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A Case Study on Internet Polarization:

Sina, "The Taiwan Strait Forum" on

Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) signing

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**Abstract**

In the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) signed on June 29, 2010, Taiwan and China declared they would cooperate with each other economically and enter a new era of mutually-beneficial relations. People from across the Straits, North America, and the so-called "Chinese community" worldwide joined in an internet debate over ECFA's pros and cons. "Taiwan Straits," Sina US, one of the most popular forums of Sina according to Beijing, which is owned and run by a Chinese investor., has attracted much enthusiastic debate. In this study, we investigate whether the existing public opinion reached any consensus through democratic dialogue or degenerated into polarization during the ECFA negotiations and its subsequent signing. We draw on the forum interaction records from March 29, 2010 to September 29, 2010 and employ content analysis to investigate questions such as follows: Was consensus enhanced or reduced in the forum? How did forum participants treat their peers and opponents respectively? Did in-group or out-group association matter in interaction? We provide some preliminary answers to these questions in light of the theory of political polarization.

**Key Words:**

group polarization, internet, the Taiwan Straits, public opinion

**Introduction**

The Taiwan Strait relationship is an interaction landscape in transformation. For more than 60 years, the relationship vacillated between antagonistic dispute, and beneficial dialogue. On June 29, 2010, Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) was signed ushering in a new economic era over the Strait. This historical milestone allows ordinary Chinese to travel, invest, and trade in Taiwan individually.[[1]](#footnote-1) People from both sides of the Strait can now interact on a personal level in Taiwan, which leads some to expect that a political peace will be achieved sooner or later,[[2]](#footnote-2) and a "coopetition"[[3]](#footnote-3) among political systems, administrative achievements, and civil rights conditions may start right away.[[4]](#footnote-4) Yet, we can't predict if this interaction will lead cross-strait relations into more positive or more negative conditions. Online interaction could be a reference for future interaction.

Study indicates that the Taiwanese people's historically Chinese national identity has deteriorated because of China's totalitarian political system, its low level of personal income, and its underdevelopment of civil rights. Scholar suggests that China needs to improve its policies towards Taiwan in order to construct an image of a single community if the One China goal is to have any possibility of succeeding.[[5]](#footnote-5) Unlike he Europe Union,[[6]](#footnote-6) more interaction between mainland China and Taiwan doesn't seem to lead the two parties to reunification, nevertheless economic cooperation becomes closer while political separation grows.[[7]](#footnote-7) One Chinese scholar blames the Kuomingtang (KMT) which dilutes its own stated role as a pro-reunion party by insisting that Taiwan must benefit first before reunification. However, the same scholar admits that KMT has to change its role in order to persuade voters to side with its aims.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Beijing has employed a strategy of "Economic cooperation, international compression,[[9]](#footnote-9) and military display" in dealing with Taiwan. In this way, China attracted many Taiwanese investments in mainland China resulting in twenty years of economic growth.[[10]](#footnote-10) Though, the Taiwanese recognize that the freedom and civil rights they currently enjoy could vanish if reunification is realized. Statistics revealed that the more investment and trade interaction happening cross-strait, the less the strength of the Taiwanese pro reunification movement: China become the number 1 market for Taiwan investments in September 2007. This trend remains unchanged with China as Taiwan's biggest export market.[[11]](#footnote-11) Taiwanese investment in China increased more than 140 times from 1989~2006 according to Ministry of Commerce of China, while the percentage of those Taiwanese self-indentifying as Chinese decreased (see Figure 1.).

Figure 1. Taiwan Taiwanese/Chinese Self-Identity Distribution(1992~2011/06)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| year people | Taiwanese | Taiwanese & Chinese | Chinese | No Response |
| 1992 | 17.6% | 46.4% | 25.5% | 10.5% |
| 1994 | 20.2% | 44.6% | 26.2% | 8.9% |
| 1995 | 25.0% | 47.0% | 20.7% | 7.3% |
| 1996 | 24.1% | 49.3% | 17.6% | 9.0% |
| 1997 | 34% | 41.4% | 19.2% | 5.3% |
| 1998 | 36.2% | 39.6% | 16.3% | 7.8% |
| 1999 | 39.6% | 42.5% | 12.1% | 5.8% |
| 2000 | 36.9% | 44.1% | 12.5% | 6.5% |
| 2001 | 41.6% | 43.1% | 10.6% | 4.7% |
| 2002 | 41.2% | 43.7% | 9.2% | 5.8% |
| 2003 | 42.5% | 43.3% | 8.3% | 4.7% |
| 2004 | 41.1% | 47.7% | 6.2% | 5.0% |
| 2005 | 45.0% | 43.4% | 7.2% | 4.4% |
| 2006 | 44.2% | 44.9% | 6.3% | 4.6% |
| 2007 | 43.7% | 44.7% | 5.9% | 5.4% |
| 2008 | 48.4% | 43.1% | 4.1% | 4.0% |
| 2009 | 51.6% | 39.8% | 4.4% | 4.2% |
| 2010 | 52.7% | 39.8% | 3.8% | 3.7% |
| 2011/06 | 54.2% | 39.0% | 4.1% | 2.7% |

