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Preference Formation in the Taiwan Strait: A Hierarchical and Conditional Model of Public Opinion toward Unification and Independence, 2008–2024

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"We are a sovereign and independent country; our name is the Republic of China, and there is no need to declare Taiwan independence separately."

[Official statement by Lai --te before the Legislative Yuan, September 26, 2017]

Abstract: This thesis examines how Taiwanese public opinion on independence, unification, and the status quo has evolved between 2008 and 2024. Drawing on six waves of Taiwan National Security Survey data, I propose the "Cross-Strait Attitude Hierarchy," a framework combining identity-based predispositions and dynamic, conditional cost-benefit reasoning. Using cross-tabulation and multinomial logistic regression, the analysis shows that external factors—such as perceived Chinese military threats and U.S. defense commitments—consistently shape public attitudes, often more powerfully than demographic or partisan identities. The findings challenge static views of cross-strait preferences, demonstrating that Taiwanese citizens respond pragmatically to shifting political and economic conditions. This research offers important insights for scholars and policymakers seeking to understand the domestic underpinnings of Taiwan's foreign policy and regional security dynamics.

Introduction

1.1 Research Background

On September 26, 2017, then–Premier Lai Ching-te (now President of Taiwan) reaffirmed a position that remains deeply contentious in Taiwan's political discourse to this day: "Taiwan is a sovereign and independent country; its name is the Republic of China, and the two sides (of the Strait) are not subordinate to each other" (Ye, 2017)[1]. Responding to a Kuomintang

[1] Ye, Xuan. 2017. "Lai Ching-Te: I Am a Pragmatic Pro-Independence Advocate]. *Deutsche Welle*, September 27, 2017. https://www.dw.com/zh-hant/賴清德我是務實的台獨主義者/a-40701971

legislator's questions about constitutional amendments on territorial matters, Lai further clarified: "I am a political practitioner who advocates Taiwan independence. I am also a pragmatic pro-independence advocate. Pragmatism means recognizing that we are already a sovereign and independent country—called the Republic of China—and there is no need to declare Taiwan independence separately." While framed within the existing constitutional status quo, Lai's remarks marked the first time a sitting Premier had openly identified as a pro-independence figure. This moment encapsulated the core dilemma in Taiwan's political future and raised enduring questions about the conditions under which Taiwanese public opinion shifts toward independence, unification, or strategic ambiguity.

1.2 Research Questions

What do Taiwanese independence and unification mean, and how should the "status quo" be interpreted in the context of cross-strait relations? While these categories may appear familiar to scholars of Chinese and Taiwanese politics, citizens of Taiwan and China, and specialists in great power competition, they often remain opaque to broader audiences unfamiliar with the region's complex historical and geopolitical landscape. Moreover, even within political science, there remains considerable ambiguity regarding what drives individual-level support for unification, full independence, or continued maintenance of the status quo. Moreover, the extent to which specific factors—such as national identity, economic interdependence, or external security commitments—can meaningfully shift public opinion beyond preexisting orientations is still insufficiently understood, despite the centrality of these preferences to Taiwan's domestic politics and cross-strait stability. This study, therefore, aims to achieve a more rigorous understanding of these questions by identifying an appropriate theoretical framework and examining the factors that account for the complex, conditional nature of Taiwanese preferences

toward cross-strait relations. It empirically investigates how—and to what extent—these factors shape and continuously influence public support for various positions regarding Taiwan's political future, employing cross-tabulation and multinomial logistic regression analyses across multiple waves of the Taiwan National Security Survey (TNSS) from 2008 to 2024.

While previous research has identified multiple determinants shaping Taiwanese preferences—including national identity, economic considerations, generational differences, and security concerns—these factors have typically been studied in isolation or through simple correlation, leaving their relative importance and complex interactions underexplored. As Niou (2004)[2] argue, Taiwanese attitudes toward independence and unification are not determined by static, ideologically based positions but rather conditional preferences that shift in response to changing circumstances. Public preferences in Taiwan are heavily contingent on the perceived costs and benefits of different outcomes[3], particularly regarding China's potential military response and the economic implications of altered cross-strait relations. This conditional nature of preferences creates methodological challenges for researchers attempting to measure public opinion accurately, as standard survey questions that force respondents to choose between independence, unification, or the status quo fail to capture the strategic and conditional character of these preferences[4]. The conditional preference framework, developed by Niou (2004), specifically designs paired conditional, scenario-based questions to directly examine the public's ambiguous preference toward Taiwan's independence and reunification.

Building on Hurwitz and Peffley's foundational three-level hierarchy and Niou's conditional preference framework, I argue that Taiwanese attitudes toward the three stances in

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[2] Niou, Emerson M. S. 2004. "Understanding Taiwan Independence and Its Policy Implications." *Asian Survey* 44 (4): 555–67. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.4.555.
[3] Niou (2004), p. 558.
[4] Chu (2004), p. 503.

cross-strait relations—independence, the status quo, and unification—are similarly formed through a hierarchical structure called the **Figure 1. The *Cross-Strait Attitude Hierarchy***, consisting of three layers: (1) core values and identities, such as national identity, ethnicity, and socialized attributes like gender and education; (2) base preferences toward cross-strait relations, including general orientations shaped by party identification and ideological leanings; and (3) an ongoing, condition-based cost-benefit analysis that transforms base preferences into flexible, conditional preferences responsive to shifting political, economic, and security environments. I hypothesize that in general, Individuals who identify as Taiwanese are more likely to develop a base preference toward the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and lean toward independence in cross-strait relations.

1.3 Study Significance

This paper makes two main contributions to our understanding of Taiwanese public opinion on independence and unification. First, it innovatively introduces a new framework that captures both identity and condition-based cost-benefit analysis thinking in operationalizing Taiwanese foreign policy attitudes. Second, it systematically evaluates the relative impact of multiple factors on shaping these attitudes, and compares which determinants exert the greatest influence across important years in cross-strait relations.

Understanding the complex determinants of Taiwanese public opinion carries significant implications for both academic research and policymaking surrounding cross-strait relations, regional security, and international relations. Academically, this study contributes to the literature on foreign policy opinion formation by presenting additional evidence from a context often underrepresented in mainstream public opinion scholarship. Although the Taiwan Strait has been extensively examined through deterrence and nationalism studies, analyses of public

opinion—particularly how ordinary citizens navigate complex geopolitical tradeoffs—remain relatively sparse. This study helps fill that gap and reorients the discussion toward the domestic political foundations of cross-strait policy preferences.

Empirically, analyzing what shapes public opinion in Taiwan has direct implications for both Taiwanese political strategy and the foreign policy calculus of actors engaged in the Indo-Pacific region. As Taiwan navigates its complex relationship with an increasingly assertive China, policymakers on both sides of the Taiwan Strait—as well as in Washington, Tokyo, and other capitals in the Indo-Pacific - would benefit from a more rigorous understanding of what shapes Taiwanese attitudes toward their island's future status and how these attitudes might evolve in response to changing circumstances. In summary, this paper is not simply about whether Taiwanese people support independence. It is about when, why, and under what conditions that support emerges—how it is shaped, how it fluctuates, and what it means for the evolving political identity of Taiwan.

1.4 Roadmap

This thesis proceeds in four parts. First, it offers a historical and conceptual clarification of what “independence,” “unification,” and “status quo” mean in the Taiwanese political context, reviewing key party positions, legal developments, and popular narratives. Second, it surveys existing literature on the formation of foreign policy attitudes—especially in the Taiwanese context—and introduces the conditional preference frameworks developed by Chu (2004) and Niou (2004), integrating them into a new model: the **Figure 1. The *Cross-Strait Attitude Hierarchy***. This framework synthesizes identity-based predispositions, partisan base preferences, and cost-benefit conditional reasoning. Third, the thesis conducts original empirical analysis using six waves of the Taiwan National Security Survey (TNSS) data from 2008 to 2024.

Through cross-tabulation and multinomial logistic regression, it evaluates the relative strength of multiple variables—including national identity, party affiliation, age, education, perceived Chinese threat, U.S. defense commitment, and economic integration—across different political moments. Finally, the thesis discusses broader implications for Taiwan's strategic future, policy recommendations for governments in Taipei and Beijing, and outlines limitations and acknowledgements while proposing directions for future research on conditional political attitudes.

Historical and Conceptual Background

2.1 Definitions: Independence, Unification, and the Status Quo

To understand what "independence", "unification", and "status quo" means in the Taiwanese context, it would be necessary to walk through a brief history between China and Taiwan to ensure these concepts are well addressed and understood in a consistent manner for the rest of this study.

The earliest historical record regarding China's relation with Taiwan can be dated back to 230 CE, but it remains controversial if the land Chinese explorers recorded is modern day Taiwan or Okinawa (Ye, 1982)[5]. In 1281, the Yuan dynasty established a naval base and local administrative structure in Penghu, marking the first instance of formal political and military presence by a Chinese central government in the Taiwan region. However, this initiative represented a strategic foothold focused on maritime defense and regional security, rather than comprehensive control over the entirety of Taiwan's main island. When the Dutch East India

[5] Ye, Zheming. 1982. "Dong Wu de haiwai tuozhan he Wei Wen, Zhuge Zhi cong Zhang'an chushi Taiwan kaolüe" [Eastern Wu's Overseas Expansion and a Study of Wei Wen and Zhuge Zhi's Mission to Taiwan from Zhang'an]. *Zhongguo Gudai Shi*, no. 23.

Company (VOC) occupied Taiwan in 1604, it focused on attracting Hoklo and Hakka immigrants from Chinese mainland to assist with excavation and colonization (Willis 2015)[6]. The island then served as a safe harbor for the exile Southern Ming dynasty and fell into the control of Qing dynasty in 1683.

While the Qing dynasty maintained a harsh ban on cross-strait immigration for almost 200 years gaining control of Taiwan, it was forced to make this strategic move that could establish a sufficient population basis for the island after rounds of foreign aggression and colonial attempts. However, it eventually lost control of Taiwan in the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895, until the winning of WWII in 1945 when it was returned to the Republic of China, ruled by Kuomintang (KMT). The return of Taiwan, also called "Guang-fu 光复", represents the first example of "unification" in Taiwanese context—after years of colonial rule, the two sides of the strait has once again become unified.

Then, what is the concept of independence? Was Taiwanese de facto independence achieved through a public voting, as seen in the independence movement for Quebec and Scotland and Kosovo? The Taiwanese case is different: after failed attempts to establish a unified government as soon as defeating the Japanese due to severe ideological difference and political distrust[7], the Communist Party of China (CCP) and KMT began a civil war. CCP eventually defeated the KMT for many reasons, and the KMT fled to Taiwan in 1949. Given both U.S. strategic interest and naval inferiority of the CCP, attempts to invade Taiwan has failed, and Taiwan, de jure Republic of China, achieved de facto independence with U.S. security commitment and partial international recognition. While the Republic of China remained to be

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[6] Willis, John E. 2015. "The Seventeenth-Century Transformation: Taiwan Under the Dutch and the Cheng Regime." In *Taiwan: A New History*, by Murray A. Rubinstein, 2nd ed. Armonk: Taylor and Francis.
[7] Ching-yao, Yin. "The Bitter Struggle between the KMT and the CCP." *Asian Survey* 21, no. 6 (1981): 622–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/2643790.

an internationally recognized political entity, with all sufficient governmental institutions, it has been encountering a concurrent, internal independence movement led primarily by Hoklo Taiwanese who are dissatisfied with the KMT's high pressure authoritarian politics, discriminatory resource allocation, and cultural assimilation (Chu and Lin, 20010, 103)[8]. Starting as a united opposition to KMT's authoritarian rule, these forces gradually transformed into the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of Taiwan. In general, the KMT prefers unification with mainland China, but not in the near future; and the DPP generally proposes that Taiwan should become a constitutionally independent country with the name as "Taiwan".

And finally, what is the "status quo"? The "status quo" refers to the complex political arrangement that emerged after the Republic of China (ROC) government relocated to Taiwan in 1949 following its defeat in the Chinese Civil War. This status quo represents a delicate balance characterized by Taiwan's ambiguous international position under a framework of partial diplomatic recognition. It encompasses several key elements:

First, the status quo includes crucial security arrangements established through the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco, which left Taiwan's sovereignty deliberately unresolved[9], and the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, which commits the United States to provide Taiwan with defensive weapons and maintain the capacity to resist force against Taiwan[10]. These agreements, alongside the "Six Assurances" of 1982, create a protective framework that secures Taiwan's de facto independence.

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[8] Chu, Yun-han, and Jih-wen Lin. 2001. "Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity." *The China Quarterly* 165 (March). https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009443901000067.

[9] Schwartz, Thomas, and John Yoo. 2019. "Asian Territorial Disputes and the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty: The Case of Dokdo." *Chinese Journal of International Law* 18 (3): 503–50. https://doi.org/10.1093/chinesejil/jmz017.

[10] AIT. 2022. "Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8, 22 U.S.C. 3301 et Seq.)." American Institute in Taiwan. March 30, 2022. https://www.ait.org.tw/taiwan-relations-act-public-law-96-8-22-u-s-c-3301-et-seq/.

Second, the status quo involves the maintenance of the One China principle in diplomatic communications—where most countries formally recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the sole legitimate government of China, while maintaining unofficial relations with Taiwan. This arrangement was formalized through the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué and subsequent U.S.-China agreements, where the United States "acknowledges" but does not necessarily "recognize" the Chinese position that Taiwan is part of China[11].

Third, it involves a complex system of domestic legislation and policies that enable Taiwan to function as a self-governing entity—with its own democratic elections, currency, passport, military, and international trade relations—without formal declarations of statehood. Taiwan participates in international organizations under alternative designations such as "Chinese Taipei" (in the Olympics and WHO) or the "Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu" (in the WTO).

