

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

The focus of my thesis is to shed light on what foreign residents in Taiwan think about the cross-strait situation and what factors influence the way they think. Similar in spirit to the breadth of scholarship on locals' identity in Taiwan — that is, studies focusing on the Mainlander/Taiwan dichotomy — where a variety of methods and theoretical underpinnings have been employed to assess the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that would be influential in deciding one's political inclinations regarding cross-Strait situation — this study focuses on an often neglected segment of the population whom, it is argued, are a product of globalization, and, in this light, their views represent a significant political and intellectual discourse that is becoming increasingly relevant in an interconnected world. Socially, politically and economically — their experiences both in Taiwan, in their homeland and other places, have influenced their vision of what ought to be Taiwan's fate.

This paper argues that while certain foreigners might either be pro-independence, pro-unification, or just don't know ... not much unlike locals — their social connections to communities in their homeland, in Taiwan, and over the world creates an underlying tension between the socialization that occurs while living in Taiwan and one's values inherited from one's unique life experiences, which are no doubt influenced by socio-economic factors such as family, education, and income. In addition to these factors, we will bring to light the influence of national identity. We argue that it is through these experiences that shape the foreigners' unique situation — politically, economically and culturally — is shaped and creates the linkages for socialization that are the drivers for identity change.

Moreover, foreigners' worldviews about their own interests and what's at stake while living in Taiwan, in the context of what they see as their own goals in life — goals

that are undoubtedly influenced by their unique beliefs, which have been shaped by their own experiences as a transnational as well as all the cultural, ideological and political baggage that it brings about with it, acts to both change and reinforce existing beliefs they had before coming to Taiwan regarding its political situation. Thus we are in a way, looking at how cultural values change in the context of being a migrant in an interconnected economic system based on capitalism. We'd like to emphasize that the focus of the analysis is not merely to study the viewpoints of non-Taiwanese. Most importantly, it aims to look at foreigners who have come to Taiwan. The above shifts in values and the tensions of belonging in a foreign country we are contending have been observed by Mike Savage, Gaynor Bagnall and Brian Longhurst:

“Belonging should be seen neither in existential terms (as primordial attachment to some kind of face-to-face community), nor as discursively constructed, but as a socially constructed, embedded process in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate given their social trajectory and their positions in other fields. There is thus a kind of paradox which is that residential space remains relatively fixed yet also the subject of increasing temporal instability as people reflect on its ability to act as a marker of their home. Residential place continues to matter since people feel some sense of ‘being at home’ in an increasingly turbulent world. It follows that in a mobile, global environment, location in fixed physical space may be of increasing relative significance in the generation of social distinction.”<sup>1</sup>

As people who have chosen to stay in Taiwan, they are becoming ever more connected not only economically (i.e., having a job there) but also socially by living and learning among Taiwanese societies. In their inevitable participation in society, foreigners become increasingly intertwined into Taiwanese society; the logical conclusion of this is that both locals and Taiwanese influence each other symbiotically and thus cross pollinating identification of the “other”. With the significant presence of foreigners here, the foreign population becomes intrinsically tied to contending local and global forces, helping to shape a landscape of responsibilities, which we contend, shapes political inclinations. Such is the case that Ross Poole has noted about the renewed responsibility that one may inherit in given place or time:

“To be a member of a family, a group of friends, or even a university, for example, means that one has greater responsibilities of human relationship simply is to

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Savage, Gaynor Bagnall and Brian Longhurst, *Globalization and Belonging* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 2.

acknowledge that the concerns of those who are also involved in those relationships will, in certain respects, take priority over the concerns of others. These relations are, in part, constituted by a framework of special responsibilities.”<sup>2</sup>

In this sense, an understanding of foreigners’ unique dynamic transnationality and the way in which it translates into political inclinations would be a significant contribution to what we know about identity politics as it relates to the cross-Strait situation. Thus in the context of globalization, the political voice of foreigners is arguably becoming increasingly resonant.

## 1.1 Structure of Study

The first chapter of this paper will be an introduction where we lay out the argument and organization of the paper. The methodology will also be introduced.

