Corso di Laurea magistrale (ordinamento ex D.M. 270/2004) in Relazioni Internazionali Comparate – International Relations

Tesi di Laurea


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La parola collega la traccia visibile alla cosa invisibile, alla cosa assente, alla cosa desiderata o temuta, come un fragile ponte di fortuna gettato sul vuoto. / The word connects the visible trace with the invisible thing, the absent thing, the thing that is desired or feared, like a frail emergency bridge flung over an abyss.

Italo Calvino – LezioniAmericane. Sei Proposte per il Nuovo Millennio/ Six Memos for the Next Millennium

You are Taiwanese. Your head holds up Taiwanese sky and your feet are planted on Taiwanese soil. Everything you hear are these things about Taiwan, and everything you’ve experienced is Taiwan’s experience.

Huang Shihui
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ABSTRACT

Taiwan è un’isola situata nell’Oceano Pacifico Occidentale, a sud della Cina Continentale, e da essa separata da uno stretto lungo cento ottanta kilometri, barriera geografica ed ideologica tra le due sponde. La Cina considera Taiwan come una provincia ancora da incorporare formalmente al proprio dominio, mentre Taiwan, sebbene momentaneamente privo di una posizione univoca rispetto al proprio futuro, pur non negando legami culturali con la Cina, non accetta l’annessione alla Repubblica Popolare Cinese o la perdita della propria libertà e dinamicità sociale.

La tesi consiste in una analisi della identità nazionale Taiwanese dal punto di vista della principale letteratura sul nazionalismo: in particolare, mi ripropongo di mostrare come innanzitutto esista una identità nazionale specificamente Taiwanese, e un nazionalismo Taiwanese che non è né una reazione sub-etnica al prominente nazionalismo Cinese né un fenomeno che possa essere ignorato. Per far ciò, occorre partire dal concetto di identità, prima individuale, e poi collettiva, per poi passare ad un riepilogo della principale letteratura sul tema del Nazionalismo. L’identità nazionale Taiwanese è nata da un contesto di isolamento, geografico e non, di diniego dell’autorappresentazione e dominazioni coloniali. Sin dall’epoca Ming, i primi racconti di viaggio degli esploratori che raggiunsero le coste di Taiwan riportarono in Cina narrative e storie che hanno fortemente permeato i discorsi su Taiwan nei secoli a venire: terra di selvaggi, barbari e tatuati, dove le donne non fasciavano i piedi e ci si vestiva con pelli d’animale.

Ad oggi, ciò che esiste di Taiwan in Cina, a livello generale, sono narrative su Taiwan: pochi hanno avuto esperienza diretta della diversità di regime del paese, e Taiwan stesso, come tutte le nazioni create dal nazionalismo, vive e sopravvive di narrative su se stesso. Narrative di un passato di esclusione condiviso, di libertà espressive negate, sono state orchestrate dall’élite politica Taiwanese per costruire politicamente una identità specifica dell’isola che riuscisse a legittimarne i mandati governativi. Eppure l’identità Taiwanese, sebbene ideologicamente e politicamente
costruita, è anche frutto di un lungo processo storico che ha radici ben più antiche delle recenti necessità elettorali.

Decostruendo la questione dell’identità Taiwanese, appare chiaro che essa si compone di vari aspetti: territoriali, economici, storici, politici, linguistici, etnici. Prima di tutto occorre considerare che dal punto di vista della legge internazionale Taiwan non è uno stato sovrano, ma semplicemente una denominazione geografica. Esso infatti non è riconosciuto che da ventidue paesi, tra cui lo Stato Vaticano, e ha perso il proprio seggio alle Nazioni Unite nel 1971 in favore della Repubblica Popolare Cinese; in quell’occasione la maggior parte dei paesi del mondo è quindi passata a riconoscere quest’ultima come rappresentante ufficiale della Cina. Infatti, al termine del conflitto civile in Cina tra Comunisti e Nazionalisti nel 1949, il Kuomintang, partito Nazionalista, fuggì a Taiwan sconfitto – sebbene Taiwan risultasse sotto al loro controllo sin dal 1945, quando i Giapponesi, sconfitti nel Secondo conflitto mondiale, furono costretti a lasciarla. Dal 1949 dunque il governo della Repubblica di Cina si limitava ai territori di Taiwan, Isole Penghu, Isole Matsu, e Kinmen, avendo perso i restanti territori dopo la sconfitta nella guerra civile.

Sin dai tempi dell’occupazione Giapponese, che andò dal 1895, anno del Trattato di Shimoseki, al 1945, i Taiwanesi sono stati soggetti ad una dominazione coloniale già conosciuta in precedenza con Spagnoli ed Olandesi: la dominazione Giapponese, per quanto efficiente e determinante per lo sviluppo impressionante del paese più avanti negli anni, fu dura e repressiva. Si proibì l’utilizzo della lingua cinese, precedentemente usata - assieme al dialetto Taiwanese - sotto la dominazione della dinastia Qing, e si impose l’utilizzo di lingua, usi e costumi giapponesi.

Dopo una lunga nipponizzazione forzata, con la fine della Seconda Guerra Mondiale Taiwan passò dunque sotto alla dominazione della Repubblica di Cina, guidata da Chiag Kai Shek, e il sentimento di risentimento già sorto sotto la dominazione Giapponese si amplificò con il ritorno a una dominazione Cinese. Infatti, i Taiwanesi ebbero in entrambi i periodi motivi di sentirsi trattati come diversi: sotto i Giapponesi, diversi perché inferiori, e dunque costretti a costruirsi un senso di
giapponesità (senza davvero essere giapponesi) che costituirà però motivo, durante la dominazione successiva, di essere trattati con sospetto e diffidenza. I Nazionalisti infatti trattavano i Taiwanesi come diversi perché la purezza della cultura cinese si era in loro perduta, e mescolata con i caratteri della cultura giapponese: iniziò allora un periodo di Sinizzazione forzata, tentando di cancellare i resti della dominazione nipponica. Appare chiaro però che oltre al risentimento per questa nuova dominazione, i semi di una identità nazionale alternativa erano già stati piantati: sebbene non si possa parlare di nazionalismo taiwanese a metà del XX secolo, sono riconoscibili i primi segni di presa di coscienza della propria inassimilabilità – né con i Giapponesi, né con i Cinesi.

Considerando poi l’immensa varietà etnica dell’isola di Taiwan, e la misura in cui la storia del Paese abbia contribuito a creare un discorso di esclusione, vittimismo e caparbietà, appare chiaro come la nascita di una identità nazionale forte sia sorta con il tempo e sia destinata, ad oggi, a non sparire. Si è iniziato a prestare più attenzione a questa a lungo sepolta identità nazionale a partire dall’impetuoso sviluppo economico di Taiwan negli anni ’70, e della sua recente democratizzazione negli anni ’90. Negli ultimi anni inoltre Taiwan ha iniziato a intrattenere stretti rapporti commerciali proprio con il Paese che meno degli altri riconosce la sua sovranità, ovvero la Cina Popolare; vari sondaggi mostrano come la posizione dei Taiwanesi riguardo questa interdipendenza economica sia molto variabile, e in generale dipenda dal momento storico e dal gruppo sociale d’appartenenza dell’intervistato. Dal gruppo sociale dipende molto anche la risposta all’interrogativo riguardo la dichiarazione di indipendenza o l’unificazione con la Cina – ad oggi un nodo irrisolto della questione.

Non da ultimo, va considerato come la questione dell’identità Taiwanese, che viene di seguito analizzata da varie prospettive storiche, politiche, economiche ed etnografiche, esiste anche in funzione del nazionalismo cinese e di quello statunitense. La questione di Taiwan resta un nodo irrisolto nei rapporti bilaterali Cina-USA, e lo sviluppo futuro della sovranità di fatto dell’isola dipende in larga misura anche dalla posizione assunta dalle due super potenze.
Sebbene minacciata da una invasione Cinese in caso di qualsiasi mossa verso l’indipendenza, e nonostante la sua fragilità, l’identità nazionale Taiwanese esiste e lotta in cerca di un consenso che unisca la popolazione, per ora molto divisa, in una decisione unanime per il futuro del Paese. I Taiwanese esprimono in maniera tenue ma urgente la loro necessità all’autodeterminazione, specialmente le giovani generazioni: tale urgenza nasce da un viaggio di costruzione nazionale lungo quanto la propria storia, e costellato di incidenti e lotte che hanno funzionato da collante generazionale e accelerato il processo di identificazione. Il ruolo minaccioso e intrusivo della Cina, anziché velocizzare l’unificazione, non sta che allungandone i tempi: ad oggi l’unione con Taiwan porterebbe problemi di notevole portata - poiché il paese si è recentemente dotato di un forte carattere democratico.

Le identità, e in particolare quelle nazionali, sono in larga parte costruite socialmente e politicamente, e le comunità, con le parole di Benedict Anderson, sono immaginate: Taiwan ha immaginato se stesso come comunità per migliaia di anni, di cui gli ultimi quattrocento con un vissuto storico completamente diverso dalla Cina Continentale. Se immaginarsi una comunità serva o meno a caratterizzarla come di fatto sovran, resta un problema qui irrisolto: e tuttavia, le differenze sociali e storiche non possono essere忽略ate. La più grande conquista dell’isola di Formosa è stata la propria libertà, e il dono di creare intere generazioni libere, moralmente ed intellelualmente: sebbene la questione dell’indipendenza, unificazione o mantenimento dello status quo sembra lontana da una risoluzione, a Taiwan resta sempre la propria libertà, nel senso più ampio del termine, per contraddistinguere la propria identità nazionale da un capo all’altro dello Stretto.
Chapter 1 - Introduction

In the Ancient East there is a people,
They are descendants of the dragon,
I grew up under the feet of the great dragon;
After growing up, I’m a descendant of the dragon.
Black eyes, black hair, yellow skin; forever
Descendants of the dragon.
- Hou Te-Chien “Descendants of the Dragon”

Taiwan is a Western Pacific Island separated from China by a 180 kilometers’ Strait; China claims ownership of the island and wishes – even pushes – for unification, while Taiwan, a recently democratized multiparty system of rather equilibrate stances, longs for self-representation and, if not for independence, at least for a separate national identity. In the following pages, I will refer to China as Mainland China, or PRC (People’s Republic of China), to emphasize the not only geographical distance from Taiwan. This thesis will address the issue of how Taiwanese identity arose out of multiple cultural, historical and political moments of specifically Taiwanese-ness - out of isolation, denial, repression or censorship; in a way, Taiwan is the free face of China, if we ever were to call it a part of the Mainland.

Around June this year in Taichung, central Taiwan, I was talking to a friend in my room, when we’ve heard a terrible rumble and then repeated ear-piercing alarms; going out in the street in the fear of an earthquake, we realized that we were the only ones to be concerned about the sirens. Life was going on as usual in the street, cars and scooters did not stop, people tried to scream louder than the sirens; this went on quite long (one hour or so). We were then informed that it was nothing but an air-force military drill in case of a Chinese missiles attack; a Taiwanese friend said that it is done once or twice a year and for ordinary people it’s nothing special, it’s just to test military readiness and velocity of reaction in case Mainland China will strike Taiwan (they actually stage an attack scenario). This is nothing but a daily-life episode, and I do not wish to draw conclusions from it;
but it helped me realize how has the threat of an hypothetical conflict with China been naturalized into the everyday life dimension, how the possibility of being attacked has been internalized as part of the situation - and so has the need for military drills (to defend from China, not from any other country). While training to defend against China and buying arms from the US to keep ideologically safe, “Taiwan has established ever closer economic and human ties with precisely the country which denies it any sovereignty”¹, and the threats of invasion, unification, ‘one country two systems’, keep on the other hand reinforcing a bold but whispered nationalism, as contradictory as much as it is strong.

The purpose of my thesis is to present the rise of national identity in Taiwan and the narratives that come with it, the traces it leaves in today’s Taiwanese conscience, and the extent to which this identity is incomplete and politically constructed. And not only politically constructed, but politically charged too – meaning that it’s a national identity fragmented by nature, based on ethnic variations, and on the same premises for all the ethnic groups, but bound for diverging directions.

In order to do so, it is necessary to start from the philosophical premises of the concept of identity, and then to shift from the individual to the collective level – collective being considered as both group identity and national identity. Identity is an elusive concept, and trying to define it can be a scarcely rewarding activity; nevertheless, philosophers and scholars have succeeded in approaching a systemic discussion of the matter of identity, generally framing it in as equalization. Parmenides implies that “A=A” is the basic notion of identity, meaning that every A is itself the same, and the same of itself². Thus, the concept of sameness constitutes a dimension of identity.

The most basic definitions of identity, that is, the ones that we can find in dictionaries, go like this: the lexical definition offered by the Oxford Dictionary is “absolute sameness; individuality”, or

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again “the state or fact of remaining the same one, as under varying aspects or conditions.”\(^3\); as we can see, Parmenides’ concept of identity as sameness never stopped permeating Western culture.

According to Erik Erikson, identity “connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others.”\(^4\) Erikson was a 1950s post-Freudian psychologist famous for his theory of psychosocial development of human beings, innovative for considering human identity’s development in stages that cover a whole lifetime (Sigmund Freud had already talked about stages, but circumscribing them temporally, not making them life-lasting). Erikson’s theory argues that each stage of life, from infancy on, is associated with a specific psychological struggle that contributes to a major aspect of personality.\(^5\) This implies that the sense of identity is shaped over someone’s whole life, so that identity grows with us - or degenerates with us, eventually leading to what Erikson defined as an “identity crisis”.

According to this theory, for each stage (eight stages in total) in a human being’s life, there is one crisis to overcome, even though to overcome it it’s not a necessary condition to go on and live the next stage. Erikson’s definition of identity contains both an individual sameness – the one the person can recognize within oneself, and an external sameness – the one the person can find in other people, “a persistent sharing”, commonalities that make certain people similar to one another. Oneself/sameness and Others/similarity are dichotomies disseminated all along the history of thought: identity has been a link between two beings that makes them (more than) similar, or, as Martin Heidegger would have put it - enhances their belonging together. Zygmunt Bauman, a prominent theorist of post-modernism, gets to the core of the issue, stating that just as modernity is liquid and un-solid, postmodern identities are mobile and fluctuating, but they do not need to be problematized, as it is often done when considering identity and modernity together. Identity was


actually born as a problem, it did not suddenly become one. Just like modernity, with its double nature of rationalizing while revolutionizing, identity has a double status - in Bauman words: “[…] identity has the ontological status of a project and a postulate. […] It is a critical projection of what is demanded and/or sought upon what is; or, more exactly still, an oblique assertion of the inadequacy or incompleteness of the latter.”

I consider this aspect of denial of the recent problematized nature of identity as related to modernity to be an important tool to better deal with the shift of the concept from the realm of philosophy to the one of social sciences.

Identity gives human beings a definition of themselves, and a framework to act within, but at the same time it cannot be defined as an a priori postulate: we do not simply need an identity, but our identity needs to be supported by a certain kind of substantial behavior. Jean-Paul Sartre notoriously stated: “It’s not enough to be born a bourgeois – one must live one’s life as bourgeois,” contending that identity can be given multiple, diverging explanations, but it needs to be filled with content - we need to act according to the social role we were given. Therefore, when the study of identity as a discipline was imported from philosophy to social sciences, it was mainly to deal with the problem of “psychosocial” identity, as we have seen up until now; basic assumption, recurrent in this kind of studies after Sigmund Freud, has always been treating identity in terms of an inner process.

Identity can be individual, but it can be collective too: Emile Durkheim called it “collective consciousness”, the glue of “dissimilar individuals of the same community which connects successive generation with one another”. A collective identity might be thought of as a belonging together of entities that belong to their own sameness, and whose sameness comes into

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7 Ibidem, p. 19.


11 Ibidem, p.238.
being with others around them, probably with the same developmental needs of a singular identity.

The study of identity itself is largely a post crisis event, namely a post-World War II phenomenon, and following the work of scholars such as Durkheim, Freud, Erikson, even political scientists have engaged in the study of identity. It was studied mainly "as a political resource in state forming, nation building and modernizing, and democratic political processes."\(^\text{12}\) Collective identity can be the identity of a group, but it can also link groups together: \textit{via} collective identity a series of collectivities can \textit{belong together}, being different from other series of collectivities, together.

Melissa J. Brown, a sociocultural anthropologist of China and Taiwan at Stanford University, digs into the question of identity bringing about an uncommon remark: while identity is usually considered to be based on ancestry or cultural ideas, she argues it is based on social experiences, as it usually are governments or leaders that decide to "hide the fluidity and changeability of identity"\(^\text{13}\) and treat it as a matter of common descent or common culture/language, “even though ultimately it is common sociopolitical experience which binds group identity.”\(^\text{14}\) If we had to link identity and collective identity, we might want to consider that the conditions for these identities to develop might be the same, and the crisis faced might be equally relevant in shaping the final condition of the self-perception. Nevertheless, the reasons for identifications at an individual and at a collective level are different: a person can choose to identify with a reference group instead of another one based on tastes, interests, beliefs, even fantasies, like choosing to join a church, a fan club or a Medieval revival group. It is a choice based on active involvement: if we pass from an individual level to a collective one, a nation - being a mega-collectivity, (where people do not just

\(^{12}\) Ibidem.


belong together, but accept to subordinate its role to someone else) - is a largest form of collective identity, without the active choice being necessary.

Moving from identity per se to collective identity, and then to the collective identity within a mega-collectivity, we arrive at a definition of national identity. Considering national identity under an essentialist lens, the Japanese have brilliantly coined the meaning-laden term kokutai [國體], national essence, first mentioned by Aizawa Seishisai in his “Shinron” of 1825. In the words of Bob Wakabayashi, “This national spiritual unity - the voluntary affection and trust the commoners felt for their rulers - was what Aizawa basically meant by kokutai,” a compendium of Japanese traditional culture and Confucian knowledge. Therefore, in its first acceptation, the term kokutai had principally a spiritual meaning, it served as a balancing ideological tool against the Tokugawa crisis, a crisis that hit the Japanese ruling class during nineteenth century, eventually leading to its collapse. “Kokutai, the National Essence, was the ‘native Japanese’, eternal, and immutable aspects of their polity, derived from history, tradition, and custom, and focused on the Emperor.” The Chinese borrowed the Japanese term, guocui [國粹] changing its meaning, as Chinese American historian Yu Ying-shih points out: “‘national essence’ consists not only in what is indigenous and suitable, but also in what it is borrowable and adaptable to the needs of our nation.” Yu admits that the term has been imported from Japan, but underlines the slightly different usage made of the term: in Japan, the kokutai express national concern for the Japanese spirit’s erosion caused by progressive

15 Ibidem.
16 Aizawa Seishisai (1781-1863) was an important Confucian scholar and tutor to the lords of Mito, a branch of the Tokugawa family. Aizawa’s greatest work, Shinron (New Theses), is considered a seminal contribution to Japanese nationalist thought. It tapped into rising sentiments in Japan supporting a more active political role for the emperor and a firm stand against the intrusions of Western barbarians.. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. "Aizawa Yasushi", accessed on August 08th 2014, Available at http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/11211/Aizawa-Yasushi.
19 Y. S. Yu, Minzu zhuyi de jiedu (Interpretation of Nationalism), Minzhu Zhongguo (Democratic China), no. 35, June-July, 1996, in J. S. Brownlee, “Four Stages of the Japanese Kokutai (National Essence)."
Westernization, while the Chinese *guocui* was meant to reinforce national identity in response to the arrival of the West, and to further the distance between Han Chinese and the Manchu dynasty.  

A systematic definition of national identity is complicated by difficulties inherent to the concept, as we must first distinguish between *nation* and *state*. A nation can be defined, in the words of Anthony D. Smith, as a “named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members.” The word comes from the Latin *nasci*, literally “to be born”, and originally meant “a group of people born in the same place”. It then took on peculiar features that shaped the concept of nation essentially as “a socio-psychological concept referring to a self-conscious and self-differentiating community of people bound together by common history and solidarity”. A state has a more tangible definition instead: it can be conceived as “an internationally recognized political entity possessing tangible territorial, demographic, and governmental attributes.” Max Weber’s notorious definition of state is centered on the legitimacy of the use of violence: “[The state is] a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” Ernest Gellner finds Weber’s definition somehow too ethnocentric, because it is taking the centralized Western state as an outstanding model, but valid at the same time: the state is, in fact, “concerned with the enforcement of order. […] The state exists where specialized order-enforcing agencies, such as police forces and courts, have separated out from the rest of social life. They are the state.” State’s roots lie in the social division of labour as well: “Where there is no division of labour, one cannot even begin to

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23 Ibidem, p. 242.
speak of the state.”