Finally, the status quo depends on mutual restraint: China refrains from military aggression while Taiwan avoids formal constitutional changes that would explicitly declare independence, maintaining strategic ambiguity that preserves peace across the Taiwan Strait while allowing Taiwan's democratic system and de facto sovereignty to flourish. This arrangement, while imperfect, has enabled Taiwan's democratic development and economic prosperity despite its contested international status.

[11] Chong, Ja Ian. 2023. "The Many 'One Chinas': Multiple Approaches to Taiwan and China." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/02/the-many-one-chinas-multiple-approaches-to-taiwan-and-china?lang=en.

2.2 Political Narratives and Party Positions in Cross-Strait Relations

Regardless of the stated long-term missions in their party constitutions, both the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) currently endorse maintaining the status quo as means to ease tensions with China. Both are also broad-based political parties—so-called "big tents"—that include politicians with divergent perspectives on Taiwan's future. Within the KMT, three general camps can be identified: "Red Unifiers," who advocate for a PRC-led unification that would either designate Taiwan as a special administrative region similar to Hong Kong or implement the mainland's political system; "Blue Unifiers," who support a ROC-led unification focused on preserving Taiwan's democratic system while promoting democratic reforms in mainland China; and finally, proponents of "Huadu"—a view that supports de facto independence under the continued use of the ROC name, which will be discussed in the following paragraph. The DPP, known for its internal factions, can be broadly divided into two camps as well: aggressive independence supporters, represented by President Lai Ching-te, and status quo endorsers with a long-term goal of eventual Taiwanese independence, sharing some similarity with the "Huadu" group, exemplified by former President Tsai Ing-wen.

Thus, there are two mainstream approaches to the question of Taiwan's independence within its political discourse. The first group regards the Republic of China as an already independent and sovereign political entity. Within this view, two sub-branches exist: one sees the ROC and PRC as forming a kind of confederation—each side having its own interpretation of "One China" while claiming full territorial sovereignty but remaining governed separately. This is commonly referred to as "One China, respective interpretations" (一中各表). The other sub-branch, "Huadu", holds that the Republic of China is synonymous with Taiwan, and that the

"China" in its name is merely a historical or literary term, not a political indication of unification, similar to the quote I have at the introduction; although President Lai is a member of the second group, which advocates for a more assertive approach: abolishing the outdated Republic of China framework entirely and initiating a formal constitutional process to establish a new, fully independent nation explicitly named "Taiwan," rather than treating the term as a mere geographic designation.

The above paragraph entails an important fact: while KMT is typically perceived to be a pro-China and pro-Unification party, voting for the KMT does not guarantee a support for unification, its voters may align with any of the three groups based on differing ideological positions, economic opinion, and military threat perception; similarly, voting for the DPP does not represent an outright support for independence and may be influenced by non-ideological determinants as well. Party identification should not be equalized to definite ideological positions that entirely determine individual attitude toward the future of Taiwan's status. Similarly, other preferences and psychological identities, including but not limited to national identity, ethnic group differences, education level, generational cohort, economic and threat perceptions, should neither deterministically shape individual preference toward independence, unification, and status quo. No single factor can account for the complex decision-making in an individual's reported attitude toward independence, they are shaped by multiple factors, and by different conditions, as I will explain in later sections of this study. The next section reviews the general theoretical foundation for understanding the determinants of public attitudes toward foreign policy and summarizes existing scholarship on the specific factors shaping Taiwanese public opinion.

Literature Review

3.1 General, U.S-Based Theories of Foreign Policy Attitudes

Research on the general determinants of public attitude toward foreign policy has developed considerably. Early perspectives, such as Almond (1950)[12] and Kennan (1951)[13], suggested that the public, moody and uniformed, have unstructured opinions on foreign affairs. The Vietnam War era prompted a re-examination of this idea, leading to a new consensus that while the public might not be perfectly informed, their general policy opinions are stable and responsive to events[14]. Hurwitz and Peffley (1987) found that general core values structure attitudes hierarchically. Recent research that builds on Hurwitz and Peffley's core value theory, for example Jacoby (2014)[15], Kertzer, Powers, Rathbun, and Iyer (2014)[16], and Rathbun, Kertzer, Reifler, Goren, and Scotto (2016)[17], continues to emphasize the role of core values in shaping foreign policy views, such as party identification and ideology.

Recently, research explored foreign policy attitudes in two main directions, through top-down and bottom-up models. Top-down models highlight the role of external factors, such as political elites and the mass media (Kertzer 2023, 6) [18]. The influence of elite is supported by

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[12] Almond, Gabriel A. 1950. The American People and Foreign Policy. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
[13] Kennan, George F. 1951. American Diplomacy, 1900-1950. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[14] Jentleson, Bruce W. 1992. "The Pretty Prudent Public: Post Post-Vietnam American Opinion on the Use of Military Force." International Studies Quarterly 36(1):49–74. https://doi.org/10.2307/2600916.
[15] Jacoby, William. G. (2014). Is there a culture war? Conflicting value structures in American public opinion. American Political Science Review, 108, 754–771. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055414000380.
[16] Kertzer, Joshua. D., Powers, Kathleen. E., Rathbun, Brian. C., and Iyer, Ravi. (2014). Moral support: How moral values shape foreign policy attitudes. Journal of Politics, 76, 825–840. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381614000073.
[17] Rathbun, B. C., Kertzer, J. D., Reifler, J., Goren, P., and Scotto, T. J. (2016). Taking foreign policy personally: Personal values and foreign policy attitudes. International Studies Quarterly, 60, 124–137. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqv012.
[18] Kertzer, Joshua D. 2023. "Public Opinion about Foreign Policy." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, edited by Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, Jack S. Levy, and Jennifer Jerit, 3rd ed., 447–85. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197541302.013.12.

Powlick and Katz (1998)[19]. The public often takes cues from party leaders, as noted by Berinsky (2009)[20]. Work by McCombs and Shaw (1972)[21], Iyengar and Kinder (2010)[22], and Entman (2004)[23] have examined the media's role in agenda-setting, priming, and framing for how the public perceives policy and form policy attitudes. Bottom-up models emphasize the role of individual traits in formulating policy attitudes. Such individual traits may include ideological orientations, such as the two-dimensional structure of militant and cooperative internationalism developed by Wittkopf (1990)[24]; and psychological constructs—such as core values, moral foundations, personal belief systems, and broader worldviews have been shown to significantly predict individual foreign policy preferences[25]. Beyond psychological and informational factors, demographic and contextual factors have also been found to associate with public attitude toward foreign policy. Such as gender differences[26], party identification[27], and issue salience[28].

Although most of these findings originate from studies grounded in the American context—drawing heavily on U.S. populations and institutional structures—many of the same determinants have surfaced in analyses of Taiwanese public opinion. This convergence suggests

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[19] Powlick, Philip. J., and Katz, Andrew. Z. (1998). Defining the American public opinion/foreign policy nexus. Mershon International Studies Review, 42(May), 29–61. https://doi.org/10.2307/254443.
[20] Berinsky, Adam. J. (2009). In time of war: Understanding American public opinion from World War II to Iraq. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[21] McCombs, Maxwell. E., and Shaw, Donald. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. Public Opinion Quarterly, 36(2), 176–187. https://www.jstor.org/stable/2747787
[22] Iyengar, Shanto., & Kinder, Donald. R. (2010). News that matters: Television and American opinion (Updated ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[23] Entman, Robert. M. (2004). Projections of power: Framing news, public opinion, and U.S. foreign policy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[24] Wittkopf, Eugene. R. (1990). Faces of internationalism. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/174361
[25] Kertzer (2023), p. 9.
[26] Eichenberg, R. C., & Stoll, R. J. (2012). Gender difference or parallel publics? The dynamics of defense spending opinions in the United States, 1965–2007. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 56, 331–348. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002711420983.
[27] Foyle, Douglas. 2017. "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, by Douglas Foyle. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.472.p. 9.
[28] Guisinger, Alexandra. 2009. "Determining Trade Policy: Do Voters Hold Politicians Accountable?" International Organization 63 (3): 533–557. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40345946.

that while political attitudes are undoubtedly shaped by national context, certain structural and identity-based influences, such as education, party identification, or issue salience, may transcend cultural and geopolitical boundaries. Hurwitz and Peffley's (1987) hierarchical belief system provides a particularly valuable framework for theorizing how foreign policy attitudes form, beginning with core values, progressing through general postures, and culminating in specific policy preferences. While originally developed to explain American foreign policy opinion, its conceptual clarity makes it a useful tool for exploring similar processes in the Taiwanese context. In the sections that follow, I unpack each level of this hierarchy and assess its relevance and adaptability to Taiwan's unique sociopolitical landscape.

3.2 Hurwitz & Peffley and The Taiwanese Context

Despite its temporal limitations and its original grounding in a great-power context, the hierarchical belief system model developed by Hurwitz and Peffley (1987) remains analytically valuable—particularly with appropriate updates for contemporary settings in the Taiwan Strait. The model presents a complete and thorough logistic map for understanding how ideology-based beliefs structure public attitudes toward foreign policy. Hurwitz &Peffley suggest a "top-down" three-level processing where individuals use their general knowledge and abstract beliefs to interpret and respond to specific foreign policy issues. Faced with the complexity and ambiguity of international affairs, citizens often act as "cognitive misers," relying on these broader beliefs as cognitive shortcuts to make sense of the world[29]. The study found that core values, such as ethnocentrism and beliefs about the morality of warfare, influence the adoption of general postures, which in turn shape opinions on specific policies. This framework suggests that public

[29] Hurwitz and Peffley, p. 1103.

opinion on foreign policy is not random but is meaningfully structured through a system where core values shape general orientations, which in turn influence specific policy preferences.

However, there are significant limitations to Hurwitz and Peffley's model. Its hierarchical structure implies that foreign policy attitudes are largely determined by stable ideological and identity-based predispositions, leaving little room for the dynamic, ongoing cost-benefit calculations that individuals make in response to evolving international conditions. Furthermore, the model is grounded in a Cold War-era, great-power context and draws from a narrow set of policy postures, offering neither a logically detailed decision-making framework nor sufficient flexibility for application beyond its original setting. As such, it is ill-suited for analyzing foreign policy attitudes in the Taiwan Strait without substantial adaptation to Taiwan's unique political and strategic environment. The next section explores how these contextual factors operate in the Taiwanese case and considers how general models of attitude formation must be recalibrated to account for Taiwan's distinct geopolitical and domestic constraints.

3.2 Hurwitz & Peffley and The Taiwanese Context

The foundational logic through which the American and Taiwanese publics approach foreign policy diverges in important ways. The United States, as a globally recognized and dominant actor in international affairs, enjoys significant freedom in determining the scope, method, and targets of its international engagement—ranging from diplomacy and economic sanctions to military interventions. Moreover, U.S. foreign policy is often framed not only in terms of national interest but also as a vehicle for advancing broader goals to preserve the values in liberal international order, such as democracy, human rights, and global stability. These prerogatives, however, are privileges afforded to the U.S. as both a great power and a sovereign state with established international recognition—conditions that Taiwan does not possess.

This structural divergence necessitates a rethinking of how foreign policy opinion operates in contexts where diplomatic goals are not driven by global ambition or power projection, but by the imperatives of strategic survival. Taiwan faces considerable structural constraints: its statehood remains contested, and its formal diplomatic presence is limited by the absence of recognition from most countries and exclusion from major international organizations such as the United Nations[30], and limited representation at global events like the Olympics or in institutions like the WTO and WHO[31]. Deprived of a full sovereign voice in global affairs, the Taiwanese public is largely confined to domestic channels for political expression and must navigate a constrained external environment shaped by pressure from regional and global powers. As a result, public engagement with foreign policy in Taiwan often becomes intertwined with questions of national identity, security, and survival rather than grand strategic ambition.

A quote from the renowned Taiwanese writer and political commentator Lung Yingtai (龍應台) captures the essence of Taiwan's foreign policy attitudes: "I don't care about the rise of great powers; I only care about the dignity of ordinary people" (我不在乎大國崛起，我只在乎小民尊嚴)[32]. This statement reflects a profound difference from the strategic global perspectives typical of great powers. In Taiwan, foreign policy is not merely a projection of geopolitical ambition, but a deeply personal and existential matter tied to the preservation of democratic values, civil society, societal dignity, and everyday survival.

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[30] UN General Assembly (26th Session). 1972. "Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations." https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/192054.

[31] Taiwan participates in the Olympics and involves in the WHO using the name "Chinese Taipei", and uses "Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu" in the WTO.

[32] Lung, Yingtai. 2013. "The Power of Civility -- From Sino Nostalgia to Formosa 文明的力量──從鄉愁到美麗島丨天下雜誌." January 25, 2013. https://www.cw.com.tw/article/5046968.

Domestic politics, thus, plays an outsized role in shaping public attitudes toward external relations. Political parties in Taiwan are not only policy platforms but also embodiments of competing visions of national identity, sovereignty, and security. Whether through support for de jure independence, maintenance of the status quo, or cautious rapprochement with China, party positions often function as symbolic commitments that allow citizens to assert their identity and moral worldview in the face of structural international constraints. In this sense, foreign policy in Taiwan cannot be decoupled from the domestic political and emotional terrain in which it is debated—it is not about abstract global strategy, but about the lived experience of a people negotiating survival, legitimacy, and dignity under pressure.

