring two contexts where nationalist sentiments are stoked.³³ The first context Ko identifies is when nationalist sentiments are stoked in the focus of the self to emphasize national achievements and greatness.³⁴ The second context is when nationalist sentiments are stoked concerning the other, typically through invoking historical memories of suffering and grievances.³⁵ These contexts help situate the two types of nationalist sentiments in a usually adverse relationship with foreign policy, where the latter context will more often generate a more significant adverse effect than the former.³⁶ However, Ko's empirical findings suggest that foreign policy effects may be more dovish when nationalist sentiments are invoked about the self.³⁷ In aggregate, an essential aspect of nationalism's relationship with foreign policy is the specific nationalist sentiment emphasized through constructing the self-other relationship and the specific political responses this generates or otherwise justifies for the public.

More broadly, nationalism serves three distinct purposes for a contested sovereign state in its pursuit of agency and legitimacy. First, nationalism is vital in solidifying a contested sovereign state's identity among its populace. Discourse constructs the identity, but nationalism is the bonding agent for the general populace's claim to this identity. Second, nationalism helps produce and reinforce identity reaffirming policies within a contested sovereign state. These policies act to internalize the constructed identity while also proclaiming to outsiders that this identity exists in contrast to other identities being imposed upon the contested sovereign state. Third, nationalism has a rallying effect that invokes greater allegiance to the contested sovereign state among its populace. This effect can leach into a contested sovereign state's efforts to sell its

³³ Ko, 2-4.

³⁴ Ko, 2-4.

³⁵ Ko, 2-4.

³⁶ Ko, 2-4.

³⁷ Ko, 2-4.

identity to the international community, but more pertinently serves to further identity adherence and cohesion among its populace.

An undergirding point in the deployment of nationalism in contested sovereign states is what Ko calls hawkish and dovish nationalist sentiments.³⁸ Nationalism can inspire these types of states to a fight for independence or as a discursive tool to empower their constructed identities. The course of action taken by these contested sovereign states hinges on to what extent they can both fan the nationalist flames and reign these flames back in as the context demands. If contested sovereign states fail to achieve this balance, nationalism's more hawkish alignment can provoke hawkish foreign policy outcomes. On the other hand, when nationalism's hawkishness is counterbalanced, contested sovereign states can justify more radical policies and actions that stop just short of calling for independence.

A somewhat applicable analogy of nationalism to the exclusive club is how an aspiring member decides whether to try to join this club in the first place, essentially, the confidence of an individual. An aspiring member would take up specific actions that act as confidence boosters, such as practicing what to say to established club members and changing how they dress or behave. While these actions set up change for this individual, the solidification of these changes to become permanent and stable traits or behaviors arises through the repetition of these practices. Repetition also serves to combat undesirable characteristics associated with becoming a club member.

³⁸ Ko, 2-4.

Theory of Identity Construction as Producing Agency

Identity Matrix

This section on the identity matrix will outline the first half of my theory to explicate how a contested sovereign state can construct itself as a legitimate actor through discourse and practices. I begin with a section explaining the broad brushstrokes of the main elements operating inside the identity matrix: the performative constitution of identity, internalized and externalized identity, and the final result being a contested sovereign state constructing itself as a legitimate actor. Following this, I break down the pieces of what internalized and externalized identity is composed of and how nationalism serves to drive these components forward into the overarching process of internalized and externalized identity. Finally, I offer a continuation of the exclusive club analogy with an adaptation of the revolving door analogy to further illustrate how the identity matrix works.

My theory builds upon the dimensions outlined in the agency, sovereignty, and legitimacy subsections, whereby a contested sovereign state may distinguish itself as a legitimate actor through a performative constitution of identity. David Campbell defines this term as “the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names.”³⁹ Campbell expands upon this definition to include how performative identity constitution is a process of materialization where the distinctions between linguistic and nonlinguistic phenomena are stabilized over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface.⁴⁰ I expand upon this conceptualization of a performative constitution of identity as a mechanism that produces the internalization (the internal, intra-state process of identity normalization) and externalization (the external, inter-state process of identity normalization) of a contested sovereign state’s identity on

³⁹ David Campbell 1998, as cited in Braun, Schindler, and Wille, 794.

⁴⁰ David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia*, (1998): 24-25.

the domestic and international fronts. Holistically, I define these processes as an identity matrix explaining how a contested sovereign state manipulates its identity construction and utilizes its internalization and externalization to distinguish itself as a legitimate agent.

At a general level, legitimacy is what the identity matrix produces; however, a closer inspection of the processes of internalized and externalized identity processes reveals three constitutive elements. The first is the acceptance, recognition/affirmation, or rejection of a state's identity. For a state's identity to be internalized and externalized, members of its populace and the international community must reach a broader consensus on what constitutes the contested sovereign state's identity. Acceptance, recognition/affirmation, or rejection can operate through various features, ranging from the actual breakdown of what percentage of a state's population identifies with particular identities to acknowledgement that the understanding of a contested sovereign state's identity exists on a spectrum. While acceptance and recognition/affirmation serve a clearer purpose to these ends, rejection of a contested sovereign state's identity can also contribute to the dynamics of identity internalization and externalization. Due to the performative nature of how these dynamics are produced, state elites may utilize the rejection of their identity as a form of narrative that must be counteracted. More on how these narratives affect the internalization and externalization of identity will be expanded upon below.

The second feature of internalized and externalized identity is how the contested sovereign state reaffirms this identity through its actions, specifically through its policies. Due to the performative nature of identity construction, state elites must reaffirm the actual constitution of the proposed identity and recenter evolving threats and security challenges confronting the state's identity. The primary locus of this feature is situated within nationalism as a tool to justify the production of potentially polarizing actions and policies. Nationalism is the undercurrent

driving all three features of a contested sovereign state's internalization and externalization. It is invoked within a state's populace as a tool for identity acceptance, recognition/affirmation, and rejection. Simultaneously, nationalism displays its most pertinent effects through its ability to be invoked by state elites when circumstances are ripe, such as a security crisis. While practices are the dominant tool used to reaffirm identity, discourse can also be equally effective in this process.

Delineating the boundaries of a contested sovereign state's proposed self and other also operates through the third feature: domineering and subversive narratives. Domineering narratives seek to maintain the contested sovereignty status, while subversive narratives seek to undermine the contested sovereignty status. Domineering narratives typically come from the state seeking to impose its identity and sovereignty claims over the contested sovereign state. However, they can also emerge from certain factions within the contested sovereign state itself. Subversive narratives typically come from revisionist factions within the contested sovereign state but can also come from outsiders who empathize with the contested sovereign state's dilemma. These narratives are situated within the relationship between a contested sovereign state and other state(s) that claim sovereignty over it.

Furthermore, the produced identity narratives orbit around the boundaries of what constitutes the state's self and its other to distinguish the state as a legitimate agent. A subversive narrative particularly serves as an amplifier for nationalist invocations due to the nature of its counteractive elements against domineering narratives and the contested sovereign status. Overall, domineering and subversive narratives exist as discourse on what identity is being constructed (or imposed) upon a contested sovereign state.

Operating throughout the identity matrix is what the contested sovereign state proposes as its own identity. This exists primarily through typically two political parties switching in and out of power. In Taiwan's example, these political parties have incredibly divergent end goals (independence and reunification). Yet, there are some core characteristics that both parties call upon to ground their differing definitions of identity. These unifying characteristics are ultimately what compose the core of Taiwanese-ness or any contested sovereign state's identity, while the outer boundaries of these states' identity are fluid and dynamic.