Martin Van Crevel underlines as unique in the concept of state its *corporative dimension*, as the state cannot be incorporated into any other political association, while it incorporates other political associations. “Communities subject to absolute government by a single king or emperor were, of course, nothing new.” – argues Van Crevel, and the monarchs’ identities were bound to the very same reign they governed; they were their reign, no distinction needed. The reason of the unicity of the state lies in the separation between the ruler and the ruled organization, in having substituted the monarch with a complex panopticon of rules, laws, and people who enforce them. A state is not a nation, but, just as nations, states “are a contingency, and not a universal necessity”. Furthermore, they do not exist all the time, or everywhere, and they did not emerge together: there can even be *nations without states*, as Monserrat Guibernau’s work points out.

As Eric Hobsbawm largely demonstrated, when it comes to national identity almost nothing is as natural as we might think: national identity has often been skillfully engineered by the ruling elites, orchestrated and then super-imposed to cultivate a cohesive population. Hobsbawm described the nations as product of modernity, and pseudo-communities, no older than the eighteenth century -if they claim to be older, they are most likely forgeries. Nations rely on largely fictitious traditions to feed a national identity that needs to hold together a considerably large community, heterogeneous in capabilities and preferences, possibly making this group of people not only respect their nation’s rules, but identify with them, and, more importantly, leading them to confer legitimacy to the nation. Ernest Renan went as far as stating that “A nation is […] a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past […] A nation's existence is […] a daily

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26 Ibidem, p.4.
plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life.\textsuperscript{30} thus underlining that national identity has a subjective and collective nature at the same time. Sidney Verba and Lucian Pye argue that national identity is circumscribed by territorial boundaries which tend to coincide with linguistic, racial, ethnic criteria, but overall forced “by the sovereign state carving out a precarious identity by force and guile in a competitive international environment.”\textsuperscript{31} When boundaries are blurred, or challenged, an identity crisis occurs. As Hobsbawm contended, a nation needs its people to have a strong national identity not only for romantic reasons, or to enhance their sense of historical belonging, but also to make people accept the nation’s dominance, and resign to willingly pay taxes, serve the army, even die for their country. Nations need national identity to survive, since “identity […] directly affects the institutionalization of legitimacy, and legitimacy in turn affects penetration.”\textsuperscript{32} To avoid identity crisis, nations should have a secure national identity (thus an identity gifted with mutually consistent criteria of inclusion\textsuperscript{33}), giving to its members enough indicators they can identify with.

We defined nation and state, or at least resumed the classical literature on the topic: we can now relate the two concepts to each other conceptualizing national identity as the very link between state and nation, the relationship between them, obtained when people of that nation identify with the state.\textsuperscript{34} But what do people actually identify with? People identify both with their state’s essence and role, namely, with what the state is and with what it does.

This thesis will focus on the rise of national identity in Taiwan and on its relevance to confer the island de facto sovereignty from the perspective of nationalist classical discourses. I will argue that in Taiwan national identity was constructed first from the outside, and then from the inside, not like

\textsuperscript{32} S. Verba, “Sequences and Developments”, p. 311.
\textsuperscript{33} L. Dittmer and S. S. Kim, “In search of a Theory of National Identity”, p.11.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibidem, p. 13.
it would normally happen in a newly-born country. When the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949 on Mainland China, the defeated Nationalist regime fled to Taiwan, here taking the lead after a long rule of the Japanese Empire on the island. The construction of tradition in Taiwan was first of all a “’renaissance’ of traditional Chinese culture […] part of a broader project by the Nationalist government to realize its vision of the modern state.” Nevertheless we have seen that an identity must have its grip on citizens in order to be working - it has to bind them up together, relying on some shared notions, values and experiences that only they can recall, and no one else; otherwise it will not be secure (and identities seldom are).

Gellner in his phasic understanding of the development of nationalism throughout human history indicates the superimposition of a homogenous new national culture as the systemic basis for the creation of national identity, paralleling the importance that Benedict Anderson confers to print capitalism in supporting the rise of a common colloquial language. Colloquial language will, via mass culture and literature, help the chosen notions of national imaginary penetrate deeply into society. Thus, nations are rooted in a “deep, horizontal comradeship” of the sort that needs to be forward-looking, meaning not that there can be no reference to a mythical past of heroic descent (as there always is), but rather that the basic imperatives of national culture should reflect “less upon the content of culture than upon the peculiar nature of the nation-state.” In Taiwan, the comradeship involved pledging to a territory that was itself an ideal construction, and where the political community was imagined upon the myth of one culture, one people, one nation.

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37 Ibidem, p.7.


39 The term myth is hereby used in the conception of Roland Barthes, who argued that “myth is a system of communication, it is a message.” According to Barthes, “myth transforms history into nature, […] and this is why myth is experienced as innocent speech: not because its intentions are hidden –if they were hidden, they could not be efficacious- but because they are naturalized.”
The early, Nationalist Taiwan saw an attempt by Kuomintang - the Nationalist Party - of revitalizing a glorious, Chinese national consciousness [民族意识 minzu yishi] as the primary mean of promote horizontal solidarity that would help overcome both the scarcity of cohesion of Mainland China (Sun Yat Sen defined the Chinese “a dish of loose sand” - [一盘散沙 yipansansha]), and the Communist threat. The Three Principles of People were taken as part of a nationalist (and Barthian) discourse of tradition that invoked Confucianism as the basis for social ethics, and, more importantly, ended up embodying “a broader view of traditional Chinese culture”.

The Three Principles of People were not even a formal treatise, but a collection of essays compiled after the death of the leader of the Chinese Republican Revolution, Sun Yat Sen, and then credited to him. But that was not the point: to the present day, these principles are still held in Taiwan as a fundamental ideological heritage, and the very “malleability of the National ideology to suit the needs of different socio-political conditions rather than its textual authenticity” was what made the Three Principles not just a political milestone, but a myth entailed in the Taiwanese imagined community discourse. Sun Yat Sen enlisted several elements that contribute to nation building: above all, the blood relationship [血统 xuetong], then conditions of life [生活 shenghуо], language [语言 yuyan], religion [宗教 zongjiao], social customs and practices [风俗习惯 fengsu xiguan].

The insistence on the Three Principles of People and their pervasive presence at all levels of education, together with KMT’s insistence on the need to recover the Mainland and guard all over Taiwan, made the passage from nationalism to nationalizing the island more and more possible. Taiwanese independence movement grew on the premises that rather than conquering the mainland, what mattered was to recognize that there were mainly Taiwanese people on the island: it was not about Mainlanders - Kuomintang officers were perceived as foreigners as well. Taiwanese

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40 A. Chun, “From Nationalism to Nationalizing: Cultural Imagination and State Formation in Postwar Taiwan”.
figured they could use their denial of self-determination and geographical isolation as the starting point to imagine their own nation-ness.

In the well-known words of Benedict Anderson, a nation is “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. Taiwan has kept imagining its own limited territory as sovereign, and cared for its national identity insomuch as to fabricate one, and construct it politically in a fast - and recently democratic- way. Is this enough to justify the existence of Taiwan per se, and more specifically as a de facto independent nation-state? With the words of professor Peng Ming Min: “The most fundamental basis of the modern state is not ethnic, religious or linguistic heritage but a sense of commonality – having the same destiny regardless of the ethnic identity. […] Even if different ethnic groups are together, people can be of the same nation because they share a common destiny. But, without it, even if the people are of the same ethnic group, they cannot have that commonality. The unique history of Taiwan [after 400 hundred years] has led to a sense of common experience. How can we have the same experience as the people of Peking?”

The country has its isolated territory, its own form of government, its people, and no common experience that can flow into the huge stream of Chinese Nationalism. The challenge remains to grow a stronger national community, since at the moment of this writing, for a number of reasons that will be faced in this thesis, Taiwan still does not collectively agree upon which future they want to imagine for the country.

In Chapter 2, I will review the classic authors on Nationalism that I believe can give a comprehensive idea of what Nationalism is about, and how it creates nations, accompanying them along the road to modernity. In Chapter 3, I will talk about Taiwan: after a geographic presentation, explaining the location and current situation of the island and its variegated ethnic and linguistic scenario, I will proceed and face the rise of Taiwanese national identity from three different

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42 B. Anderson, Imagined Communities, p. 6
perspectives. First, a political and historical account of the moments that contributed to shape a specific Taiwanese identity over time; opinion polls about Taiwanese people self-perceptions will give us a measure of the indetermination that reigns over the matter, but also of the growing pace of ‘Taiwanese identity’ as a real identity. Secondly, an economic account, to point out that even from this perspective matters of identity can be found influencing Cross-Strait relations. Finally, an ethnographic account for the negotiability of changing identities both in Taiwan and in the Hubei region of China will show the extent to which Taiwanese identity issue as related to PRC claims of ownership is not just a matter of treaties and history. In Chapter 4, I will look closer at the moments of specific rise of Taiwanese conscience over the periods of time analyzed in the historical section of the previous chapter: forced Japanization under Japanese occupation and then the moments of self-perception as different under KMT rule - and its various political and literary displays. Approaching Taiwanese nationalism from several different angles, I will conclude that Taiwanese identity is most and foremost civic, pacifist, and free. At the end of this last chapter I will merge the previous notions together, considering Taiwanese nationalism directly according to the classic nationalist literature presented in Chapter 2. In the Conclusions Chapter I will briefly mention the position of Taiwan in US and China’s nationalist discourses, and the underline the relevance of the dimension of freedom in determining, if not de facto sovereignty, at least a complete detachment and a possible shield from the PRC’s claims.
Chapter 2 – Nationalism: Literature Review

“[…] αὕτης δὲ τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν ἐνόμιστον τε καὶ ὀμόγλωσσον καὶ θεῶν ἱδρύματα τε κοινὰ καὶ θεότια ἴθεα τε ὀμόστροπα […]./ the kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech, and the shrines of gods and the sacrifices that we have in common, and the likeness of our way of life [...].”

44 – Herodotus. The Histories, 8.142.2-3

I. On the term and its early interpretations

Nationalism is modern both in a linguistic and in a conceptual understanding: in fact, its first use dates back to 1836, when it was first used in a theological acceptation, as Anthony D. Smith points out, referring to the doctrine according to which some nations are divinely elected. It was actually during the 20th century that the term has acquired the blurred multiplicity of meaning it has today, and it will be used in this thesis in one of the following usages45: as an ideology of nations, a sociopolitical movement and a panoply of language and symbolism. It goes without saying that the ideology aspect is the most vital, as it embodies the fundament of nationalism, a paradoxical ideology of nations that presupposes them as natural, aprioristic units, while creating them at the same time. Of course, nationalist ideology is concerned with nations, and this is the idea that distinguishes national identity from any other identity: for “national identity is not a generic identity; it is specific. Generating an identity may be a psychological necessity, a given of human nature. Generating national identity is not.”46 Nationalism places the source of individual identity in the people, that therefore bear personal self-determination, and then choose to carry a more specific,
and by no means compulsory, kind of identification: a national one. People bear legitimacy, thus sovereignty is enshrined in a nation’s mass of adhering individuals.

The term nationalism comes from the latin word nātiōn(m), which meant “birth, origin”, derived from natus, and originally from nascor, “I am born”; thus, to the Romans, a natio was something born, as in Cicero natio personified the goddess of birth.48

As Guido Zernatto shows in his work of investigating the very meaning of the word nation, the first, so to speak, political usage of the word, was derogatory. In fact, it was used to indicate groups of foreigners during the Roman Empire, a group of not native people, just like for the Greeks ἔθνη originally indicated both “people living together” and foreigners. As Zernatto writes, “the Romans never designated themselves as a natio. There was a popolus Romanus; […] the natio was a native community of foreigners.”49

Thus, in all the main ancient civilizations, the term was inherently negative, and entailed a group of people who came from outside the main reference group and was united by a shared foreign origin – to illustrate with Zernatto’s words, natio was used “when the language-murdering foreigner steps on the stage [and] every audience shakes with laughter”.50

Foreigners in a foreign territory tended, just like nowadays, to bond and stick together, typically occupying a circumscribed area of a metropolis and there speaking their own language, eating their own food, fostering their own sense of community: foreigners in this sense were called nationes, and they were always looked upon with contempt. So there was the popolus, superior and elitarian, and the natio, of the heathens and inferiors. Saint Jerome used the word to paint a very bleak picture of the arrival of barbarian tribes in ancient times, calling them “ferocissimae nationes”.51

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49 Ibidem.
50 Ibidem.
In his analysis of the history of the word, Zernatto goes on arguing that from the Roman Empire we could connect the dots straight to Middle Ages Universities, at a time when communities of students massively moved to the small towns in which Universities were located, becoming as foreigners as the “nationes natae servititutis” of Cicero.52 Here they lived together to speak their own dialect and eat their regional food, and were again called nationes. Since the twelfth century these student unions started to imply something more than mere commonality of origins, as the students of a unit usually shared common opinions, supported the views of their fellows – and usually came from the same lands. With the words of Zernatto, “[…] the natio had grown beyond the sense of a simple community on the basis of origin. The word now signified more; it designated a community of origin, a union of purpose, and a community of opinion.”53 Here I do not mean to suggest that nation’s history dates back to Medieval times; as Zernatto recalls, if scholars see in these universities students’ unions the seeds of the modern concept of nation, they are wrong. This is because Universities in the Middle Age were instituted by the Church, and Christianity could not understand the concept of nation in any possible way. In fact, the Christian Community was, at the time, at the fullest of its homogeneity: it was categorically composed only of Christians, that all spoke Latin and had just one culture (the Christian one). There was no place for differentiation in Christianity back then, so there was no place for nation or nationalism as we mean it.

In sum, the word natio(n) went through a great deal of change, and finally began to be understood as “all the citizens of a state […] or all those who belonged to a language community”54, and even though it is hard to know the exact moment when this sense shift took place, we know it happened during the 19th century.

52 Cicero, De Orationes, 2, 4, 18. Cicero speaks of the Syrians and the Jews as “people born to be slaves”.
54 Ibidem, p. 366.
Nationalism, as a science of nations, was regarded as a “component of national history rather than a distinct subject” until 1918, and the great theorists of modern society – as John Breuilly calls them – namely Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, did not write extensively on the subject. Marxists were skeptical about nationalism, and generally opposed it: it was a kind of “false consciousness”, something that distracted workers from the final goal of destroying the bourgeoisie. Weber was a fervent German nationalist and Durkheim looked into the components that could help social communities hold together despite the fact that modern division of kept fragmenting societies more and more minutely. Each of these three great theorists, anyway, generally saw a coincidence of state and society, and was mainly engaged in understanding how the latter internally worked.

The inter-war and Post World War II periods were benchmarks in the (re)construction of national identity, and therefore in the theorizations of nationalism, since, according to the historian Michael Howard, “no self-conscious community could establish itself as a new and independent actor on the world scene without an armed conflict or the fear of one.”

To create a specific national identity is easier if a threat makes a sharpened dichotomy us/them necessary, and sure enough it was in the inter-war period indeed that nationalism became a subject of analysis per se, regarded singularly and not embedded in national history anymore. Carlton J. Hayes published his “The historical Evolution of Nationalism” in 1931, in which he dealt with nationalism as a “purposeful effort to revive primitive tribalism”. Hayes had already written a book on the subject in 1926, “Essays on Nationalism”, treating nationalism as a “deep and compelling emotion” that is “essentially religious” and, like other religions, involves faith in some external power, feelings of awe and reverence, and ceremonial rites, focused on the flag.

Hayes stated that nationalism has its god - a father of the land - and its own corpus of “speculative theology or mythology” describing the “eternal past […] and everlasting future” of the nation; it has

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its notions of salvation and immortality, and, last but not least, “its feasts, fasts, processions, pilgrimages and holy days” - and its supreme sacrifice.59

On the other hand, the historian Hans Kohn wrote “The Idea of Nationalism” in 1944, in which he did not consider nationalism a negative and aggressive phenomenon, like Hayes did, but regarded it as having a bad as well as a good side, and largely anticipated the groundbreaking work of authors such as Benedict Anderson stating that “Nationalism is first and foremost a state of mind, an act of consciousness, which since the French Revolution has been more and more common to mankind”60. Each nationality should form a state, and the state should include the whole nation; loyalty to the national-state should override all other public loyalties.61

Hayes and Kohn’s theorizations of nationalism are both pillars in the classical history of nationalism, pointing out the actual different faces that the nationalist phenomenon shows and that makes it ineffable and hard to grasp.

Trying to analytically define it in this way could incur the risk of futility, as nationalisms are known to change their character over time, volatiles as they are - just like national identities.

II. On Ernest Gellner

Gellner’s theorization of nationalism represented a significant systemic break with the previous understandings of the matter, in that he frames it in the context of social organization and division of labour, believing it to be nothing more than a feature of modernity, which is itself merely a different way of organizing life and culture. As Breuilly points out in his Introduction to Gellner’s central opera on the subject, “Nations and Nationalism”, Elie Kedourie had already stated in 1945 that nationalism is modern and that it produces nations, not the other way round62. What Gellner did,

59 Ibidem.
61 Ibidem, p. 16.
62 J. Breuilly, Introduction, pp. xx- xxi
stimulated by this input, was adding that is not simply an idea (as we will see, Kedourie calls it a *doctrinem*), but rather a function, a product of modernity.

Roots of nationalism cannot be found in nations, or in capitalism: Gellner argues that none of the two is a natural given, as they came into being just with the advent of industrialism. Furthermore, nations are far from being God-given entities “inscribed into the nature of things” — what actually exists are *cultures*, “shading into each other, overlapping, intertwined”, and political units as well: the two things were usually not converging.

Gellner did not reject just naturality theory - he disagreed with Kedourie's idealist argument, too.

According to Elie Kedourie, as we previously mentioned, nationalism is the result of a world historical intellectual error: an accidental and bad set of ideas, loosely derived from Kant, and disseminated by philosophical incompetents with disastrous consequences.

So how does Gellner define nationalism? Nationalism is a “political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” and it is fundamentally a *theory of legitimacy*, “which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones.” It is not rooted in human psyche, but in human societies instead, and whenever it claims to invigorate and defend the intimate nature of a country’s people and culture, it creates anew most of the times.

And again, in Gellner’s words: “[...] nationalism is, essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases of the totality, of the population. [...] It is the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by

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63 Ibidem, p. xxiii
65 Ibidem.
folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves. That is what really happens.”

Gellner’s argument was groundbreaking also because he treated the topic not merely in a political science’s key, but adding nuances of anthropology and philosophy as well, and thus nestling it in a philosophy of history that sees the evolution of mankind articulating in three phases: the pre-agrarian, the agrarian, and the industrial. Each of the three key phases is associated with characteristic modes of production, coercion, culture and cognition, and not all of these phases’ societies were state-endowed in the same way. When there was no state, like during the pre-agrarian, tribal phase, nationalism was not a problem at all, and for some states, it will never constitute one. As a matter of fact, it will rise only in some states.

Let’s take a closer look at the phases: as referring to the first one, Gellner does not spend much time dealing with it, forasmuch as it would be useless. Pre-agrarian societies were stateless, and hunting bands had no need for nation and state to coincide, as they had none of them.

During the agrarian phase though, two important developments took place: “centralization of power”, with the rise of a clerisy, and “culture cognition”, as literacy began to be spread among few, selected, society’s segments. Below the horizontally organized clerisy cleavages, came the vertical world of peasants and producers, and the two strata were not much inclined to reciprocal mixing. Culture is sectorial in the agrarian society, and there is no encouragement of sort for cultural imperialism. As for the political dimension, the model to rely on was one in which a “central dominant authority co-exists with semi-autonomous local units.”

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67 E. Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, p. 56.


It is important to underline that in this period the problem is not culture - or lack thereof - but the fact that who had the culture was more interested in using it to differentiate himself from the lower classes than to actually make it universal and absorbed by the whole society.

What was different in the industrial phase then? Industrial society was the first to ever “live by and rely on sustained and perpetual growth, on expected and continuous improvement.”\textsuperscript{70} Perpetual growth and development needed high productivity regimes, and, as Adam Smith taught us, this calls for a complex division of labour.\textsuperscript{71} For the division of labour to be efficient and fast, there is need for mobility and continuous innovation: roles stop being stable, and start being interchangeable instead. Everyone needs to be ready to perform a different task whenever necessary: there’s no space for sectarian specialization anymore, nor for life-lasting occupations.

Hence, in modern society everyone needs to be prepared to do everything, at least in theory, and to know how to communicate with other people efficiently, creating a need for a standardized idiom. In order to do so, everyone undergoes a large-scale training, that homogenizes standard culture and skills, thus making it possible for modern society to be compared to an army, that “provides a very prolonged and fairly thorough training for all its recruits, insisting on certain shared qualifications: literacy, numeracy, basic work habits and social skills, familiarity with basic technical and social skills.”\textsuperscript{72} Here we see “the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals” taking place, unfolding in front of the eyes of the modern, replaceable (and always recyclable) spectators of this generalization process – in front of our eyes.