Past studies have collectively confirmed these unique factors in shaping Taiwanese public opinion on independence, the status quo, and reunification. Notably Chinese military threat, national identity as Taiwanese or Chinese or both, economic interdependence, party identification, and generational differences. Chu's (2004) analysis of longitudinal survey data reveals that while efforts by Taiwanese leaders to promote a pro-independence sentiment have had some effect, the perception of China's *growing economic potential* and the *increasing inevitability of cross-strait economic integration* have somewhat constrained the popular support for Taiwan independence, particularly among the younger generation[33]. Tang's (2007) analysis of survey data reveals that education, socioeconomic status, and economic considerations influence citizen's cross-strait attitudes[34]. Sobel et al. (2010)[35] also note that cross-strait tensions

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[33] Chu, Yun-han. 2004. "Taiwan's National Identity Politics and the Prospect of Cross-Strait Relations." *Asian Survey* 44 (4): 484–512. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.4.484. p. 486.
[34] Tang, Wenfang. 2007. "Nationalism and Electoral Outcome in Taiwan: The Impact of Identity Fence-Sitting on Voting Behaviour." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 1 (4): 481–96. https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pom010. p. 493.
[35] Sobel, Richard, William-Arthur Haynes, and Yu Zheng. 2010. "The Polls—Trends: Taiwan Public Opinion Trends, 1992–2008: Exploring Attitudes On Cross-Strait Issues." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 74 (4): 782–813. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfq045.

and specific events like China's missile tests and leaders' speeches have influenced the Taiwanese public to become more independence-minded. Furthermore, Wang (2017)[36] also identifies the feeling of hostility from Beijing, particularly regarding diplomatic isolation, has also been a significant factor in hardening Taiwanese identity and a preference for independence. Lastly, Wang et al. (2025)[37] concludes that while Taiwanese nationalism has risen significantly, the majority still prefer the status quo due to a combination of concerns about China's potential military threat and the economic reliance on China.

While these studies provide valuable insights and different perspectives into the determinants of Taiwanese public opinion on cross-strait relations, they often examine these factors in isolation, leaving their interactions and collective influence underexplored. Moreover, I argue that public opinion on foreign policy—particularly in the context of high-stakes issues like cross-strait relations—is not wholly determined by broad, fixed ideological or psychological factors. Rather, such preferences often operate through a flexible, context-sensitive process of conditional evaluation, continuously shaped by scenario-based cost-benefit reasoning. This perspective echoes the findings of Chu (2004) and Niou (2004), which emphasize the importance of contingency in shaping political choices. The next subsection reviews and introduces the conditional preference framework developed by Chu (2004), Niou (2004), and Wang et al. (2025) as the final picture that captures the dynamic and strategic nature of Taiwan's cross-strait policy attitudes.

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[36] Wang, T. Y. "Changing Boundaries: The Development of the Taiwan Voters' Identity." In *The Taiwan Voter*, edited by T. Y. Wang and Christopher H. Achen, 45–70. University of Michigan Press, 2017. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvndv9z7.6.

[37] Wang, Austin Horng-En, Charles K S Wu, Fang-Yu Chen, and Yao-Yuan Yeh. 2025. "Undercurrent in Taiwan: Nationalism and Calculation of the Cross-Strait Relations (2002–2022)." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, February, nfae063. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfae063.

3.3 The Conditional Preference Framework

A common issue that challenges accurate measurement of Taiwanese attitudes toward independence is "preference ambiguity."[38] Typical questionnaires only ask respondents to choose one option among reunification, independence, or maintaining the status quo. When asked to indicate a clear preference, survey respondents tend to hide their conditional preferences by selecting the "status quo" answer. This pattern is consistent with established findings in survey design research, which shows that offering a middle position significantly increases the proportion of respondents selecting that category (Moors, 2008)[39]. Furthermore, Presser and Schuman (1980) argue that respondents with less intense opinions are more affected by the presence or absence of a middle response category than those who feel strongly about the issue[40]. This observation also aligns with the consistent finding that most Taiwanese express a preference for the less intense option of maintaining the status quo[41]. This preference ambiguity can also be explained by the social desirability bias: respondents tend to conceal preferences that are not perceived to be socially desirable, such as measuring the support for Donald Trump in the 2016 election[42] or expressing support for CCP-led unification in Taiwan. Many Taiwanese respondents select the status quo option in surveys not because they genuinely prefer it, but because this middle position allows them to conceal their calculated conditional preferences[43] to feel safe in a polarized political environment. To overcome this limitation, researchers who study

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[38] Niou (2004), p. 556
[39] Moors, Guy. 2008. “Exploring the Effect of a Middle Response Category on Response Style in Attitude Measurement.” *Quality and Quantity* 42 (6): 779–94. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-006-9067-x.
[40] Presser, Stanley, and Howard Schuman. 1980. "The Measurement of a Middle Position in Attitude Surveys." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 44 (1): 70. https://doi.org/10.1086/268567.
[41] Wang et al. (2025), p. 2; Sobel et al. (2010), p. 785.
[42] Brownback, Andy, and Aaron Novotny. 2018. “Social Desirability Bias and Polling Errors in the 2016 Presidential Election.” *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics* 74 (June):38–56. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2018.03.001. p. 38
[43] Chu (2004), p. 504.

Taiwanese public opinion need more sophisticated approaches to capture the conditional nature of Taiwanese attitudes.

Recognizing this limitation, Chu (2004)[44] introduces a conditional preference framework to improve the measurement of Taiwanese attitudes. Instead of forcing respondents into static categories, Chu designs a paired-question methodology that asks respondents to express their views on two carefully crafted hypothetical questions:

1. *Taiwan should become a new state if it can maintain peace with mainland China after declaring independence.*

2. *The two sides should unite if mainland's social, economic, and political conditions become comparable to Taiwan (If China becomes a wealthy democracy).*

For each question, respondents could select "agree," "no opinion," or "disagree." By cross tabulating these responses, Chu created a response matrix with nine distinct orientations toward Taiwan's future (in Table 1). This methodology represents a significant advancement beyond conventional surveys that forced respondents to choose between independence, unification, or maintaining the status quo without capturing the conditional nature of these preferences.

[44] Chu, Yun-han. 2004. "Taiwan's National Identity Politics and the Prospect of Cross-Strait Relations." *Asian Survey* 44 (4): 484–512. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.4.484. p. 503.

Independence under Favorable Conditions	*Unification under Favorable Conditions*	*"If the social, economic and political conditions in the mainland become comparable to Taiwan, the two sides should become unified."*		
		Agree	*No Opinion*	*Disagree*
"If Taiwan can maintain peace with mainland China after declaring independence, Taiwan should become a new nation (state)."	*Agree*	Open-minded rationalist	Lean toward independence	Principled believer in independence
	No Opinion	Lean toward unification	Passivist	Weak opponent to unification
	Disagree	Principled believer in unification	Weak opponent to indepen-dence	Strong believer in status quo

Table 1: Nine Orientations toward Unification toward Independence (Chu 2004)[45]

However, because many respondents prefer not to make a direct or risky political choice, identity-driven preferences often appear as support for the status quo. Chu's paired-question methodology was designed to uncover latent identity-driven attitudes by presenting respondents with conditional scenarios—revealing whether their "status quo" preference leans toward independence or unification given the right conditions.

Niou (2004) coincides with Chu (2004) in examining Taiwanese public opinion through a conditional preference framework; **however, their fundamental differences lie in the weight they assign to national identity versus strategic calculations in shaping cross-strait attitudes.** Rather than treating identity as the dominant force, Niou places it on equal footing with other key factors, arguing that individuals engage in cost-benefit analyses when deciding their stance on Taiwan's future. His hypothetical scenario approach tests how people shift their preferences in response to different strategic conditions— any Taiwanese hold conditional preferences, with a significant portion willing to shift toward either independence or unification depending on external circumstances. *Ultimately, conditional preference is cost-gains optimization.* If China were to launch a military invasion following Taiwan's declaration of

[45] Chu (2004), p. 503.

independence, the cost of pursuing independence would rise significantly due to the likelihood of casualties and severe economic disruption—especially when compared to a scenario in which no military retaliation occurs. Conversely, if China were to adopt political, economic, and social institutions more similar to Taiwan's, the perceived cost of unification would be lower, as Taiwan would not face the loss of its democratic system or the fiscal burden of subsidizing economically weaker mainland provinces.

Niou's work demonstrates that Taiwanese preference for the status quo is often a strategic calculation against uncertainty, rather than determined by inherent ideological commitment as suggested by Chu (2004). This perspective challenges traditional survey methodologies that assume preferences remain stable across different contexts. Niou's work suggests how internal and external factors **continuously reshape** individual decision-making processes, suggesting that public opinion on cross-strait relations is better understood as a series of conditional responses to evolving scenarios rather than as determined by fixed political identities. By synthesizing the conditional preference framework developed by Chu (2004) and Niou (2004), alongside key findings on the determinants of Taiwanese attitudes toward cross-strait relations from Tang (2017), Sobel et al. (2010), Wang (2017), and Wang et al. (2025), this study seeks to update Hurwitz and Peffley's (1987) foundational hierarchical model. The revised framework incorporates both identity-based influences and the ongoing, strategically driven recalibration of preferences based on conditional cost-benefit assessments specific to the Taiwan Strait context.

Theory – the Cross Strait Attitude Hierarchy

Building on Hurwitz and Peffley's foundational three-level hierarchy and Niou's conditional preference framework, I argue that Taiwanese attitudes toward the three stances in

cross-strait relations—independence, the status quo, and unification—are similarly formed through a hierarchical structure consisting of three layers: (1) core values and identities, such as national identity, ethnicity, and socialized attributes like gender and education; (2) base preferences toward cross-strait relations, including general orientations shaped by party identification and ideological leanings; and (3) an ongoing, condition-based cost-benefit analysis that transforms base preferences into flexible, conditional preferences responsive to shifting political, economic, and security environments. This model builds on the classic three-layer hierarchy proposed by Hurwitz and Peffley (1987), but modifies it to reflect Taiwan's unique political context and incorporates the conditional preference framework developed by Niou (2004) within the final layer to account for the continuous evolution of policy preferences, offering a more accurate framework for understanding how public opinion toward cross-strait policy is formed and reshaped over time. I call this model as the **Cross-Strait Attitude Hierarchy**.

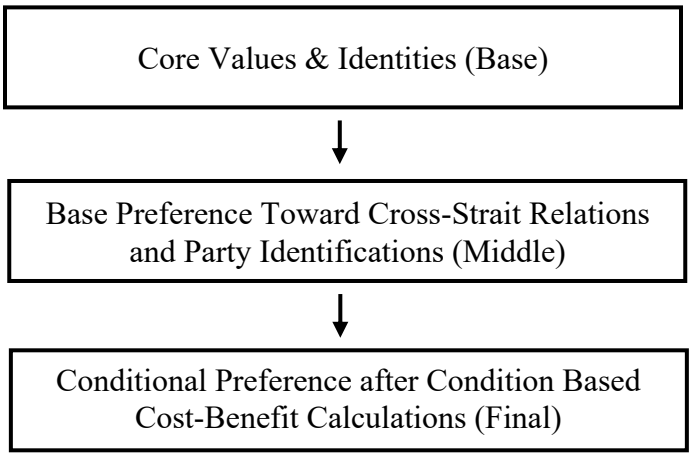

Figure 1. The Cross-Strait Attitude Hierarchy

The first layer, paralleling the "core values" tier in Hurwitz and Peffley's model, resides *Core Values and Identities*. These include both innate identifiers—such as national identity (e.g., Taiwanese, Chinese, or both), ethnic origin (e.g., Hoklo, Waishengren/Mainlander, Hakka,

Indigenous), and gender—and acquired socialization traits, including generational cohort and educational attainment. Prior research, including Chu (2004), has demonstrated that these factors serve as durable predispositions shaping initial political orientations.

The middle layer, *Base Preferences*, mirrors what Hurwitz and Peffley refer to as "general postures" in their hierarchy. It presents the base, identity-based preferences toward cross-strait relations and party identifications Taiwanese individuals develop from the *Core Values and Identities*. The *Base Preferences* are reflected in whether individuals lean toward unification, independence, or maintenance of the status quo. Party identification, particularly affiliation with the Kuomintang (KMT), Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Taiwan People's Party (TPP), or other political actors, serves as both an expression and reinforcement of these preferences. For example, those identifying as Taiwanese and socialized under post-martial law democratic education are more likely to develop base preferences favoring independence, while those with Chinese identity markers or stronger economic ties to the mainland may initially align with unification-oriented stances. While this layer captures relatively stable orientations, it does not imply rigidity; as the following layer demonstrates, base preferences can be reshaped in response to changing external circumstances.

The third layer, the most dynamic and important, incorporates the conditional preference framework developed by Chu (2004) and Niou (2004). In this layer, citizens adjust their stated base preferences in the previous layer in response to evolving external conditions through a process of ongoing cost-benefit calculation. Key conditions influencing this reassessment may include the presence or absence of a credible U.S. security guarantee, perceived military threats from China, and expected economic gains or losses from increased integration with the mainland.

Together, the **Cross-Strait Attitude Hierarchy** model captures both the enduring structure and the conditional flexibility of Taiwanese public opinion on cross-strait policy. It challenges the notion that identity alone determines attitudes, emphasizing instead the continuous, situational negotiation of policy preferences in an environment defined by contested sovereignty and geopolitical constraint.

4.1 Key Assumptions and Hypotheses

Key assumptions and hypotheses in my theory include:

(1) Core Values and Identities

H1a: Individuals who identify as Taiwanese are more likely to support unconditional or conditional independence, and less likely to support unification. And individuals who identify as Chinese are more likely to support unconditional or conditional unification, and less likely to support independence.

H1b: Older individuals are more likely to support independence over unification.

H1c: Higher levels of educational attainment are associated with greater likelihood of conditional preferences—either for independence or unification—rather than unconditional stances.