To further illustrate my theory of identity construction, I raise the analogy of the revolving door. In political science, this analogy is often utilized to describe the cyclical relationship between public and private sectors, where individuals in power frequently transfer to similar positions in another sector. In identity construction, the revolving door shifts identity rather than people to the fore. Rather than transferring people from positions of power to similar positions in another sector, a revolving door contingent upon identity shifts various sub-identities or transformational identity definitions dependent upon the political party in power. To merge this concept of the revolving door with my previous analogy of the exclusive club, imagine the club has a bouncer at the door who makes initial determinations before other club members pass judgment on whether an individual is granted entry or membership. Like a revolving door, an aspiring member would change how they present themselves to the bouncer and then to the club members. The core of the aspiring member's identity remains unchanged; however, the outer boundaries of what the identity privileges are adapted to each context. Maybe the aspiring member says they like chocolate ice cream to the bouncer and then advertises themselves to club members as liking vanilla ice cream since each of these contexts demands different ice cream

preferences. The individual still likes ice cream (a desirable club member characteristic) despite changing what flavor of ice cream they like.

Figures 1 and 2, illustrated below, offer a summarized model of my theory's operation. While this process may establish a contested sovereign state as a legitimate agent, it does not articulate how it may produce agency.

Figure 1—Identity Matrix: How a Contested Sovereign State Becomes a Legitimate Agent

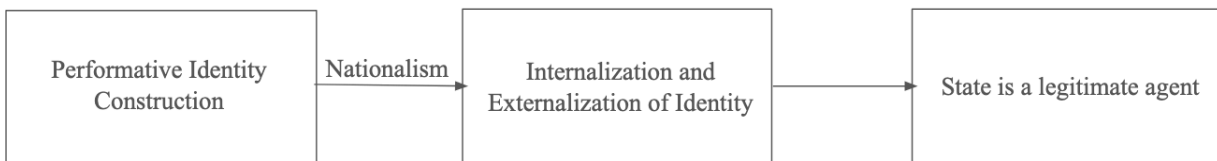
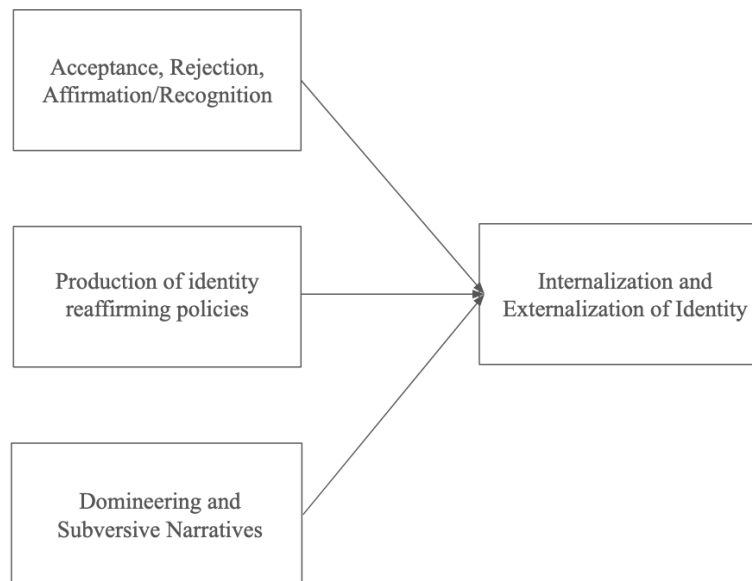


Figure 2—Components of the Internalization and Externalization of Identity



Producing Agency

Having outlined the identity matrix, I now shift to the second half of my theory: how a contested sovereign state can produce agency. I begin by contextualizing the reality for contested sovereign states, which is an existence that is continually affronted by other states seeking to impose sovereignty claims over the contested sovereign state. Following this, I explicate the importance of identity facing contested sovereign states and how these states must establish counter-narratives to shape their identity discourse, thus producing agency. I also address the deeper reasoning for the assaults on their sovereignty and identity. Finally, I offer some notes about the generalizability of my theory outside of the Taiwan case study.

To produce agency, state elites must successfully establish a counter-narrative concerning the contested sovereignty status. While agency has been traditionally characterized through sovereignty, a state with a contested sovereignty lacks this prerogative. A state with a contested sovereignty must then be able to distinguish itself from domineering narratives by creating a unique identity claimed by it. The operative feature of this concept rests in how contested sovereign states face a crisis of identity rather than a crisis of security. While a security crisis is not nonexistent for these states, it takes a backseat to the identity crisis that contested sovereign states face.

A contested sovereign state is typically claimed by one or more sovereign states that seek to impose or reaffirm that the contested state lays within the boundaries of the identity of the sovereign state(s). While this typically consists of the threat or use of force to enforce these identity claims, these actions occur because the identity of the contested sovereign state is detached from the sovereign state. Thus, a contested sovereign state can produce agency by producing a counter-narrative from these identity and sovereignty claims. In this scenario,

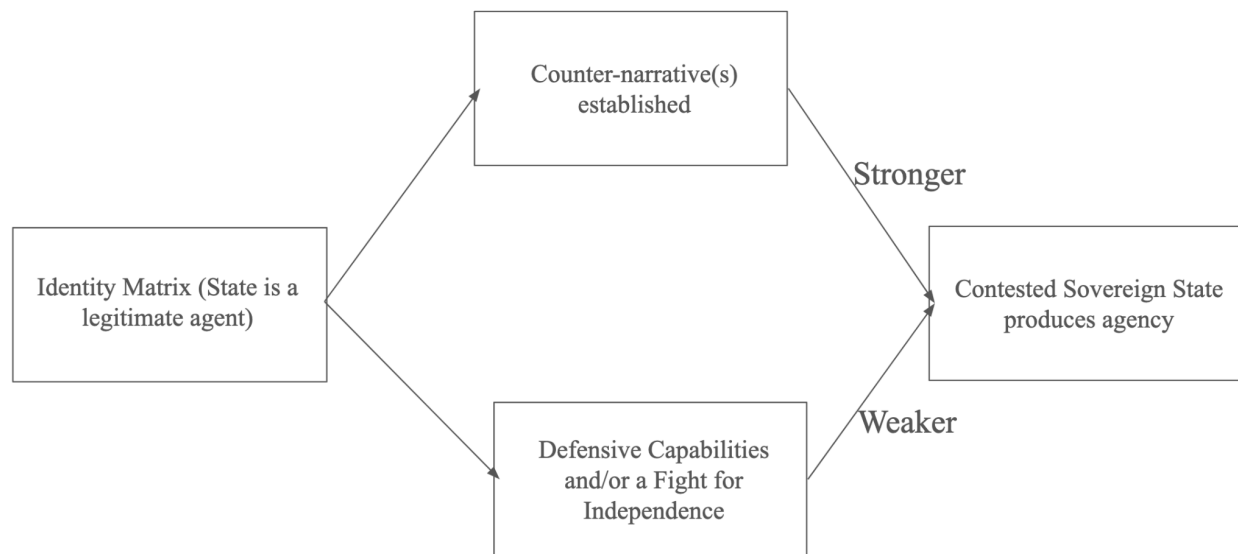
contested sovereign states can claim agency and sovereignty due to their belief in and construction of a unique identity existing in opposition to another state(s) sovereignty claims over it. This counter-narrative reinforces the policies a contested sovereign state adopts and the ability of these states to participate in international affairs.