Max Weber had once individuated the legitimate use of violence as the real source of state power; Gellner shows us that the legitimate use of education is now the tool to confer strength to the state.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibidem, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibidem, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibidem, p. 27.
The “force that drive[s] towards new units constructed on the principles corresponding to the new division of labour” is nationalism, not the awakening of units that have always existed, but “the crystallization of new units, suitable for the conditions now prevailing.” Not all the societies have to be hit by this force, since not all the nation-states strive to render culture and polity congruent. Nationalism operates – or better, claims to do so – on the basis of national old folklore, so that modern society “celebrates itself in song and dance, which it borrows (stylizing it in the process) from a folk culture which it fondly believes to be perpetuating [...]”.

The preconditions of nationalism include widespread or universal literacy, a society committed to economic growth through its formal commitment to social mobility - both horizontal and vertical, and a centrality of communicative media, that are given a pivotal role in generating nationalism, even though Gellner does not stress, like Benedict Anderson, the importance of print capitalism, but of print per se.

So, when the transition to the industrial phase of human history is complete, and during this transition, nationalism sparkles, as the world has turned out to stand on the “congruence of culture and polity.” The initial period of industrialization is usually the most violent phase of nationalism, as new egalitarianism surely brings about new inequalities, too; when these inequalities “coincide with ethnic and cultural ones, [...] they impel the new emerging units to place themselves under ethnic banners”, freeing some acute tension into society.

As modernization and globalization processes go on, “almost everyone [...] has cause to feel unjustly treated, and [...] he can identify the culprits as being of another ‘nation’. If he can also identify enough of the victims as being of the same ‘nation’ as himself, a nationalism is born. If it succeeds, and not all them can, a nation is born.”, and I believe this phrase perfectly synthetize the very nature of Gellner’s opera.

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73 Ibidem, p. 48.
74 Ibidem, pp. 56-57.
77 Ibidem.
III. On Elie Kedourie

Baghdad-born historian Elie Kedourie gave transcendentally important insights on nationalism, as we have seen that the main theorists of the doctrine in the 20th century, Ernest Gellner, largely drew on Kedourie’s inputs to elaborate his theories.

Kedourie is father of the well-known definition of nationalism as “a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century”78, to be found in the first lines of his 1960’s essay “Nationalism”. With this work, Kedourie placed the nationalist phenomenon firmly into the realm of politics, embracing the new current started by Hayes and Kohn. The author considers nationalism a product of the disaffection of intellectuals, first in Europe, and later in Africa and Asia;79 his main contribution was to analyze nationalism illustrating its rise through the manipulation of ideas operated by intellectuals, especially the German heirs of Immanuel Kant, who twisted his principle of self-determination and made it a grotesque celebration of particularism.

“The fortunes of ideas, like those of men, depend as much on accident as on their own worth and character”80, and if nationalism became the dominant ideology at the end of the eighteenth century, the reasons lie in a chain of events that started with Enlightened Absolutism and in a debate the philosophers were having at the time. At the outbreak of the French Revolution, Europe was dominated by the ideology of Enlightenment, which held that “the universe was governed by a uniform, unvarying Law of Nature. […] The law was universal, but this did not mean that there were no differences between men; it meant rather that there was something common to them all which was more important than any differences.”81

80 E. Kedourie, Nationalism, p. 2
81 Ibidem.
The French Revolution is considered to be the turning point in history as long as the conception of power is concerned, as it showed that people, if unsatisfied with their rulers, could and should complain and act to remove them, replacing the ruling class with a more satisfying one. Thus, the 1789’s Revolution was not merely relevant *per se*, but even more so because it disclosed that sovereignty ultimately lies with the governed, not with the rulers – it is encrypted in the nation, in the will of people, not in the absolute reign of the kings. Kedourie quotes the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen saying: “The sources of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation; no body, no individual can exercise authority that does not proceed from it in plain terms”, hence stating that people finally had the power to confer sovereignty, and restlessness was politically sustainable.

These new political achievements found their metaphysical counterpart in Immanuel Kant’s moral imperative, which held that our true nature is that of self-determining souls, and right is that part of morality which allows us to coerce each other so as to ensure that each has a sphere of external freedom in which it can realize that essence, and to set up a political community for this purpose.\(^82\) A good will is a free one, self-determined and autonomous. An autonomous will is free, because nothing can determine it and it can make its own laws. We can therefore infer that, according to Kant, in the individual rests sovereignty of his own actions: Kant’s heirs extended his doctrine of the autonomy of the will to the national realm, where self-determination was seen as the good will of the nation, often trespassing in quite an ardent parochialism. “You German alone, returning from abroad,/Wouldst greet your mother in French?/O spew it out, before your door/Spew out the ugly slime of the Seine/Speak German, O you German!”.\(^83\) Here, Johann Gottfried Herder gives voice to the German obsession with what was foreign, since for a German to speak a foreign language would have been humiliating and implied a loss in spontaneity. This fervent linguistic nationalism was part

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\(^{82}\) *An Introduction to Kant’s Political Philosophy, via Rousseau*, University of Sussex, accessed on 15\(^{th}\) August 2014, available at [http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/sefd0/crsold/tt1034/tt1034kant.htm](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/sefd0/crsold/tt1034/tt1034kant.htm).

of a movement that regarded language as the most important expression of the Volkgeist, particularly popular during Romanticism, of which Johann Gottfried Herder, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Wilhelm von Humboldt were representatives.

Following this line of thought, Kedourie suggests that nationalism is “a characteristic case of 'ideology' as understood in classical European social theory and as such it had bred fanaticism and irrationalism with truly tragic and pernicious consequences for human society in Europe, in the Middle East and in the former colonial territories in Africa and Asia.”

IV. On Eric Hobsbawm

Eric Hobsbawm is one of the main historians of the twentieth century, who offered a highly enjoyable analysis of nationalism from a chronological perspective, with inasmuch precision as you would expect from a navigated historian like he was, not deprived of a witty prose that make his writings some of the best synthesis on the topic.

Hobsbawm wrote two books on Nationalism, one edited with Terence Ranger in 1983, “The Invention of Tradition”, and then “Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality”, published in 1989 (but then revised in 1992); one of the most interesting claims made by the author is that one cannot be a good historian and a nationalist at the same time, as he believes nationalism to be mostly a forgery, antithesis of what has a past and history, since it is a recent and inherently modern phenomenon.

Hobsbawm’s definition of nationalism is actually a rehashing of Ernest Gellner’s one, since the author first admittedly draws on the famous caption that sees nationalism as a “political principle,

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84 P. M. Kitromilides, “Elie Kedourie's Contribution to the Study of Nationalism”.

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which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent,"\textsuperscript{85} exactly as we find in
"Nations and Nationalism". To this congruence of culture and polity he adds the need for a
preeminent commitment to it, a need with a compulsory nature: a duty, similar in meaning to Paul
Gilbert’s “right to statehood”.\textsuperscript{86}

Hobsbawm chose a predominantly historical approach, following the tortuous way that leads
millions of individuals to identify with their nations, considering proto-nationalisms as the channel
for manifold forms of national identification. Proto-nationalism is defined as follows: “Certain
variants of feeling of collective belonging which already existed and which could operate, as it were,
potentially on the macro-political scale which could fit in with modern states and nations.” Proto-
nationalism are distinguished in two kinds (and neither of these will inexorably lead to nationalism):
supra-local bonds, which go beyond the special boundaries in which people go about their lives,
that is, beyond families and towns; and political bonds, “[…] vocabularies of select groups more
directly linked to states and institutions [because they are] capable of eventual generalization,
extension and popularization.”\textsuperscript{87} Political bonds are of special relevance for modern nationalism,
and it is evident that Hobsbawm looks at proto-national bonds as related to nationalism considering
them a connection, not enough to bring nationalities and nations together, but making the task easier
when they are present. The author also reminds his readers that to actually grasp the meaning of
popular proto-nationalism one should look into the feelings of illiterates during the nineteenth
century, as they made up for the majority of the world’s population at the time. Constituting the
local kind of bonds are religion, language, and ethnicity, and here Hobsbawm underlines the special
relevance of national \textit{holy icons} in giving “a palpable reality to otherwise imaginary community.
They may be shared images […] or practices […], named images, […] periodic festivals or contests

\textsuperscript{85} E. Gellner, \textit{Nations and Nationalism}.
defined a nation as “a group of a kind that has, other things being equal, the \textit{right} to statehood”.

\textsuperscript{87} E. Hobsbawm, \textit{Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality}, Cambridge University Press, 1990,
pp. 46-47.
The significance of the holy icons is demonstrated by the universal use of simple pieces of coloured fabric – namely flags – as the symbol of modern nations, and their association with highly charged ritual occasions or acts of worship.88

Thus, the author expounds that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, hiding behind the wave of metaphysical change that the French Revolution had set forth, and relying not on the sense of belonging of common people - as we are inducted to believe - but rather on the sapient nation-building process operated by the elites. Thus, it is at governments that we should look at to understand how nationalism is set in place, because it is of governments that need to make its people feel that they belong together, so that they can be ready to pay, die, and, eventually, live for the nation.

The modern nation-state brought forth a series of innovative as well as explosive features. It had a defined territory with a uniformed administration and it was characterized by direct rule, with no intermediaries between the people and the ruler. Being closer to the people, rulers had now to listen to them, since the system relied more on private individuals than it once used to. Every government needs its soldiers and taxpayers, so if people ask for democratization, democratization they should have. Furthermore, loyalty became a fundamental dimension of power, a loyalty that had to be purely civic, not an attachment of a superimposed divine rule. Hobsbawm talks about state patriotism, a tool in the hand of the State, whereas nationalism, in contrast with patriotism, is detached from the state, it acts independently from it. Modern nation-states failed in making nationalism an emotional component of patriotism.

The very existence of nation-state makes state-based patriotism a useful tool, argues Hobsbawm, since “[..] the modern territorial citizen-state constantly involve its inhabitants in its affairs, and, inevitably, provides an institutional or procedural ‘landscape’ which is unlike any other such landscape and it is the setting for their lives, which it largely determines. The mere fact of existing

88 Ibidem, pp.71-72.
for a few decades, less than the length of a single human lifetime, may be enough to establish at least a passive identification with a new nation-state [...]”89 The difference with nationalism as it emerged at the end of the nineteenth century was abysmal, even when nationalism “attached itself to [state patriotism]. Its basic loyalty was, paradoxically, not to ‘the country’ but only to its particular version of that country: to an ideological construct.”90 During the nineteenth century, group loyalties were gradually intensified by state patriotism and mass politicization; this happened in the same period when three relevant features of the twentieth century were beginning to make their appearance, namely racist theories, language bagarres, and the Mazzinian principle of nationality. Thus, even though we cannot reduce the birth of nationalism to one single causal element, we can argue that a mixture of these ideological seeds, together with capitalism, mass culture, and the new administrative and political concerns of the elites, led the patriotic group loyalties to merge into nationalism.

In conclusion, according to Hobsbawm, nationalism is not a mere manifestation of the superciliousness of an ethnic group, and never an issue pertaining solely to national pride, but rather a matter of diverging identities intra-nation and inter-classes within a society. Before constituting a way of differentiating itself from the neighboring countries, nationalism is a tool to differentiate classes within the country, using historical glories to strengthen national identity - often forged as ancient and glorious, but, in point of fact, relying on invented traditions.

What does Hobsbawm mean by ‘invented traditions’? “Traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.”91 Together with Terence Ranger in “The Invention of Tradition”, he presents a collection of essays about how and why different traditions are invented, arguing that “Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate

89 Ibidem, p. 86.
90 Ibidem, p. 93.
certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. […] However, insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of 'invented' traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition.”92

There are three types of invented traditions: (1) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion and collective identities, (2) those establishing or legitimatizing institutions and social hierarchies, (3) those socializing people into particular social contexts; the first type has been most commonly referred to (and often taken to imply) the two other functions as well.93

Thus, we have seen how nationalism needs to inflate national history to create the hologram of a nation and foster people’s attachment to it, and in order to do so, it relies on the invention of traditions. Concluding more effectively with Hobsbawm’s own words: “modern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely human communities so 'natural' as to require no definition other than self-assertion. Whatever the historic or other continuities embedded in the modern concept of 'France' and 'the French' […] these very concepts themselves must include a constructed or 'invented' component. […] the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the 'invention of tradition'.”94

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93 Ibidem, p.9.
V. On Benedict Anderson

Cornell University Professor Benedict Anderson is best known for his work on Nationalism in his 1983 book “Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism”, that, since its publication, has become one of the fundamental texts when approaching the matters of national identity and nationalism. Anderson, as in contrast with the authors previously presented, values Nationalism for its utopian elements: he believes it can be a good component of society, as it makes people behave better in the name of their membership to that society. He contends that people would pay taxes and follow the laws because they are their taxes and their laws, always considering that some will refuse to pay or will break the law, thus deviating from the originally good nature of nationalism. In his acclaimed book Anderson defines nation like follows: “it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”95 In this regard Anderson interestingly mentions that Hugh Seton-Watson had already written “[…] a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one”96, and Renan had already considered the nation as a choice consciously (or rather, unconsciously?) made by people to forget some things and remember other things, together. Why then just consider, and not imagine? Nations should be distinguished not by their being genuine or false, but rather by how they have been imagined.

“The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. […] It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was


born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. [...] Finally it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.  97

Nationalism is culturally rooted in the eighteenth century European context, a period in which the insofar dominating cultural systems - namely religious communities and dynastic realms - were declining, substituted by the idea of nation, more cohesive and continuous in time. The decline of religious faith and millenary kingships, together with the discovery of print and the advent of capitalism, created imagined communities of subjects, with their own languages of state and different apprehensions of time. Anderson, just like Gellner, places great emphasis on the role of print capitalism to help popularize the concept of nation, and to change the very notion of time: in newspapers and novels, time is instantaneous, everything happens while we are reading - time is homogenous and empty.  98 Anderson argues that three ideological pillars of antiquity had to collapse under the impact of economic change, scientific discoveries, and the development of communications, before it could be possible to imagine nations. The first pillar was embodied by the belief that certain kinds of written language were keys to the truth, like religious language; then there was the idea that societies had to be naturally organized hierarchically around a highest figure, a monarch, that was superior to all human beings and from whom power emanated top-down; third was an apprehension of time in which past and future coexisted, “in which cosmology and history were indistinguishable”.  99 After their demise, “the search was on [...] for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together.”  100 This search was undoubtedly enhanced by

97 Ibidem, pp. 6-7.
98 Ibidem, p. 33.
99 Ibidem, p.34.
100 Ibidem.
print capitalism, and Anderson shows in each chapter, with different case studies from various countries, how capitalism established a connection with print media and thus contributed to the diffusion of nationalism.

VI. On John Breuilly

London School of Economics Professor John Breuilly is author of a compendium, historical and comparative in nature, that covers the whole scene of the debate on nationalism, called “Nationalism and the State”. Published in 1985, this book’s focus is on nationalism as a form of politics, namely of opposition politics. Many scholars had already considered nationalism as a political matter, but they had a tendency to focus on what Breuilly considers non-fundamental matters such as language, culture, national identity, while nationalism is all about politics, therefore all about power.

The very precise definition as offered by the author recites as follows: “The term 'nationalism' is used to refer to political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions with nationalist arguments. A nationalist argument is a political doctrine built upon three basic assertions: (a) there exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character. (b) the interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values. (c) the nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty.”

Breuilly argues that nationalism did not emerge from a sense of cultural identity. Rather, he shows how nationalist appeals have often been used by governments and elites to mobilize the masses against the state. Hence, nationalism is a means of building a sense of identity through opposition politics, opposing the nation-state it usually said to shape. More precisely, nationalist opposition can strive for separation, unification or reform.

If nationalism does not spring from cultural identity, and it is not an invented monstrosity, it needs to be a constitutive element of identity. Breuilly puts it rather elegantly: “The ideology is not […] a gloss upon some preexistent social reality but a constituent of that reality. […] It arises out of the need to make sense of complex social and political arrangements. But that need is itself shaped both by intellectual traditions and the sorts of responses which any intellectual scheme evokes when it is activated in some way or another.”102 Just like Elie Kedourie, Breuilly underlines that nationalism has great mass support attainment skills, and that intellectuals have a relevant role in its rise and realization, even though ultimately “nationalism cannot be seen as the politics of any particular social class. Neither can it be regarded as the politics of the intellectuals.”103

“Nationalism and the State” is an engaging reading because it provides uncommon examples of quite common subjects, such as nationalist symbols or ceremonies. Of course, nationalist movements, relying on mass support, need symbols to shape the core ideals it propagandizes: nationalism is self-referent; it celebrates itself, unlike religions or political movements, that celebrate some after life dimension or the advent of a future, lawful society.104 The example used to demonstrate the power of symbolism is Afrikaner nationalism, and more precisely, the Ossawatrek. It was a commemoration of a battle of the Zulus against white trekkers in 1838, organized as a “dramatic re-enactment of the Great Trek. […] in 1938 a number of ox wagons were taken along carefully selected routes. At each town and village people gathered to celebrate.”105

The peculiarity of this commemoration lied in the fact that people were involved directly in the re-enactment of the historical episode, and were asked to celebrate personally: this proved them that past and present could be made whole in the blink of an eye. Thus, nationalism takes feelings that

102 Ibidem, p. 63.
103 Ibidem, p. 51.
104 Ibidem, pp. 64-65.
are already lingering in the outer space, and transform them in political ideologies: it is the “response[s] to the modern problem of the relationship between state and society.”

VII. On recent developments

In recent years, the debate on Nationalism was revived by contributions from a much disputed and multidisciplinary field of studies known as Post-colonialism. Post-colonial studies arose out of literary concerns about the literary products in colonized places from both colonizers and colonized, dealing with the extent to which the very idea of submission implied by colonization was a matter of representation by colonizers’ literature. Springing from a strictly academic environment, born within universities and rapidly spread from literature to social sciences, economy and political science, post-colonialism as an approach is broad and lacks a strictly specific agenda: what it does though is to focus on “imperial cultures and colonial rule, [… and] the gamut of social practices”. It became a broad denomination under which everyone who wanted to dispute the notions of domination and subordination could gather, and even if the term itself is conceptually Eurocentric in that it concentrates on the colonial angle to deal with the colonized places, this study field is centered on the “unequal encounter of the Non-West with the West.” Scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee politically engaged in this current, their contributions making it increasingly popular among academic circles. As in the last twenty years the wave of Third-World anti-colonialist nationalisms have swiped the world with their often violent characters, the belief that nationalism was a destructive force has spread: in many previously colonized nations, nationalism rose either as post-colonialist unity in shared goals, or as post-colonialist ethnic violence and separatism. “In each post-colonial context,

106 Ibidem, p. 70.
whether nationalism develops in a more civic or more ethnic form has reflected particular pre-
colonial historical experiences colonial inheritances, and the dynamics of unique social structures,
along with leadership capacity and mass-level choice making.”^{110} Be it concerned with the re-
writing of national identities after colonization, with India, Africa or Asia, civic or ethnic
nationalism, post-colonialist discourse seeks to give voice to the colonized and to the Others, and
offers one more angle to look at the Nationalist phenomenon.

Chapter 3 – Taiwan

Strange indeed, these Eastern Savages! The island is so close that if one sets out sailing with a northerly wind from a harbor such as Lieyu, one can reach the Pescadores in one day and night, and then in another day and night one can reach [Mu]Jialaowan. Yet, here there are still people who do not have a calendar, who do not have officials and superiors, who go about naked, and who use a knotted string for calculations. Is that not strange? - 陳第 [Chen Di], Record of the Eastern Savages

I. On the territory and the ethos

Taiwan is a leaf-shaped island in the Western Pacific Ocean, now officially known as Republic of China (ROC); it was once called in the West Ilha Formosa, from the Portuguese “beautiful island” as Spanish sailors who first sailed by it in the 16th century had named it. And Formosa is beautiful, indeed: a luxuriantly green subtropical island bisected by the Tropic of Cancer and gently rocked by the waves of the Pacific, East and South China Sea. The climate is warm, vegetation is abundant and verdant, there is no lack of rain nor of flora or fauna. The country is 35,980 km², roughly about the size of the Netherlands, 394 km long and 144 km wide. The territory of the Republic of China comprehends not just Taiwan proper, but also a dozen small islands around it, that lie under its governance: the Penghu islands or Pescadores [澎湖群島 Penghu qundao], Kinmen or Quemoy [金門群島 Jinmen qun dao], Matsu Islands [馬祖列島 Mazu liedao], and Tungsha [東沙群島 Dongsha qundao]. Moreover, the ROC claims sovereignty over Nansha Islands, also known as Spratly Islands, [南沙群島] in the South China Sea.111 Worth mentioning are also Taiwanese claims over the control of the Diaoyu Islands [釣魚臺 Diaoyu Tai], otherwise known with the Japanese name Senkaku-shotō [尖閣諸島], object of a recently quite harsh dispute between China and Japan, in which Taiwan entered in 1971 claiming that these eight, rocky, inhabited islands have been used by Taiwanese fisherman for years,112 so they should belong to the ROC. In more recent

111 The control over Spratly Island is contended between China, Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and Indonesia too.
years, Taipei has gradually diminished the efforts in fighting for these islands, as the conflict over them got harsher and Japanese and Chinese claims were sounder.