H1d: Gender will not consistently predict cross-strait preferences, though some variation may appear in conditional attitudes.

(2) Base Preferences and Party Identifications

H2: DPP supporters are more likely to favor unconditional independence. KMT supporters are more likely to favor conditional independence or conditional unification, depending on

circumstances. And TPP supporters are more likely to favor the status quo and avoid strong alignment with either independence or unification.

(3) Conditional Cost-Benefit Factors

H3a: Individuals who perceive strong U.S. security commitment are more likely to support independence, as the anticipated costs of Chinese retaliation are lowered. In contrast, individuals who perceive the Chinese military threat as serious are less likely to support independence and more likely to support conditional or unconditional unification.

H3b: Individuals who support greater economic integration with China are more likely to oppose independence and more likely to support unification. Conversely, individuals who prefer to reduce economic ties with China are more likely to favor independence.

Having established my theoretical framework, I now turn to an empirical investigation of how Taiwanese individuals form preferences toward independence, unification, or the status quo. This next section outlines the methodological approach used to test the determinants embedded within the Cross-Strait Attitude Hierarchy. Drawing on multiple waves of the Taiwan National Security Survey (TNSS), I examine how core identities, base preferences, and condition-based cost-benefit assessments interact to shape public opinion over time. I explain how key variables are operationalized, detail the construction of both dependent and independent measures, and describe the multinomial logistic regression models employed to analyze the structure and temporal evolution of these preferences across survey years.

Methodology

5.1 Data Source: Taiwan National Security Survey

The dataset for this study is the Taiwan National Security Survey (TNSS), a nationally representative survey that tracks public attitudes toward Taiwan's security, cross-strait relations, and U.S. foreign policy commitments. The weighed dataset includes responses on preferences for independence, unification, and the status quo, as well as key independent categorical and ordinal variables that influence these preferences.

5.2 Operationalization of Variables

Dependent Variable: Support for Independence and Unification, under different conditions

This study examines attitudes toward independence as the dependent variable, measured through survey responses indicating support for independence, unification, or maintaining the status quo under various conditions. I follow Niou (2004) in categorizing both independence and unification supporters into 3 groups: unconditional supporters, conditional supporters, and non-supporters. I have attached detailed coding strategies in the Appendix.

Independent variables include factors (categorical) and covariates (ordinal):

Within Factors, there are:

1. National identity *(Taiwanese, Chinese, or both)* – Captures whether identity influences preferences for independence or unification.
2. Perceived military threat from China – Measures whether fear of conflict affects attitudes toward unification and independence.

3. Mainland Economic integration attitudes – Assesses whether belief in closer economic integration with mainland China influences attitudes.
4. Party Identification *(DPP, KMT, third parties, or non-partisan)* – Determines whether partisan alignment conditions policy preferences.
5. U.S. Security Commitment – Examines whether belief in U.S. military support affects willingness to support independence or unification.

Within Covariates, there are:

1. Generational cohorts (age) – Tests whether younger or older generations differ in their cross-strait attitudes.
2. Education Attainment – Whether educate attainment associates with attitudes. If so, how much does it attribute to differences?

5.3 Statistical Methods for Measurement

This study replicates Niou's (2004) statistical approach but applies it to more recent data (2008, 2014, 2016, 2020, 2022, and 2024) to assess how Taiwanese public opinion has changed over time. I first present a group crosstabulation analysis to display the correlation between key independent variables within the **Cross-Strait Attitude Hierarchy** and respondents' preferences on independence to argue that perceptions of external conditions can affect preferences on independence. By categorizing respondents into unconditional supporters, conditional supporters, and non-supporters, the crosstab allows for a direct comparison of how these preferences intersect. The results of this analysis serve as a baseline for the multinomial **logit regression model**, which further tests how various independent variables shape these preferences over time and the extent to which they shape the preferences.

Why select these years?

This analysis focuses on six pivotal years—2008, 2014, 2016, 2020, 2022, and 2024—each marking a key political or geopolitical turning point in cross-strait relations. The year 2008 represents the first term of KMT President Ma Ying-jeou, often seen as Taiwan's last pro-unification leader, whose technocratic moderation and weak resistance to identity-based reforms arguably fueled the rise of a stronger "Taiwanese-only" identity among youth. In 2014, the controversial Cross-Strait Service and Trade Agreement ("Fumao") sparked the Sunflower Movement, a mass student-led protest that reshaped Taiwan's political landscape. The 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen, alongside Donald Trump's presidency, marked a shift toward pro-independence policies and introduced new uncertainties around U.S. security commitments. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic redefined perceptions of governance and global alignment. Pelosi's 2022 visit triggered an escalation in Chinese military activities, reshaping Taiwan's security discourse. Finally, 2024 captures the latest public sentiment in a rapidly evolving cross-strait environment.

Emprical Analysis

6.1. Descriptive Trends and Crosstabs

Table 2. National Identity and Preferences on Taiwan Independence (%)

	Taiwanese	Both	Chinese	Row Total (N)
Unconditional Independence	85.5 (396)	14.0 (65)	0.4 (2)	463
Conditional Independence	61.6 (305)	37.8 (187)	0.6 (3)	495
Don't Support Independence	27.3 (77)	65.6 (185)	7.1 (20)	282

Table 2

Table 2 examines the relationship between national identity (self-identification as Taiwanese, both Taiwanese and Chinese, or exclusively Chinese) and preferences on Taiwan independence. The results demonstrate a clear association between national identity and independence preferences. In terms of unconditional supporters, 85.5% identify as Taiwanese, while only 0.4% identify as Chinese. This distribution shifts among conditional supporters, where 61.6% are Taiwanese and 37.8% hold a dual identity. Among non-supporters, however, the proportion of Taiwanese identity drops significantly (27.3%), with the largest percentage (65.6%) consists of those who identify as both Taiwanese and Chinese. Identification as solely Chinese remains low for all 3 groups. But the findings collectively suggest that a Taiwanese-identifying public is likely to support independence, and a more Chinese-identifying group is less likely to endorse it.

Table 3. Generational Differences and Preferences on Taiwan Independence (%)

	20–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60 and Above	Row Total (N)
Unconditional Support	17.2 (80)	18.3 (85)	21.7 (101)	19.1 (89)	23.7 (110)	465
Conditional Support	21.1 (105)	20.9 (104)	21.1 (105)	15.9 (79)	21.1 (105)	498
Non-Support	5.3 (15)	12.1 (34)	17.8 (50)	25.6 (72)	39.1 (110)	281

Table 3

Table 3 presents the relationship between generational differences and support for Taiwan independence. Among unconditional supporters, the highest percentage (23.7%) is found for those 60 and above, while the lowest percentage (17.2%) is seen for those aged 20–29. Conversely, among non-supporters, the percentage increases steadily with age, reaching 39.1% for those 60 and above (an interesting contrast) , compared to only 5.3% among those in the youngest age group (20–29). The Pearson Chi-Square test is highly significant ($p < .001$),

confirming that generational differences play a crucial role in shaping independence preferences. Younger respondents tend to be more supportive of independence, while older generations exhibit greater opposition.

Table 4. Perceived China Threat and Preferences on Taiwan Independence (%)			
	No Threat	Threat Perceived	Row Total (N)
Unconditional Support	58.4 (262)	41.6 (187)	449
Conditional Support	17.8 (86)	82.2 (396)	482
Non-Support	10.0 (28)	90.0 (251)	279

Table 4

Table 4 examines the relationship between perceptions of a Chinese military threat and support for Taiwan independence. Among unconditional supporters, a majority (58.4%) believe there is no threat, while 41.6% believe there is a risk of Chinese military action. In contrast, for conditional supporters, the pattern is reversed—82.2% believe China would attack if Taiwan declared independence, while only 17.8% perceive no threat. Finally, in terms of non-supporters, the belief in a Chinese threat is overwhelming (90.0%), whereas only 10.0% see no threat. The Pearson Chi-Square test is also highly significant ($p < .001$), confirming that the perception of a Chinese threat strongly influences independence preferences. Those who believe China will attack are more likely to oppose independence or support it conditionally, while those who perceive no threat are more likely to support independence unconditionally.

Table 5. Attitude toward Mainland Economic Integration and Preferences on Taiwan Independence (%)			
	Strengthen	Decline	Row Total (N)
Unconditional Support (IND)	29.1 (118)	70.9 (287)	405
Conditional Support (IND)	62.2 (272)	37.8 (165)	437
Non-Support (IND)	87.8 (209)	12.2 (29)	238

Table 5

Table 5 presents the relationship between attitude toward Mainland economic integration and preferences on Taiwan independence. Among unconditional supporters, 70.9% believe that Taiwan's economic integration with the Mainland should decline, whereas 29.1% believe it should strengthen. Among non-supporters, the pattern reverses: 87.8% support stronger economic integration with the Mainland, while only 12.2% favor decline. Conditional supporters fall between these extremes, with 62.2% supporting stronger integration and 37.8% favoring economic decline. The Pearson Chi-Square test is highly significant ($p < .001$), confirming that economic perspectives on China are a crucial factor in shaping respondents' attitudes toward Taiwan independence.

Table 6. Party Identification and Preferences on Taiwan Independence (%)

	KMT	DPP	TPP	Row Total (N)
Unconditional Support (IND)	10.7 (34)	82.1 (262)	7.2 (23)	319
Conditional Support (IND)	36.8 (118)	37.1 (119)	26.2 (84)	321
Non-Support (IND)	76.7 (148)	6.7 (13)	16.6 (32)	193

Table 6

Table 6 presents the relationship between party identification (KMT, DPP, and TPP) and support for Taiwan independence. Among unconditional supporters, 82.1% identify with the DPP, while only 10.7% belong to the KMT. The reverse pattern is seen among non-supporters, where 76.7% are KMT members, while just 6.7% belong to the DPP. For conditional supporters, respondents display a relative equal distribution among three parties. I was expecting to see if TPP identifiers would be more associated with a "median-voter" image; but ultimately people who identify themselves as either KMT or DPP have exceeded that of TPP. The Pearson Chi-Square test is highly significant ($p < .001$), confirming that party affiliation plays a critical role in shaping attitudes toward Taiwan independence.

Table 7. U.S Defense Commitment and Preferences on Taiwan Independence (%)			
	U.S. Will Defend	Neutral	Row Total (N)
Unconditional Support (IND)	40.0 (340)	27.8 (87)	36.7 (427)
Conditional Support (IND)	42.7 (363)	36.1 (113)	40.9 (476)
Non-Support (IND)	17.3 (147)	36.1 (113)	22.4 (260)

Table 7

Table 7 examines the relationship between perceived U.S. commitment to defending Taiwan and support for independence. The results indicate that expectations of U.S. defense influence respondents' views on independence. Among unconditional supporters, 40.0% believe the U.S. will defend Taiwan, while 27.8% remain neutral. Conditional supporters, however, have the highest proportion believing in U.S. defense (42.7%), while 36.1% of neutral respondents fall into this category. Among non-supporters, the lowest percentage (17.3%) believe the U.S. will defend Taiwan, while 36.1% are neutral. The Pearson Chi-Square test is highly significant ($p < .001$), confirming that belief in U.S. defense commitments is associated with increased support for Taiwan independence. Those who expect U.S. military intervention are more likely to support independence, while those who are neutral are more evenly distributed between conditional support and non-support.

Table 8

Table 8. Ethnic Group and Preferences on Taiwan Independence (%)					
	Hakka	Minnan	Mainlanders	Aboriginals	Row Total (N)
Unconditional Support (IND)	9.6 (42)	82.9 (364)	4.6 (20)	3.0 (13)	439
Conditional Support (IND)	13.6 (66)	76.4 (372)	9.9 (48)	0.2 (1)	487
Non-Support (IND)	14.8 (42)	66.9 (190)	16.9 (48)	1.4 (4)	284

Table 8 presents the relationship between Taiwanese ethnic groups and support for Taiwan independence. Among unconditional supporters, the vast majority (82.9%) are Minnan (Hoklo), while only 4.6% are Mainlanders, 9.6% are Hakka, and 3.0% are Aboriginals. A similar

trend is observed among conditional supporters, where 76.4% are Minnan and 9.9% are Mainlanders. Within non-supporters, the proportion of Mainlanders rises to 16.9%, while Minnan representation drops to 66.9%. The Pearson Chi-Square test is highly significant ($p < .001$), confirming that ethnic identity is a crucial factor influencing preferences for Taiwan independence. Minnan respondents are more likely to support independence, whereas Mainlanders are more likely to oppose it.

Table 9

Table 9. Education Level and Preferences on Taiwan Independence (%)

	Elementary and Below	Middle School	High School	Vocational School	College and Above	Row Total (N)
Unconditional Support (IND)	10.1 (47)	15.1 (70)	28.2 (131)	8.8 (41)	37.7 (175)	464
Conditional Support (IND)	5.4 (27)	7.4 (37)	27.1 (136)	13.8 (69)	46.3 (232)	501
Non-Support (IND)	13.2 (38)	10.4 (30)	30.6 (88)	13.9 (40)	31.9 (92)	288

Finally, table 9 visualizes the relationship between education level and support for Taiwan independence. The results suggest that higher education levels are associated with greater support for independence. Among unconditional supporters, 37.7% have attained college education or above, while only 10.1% have elementary education or below. The trend is similar for conditional supporters, with the highest proportion (46.3%) being college-educated, compared to 5.4% with elementary-level education. The non-supporters are more evenly distributed. 31.9% have a college education, and 13.2% have elementary-level education, suggesting that lower education levels correspond with greater opposition to independence. The Pearson Chi-Square test is highly significant ($p < .001$), confirming that education level is an important factor influencing attitudes toward Taiwan independence.