Essentially, a contested sovereign state is essentially confronted with two assaults: an assault on its identity and an assault on its sovereignty. In prioritizing its survival, a contested sovereign state will naturally build up defensive arms and related capabilities to defend against physical assaults on its sovereignty. However, the more profound survival concern for these types of states is in both distinguishing and ensuring the continuance of their own identity as opposed to allowing other states to impose their identity over it. Without such efforts, these types of states will ultimately succumb to competing states' sovereignty and identity claims both physically and spiritually. The loss of the uniqueness of a contested sovereign state's identity poses as the metaphorical death of the basis of its sovereignty claims. To ensure the survival of its own identity, a contested sovereign state must produce discourse in opposition to the core identity and sovereignty claims imposed on it, or what I define as a counter-narrative. Both counter-narratives and defensive capabilities produce agency for a contested sovereign state. Yet, the true aim of both forms of agency is to distinguish these types of states from their opposition. In this pursuit, the stronger form of agency is ironically the counter-narrative rather than physically fighting to proclaim difference.

Agency production is further amplified through acceptance or recognition of this counter-narrative within the contested sovereign state's populace and among the international community. Acceptance and/or recognition need not be the sole mechanism for a state to produce agency. Still, it does significantly amplify a state's upper threshold for how effective and to what

extent it may wield its agency. Accordingly, a contested sovereign state that has successfully established a counter-narrative through the identity matrix will see increased participation in international affairs and reflect increased identification with the particular identity constructed by state elites among its populace. Figure 3 illustrates my theory of how a contested sovereign state may produce agency, provided that it has established itself as a legitimate agent through the identity matrix.

Figure 3—Agency Production in a Contested Sovereignty



Ultimately, a prominent question attached to the question of agency for a contested sovereign state is whether that state will turn to the use of force to claim independence. While my theory does not disregard this outcome entirely, I argue instead that it is just as likely for a contested sovereign state to maintain its paradoxical status either until it has the military capacity to entertain a fight for independence or until the state believes that more time is needed to cement its identity. In line with Ko's logic of hawkish or dovish nationalist invocations in reference to the self or Other, a contested sovereign state will be more likely to turn to violence when state elites invoke nationalism in reference to the Other as opposed to a more dovish stance

when invoked in reference to the self.⁴¹ To speak briefly on the generalizability of my theory, contested sovereign states like Kosovo or Palestine are much more likely to reference the Other in their nationalist invocations due to the geographic togetherness of the Other in both cases. On the other hand, Taiwan exists in relative geographic isolation from the Other, mainland China, which the Taiwanese have uniquely adapted in their pursuit of legitimacy and agency. This does not mean that Taiwan is so unique that my theory cannot be applied to Kosovo and Palestine. On the flip side, I argue that the larger processes facing all of these contested sovereign states center around a crisis of identity that must be resolved either through discursive practices, like in the example of Taiwan, or by entertaining fights for independence in the case of Kosovo and Palestine. Despite the apparent need to fight for independence in the latter examples, these contested sovereign states must continually address the assaults on their respective identities through establishing counter-narratives. Taiwan represents a pertinent case study of how contested sovereign states can produce agency without resorting to violence.

Taiwan's Contested Sovereignty

Having established my theoretical framework by which a contested sovereign state can produce agency, I now turn to an application of my theory through the case study of Taiwan. The following sections outline some context and history of Taiwan's political parties and Taiwan itself. Following this, I foreground how Taiwan's primary dilemma rests in a crisis of identity rather than a crisis of security. This framing highlights the importance of Taiwan's identity-producing actions and elevates the significance of these actions in light of growing threats from the mainland.

⁴¹ Ko, 2-4.

Political Environment on Nationalist Narratives

Concerning Taiwan, there is complexity in defining what Taiwanese nationalism is and who it includes for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the Kuomintang (KMT), and the people who align with some aspects of both. Taiwanese nationalists, typically associated with the DPP, promote Taiwanese uniqueness and separation from the Chinese state in the strongest terms.⁴² The second leading group is Chinese nationalists in Taiwan, which supports maintaining the status quo; however, what this maintenance means in practice takes on different interpretations.⁴³ One subgroup argues that Taiwan is a part of greater China. In contrast, another subgroup argues that Taiwan is China in the sense that the Republic of China (ROC) colonized the island in 1949 and its territories extend through the mainland.⁴⁴ Colloquial terms used to reference the broader movements associated with Taiwanese independence or reunification are pan-green and pan-blue, respectively. A third group comprises civic nationalists and pragmatists who recognize the emergence of a localized national identity composed of Taiwanese and Chinese identities and the range of future possibilities for Taiwan under reunification or independence. However, as long as Taiwan remains under threat from the mainland, maintaining the status quo remains the most pragmatic option for this group.⁴⁵ While this research highlights the Taiwanese nationalists as the dominant group in Taiwan's politics today, I will also consider how the other two groups contrast this conceptualization of Taiwaneseeness and to what extent these conflicting identities influence Taiwan's foreign policy.

⁴² Sullivan, Johnathan, and Lev Nachman. *Taiwan: A Contested Democracy Under Threat*. Agenda Publishing, (2024).

⁴³ Sullivan and Nachman, (2024).

⁴⁴ Sullivan and Nachman, (2024).

⁴⁵ Stockton, (2008).

Political complexities on what Taiwanese nationalism is and who it includes extend to questions about how Taiwan is able to understand its current conception of Taiwaneseeness through its colonial past. Various authors have honed in on the issue of national identity construction through works like postcolonial remembering of the 228 incident, social commentary on what Taiwanese independence means in terms of *huadu* and *taidu*, the visual politics of Taiwanese nationalism in the 2014 Sunflower Movement, and historical memory and nostalgia for Japanese colonialism.⁴⁶ The emergence of a Taiwanese identity can be traced to when the Japanese colonized the island; however, it can be argued that true Taiwanese nationalism not to have fully blossomed until the 228 incident and the subsequent White Terror under KMT colonization.⁴⁷ The 228 incident, also known as the February 28 Incident (or Massacre), posed a foundational moment for the full bloom of Taiwaneseeness because of a pivotal moment of collective action against the colonial KMT government's mass killings and repressive policies against civilians. This event resulted in decades of continued repression known as the White Terror that characterizes much of how KMT rule is remembered before Taiwan's democratization. Another strand of literature on the origins of Taiwanese nationalism argues that its modern conceptualization, which began with the start of democratic elections in 1996, takes on a different tone and identity than the previous iterations.⁴⁸ Overall, these works analyze how Taiwan grapples with its colonial legacy and discern when the Taiwanese identity began to emerge within its colonial history.

⁴⁶ See for example, Hartnett, Stephen J., Patrick Shaou-Whea Dodge, and Lisa B. Keränen. "Postcolonial Remembering in Taiwan: 228 and Transitional Justice as 'The End of Fear.'" *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 13, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 238–56; Lin, James. "Nostalgia for Japanese Colonialism: Historical Memory and Postcolonialism in Contemporary Taiwan." *History Compass* 20, no. 11 (2022): 1–11; Verrall, Robin Duncan. "The Visual Politics of Taiwanese Nationalism: Contested National Identities in the Imagery of the Sunflower Movement," March 2021; Boyle, Martin. "Huadu: A Realist Constructivist Account of Taiwan's Anomalous Status." In *The Social Construction of State Power: Applying Realist Constructivism*, edited by J. Samuel Barkin, 73–100. Bristol University Press, (2020).

⁴⁷ Sullivan and Nachman (2024).

⁴⁸ See for example, Ping-Hui Liao, (1999).