The PRC lays claims of sovereignty over Taiwan and wishes for reunification, threatening military retaliatory actions in case of Taiwanese moves towards independence. The two actors are spatially separated by the Taiwan Strait, a 180 km, symbolically inaccessible strait, and its surface is covered for two thirds by mountains or hills. The Central Mountain Range traverses the country as if it were a spine\textsuperscript{113} on the eastern side, that is consequently not only less arable, but short of efficient ports as well. The West side on the other hand has some excellent ports, such as Taichung, Kaohsiung and Tainan - and is far more populated. As John F. Cooper suggests, geographically and topographically Taiwan resembles much more to Japan than to China, and “is part of the long chain of islands extending south from the Alaskan Aleutian Islands”.\textsuperscript{114} Some even argue that the similarities can be pushed further, as both countries have volcanic soil and a terrible earthquake frequency (in Taiwan there are averagely 160 earthquakes a year)\textsuperscript{115}. This evidence would suggest “either a distant time connection, or none at all”\textsuperscript{116} to the Mainland, whereas some geologists say that there is evidence of Taiwan once being territorially united to China instead, based on the scarce depth of the Taiwan strait's waters, the coastlines’ configurations, and other indicators.

Taiwan is not well-endowed in natural resources, thus it relies heavily on imports to obtain energetic subsistence. The country imports mostly mineral products and basic metals, electronic

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{113} Ibidem, p. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Ibidem, p.4.
\item \textsuperscript{115} C. M. Hsieh, \textit{Taiwan-Ilha Formosa; a geography in perspective}, Washington, Butterworths, 1964, p.20.
\item \textsuperscript{116} The Republic of China Yearbook – Taiwan 2002, Taipei: Government Information Office, 2002, p. 25
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
products, chemicals, machinery; main import partners are Japan (21% of total), Mainland China & Hong Kong (14%), USA (10%), Europe (10%) and ASEAN countries (11%).

In the post war period, Taiwan, strong of its efficiency in the textiles sector and in the technology-intensive manufactures, underwent a period of intense and rapid development that gained the country a place among the so called Asian Dragons. Taiwan exported mainly petrochemical products and electronics, such as computer hardware, and was (it still is) strong in the fishing sector too, catching over a million metric tons of fish per year.

The country might be poor in natural resources, but it is rich in population and human resources. In 2013, the country’s population accounted to 23.34 million people, making it one the most densely populated places on earth; if Taiwan was ever to be a de facto State, it would be the most densely populated nation in the world after Bangladesh. This huge number of people makes the country an incredible melting pot of ethnic and religious groups: due to the freedom of religion guaranteed by the constitution of the Republic of China, the country is immensely rich in faiths, its largest tradition being “a blend of Buddhism and Taoism” - a kind of folk religion that sees thousands of mixed temples all over the country. While the overwhelming majority of religious adherents are either Buddhist or Taoist, many people consider themselves to be both. Approximately 50 percent of the population regularly participates in some form of organized religious practice, and 81 percent adheres to some form of organized religion. Counting a total of 26 religions, the MOI [内政部, Guoneibu Ministry of the Interior] counts about one million Christians and some fifty thousand


119 Ibidem.


adherents to Islam, while the civic religion (severely banned in China) of Falun Gong, and the new faiths, I-Kuan Tao and Tien Te Chiao, claim a million adherents too. Widespread are also Roman Catholics, Protestants, Ba’Hai, and Mormons.

II. On the language and the people

You can beat my skin,  
You can eat my flesh,  
But you cannot take away  
The right to my language;  
My voice is my feeling,  
Language is my thought.

I refuse to be wrapped up in your "national language,"  
And become a Taiwanese  
Who has lost his own soul.

– Chen Lei, Love of The Mother Tongue, 1939.

Mandarin Chinese [国语 guoyu, literally “national language”] is the official language of Taiwan, although it is not the first language among Taiwanese: as a matter of fact, other mother tongues exist, such as various Chinese dialects, and Taiwanese language.

Taiwanese Language, or Taiyu [台语], is the Hokkien dialect of Min Nan, spoken by about 73% of the population of Taiwan\footnote{122 Taiwanese Hokkien at Ethnologue, 17th ed., 2013. Accessed on 21st August 2014. Available at \url{http://www.ethnologue.com/language/nan}.}, and fundamentally an unwritten, independent language. It is independent because it scarcely coincides with Mandarin, even though 75-80% of Taiwanese morphemes are adequately covered by recognized Mandarin or traditional Chinese\footnote{123 V.H. Mair, How to Forget Your Mother Tongue and Remember Your National Language. Retrieved on Nov 11 (2003): 2009.} characters, still making it hard for the two languages to fit comfortably – as a matter of fact, most of the common Taiwanese words find no correspondence in Mandarin.
Taiwan is a Chinese speaking country, but the Chinese they use is the traditional, not the simplified one: on the Mainland, Chinese was simplified in the 1950s by Mao Zedong to raise literacy rates, making almost 2000 characters easier to write. Taiwan, as it was separately ruled by the Nationalists after their defeat in the Civil War, did not simplify the language - they kept it traditional way. Taiwanese nowadays still consider their Chinese the real Chinese language, and refuse to use the simplified version, as it would diminish the pureness of the idiom. Moreover, the two versions are not mutually intelligible: a Mandarin Chinese speaker will find it hard, even if native speaker, to read and understand traditional characters, while a traditional Chinese user will be able to read simplified characters, even though not written similarly. I myself noticed that Taiwanese are really proud of this particular aspect and they perceive it as a cultural asset (and it actually is), regarding with some kind of incomprehension and indulgence who studies simplified Chinese, as it is “the simpler one” (and it really is not). As Jing Tsu, Professor of Chinese Literature at Yale University, writes in her book “Sound and Script of Chinese Diaspora”, “[…] the island diverse linguistic path paralleled the course of the Mainland sinography while unfolding against a different multiethnic and multilingual reality.”

The ROC thus counts a majority of South Min (Taiwanese language) speakers, then mandarin speakers, aboriginal dialects speakers, and a percentage of 15% of the population who speaks Hakka, a different topolect from northern China: this variety inevitably leads to linguistic tensions that have helped shaping Taiwanese identity, beginning with the first imprints left by the Portuguese and the Dutch, and then by the Japanese. “Southern Min is the unresolved kernel of China’s modern language movement”, but it also indicates much more than mere contrast to the standardization of Chinese: it embodies the quest for expression of national identity, as it was always the first thing to be suppressed by foreign dominators during Taiwanese history. Japanese

125 Ibidem, pp. 144-145.
126 Ibidem.
and Kuomintang rulers all tried to eliminate Taiwanese language and supplant it with some official/standard idioms, so much that “a notable consequence of Taiwan’s segmented modern history is that its linguistic identity suffers a similar disjunction in treatment.”127 The diversity of tongues spread among Taiwan reflects an uncommon variety in the ethnical mosaic of the island, its population varying greatly and ultimately grouped in four main ethnic groups: the Aborigines, then the Fujianese (also called Hoklo) and the Hakka (that together constitute the subgroup of Taiwanese Chinese), and Mainland Chinese.128 The Aborigines are largely considered the first inhabitants of the island, even though there is no concrete proof of it; surely enough, they populated the island before any Chinese had arrived. The Aborigines are usually regarded as a single group, but they actually vary in customs, language, culture129, and the government enlisted thirteen major tribes: Ami, Atayal, Bunun, Kavalan, Paiwan, Pinuyumayan, Ruki, Saisiyat, Thao, Ruuku, Tsou, Yami, Sakizaya.130 As Cooper explains, many other tribes could be identified, but mostly they are either too small, or extinguished to be counted; the three main groups are the Ami, Paiwan and Atayal. Most of the Aborigines are thought to have migrated to Taiwan from Southeast Asia, as they resemble to Malaysian people and, as a matter of fact, they are mostly classified ethnically as Malayo-Polynesian131; a smaller number migrated from Northern Asia too, thus from China or Japan, several millennia ago.132

Interestingly, Aboriginal languages resemble to Bahasa, the language spoken in Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia, and studies by some influent linguists, such as Robert Blust, on Taiwanese Austronesian languages suggests that that the early diversification of existing Austronesian languages took place long ago, right on Taiwan.133 The Austronesian family is one of the largest

127 Ibidem.
128 J. F. Copper, Taiwan: Nation-state or province?, pp.11-12.
129 D. Roy, Taiwan: A Political History, p.3.
130 J. F. Copper, Taiwan: Nation-state or province?, p. 12.
131 Ibidem.
132 Ibidem.
linguistic families of the modern worlds, encompassing more than 1200 languages,\(^{134}\) that Blust’s study gathers in ten subgroups; nine of these ten groups (counting totally 26 languages) are spoken only by Taiwanese Aborigines, and the tenth group encompasses all Austronesian languages outside Taiwan, from Madagascar to East Polynesia.\(^{135}\) This suggests that when one group of Taiwanese migrated to other places, and then their descendants migrated to other places again, they spread a language that, with variations dictated by places and dialects shifts, became proper of all living Austronesian peoples outside Taiwan.\(^{136}\) The multilingualism of Aboriginal Taiwanese is another intriguing dimension which provides additional evidence of the richness and diversity of the island’s scenario, unrivalled by any other place in the world - and more hollow any claim of imposed or imposable homogeneity from Mainland China. Although other scholars disagree with some aspects of Blust's analysis, a broad consensus has merged around the conclusion that the Austronesian languages originated in Taiwan. Furthermore, linguists generally agree that the differentiation of the Malayo-Polynesian branch of the Austronesian languages occurred when populations moved out of Taiwan.\(^{137}\)

It is hard to determine whether they were really the first Taiwan’s inhabitants or not, but Aborigines regard themselves to be, having lived on the island before any Chinese had ever set foot on it. Despite Taiwan’s geographic proximity to the Celestial Empire’s coasts, the Chinese had not much interest in the island before the sixteenth century, and when they first disembarked on Formosa, they were startled. Taiwan was inhabited by tribes of hunters, who were short, harshly shaped, and rather coarse-looking, large-nosed men: no good manners, tattoos, wrapped in animals skin, just like the Ming literate Chen Di described them when arriving to the island in the early seventeenth century. He was astonished to see that the Formosans stayed stuck in the past, in a time before the

\(^{134}\) P. Bellwood, J. J Fox, & D. Tryon, *The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1995.

\(^{135}\) J. M. Diamond, *Taiwan’s gift to the world.*

\(^{136}\) Ibidem.

invention of calendars, clothing, writing, and other accoutrements of civilization,\textsuperscript{138} as reported at the beginning of this chapter.

He was not the only one to see the Aborigines as anachronistic beings: late-imperial Chinese travelers described Taiwan as an out of time realm, where antiquity kept lingering in the air.\textsuperscript{139} Chinese immigrants even classified them according to their degree of wilderness, calling \textit{shenfan} [raw savages], those living in the mountains, who were for the most part beyond Qing control, whereas \textit{pepohuan} [cooked, ripe savages] were the plains dwellers, who had submitted to Qing authority and were partially acculturated;\textsuperscript{140} the lowland savages were either assimilated or killed, and the Chinese were sadly famous for their violence with them. Nowadays, most of the Aborigines are still the mountain ones, as they were less subject to Qing domination and Japanese settlement, and thus have lost less of their character: curious how Aborigines are still colloquially called \textit{shandiren} [山地人, the mountain people].

As for what we nowadays refer to when using the term “Taiwanese”, it generally includes these two groups: the Fujian Taiwanese, also called Hokklo, who make up for 70% of today’s Taiwan population, and the Hakkas. The Fujianese came from Fujian region in South-East China (and prevalently from the South of this region) over discontinuous periods of time that span from fourteenth to seventeenth century, migrations becoming more intense after the fall of Ming Dynasty in 1644.\textsuperscript{141} Mainly farmers and fisherman, Fujianese left China for economic reasons, fleeing to


\textsuperscript{139} The basic model for the rhetoric of primitivism in Taiwan travel writing was established by Chen Di’s “Record of the Eastern Savages”[東番記], one of the most celebrated pre-modern accounts of the island. Although Taiwan is located only a hundred or so miles from the Fujian coast, the Chinese had relatively little contact with the indigenous inhabitants of the island before the sixteenth century. Excerpt taken from E. Teng, “Taiwan as a Living Museum”.

\textsuperscript{140} E. Teng, “Taiwan as a Living Museum: Tropes of Anachronism in Late-Imperial Chinese Travel Writing”; J. F. Copper, \textit{Taiwan: Nation-state or province?}.

\textsuperscript{141} D. Roy, \textit{Taiwan: A Political History}, p.4.
Taiwan’s fertile plains in search of opportunities; they did not feel any particular social affinity as a group, as the Hakka felt, but they ended up bonding under Japanese and KMT rule, forging a Fujianese Taiwanese identity that tends to entail solely Fujianese culture, and to exclude the Hakka realm (they have their Fujian dialect, Minnanyu, and their own lunar calendar). When they arrived in Taiwan, they found some other people occupying the Western plain: the Hakkas. Since the latter were scarce in number, Fujianese easily moved them - and settled on the plains. Hakkas were in Taiwan before other Chinese arrived, beginning when they were forced to flee from China more than 1500 years ago, inasmuch as they were prosecuted for being an ethnic minority. They came to Taiwan mainly from Guangdong and South Fujian, but they originated in Mongolia and from there forcibly started to drive more and more south, always drifted apart from their homes: first to Anhui and Jiangxi, they were purged in 419 AD and hence directed to Guangdong. Still prosecuted, many eventually migrated either to South East Asia or Taiwan. By 1000 AD there were Hakka settlements in South West Taiwan, and the final consistent wave of immigrants came after the Taiping Rebellion of 1864; the rebellion was led by a Hakka, and after it failed they were prosecuted even more harshly. Hakkas had a strong ethnic identity, and were very different from the other Chinese on the island, as their women could work along with the men and did not bind their feet; forced to move from the Western plain to the hills near the coast, their relocation made them closer to the Aborigines territories and thus more prone to get along with them better than the Fujianese could do. They were labeled by Fujianese kejiaren, [客家人 guests], implying their belonging to a natio of strangers, partly because they would never let go of their traditions, never giving way to Chinese customs, honoring their fame of being an assertive and stubborn clan. Fujianese called themselves bendiren or benshengren [本地人，本省人 natives], and the Aborigines shangdiren; there was a fourth name for the fourth main component of Taiwan’s mosaic of people and nationes, namely, the Mainlanders. They were called waishengren, [外省人 people out of the province], and hailed from

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142 J. F. Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-state or province?* pp. 12-14.
many parts of China (but mostly from the South) after the Nationalist defeat in the Chinese Civil War in 1949. One and a half millions Chinese left China after the Communists’ victory thinking that they would go back to China soon enough, and believing Taiwan to be just a temporary shelter before the Nationalists could take Mainland China back. Thus, they behaved like powerful guests who had been left untouched by the impure Japanese rule, occupying high ranking positions and boasting their immaculate Chinese-ness, embodied by Mandarin language and Chinese traditional culture. Considering that they were, after all, a minority on the island, it is easy to understand that they felt insecure and that they too, like the Fujianese and the Hakkas, righteously did not want to let go of the pride to be who they were. As it often happens when moves seem to be impermanent, but they are not, Mainlanders gradually realized that Nationalists were not reconquering the Mainland, and they started calling Taiwan home. “By the mid-1980s, more than a half the Mainland Chinese population of Taiwan was born on the island”, writes Copper, beginning a tidal wave of silent broken strings between the Mainland and Taiwan that is still hard to re-tie.

All of these distinctions might sound pedantic or scarcely relevant, but they are not forasmuch as all of these ethnic groups, and many more that still slip through the grids of definitions, are what we imply when we simply talk about “Taiwanese people”, and, more noteworthy, these distinctions matter a great deal to Taiwanese themselves. When talking to fellow master students in Taichung, I have often heard comments about grandparents being either Fujianese, or pure Mainlanders, then inter-married with a Hakka girl, leading straight to present day youngsters, Taiwanese-born but still tied with the Mainland, making him/her a different Taiwanese from someone with both Hakkas grandparents, or both Hoklos. Of course, it is always of Taiwanese people, as inhabitants of Taiwan, that we are discussing: nevertheless, it is crucial to explicate clearly here how difficult it can be to understand that these distinctions are vital to Taiwanese identity, that seems to me to be individualistic and communitarian at the same time. Members of this groups act on behalf of their, so to speak, micro-communities, mainly to save their own traditions, unable to lose the
Weltanschauungs peculiar to their ancestors - but at the same time, they act on behalf of a nation, imagined on the basis of inhabiting the same island, of sharing the same identity struggle, and the same history of mistreatment.

Taiwanese nationalism stemmed on the micro nationalisms of the social groups composing the Formosan mosaic, fertile ground being a sequence of rulers that repeatedly tried to manipulate the culture and reshape the collective imagining of the people. Be they Fujianese in descent, or Hakkas, or Mainlanders (before or after 1949 can make a difference, too) or Yami Aborigines, they have all started to view ties with China under a different light, one of democracy and freedom: the kind of light that can hardly be turned off.
III. Diverging Perspectives on the Taiwanese Identity Issue: Political-Historical Perspective

“Taiwan since ancient times has been outside the realm of China” - Emperor Yongzheng, 1722.

“Manchuria must be regained. We do not, however, include Korea, formerly a Chinese colony, but when we have re-established the independence of the lost territories of China, and if the Koreans wish to break away from the chains of Japanese imperialism, we will extend help in their struggle for independence. The same thing applies for Taiwan [Formosa].” - Mao Zedong, Interviewed by E. Snow, 1978.

III.I Early accounts of a beleaguered island

When facing the Taiwanese identity issue, scholars have a tendency for deconstructive approaches, that tend to fragment the issue aspect by aspect - and yet, seemingly, they forget to re-construct. I cannot deny that fragmentation is the most tempting modus operandi, as the issue is convolutedly versatile and overlaps with matters of territoriality, politics, international law, economic interdependence: one cannot simply support the presence of a Taiwanese national identity without indicating the steps that led to its formation. Considering it to be the most efficient, though incomplete, method to better penetrate the issue, I will rely on the deconstructive approach, but instead of leaving a gap in knowledge, I will put the metaphysical pieces back together again, so that we will clearly see the Taiwanese identity’s ball of yarn unravel straight into the independence direction.

Beginning from a political perspective, Taiwan’s status must be first clarified and appraised under the principles of international law: Taiwan is not a sovereign country, it does not have a Constitution, it is “merely a geographical designation.”143 It currently maintains diplomatic relations with twenty-two countries, most of them small developing countries on Pacific Islands, in Africa, or in Latin America, and the Holy See. Before the seventeenth century, Taiwan was virtually under no domination, considered terra nullius and thus possible of annexation through occupation.