Source: National Chengchi University Election Study Center, Taipei, Taiwan

The emphasis on Taiwanese identity in the trend is making it harder for Taiwan's politicians to deal with mainland China. It is dangerous to articulate a "One China" policy especially in Taiwanese election.[[12]](#footnote-12) Some even say that it would be political suicide to propose a "One China" policy in an election campaign.[[13]](#footnote-13) In Taiwan's democratic transition, there has been a clear demand for Taiwanese national and ethnic identity. In addition each of the five recognized political parties must ultimately align themselves with reunification or separation.[[14]](#footnote-14) The Taiwanese worry about an ever-increasing military threat from China has popularized as well as polarized these populist appeals.[[15]](#footnote-15) In addition, the Taiwanese people agreed to cease social protests (thus creating greater social stability) in favor of using political participation.[[16]](#footnote-16)

There are more obstacles than opportunities blocking cross-strait relations when political differences are considered. Not only do some Taiwanese not see reunification as a choice given the policies of Beijing, but in China reunification is the only acceptable basis for relations.

China's policy of reform has led to extraordinary economic and societal changes during the past 30 years. Media, as important indicators of government policy, have to change in coping with the transformation of Chinese society despite the fact that the government still embraces one party rule. Government propaganda has extensive, direct, powerful, and harmful effects on the forming of public opinion/debates.[[17]](#footnote-17) Nevertheless debate from the public forced Beijing to allow the media to report local government corruption.[[18]](#footnote-18) There is clearly no more "Yixinyide" (one heart and one mind) in today's China. Scholars suggest that it is economic development that has brought about fundamental changes in China, in which civil liberty and political freedoms have been explored as the top two public demands.[[19]](#footnote-19) One of the demands of the public for incremental democratic change has yielded remarkable grassroots changes within the CCP; never the less those demands for political reforms must be accompanied by economic reforms and modernization. Those within CCP have realized that these urgent needs must be addressed in competitive elections held for local leadership in countrysides and townships. Such a change has been evident over the last decade.[[20]](#footnote-20) This is a definite indication of a relaxing of former Beijing policies.

As a form of media, the internet has dramatically increased individuals’ abilities to access information and to communicate with others in China. In terms of accessing information, Chinese internet users employ the internet primarily for “pragmatic reasons.”[[21]](#footnote-21) However, Beijing is still employing internet censorship practices in controlling the flow of information in China. Netizens need to avoid careless elaborations that will cause unfortunate scrutiny by government censors. If they respond with language contradictory to government policy or positions, they will draw immediate government attention. Not only will their statements be eliminated, but they also will be punished, likely with imprisonment. Still the changes are significant and have been evident over the entire last decade.

It is true to say that China suffers dramatic pressure from an unstable society riddled with hidden dissatisfactions. Valid interests and neglected or even suppressed voices clamoring for minority or individual rights are gaining some attention in the official Chinese media.[[22]](#footnote-22) China is changing; it has no choice but to change. However, these differences still prevent progress in discussion of reunification between Beijing and Taipei.

Despite the problems, Chinese and Taiwanese discussion regarding a normalized relationship is an inevitable agenda in terms of national interests, national security, and national development for both sides.[[23]](#footnote-23) In order to disentangle the conflicts in this dilemma to pursue a better solution over time, Beijing and Taipei have agreed to leave aside the "One China" issue and focus on easier disputes first to build a solid foundation for further negotiation.

Taking the need for social and institutional stability into consideration, authorities can negotiate cross-strait normalized relationship. While both agree that now is not a good time for political dialogue,[[24]](#footnote-24) netizens from both sides as well as overseas Chinese debate fiercely with the internet forum, over a future cross-strait political relationship. The Taiwan Strait Forum, one of the virtual communities of Sina US, attracts members of Chinese communities of diverse beliefs and backgrounds to deliberate in the issues. This interaction is interesting though virtual. What and how Chinese deliberate online affect future negotiations.

**1. Sina.com & Chinese Internet Users**

Sina.com, run by Chinese capital, governmental and privte, since 1999, is the largest news and entertainment web portal in China. It has been headquartered in Shanghai since October 1, 2001. Sina.com provides tailored pages in Chinese and in English for overseas Chinese. SINA US, SINA Japan, SINA Korea, SINA Australia, SINA Europe and SINA Germany serve 24/7 globally.[[25]](#footnote-25) Sina.com is ranked in the top one fourth of websites globally and 46.4% market share in China.[[26]](#footnote-26) Sina and Sohu's traffic are expected to skyrocket by the end of 2011 with the relaxation of Chinese government regulations according to Zacks investment research.[[27]](#footnote-27) Sina.com has become the most popular news media in today's China.[[28]](#footnote-28)

In China, internet users are more male (58.3%) than female (41.7%), younger,[[29]](#footnote-29) more single(57.8%) than married (42.2%), better educated,[[30]](#footnote-30) and more urban according to the CNNIC reports. Students are the largest group to use the internet[[31]](#footnote-31) though most of Chinese internet users (76%) use the internet at home.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The control of information by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is a common practice in China. Media perform the role of mouth-piece for praise of Beijing authority in an attempt to orchestrate "harmony." Internet sources are no exception.[[33]](#footnote-33) In spite of the rise in democratic functions, internet technology has also shown that it can be used to maintain undemocratic regimes as well. Beijing treats the internet like traditional media, sending a message to the Chinese that when internet regulations are disobeyed, there will be a consequence. An internet user must always take punishment into consideration under the Great Chinese Firewall. Discourses online thus tend to be more cautious and to echo the rulers’ opinions rather than being an accurate reflection of real world views held privately.[[34]](#footnote-34) In effect Sina.com is a Chinese nationalistic brand name shepherded by CCP[[35]](#footnote-35) and opened to international participation. The Taiwan Strait Forum of Sina US uses mainly Chinese though some discussion take place in English.