In conjunction with Taiwan's colonial past, there exist diverse approaches to how Taiwan handles the issue of its contested sovereignty in cross-strait relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The definitive agreement on cross-strait relations between the ROC and PRC is the 1992 Consensus, which states that there is "One China" but with two interpretations.⁴⁹ The KMT understands the One China principle to be that the ROC has sovereignty over Taiwan and mainland China. In contrast, the PRC understands the One China principle to be that the PRC has sovereignty over the mainland and Taiwan. Alternatively, the DPP rejects the One China principle and argues that Taiwan and the mainland have sovereignty only over their respective territories. Since the turn of democratic elections in 1996, Taiwan's various presidents have taken it upon themselves to maintain this status quo while not outright conceding its sovereignty and agency to the mainland. This has been met with varying success and diverse tactics on other aspects of cross-strait relations through Taiwan's post-democratization history. Further contextualizing these dynamics is the US's defensive commitment against invasion of Taiwan from the mainland per the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA).⁵⁰ As the next section will explore, the ultimate source of Taiwan's troubles lies not in aggression and threats of invasion from the mainland but in the crisis of identity confronting Taiwan.

A Crisis of Identity

I characterize Taiwan's dilemma as a crisis of identity rather than a crisis of security for two reasons. First, the inner core of Taiwan's domestic politics centers around how Taiwanese people view themselves and what it means to be Taiwanese. To these ends, the KMT and the

⁴⁹ Grossman, Derek. "Is the '1992 Consensus' Fading Away in the Taiwan Strait?," June 3, 2020.

⁵⁰ Zablocki, Clement. H.R. 2479 - Taiwan Relations Act, Pub. L. No. H.R. 2479 (1979).

DPP center Taiwanese politics around their respective approaches to cross-strait relations and the intertwined issue of defining Taiwaneseess. As the previous section noted, the KMT clings to the Chinese identity shared with the mainland but is also distinguished in the modes of governance the CCP and the KMT have adopted (per the Chinese Civil War). The DPP removes itself from the notion of a Chineseness inhabiting the Taiwanese people and instead centers on mixed ethnic backgrounds, Taiwan's colonial history, and a new Taiwaneseess that has been especially prominent among younger generations of Taiwanese people.⁵¹ While the DPP is more strongly for independence, DPP leaders have also contended that peaceful cross-strait relations and maintenance of the status quo are a win-win when invasion or war is the alternative. A straightforward outlook on Taiwan's domestic politics would find that it revolves around Taiwan's security and the conflicting approaches to cross-strait relations, however, the very heart of these surface level observations is that Taiwanese elites, mostly the DPP, are constructing a new national consciousness that directly conflicts with the Chineseness that the mainland claims over itself and Taiwan. This identity crisis rests at the core of almost every domestic and foreign policy that Taiwanese elites seek out and employ. If security truly were the focal point, Taiwan would not only be spending much more of its GDP on its military but also be more aggressively making military alliances with regional and international players.

The second reason why the true dilemma facing Taiwan is a crisis of identity is that identity is what I perceive to be the best explanation for the increase in cross-strait hostilities since the turn of democratic elections in Taiwan. From this turning point, the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis was initiated by the mainland in protest of Taiwan becoming a democracy. In more recent years, visits by high-profile US government leaders to Taiwan initiated the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis. These events coincide with a relative increase in the Taiwanese population, both calling

⁵¹ "Election Study Center, NCCU-Taiwan Independence vs. Unification with the Mainland." (2024)

for independence and more strongly identifying with the Taiwanese identity rather than solely identifying with the Chinese identity or both.⁵² Unsurprisingly, the mainland government perceives Taiwan's turn to democracy and increased relations with the West as eroding its control over Taiwan. These events are certainly triggers for cross-strait hostilities; however, the root cause of these hostilities is the rising dominance of the Taiwanese identity over identification with the Chinese identity or both. It is precisely through this distinction that Taiwan produces a stronger and more threatening form of agency than outright claiming independence. At the same time, Taiwanese elites from both political parties balance this with continual calls for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. With these points in mind, I now shift the discussion to an analysis of how Taiwanese elites produce a Taiwan-ness and how this process can convey agency for Taiwan.

Shifting Narratives, Shifting Identities

Methodology

The preceding section provided an overview of Taiwan's political context and history. I now shift to an analysis of Taiwanese president's inaugural addresses since democratization in 1996, as well as their responses to the Third and Fourth Taiwan Strait Crises. This time period was chosen due to Taiwan's transition and continuance of democratic elections since 1996. Additionally, the inaugural addresses typically contain the specific outlook each administration has on relations with China and can provide a rough framework of what domestic and foreign policies they employ to these ends. The Taiwan Strait Crises were also critical events during this period that occurred as a result of what China perceives as a threat to their stated goals of

⁵² "Election Study Center, NCCU-Taiwan Independence vs. Unification with the Mainland." (2024); Starr, Christine Huang and Kelsey Jo. "Most People in Taiwan See Themselves as Primarily Taiwanese; Few Say They're Primarily Chinese." Pew Research Center, (2024).

peaceful reunification and one country, two systems.⁵³ Identified themes from these sources will then be mapped onto Taiwan's domestic and foreign policy approaches with China, the US, and other regional actors that have been sought out from the Chen Shui-bian to the Tsai Ing-wen administrations.

I approach this issue using content analysis to thematize categories of language and discourse employed by Taiwanese elites in the context of nationalism and identity. Two central themes of nationalist discourse and language are whether they are in reference to the self or the Other.⁵⁴ Furthermore, these themes will be spliced based on whether the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) or the Kuomintang (KMT) is in power and the resultant Other each political party is constructing. This Other would be China and the KMT's elevation of Taiwan's Chinese identity in the case of the DPP, whereas the KMT identifies the other as the DPP's construction and elevation of Taiwanese identity over Chinese identity. In analyzing Taiwan's elite discourse, I will explicate how the construction of Taiwanese identity operates through the process of the identity matrix.

Lee Teng-hui

Lee Teng-hui was the first democratically elected president of Taiwan. As a member of the KMT, Lee had the Sisyphean task of paving a democratic future for a state still reeling from its colonial past and with its sovereignty under assault from the mainland. Further straining these objectives was the windfall of the 3rd Taiwan Strait Crisis initiated by the PRC to protest Taiwan's democratization. The immediacy of this event became a singular and particular focus for Lee's initial political objectives after being elected. Critically, Lee's demeanor towards

⁵³ Derek Grossman, "Is the '1992 Consensus' Fading Away in the Taiwan Strait?" Rand Corporation (2020).

⁵⁴ Ko, 1-2.

cross-strait relations would set the tone for how future presidents would act in similar circumstances. His inaugural address noted the importance of adopting a win-win strategy for expanding cross-strait relations with “quiet tolerance, not cowardice” and how the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis posed a peril for “peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region.”⁵⁵ Additionally, Lee highlights how the central issue of the sovereignty dispute centered around the system and lifestyle rather than ethnic or cultural identity. This implicit affirmation of the Chinese identity of Taiwan extends to Lee’s phrasing of the “new Chinese culture” of Taiwan.⁵⁶

As a member of the KMT, the emphasis on Chineseness within Lee’s construction of identity is apparent. However, Lee also understood that a new generation of Taiwanese people was being brought into a society with different values and circumstances from those of his generation. He supported the Taiwanese localization movement that sought to restore and reemphasize native Taiwanese culture as opposed to the emphasis on ROC/KMT rule and leadership. Prior to his democratic presidency, Lee also played an essential role in reintegrating the benshengren, who were the local Hokko and Hakka people of Taiwan, back into Taiwanese politics. The duality of Lee’s claims to Taiwan’s inherent Chineseness while laying the foundations for an evolution in the modern Taiwanese identity reflects the paradoxical nature of Taiwan’s sovereignty and, thus, its very identity.