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143 Chen Yi-shen (et al.), “Taiwan's international status: history and theory”, Hsueh Hua-Yuan, Li Ming-juinn, Hu Ching-shan Chen Yi-shen (eds.), Series Vision Taiwan (Book 1), Taipei: Taiwan Advocates, 2005, p. 103.
Through most of its ancient history, Taiwan was considered beyond the pale of Chinese civilization,\textsuperscript{144} and when the first Chinese explorer, Cheng Ho, shipwrecked on the island in 1430, as mentioned by Danny Roy in his historical compendium on Taiwan, he reported to his government that he had found savages and curative herbs, but no trace of any Chinese settlements. Imperial China did not claim sovereignty over Taiwan, and when some Chinese first started settling on Taiwan, Chinese government forbade emigration on pain of execution by beheading.\textsuperscript{145} The first immigrants came to Taiwan in search for better economic opportunities than the ones offered by the Mainland, leaving behind the high taxes and rebellions of the late Ming Dynasty period, that was to end in 1644. Typically young and full of hopes, Chinese people went to Taiwan having in mind a temporary move, and a chance of getting richer, or, if they were fisherman, just during the fishing season. Taiwan became a shelter for who was economically dispossessed, or for antigovernment intellectuals, such as the literates prosecuted by Emperor Qianlong in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{146}

During the seventeenth century the Dutch East India Company was looking for a basis for its trades with China and Japan, and eventually chose Penghu Islands; Ming Dynasty Regnant asked them to move out, as that was Chinese territory, and establish their basis on Taiwan instead; thus, the Dutch moved to Tainan, initiating their period of administration, that lasted from 1624 to 1663. Spanish conquistadores were interested in Southern Taiwan, but they gave up for lack of productivity and Dutch hostility. The Dutch reigned undisturbed over Taiwan for a brief, but significant period: as a matter of fact, they initiated the process of development of the island, establishing a functional division of labour, providing new tools and crops and creating mines and plantations.\textsuperscript{147}

This situation lasted until Zheng Chenggong, also known as Koxinga, led his troops on Taiwan and overthrew the Dutch in 1661. Zheng Chenggong acted according to the slogan “Resist the Qing,

\textsuperscript{144}D. Roy, \textit{Taiwan: A Political History}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{145}Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{146}Ibidem, p.13.
\textsuperscript{147}Ibidem.
restore the Ming”, fighting the new Manchus dominators that, with all due respect to Koxinga’s efforts, lasted until 1912 anyway. Half-Chinese, half-Japanese, son of a pirate, Koxinga was a merchant determined to eradicate the Manchus from Southern China, and therefore led a series of unsuccessful campaigns in that area. Predictably losing in Nanjing, he was forced to seek refuge in Xiamen and Kinmen after the defeat. From there, Zheng had individuated Taiwan as a good basis for his successive operations: he moved his troops on the island and fought the Dutch, that, not without much hesitation, gave it away (after suffering over a thousand casualties), living Taiwan to Zheng’s family domination.148 It was during Zheng’s rule, from 1662 to 1684, that the Qing took some interest in Taiwan, ultimately invading it and taking control mainly to preclude more anti-Qing movements to breed there, and not to let it fall in foreign hands.149 By the time the Qing gained control of the island, Formosa was inhabited by quite a number of people that had already lost contact with the Mainland and wanted to stay in Taiwan; after emigrating, they had started to identify with the island, and the new Qing rulers were not compatriots, they were just rulers.

Taiwan was difficult to govern for the Qing, as it was a “wasteland, having no contact with China, and known as the land of Eastern Savages. Since the rise of the Ming, this Japanese territory has been a base of the red-haired Dutch barbarians. [台灣自古荒服之地，不通中國，名曰東番。明天啟中，為紅毛荷蘭夷人所據，屬於日本.]”150 Nowadays, China’s main reason supporting its claims over Taiwan is that the island is defined as an “inalienable part of China since ancient times”, and not just for propaganda; this concept is enshrined in Chinese constitutional law, and endlessly repeated in international statements of every sort and kind.151 We have just seen the lack of credibility of these claims unravel as the narration of the historical events made itself evident in the

149 D. Roy, Taiwan: A Political History, p. 19.
150 As reported by the National Annals of the Qing Dynasty, 1744, at the section “臺灣府建置沿革 – History of the establishment of Taiwanese government”.
previous lines, given that throughout the whole early history of Taiwan, until the Qing annexation of the island, China had made no claim whatsoever on Taiwan being part of Chinese territory. Even after having occupied it, China did not consider it part of its territory, as this came “only at the time of the Cairo Conference”, since, as Professor Christopher Hughes argues, in the context of rising Chinese nationalism, the Communist Party “had made the preservation of the territorial integrity an issue of political legitimization […]. By 1943, to deny an international agreement presenting China with territories deemed to have been stolen by Japan would hardly have been consistent with the CCP’s claim to be the true party of national salvation as the post-war contest with the KMT approached.”152 At that time, China could not reject the attribution of Taiwan as a part of the Japanese stolen territories, but back then -when the Dutch wanted to take advantage of it, or pirates settled on it - China always rejected the claims of ownership of the island.

During Qing domination, a local literati class emerged, a gentry composed of individuals of various origins but all serving the purpose of linking the state to the local realities of the island, and all Confucians; these imperial era intellectuals were “among the first to rise above ethnic division and articulated the earliest idea of island-wide Taiwanese identity. In a sense they were the pre-national archetype of the Andersonian nationalist bilingual intelligentsia that appeared later in many colonies, only what they helped to forge was more a region than a nation.”153 In sum, during Qing’s rule on the island Taiwan emerged as a frontier region, less important than a province, but more troubling. The Mainland governed on it indirectly and incompletely, making even the Han on the island grow increasingly unattached to China, disconnected, and indigenized.154

154 Ibidem.
Further historical details need to be given about a benchmark in Taiwanese identity formation: Japanese occupation, that began with factional squabbling in Seoul, provoking a war between China and Japan that ended up mattering greatly to Taiwan’s destiny. The war was won by Japan and ended with the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, when China accepted the cession of Taiwan and the Pescadores to Japan “in perpetuity”. Whereas the Manchus renounced to those territories with no notable sign of regret, some officials on Taiwan had a nostalgic quiver and, in a considerable identity chaos, declared a new Republic of Taiwan (the very first Republic in Asia) that was to be devoted to the Qing Dynasty old splendors. This effort did not last long, as the Republic under Tang Jingsong lasted twelve days; after these glorious days, official Tang eventually fled Taiwan in occasion of Japanese military landing on the island, and so did all the remaining aficionados of the “YongQing Republic” (meaning “forever Qing”, as it was named by the President.)

Rather humanely, the Japanese declared a two-year period to leave Taiwan (bound to end on May 1897) for the inhabitants who refused to be ruled by Japan, and wished to return back to China: for those who would choose to stay, they would automatically become Japanese Empire citizens. Gary Davison reports than about 23% of the population opted for a return to the Mainland, while the 77% remained, ending up suffering of severe identity crisis. As a matter of fact, despite partly coming from China, the inhabitants of Taiwan never had great respect for Qing rulers, and did not identify much with them, gradually losing every inch of attachment to the native villages back in Fujian or Guangdong in favor of a sense of belonging to their ravishingly beautiful island. “They fought for territory within Taiwan; they defined their existences within the geographical boundaries and in the context of a unique frontier society.”

This is to say that the Han origins of some were already not enough to guarantee to Chinese rulers loyalty and legitimacy; if we consider the ease with which the Qing gave up Taiwan, the feeling of being unjustly treated comes as a necessary axiom. To say it with Gellner’s words, “almost everyone […] has cause to feel unjustly treated, and

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155 G.M., Davison, A Short History of Taiwan: The Case for Independence, p. 49.
156 Ibidem, p. 50.
157 D. Roy, Taiwan: A Political History, p. 34.
158 G.M., Davison, A Short History of Taiwan: The Case for Independence, p.53.
[...] he can identify the culprits as being of another ‘nation’. If he can also identify enough of the victims as being of the same ‘nation’ as himself, a nationalism is born. If it succeeds, and not all them can, a nation is born.”

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In this case, a nationalism was not born yet, but the seed had been planted; years of Japanese rule and imposed Nipponization160 watered the seed, and represented the first of two distinct moments of superimposition of a high culture - whereas in Gellner’s nationalist view this happens once on the road to the modernity. Japanese banned all Chinese language publications, imposed to people to change their names to Japanese, adopt Japanese language and customs161, and this did not just lead to an inculcation of a sense of Japanese-ness into the population. This lead in turn to “an island-wide definition of political incorporation as ‘Taiwanese’”162, generating a feeling of resentment that eventually went on acting as a binding force among the inhabitants. This is not to say that such a binding feeling can be considered a national identity feeling, as in that moment there could be no communitarian consciousness in Taiwan, homogeneity still being absent among population and chaos ruling as for which identity to embrace. Hughes mentions difficult formative experiences during Japanese colonial rule that “consisted of speaking, acting and moving as a Japanese while at school, but returning to the traditional culture of the family, speaking a provincial dialect,

159 E. Gellner, Nations and Nationalism.

160 C. Hughes, Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism, p. 22.


worshipping local deities, and occasionally listening to stories about China from the older generation on returning home”.\(^{163}\)\(^ {164}\)

The idea of China was not but an instrument to strengthen the feeling of simply being not Japanese, in the hands of Taiwanese intellectuals that, beginning in the 1920s, took part in increasing initiatives aimed at reinvigorating a sense of distinct Taiwanese identity, and at asking for more representation in Japanese government.

According to Rwei-Ren Wu, Japan’s insistent attempt in building a Nipponised state in Taiwan led to three paradoxical consequences: firstly, they politicized it, as they created a restricted geographical area in which Taiwanese were institutionally isolated and became Japanese without even really being Japanese, “thereby creating the territorial basis for the rise of Taiwanese nationalism”. Moreover, the imposition of Japanese culture naturally led Taiwanese to refuse it and search for their own identity instead, turning to Western ideologies of self-determination. “The experience of cultural resistance left an indelible imprint upon the Taiwanese self-understanding ever since — an understanding of themselves as self-determining and passionately aspiring for modernity.” Lastly, the persisted and pervasive imposition of a culture as strong as the Japanese,

\[\text{References:}\]

\(^{163}\) Cited in C. Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism* as (Ye: 1990).

\(^{164}\) Taiwanese author Zhong Zhaozheng writes in an article for Lianhe Bao (United Daily): “I am a native of Taiwan, born and bred. When I was growing up, especially when I was seven years old and entered public school (during the Japanese occupation, the schools that were set up for local children were called "public" schools), I was forced to learn Japanese. Before that time, I had only used Hoklo and Hakka. This was because my father was of Hakka descent and my mother was of Hoklo descent. My relatives were also half Hakka and half Hoklo, so I grew up hearing both languages. After I went to school and gradually got older, my Japanese ability also advanced. By the time I entered middle school, while we were in school we used only Japanese. During those middle school years, I even thought only in Japanese. Now I've abandoned Japanese and switched to Chinese (zhongwen, i.e., Mandarin) when I write. After getting a bit used to it, I've also started to think in Chinese (zhongwen). But then a problem came along. Normally when I'm writing, I think in Chinese (zhongwen) and write my thoughts down in Chinese (zhongwen). This is as it should be, and I find nothing objectionable about it. But when I come to dialog, then there's a big difference. When a character in one of my stories says something, clearly it's one kind [of language], but when I write it down it's another kind [of language]. It goes without saying that, between these [two kinds of language, my writing has] to undergo a process of translation.” Zhong Zhaozheng, “Is Writing Translation? [Some thoughts on the rise of the Mother Tongue Movement].” *Lianhe Bao* (Supplement), October 25, 1991, 鍾肇政, “寫作即翻譯？「母語運動興起後的一個省 思」”, 聯合副, Translation taken from V. H. Mair, “How to forget you Mother Tongue and remember Your National Language”.

53
turned out to be finally successful. Taiwan post World War II was in many ways similar to Okinawa, “vanquished, assimilated, albeit with shreds of residual identity [emphasis added].”  

III.II Post-War Developments – ‘Back’ to China

“There must have been a moment when, knowing they would soon be under Chinese rule again, Taiwanese could assume themselves simply to be Chinese. That moment lasted until shortly after the Mainlanders arrived.” – Hill Gates, 1987. 

Taiwanese people gave evidence of being divided in opinions all throughout their history, and the final period of Japanese domination is no exception: some people ended up identifying with the rulers, forsaking their cultural ties with China after so many years of different mental processes, other did not directly support the Japanese, but had accommodated to their rule; some were just tired of the war and needed change, no matter which form it would take. 

Towards the end of the Second World War, Chang Kai-shek’s special position as a friend of the United States gained him the chance to ask back the so-called “stolen territories” that had been taken from China by Japan with the Shimonoseki Treaty. Even though Taiwan is never mentioned as a province in the various Chinese Constitutions of 1925, 1934 and 1936, the island was cited in the Cairo Declaration of 1943 as follows: “all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China.” The concept was then reiterated with the Potsdam Declaration of 1945, and underlined by Japan’s signing its surrender in September the same year, thus acknowledging to have accepted the terms of the previous documents. These legal documents are still a dangerous instrument in interpreting the question of Taiwan’s status, as both have failed to clearly address the issue concerning the status of Taiwan, leaving a legal void. Churchill later on declared that “the Cairo Declaration could not in

165 R. R. Wu, “Fragment off Empires: The Peripheral Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism”.


167 G. M., Davison, A Short History of Taiwan: The Case for Independence
any way be viewed as providing that Taiwan is a part of China.”168 and even the US eventually denied that the Cairo Declaration could be held as determinant to settle Taiwan’s status. Besides this unsolved discussion over the binding force of the Cairo Declaration, the Treaty of San Francisco has to be considered as well. Advocates of Taiwanese independence argue that until the entry into force of this treaty, Taiwan status had not been determined yet and it was in a limbo, it still had not been “handed over to China”, since the Cairo and Potsdam Declaration were “merely unilateral statements of joint allied policy based on military necessity for final victory”.169 The Treaty of San Francisco provides in Article 2, Item B, as follows: “Japan renounces to all right, title and claim to Formosa and the Pescadores.”170 Thus, this entails that Taiwan has stopped being a Japanese territory since 1945, but it does not define to whom it has been ‘transferred’, “no explicit provision for possession of Taiwan was made here either.”171

Nevertheless, on October 25th 1945 Taiwan officially became a part of the Republic of China (even though it was not made a province)172 and the Generalissimo appointed Chen Yi as Chief Administrator and General Commander: basically, his power was absolute, as was its contempt for Taiwanese people. Chen Yi regarded them as traitors for not having rebelled against Japanese oppression, and for having been contaminated by inferior Japanese, polluting their pure Chinese-ness. Thus, he wanted Taiwan to Sinicize, imposing a harsh ‘cultural reconstruction’ that was hard to bear for the population: Japanese was banned, and Mandarin Chinese declared the official language on the island. Mainland China’s literature was propagandized as it was the Kuomintang ideology of the Three Principles of People. It didn’t take long for Taiwanese to realize that the new KMT government, which they initially saluted with enthusiasm, was just severe and harsh as the previous Japanese administration, without “any of its efficiency, predictability, and order”. Japan had initiated Taiwan’s development, creating a stable economic environment, high public health

169 Chen Yi-shen (et al.), “Taiwan's international status : history and theory”, p.68.
171 Chen Yi-shen (et al.), “Taiwan's international status : history and theory”, p. 69.
172 G. M., Davison, A Short History of Taiwan: The Case for Independence, p. 43.
standards and social order; Nationalist Chinese destroyed this equilibrate scenario in less than a month. As they were concerned with the events on the Mainland, “public and even private buildings were stripped of machines, tools, and sometimes plumbing - anything metallic - to send to the Mainland. […] Public health services ceased to function causing outbreaks of cholera and bubonic plague. Rumors spread that Nationalist soldiers had brought these diseases to Taiwan.”

A popular motto (nowadays just whispered with bonhomie), spread soon after KMT’s arrival, and it recited: “dogs are gone, and pigs come [狗走了，豬來了]”, dogs being the Japanese, and pigs the Nationalists, indicating that there was not much difference between the two dominations after all. Just as Taiwanese were considered savage traitors, the Mainlanders were viewed as backwards, corrupted, dirty and dishonest. “Stories circulated about Mainland Chinese who stole bicycles and did not know what they were, and about others who spent hours staring at elevators they had never seen before.”

I believe it is necessary to report these cruel jokes or slogans as they, too, shaped (and still shape) the collective imaginary of Taiwanese regarding Mainlanders being arrogant and backwards, and because they led to the second pillar in the crafting of Taiwanese national identity: the incident known as 二二八, [er er ba, 2-2-8]. The February 28, 1947 Incident, a plague in Taiwanese history, was officially deleted from public memory since it was followed by the White Terror period, and it was made a national holiday only in 1997. An old woman, street vendor of black market cigarettes, was beaten by KMT police for her unauthorized sells, and that was the last drop: Taiwanese people, already fed up with the corruption and misgovernment of the Nationalists (who had, by the time, completely lost control of Taiwan’s economy) gathered in a huge crowd and started harassing the police. They threw stones, called them names; policemen shot in the crowd, killing four people, and injuring many. A rebellion exploded, and it lasted until KMT displaced its troops and started acting to reestablish order. Indiscriminate shootings, martial law, ‘traitors cleansing’, led to a number of victims cautiously determined to be “10.000 killed and another

173 Ibidem.
174 Ibidem.
30,000 wounded. What is certain is that a brutal and corrupt regime – the island representative of the bungling party on the Mainland that was in the midst of badly losing a war it should have won - sent thousands and perhaps tens of thousands innocent Taiwanese people to premature reunions with their ancestors.”

III.III Taiwanese political self-perception: opinion polls

We have seen how the unraveling of Taiwan’s peculiar history has been accompanied by a rather constant “denial of self-determination”, that has in turn led to the formation of a Taiwanese identity, “a consciousness born of isolation and frustration.” From Western colonization, to Chinese rule, living through Japanese occupation and then Chinese domination again, Taiwanese identity has stemmed as result of the island’s permanently liminal position in history and geography. Treated as ‘different’ by everyone - Westerners, Japanese, and KMT - the inhabitants of the island see no fundamental difference when it comes to the perception of the Other. Great tragedies such as the February 28th Incident, the Thousand Island Lake Incident (1994), and the two cross-strait crisis have enhanced the mental distance that separate Taiwan from the Mainland, furthering the gap between a “Taiwanese” and “Chinese” identity. As Chia-lung Lin argues, for most islanders being “Taiwanese” does not merely entails an ethnic categorization, but also a “citizen-based political identity”; more notably, a significant part of the population has multiple identities, claiming to be politically Taiwanese and culturally Chinese. Referring to Anderson once again, communities are imagined, people are connected by a virtual sense of belonging - a quite impalpable and nebulous vision of one’s self that often overlaps with how the others see us and what do we

175 Ibidem, pp. 79-80.
understand as commonality with the Others. When trying to grasp how Taiwanese consider themselves, one finds clear that borders are blurred and definitions arbitraries, as some can define themselves as belonging to the Chinese nation, but identifying themselves as Taiwanese. This being the case, some people define Taiwan as a mere ethnic category, and others think of it as a proper nation instead. As Alan Wachman reports quoting Hill Gates’ comments over social interaction in Taiwan: “New acquaintances were usually ‘placed’ for me […] as Taiwanese or Mainlanders. The common social chat among strangers attending dinner parties begins by establishing the origins of all persons present with jocular references to foods, speech peculiarities, or personality traits supposedly characteristics of each ethnic group.” People might not care for reunification, status-quo maintenance or independence, as quoted in the opening lines of this paragraph, but they do care about a dichotomy us/them from which is hard to escape. The line of demarcation has been established to be not so much dictated by the place of origin as much as by the time of arrival on the island, and the attitude towards Taiwan’s status. Moreover, a pattern can be noticed with the rise in cross-strait tension and people self-identification with Taiwanese identity; the following tables will give an inclusive account of Taiwanese main identity-related attitudes.

The first two tables cover the apprehension of the terms ‘Taiwanese’ and ‘Chinese’, interestingly showing that when defining the meaning of Taiwanese, people refer more to territorial or political criteria (55% of the masses, 64% of the élites), or to subjective/psychological criteria, hence stating that is sufficient to feel Taiwanese, to self-identify as such, in order to be so. On the other hand, when defining the meaning of being Chinese, the qualifying criteria are predominantly primordial or cultural, entailing a shared history or blood lineage. A 38% of the interviewed even applies cultural criteria to confer Taiwanese-ness; this percentage notably decreases among élites, that mainly opted for the predominantly civic criterion of living or working in Taiwan.