**2. Taiwan issue within China**

Taiwan may be an internal affair in Beijing’s eyes,[[36]](#footnote-36) but domestic opinion is not invited to engage in the debate and decision-making process. That remains confined to the Chinese Communist Party and the top military leadership which involves a very small number of officials and experts in China.[[37]](#footnote-37) In the meantime, the public is educated, mobilized, and encouraged, deliberately to support an overly state-centric perspective under CCP that claims reunification is a matter of ethnic obligation.[[38]](#footnote-38) In addition, Chinese cyberspace is consciously limited in terms of public deliberation to secure CCP's authoritarian governance[[39]](#footnote-39) where no attempt to foster civil participation took place.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Chinese netizens and cyber businessmen are smart enough to avoid punishment for defying CCP and the bureaucracy. Therefore they have practiced self-censorship since 2000.[[41]](#footnote-41) An authoritarian government limits public deliberation and debate of policy in virtual communities in China.[[42]](#footnote-42) Thus, opinions posted on the Chinese internet forum cannot be seen as representative of genuine bottom-up public deliberative democracy, nor can it be ignored as simplistic top-down propaganda.[[43]](#footnote-43) Nevertheless, it is fair to say online discourses represented as public expressions offline in China under the Great Chinese Firewall regulations are not freely expressed opinions.

**3. Signing ECFA Upon Different Expectations**

Wang Yi, Director of Chinese Taiwan Affairs of People's Republic of China, said that Beijing seeks stable, progressive development in cross-strait relations hoping that it will lead to political talk." On October 19, 2010, he emphasized that this approach is a principle in dealing with Taiwan affairs.[[44]](#footnote-44) Ma Ying-jeou, President of the Republic of China, interviewed by the Associated Press News on the same day, said that "his government was prepared to discuss political agreements, including security issues, as soon as the priority economic issues are dealt with. President Ma suggested that those political talks could start as early as his second four-year presidency if he wins re-election in 2012."[[45]](#footnote-45) President Ma also maintained that the ECFA signing can be seen as a very important mutual military trust mechanism. Ma's and Wang's statements stirred up excited expectations.

David G. Brown, former U.S. State Department official in reference to ECFA, warned Taiwan, "Taiwan must guard against the Chinese tendency to appear agreeable on simpler issues initially, and then to become increasingly demanding later on complex ones." Shelley Rigger, professor of Davidson College of political sciences, also commented that "Even though the Straits relations have improved by signing ECFA that the tension seems to be decreased, it will last only as long as China's tolerance and Taiwan's restraint."[[46]](#footnote-46) Professor Rigger's advice that both sides maintain a peaceful atmosphere to reduce tension after the ECFA signing is much more meaningful.[[47]](#footnote-47) If the Chinese and Taiwanese perceptions of one other become better that suggests the ECFA has contributed positively toward the change granting greater peace of mind in the region.

**4. Literature Review and Research Questions**

New media have created a virtual community which attempts daily to connect the real and the virtual world. Studies show that the real world and virtual space have mutually penetrated one another justifying some of the hopes for its role as a means of civic response.[[48]](#footnote-48)

People with different ideologies come to online networks to create personal connections and accumulate social capital.[[49]](#footnote-49) We propose that the online interaction can be best illustrated by future interaction in the real world. Thus netizens anonymous interactions in a virtual community would eventually be represented in the real world.

**4.1 Virtual Community As A Penetration Of Real World**

In comparison with traditional media, the internet highlights equal participation,[[50]](#footnote-50) allowing people to choose to be anonymous.[[51]](#footnote-51) Putnam states that all forms of the social connections and civic participation can be found on the internet, and that the internet transforms a secondary communication into direct interpersonal communication.[[52]](#footnote-52) Bimber suggests that online networks will create more interest-based, mobile, and small group, political gatherings. The internet continues to be a more broken, more fragmented, less elite institute of "accelerated pluralism," in which the virtual community transforms into a more causal role in public communication and in social life.[[53]](#footnote-53)

Rheingold predicts that the internet also has the ability to subvert the existing monopolistic media with some democratic internet deliberation. This will undermine some of the influence of political authority.[[54]](#footnote-54) Although media events come and go, the internet forum by nature is a spot capable of distinguishing civilization from barbarism by its attempts to respect or suppress equal opportunity in deliberation. Orlikowski suggests that different cultures will collaborate and communicate differently. His study suggests that main stream opinion is usually controlled by a small group of members who classify themselves as "in-group" within a specific boundary while seeing others as belonging to an "out-group."[[55]](#footnote-55) If boundaries hinder in-group and out-group members from equal dialogue, the integration of virtual and real world into a new social structure will become difficult or impossible as a means to accumulate positive social capital. As a result, democracy and civil society will suffer; miscommunication and mistrust will be inevitable.