These actions and identity discourse set the foundations for a new take on what Taiwan’s counter-narrative to the mainland is. Before democratization, the KMT colonial government distinguished itself primarily through the mode of governance between the mainland and Taiwan. With Lee’s presidency, it becomes apparent that this distinction has new dimensions through an evolving definition of Taiwanese. In the Lee era, Taiwanese evolves to become this

⁵⁵ “Inaugural Address, Lee Teng-Hui President Republic of China,” (1996).

⁵⁶ “Inaugural Address, Lee Teng-Hui President Republic of China,” (1996).

“new Chinese culture,” symbolizing efforts to retain certain elements of Chineseness/Chinese heritage but also reframe this identity in the context of Taiwan.

Chen Shui-bian

With democratization underway, Chen Shui-bian began his presidency by reshaping cross-strait relations, upholding democracy in Taiwan, and furthering its modernization. Chen’s first inaugural address noted Taiwan’s achievements in international participation through Taiwan’s adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention for Civil and Political Rights, the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, and the World Trade Organization later on in Chen’s first term.⁵⁷ On cross-strait relations, he comments on the shared ancestry, culture, and history with people across the Taiwan Strait and that ties with the mainland should cast aside Cold War hostilities.⁵⁸ As a member of the DPP, Chen also had a different outlook on Taiwan’s national identity compared to the previous administration. Chen’s inaugural address highlights the spirit of the “child of Taiwan,” emphasizing a new Taiwaneseess over Chineseness.⁵⁹ With these considerations, Chen declared the Four Noes and One Without that promised to maintain the status quo of cross-strait relations provided that the PRC would not use military force against Taiwan.⁶⁰ While a concession to the mainland at face value, the Four Noes and One Without were not considered by the PRC to be an acceptance of the One China policy, and also caused immense backlash from KMT members. This declaration maintains President Lee’s commitment to peace and stability in cross-strait relations. Yet, it also

⁵⁷ “President Chen Shui-Bian’s Inaugural Speech,” (2000).

⁵⁸ “President Chen Shui-Bian’s Inaugural Speech,” (2000).

⁵⁹ “President Chen Shui-Bian’s Inaugural Speech,” (2000).

⁶⁰ “President Chen Shui-Bian’s Inaugural Speech,” (2000).

shifts the goals of the relationship through a divergent identity proposed by the Chen administration.

Chen's second term as president arrived after a tumultuous re-election campaign characterized by pan-blue, or for peaceful reunification, protests and violence against the Chen administration. Chen began his second inaugural address by characterizing Taiwan's democratization to "create an identity with this land and a common memory."⁶¹ He addresses the transformation of mainland settlers during KMT rule into a "New Taiwan," the transformation of their ethnic identity through "shared history," and an acknowledgement of the colonial legacy of KMT rule throughout events like 228 and the White Terror.⁶² On cross-strait relations, Chen characterizes Taiwan as seeking existence rather than independence and promises to uphold the "peace and stability framework."⁶³ Despite these claims, Chen rephrased his previous policy on cross-strait relations to the Four Wants and One Without. This reiteration emphasized how Taiwan wants independence, the rectification of its name, a new constitution, development, and how Taiwanese politics is without a left or right but only a question of for unification or independence.⁶⁴

Once again, Chen seeks to carve out recognition for the Taiwanese identity without outright declaring independence. The new Taiwanese identity that Chen, alongside the DPP, proposes is that the Taiwanese people embody a shared history of living on the island of Taiwan and a shared present in the threat posed by the mainland to Taiwan's status as a sovereign state. Chen and the DPP argue these two core points of identification to establish a unique Taiwanese-ness that is wholly differentiated from the Chineseness promoted by the mainland and

⁶¹ "Full Text of Inaugural Speech; Paving the Way for a Sustainable Taiwan - Taipei Times," (2004).

⁶² "Full Text of Inaugural Speech; Paving the Way for a Sustainable Taiwan - Taipei Times," (2004).

⁶³ "Full Text of Inaugural Speech; Paving the Way for a Sustainable Taiwan - Taipei Times," (2004).

⁶⁴ "Full Text of Inaugural Speech; Paving the Way for a Sustainable Taiwan - Taipei Times," (2004).

the “new Chinese culture” proposed by the KMT. As the next section will explore, the polarized nature of this clash of identities persists throughout the early development of Taiwan’s democracy and remains embedded within its domestic and foreign politics.

Ma Ying-jeou

Ma Ying-jeou’s presidency carries over the legacy of pan-blue violence from Chen’s second term into the identity politics of Taiwan. His first inaugural address immediately set out to reframe the people of Taiwan as ethnic Chinese and Taiwan itself as an “ethnic Chinese enclave.”⁶⁵ In line with this, Ma recommits to the One China principle in order to define a “new era of cross-strait relations” characterized not only by security and prosperity, but also dignity.⁶⁶ As a KMT member, this backpedalling is unsurprising; however, Ma also references the “Taiwan Spirit” as the wellspring of Taiwanese progress and couples this with the belief that Taiwan should come first.⁶⁷ These concessions were not enough to quell pan-green sentiments; Ma became widely criticized for making too many concessions and moving too fast in relaxing restrictions on trade and investments from the mainland.⁶⁸ Ma invited Chen Yunlin, the Chairman of the PRC’s department on cross-strait relations, to Taiwan. Chen’s visit sparked the Wild Strawberry movement in protest against the visit.⁶⁹ Another polarizing action from the Ma administration was furthering economic embeddedness with the mainland through the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA).⁷⁰

Ma’s second term inaugural address doubles down on his framework of cross strait relations by claiming achievements like expanded visa access for ROC nationals, fostering

⁶⁵ “Taiwan’s Renaissance: English Translation of the Inaugural Speech by ROC President Ma Ying-Jeou,” (2008).

⁶⁶ “Taiwan’s Renaissance: English Translation of the Inaugural Speech by ROC President Ma Ying-Jeou,” (2008).

⁶⁷ “Taiwan’s Renaissance: English Translation of the Inaugural Speech by ROC President Ma Ying-Jeou,” (2008).

⁶⁸ The Associated Press. “Thousands in Taiwan Protest Talks With China.” *The New York Times*, (October 25, 2008).

⁶⁹ Schott’s Vocab Blog. “Strawberry Generation,” *The New York Times*, (2008).

⁷⁰ “Taiwan’s Renaissance: English Translation of the Inaugural Speech by ROC President Ma Ying-Jeou,” (2008).

economic growth and activity through setting Taiwan up to be a free-trade island, environmental achievements by advancing green industries, the retainment of Taiwanese talent remaining in Taiwan's job environment, and invoking culture as a pillar that guides Taiwan's development.⁷¹ Harkening back to Lee Teng-hui's characterization of cross-strait relations, Ma argues for the gradual opening up of political participation and processes with the mainland, viable diplomacy to strengthen international ties and to create breathing space, and military strength to deter external threats.⁷²

Overall, Ma's administration sought a return to the KMT's understanding of normalized cross-strait relations as well as a new chapter in the economic and even political ties with the mainland. While all Taiwanese people did not universally accept this process, Ma builds upon Lee's conceptualization of the Taiwanese people as ethnically Chinese, with the primary distinction being the mode of governance with the mainland. Ma's construction of the Taiwanese identity, which is similar yet distinct from the mainland's construction of the Chinese identity, furthers a domineering narrative over Taiwan's sovereignty to the ends of eventual and peaceful reunification with the mainland. These distinctions are the primary theme cutting across both the KMT administrations since Taiwan's democratization.