In the chapter two, “Taiwan’s Globalizing Narrative of Unfolding”, we will attempt to provide some local context about how the cross-strait issue is framed among the Taiwanese, and how they are interpreted by China. It is hoped that with an understanding of the origins of the cross-Strait debate as well as the contending issues perpetuating the ideational differences about the how the impasse should be resolved, would provide us some context so that we can begin to contrast these analytical frameworks with that of foreigners. We will show how identity construction in Taiwan among the locals is not indeed static, but results from the ongoing process of the “narrative of unfolding”. It is argued that Taiwan is unique in that its political debate revolves significantly around the cross-strait relationship and the government’s success at maneuvering between independence or unification with China creates the stage for the debate. In contrast, such sovereignty issues do not exist in other countries; yet the political debates elsewhere also hinge on unique political, social and economic debates — and more often than not, identity becomes a salient concept too.

Nor have the foreigners received their upbringing in Taiwan, in a land where the specter of the China-threat hovers over society and Taiwan’s unique relationship with the world vis-à-vis China has no doubt influenced the making of Taiwan’s political,

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<sup>2</sup> Ross Poole. *Nation and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 70.

economic and social institutions. Among locals, it has also played a significant role in shaping their attitudes about Taiwan's objectives towards China, which could be said to be partly based on their assessment of how they would be affected by the way the issue is resolved, values about political efficacy, ideas about the future prospects of Taiwan and China and identifications, both ethnic and national. Since foreigners are by definition, people who aren't from Taiwan, their lack of blood, national and ethnic allegiances and thus their frame of reference can be said to be significantly distinct from locals. Namely, foreigners inhere a unique frame of reference that is substantially governed by their experiences — multiple experiences and variegated points of view. Hence, as foreigners, they are by this definition, looking at the Cross-Strait situation from a foreign perspective. The next few chapters we will flesh out how the political, social, economic factors that result in identity formation in Taiwan among foreigners bestow certain political tendencies regarding the cross-strait situation.

We will show in Chapter 3 — “Immigration and Development Strategy” — how various legal institutions in Taiwan create a sense of community among the foreigners as its epiphenomenon. Thus, in the section “Low skilled and High skilled Foreigners” we try to contrast, however roughly, just how varied a lifestyle and opportunities that some foreigners are from others. We try to assess, based on these differences, whether any single variables are more useful in correlating with political inclinations on the cross-strait relationship.

Here, various aspects of Taiwan's labor/immigration policy will be scrutinized to show how they tend to coalesce foreigners into communities that are based on various government objectives, linguistic differences, and different lines of employment. The groupings resulting from these policies help to solidify the foreigners into communities whose members share among other aspects, similar legal status, which creates an underlying basis for the economically-constructed communities based on one's qualifications for specific purposes in Taiwan, including for some, the legal status and ability to teach English the English-language, the willingness to do dirty, demeaning or dangerous work, or the academic qualifications and financial resources to be enrolled as a student.

Because of globalization, the perceived opportunities of Taiwan act to draw in distinctive groups, which are crystallized in some cases by a common language, shared national and cultural affinities and similarities in lifestyle. This phenomenon that partly results from state responses to the global stratification of labor has been observed by Phizicklea who argues that “migrant labour, having been ‘produced by demand for labour in socially undesirable and low-wage sectors of the economy, is confined to those sectors *often by specific policies and practices* which are partially justified by the ascription of inferior characteristics, the consequence then being viewed as vindication of the ideology.” (emphasis added).<sup>3</sup> Thus it is unsurprising to find only a few foreigners in Taiwan who are proficient in Chinese because the work they are allowed to do usually does not require it (although in the last ten years, with the growing importance of the Chinese language, this has begun to change).

The next chapter will assess some of the possible pathways that foreigners’ transnational identities might play a key role in influencing political outlook on the cross-strait issue and shows how their transnational identity is not only foreign per se, but becomes nuanced with their socialized through local knowledge, as well as their other experiences abroad. Thus is the result of the commingling of the forces of spurred by globalization and exist as its own unique frame of reference. Thus in Chapter 4, “Foreigners’ Contending Political Voice in Taiwan,” we will explore the dynamics of identity construction of foreigners who have had significant experiences abroad. In the section entitled “Globalization and Cultural Changes” we will critically look at how national borders are becoming increasingly permeable in globalization and why as a result, the importance of foreigners’ political voice is becoming not only resonant but also should no longer be ignored. Thus the section will highlight many leading conceptualizations of globalization as well as implications. In “Cosmopolitanism and the Flexible Eye on Taiwan” we discuss what might these outlooks might look and analyzing how these concepts, which can be seen as products of globalization, may help understand new ways to break the cross-strait impasse that would on acceptable terms to people with global concerns.