6.2. Regression Results and Discussions: Independence Preferences

Based on the multinomial logit regression results for preferences on independence (as shown in **Table 10**), several key findings emerge regarding the factors influencing Taiwanese public opinion and provides answers to my hypotheses. Coefficients for the unconditional independence supporters are normalized at zero. The entries are maximum likelihood coefficients (B) with standard errors (SE) in parentheses. A positive B increases the likelihood of falling into that category (Conditional or Non-Supporter), relative to the baseline. For example, in 2020: the coefficient for Age for Non-Supporters is 0.404 (0.118)*: Older people are significantly more likely to be non-supporters of independence; and the coefficient for DPP for Non-Supporters is -2.186 (0.779)*: DPP supporters are significantly less likely to be non-supporters (i.e., more likely to support independence).

Three out of four original "important" factors, Mainland Economic Integration (MEI), Chinese Military Threat (CMT), and U.S. Defenses in Niou (2004) continues to be influential in conditioning Taiwanese support toward independence. Taiwanese who think they should increase economic integration are more likely to be conditional supporters of independence (in all years except 2008) or support unification (in all years) as opposed to be unconditionally supporting independence. The perception of a Chinese military threat, similarly, significantly deters the Taiwanese public from supporting independence at a high cost. A belief that the U.S. would defense Taiwan in the event of a mainland invasion continuously boost the confidence of Taiwanese in supporting unconditional preference toward independence, suggesting that deterrence mechanisms boost confidence.

Interestingly, some findings contradict two of my hypotheses. I originally hypothesized that older individuals are more likely to support independence over unification (Hypothesis H1b). However, as indicated by **Table 10**, as age increases, older individuals are increasingly opposed to unconditional independence. Gender differences (H1d) do consistently predict cross-strait preferences, with men (the reference group is women) moderately more likely to support independence. Outliers appear in how national identity interacts with conditional support for independence in 2014. Though all three national identity categories are statistically significant, I am doubtful given the unrealistically high maximum likelihood coefficients (B). However, the more normal estimates in 2020 suggest that individuals who identify as Taiwanese only are significantly more likely to support unconditional independence. Finally, educational attainment (H1c) has been confirmed to be associated with a greater likelihood of conditional preferences—either for independence or unification—rather than unconditional stances.

Excluding the outlier coefficients observed in 2014, identification with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) exerts the strongest influence on shifting public support away from the status quo in the single year of 2020, particularly among unconditional independence supporters. Over the broader period from 2008 to 2024, the two most consistently influential factors are support for Mainland Economic Integration (MEI) and perceptions of a Chinese Military Threat (CMT). Both variables are statistically significant in most survey waves and exhibit comparable magnitudes, suggesting they shape not only base preferences but also conditional judgments regarding Taiwan's political future. Perceived commitment from U.S. defense offers a modest but meaningful boost to pro-independence sentiment, particularly under scenarios involving external military risk. Conversely, identification with the Kuomintang (KMT) correlates with a lower likelihood of supporting either conditional or unconditional independence, underscoring

how partisan dimension impact Taiwan's cross-strait attitudes. The regression findings regarding independence support all my hypothesis except for H1b: Age and H1d: gender.

6.3. Regression Results and Discussions: Unification Preferences

In terms of the multinomial logit regression results for preferences on unification (as shown in **Table 11**), the key variables continuous to demonstrate consistent statistically significant effects across survey waves from 2008 to 2024.

Though the negative coefficients for MEI (Mainland Economic Integration) might initially seem counterintuitive, it is important to clarify that the conditional and non-support groups are being compared against the unconditional unification supporters. A negative sign for MEI thus indicates that individuals favoring greater economic integration with China are more likely to unconditionally support unification. Interestingly, two positive coefficients emerge in

Table 10

Table 10. Multinomial Logit Model of Factors Explaining Preferences on Independence, 2008-2024

Year	**2008**		**2014**		**2016**		**2020**		**2022**		**2024**	
Factors	*Non-Supporters*	*Conditional Supporters*	*Non-Supporters*	*Conditional Supporters*	*Non-Supporters*	*Conditional Supporters*	*Non-Supporters*	*Conditional Supporters*	*Non-Supporters*	*Conditional Supporters*	*Non-Supporters*	*Conditional Supporters*
Age	-0.151 (0.130)	-0.017 (0.105)	**0.235 (0.116)***	0.067 (0.094)	**0.534 (0.124)***	0.182 (0.104)	**0.404 (0.118)***	**0.307 (0.091)***	**0.317 (0.093)***	0.118 (0.071)	**0.702 (0.108)***	**0.144 (0.078)**
Education	-0.171 (0.134)	-0.028 (0.112)	**0.308 (0.123)***	**0.242 (0.100)***	0.100 (0.118)	0.188 (0.103)	0.118 (0.127)	**0.359 (0.099)***	0.126 (0.098)	**0.198 (0.077)***	**0.353 (0.110)***	**0.172 (0.083)***
Taiwanese	-0.237 (0.985)	0.091 (0.786)	-1.820 (1.073)	**17.034 (0.708)***	-1.129 (0.957)	-0.261 (0.942)	**-2.955 (1.101)***	-1.764 (0.936)	-1.725 (1.090)	0.373 (1.211)	-0.990 (0.915)	0.103 (0.794)
Both	1.660 (0.973)	1.215 (0.788)	-0.889 (1.069)	**17.765 (0.717)***	0.769 (0.961)	0.545 (0.956)	-1.370 (1.107)	-1.047 (0.956)	0.001 (1.088)	1.278 (1.215)	0.265 (0.918)	0.698 (0.805)
Chinese	**20.452 (1.015)***	**18.932 (0.000)***	0.033 (1.269)	**18.772 (0.000)***	0.904 (1.195)	-0.223 (1.233)	-2.168 (1.283)	-2.137 (1.161)	1.246 (1.284)	1.539 (1.410)	2.470 (1.857)	1.478 (1.862)
KMT	1.312 (2.513)	1.118 (1.527)	0.924 (1.071)	1.141 (0.924)	**1.854 (0.680)***	**1.342 (0.552)***	0.828 (0.660)	**1.369 (0.562)***	-0.004 (1.854)	0.077 (1.868)	1.366 (0.750)	0.868 (0.534)
DPP	-0.758 (2.527)	-0.166 (1.519)	-1.081 (1.066)	0.050 (0.898)	0.337 (0.667)	-0.194 (0.489)	**-2.186 (0.779)***	0.125 (0.505)	-2.440 (1.869)	-0.849 (1.864)	-1.019 (0.778)	-0.198 (0.491)
3rd Party	**20.557 (2.366)***	**20.119 (0.000)***	0.979 (1.402)	0.259 (1.328)	17.794 (10117.583)	17.447 (10117.583)	-0.081 (0.825)	1.027 (0.675)	-0.453 (1.871)	-0.097 (1.878)	1.172 (0.778)	**1.245 (0.536)***
MEI	**0.982 (0.358)***	0.431 (0.265)	**1.709 (0.315)***	**0.815 (0.227)***	**1.723 (0.367)***	**0.649 (0.248)***	**1.405 (0.359)***	**1.074 (0.238)***	**1.514 (0.253)***	**1.190 (0.186)***	**1.511 (0.299)***	**0.721 (0.190)***
CMT	**1.095 (0.297)***	**0.947 (0.239)***	-0.033 (0.276)	**0.453 (0.216)***	-0.067 (0.288)	**0.674 (0.234)***	**1.536 (0.369)***	**0.938 (0.223)***	0.295 (0.251)	**1.277 (0.199)***	**0.544 (0.259)***	**1.049 (0.180)***
USD	**-0.602 (0.288)***	-0.300 (0.249)	**-0.753 (0.303)***	**-0.589 (0.256)***	**-0.756 (0.279)***	-0.189 (0.237)	**-1.019 (0.308)***	-0.068 (0.241)	-0.315 (0.233)	-0.005 (0.195)	**-0.635 (0.261)***	-0.005 (0.212)
Gender	-0.292 (0.287)	**-0.629 (0.241)***	-0.278 (0.269)	**-0.652 (0.213)***	0.209 (0.269)	**-0.587 (0.224)***	0.168 (0.280)	0.077 (0.210)	-0.114 (0.214)	**-0.446 (0.166)***	0.407 (0.233)	-0.036 (0.167)

MEI stands for Preferences toward Mainland Economic Integration, **CMT** stands for Chinese Military Threat; **USD** stands for Perception of U.S. Defenses

* Indicates p .05 two-tailed; entries are maximum likelihood coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Table 11

Table 11. Multinomial Logit Model of Factors Explaining Preferences on Unification, 2008-2024

Year	**2008**		**2014**		**2016**		**2020**		**2022**		**2024**	
Factors	Non-Supporters	Conditional Supporters	Non-Supporters	Conditional Supporters	Non-Supporters	Conditional Supporters	Non-Supporters	Conditional Supporters	Non-Supporters	Conditional Supporters	Non-Supporters	Conditional Supporters
Age	0.142 (0.118)	0.130 (0.116)	-0.030 (0.108)	**0.292 (0.124)***	-0.082 (0.097)	0.009 (0.113)	-0.232 (0.131)	-0.113 (0.141)	0.067 (0.084)	**0.227 (0.098)***	**0.176 (0.088)***	**0.321 (0.103)***
Education	0.129 (0.119)	0.174 (0.116)	-0.022 (0.113)	**0.272 (0.129)***	**0.237 (0.094)***	**0.307 (0.111)***	**0.302 (0.135)***	**0.418 (0.146)***	**0.210 (0.094)***	**0.462 (0.111)***	**0.259 (0.092)***	**0.350 (0.108)***
Taiwanese	-0.866 (1.214)	-0.733 (1.264)	-0.195 (1.544)	-0.827 (1.618)	-0.761 (0.901)	-0.646 (1.174)	-15.108 (2949.449)	-16.460 (2949.449)	0.779 (0.819)	0.353 (0.966)	1.555 (0.862)	0.486 (0.887)
Both	-1.675 (1.206)	-0.508 (1.253)	-1.068 (1.535)	-1.148 (1.604)	-1.184 (0.898)	0.002 (1.162)	-17.215 (2949.449)	-17.674 (2949.449)	-0.063 (0.809)	0.237 (0.950)	0.651 (0.860)	0.310 (0.882)
Chinese	-2.039 (1.307)	-1.458 (1.341)	-1.758 (1.587)	-2.315 (1.686)	-1.063 (0.992)	-0.335 (1.265)	-18.070 (2949.449)	-18.722 (2949.449)	-0.566 (0.872)	-0.819 (1.061)	0.694 (0.975)	-0.856 (1.147)
KMT	0.911 (1.083)	**16.441 (0.307)***	-0.968 (1.499)	-0.274 (1.809)	-0.791 (0.548)	-1.075 (0.574)	1.063 (0.816)	0.763 (0.850)	-1.048 (1.425)	13.887 (1179.812)	-1.125 (0.684)	-0.618 (0.821)
DPP	1.921 (1.132)	**17.764 (0.451)***	-0.472 (1.503)	0.140 (1.817)	0.181 (0.587)	-0.306 (0.632)	1.567 (0.860)	0.224 (0.901)	0.991 (1.481)	15.642 (1179.812)	0.198 (0.731)	0.093 (0.863)
3rd Party	2.033 (5518.126)	33.846 (4539.150)	-1.312 (1.750)	0.576 (2.005)	-1.193 (1.648)	-0.897 (1.504)	1.755 (1.057)	1.748 (1.081)	-0.158 (1.463)	14.766 (1179.812)	-0.480 (0.710)	-0.341 (0.847)
MEI	**-1.042 (0.328)***	0.081 (0.354)	**-0.982 (0.288)***	0.021 (0.352)	**-1.365 (0.338)***	**-1.007 (0.400)***	-0.798 (0.438)	**-0.978 (0.466)***	**-1.280 (0.271)***	**-0.588 (0.323)***	**-1.457 (0.288)***	**-1.154 (0.332)***
CMT	-0.162 (0.260)	0.225 (0.262)	-0.032 (0.253)	0.423 (0.305)	0.041 (0.241)	0.020 (0.286)	0.079 (0.389)	0.833 (0.440)	0.001 (0.245)	**0.754 (0.318)***	-0.112 (0.224)	0.467 (0.280)
USD	**0.689 (0.248)***	0.201 (0.242)	0.503 (0.265)	0.313 (0.308)	**0.639 (0.229)***	0.295 (0.269)	**0.859 (0.348)***	**0.861 (0.376)***	**0.738 (0.207)***	**0.777 (0.251)***	0.259 (0.209)	**0.515 (0.258)***
Gender	**0.516 (0.252)***	**0.798 (0.247)***	0.392 (0.247)	**0.794 (0.293)***	-0.340 (0.222)	0.188 (0.262)	0.019 (0.299)	**0.986 (0.326)***	0.223 (0.203)	**1.027 (0.241)***	-0.014 (0.197)	0.339 (0.230)

MEI stands for Preferences toward Mainland Economic Integration, **CMT** stands for Chinese Military Threat; **USD** stands for Perception of U.S. Defenses

* Indicates p .05 two-tailed; entries are maximum likelihood coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

2008 and 2014, suggesting that during those earlier years, individuals who supported deeper cross-strait economic ties were less likely to favor immediate, unconditional unification.

This reflects a complex strategic calculus. Typically, individuals advocating for increased economic integration are those who benefit most from trade with China—business elites, industrial actors, and service providers who enjoy preferential treatment through tax incentives, subsidies, and other privileges extended under Taiwan's semi-sovereign status. However, should the two sides unify, and Taiwanese citizens become ordinary PRC citizens, these privileges may be rescinded or diluted. Anticipating such a loss, these economic beneficiaries may have strategically preferred to delay unification, opting instead to preserve the economic advantages of the status quo.