More broadly, the return of the KMT to political power in Taiwan serves as a brusque reminder of what being Taiwanese means for the people voting for these political parties to power. At this point, Taiwaneseeness is still in a nascent, fluid state that needs to subvert the previous fifty years of KMT colonial governance hammering home the Chineseness of Taiwan.

⁷¹ Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan). "President Ma's Inaugural Address-News Releases-News & activities | Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan)," (2012).

⁷² Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan). "President Ma's Inaugural Address-News Releases-News & activities | Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan)," (2012).

Ma's presidencies signify how the people of Taiwan are still not fully accepting of what they perceive to be the more radical turn imposed by the Chen administration.

Interestingly, both KMT and DPP president's at this point have played important roles in constructing this new Taiwanese identity, albeit with divergent end goals in mind. The KMT posits a dual domineering and subversive narrative that seeks to counter the DPP's identity narrative. Simultaneously, the KMT both agrees with the mainland on the Chineseness of Taiwan but also seeks to distinguish Taiwan from the mainland through its democratic values. These narratives are further reinforced by KMT policies and actions like Ma's invitation of Chen Yunlin to Taiwan and the ECFA. Undergirding these actions are continual invocations of nationalism through references to the "Taiwan Spirit" and democratic values. Cementing the internalization and externalization of the Taiwanese identity can also be shown through Lee's achievements in international participation and Chen's efforts to address Taiwan's colonial legacy. Divergence within the people of Taiwan remains a hot topic as the next Taiwanese president, Tsai Ing-wen, poses a return to the DPP's rebranding of the identity of Taiwan.

Tsai Ing-wen

Tsai Ing-wen's presidency continues the trend of bifurcating ethos on cross-strait relations and identifying the Taiwanese identity. In a complete reversal of the Ma administration, Tsai emphasized the importance of transforming economic structures and dependencies through policies like the New Southbound Policy that adopted a more regional outlook on economic integration, reforming social systems in the government, providing social fairness and justice, and becoming a "proactive communicator for peace" in her first inaugural address.⁷³ These

⁷³ Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan). "Inaugural Address of ROC 14th-Term President Tsai Ing-Wen-News Releases-News & activities | Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan)," (2016).

commitments represent a return to Chen Shui-bian's conceptualization of the peace and stability framework, where the One China principle is rejected. Yet, DPP administrations still uphold a commitment to the maintenance of regional and cross-strait peace. Tsai acknowledges and respects the One China principle but refuses to agree to it outwardly. Another core pillar of Tsai's plan for Taiwan is to "bring Taiwan closer to the world and the world closer to Taiwan" by utilizing democracy in conversation with the diverse values globally, as well as the values that Taiwan fosters and hopes to share.⁷⁴ Without rehashing the core identity rifts between the DPP and the KMT, the Tsai administration incorporates a new distinction by which the DPP and the KMT can actually agree upon: the uniqueness of Taiwan and its people through its values and democratic government.

The transition to Tsai's second term was rocked by the global COVID-19 pandemic, yet also provided a unique opportunity for Taiwan to participate in global health without being a member of the WHO. In light of this, Tsai's second inaugural address elevates Taiwan's pandemic response as a model for other nations and Taiwan's role in providing health supplies and other forms of aid to other nations.⁷⁵ She utilizes this platform to springboard into a discussion on strategic industries and national security in Taiwan. Tsai emphasizes substantial reforms in three areas: accelerating the development of asymmetrical warfare capabilities, reforms to the military reserve and mobilization systems, and improvements to the military's management institutions.⁷⁶ These reforms show particular insight into a relative increase in hostilities for cross-strait relations and foresight on changing warfare dynamics exemplified by the outbreak of the Ukraine war in the third year of Tsai's second term. The Fourth Taiwan Strait

⁷⁴ Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan). "Inaugural Address of ROC 14th-Term President Tsai Ing-Wen-News Releases-News & activities | Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan)," (2016).

⁷⁵ Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan). "Inaugural Address of ROC 14th-Term President Tsai Ing-Wen-News Releases-News & activities | Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan)," (2016).

⁷⁶ Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan). "Inaugural Address of ROC 14th-Term President Tsai Ing-Wen-News Releases-News & activities | Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan)," (2016).

Crisis furthers this narrative on the importance of Tsai's defense reforms. Following a visit from Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan, the PRC conducted live-fire military exercises around the island and was met with condemnations and verbal support of the Taiwanese cause from the US and other strategic allies to Taiwan.⁷⁷

An emergent trend from the Tsai administration is redefining and transforming the Taiwanese approach to cross-strait relations. Notably, economic integration regionally and internationally takes a front seat in implementing a diversified Taiwanese economy and reducing reliance on trade with the mainland. Increased hostilities resulting from Tsai's reversal of the Ma era policies with the mainland also seem to influence national defense reforms and a firmer approach to securing allies that can come to the defense of Taiwan. In contrast with the Chen administration's greater focus on constructing Taiwanese-ness, Tsai's approach to identity construction seems more reliant on invoking nationalism to garner support and justification for her policies. This approach appears particularly effective considering the triple combo of the COVID pandemic, the Ukraine War, and the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis, which occurred in Tsai's second term. Despite the more hawkish outlook, Tsai parrots the Taiwanese commitment to a peace and stability framework in defining cross-strait relations and Taiwan's outlook on regional and international participation.

Generally, the Tsai administration could be identified as the turning point in Taiwan's political history since democratization. Tsai's administration represents what I argue to be the actual internalization and externalization of the new Taiwanese identity that the DPP has been advocating for alongside their pursuit of Taiwan's independence. Internally, the Taiwanese

⁷⁷ Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan). "President Tsai Delivers Remarks on the Live-Fire Military Exercises China Conducting in Areas around Taiwan-News Releases-News & activities | Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan)," Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan), (2022).

people seem to be more strongly identifying with the Taiwanese identity.⁷⁸ This is further demonstrated by the re-election of a DPP candidate in 2024. Externally, two significant events characterize the turning point of the Tsai administration: the role of Taiwan in the global pandemic response to COVID-19, as well as the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis. In both of these events, the Tsai administration proves to the international community what Taiwan is capable of and how democratic Taiwan is distinguished from its mainland counterpart. The COVID pandemic in particular served as a significant identifier in how the Tsai administration fostered its democratic values through coordinating and assisting the global pandemic response.

Lai Ching-te

Lai Ching-te is the current president and a member of the DPP. His first inaugural address echoes the main talking points from the Tsai era by positioning Taiwan as a beacon for democracy, a pilot for peace, and a reverberation of the peace and stability framework through the Four Pillars of Peace action plan. This plan promotes strengthened national defense, improved economic security, stable and principled cross-strait leadership, and values-based diplomacy as a motto for Lai's approach to cross-strait relations and regional and international participation.⁷⁹ Coming off the heels of the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis, Lai emphasized the importance of national unity and solidarity to strengthen the nation. He comments on how "so long as we identify with Taiwan, Taiwan belongs to us all" to signify how the formal name of Taiwan (ROC, Taiwan, ROC Taiwan) does not matter but rather the unifying and straightforward identification of Taiwan is symbolic of what provides Taiwan with the source of its sovereignty

⁷⁸ "Election Study Center, NCCU-Taiwan Independence vs. Unification with the Mainland." (2024).