Computer-intermediated networking handles communication badly because "consent," an important result of socialization, is hard to accomplish by this means. Study points out that regardless of self-selected information, computer mediated communication cannot convey necessary information in abundance.[[56]](#footnote-56) With these limitations, internet dialogue faces obstacles of "tensions in communication" and "miscommunication," which reflect that boundaries matter in human interaction. Some scholars explain that boundary negotiations between groups is implied in individuals' agreements on choices made in the context of online statements. Most agree that "miscommunication" or "problematic communication" can be divided into "incomplete transfer of information symbols," "strategic compromise," "lack of awareness of misunderstanding others' meanings" and "accumulation of misunderstandings."[[57]](#footnote-57)

**4.2** **Group Polarization**

Group polarization makes people see only what they want to see, hear only what they want to hear, read only what they want to read.[[58]](#footnote-58) Deliberation under this kind of "interaction" merely intensifies in-group opinion and encourages violent opposition instead of tolerance. Studies of group polarization, Cartwright;[[59]](#footnote-59) Clark;[[60]](#footnote-60) Dion, Baron, and Miller;[[61]](#footnote-61) Isenberg;[[62]](#footnote-62) Lamm and Myers;[[63]](#footnote-63) Pruitt;[[64]](#footnote-64) Burnstein &Vinokur;[[65]](#footnote-65) Allport;[[66]](#footnote-66) and Asch,[[67]](#footnote-67) all found that when community discussion did not lead to decision-making but into more risk-taking or more conservative positions, group majorities will risk escalated conflict.

Internet participants speak up by posting or threading more or less to express themselves; thus, they are eventually classified as sort of an in-group or out-group. Those who keep silence, do not post or do not feedback by threading, do not accumulate social capital online. Different or conflicting opinions confronted online seldom achieve consensus; on the contrary, the advantage of anonymous internet interaction intensifies points of view and reduces compromise. These tendencies will intensify prevailing opinions. If there is a powerful group consensus to suppress are others, that group is more likely to become reckless, arrogant, oppressive and hostile. This internet "group polarization" is becoming common.[[68]](#footnote-68)

Sunstein has found that the internet is a hotbed of extremism.[[69]](#footnote-69) Because people who share common opinions may easily sit in the comfort zone to dialogue with those of like opinions, there is no inclination to dialogue with those who differ. Online feedbacks are usually fragmented and impulsive, back and forth in a blink; participants feel no burden or obligation to listen to opposing opinion or the justifications for them. This encourages netizens to believe that their in-group argument is the truth. Anonymous netizens are attracted to similarities. The more they surf the net, the more inevitably they push themselves into extremism. Certainly, group polarization occurs not only on the internet; any kind of media or personal attractions can lead to group polarization. However, current anonymous online practices make group polarization even worse.

Sunstein declares that even negotiations will eventually accelerate group polarization because online conversations tend to suppress opponents. This puts public deliberation in danger and jeopardizes public and democratic forums.[[70]](#footnote-70) In addition, Sunstein notes that online networking does not promote communication to achieve consensus, but instead to demand a "tooth for tooth, an eye for eye" type of interaction.[[71]](#footnote-71) Internet forums tend to gather into groups people of the same or similar ideas, no matter how extreme or unjustified.[[72]](#footnote-72) It is not likely that contrasting opinion will be inserted in such conversation.[[73]](#footnote-73) Moreover, there will always be some people deliberately spreading biased information and distorted "evidence" in order to mislead others.[[74]](#footnote-74) The internet forum tends to encourage domination of opinions or attitudes of the powerful and/or the overzealous over thoughtful and well-substantiated arguments. Many submissions on the net tend to take advantage of strongly held views, regardless of their reasonableness, fairness, or lack of substantive evidence in order to promote group polarization. Public opinion will thus become superficial. It will be difficult to achieve consensus for solutions. Netizens will continue to be surrounded by targeted, biased messages in a government effort to prevent any contrary political beliefs.[[75]](#footnote-75) However, there is also some research that suggests that some people surf "to expose themselves to new information."[[76]](#footnote-76) Nevertheless, all agree that netizens do reveal self-confidence in choosing to expose themselves to certain messages or not. Also, online interaction may be motivated deliberately to avoided reaching consensus or to struggle with adversaries in order to avoid quarrels and other conflict.

Equality and democracy in interaction are the features that could be provided by the Internet.[[77]](#footnote-77)Yet, it seems questionable that users will access it for this purpose. Ivie points out that one can distinguish "democracy" or "war" by the way people deal with their opponents online.[[78]](#footnote-78) When netizens threaten opponents with "high pressure," "destruction", "political devaluation" rather than "competition," "agreement," or "political symbiosis," this is "war." The differences between "war" and "democracy" amount to how much tolerance is allowed to those whose opinions differ. Those who do not push an opponent into silence or into devaluation, but instead demand evidence based debate are those who truly keep the online forum a "democratic" one.