Yet this calculus appears to shift in more recent years, matching the negative coefficients since 2014. Rising political polarization in Taiwan and growing intolerance toward dissent from pro-DPP or the Taiwanese Consciousness (臺灣主體意識)[46] may have altered the perceived costs of maintaining ambiguity. Events such as the politically charged shutdown of CTi News[47]—a legacy media outlet aligned with the KMT and viewed by some as sympathetic to Beijing—and the "Great Recall Wave"[48] led by DPP-affiliated activists seeking to oust KMT and TPP legislators, may have intensified fears among these previous conditional unification supporters. Facing mounting political marginalization and repression, some individuals formerly

[46] Shih, Cheng-Feng. 1997. "A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TAIWANESE CONSCIOUSNESS — WITH A FOCUS ON LINGUISTIC AND HISTORICAL DISTINCTIONS." *Peace Research* 29, no. 4 (1997): 55–76. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23607240.
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favoring delayed unification may now view unconditional unification as a more stable path to preserving their economic and ideological interests.

U.S. defense commitments, consistent with findings from the independence preference model, continue to exert a substantial influence in reducing Taiwanese preference toward unification. Across multiple survey waves (2008, 2016, 2020, 2022, and 2024), higher confidence in American military protection—in the event of a Taiwanese declaration of independence—is associated with lower levels of support for unification.

What's particularly noteworthy is the effect of the perceived Chinese military threat in incentivizing some previously unconditional supporters of unification to shift toward conditional support in 2022. This change coincided with then–House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's unexpected visit to Taiwan in August 2022, after which China significantly escalated its military activities around the island—establishing a new, more aggressive status quo in cross-Strait relations[49]. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted extensive live-fire exercises, launched missile tests over Taiwan and into Japan's exclusive economic zone, and simulated a blockade by operating within six closure zones that encircled Taiwan.

A notable shift was the PLA's frequent crossing of the Taiwan Strait's median line—a previously respected unofficial boundary. In August 2022 alone, nearly 450 Chinese military aircraft entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ), marking the highest monthly

[49] Shattuck, Thomas J. 2023. "One Year Later: How Has China's Military Pressure on Taiwan Changed Since Nancy Pelosi's Visit?" Global Taiwan Institute. September 20, 2023. https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/09/one-year-later-how-has-chinas-military-pressure-on-taiwan-changed-since-nancy-pelosis-visit/.

total on record. This pattern persisted, with April 2023 recording 259 incursions, coinciding with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

These actions signify China's intent to normalize heightened military pressure on Taiwan, effectively erasing established boundaries and increasing the risk of miscalculation. The PLA's activities have shifted from isolated shows of force to sustained operational patterns, marking a strategic transformation in Beijing's approach to cross-Strait relations. This escalation has produced a consistent and observable deterrent effect on Taiwanese preferences toward unification, as reflected in the regression results from 2014, 2020, 2022, and 2024 (though only statistically significant in 2022). Even though recent political and military actions—as well as official rhetoric in public speeches—suggest that Beijing is no longer actively seeking to appeal to the Taiwanese public, gaining support for unification among Taiwanese citizens would still offer important political legitimacy for China's engagement in cross-Strait affairs. While a military occupation of Taiwan might appear achievable in the short term, the long-term governance of a resistant population would be both costly and unstable without meaningful cultural, political, and identity-based integration.

Lastly, regarding the effects of education and gender: higher levels of education are consistently associated with a greater likelihood of conditional support for unification. This finding aligns with Hurwitz and Peffley's (1987) argument that individuals with more abstract belief systems are more likely to develop informed and calculated policy preferences. I summarize that education, by fostering critical thinking and exposure to theoretical frameworks, enables individuals to move beyond emotionally driven or identity-based stances and instead adopt structured, reserved, and strategically grounded positions—ones shaped more by cost-benefit analysis than by innate identities.

In terms of gender, men appear to be more supportive of unification, which is somewhat surprising given their already higher likelihood of supporting independence relative to women. One possible explanation for this pattern is the presence of social desirability bias. In the all-sociopolitical context, not-exclusive to Taiwan, women are expected by society to withhold or moderate their political preferences, or participate in politics, due to prevailing gender norms that associate political engagement—particularly in contentious issues such as cross-strait relations—with masculinity. Politics is often framed as a domain dominated by men, and female political leaders are frequently treated as anomalies in media narratives, which may reinforce the perception that political assertiveness is at odds with traditional femininity. As a result, female respondents may be more likely to express neutral or less polarized positions in survey responses.

6.4 Summary of Regression Results and Discussions:

To sum up, all the variables identified in the Cross-Strait Attitude Hierarchy—perceived Chinese military threat, U.S. defense commitment, willingness toward mainland economic integration, national identity, party identification, generational cohort, and gender—consistently shape Taiwanese preferences toward independence, unification, or the status quo. With perceived Chinese military threat and U.S. defense commitment, on average, projecting the most stable and pronounced effect on conditioning public opinion. While identity-based factors provide the foundational orientations, it is the interaction with external conditions—especially shifts in military and economic dynamics—that transforms these orientations into conditional preferences. This study demonstrates that Taiwanese public opinion is not static but responsive to strategic considerations, with cost-benefit calculations playing a central role in shaping evolving cross-strait attitudes. The findings underscore the importance of treating Taiwanese

public opinion as fluid, multidimensional, and deeply sensitive to both domestic identity politics and international developments—a crucial insight for scholars, policymakers, and international observers seeking to understand Taiwan's strategic calculus.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings from the 2008–2024 waves of the Taiwan National Security Survey (TNSS), I have developed policy recommendations for different strategic scenarios in both Taipei and Beijing.

For a government aiming to maintain the status quo—such as the previous Tsai administration—it is particularly important to elevate the educational attainment of the general public, whether through expanding compulsory education or increasing admission rates to colleges and graduate programs. A more educated populace is better equipped to form abstract beliefs and develop the analytical capacity necessary for informed, calculated policy judgments regarding cross-strait relations. In parallel, it is essential to maintain a balanced perception of economic engagement with the mainland: emphasizing the tangible benefits of integration while mitigating perceived threats. Simultaneously, ensuring a baseline of U.S. security commitment remains vital. This combination allows Taiwan to enjoy the economic dividends of cross-strait relations while preserving a stable and informed public foundation for continued support of the status quo.

For an independence-oriented government in Taipei, such as the current Lai administration, the key to strengthening public support for unconditional independence lies in securing a credible U.S. security and defense commitment in the event of a mainland invasion. Empirical results consistently show that perceived U.S. commitment has a significant effect on increasing support for independence. In addition, cultivating Taiwanese nationalism—or what is

often referred to as the Taiwanese consciousness—remains critical. National identity defined exclusively as Taiwanese exerts the strongest influence on fostering pro-independence attitudes.

For a government seeking to foster closer relations with the mainland—such as the Ma administration—promoting a shared Chinese cultural identity rooted in traditional Confucian values, alongside deeper economic integration with the mainland, is likely to move public sentiment closer to alignment with China. However, it is equally important to balance such efforts with careful attention to state autonomy and domestic public opinion. Failure to do so risks triggering strong backlash, particularly among segments of the population who perceive themselves as excluded from the benefits of cross-strait engagement. This dynamic was most clearly illustrated during the 2014 Sunflower Movement, in which student-led protests—driven by limited economic gains and weak identification with Chinese cultural or political identity—effectively stalled the Ma administration's cross-strait initiatives. The most significant casualty of this backlash, the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (服貿協定), remains unratified to this day.

For Beijing, the framing of military actions in the Taiwan Strait is particularly crucial, as empirical results consistently show that overt military threats tend to deter the Taiwanese public from supporting unification. In terms of appealing to the Taiwanese public, while individuals with lower levels of education may exhibit stronger and more polarized stances in cross-strait relations, their overall political influence remains limited. This suggests that political campaigns targeting this demographic may have diminishing returns and warrant cautious consideration. In contrast, higher-educated individuals are generally less responsive to emotion-driven messaging or propaganda-based narratives. To cultivate support among this group, Beijing may find greater

success by emphasizing the tangible economic and social benefits of cross-strait engagement, fostering perceptions of mutual gain and pragmatic cooperation.

Limitations, Acknowledgements, and Future Research

While this study advances a more systematic and dynamic account of Taiwanese public attitudes toward cross-strait relations by applying the conditional preference framework across multiple TNSS waves, several limitations must be acknowledged.

First, as my advisors have rightly noted, survey data—while useful for identifying statistical associations and population-level trends—are inherently limited in their ability to establish causal mechanisms. Endogeneity remains a persistent concern, particularly when variables such as national identity, party identification, and policy preference may simultaneously influence and be influenced by each other. Thus, the observed relationships in this study should be interpreted as correlational, not causal, and should be approached with appropriate caution.

Second, the operationalization of "conditionality" in the TNSS and Niou's original framework—although innovative—tends to treat conditional preferences as static and scenario-specific. Respondents are only asked about their support for independence under the threat of Chinese invasion, and about unification under the assumption of a democratic, economically advanced China. While these binary conditions offer conceptual clarity, they fail to capture the full spectrum of strategic reasoning that individuals apply when evaluating such high-stakes choices. Future research would benefit from a more granular, multi-scenario approach that isolates and tests a broader range of contingencies—for instance: *"If Taiwan declares independence and the U.S. provides security protection, would you support independence?"*, or

"If declaring independence results in large-scale casualties, would you still support it?[50]*"* Likewise, for unification: *"If China becomes a democracy but limits Taiwan's local autonomy, would you support unification?"* These variations would allow researchers to identify **threshold conditions** that distinguish principled, strategic, and reluctant supporters—offering a more realistic depiction of the conditionality that Niou's model initially sought to explain.

Third, and relatedly, this study does not fully account for intersectionality in the formation of political preferences. While the **Cross-Strait Attitude Hierarch**y distinguishes between core identities (e.g., ethnicity, gender, age) and base preferences (e.g., party affiliation), it treats these as additive, rather than interactive. In reality, these attributes often intersect in ways that create unique political orientations—for example, how a younger, female, Taiwanese-identifying DPP supporter may differ from an older, male, ethnically Hakka KMT voter in how they process cost-benefit calculations. Future work should further develop this intersectional dimension by adopting models that allow for interaction effects and deeper qualitative insight.

Despite these limitations, the conditional preference framework remains a valuable contribution, offering a middle ground between ideological rigidity and fluid instrumental reasoning. This study demonstrates its empirical utility while also pointing toward ways to refine and expand its application in future iterations of public opinion research.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Coding Strategies

Niou (2004), Chu (2004), and Wang et al. (2025) did not include specific instructions on how to recode the TNSS dataset. For others to be able to replicate what I did for my study, I am including my coding strategy here.

How to code unconditional, conditional, and non-supporters of independence and unification? This study will replicate the precedent in Niou (2004) to categorize unconditional, conditional, and non-supporters of independence of unification. Niou centers on "cost" of independence and unification: If the costs of uniting with mainland China were low, then unification would be more acceptable, and vice versa. Likewise, if the cost of becoming an independent country were low, then independence would be more acceptable, and vice versa. What does he mean by low and high cost in independence and unification settings, respectively? For independence, an independence without mainland invasion is low cost for Taiwan, and vice versa; concurrently, a unification with a systematically and economically compatible China (meaning a democracy is preserved and Taiwan don't have to surrender its taxes to subsidize economically inferior mainland) is low cost. In Niou's original study, he relied on two sets of questions in the TNSS 2002 survey:

Q1. If the act of declaring independence will cause mainland China to attack Taiwan, do you favor or not favor Taiwan **independence**? (Favor, Not Favor)

Q2. If the act of declaring independence will not cause mainland China to attack Taiwan, do you favor or not favor Taiwan **independence**?

Q3. If great political, economic, and social disparity exists between mainland China and Taiwan, do you favor or not favor Taiwan **unifying** with China?

Q4. If only small political, economic, and social disparity exists between mainland China and Taiwan, do you favor or not favor Taiwan **unifying** with China?

Q1 and Q2 (their numbering differs in different years) measures conditional preference for independence using military threat as a proxy for cost of independence, while Q3 and Q4 uses systematic and economic compatibility to operationalize cost of unification.

For categorization of support for independence, respondents choosing independence regardless of China attacks are identified as unconditional, respondents supporting independence if China don't attack but refuse if China attacks are conditional supporters, and lastly, respondents who refute independence in either scenario are classified as unconditional supporters.

For categorization of support for unification, it follows a similar logic. Respondents who support unification regardless of disparity are unconditional supporters, who support unification only if two sides are similar are conditional supporters, and those who don't support unification in either case are non-supporters.