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<sup>3</sup> A. Phizicklea, *One Way Ticket: Migration and Female Labour* (London: Routledge, 1993), 106.

In the second part of this paper, we will illuminate the results of my field studies, which was a survey handed out to members of the foreign community in Taiwan (attached with document). Firstly, we will describe the survey and describe the rationale for the questions. Then we will analyze the results of the survey by first assessing the effect of the foreigners' country of origin on their political origins regarding the cross-strait situation. In doing so, we would like to analyze the degree to which noteworthy characteristics can be observed among foreigners of a particular country or group of countries. It is hoped that by singling out particular countries of interest according to their responses to the questionnaire, we could discern certain nationalities that tend to lean on one side or the other regarding the cross-strait situation. Hence, this chapter will be comparative in nature. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: Firstly, we would like to look at the countries endogenously by assessing the degree to which the foreigners from each respective country vary in their responses toward their political inclinations regarding Taiwan, namely to analyze whether country of origin could be a useful independent variable. We will then the group the countries by levels of development and also by continent to see if these factors. We hypothesize that on a macro-level, there might exist real differences in regards to the respective nationality's political inclinations because of the country's particular economic, political, cultural and perhaps geographical qualities.

In Chapter 7, we will look at factors related to socioeconomic status, which include such often-used categories as age, gender, education, marital status, income and occupation. The main reference point in this part of the paper, however, will continue to refer to the foreigner's experience in the age of globalization. In Taiwan this manifests itself in the foreigner working in a factory. More likely than not, he is probably from a Southeast Asian country, such as Thailand or Vietnam. Also, the female foreigner who is making NT\$15,800 — around the legal minimum wage for foreigners — chances are that she is working as a caretaker or a housekeeper. In addition, Taiwan seems to attract many English-speaking (often Caucasians) in search for a teaching job, thus an overwhelming majority of English-speakers in Taiwan are English teachers. We do not mean to oversimplify the foreign labor pool in Taiwan but the predominance of such patterns currently in existence illuminate the significant qualities about the foreigner's role in

Taiwan in the context of globalization, particularly global capitalism and the global labor supply chain. However, must also not forget the importance of Taiwan's legal institutions, which aim to regulate its foreign labor supply in accordance to its own strategic interests and needs.

Chapter 8, "Taiwan, China and other Global Connections" looks at how the political inclinations of foreigners might change as a result of the socialization process in Taiwan and as a result of their other experiences abroad. In doing so, the third main group of independent variables we will look at is to see whether foreigners' stay in Taiwan, as well as their other experiences both in their homeland and the totality of the places they've been abroad, may correlate with their political inclinations regarding the cross-strait situation. Namely we would like to analyze separately the impact of their socialization into Taiwanese society and their total time spent abroad, and whether that has engendered a sense of "cosmopolitanism", which according to Nick Stevenson these global perspectives might "point towards a new kind of global politics transcending identity politics, narrowly conceived passions and enhanced forms of economic competition." That is, cosmopolitanism is "able to offer substantial ethical arguments that move discussion beyond narrower concerns of ... neoliberalism and the certitudes of dogmatists ... Cosmopolitanism then resembles an interconnected mosaic of arguments and discourses rather than predetermined blueprints."

In this light, Stevenson argues that modern discourse had been shaped by the unfolding of the Cold War in a way that "issues such ecological awareness, the impact of global poverty, feminism and the participation racial and ethnic minorities cannot readily be integrated into a concern for territorial states."<sup>4</sup> When Stevenson argues optimistically that cosmopolitan concepts have incorporated a vast array of issues that have been neglected by the state, he is assuming that global awareness would engender concern about the neglected issues. Because of foreigner's global experiences might the foreigners have in common beliefs about the cross-strait relationship? Or, how might their concerns about Taiwan either enhance or detract for their globalized beliefs?

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<sup>4</sup> Nick Stevenson, "Cosmopolitanism and the Future of Democracy: Politics, Culture and the Self," *New Political Economy* 7, no. 2 (2002): 252.