A war forum categorizes participants into either allies or enemies. There is slim or no space for real debate nor is there likelihood of interest in rational consensus. It seems the only aim is to "win." A democratic forum should encourage differing opinions to be expressed, but the aim should be peaceful social improvement. If the forum is a war forum, opponents are portrayed as having evil intentions, beliefs, and habits and defy democratic attempts to find agreement in differences. Gimmler suggests that a democratic forum must share the rights of discourse to make the forum a public space.[[79]](#footnote-79) If this intent is realized, whenever the internet opens for discussion, it will then offer equal participation in a public space as well as an effective political tool. Netizens would be encouraged to participate in public discussion, to find common traditions, common values, common virtues, and common goods in debating. Having common interests in a community which allows participants to debate freely over differences is the key to a more democratic form of government.[[80]](#footnote-80) However, a war forum lacks opportunity for rational dialogue. A war forum stifles or marginalizes its rivals while democratic forum in hopes to transform adversarial participation into healthy civic participation.

Rowe & Frewer contend that public participation can only be achieved with public communication and public consultation.[[81]](#footnote-81) This can be an index for investigating the differences or maturity of public participation. The internet boasts of equal space for dialogue and prides itself in allowing participants to have multiple identities under anonymity to speak without hesitation on a real world agenda. This previously nonexistent freedom in sharing common interests has created a brand new social network, a virtual community, co-existent with the real world.

Several scholars have examined group polarization, extremism, and hate speech in early online communities.[[82]](#footnote-82) Many online communities are structured around groups of socially similar individuals. Research found that replies between like-minded individuals strengthen group identity, where as replies between different-minded individuals reinforce in-group and out-group affiliation. People may be exposed to broader viewpoints than they were before but are limited in their ability to engage in meaningful discussion.[[83]](#footnote-83) People's opinions have been shown to become more extreme simply because their views have been corroborated and because they grow more confident in their own views after learning of the shared views of others.[[84]](#footnote-84)

**4.3 Research Questions**

This study asks if online participants respond to people unlike themselves to expose themselves to chance to deliberation among viewpoints. The following research questions are stated:

1. Did in-group members tend to agree more with their in-group members than with out-group member?

2. Were out-group members suppressed or shamed to prevent their participation in deliberation?

3. Is group polarization found in this forum?

**5. Research Method**

This study focuses on internet interaction as a "field" proposed by Yang Gou-bing who suggests a virtual ethnography as a methodology for this kind of research. He recommends a view of the "internet" as a "field" of ethnography--to track the post and thread internet discourse of online events.[[85]](#footnote-85) Because the essence of systematic quantitative, objective, and descriptive content analysis is scientific, many scholars, Wang Yu-ming,[[86]](#footnote-86) Yang Gou-shu et al.,[[87]](#footnote-87) suggest that encoding interaction by content analysis will not change the conclusions; therefore, it is particularly suited for studying an online society in transition. Thus, we employ content analysis in this investigation in the form of a coding book created by the authors in light of theories and studies stated in the literature reviews. Boundary variable, in-group/out-group membership, interaction, and consensus are four variables explored to verify group polarization.

This research data was collected between March 29, 2010 and September 29, 2010. It covered data before and after the ECFA signing from "the Taiwan Strait," Sina US. Four hundred and fifty posts were collected. Every thread was also collected to equal 449 samples in all. Every 10th posting was selected. Every thread under the selected posts was coded. The thread was compared with the post; the second thread under same post was compared with the first thread to be coded. Each sample's agenda was listed and read to record tendency first. Secondly, all sampled posts and threads were coded and analyzed systematically by content analysis techniques to categorize the post or thread as in-group or out-group and as by its tendency to jeopardize all group deliberation by polarization, extremism, and hate speech in interaction. The agenda discussed within the research period reflect concerns in cross-strait relations (see Figure 2.).