Appendix B. Complete regression tables

2014 IND Regression

Independence Conditionality[a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non IND	Intercept	-1.049	1.616	.421	1	.516			
	Age (Ordinal)	.235	.116	4.107	1	.043	1.265	1.008	1.589
	Education (Ordinal)	.308	.123	6.290	1	.012	1.361	1.070	1.731
	Taiwanese	-1.820	1.073	2.880	1	.090	.162	.020	1.326
	Both	-.889	1.069	.693	1	.405	.411	.051	3.336
	Chinese	.033	1.269	.001	1	.979	1.034	.086	12.438
	KMT	.924	1.071	.744	1	.388	2.520	.309	20.572
	DPP	-1.081	1.066	1.029	1	.310	.339	.042	2.739
	New Party	.979	1.402	.488	1	.485	2.662	.171	41.522
	Gender	-.278	.269	1.072	1	.301	.757	.447	1.282
	Chinese Economic Integration	1.709	.315	29.506	1	<.001	5.521	2.980	10.227
	U.S. Defense	-.753	.303	6.168	1	.013	.471	.260	.853
	Chinese Military Threat	-.033	.276	.015	1	.904	.967	.563	1.661
Con IND	Intercept	-18.497	1.295	204.128	1	<.001			
	Age (Ordinal)	.067	.094	.505	1	.477	1.069	.889	1.285
	Education (Ordinal)	.242	.100	5.887	1	.015	1.274	1.048	1.550
	Taiwanese	17.034	.708	578.720	1	<.001	24985908.7	6237094.128	100093989
	Both	17.765	.717	614.407	1	<.001	51929446.1	12745137.9	211584008
	Chinese	18.772	.000	.	1	.	142071700	142071700	142071700
	KMT	1.141	.924	1.523	1	.217	3.129	.511	19.159
	DPP	.050	.898	.003	1	.956	1.051	.181	6.114
	New Party	.259	1.328	.038	1	.846	1.295	.096	17.487
	Gender	-.652	.213	9.362	1	.002	.521	.343	.791
	Chinese Economic Integration	.815	.227	12.939	1	<.001	2.260	1.449	3.525
	U.S. Defense	-.589	.256	5.293	1	.021	.555	.336	.917
	Chinese Military Threat	.453	.216	4.414	1	.036	1.573	1.031	2.401
		0	.	.	0	.	.	.	.

a. The reference category is: UnCon IND.

2014 UNI Regression

Unification Conditionality[a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non UNI	Intercept	2.830	2.229	1.612	1	.204			
	Age (Ordinal)	-.030	.108	.076	1	.783	.971	.786	1.200
	Education (Ordinal)	-.022	.113	.038	1	.846	.978	.785	1.220
	Taiwanese	-.195	1.544	.016	1	.899	.823	.040	16.970
	Both	-1.068	1.535	.484	1	.487	.344	.017	6.965
	Chinese	-1.758	1.587	1.227	1	.268	.172	.008	3.866
	KMT	-.968	1.499	.418	1	.518	.380	.020	7.163
	DPP	-.472	1.503	.099	1	.754	.624	.033	11.872
	New Party	-1.312	1.750	.561	1	.454	.269	.009	8.322
	Gender	.392	.247	2.520	1	.112	1.480	.912	2.400
	Chinese Economic Integration	-.982	.288	11.601	1	<.001	.374	.213	.659
	U.S. Defense	.503	.265	3.605	1	.058	1.653	.984	2.778
	Chinese Military Threat	-.032	.253	.016	1	.901	.969	.590	1.591
Con UNI	Intercept	-1.459	2.526	.334	1	.563			
	Age (Ordinal)	.292	.124	5.501	1	.019	1.339	1.049	1.708
	Education (Ordinal)	.272	.129	4.443	1	.035	1.313	1.019	1.692
	Taiwanese	-.827	1.618	.261	1	.609	.437	.018	10.428
	Both	-1.148	1.604	.512	1	.474	.317	.014	7.359
	Chinese	-2.315	1.686	1.884	1	.170	.099	.004	2.693
	KMT	-.274	1.809	.023	1	.880	.761	.022	26.383
	DPP	.140	1.817	.006	1	.939	1.150	.033	40.501
	New Party	.576	2.005	.083	1	.774	1.779	.035	90.466
	Gender	.794	.293	7.373	1	.007	2.213	1.247	3.926
	Chinese Economic Integration	.021	.352	.003	1	.953	1.021	.512	2.037
	U.S. Defense	.313	.308	1.029	1	.311	1.367	.747	2.501
	Chinese Military Threat	.423	.305	1.927	1	.165	1.527	.840	2.777

a. The reference category is: UnCon UNI.

2016 IND Regression

Conditional Support for Independence[a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non IND	Intercept	-3.710	1.314	7.976	1	.005			
	年齡	.534	.124	18.457	1	<.001	1.706	1.337	2.177
	教育程度	.100	.118	.725	1	.394	1.106	.877	1.393
	Gender	.209	.269	.602	1	.438	1.232	.727	2.090
	國民黨	1.854	.680	7.429	1	.006	6.383	1.683	24.207
	民進黨	.337	.667	.255	1	.614	1.400	.379	5.179
	新黨	17.794	10117.583	.000	1	.999	53440797.8	.000	.[c]
	Taiwanese	-1.129	.957	1.392	1	.238	.323	.050	2.109
	Both	.769	.961	.641	1	.423	2.159	.328	14.191
	Chinese	.904	1.195	.573	1	.449	2.470	.237	25.693
	Chinese Economic Integration	1.723	.367	21.991	1	<.001	5.599	2.725	11.502
	U.S. Defense	-.756	.279	7.341	1	.007	.470	.272	.811
	China Threat	-.067	.288	.054	1	.817	.936	.532	1.645
Con IND	Intercept	-1.678	1.176	2.035	1	.154			
	年齡	.182	.104	3.082	1	.079	1.200	.979	1.471
	教育程度	.188	.103	3.297	1	.069	1.206	.985	1.477
	Gender	-.587	.224	6.886	1	.009	.556	.359	.862
	國民黨	1.342	.552	5.920	1	.015	3.826	1.298	11.278
	民進黨	-.194	.489	.157	1	.692	.824	.316	2.149
	新黨	17.447	10117.583	.000	1	.999	37755902.9	.000	.[c]
	Taiwanese	-.261	.942	.077	1	.782	.770	.121	4.885
	Both	.545	.956	.325	1	.569	1.725	.265	11.237
	Chinese	-.223	1.233	.033	1	.856	.800	.071	8.962
	Chinese Economic Integration	.649	.248	6.875	1	.009	1.914	1.178	3.111
	U.S. Defense	-.189	.237	.635	1	.426	.828	.520	1.318
	China Threat	.674	.234	8.273	1	.004	1.961	1.239	3.103

a. The reference category is: UnCon IND.

c. Floating point overflow occurred while computing this statistic. Its value is therefore set to system missing.

2016 UNI Regression

Conditional Support for Unification[a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non Uni	Intercept	2.388	1.164	4.208	1	.040			
	年齡	-.082	.097	.720	1	.396	.921	.762	1.113
	教育程度	.237	.094	6.327	1	.012	1.267	1.054	1.524
	Men	-.340	.222	2.352	1	.125	.712	.461	1.099
	國民黨	-.791	.548	2.082	1	.149	.453	.155	1.328
	民進黨	.181	.587	.095	1	.758	1.198	.379	3.787
	新黨	-1.193	1.648	.523	1	.469	.303	.012	7.677
	Taiwanese	-.761	.901	.713	1	.398	.467	.080	2.733
	Both	-1.184	.898	1.739	1	.187	.306	.053	1.779
	Chinese	-1.063	.992	1.148	1	.284	.345	.049	2.414
	Chinese Economic Integration	-1.365	.338	16.336	1	<.001	.255	.132	.495
	U.S. Defense	.639	.229	7.816	1	.005	1.895	1.211	2.966
	China Threat	.041	.241	.029	1	.866	1.042	.649	1.672
Con Uni	Intercept	.336	1.437	.055	1	.815			
	年齡	.009	.113	.007	1	.934	1.009	.809	1.260
	教育程度	.307	.111	7.694	1	.006	1.359	1.094	1.688
	Men	.188	.262	.516	1	.473	1.207	.722	2.017
	國民黨	-1.075	.574	3.509	1	.061	.341	.111	1.051
	民進黨	-.306	.632	.235	1	.628	.736	.213	2.542
	新黨	-.897	1.504	.356	1	.551	.408	.021	7.779
	Taiwanese	-.646	1.174	.303	1	.582	.524	.052	5.228
	Both	.002	1.162	.000	1	.998	1.002	.103	9.784
	Chinese	-.335	1.265	.070	1	.791	.715	.060	8.538
	Chinese Economic Integration	-1.007	.400	6.352	1	.012	.365	.167	.799
	U.S. Defense	.295	.269	1.199	1	.274	1.343	.792	2.275
	China Threat	.020	.286	.005	1	.944	1.020	.582	1.788

a. The reference category is: UnCon Uni.

2020 IND Regression

Independence Conditionality[a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	Upper Bound
No IND	Intercept	-1.489	1.457	1.045	1	.307			
	Age	.404	.118	11.735	1	<.001	1.497	1.189	1.886
	Educational Attainment	.118	.127	.863	1	.353	1.125	.877	1.443
	China Threat	1.536	.369	17.295	1	<.001	4.645	2.252	9.579
	U.S. Defense	-1.019	.308	10.958	1	<.001	.361	.198	.660
	Chinese Economic Integration	1.405	.359	15.318	1	<.001	4.074	2.016	8.232
	臺灣人	-2.955	1.101	7.207	1	.007	.052	.006	.450
	都是	-1.370	1.107	1.532	1	.216	.254	.029	2.224
	中國人	-2.168	1.283	2.856	1	.091	.114	.009	1.414
	Gender	.168	.280	.360	1	.548	1.183	.684	2.046
	國民黨	.828	.660	1.573	1	.210	2.289	.627	8.351
	民進黨	-2.186	.779	7.880	1	.005	.112	.024	.517
	台灣民眾黨	-.081	.825	.010	1	.921	.922	.183	4.646
Con IND	Intercept	-2.648	1.214	4.756	1	.029			
	Age	.307	.091	11.463	1	<.001	1.359	1.138	1.623
	Educational Attainment	.359	.099	13.149	1	<.001	1.431	1.179	1.737
	China Threat	.938	.223	17.716	1	<.001	2.555	1.651	3.954
	U.S. Defense	-.068	.241	.079	1	.778	.934	.582	1.500
	Chinese Economic Integration	1.074	.238	20.371	1	<.001	2.927	1.836	4.665
	臺灣人	-1.764	.936	3.552	1	.059	.171	.027	1.073
	都是	-1.047	.956	1.200	1	.273	.351	.054	2.286
	中國人	-2.137	1.161	3.388	1	.066	.118	.012	1.148
	Gender	.077	.210	.135	1	.714	1.080	.715	1.632
	國民黨	1.369	.562	5.928	1	.015	3.932	1.306	11.836
	民進黨	.125	.505	.062	1	.804	1.134	.421	3.050
	台灣民眾黨	1.027	.675	2.315	1	.128	2.793	.744	10.484

a. The reference category is: UnCon IND.

2020 UNI Regression

Unification Conditionality[a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non Uni	Intercept	16.856	2949.449	.000	1	.995			
	Age	-.232	.131	3.115	1	.078	.793	.613	1.026
	Educational Attainment	.302	.135	4.971	1	.026	1.352	1.037	1.763
	China Threat	.079	.389	.041	1	.839	1.082	.505	2.319
	U.S. Defense	.859	.348	6.075	1	.014	2.360	1.192	4.673
	Chinese Economic Integration	-.798	.438	3.327	1	.068	.450	.191	1.061
	臺灣人	-15.108	2949.449	.000	1	.996	2.746E-7	.000	.
	都是	-17.215	2949.449	.000	1	.995	3.340E-8	.000	.
	中國人	-18.070	2949.449	.000	1	.995	1.419E-8	.000	.
	Gender	.019	.299	.004	1	.950	1.019	.567	1.831
	國民黨	1.063	.816	1.698	1	.193	2.895	.585	14.323
	民進黨	1.567	.860	3.322	1	.068	4.791	.889	25.824
	台灣民眾黨	1.755	1.057	2.759	1	.097	5.785	.729	45.902
Con Uni	Intercept	15.541	2949.450	.000	1	.996			
	Age	-.113	.141	.648	1	.421	.893	.678	1.177
	Educational Attainment	.418	.146	8.179	1	.004	1.519	1.141	2.023
	China Threat	.833	.440	3.594	1	.058	2.301	.972	5.448
	U.S. Defense	.861	.376	5.240	1	.022	2.367	1.132	4.949
	Chinese Economic Integration	-.978	.466	4.413	1	.036	.376	.151	.937
	臺灣人	-16.460	2949.449	.000	1	.996	7.101E-8	.000	.
	都是	-17.674	2949.449	.000	1	.995	2.110E-8	.000	.
	中國人	-18.722	2949.449	.000	1	.995	7.400E-9	.000	.
	Gender	.986	.326	9.157	1	.002	2.680	1.415	5.074
	國民黨	.763	.850	.806	1	.369	2.144	.406	11.335
	民進黨	.224	.901	.062	1	.803	1.252	.214	7.319
	台灣民眾黨	1.748	1.081	2.615	1	.106	5.741	.690	47.745

a. The reference category is: UnCon Uni.

2022 IND Regression

Independence Conditionality[a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non IND	Intercept	-.960	2.254	.182	1	.670			
	Education	.126	.098	1.645	1	.200	1.134	.936	1.375
	Age	.317	.093	11.565	1	<.001	1.373	1.144	1.648
	Chinese Economic Integration	1.514	.253	35.886	1	<.001	4.546	2.770	7.461
	China Threat	.295	.251	1.379	1	.240	1.343	.821	2.196
	U.S. Defense	-.315	.233	1.823	1	.177	.730	.462	1.153
	臺灣人	-1.725	1.090	2.505	1	.113	.178	.021	1.508
	都是	.001	1.088	.000	1	.999	1.001	.119	8.445
	中國人	1.246	1.284	.942	1	.332	3.475	.281	43.004
	Gender	-.114	.214	.284	1	.594	.892	.586	1.357
	國民黨	-.004	1.854	.000	1	.998	.996	.026	37.741
	民進黨	-2.440	1.869	1.705	1	.192	.087	.002	3.397
	台灣民眾黨	-.453	1.871	.059	1	.809	.636	.016	24.910
Cond IND	Intercept	-2.617	2.289	1.307	1	.253			
	Education	.198	.077	6.657	1	.010	1.219	1.049	1.417
	Age	.118	.071	2.733	1	.098	1.125	.978	1.295
	Chinese Economic Integration	1.190	.186	40.983	1	<.001	3.286	2.283	4.729
	China Threat	1.277	.199	41.330	1	<.001	3.587	2.430	5.295
	U.S. Defense	-.005	.195	.001	1	.979	.995	.679	1.459
	臺灣人	.373	1.211	.095	1	.758	1.452	.135	15.586
	都是	1.278	1.215	1.106	1	.293	3.589	.332	38.846
	中國人	1.539	1.410	1.191	1	.275	4.658	.294	73.838
	Gender	-.446	.166	7.203	1	.007	.640	.463	.887
	國民黨	.077	1.868	.002	1	.967	1.080	.028	41.992
	民進黨	-.849	1.864	.207	1	.649	.428	.011	16.507
	台灣民眾黨	-.097	1.878	.003	1	.959	.908	.023	36.024

a. The reference category is: Uncon IND.