178 Alan Wachman, “Competing Identities in Taiwan”.
180 Alan Wachman, “Competing Identities in Taiwan”.

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### Table 1

**Meaning of being Taiwanese**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
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</table>

**I. Primordial/Cultural Criteria**

1. (1) those with common blood and lineage (e.g., the Han nation) 33 (20)
2. (2) those who speak Chinese (i.e., Mandarin) 6 (0)
3. (3) those with common historical or cultural background (i.e., the Hua Jen) 50 (32)

**II. Territorial/Political Criteria**

4. (4) those live and work in China 8 (3)
5. (5) those with the PRC (China) citizenship 41 (26)

**III. Subjective/Psycologica Criteria**

6. (6) those who self-identify as Chinese 17 (12)
7. (7) those with a strong sense of Taiwanese consciousness 55 (17)

### Table 2

**Meaning of being Chinese**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. Many people in our society say &quot;We are Chinese.&quot; What does &quot;Chinese&quot; mean to you?</th>
<th>Elite (1995-96)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
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**III. Subjective/Psycologica Criteria**

6. (6) those who self-identify as Chinese 17 (12)
7. (7) those with a strong sense of Chinese consciousness 9 (8)

Source for both tables: C. L. Lin, “The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism”. The mass data were based on a telephone survey conducted by Yanjian magazine between May 16-18, 1996 (see Yuanjian, June 15, 1996). Data in the elite column are based on the author’s interviews with sixty-six legislators.
Table 3

<table>
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<th>National Identity</th>
<th>Mass (%)</th>
<th>Elite (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese and chinese</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This table shows the changes in national identity’s perception from 1989 to 1999, suggesting that an increasing number of people identified themselves as Taiwanese, growing in number from 16% to 33% over a ten-year period; this happened more intensively among highest social classes. On the other hand, we observe a significant drop in the percentage of people self-perceiving as Chinese, sharply falling from 52% in 1989 to 12% in 1999. Worth mentioning is the growing percentage of interviewed who perceive themselves as both Chinese and Taiwanese. I believe it is interesting to integrate this table with the results of a more recent survey conducted by National Chengchi University, Taipei, showing the same changes in identity over a subsequent period of time, from 1992 to 2013.
The graphic efficiently points at a sharp increase of Taiwanese identity and a contemporary decrease of Chinese identity over a decade (just as showed in the table above), with just 3.8% of the interviewed identifying themselves as Mainlanders in December 2013. The number of mixed identifiers (both Taiwanese and Chinese), though always quite consistent, has seen a relative decline coinciding with the rise of non-mingled Taiwanese-ness in recent periods. The moment when the green line of Taiwanese national identity begins to rise can be collocated around 1994, year of peak in the ripeness of identity-crafting in the aftermath of the Thousand Island Lake Incident of March 31, 1994 [千島湖事件, *QianDao Hu shijian*]. The appalling tragedy involved a group of Taiwanese tourists in the Zhejiang region of PRC, visiting the famous QianDao Lake, and turning up kidnapped, robbed and dead by the morning after on a hijacked tourist ferry. The
mishandling of the murder by the Chinese government, that immediately blocked the release of any information to the public and the media, dazed and enraged Taiwanese people. “Mounting evidence suggested that the Chinese People’s Liberation Army were heavily involved”, but the government burnt all the bodies in what seemed to be an accidental fire and no further investigation was possible. It goes without saying that the episode filled Taiwan with indignation for the arrogance showed to the families of the victims (who went all the way to Zhejiang and were not allowed to dispose of the bodies as they wished), the censorship lid kept straight from the beginning on the incident and the general feeling of unlawfulness that permeated the whole story. According to a popular poll by the United Daily News taken two weeks after the murders, Taiwanese identity rose from 33% to 41%, unveiling the weight of the episode in jeopardizing Cross-Strait relations.

What could have simply been a tragic news story turned out to represent the main differences between the two countries: human rights respected or coldly ignored, persistence or absence of the rule of law, sympathy shown to the families of the victims or victory of censorship over human tragedies; these contrasts all fostered the void orbiting across the Taiwan Strait. Furthermore, as Chia-Lun Lin considered, “it enhanced a sense of common suffering and imprinted a collective memory” among Taiwanese: once again they felt unjustly treated, and, what’s more, treated as different. No matter if on the island they cared about their origins as Mainlanders, Hakka, or Taiwanese, as “in the eyes of the Chinese on the Mainland, they are all ‘Taiwanese fellows’, […] [all the] ethnic groups share Taiwan’s destiny when Taiwan is in conflict with China”.

President Lee Deng Hui’s famous interview after the episode deserves to be mentioned: “[…] the PRC does not seem to me a civilized country. Taiwan is a civilized country; we wake up every morning expecting to have our newspapers and milk delivered on time. [In Taiwan] everything is on

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181 C. L., Lin, “The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism”.
183 C. L., Lin, “The Political Formation of Taiwanese Nationalism”.

62
track and has an order. […] The Chinese Communists say that Taiwan is a province of the PRC; this is ridiculous. They have never received a dime of tax from Taiwan and never ruled Taiwan for even one day. […] So where did their sovereignty over Taiwan come from?"\(^1\)

Keeping in mind this episode as well as the Cross-Strait crisis of 1995-96, which coincided with elections period on Taiwan and thus military threats from China in the eventuality that Lee Deng-Hui could be elected (and he was), we will look at one last table showing a key component of nationalism unfolded. The pride of partaking in a national identity is one of the thousands hands of Nationalism, a centerpiece of future legitimacy, and we can see here how, despite being not decisive as far as gaining independence is concerned, the rise of a specifically Taiwanese national conscience kept constantly growing over time.

**Table 5**

![Table 5](image)

*Source: United Daily News 2010, collected by Chien-Jung Hsu.\(^2\)*

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Table 6

| Taiwanese Pride vs Chinese Pride (%) | Self-Identification | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Taiwanese | Taiwanese and | Chinese | | | | | | | |
| | N= 557 | Chinese | N= 208 | | | | | | | |
| Only proud of being Taiwanese | 43 | 8 | 4 | | | | | | 21 | |
| Only proud of being Chinese | 1 | 6 | 19 | | | | | | 6 | |
| Proud of both identities | 29 | 62 | 60 | | | | | | 48 | |
| Not proud of either identity | 15 | 17 | 8 | | | | | | 15 | |


As Professors Mumin Chen and Cheng-feng Shih argue, modern Taiwan’s nationalism is undeniably a reality, a well-established fact, and “a native Taiwanese identity is now the predominant view in politics”; and yet, no political party was able to base it on ethnic reconciliation. Terrible episodes such as 2-28 or the QianDao Lake murders can be held as binding agents for a collective identity that cuts across ethnic boundaries, “serving as a profound remainder that any [...] political segregation of any ethnic group in unacceptable.” Despite the high percentage of people self-identifying as Taiwanese, what is missing in Taiwan is an explicitly asserted will of independence: if “a government is only recognized for what it claims to be”, as D. P. O’Connell argued, Taiwan’s status is unsolved also because there never was an unequivocal declaration of sovereignty. As we have seen and will see in further details, the reason for this shortcoming of self-assertion does not lie in lack of self-determination, but in a tangle of ethnic divisions, cultural echoes, fear of a war, and economic interdependence.

IV. Diverging Perspectives on the Taiwanese Identity Issue: Economic Interdependence’s Panacea

IV. I Economic interdependence: A “Security Community” through ECFA?

Cross-Strait relations have grown increasingly closer in recent years, even though it’s as early as 1979 that cross-strait trade has begun growing by a two-digit percentage annually. In 1979, when trading started, the total gross volume was merely 80 million US dollars, becoming 145.37 billion by 2010. In 2003 the mainland replaced the US and Japan as the biggest trading partner of Taiwan; Taiwan also became the second-largest import market for the mainland. Despite a rise in the volume of trades, cross-strait exchanges are unbalanced for Taiwan, as shown by the following Table.

![Cross-strait Trade Interdependency from 1992 to 2005](image)

Table 7

Source: Zhang, “Cross-Strait Economic Interdependence and the Prospects for Peace Between Mainland China and Taiwan.” Data Source: Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council. PRC Website.

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Moreover, according to additional statistics, from January to October 2010, the gross imports and exports of the Chinese mainland were approximately 5.02% of the foreign trade volume of the mainland, while Taiwan’s gross exports over the same period were 42% of its gross exports.\footnote{J. F., Wang, “ECFA and Cross-Strait Peaceful Development” [ECFA 与两岸关系和平发展], Taiwan Research Quarterly [台灣研究集刊], 2, 2011, pp. 18-25.} the imbalance is not hard to spot. Nevertheless, the two countries seem to have tacitly convened that the implementation of international cooperation over trade and services might make the Strait more navigable. In the context of increased cooperation and reduced barriers, the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) [兩岸經濟合作架構協議 liang’an jingji hezuo jiajou xieyi] was signed on June 29, 2010. The ECFA, according to the Ministry of Commerce of the People’s Republic of China, covers “main economic activities between Chinese mainland and Taiwan”, is gradual and comprehensive, and “did not touch upon opening market on agricultural goods, the uncompetitive industries of Taiwan, and dispatching mainland labor to Taiwan, which showed the greatest sincerity and goodwill of mainland.”\footnote{Ministry of Commerce – Public Republic of China, MOFCOM Comments on Chinese Mainland-Taiwan ECFA, June 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2010. Accessed on 28\textsuperscript{th} August 2014, available at \url{http://english.mofcom.gov.cn/article/newsrelease/significantnews/201007/20100706998761.html}.} In the framework of this Agreement, in June 2013 the Cross-Strait Agreement on Trade in Services [海峽兩岸服務貿易協議 haixia liang’an fuwu maoyi xieyi] was signed in Shanghai, first of the two follow-ups expected for the ECFA in 2010. Many Taiwanese fear that this Service Agreement, opening various sectors to Chinese investments, could endanger some strata of Taiwanese society and jeopardize the de facto sovereignty that reigns on the island. Taipei was theatre of vehement protests in March 2014, when KMT government was accused by the Sunflower Student Movement [太陽花學運 taiyanghua xue yun] of having negotiated and ratified the Agreement through undemocratic procedures. But were the protests, that saw millions of people gather outside the Legislative Yuan to support the students that occupied it from March 18 to April 10, all and exclusively about the content of the so called ‘fumao’ [服務], the Service Pact? Or could some fear be seen, slowly wrapping around young and old people’s
shoulder - fear of losing control of their own enterprises, of letting China one more step through the door, without being able to close that door ever again? In any case, these protests were like a breath of fresh air in the minds of those used to the suffocating repression of the Mainland, and astonished me simply for having been possible (and with such a massive participation); we will explore in the next paragraph the possibility for national identity issues to have influenced the Service Pact protests of March 2014.

IV.II ”反黑箱服貿” – “Anti Black Box Service Trade”

Among other things, the Cross-Strait Agreement on Trade in Services sensibly lowers the preexisting limit in Chinese investments necessary to a PRC’s citizen to get a one-year multiple visa to Taiwan (from 15 million Taiwan Dollars to 6 million), and adds services such as banking and finance, retail, education, telecommunications and cultural industries, to the sectors to be reciprocally opened to the Mainland. Even though the Mainland is going to preferentially open to Taiwan as well and the Agreement clauses are reciprocal, the deal was negotiated behind closed doors, and the opponents defined it a black box deal from the very beginning. After signing ECFA, pressures were high in Taiwan to quickly review and ratify it; on March 17th, it was decided that the Internal Affairs Committee resolution would have skipped the agreed review and moved straight to legislative approval. This was the spark for protesters to start acting; a group of students irrupted into the Legislative Yuan, and more than 350.000 people gathered outside the Parliament to support the students inside. During the night of March 23, riot police evicted thousands of activists from the seat of the Cabinet. About 170 people were hurt in the clashes, with activists accounting for the most serious injuries. Water cannons and batons were used, and the images of bloodied students were showed in loop on Sunflower’s movements-sympathizers TV channels, notably impressing the portion of the population who did not go to Taipei to protest, and totally galvanizing the students.

inside the Legislative Yuan (who were, at the same, idolized at pop-star levels - with blogs and talk-shows analyzing their outfits). The Sunflower Movement said the protests were organized to prevent the Service Pact from being passed with undemocratic procedures, accusing Ma’s government of conducing secret negotiations; what they asked for was a revision clause-by-clause of the Agreement, and a broader popular participation to the Pact’s content, which was evidently seen with terror of losing integrity in favor of China.

The protests of March 2014 (perceived in Taiwan as violent, but rather peaceful in the eyes of a foreigner) fit comfortably in the stream of denial of Taiwanese conscience that goes on since ancient times, defining an identity rising in contrast to authoritarianism and opposing whatever may lead Taiwan to lose an inch of the convenient isolating ozone-like layer surrounding the island. “Being a Taiwanese does not necessarily connote the person’s support of Taiwanese statehood”, writes Professor Shih Chih-Yu, although March’s protests showed that a great share of the population, especially the younger, even though not necessarily protesting for statehood, is willing to rise up to protect the country from what has been perceived as a loss of autonomy. The Service Pact will lift trade restrictions between Taiwan and China, and would actually be more beneficial to Taiwan, (especially to financial and retail-related industries): China would open a total of 80 market segments, while Taiwan would liberalize 64. Nevertheless, a study made by the Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research [中華經濟研究院 Zhonghua Jingji Yanjiuyuan], indicates that Taiwan’s GDP would increase among 0.025 and 0.034% as a result of the Service Pact, but just for a few targeted beneficiaries. The setback would hit low-entry-barrier service providers and workers, as the Taiwanese service sectors employs the 60% of the island’s workforce.

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195 Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research, [中華經濟研究院], Report assessing the economic effects of the Cross-Strait Agreement on the Trade in Services [兩岸服務貿易協議經濟影響評估報告], July 2013.
196 J., Fann, “The Economics of Cross-Strait Services Agreement”.

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This being said, we should notice that Taiwan’s pace of signing FTA has always been slower than other countries’, as particular caution is used to handle the competitive hedge. When in 2012 the Parliament lifted a ban imposed on US beef containing ractopamine, mild protests were enacted too, mainly coming from hog farmers, DPP, and civic associations, but the situation did not provoke any mass reaction, and the FTA signed with New Zealand in 2013 did not raise issues at all.

During the anti-**fumao** protest, a letter by a Taiwanese attorney, Richard Chiu-yuan Lu, went viral on the internet; the letter gives voice to the irrational fear of China spread among some Taiwanese, and it goes like this:

“Many people don’t understand what the CSSTA says, so some protesters don’t even know why they oppose it. No one in Taiwan dares to write in support of the pact because sentiment here has almost reached the point where anyone who dares to support the CSSTA is seen as a traitor. […] The truth is, the Taiwanese companies that can afford to set up branches in China are large conglomerates, and those Taiwanese profiting the most from the CSSTA are tycoons and their families, not your family or mine. As far as Chinese companies are concerned, their investment in Taiwan is a drop in the bucket that won’t affect their overall operations. And those Chinese companies are deeply influenced by their political system. If Taiwan were to hold a referendum on independence, the Chinese government might order its companies to cease operations in Taiwan. For example, our convenience stores would close and our taxi service would stop, assuming they had Chinese investment, and Beijing would have our credit card records and hospital records in hand. With such a scenario staring us in the face, could we still hold the referendum? The truth is that if the counterparty to the agreement were a country other than China — or a democratized China that would treat Taiwan as an equal and stop trying to achieve its political agenda through business, and didn’t want to swallow us up — we’d happily accept the pact. Take the words from the above paragraphs and insert “Japan” or the United States” in place of China — there would be no issue. When Taiwan signed a free trade agreement with New Zealand in June 2013, the public wasn’t out for blood then.

But why is it that when it comes to China, we won’t give an inch? It’s because we’re afraid of you, China. Really. We’re very afraid.” -

Translated by David Wertime and Rachel Lu for Foreign Policy.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷“誠實在話，許多人對於服務貿易協定的內容並不了解，所以不知道為什麼要反對。何況現在網路上支持服貿協定的內容已經沒人在看，也沒人敢寫，畢竟這是政治播 播學上所謂「沉默的螺旋」，誰敢支持服貿協定，誰就是背叛的台灣人，毀滅自己就業機會的笨蛋。[…]其實這是個無解的習題，要不要試試看，把上面的主詞：中國，換成日本或美國？舉例來說，為什麼我們也通過了對於紐西蘭的 FTA，民眾對於這項協定並沒有太大反 拔，但是對於這項協定，就得要寸土不讓？因為，中國，我怕你們。真的，我很怕。” Excerpt from the original letter as written by 呂秋遠. The excerpt’s content is shorter than the English version one.
V. Diverging Perspectives on the Taiwanese Identity Issue: An Ethnographic account for
the Negotiability of Identities

“The old people all had dark skin and big [round] eyes. The women were all fierce. The men of
surrounding villages [which were Hoklo] didn’t want to marry them; they called them [the Jibeishua
women] hoan-a-pho [Mandarin: fanzi po; roughly: ‘savage biddies’], so the [Jibeishua] village men
had to marry them.” A Jibeishua village man, explaining why Aborigine women could not marry
Hoklo men.198

Keeping in mind the background on Taiwan’s four main ethnic groups given in Paragraph II of this
chapter, I hereby present the study of Stanford University Anthropologist Melissa Brown on the
impact of the intermingling of Han Chinese and Aborigines (or, in general, non-Han) in Taiwan and
on the Mainland in producing fluid barriers of identity.

In her challenging book “Is Taiwan Chinese?”, Brown collects ethnographic data, based both on
previous studies on the subject and her own fieldwork, on three traditional Plain Aborigines villages
in Southern Taiwan: Toushe [頭社], Jibeishua [吉貝耍], and Longtian [隆田]. In these villages,
most people had an Aboriginal identity throughout the 20th century, and when Hoklos from the
Mainland started arriving in Taiwan, Japanese sociopolitical decisions triggered intermarriages, first
spurring long-route identity changes from Aborigines to Han. In short, by the end of the 20th
century, the only differences between the three aforementioned villages and the Hoklo villages
nearby consisted mainly of the practice of foot binding - common for Han people, but absolutely
avoided by Aborigines. There were other differences among them, but they were almost ‘invisible’,
and they ended up gradually disappearing over time. Therefore, these villages had an Aboriginal
identity in early 1900, (differentiated from Han by the absence of women with bound feet) but the
identity switched to Han by the end of 1900, just to turn to Aboriginal again at the beginning of the
21st century.

198 M. J., Brown, Is Taiwan Chinese?: The impact of culture, power, and migration on changing identities. Berkeley:
When in 1915 the Japanese forbade foot binding, considering it a barbaric practice, “people in Toushe, Jibeishua and Longtian were finally able to take on a Hoklo identity”¹⁹⁹, and Brown argues that this stimulated what she calls ‘long-route identity changes’, observing an increased number of intermarriages between Hoklos and former Aborigines. The author considers the intermarriage rate as significant to trace this first shift towards a Han identity around 1925-1930, when she reports an increased number of virilocal marriages. In fact, who is culturally Han preferred virilocal marriages, when the woman “marries to her husband’s household”, whereas the Aborigines married uxorically, with the husband marrying to the wife’s household instead. Before, a consistent number of Han men marrying in Taiwan were uxorically married to Aborigines spouses, (even though, “before the foot binding ban, […] only Hoklo men who had no other options for brides would marry"²⁰⁰ a savage women) but according to Brown’s interviews, the marriage pattern started changing around 1930. Increased rates of virilocal marriages diminished the previous predisposition of women for roles of authority, and for the practices of chewing betel-nuts²⁰¹ and drinking alcohol that used to belong strictly to non-Han wives, and gained them the savage label.

By the end of the 1980s though, when political liberalization’s waves swept Taiwan and martial law was finally lifted, Toushe, Jibeishua and Longtian were, due to what the author links to Taiwanese nationalist interests, re-enshrined in a plain Aborigines narrative, for “their maintenance of religious practices, especially the main annual festival to ‘Ali Zu’ […] provided publicly visible continuities to past Aborigine culture.”²⁰² Locally, people still identified themselves as Hoklo, but it soon became convenient to change identity, as Aboriginal local annual festivals could provide high revenues, and “in the context of a New Taiwanese national identity that claims a plain Aborigines heritage, it seems that more people in Taiwan will travel longer distances to see a plains Aborigines

¹⁹⁹ Ibidem, p. 95.
²⁰⁰ See the quote at the beginning of this Paragraph.
²⁰¹ 槟榔 binglang, Areca nuts, wrapped in a betel leaf, coated with slaked lime and occasionally with tobacco added. They are largely chewed by the elder population in Taiwan but widespread in all Asia, too. Mildly stimulant, they are addictive and cause red-stained teeth, gums and saliva, let alone oral cancer.
²⁰² Ibidem, p. 124.
festival, especially one where the deity consumes raw pig through her spirit medium.” These long-term identity changes couldn’t possibly originate just from early intermarriages with Han men, even though these men, becoming fathers of mixed children, could spread Hoklos ideas in Aboriginal villages: this only led to some occasional syncretic practices. The real identity changes occurred only with a change in political regime, as if the Japanese had not banned the practice of foot binding, we cannot be sure that Aborigines would have ever had the chance of crossing Han borders.

As for “short-route identity changes”, they took place between seventeenth and eighteenth century, between Dutch and Qing dominations, and they are better shown considering the heavy flow of Han Chinese from the Mainland to Taiwan. Han Chinese intermarried with the island’s Aborigines, generating a mixed population that eventually took on a Han identity not basing it on the culture, as the cultural practices did not have the time to change, but merely on ancestral origins, based on their surnames, for example. At a later stage, “changes in the ruling regime […] created windows of opportunity for people of mixed households and ancestry to renegotiate their official classification.” The author observed discrepancies in the census figures from Dutch to Zheng’s periods, suggesting that shifts in the power structure apparently determined shifts in identity. As a matter of fact, during Dutch rule, having a Han identity was not convenient: Westerns deeply mistrusted them; if someone had mixed origins, he would have claimed to be an Aborigine. During Zheng’s family rule and under the Qing, being Han was convenient instead: Aborigines had to serve corvées, pay higher taxes, and were suspiciously Dutch-friendly. Thus, people coming from mixed households were provided incentives to change identity. This would explain the otherwise inexplicable gap in figures for the Aborigine population reported by Shepherd: “The [Zheng] figures for [Zhuluo’s] Aborigine population, 4,516 taxable heads and 2,224 households, seem extremely low when compared with the Dutch census for the same region, which showed 26,047

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204 Ibidem, p. 135.
persons and 5.785 households in 1650.” Not only Han identity is demonstrated to be negotiable, and highly dependent on migration, culture, and power shifts, but the content of Han culture itself has been modified, since Han-considered practices were not similar to Han practices on the Mainland.