Figure 2. Agenda of Posts in "The Taiwan Strait, Sina US" (2010/3/29~9/29)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| # | Date | Agenda of Posts |
| 1 | 10/20 | Is James Soong "too smart" or "too confused"?(Taiwanese)- |
| 2 | 10/17 | Chen Jiyu's anxiety makes her "bite" her opponent. (Taiwanese)- |
| 3 | 10/19 | Why does Ma Ying-jeou delay cross-strait political negotiation? (Taiwanese)- |
| 4 | 10/7 | A reflection of cross-strait cultural exchanges.(Cross-strait)n |
| 5 | 9/22 | Analyzing five city elections held in Taiwan. (Taiwanese)n |
| 6 | 9/16 | From "Eleventh Five "to "Twelfth Five" assembling in mainland.(Chinese)n |
| 7 | 9/13 | If and only if Su Zhen-chang elected as Taipei mayor. (Taiwanese)- |
| 8 | 9/1 | Does Ma really want to detach China from "Rep. of China." (Taiwanese)- |
| 9 | 8/19 | Who can be expected to reunify the Taiwan Strait. (Taiwanese) (Cross-strait)n |
| 10 | 8/16 | The mystery of "One China" - different explanations. (Cross-strait)n |
| 11 | 8/8 | Ma administration response is hostile toward withdrawing the missiles. (Taiwanese)(Cross-strait)- |
| 12 | 8/3 | Ma Ying-jeou said in his first presidency he will not negotiate unification, nor pursue Taiwan de jure independence. (Taiwanese)(Cross-strait)n |
| 13 | 7/27 | Shocked! The first day of the US-ROK military exercises, the PLA blasts the Yellow Sea.(Cross-strait)- |
| 14 | 7/21 | Tsai Ying-Wen supports U.S. military exercises in Yellow Sea. (Taiwanese) (Cross-strait)- |
| 15 | 7/19 | Ten good and ten bad of Taiwan. (Taiwanese)n |
| 16 | 5/27 | Is Taiwan a "government in exile," "deceiving the name " or to "comply with the legitimate justice. (Taiwanese)(Cross-strait)- |
| 17 | 5/25 | Tsai Ing-wen said that "Republic of China" is a " exiled government." (Taiwanese) (Cross-strait)n |
| 18 | 5/23 | Observation: Why has Lee Deng-hui become active again? (Taiwanese)- |
| 19 | 5/19 | Discuss the shortcomings of Ma Ying-jeou. (Taiwanese)- |
| 20 | 5/14 | Transformation in mainland China is hope of Tsai Ying-Wen.(Chinese)(Cross-strait)+ |
| 21 | 5/12 | Despite guilt in corruption and money laundering, Chen Chih-Zhong announced candidacy. Will he be elected? (Taiwanese)- |
| 22 | 5/10 | Reasons why Ma Ying-jeou will never ask U.S. to fight for Taiwan. (Taiwanese) (Cross-strait)n |
| 23 | 5/6 | Support "One China, two systems" principle; everything can be discussed.(Chinese) (Cross-strait)n |
| 24 | 5/3 | Take a look at Ma Ying-jeou's declaration of man. (Taiwanese) (Cross-strait)n |
| 25 | 4/29 | Mainland students discuss Chinese studying in Taiwan. (Taiwanese) (Cross-strait)n |
| 26 | 4/26 | Will there be a female president in Taiwan? (Taiwanese)n |
| 27 | 4/22 | DPP's native disclosures dim. (Taiwanese)- |
| 28 | 4/20 | Taiwan: Regarding the price of 4.5 aircrafts to shoot down one Su-30 fighter of China. (Taiwanese) (Cross-strait)- |
| 29 | 4/14 | China's pride in its rising model is misplaced.(Chinese)- |
| 30 | 4/12 | Never having participated in an election campaign, Xiao-ying enjoys more advantages. (Taiwanese)+ |
| 31 | 4/12 | Is it really a must to cross the Strait to be called "hero."(Chinese) (Cross-strait)n |
| 32 | 4/6 | Why DPP "A decade policy" dares not to touch government cross-strait position. (Taiwanese)n |
| 33 | 4/2 | Why can Wang Yi utter it clearly while Ma Ying-jeou can't? (Taiwanese)(Cross-strait)- |
| 34 | 3/31 | From low self-esteem to arrogance: on cross-strait ECFA. (Taiwanese) (Cross-strait)- |

Table produced by the author in according to samples

Two persons, the author (female) and a male, did the coding job according to coding book (see Index 1 & 2.) separately. Coders composite reliability reached 0.87.[[88]](#footnote-88) This study utilizes percentile and Chi-Square Test with SPSS(Statistics Package for Social Science) for statistical test.

**6.** **Findings**

The tendency of the agenda posted in this forum are evaluated as Taiwanese foci (41%) and more negative (64%) (Figure 3.). The image projected in the Taiwanese agenda seemed to be negative and extreme, this led to the misperception and mistrust that damaged cross-strait relations in the long run.

Figure 3. Agenda Tendency in "The Taiwan Strait, Sina US" (2010/3/29~9/29)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Model tendency | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Total |
| Chinese | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Chinese + Cross-Strait | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Taiwanese | 1 | 4 | 9 (64%) | 14(41%) |
| Taiwanese + Cross-Strait | 0 | 6 | 6 | 12(35%) |
| Cross-strait | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Total | 2 | 15(44%) | 17(50%) | 34 |

Table produced by the author according to samples

| Table 1. name \* forum | | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count(%) | | | | Forum | | | | | | Total | |
| Home | | Guest | | Others | |
| Name | | Real | | 1 | | 1 | | 18 | | 20 | |
| Anonymous | | 120(28%) | | 102(24%) | | 207(48%) | | 429(96%) | |
| Total | | | | 121 | | 103 | | 225(50%) | | 449 | |
| Table 2. name \* boundary | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Count(%) | | | Boundary | | | | | | | | Total | |
| Peer | | Not Peer | | Both | | Others | |
| name | Real | | 0 | | 0 | | 19 | | 1 | | 20 | |
| Anonymous | | 156(36%) | | 35 | | 205(46%) | | 33(7%) | | 429 | |
| Total | | | 156 | | 35 | | 224 | | 34 | | 449 | |

Ninety-six percent of the users spoke under anonymity. Fifty percent of the statements were either advertisements or meaningless statements. Forty-eight percent of advertisements and meaningless statements were threaded in anonymity. More (28%) anonymous netizens regarded this forum as their home site (Table 1.). Thirty six percent of anonymous users felt they had found peers; some of these responded to peer posts or threads in full agreement or in a friendly manner, in this virtual community. However, forty-six percent of the users could not identify if there were teammates or not to stand by them, which coded as "Both." If it is an advertisement or no one responded to it, it coded as "Others." (Table 2.).

| Table 3. name \*attitude | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count (%) | | | Attitude | | | | | | | | | Total | |
| Emotional Support | Reasoned  Support | | Emotional  Reject | | Reasoned  Reject | | Others | |
| name | Real | 12 | | | 5 | | 3 | | 0 | | 0 | | 20 | |
| Anonymous | 14(3%) | | | 188(44%) | | 218(51%) | | 5(0.01%) | | 3 | | 428 | |
| Total | | 26 | | | 193 | | 221 | | 5 | | 3 | | 448 | |