2022 UNI Regression

Unification Conditionality[a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non Uni	Intercept	.869	1.768	.242	1	.623			
	Education	.210	.094	4.989	1	.026	1.234	1.026	1.483
	Age	.067	.084	.650	1	.420	1.070	.908	1.260
	Chinese Economic Integration	-1.280	.271	22.339	1	<.001	.278	.163	.473
	China Threat	.001	.245	.000	1	.998	1.001	.619	1.618
	U.S. Defense	.738	.207	12.673	1	<.001	2.091	1.393	3.138
	臺灣人	.779	.819	.905	1	.342	2.179	.438	10.852
	都是	-.063	.809	.006	1	.938	.939	.192	4.580
	中國人	-.566	.872	.421	1	.516	.568	.103	3.139
	Gender	.223	.203	1.204	1	.273	1.249	.839	1.860
	國民黨	-1.048	1.425	.541	1	.462	.351	.021	5.725
	民進黨	.991	1.481	.448	1	.503	2.695	.148	49.149
	台灣民眾黨	-.158	1.463	.012	1	.914	.854	.049	15.016
Con Uni	Intercept	-18.004	1179.812	.000	1	.988			
	Education	.462	.111	17.348	1	<.001	1.588	1.277	1.973
	Age	.227	.098	5.435	1	.020	1.255	1.037	1.520
	Chinese Economic Integration	-.588	.323	3.311	1	.069	.555	.295	1.046
	China Threat	.754	.318	5.608	1	.018	2.125	1.139	3.966
	U.S. Defense	.777	.251	9.600	1	.002	2.175	1.331	3.557
	臺灣人	.353	.966	.134	1	.715	1.424	.214	9.464
	都是	.237	.950	.062	1	.803	1.267	.197	8.161
	中國人	-.819	1.061	.596	1	.440	.441	.055	3.526
	Gender	1.027	.241	18.096	1	<.001	2.792	1.740	4.481
	國民黨	13.887	1179.812	.000	1	.991	1074257.441	.000	.
	民進黨	15.642	1179.812	.000	1	.989	6212909.418	.000	.
	台灣民眾黨	14.766	1179.812	.000	1	.990	2587879.644	.000	.

a. The reference category is: UnCon Uni.

2024 IND Regression

IND Conditionality[a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non IND	Intercept	-5.232	1.315	15.824	1	<.001			
	Generational Difference	.702	.108	41.898	1	<.001	2.017	1.631	2.495
	Education Level	.353	.110	10.274	1	.001	1.423	1.147	1.766
	U.S. Defense	-.635	.261	5.915	1	.015	.530	.317	.884
	Chinese Economic Integration	1.511	.299	25.464	1	<.001	4.531	2.519	8.147
	China Threat	.544	.259	4.423	1	.035	1.724	1.038	2.863
	國民黨	1.366	.750	3.316	1	.069	3.918	.901	17.033
	民進黨	-1.019	.778	1.714	1	.190	.361	.079	1.659
	台灣民眾黨	1.172	.778	2.268	1	.132	3.227	.702	14.830
	臺灣人	-.990	.915	1.171	1	.279	.371	.062	2.234
	都是	.265	.918	.084	1	.773	1.304	.216	7.876
	中國人	2.470	1.857	1.769	1	.184	11.818	.310	450.076
	Gender	.407	.233	3.062	1	.080	1.502	.952	2.371
Con IND	Intercept	-2.643	1.034	6.530	1	.011			
	Generational Difference	.144	.078	3.433	1	.064	1.155	.992	1.346
	Education Level	.172	.083	4.308	1	.038	1.188	1.010	1.398
	U.S. Defense	-.005	.212	.001	1	.981	.995	.657	1.507
	Chinese Economic Integration	.721	.190	14.445	1	<.001	2.056	1.418	2.981
	China Threat	1.049	.180	33.773	1	<.001	2.854	2.004	4.065
	國民黨	.868	.534	2.643	1	.104	2.383	.837	6.789
	民進黨	-.198	.491	.163	1	.687	.820	.314	2.146
	台灣民眾黨	1.245	.536	5.385	1	.020	3.471	1.213	9.930
	臺灣人	.103	.794	.017	1	.897	1.108	.234	5.250
	都是	.698	.805	.751	1	.386	2.009	.414	9.742
	中國人	1.478	1.862	.630	1	.427	4.382	.114	168.524
	Gender	-.036	.167	.045	1	.831	.965	.696	1.339

a. The reference category is: UnCon IND.

2024 UNI Regression

UNI Conditionality[a]		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B) Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Non Uni	Intercept	.150	1.195	.016	1	.900			
	Generational Difference	.176	.088	4.028	1	.045	1.193	1.004	1.416
	Education Level	.259	.092	7.893	1	.005	1.295	1.081	1.551
	U.S. Defense	.259	.209	1.539	1	.215	1.296	.861	1.951
	Chinese Economic Integration	-1.457	.288	25.650	1	<.001	.233	.133	.409
	China Threat	-.112	.224	.251	1	.616	.894	.577	1.386
	國民黨	-1.125	.684	2.700	1	.100	.325	.085	1.242
	民進黨	.198	.731	.074	1	.786	1.219	.291	5.107
	台灣民眾黨	-.480	.710	.458	1	.499	.619	.154	2.486
	臺灣人	1.555	.862	3.258	1	.071	4.737	.875	25.651
	都是	.651	.860	.572	1	.449	1.917	.355	10.346
	中國人	.694	.975	.506	1	.477	2.001	.296	13.520
	Gender	-.014	.197	.005	1	.942	.986	.670	1.451
Con Uni	Intercept	-2.248	1.331	2.854	1	.091			
	Generational Difference	.321	.103	9.601	1	.002	1.378	1.125	1.688
	Education Level	.350	.108	10.543	1	.001	1.419	1.149	1.752
	U.S. Defense	.515	.258	3.975	1	.046	1.673	1.009	2.774
	Chinese Economic Integration	-1.154	.332	12.086	1	<.001	.315	.164	.604
	China Threat	.467	.280	2.786	1	.095	1.595	.922	2.762
	國民黨	-.618	.821	.566	1	.452	.539	.108	2.697
	民進黨	.093	.863	.012	1	.914	1.098	.202	5.964
	台灣民眾黨	-.341	.847	.162	1	.687	.711	.135	3.739
	臺灣人	.486	.887	.300	1	.584	1.626	.286	9.261
	都是	.310	.882	.124	1	.725	1.364	.242	7.684
	中國人	-.856	1.147	.557	1	.456	.425	.045	4.025
	Gender	.339	.230	2.163	1	.141	1.403	.893	2.204

a. The reference category is: UnCon Uni.

Appendix C. Taiwanese National Identity and Attitudes, 2008-2024

Table 1. Taiwanese National Identity Trends, 2002–2024

"Do you think of yourself as Taiwanese, Chinese, or both?"

Survey Date	N	Chinese (%)	Both (%)	Taiwanese (%)
2008.02	1076	4.2	55.9	39.9
2012.10	1075	3.8	44.8	51.3
2014.12	1091	**5.0**	38.2	56.7
2016.11	1069	4.5	40.1	55.4
2020.10	1110	3.3	40.2	56.5
2022.12	1501	4.4	35.6	60.0
2024.07	1463	2.1	35.4	62.5

Source: TNSS 2008 – 2024, https://sites.duke.edu/tnss/tnss-survey-data/. Accessed Apr 30, 2025.

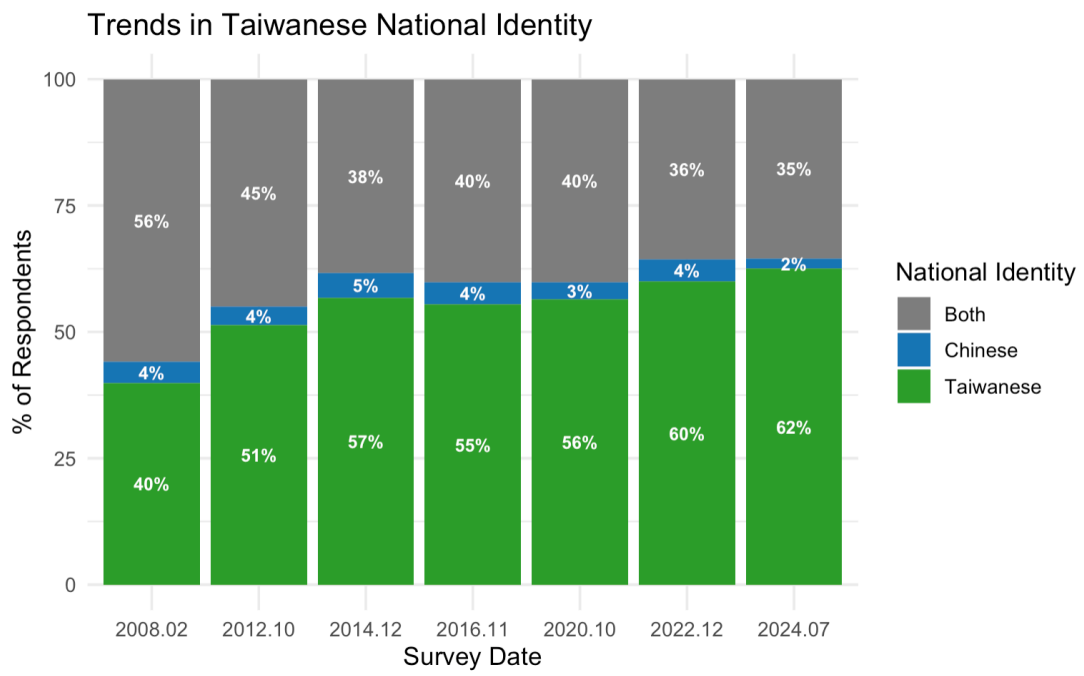

Table 2. Which of the following statements closest to your point of view about Taiwan's Relationship with mainland China?

Survey Date	N	Unification ASAP (%)	Unification Later (%)	Status Quo (%)	Independence Later (%)	Independence ASAP (%)
2008.02	1076	1.9	11.2	64.6	15.7	6.7
2012.10	1075	1.8	8.7	67.2	16.7	5.6
2014.12	1091	1.2	7.0	68.8	17.7	5.3
2016.11	1069	1.6	10.9	64.3	19.6	3.7
2020.10	1110	1.2	6.8	66.3	20.5	5.3
2022.12	1501	1.4	6.6	63.3	22.9	5.8
2024.07	1440	1.5	5.6	67.1	21.7	4.1
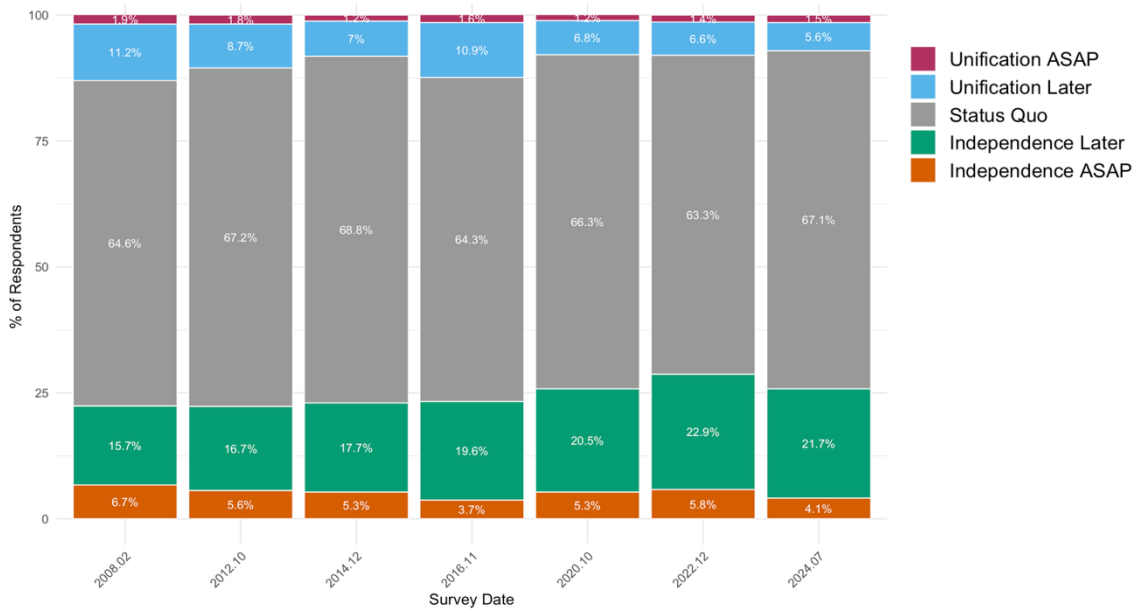
Figure 2. Five Reported Stances on Cross-Strait Relations.