The author shows that this happened on the Mainland too, in the Enshi Prefecture of Hubei province [湖北省恩施地區] were until 1949 people identified themselves as Han; migrations in the area lead to intermarriages with local people, producing a Han culture which was quite different from the standard one. Interestingly enough, Enshi people perceived themselves to be Han, but after the Communists’ victory, because of the actual differences between their cultural practices and those of other Chinese, and because of the “policy incentives in the post-Mao China for […] local governments to have citizen classified as non-Han”, they were reclassified as Tujia, during the phase of National Ethnic Identification. Tujia is one the fifty-five non-Han ethnic minority officially recognized by the PRC, and despite locals protested and managed to be recognized as Miao minority, and not Tujia, they eventually had to settle for a Tujia classification, thus validating what Brown reports Hill Gates as saying: “What happens [when official ethnologists make their category decisions] is really this: we tell them what they are, and after a while they get used to it.”

What this proves is that China, labelling Enshi as a non-Han area, acknowledges that de-sinicization is possible; as for Taiwan, they deny that the cultural change is old enough to be considered, and if it is, they question whether it really denoted a de-sinicization or not. This is because Taiwan has chosen to base its claims for an independent statehood on notes of ancestry, and ancient shared culture, whereas Brown suggests that they should base it on the short-route identity changes,

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206 For example, they placed graves near their houses, absolutely not conformably to Han culture, that preferred to expel coffins from the communities of the deceased. See J. Watson, E. Rawski, (eds.) *Death ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
otherwise, ironically, they are using “a Han perspective to claim a non-Han identity and thus to challenge Taiwan’s relation to the Chinese nation.” 209

I believe Melissa Brown’s research is brilliant as for her exploration of identity changes in Aboriginal tribes and ethnic minorities to underline the extent to which both Taiwanese and Chinese identities are socially and politically constructed: this can shed some light on why it is impossible to exclude that Taiwan’s question entails first and foremost matters of identity. International law, historical records, balance of power, all play a role in defining Chinese and Taiwanese national consciousness; this research offers an additional perspective to understand that identity plays a major role in shaping national conscience, as it is fluid and changeable, “is cultural and geographic as much as it is national”210. Nevertheless, I disagree with Brown’s political implications related to Taiwan, as they seemed to me to be quite far-fetched: one thing is examining the frequency of identity changes, (and their happening in the first place) to demonstrate the impact of power and social structures as well of social dynamics (such as marriage and migration) on the change of an identity; another thing is to imply that Cross-Strait relations might be influenced by Taiwanese self-perception as Han or non-Han. It is surely useful to conceive Taiwanese statehood also from an ideology-of-identity angle - and not just from the purely Taiwanese identity one. Brown had the merit of reminding that national identity cannot be attributed to one single variable, (similarly to what Professor Shih Chih-Yu recalls when stating that democratization alone did not forge Taiwanese identity), and should remind to others approaching this issue that is at the very least reducing to frame Taiwan’s situation as entirely pertaining one single aspect.

Chapter 4 – Nationalism of oblivion: the obligation to forget

“Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. [...] the margins of the nation displace the center; the peoples of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis. The island story is told from the eye of the airplane which becomes that 'ornament' that holds the public and the private in suspense. [...] Amidst these exorbitant images of the nation-space in its transnational dimension there are those who have not yet found their nation. “ – Homi Bhabha, from Nation and Narration, 1990.

“When I asked my wife what topic I should be talking about with Mr. Shiba, she told me to talk about 'the grief of being born a Taiwanese.' ” – Lee Deng Hui, Dialogue between President Lee Deng-hui and Japanese writer Ryotaro Shiba, Asahi Weekly, May 5, 1994.

I. National identity under the Japanese: 1895 - 1945

Just like Homi Bhabha’s narratives, Taiwanese nation-ness loses its origins in the myths of time: we assisted to the unfolding of Taiwanese identity’s narratives at the slow pace of historical crossroads’ sequence, privileged observatory being the multiple perspectives on the nation-building process of history, economy and ethnicity. Paraphrasing Professor Qiu Gui-Feng, Taiwan could be held as a kind of test case for Anderson’s imagined communities, as she argued: “Ordinarily we think of nations as consisting of territory, a government, and people. But Anderson points out that actually these things are not enough. The formation of a nation relies importantly on people’s ‘national imagination’ – that is, a common identity among the people living on this piece of territory.”

Furthermore, Taiwan already has territory, government and people: what’s missing is a clear assertion of Taiwanese distinct subjectivity [主體性 zhuti xing], and the abandonment of the peripheralization discourse (itself an imaginary chain) that has constantly accompanied the island. Taiwanese subjectivity and identity have been crafted ever since Japanese occupation, and even though at the time there was no specific nationalist movement, the first claims for Taiwanese peculiarities were made, lying on the assumption that Taiwanese were ‘ethnically different’. After an initial period of military crackdowns due to Taiwan’s resistance to foreign domination, the

Japanese government decided to administrate Taiwan without according it full equity, but not applying full repression either: Gotō Shimpei, a German-trained doctor, was given the task of building “an elite-steered colonial state that was penetrative and efficient.”²¹² In order to do so, Shimpei applied the ‘biological principle’ when ruling Taiwan, acknowledging a difference in race between Japanese and Taiwanese: the islanders needed a different rule than the Japanese proper. Colonial government initially did not touch upon the pre-existent social structure, but rather “subjected it to close surveillance”²¹³: the literati-gentry class was preserved, intellectuals could hold their meetings - they were only watched closely, with high-density displays of police officers. When the First World War led to a Japanese economy’s boost (as European powers had to leave their Asian colonies), Japan asked for more rice supplies to Taiwan, whose landowning gentry started to rise in status and economic prowess. With this rise in social and monetary status came a quest for political representation, as the land-owners “wanted more political autonomy and launched various political movements. This time they were armed with modern ideologies, such as democracy and self-determination, that the colonial government could not easily counteract with violence.” Japanese had always fluctuated between assimilation or differentiation policies, and when they gradually shifted towards the first option, public opinion was not totally resilient. In 1921, the Taiwan Cultural Association was born, asking for a Taiwanese parliament and insisting on the ethnic peculiarity of Taiwanese people. As we already stated, this was no nationalism, as the emphasis on this specific identity was politically strategic: by the following decade, all of these movements were gone, and the landowner gentry resigned to total assimilation.

The ko’minka (Japanization, imperialization) policies were fully enforced by the 1940s, producing the first of the two moments of superimposition of a high-culture on society that Gellner could identify as prompting the first nationalist sprout on the island. In fact, Gellner identifies as the


²¹³ Ibidem.
moment in which a society turns to modernity the adoption of a centralized education system that homogenizes national culture. This turning point has happened twice in Taiwan: first, under the auspices of the Japanese Empire, and then again when the Kuomintang arrived on the Island. The Nipponization of Taiwan, which entailed the ban of Classical Chinese and the adoption of Japanese language, apparatus of life-style and traditions, led to different consequences in the shaping of national identity depending on age and social class: for the elder, ko’minka started too late to have any significant influence; young people were fully but controversially Japanized, choosing to cooperate not to incur in any political risks, while the “aged gentry with a Chinese education” remained submissive, but held a poor consideration of the colonial rulers.\textsuperscript{214} All considered, at the end of Japanese colonial rule Taiwan’s identity was blurred, but the Taiwanese [台湾人 Taiwanren] discourse had entered the scenes: a mixture of colonial resentment and scarce political representation, together with a variously successful eradication of Han culture and dismissive repression would, over time, cement this precarious national identity. To such a fragmented, nebulous and double sense of identity (being Japanese without actually \textit{being Japanese}) we should apply an “ideology of abandonment”\textsuperscript{215}, a sort of “victimhood nationalism”\textsuperscript{216}: these discourses, later on, contributed in shaping a Taiwanese identity centered not only on perpetual exclusion from the glories of history, but also on rejection (by the Mainland), and subjugation (by the Japanese). Jie-Hyun Lim explains that for ‘victimhood nationalism’ we should mean “the competing national memories over the position of the victim in coming terms with the nation’s pasts”; this process is complete when such memory becomes hereditary, as nationalism without collective memory wouldn’t matter much. Professor Lim believes victimhood nationalism to be transnational, as transnational is nationalism \textit{per se}, in as much as ‘modern nations and all their impedimenta’ (as

\textsuperscript{214} Ibidem.  
Hobsbawm described them) “can be fed only in the transnational space”\(^{217}\): they should be considered from both the perspective of the victim and of the victimizing actor. Taiwanese nationalism entered the pattern of victimhood nationalism during Japanese colonization, demonstrating that Renan was right to argue that “shared suffering unites people more than common joy, and mourning is better than victory for the national memory.”\(^{218}\)

All in all, observes Professor Alan Wachman, Japanese rule modernized and improved Taiwan, but [Japanese rule] “may […] have affected the growth of a nationalist sentiment”\(^{219}\) at the same time: as the Japanese typically looked upon islanders with contempt and monopolized all major positions in the government, people felt victimized and isolated; their improved economic conditions made them more conscious of how different they were. Moreover, the faster Taiwanese economy was boosted, the more people grew fond of their country, leading them to identify even more with their land - be them Taiwanese proper or Mainlanders. Taiwanese considered themselves a group also because they were all ruled by foreigners - and the same will be true under Nationalist rule. Moreover, the ‘island factor’ has to be considered: people living on an island often feel like they belong to a different reality, as the spatial distance between them and any other place requires a journey that is different from the journey from a city to another. I suggest that natural boundaries influenced the ideological ones, as the geographic distance between Taiwan and China generated two completely different national histories, and, definitely not without the help of all the elements mentioned up to now, it triggered a certain ‘union in isolation’ that made a good legacy for national consciousness.

\(^{217}\) Ibidem.


II. National Identity under KMT rule: longing for self-salvation

“The ship docked, the gangways were lowered, and off came the troops of China, the victors. The first man to appear was a bedraggled fellow [...] with a carrying pole across his shoulder, from which was suspended his umbrella, sleeping mat, cooking pot, and cup. Others like him followed, some with shoes, some without. Few had guns. [...] My father wondered what Japanese could possibly think. [...] He said, ‘If there had been a hole nearby, I would have crawled in!’” – Peng Ming-Min on the first Nationalist troops to arrive in Taiwan in occasion of a welcome ceremony hosted by the Japanese, who had lost the war.  

“The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have jointly forgotten many things”221, considered Renan: Taiwanese were asked to join and forget together the horrors of KMT’s early rule, especially of February 28th. These memories being completely buried deep inside the folds of history, Taiwanese were also forced to forget the possibility to have any international weight for years, beginning with the Japanese occupation until present days. After the spike in violence represented by the 2-28 Incident, Taiwan went through generally quiet decades in the 1950s and 1960s, acquiescing to a one-party rule while increasing their awareness of the huge gap between them and their ruling class. The difference entrenched even deeper into Taiwanese conscience because after the Incident, and with the retreat on the island of Chiang Kai-Shek’s defeated Nationalist army in 1949, the “White Terror” [白色恐怖 baise kongbu] period began: thousands of Taiwanese were prosecuted and killed for their alleged ties with the Communists222. Nevertheless, with the advent of the Korean conflict, the US showed their support to Chiang Kai-Shek’s regime, and aid started to flow inside the country: despite the bloody repression they were subjected to, Taiwanese had no other option but the KMT when it came to choose a political side, and US support contributed in giving the party some legitimacy. The US guided Taiwan through an economic development process that had to transform Formosa into a “bastion against Communism” in their bipolar confrontation with the Soviet Union (whose bastion

221 “L'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses” - E. Renan, Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?.
was the PRC instead). The KMT and the Taiwanese settled for economic development: the
government, stimulated by US aid - and by the promise of further aid to come - worked out a
comprehensive economic reforms program, an export-oriented strategy, liberalization of trade, and
adopted a convenient Statute for the Encouragement of Investment\(^{223}\) in 1960. Together with an
accent on labour intensive industries and the establishment of several export processing zones.
“Taiwan became the fastest-growing economy in the world, because of the sound economic and
industrial infrastructure and the Statute for the Encouragement of Investment”\(^{224}\) And yet the so-
called “Taiwan miracle” did not result in a gain in international leverage, as Taiwan’s position was
gradually losing grip on the representation of “China” as PRC’s development went by. Moreover,
the government kept repression levels as high as ever, censuring all forms of dissent and crushing
every quest for more representation that local people might promote. In fact, Taiwanese people still
found no space in the government and shared no identity with the ruling party (who never went
from the position of *ruler*, to compatriots, or similar epithets); their culture dismissed in favor of the
‘speaking Mandarin’ policy, and with growing economic prowess at their disposal, it didn’t take
long before dissention began to spring out of Formosans’ every pore. One illustrious example of
such a will of freedom from the constraints of authoritarianism of every kind and flag was the
“Declaration of Formosan Self-Salvation” \([ 台灣人民自救宣言 Taiwan renmin zijiu xuanyan ]\) by
Professor Peng Ming-min and two of his students, Hsieh Tsung-Min and Wei Ting-Chao, in 1964.
Peng, a Professor of Political Science at National Taiwan University, was arrested at a later stage
for this appeal to all the Taiwanese people, a Declaration in which he substantially advocated for a
“one China, one Taiwan” policy as a long-acknowledged truth. Taiwan is already an independent
country - wrote the three dissidents - and its people have to rise and fight for democracy. Peng was

\(^{223}\) This Statute was aimed at attracting funds from national and international investors and employ them for industrial
construction. Among the incentives offered to the investors: a 5-years tax holiday for who responded to certain criteria,
tax exemptions on machineries and raw materials, etc.

\(^{224}\) Ibidem, pp. 331 – 333.
not the only one to be arrested: he and Wei got an eight-year sentence, Hsieh a ten-year one. As a consequence of US pressures on the government, Peng obtained amnesty and fled to Sweden in 1970.

I will quote several passages of the Declaration, as I believe it gives an all-encompassing picture of the landscape of Taiwanese identity formation as it was rising during the 1960s and 1970s:

A strong movement is rapidly sweeping across Taiwan. It is a self-salvation movement for the 12 million people of Taiwan, who are unwilling to be governed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or destroyed by Chiang Kai-shek. People throughout the world are awakening, and we want to join them. To establish a democratic, free, sensible, and prosperous society, we will unite to abolish Chiang Kai-shek’s illegitimate regime. We deeply believe that joining this strong movement to realize our dignified objectives is everyone’s right, and also everyone’s duty.

[…] 2. As for the Taiwanese youth drafted to substitute for the retired soldiers, still embedded in their minds is their hatred for Chiang Kai-shek’s slaughtering of the twenty-thousand Taiwanese leaders during the 228 Incident. Although the Taiwanese youth do not vocalize their hatred, they are nevertheless Chiang Kai-shek’s “silent enemies.”

 […] 6. Is Taiwan sufficient to form its own country? A country is only an instrument to bring welfare to its people. Any people who face the same situation and stand to lose or gain together can form a country. For more than ten years, Taiwan has practically been a country. In terms of population, productivity, and cultural level, Taiwan ranks in the thirties among the one hundred and plus members of the United Nations. In fact, it is the people from many small countries that are benefiting more from social welfare and the contributions of culture. The Scandinavian countries, Switzerland, and South America’s Paraguay are all good examples. We should abandon the illusion and burden of a “big country” and face reality by building a democratic and prosperous society.

[…] Our principles: 8. Away from the Nationalists and the Communists, Taiwan must choose a third path----the path of self-salvation. Let’s end these dark days! Let us summon all those who are unwilling to be governed by the communists, and also reluctant to be destroyed by Chiang Kai-shek. Let’s unite and fight to end Chiang’s despotic regime and build a free nation.

Translation by Li Ming-Juinn and William Wei-Lun Hsu.

As Professor Hughes wrote, it is uncertain whether the Declaration of Formosan Self-Salvation actually had an impact over Taiwanese society in the 1960s, but it did have the merit to reveal the ideological dynamics going on among Taiwanese intellectuals, tired of the authoritarianism of KMT and of the self-fulfilling goal of “reconquering the Mainland” - clearly an unreachable chimera.

225 M. A. Rubinstein, Taiwan: A New History, p. 335.
Moreover, the KMT’s sovereign rule over Taiwan had ended up unintentionally endowing the island with \textit{de facto} sovereignty, especially after the capital of ROC was moved from Nanjing to Taipei in 1949\textsuperscript{227}. Nationalists had fled the Chinese motherland and separated the governments, and yet they based their own legitimacy over a no-more-existent unity with the same motherland they had abandoned. How could they maintain political legitimization? After the US and PRC re-approached in the 1970s, a crisis of legitimacy hit hard on the KMT, already frail for the spread dissatisfaction, as seen above: when Taiwan lost its seat at the United Nations in 1971, and all the world’s countries began recognizing the Mainland instead of Taiwan as the legitimate government to represent China, the KMT’s legitimacy crisis was not merely internal anymore. The Nationalists could not represent China on the international scene, and yet that was where they came from: there was no way they could efficiently represent Taiwan, a country they did not even consider their motherland. Interestingly enough, the KMT leadership reacted with opening to democratic procedures and relaxing the political pressures: as democratization slowly filtrated into society, the cultivation of national identity crept in between the rifts of the one-party rule.

By the late 1970s a number of members of KMT’s opposition gathered in a group known as \textit{Dangwai} [党外 literally: outside the Party], the “first organized political challenge to the KMT”\textsuperscript{228}, asking for a democratic turn and demanding the lift of martial law. Furthermore, reports Danny Roy, they insisted over Taiwan’s need for self-determination, and engaged in overseas opposition activities based in the US or Japan. \textit{Dangwai} members gathered in an organization around the journal \textit{Meilidao} [美麗島雜誌 – Formosa Magazine], founded in 1979. This Magazine was not the first newspaper that opposed KMT and had a Taiwanese identity connotation, but it was the first time that a newspaper actually represented a political organization.\textsuperscript{229} The Formosa Magazine

\textsuperscript{227} Y.H., Chu and J.W., Lin, “Political Development in 20th-Century Taiwan: State-Building, Regime Transformation and the Construction of National Identity”.

\textsuperscript{228} D. Roy, \textit{Taiwan: A Political History}, p. 158.

organized protests all over the country and had widespread offices, pursuing the quest for democratic institutions and social justice: the government obviously tried to keep them quiet and harassed them in various ways, but they always found ways of meeting and demonstrate anyway.\footnote{M. A. Rubinstein, *Taiwan: A New History*, p. 441.}

Main leaders of the *Dangwai* were all arrested in occasion of yet another watershed in Taiwanese identity history: the Kaohsiung Incident of December 1979. The Formosa Magazine group had organized a rally in occasion of the International Human Rights Day on December 10th: clashes with the police occurred, but the demonstrators dispersed and a few days later the arrests started. The so called ‘Kaohsiung Eight’ organizers of the demonstration were arrested, secluded and threatened to confess their guilt of instigating Taiwanese Independence. Among these eight leaders, particularly brutal is the experience of Lin Yi-Hsiung: his mother visited him in jail and noticed the abuses and tortures he was inflicted by the police. Hence, she tried to call the Amnesty International Office in Japan to denounce the abuses. The morning after, Lin’s mother and 7-year old twin daughters were found stabbed to death in their home. Lin’s family house was under strict police surveillance at the time of the murders, and yet the authorities claimed to know nothing about it.

Despite the arrest of all *Dangwai* main leaders, the opposition on the island was not vanquished, and more opposition came from overseas Taiwanese as well. The re-grouping of *Dangwai* and the rising number of anti-government movements gradually loosened KMT’s grip on power, and despite the ban on the creation of political parties, a new opposition party was finally founded in 1986, the Democratic Progressive Party. The President Chiang Ching-Kuo, in order not to lose more legitimacy in front of the upcoming elections of 1986, had already started recruiting more native Taiwanese in the party, nominating the native Lee Deng Hui as vice-President and official successor. Thus, 1986 signals a real turning point in the history of Taiwan: the first two-party elections were held and martial law was lifted. Chiang is reported to have said: “The times have changed, events have changed; trends have changed. In response to these changes the ruling party
must adopt new ways to meet this democratic revolution and link up with historical trend.”231 Despite his iron fist, Chiang Ching-Kuo had indeed the merit to have recognized the need for an opening in his country: the changes he initiated survived to his death and “unleashed Taiwanese nationalism and desire for independence, but also channeled it through the democratic contest.”232

With the death of Chiang in January 1988 Taiwan passed in the hands of the first native Taiwanese President of the island, Lee Deng Hui, who enhanced the process of Taiwanization of Taiwan and completed the path of community-imagining that transformed Formosa from a geographical space to a civic political community.