The "emotional reject" model of conversation comprised the largest share (51%) and "reasoned support" placed second (44%) among attitudes (Table 3.). Netizens treated out-group members emotionally without reasons (31%) which was ranked highest (Table 4.). These emotions were negative. However, a sense of in-group yielded the participants' agreement without reason (32%) (Table 5.). Refer to the negative response without explanation response was very much supported.

| Table 4. name \* out-group | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count (%) | | Out-group | | | | Total |
| Friendly  Reason | De-valued  Reason | Emotional No Reason | Others |
| name | Real | 11 | 8 | 1 | 0 | 20 |
| Anonymous | 51(11%) | 45(10%) | 133(31%) | 200 | 429 |
| Total | | 62 | 53 | 134 | 200 | 449 |

There were 43% ("Others") of deliberations too unclear to distinguish between "Follow yes," "Cursed," or "Reasoned," but they did respond. Likewise, there were posts or threads that were too vague to determine if they agreed or disagreed with the former statements (43%). These were classified into "Others" (Table 5.). More peers used feedback to users who revealed themselves as members of home sites (58%) while fewer replied to guests to the site (15%). A more conservative deliberative approach (40%) was exhibited on forum and boundary cross tabulation (Table 6.).

| **Table 5. boundary \* in-group Response** | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count (%) | | In-group Response | | | | | Total |
| No Response | Follow Yes | Cursed | Reasoned | Others |
| Boundary | Peer | 27 | 50(32%) | 9 | 3 | 67(43%) | 156 |
| Not Peer | 1 | 7 | 2 | 11 | 14 | 35 |
| Both | 11 | 7 | 11 | 1 | 194(43%) | 224 |
| Others | 3 | 2 | 0 | 16 | 13 | 34 |
| Total | | 42 | 66 | 22 | 31 | 288 | 449 |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 237.972a | 12 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 194.556 | 12 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 65.257 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 449 |  |  |

Both Table 5 and Table 6 indicate that participants were responding as if they were self-talking; their statements had no connection, to the deliberations. The tendency to extremism, and monologue found with cross tabulation reach .000, a very significant statistical finding (Table 5 & 6.).

Regarding those who thought of themselves as members of a home site, we checked how users responded to assumed outsiders. We coded "Peers" when "deliberated" and "Others" when netizens "responded irrelevantly or meaninglessly to the former statements. When the response was ambiguous and difficult to distinguish as "Peer" or "Not Peer,"[[89]](#footnote-89) and it was not advertisement or meaningless, it was coded "Both." Fifty-four percent of internet users replied as "Emotional No Reason," and 38% coded as "Others," either responded in meaningless terms or advertisements. More irrelevant sentences occurred under ambiguous identity, which meant that participants, purposely, were ? their identities (Table 7.). In terms of interaction with "out-group," in the responses to the outsiders, the majority of the users threaded either meaningless responses or posted advertisements, coded as "Others" (31%) in order to minimize the outsiders' influence. Users' responses were not "Friendly Reasoned;" instead, they are categorized as "Devalued Reason," or "Reasoned Emotionally." These responses don't contribute to effective deliberations. Twenty-three percent of participants' feedback were categorized as "Reasoned Emotionally," though negatively, with no thread follow up. Ten percent of participants' responses were followed by "Devalued Reason" threads, the worst of these threads advocated war. Only 11% of the users dialogued with their opponents in "Friendly Reasoned" (Table 8.). Cross tabulated out-group members and peer-threads[[90]](#footnote-90) as well as out-group members and boundary both reached a very significant statistical finding at .000.

Follow up threading disregarded others' opinions by expressing personal points of view coded as "pay no attention," and followed by cursing coded as "follow up to curse." "Others" are those follow up threads that were either meaningless threads or advertisements." These were coded as "both" when it was difficult to judge between having peers or not. It was coded as "others" when the responses were meaningless threads or advertisements. Cross tabulated of boundaries and interactions found that most of the interactions were meaningless or advertisements (59%). "Follow up to curse" appeared to be the largest portion (48%) followed by "others" cross tabulated with "others" (40%), which means users networked with others but tried not to engage in conflict by using vague statements. Also, 24% of peer threads "pay no attention" to their peers, in essence by talking to themselves, while 35% of threads found to be supported by peers at a very significant statistical result by Chi-square test. (See Table 9.)

| **Table 6. boundary \* forum** | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count (%) | | | | forum | | | | Total |
| Home | Guest | Others | |
| Boundary | | Peer | | 90(58%) | 24(15%) | 42(27%) | | 156 |
| Not Peer | | 8 | 26 | 1 | | 35 |
| Both | | 16 | 27 | 181(40%) | | 224 |
| Others | | 7 | 26 | 1 | | 34 |
| Total | | | | 121 | 103 | 225 | | 449 |
| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | | | | |
|  | Value | | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | | |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 275.736a | | 6 | .000 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 267.273 | | 6 | .000 | | |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 84.209 | | 1 | .000 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 449 | |  |  | | |
| a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.80. | | | | | | |