⁷⁹ Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan). "Inaugural Address of ROC 16th-Term President Lai Ching-Te-News Releases-News & activities | Office of the President Republic of China(Taiwan)," (2024).

and strength. Much remains to be seen on how Lai will approach a coming re-election campaign and to what extent this signifies the prominence of the DPP's political hold on the nation.

The re-election of a DPP candidate to the Taiwanese presidency broke the infamous eight-year curse of not having the same political party return to power after president's served two terms. Another divergent aspect of the Lai and Tsai presidencies arises through their focus on foreign policy as opposed to the relative focus on domestic policy and economic revitalization during the Ma, Chen, and Lee presidencies. What becomes crystallized in the Lai and Tsai presidencies, however, is the dominance of the DPP's identity narrative over the KMT's identity narrative. Internally, the breaking of the eight-year curse and Taiwan's domestic responses to both COVID and the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis illustrate this point. Externally, Taiwan's role and participation in global pandemic response and coordination proved to be an important method for international participation despite not being a member of the WHO. While the Ma, Chen, and Lee presidencies produced Taiwan's legitimacy in its nascent stages, the Lai and Tsai presidencies expanded upon these building blocks to formalize Taiwan as a legitimate actor in its domestic and international spheres.

Producing Agency in Taiwan

I now shift the analysis to a broader overview of the themes emerging from each Taiwanese president and consolidate these into a cohesive picture of what I conceive to be the core of the Taiwanese identity. Contrary to the changing directions on independence and reunification that each presidency aims towards, these core characteristics of Taiwaneseess emerge as a unifying force that bonds both political parties in their construction of identity. Finally, I touch on some of the risks that Taiwan's identity construction poses for its own future.

At a general level, two classifications emerge from the previous analysis of Taiwanese presidents since democratization. I categorize all five presidents as either old or new guards. Lee and Chen occupy the old guard since their inaugural addresses are primarily focused on constructing a new Taiwanese identity concerning its recent democratization. While these old guard presidents are pulling the Taiwanese identity in two different directions, it is notable that there is some agreement on what the Taiwanese identity includes and what it values. The new guard presidents include Ma, Tsai, and Lai. This grouping builds upon the legacy of the identities attached to their respective political parties while invoking nationalism to justify divisive policy choices and reforms. Another surface-level classification is, of course, which political party each president belongs to.

Despite contrasting narratives on the construction of a Taiwanese identity and what it constitutes, the overarching trend of both the DPP and the KMT's take on Taiwaneseeness exists in stark contrast to the identity constructed by the mainland. Thus, not one, but two counter-narratives have been successfully produced to contrast with the mainland identity. Taiwanese elites have adapted these identities to achieve international participation in organizations like the WTO, coordinated global pandemic response despite not being a member of the WHO, enacted regional and cross-strait economic policies, and elevated Taiwan's positionality as a force for democracy in the world. Despite operating in a contested sovereignty, these achievements convey Taiwanese elites' ability to produce agency through the identity matrix. Additionally, it is remarkable that Taiwanese elites produce such agency without resorting to hawkish invocations of nationalism and commit to peaceful approaches to reunification or independence. The subsequent sections will identify four overarching themes Taiwanese presidents employ that convey the identity matrix.

The first theme highlights the bifurcated nature of how DPP and KMT presidents construct the Taiwanese identity concerning the mainland. The DPP highlights a shared history and the multi ethnic framework occupying Taiwaneseeness as part and parcel of Taiwan's sovereignty and justification for seeking independence. Comparatively, the KMT presidents construct Taiwaneseeness through Chinese ethnicity but are distinguished from the mainland through the mode of governance that Taiwan utilizes. At face value, these two identities operate in denial or exclusion of the other; however, there is a surprising amount of agreement on what Taiwaneseeness constitutes beyond ethnicity or unification/independence.

This brings the discussion to the second and interrelated theme, encapsulating Taiwanese presidents' desire to frame cross-strait relations through the lens of a peace and stability framework. The exact language of "peace and stability" originates from Lee Teng-hui's inaugural address and is adopted in one form or another by every other Taiwanese president, regardless of political party. What peace and stability truly constitute is another matter, however. For DPP presidents, a peace and stability framework is often translated to maintaining the status quo while shifting the means of independence through economic, regional, and international integration. For KMT presidents, a peace and stability framework means further integrating with the mainland to eventually achieve a peaceful reunification with the stipulation that Taiwan can adopt the "one country, two systems" policy the CCP has employed with Hong Kong and Macau.

The third theme that also continues this trend of solidarity through differences among the DPP and KMT is the importance of democracy as a core value of Taiwan and its role in distinguishing Taiwan from the mainland. All Taiwanese presidents universally agree upon the importance of democratic institutions and Taiwan's governance. KMT presidents' stipulation on unification is particularly insightful because of the importance of democracy as a Taiwanese

value. Further reiterating this point can be exemplified by the language of Taiwan as a beacon for democracy (Lai), the emphasis of old guard democratic reforms to increase institutional legitimacy and further Taiwan's ability to be a model democracy, Tsai's conceptualization of utilizing democracy and democratic values to garner international support and participation, and Ma's emphasis on how Taiwan's democratization showcases that Chinese societies can become democratic.

The fourth theme I identify is the emphasis on Taiwan's ability to become a regional and international player that can participate in international affairs and utilize this as a platform to essentially "sell" Taiwanese-ness to the world. This is particularly notable with DPP administrations; however, extrapolating the usage of democratic values among KMT presidents also conveys a particular manner in which Taiwan seeks to sell itself. The ultimate nature by which Taiwan is afforded participation or inclusion in some international organizations is also contingent upon the broader recognition or acceptance of the Taiwanese identity. Some international organizations, like the WHO, will not allow Taiwan to join unless they agree to the One China policy stipulation set by the PRC. Diplomatic relations with Taiwan will similarly be seen as a red flag by the PRC and provoke the PRC to disband any formal diplomatic relations with a state that either recognizes Taiwan as a sovereign country or has diplomatic relations with it. Taiwan's ability to achieve any international participation or formal diplomatic relations with other states is remarkable. Another aspect of this theme is how KMT and DPP presidents paint their economic policies concerning the Taiwanese identity. The most notable figures and policies are Ma's ECFA and Tsai's New Southbound Policy. Ma's ECFA reflects the KMT's construction of identity through an economic integration policy with the mainland. In contrast, Tsai's New Southbound Policy shifts economic integration towards a more regional outlook that emphasizes

the DPP's construction of Taiwaneseess. Both of these policies attempt to forge a new state of economic relationships through elevating their respective identities embedded within how each policy constructs the significance of economic relationships with Taiwan and with whom Taiwan constructs these relationships.

Each of these four themes highlighted the construction of the identity matrix depicted through the inaugural address, key policies, and key events within each Taiwanese presidency since democratization. I now shift the discussion to a closer inspection of the counter-narratives being produced. While the DPP and KMT certainly have their differences, the overarching goal of their counter-narratives serves to distinguish the Taiwanese identity from the mainland ethnic Chinese identity. The KMT uniquely does not dispute the ethnic Chinese claim from the mainland over Taiwan. Instead, they construct a Taiwaneseess rooted in the Chinese ethnicity but distinguished by the democratic governance of Taiwan. As such, the KMT still produces a relevant counter-narrative that subverts the mainland claim over Taiwan. The DPP takes the opposite approach. Rather than rooting Taiwaneseess in Chinese ethnicity, the DPP constructs Taiwaneseess through a multi-ethnic conceptualization of identity that exists in absolute contrast to the mainland and, to a lesser extent, the KMT's construction of identity. These divergent constructions of identity share the conceptualization that the Taiwanese identity is unique through its democratic values. Critically, this theme centers on how Taiwanese elites can construct themselves and Taiwan as legitimate actors and how they utilize counter-narratives to produce agency in Taiwan.