III. Narratives of Taiwanese Nationalism

There are several approaches that can be used to face Taiwanese nationalism and come to grips with its undeniable existence: a pragmatic approach underlines the act of imagining a sovereign political community through indigenization, a trend enforced by Lee Deng Hui and Chen Shui Bian’s presidencies – and probably the boldest form of self-assertion Taiwan can manage; constructivism on the other hand attributes to cultural factors a determining role in the shaping of identity, stressing the influence of the modern global culture in steering Taiwan’s recent democratization into line with its national aspirations233. A realist approach would consider the process of democratization as a way to regain security – and it actually is necessary to acknowledge that KMT leaders opened to democratic reforms in order not to lose more legitimacy after the diplomatic crisis of the 1970s; a functionalist one would explain the rise of a Taiwanese nationalist conscience as a setback of democratization aimed at sustaining the economic boom and at ensuring the role of the rule of law

231 D. Roy, Taiwan: A Political History. p. 173.
in consistency with global norms.\textsuperscript{234} As Mumin Chen and Cheng-feng Shih argue, the most common approaches are primordialism, that recurs to ethnic and physical characteristics to establish a feeling of collective identity, or structuralism (or instrumental) approach, that calls for the insubstantiality of cultural factors to inspire group identification, as “only when these people began perceiving a common destiny in the form of deprivation of political power, economic resources, social status, and/or cultural values do they start forming a collective identity.”\textsuperscript{235} Structuralism connects with the aforementioned ‘victimhood nationalism’, an explanation I believe to be really solid in that it gives oppression and suffering the right weight in crafting a common experience of grief, that inevitably helps people to imagine their community in Andersonian terms, \textit{as both inherently limited and sovereign}\textsuperscript{236} - the limit being the confines of suffering.

Taiwanese’s “daily plebiscite” takes place not within an ideological void, but in a dimension pervasively entrenched into the giant Chinese nationalism’s sphere and in the \textit{eternal recurrence} of historical legacies. Of course, no nationalism develops in a not-ideologically laden reality: but Taiwanese experience is still unique in that the same rhetoric that it’s trying to escape deeply connotes the roots of its existence, and its future offshoots. As Shih Chih-Yu argues, Chinese attitude toward Taiwan is controlled by Chinese Nationalism\textsuperscript{237} as well, as Taiwan’s issue is for China a ‘matter of people’s heart’, a psychological as well as a national matter, an emotional imperative. “Territorial sovereignty […] reverts to a tool of identity politics”\textsuperscript{238} in China, as Chinese people must first of all be united. Cultural unity is the last bastion of polity unity that still makes it possible for PRC’s governments to hold such an immense country together – even if we are recently assisting at an increased detachment of the troubled areas of Tibet and Xinjiang through unexpectedly venturous separatist movements. Territorial integrity is clearly a matter of life or

\textsuperscript{234} Ibidem.


\textsuperscript{238} Ibidem, p. 72.
death for China, and not merely because they really care for the extension of their territory, but rather because it holds the key for legitimacy; Chinese nationalism shares with its Taiwanese counterpart the character of victimization, as it’s essentially an anti-imperialist ideology.

Taiwanese national identity finds its historical justifications – as shown in the previous chapter – in early colonial history and its subjection to multiple hegemonies; constantly changing over the years, national identity became exclusively Taiwanese around the mid-1980s. As pointed out by Yu-Shan Wu, the rise of a Taiwanese identity might be “more a matter of political re-identification than cultural de-Sinification”\(^239\): as he goes on identifying several explanations for the rise of an exclusive conscience, he notices as usual that many who identify exclusively as Taiwanese, do not support independence of Taiwan. Nevertheless, China is largely perceived as a foreign country: many have never even visited it, and have no concrete imagination of China as it really is. What the two countries have of each other (at a popular level of knowledge) it’s just narratives of past glories, ownership and myths. Just like in ancient times - when Taiwan was only a tale, hovering between representations as a horrific cannibals’ domain or a marvelously fecund land of treasure - all that the island is, is narratives, “always informed by pre-existing figments of the geographic imaginary.”\(^240\)

Taiwanese nationalism can be understood applying different approaches, and we have mentioned pragmatism, constructivism, realism, functionalism, primordialism and structuralism: whatever we may choose, national identity that springs from this politically constructed nationalism is a “civic, liberal, and, above all, pacifist”\(^241\) ideology.


IV. Taiwanese national identity Apprehended by means of the Classical Literature on Nationalism

“Most islanders [...] do not subscribe to the idea of a distinct Taiwanese culture incompatible with the Chinese culture but they stand united against the PRC’s variant of Chinese nationalism and its claim of sovereignty over the island. Consequently, whilst Taiwan may develop a stronger civic national identity in the future, both the confrontation with the PRC and the dynamics of Taiwan’s electoral politics may at the same time produce a new and more radical ethnic nationalism.” – Gunter Shubert, 2006

The phrase above mentions the contraposition between civic and ethnic nationalism already treated in Chapter 2, considering the Taiwanese identity as a fundamentally civic one, that at the same time cannot be detached from an ethnic component; given that is ethnic, it will probably be radical as well. This is an interesting way of applying Kohn’s theory to Taiwan, and it’s a distortion of his theory as well: Kohn conceived it as an ‘either/or’ kind of contrast, where the notion of state precedes or follows the presence of nationalism. In Western countries, argued Kohn, the ideas of nation, national identity, and nationalism, arose within the context of the state: the state preceded the nation, and nationalism grew out of this lack of nation-ness. In Asia and Eastern Europe on the other hand, nationalism “struggled to redraw political boundaries in conformity with ethnographic demands”242, hence the state was not there, not yet; population consolidated around similar ethos, religion, or cultural heritage, and it seeks to create a state. Statehood comes after the gathering of people around the feeling of commonalities, and nationhood does not derive from citizenship. This is, according to Kohn, more prone to happen where cultural and state boundaries do not coincide: ethnic nationalisms try to rewrite national boundaries according to cultural frontiers.

As for Taiwan, its nationalism is ethnic, but not in such a re-writing-boundaries’ key: the only boundaries Taiwan wouldn’t mind to redraw are probably the intrusion frontiers, as most of the international actors do not recognize them as sovereign, but write about their sovereignty all the

time.\textsuperscript{243} It is an ethnologic more than ethnographic nationalism, as it is more concerned with the different ethnic groups in their cultural manifestations - and there is to hope that this ethnic internal schism will not lead to the explosion of tensions long pent-up inside Taiwan.

What if we concern ourselves not with the timing of nation and state in shaping nationalism, but with nations with more than one state, or a group which has more than one state associated with its culture - such as United Kingdom and New Zealand? These two countries are geographically distant, but really proximate as far as culture is concerned: in their case, no one suffered from their political separation, as it was much less trouble to have two, individual sovereignties. A pattern could be seen here for Cross-Strait relations. Gellner considered the eventuality of fragmented states but akin nations as offending the principle of nationalism, even though not as much as the ethnic divergence between rulers and ruled (like in Manchu China) would do. “Unification succeeds only in those cases where the external disadvantages of fragmentation are very great and visible […], and I believe the cultural and historical differences between Taiwan and China - that have kept accumulating in the last four hundred years - could make the case for this violation of nationalism to become a possible lens through which to look at Cross-Strait relations. Moreover, the accent on cultural formation in determining the shift towards modernity (that then, eventually, leads to nationalism) is another element of Gellner’s theory to be extrapolated and framed on Taiwan. The process of super-imposition of a homogenized high culture on society showed an interesting variation in Taiwan. As already mentioned, this turning point has happened twice: first, under Japanese rule, and then again under the KMT. This would at the very least muddle Gellner’s phasic view of human history, as in this case first the Japanese, and then the Nationalists, had used the

\textsuperscript{243} There is something about the Taiwan issue though that makes it inscrutable and crystal clear at the same time: Taiwanese people will have to forgive the general interest in their area, and take it as sign of solidarity with the “unjustly treated in the world” ’s cause that often strikes Westerners observers dealing with new democracies (myself included).

\textsuperscript{244} E. Gellner, \textit{Nations and Nationalism}. 

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legitimate use of education as a source of state power, and diversely triggered “the crystallization of new units”\textsuperscript{245} suitable for the newly-established conditions.

During these processes, victimhood’s discourse forcibly entered the scene, as “everyone […] has cause to feel unjustly treated”\textsuperscript{246}, and could find the basis for a union in grief that, as we have seen, will accompany Taiwanese national identity up to today.

Nationalism shapes nations, and nations are imagined communities, springing out of people’s holograms of belonging: Taiwan makes the perfect case for Anderson’s pioneering notion of nation-ness. “All profound changes in consciousness, by their very nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions […] spring narratives”.\textsuperscript{247} I would suggest to think of Taiwanese nationalism as a narrative of unfolding\textsuperscript{248} that sprang from the changes in consciousness triggered by the foreign dominations, together with the specificities of the Taiwanese experience (as both happened and perceived). According to Anderson, we shall treat nations like they are people, because they both need an identity, and both will live and die; but nations “have no clearly identifiable births”, thus we should not try and necessarily place in time the exact date of birth of Taiwan as an independent nation. What should be reasoned about instead is the will of imagining a community of one’s own, or to behave like there is one; this could be held as a sufficient condition to constitute nationhood. Taiwanese imagined community [想像的共同體 xiangxiang de gongtongti] is, as reported by Perry Anderson (referring to a conference held by his brother, Benedict Anderson, in Taipei) comparable to the Creole communities of Eighteenth century. More specifically, Taiwanese nationalism can be seen as a modern version of

\textquote{“the separation of overseas settler communities from an imperial homeland, such as gave birth to the United States in the 18th century, and to the Latin American republics of the early 19th century. […] The overseas settler – or ‘creole’ – type required no major linguistic or ethnic difference from the metropolis. Rather, the markers of nascent national identity were territorial and historical:}

\textsuperscript{245} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibidem, p. 204.
\textsuperscript{248} M. J., Brown, \textit{Is Taiwan Chinese?: The impact of culture, power, and migration on changing identities}.
geographical distance and colonial institutions engendered a distinct culture and self-consciousness, and, with it, a collective identity that laid the foundation for independent states. The late 19th century saw a repetition of this process in the white dominions of Canada and Australasia. Seen in this light, contemporary Taiwanese nationalism belongs to a political family with a well-established ancestry. The great majority – perhaps 85 per cent – of its modern population of 22,500,000 descends from migrants who arrived in the island from Fujian and Guangdong between the 17th and late 19th centuries, pushing its Malayo-Polynesian natives back into the mountainous interior. Genetically and linguistically, they are as Chinese as white New Zealanders are British. But geographical separation and historical experience have produced over time a settler community with a national identity that is today as natural and legitimate as American or Costa Rican, Australian or Uruguayan.249

Considering now Breuilly’s theory on nationalism, Taiwan would lack of nation-ness by virtue of the very basis of his theory: “: (a) there exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character. (b) the interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values. (c) the nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty.”250 Taiwan fulfills the first assertion, but its interests seem to be rather attached to the nation across the Strait, both economically and culturally, or attached enough not to take priority over economic or military stakes (especially with this last Presidency). As for independence, Taiwan has none, and there can be no room here to argue whether de facto sovereignty is in itself enough to confer political status or not. Nationalism is self-referent, but it can be developmental at the same time: in Taiwan, or, more generally, in East Asian countries, nationalism was often of a developmental nature, postulating a convergence of authoritarian rule and free market economies.

Another aspect of Breuilly’s theory on nationalism that I found applicable to Taiwan is his ‘sub-nationalist reaction’ discourse. Assuming that nationalism seeks to abolish the distinction between state and society, and it is distinctive only when it does not succeed, we assert that if nationalism was claiming the truth, it would abolish its own foundations.251 New states can hardly have a good balance between state and society, and must rely on invented traditions to force the harmonization

250 J. Breuilly, Nationalism and the State.
251 Ibidem, p. 390.
of its components. The decisions on what can and cannot be included into national identity rests arbitrarily with the state. Thus, political needs of a newly established country (or rule on a country) dictate the identity of that country, not the other way round, echoing Kedourie and Gellner’s assumptions. States determine nationality, and their ideology will be a means to an end: this can, according to Breuilly, “provoke sub-nationalist resistance”\(^{252}\): your state does not represent my nation. Could this be the case for Taiwan? Can the pervasiveness of Chinese Nationalism have caused the rise of Taiwanese nationalism? Surely ideology shapes nationalism, but to bluntly characterize Formosa as a sub-nationalist enclave would be reductive, since Taiwanese self-consciously built their national conscience in a much more deliberate way than a mere reaction. Democratization here could make the case for nationhood, given that nationalism can hardly be the determining factor of the existence or the non-existence of a nation, just as Breuilly writes. Scholars such as Professor Shih Chih-Yu though argued against the linkage between democratization and independent statehood feelings in Taiwan; according to him, Taiwanese conscience is about external representation and not much about democratic processes. The American Pacific Rim discourse and the needs of Taiwanese politicians ended up shaping a national identity that is actually unhooked from anti-communism or liberalism.\(^{253}\)

\(^{252}\) Ibidem, pp. 390 – 391.

Conclusions

“There are certain ways of knowing Taiwan, of knowing that someone is Taiwanese, and ways that Taiwanese know themselves as Taiwanese which construct identity in terms of specific understanding of language, power, and history.” – Mark Harrison, University of Tasmania

I. Taiwan, China, USA

“Wherever there is oppression, there is resistance. Countries want independence, nations want liberation and the people want revolution--this has become the irresistible trend of history. All nations, big or small, should be equal: big nations should not bully the small and strong nations should not bully the weak. China will never be a superpower and it opposes hegemony and power politics of any kind.”^{254} This caption in taken from the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972, signed between China and the US to promote the furthering of the newly re-established ties between the two governments. All nations should be equal – except, of course, those nations which are not nations, and big nations should not bully the small – it goes without saying that this represents a peak in the discourse of China’s pacific rise [和平崛起 *heping jueqi*]. The whole agreement lays the basis for US-China relationship, and started the ‘constructive ambiguity’ current, as Kissinger defined it, that will dominate the Taiwan issue, and allow Chinese claims of US support of the One China policy. The Joint Communiqué goes like this:

The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan.^{255}

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^{255} Ibidem.
The US thus endorsed the One China policy, but did not derive any provision from it: they simply acknowledged that China pursues this policy, and they do not wish to oppose it. This ‘constructive ambiguity’ allowed American government to lower the tensions with China regarding this untied knot in their reciprocal relations, without totally losing ties with Taiwan at the same time. At the time of this declaration, it could still be held true by both sides of the Strait that there was but one China – just each side thought to be the one worth representing it. Nevertheless, nowadays this cannot be true anymore. Differences have emerged overtime that made the ROC drop its claims over the representation of China as a whole, and Taiwanese largely do not wish to represent China, but just to be left undisturbed.

Nevertheless, the Taiwan issue is still a huge obstacle to a complete smoothing of Sino – American relations - a relationship destined to devastation in case of future moves toward independence by Taiwan. As a matter of fact, US policy toward Taiwan is now twofold: on the one hand, based on the three Communiqués with the PRC, the US sticks to the One China policy and does not support Taiwan’s independence; on the other hand, according to the Taiwan Relations Act, Taiwan is regarded as a protectorate, and they maintain close ties with Taiwanese government, selling them advanced weapons and radars and improving their military defense training. This, as Chen Qimao, Chairman of Shanghai Center for Rim-Pac Strategic and International Studies, has suggested, ended up sending conflicting signals to Taiwan separatists: they might think that the US would protect Taiwan at any cost, while Americans have reiterated the concept that they stick with China and they do not support unilateral actions across the Strait. The United States position over Taiwan’s

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256 The 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) provides the legal basis for the unofficial relationship between the United States and Taiwan, and enshrines the U.S. commitment to assist Taiwan in maintaining its defensive capability. The United States insists on the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait differences, opposes unilateral changes to the status quo by either side , and encourages dialogue to help advance such an outcome. The act stipulates that the United States will “consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States”. Source: US Department of State – “US relations with Taiwan”. Accessed on 21/09/2014, available at [http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35855.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35855.htm).

issue was and still is crucial, as it is the pivotal role of Taiwan in United States’ Asia-Pacific
strategy.

As for China, its attitude toward Taiwan is deeply involved with Chinese nationalist discourses, the
latter being rooted more in the notion of sovereignty than in the one of patriotism: Chinese people
must be united, and China’s territory must stay integer and sovereign as a whole. “International as
well as internal forces will laugh at the Chinese people if their richest province [Taiwan] flies away.
The Chinese government would have no alternative to a Civil War.” By internal forces we mean
separatist forces in Tibet and Xinjiang, as well as the citizens of PRC in general: how could China
detain credibility if any province can just declare independence without consequences?

II. An urgent but tenuous imagining of Taiwan

Taiwanese national identity is a fact; a complex, frail and threatened reality, but still a fact. It is
characterized by more than a few peculiarities, first of all the fact that Taiwanese people did not
make up their minds yet about which direction to take for their future. More precisely, younger
generations are increasingly aware of their need for independence, but a mature consensus is still far
from being achieved. What more or less everyone in Taiwan agrees about though, is that a conflict
with the PRC is largely unnecessary, even if conflicting attitudes are present towards the salvific
role of the US in the eventuality of a Chinese attack.

As Mark Harrison rightly writes, “for both Taiwanese and those who write about them, the
tenuousness and urgency of Taiwanese identity makes visible the processes through which their
identities are fashioned”, and it’s just presumptuous to try and systematize it, as it is made of too
many single moments and understandings of language, history, economy, ethnicity, geography.

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260 M., Harrison, "Writing Taiwan's nationhood: language, politics, history", in Fang-long Shih, Stuart Thompson, Paul-Francois Tremlett (eds.), *Re-Writing Culture in Taiwan*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2009, p. 123.
Referring again to Harrison’s words, Taiwanese people collectively underwent several journeys of narrativization of their own identity, journeys through which they achieved an identity, “covering up the gaps, elisions, and erasures” of history, hidden but still visible in today’s Taiwan. Taiwanese identity has been faced from the different angles of history and politics, economy and ethnicity, and nationalist classic literature has then been applied to it in order to give possible definitions of a Formosan national identity in the framework of nationalist rhetoric – as it is an undeniably part of Chinese nationalist rhetoric, as well.

Taiwan might not have a straightforward position as far as its independence is concerned, but it is quite clear that people do not comply with the idea of being ruled by the PRC, and not just because of the traumatic experience under the KMT in the 1950s. At present, it seems to me that Taiwanese cannot unify with China, simply because Taiwanese people are not Chinese: many have already experienced this, many other are far away from knowing what it would be like to be Chinese. Taiwanese know more about China than Chinese know about Taiwan anyway: PRC’s citizens do not generally have experience of contemporary Taiwan, just narrations and memories of when Taiwanese submitted with no protests to Japanese rule. Moreover, as Melissa Brown argues, there’s even a resentment component towards Taiwanese: they have the US on their side and they were spared the worst horrors of Chinese history - the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

This be said, imagining that China - no need for war - could manage and convince Taiwan to merge into the big body of the People’s Republic, would there be social basis for integration in the Chinese society? Taken as a whole, China isn’t surely the best exemplar of free democracy in the world, and yet sparkles of expectations have been observed by China watchers, quests for transparency, more liberal institutions, less corrupt governance are rising from isolated voices. It would be risky for China to make Taiwan one part of its empire, as the island has already gone one steps too far along the road of democratization: and democratization might not be the source of Taiwanese statehood, but it could be a shield against unification indeed.

261 Ibidem.
I would suggest that Taiwanese are striving for freedom in a certain way, similar to Federico Chabod’s comparison in his ‘L’idea di Nazione’ of the concept of freedom during Italian Risorgimento as opposed to the one that Swiss and German people had in the eighteenth century. Freedom is not so much something to conquer anymore, destroying the present order and recreating a new one. Freedom is enshrined in national history, and needs not to be conquered, but defended from external aggressions; it needs to go hand in hand with national past - it’s not a hope, but a part of history. It is not a merely political freedom we are talking about – but a moral, mental, cultural one, the very essence of the nation.\textsuperscript{262} Taiwan has achieved its moral freedom along the way, during a journey of identity crafting that was long, elliptic, and filled with moments of high nationalistic and symbolic value: while it is probably for the future to show us which direction will this national identity choose, it’s for the present to assess the not debatable free nature of Taiwanese national identity.

Be it bound for war, unification, independence or status quo maintenance, we hope Taiwan will not let go of freedom, that, after all, draws a thick line demarcating the two sides of the Strait.

\textsuperscript{262} F., Chabod, \textit{L’idea di nazione}, Laterza, 1967, pp. 32-33.
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