In Chapter 9, “Social Relations in Taiwan” we will look at the correlations, if any, such as foreigner’s social relations in Taiwan, their Chinese language ability, their proportion of from home, and the effects of Taiwan’s English-media on foreigners’ political inclinations we will focus on the role of English-language newspapers here in Taiwan. There have been studies conducted regarding the relationship between the media and politics in Taiwan. Namely, does the newspaper you read influence your political inclinations? On most accounts, including one that was conducted by a Chengchi University scholar, one chooses a particular newspaper because of the reader’s inherent political ideologies, not the other way around. However, we wonder if it is the case that among foreigners in Taiwan the English-language press is actually quite influential on their political inclinations. This suspicion arises from the fact that most foreigners do not speak or read Chinese — and while they can get their information from word of mouth or from the Internet (as local news and talk shows on TV are virtually all in Chinese), they really have little source for local news other than from the three main English-language newspapers — *The China Post* (Blue), *Taipei Times* (Green), *Taiwan News* (Green). Although the respondents probably read many other newspapers, many of them in a language other than English, we thought that by limiting our study to the English language media only, we could achieve much more meaningful results in lieu of Taiwan’s numerous daily publications.

Chapter 10 is the conclusion. This will be followed by reference and an appendix containing the questionnaires use to conduct the survey in all three languages.

## **1.2 Methodology**

In order to measure foreigners’ political inclinations regarding the cross-strait situation, we designed a survey that intended to collect information regarding various social indicators, Taiwan, China and other global connections, social relations in Taiwan and their political inclinations. (Please refer to Chapter 6 for a detailed discussion of the questionnaire design). Basically, the first 24 questions, we ask them various questions that could be useful for us in grouping foreigners together into, what we hypothesize, could have correlations with their political inclinations.

In the last question of the questionnaire, we tried to create a question that could measure their political inclinations regarding the cross-strait situation. The question was taken word for word from the 2004 TEDS Questionnaire, created by the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University. Although the TEDS was intended for Taiwanese nationals residing in Taiwan and asked *numerous* questions regarding the cross-strait situation, we chose just one question, which we hoped could be suitable for our purposes in describing one's political inclinations. In addition, as government dialogues between Taiwan and other countries suggest, the wording of Taiwan's status is extremely nuanced. Depending on how one breaks it down, there are virtually limitless ways that the cross-strait debacle could be resolved, and numerous plays on semantics that one could employ. Therefore, due to its language, we thought the TEDS questionnaire encapsulated well the cross-strait policy options available by not only allowing them to choose on a highly simplified level (i.e., unification, independence, or status quo) and adds a temporal dimension (now, or later). The question highlights the main direction that Taiwan should be going in terms of unification or independence. The English version of the questionnaire we intend to use is attached. Since my study intends to incorporate responses from both English speakers and non-English speakers, we will also have the surveys translated into Thai and Indonesian.

We knew we were limited in the extent to which we could really randomize our sample. Our main goal was to get as many respondents as possible and we included techniques like handing them out in places where many foreigners normally gather and "snowballing." While these techniques, we are sure, are susceptible to critiques, the aim of my survey, which is to disaggregate the foreigners into different social, economic and political classifications, we are really looking at the correlative effect of the groupings and political inclinations. Thus, while our study might include samples that are highly concentrated in certain characteristics (e.g., occupation, nationality, income etc.), as much as this would help us understand the political inclinations of the foreign presence in Taiwan, but also more importantly, illuminate the markedly different political psychologies of sub-segments of the foreign community in Taiwan.

We handed out the surveys, normally on weekends, at different sites around Taipei. The questionnaires in English were handed out near the Chungxiao Dunhua MRT

areas, typically on the weekends. We found that at nights in particular, a lot of English-speaking foreigners visit the restaurants, shops and bars in the area and so we focused my attention there. Also, many English surveys, and a few Thai and Indonesian surveys were handed out at National Chengchi University, primarily to students as well as other people who lived or worked in the NCCU community. The Thai and Indonesian surveys were handed at Taipei Main Station and 228 Peace Park on Sunday afternoons, when many Thais and Indonesians typically have their day off and gather at those locations. “Snowballing” was also employed. Namely, around 40 of the surveys in Thai were collected by a Thai lady who worked in a restaurant on the main row of restaurants in front of the university. She and her husband, also Thai, disseminated the surveys to people they knew for a fee of NT\$50 per filled-out survey. They also handed them out at a factory where many Thai people were employed. The rest of the surveys in Thai and all the Indonesian surveys were handed out by the author. A number of surveys in English were given to a student from Chile at National Chengchi University, in which he disseminated to people, primarily at school, he knew.