Conclusion

While the study of nationalism, identity, and foreign policy encompasses a vast amount of literature, there remains a significant gap in how these factors contribute to conveying agency in contested sovereignty. Existing scholarship highlights factors contained in domestic politics, postcolonial perspectives, and the role of nationalism in a state's security and sovereignty. This research has set out to answer how a contested sovereign state can convey agency by highlighting the role of nationalism and identity in conveying agency through the case study of Taiwan. While not a specific response to solving the problem of Taiwan's contested sovereignty, this approach can offer a new perspective on what Taiwan can accomplish within this space and how other states could employ this framework in a contested sovereignty.

Future research should examine whether this theory is consistent with identity construction behavior and processes among other states within a contested sovereignty. Additionally, the unique circumstances that encapsulate most contested sovereign states may paint a very different picture from the issues that Taiwan faces. Other contested sovereign states could follow Taiwan's example in choosing a more peaceful alternative to approaching their status instead of resorting to force.

Two prominent cases immediately come to mind, on top of the Taiwan case study, for states in a contested sovereignty. Kosovo and Palestine both represent the opposite end of the spectrum. Both of these states have resorted to a fight for independence to produce agency. In contrast, Taiwan's relative geographic isolation from the mainland allows more room for peaceful methods and face value commitments to the status quo. Comparatively, Kosovo and especially Palestine face a more troubled past concerning their multi-ethnic populations. Rather

uniquely, Taiwan has relatively peacefully managed the problem of a multi-ethnic society, perhaps as a result of the initial transplant of ethnic Chinese to the island.

On the other hand, Kosovo and Palestine must contend with ethnic Serbian and mostly Jewish Israeli populations knocking on their doorstep. Future research on contested sovereign states should explore the differentiating conditions that lead to violence—a face value examination points to geography as the primary distinguishing factor between Kosovo and Palestine versus Taiwan. I suspect, however, that there are deeper causes intermingled with the geography factor that could offer stronger causal arguments for why these states have resorted to violence.

Another highly unique feature for Taiwan is the US's military commitment against an invasion of Taiwan per the TRA.⁸⁰ Taiwanese elites have certainly used this to their advantage in constructing the Taiwanese identity. The US's relationship with Taiwan is also a point of contention with the PRC. All of these factors point to a significant risk that Taiwan takes in hinging its defensive capabilities primarily through the TRA. Due to the fluctuating nature of current US domestic politics, I expect that Taiwan would seek out more dependable alliances with regional partners like South Korea and Japan to further solidify Taiwan's defensive capabilities against invasion.

By explicating my theory through the Taiwan case study, I aim to convey the ability of a contested sovereign state to produce agency. Agency for a contested sovereign state is traditionally characterized as a fight for independence. However, my research explicates how Taiwan has distinguished its status through an identity matrix that plays out on its domestic and foreign policy approaches. By constructing and distinguishing its identity in this manner, I argue

⁸⁰ Zablocki, Clement. H.R. 2479 - Taiwan Relations Act, Pub. L. No. H.R. 2479 (1979).

that Taiwan has successfully produced agency in a contested sovereignty without outright resorting to force.

Appendix

Figure 1—Identity Matrix: How a Contested Sovereign State Becomes a Legitimate Actor

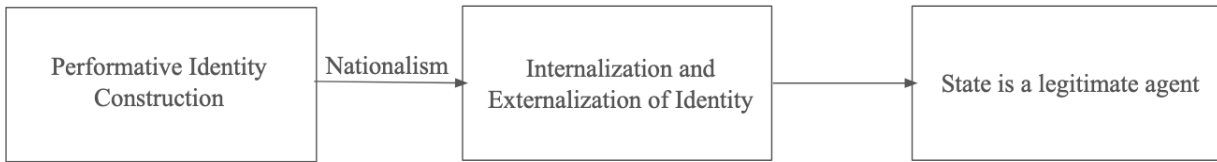


Figure 2—Components of the Internalization and Externalization of Identity

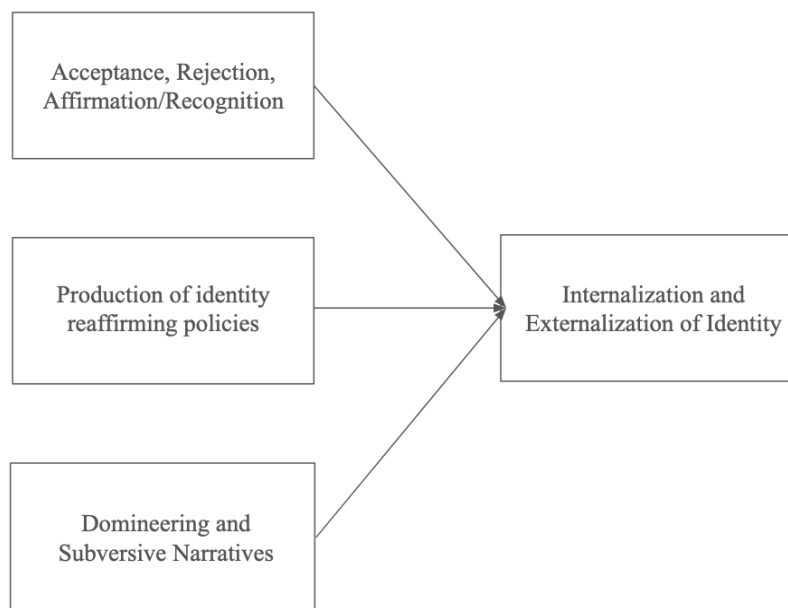
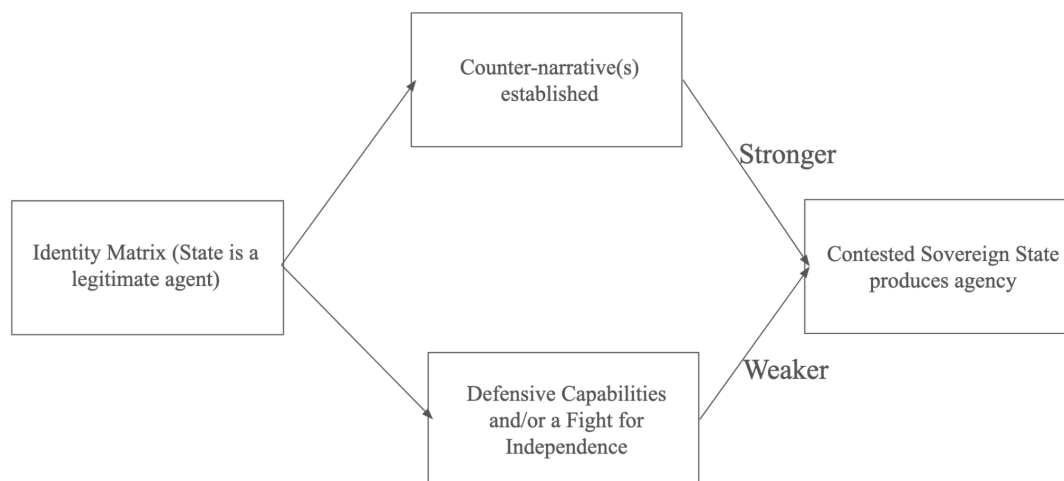


Figure 3—Agency Production in a Contested Sovereignty



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