| **Table 7. boundary \* out-group** | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count (%) | | Out-group | | | | Total |
| Friendly Reason | Devalued Reason | Emotional  No Reason | Others |
| Boundary | Peers | 2 | 9 | 85(54%) | 60(38%) | 156 |
| Not Peer | 15 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 35 |
| Both | 25 | 24 | 40 | 135(30%) | 224 |
| Others | 20 | 13 | 0 | 1 | 34 |
| Total | | 62 | 53 | 134 | 200 | 449 |

| **Chi-Square Tests**  Value df Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pearson Chi-Square | | 205.731a | | 9 | | .000 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | | 198.466 | | 9 | | .000 | | |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | | 17.750 | | 1 | | .000 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | | 449 | |  | |  | | |
| a. 4 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.01. | | | | | | | | |
| **Table 8. Out-group \* Peer-thread** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Count(%)** | | | **Peer Thread** | | | | | **Total** | |
| **Yes** | | **No** | | **Others** |
| **Out-group** | **Friendly Reasoned** | | **7** | | **51(11%)** | | **4** | **62** | |
| **Devalued Reason** | | **3** | | **47(10%)** | | **3** | **53** | |
| **Reasoned Emotionally** | | **13** | | **102(23%)** | | **19** | **134** | |
| **Others** | | **137(31%)** | | **55(12%)** | | **7** | **199** | |
| **Total** | | | **160** | | **255** | | **33** | **448** | |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 178.071a | 6 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 189.726 | 6 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 79.141 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 448 |  |  |
| a. 2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.90. | | | |

| **Table 9. boundary \* interaction** | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count(%) | | interaction | | | | | Total |
| Pay no attention | Follow up Agree | Follow up Curse | Rational Reason | Others |
| boundary | Peer | 37(24%) | 16(10%) | 23(15%) | 6 | 74 | 156(35%) |
| Not Peer | 1 | 1 | 7 | 16 | 10 | 35 |
| Both | 5 | 2 | 30(48%) | 8 | 179(40%) | 224(50%) |
| Others | 2 | 0 | 2 | 28 | 2 | 34 |
| Total | | 45(10%) | 19 | 62(14%) | 58(13%) | 265(59%) | 449 |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 291.659a | 12 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 229.845 | 12 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 47.255 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 449 |  |  |
| a. 8 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.44. | | | |

How do netizens confronted with "others" respond if any deliberation exists? Posts and threads distinguished between degrees of differences form "Friendly with reasoned discussion, "Angrily reasoned discussion," "Treated emotionally," "Curse without reason," and "Others." Advertisements and meaningless statements, again, code as "Others." Most of these users thread by saying something unrelated or meaningless to the topic (49%, 50%) to protect themselves(Table 10.). Besides, the users found to be deliberating emotionally (11%, 19%), another 8% were categorized as "cursing without reason." Some tried to appear reasonable (13%) (Table 10.).

| **Table 10. boundary \* confrontation** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count(%) | | | | confrontation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | | | |
| Friendly Reasoned  Discuss | | | Angrily Reasoned  Discuss | | | Treated Emotionally | | | Curse Without Reason | | | Others | | |
| Boundary | | Peer | | 4 | | | 11 | | | 57 | | | 13 | | | 71(16%) | | | 156(35%) | | | |
| Not Peer | | 13 | | | 9 | | | 5 | | | 3 | | | 5 | | | 35 | | | |
| Both | | 21 | | | 17 | | | 25 | | | 21 | | | 140(31%) | | | 224(50%) | | | |
| Others | | 19 | | | 12 | | | 0 | | | 0 | | | 3 | | | 34 | | | |
| Total | | | | 57(13%) | | | 49(11%) | | | 87(19%) | | | 37 | | | 219(49%) | | | 449 | | | |
| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | | | | Value | | | | df | | | | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | | | | | |
| Pearson Chi-Square | | | | 181.318a | | | | 12 | | | | .000 | | | | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | | | | 165.023 | | | | 12 | | | | .000 | | | | | |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | | | | 5.674 | | | | 1 | | | | .017 | | | | | |
| N of Valid Cases | | | | 449 | | | |  | | | |  | | | | | |
| a. 6 cells (30.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.80. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Table 11.** **boundary \* tone** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Count(%) | | | | | | | | | Tone | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | | | |
| Violence | | | | | | No violence | | | | | |
| Boundary | | | | | Peer | | | | 15 | | | | | | 141 | | | | | | 156 | | | |
| Not Peer | | | | 9 | | | | | | 26 | | | | | | 35 | | | |
| Both | | | | 54 | | | | | | 168 | | | | | | 222 | | | |
| Others | | | | 0 | | | | | | 36 | | | | | | 34 | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | | | 78 | | | | | | 371(83%) | | | | | | 449 | | | |
| **Table 12 attitude\* consensus** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Count (%) | | | consensus | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Total | | | |
| Friendly Reasoned Discuss | | | Angrily Reasoned | | | | | Treated Emotionally | | | Curse without Reason | | | Others | | |
| attitude | Emotionally Support | | 3(12%) | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | 3(12%) | | | 18(69%) | | | 26(6%) | | | |
| Reasoned Support | | 133(69%) | | | 13 | | | | | 11 | | | 9 | | | 27 | | | 193(43%) | | | |
| Emotionally Reject | | 19 | | | 17 | | | | | 81(37%) | | | 42 | | | 61 | | | 220(49%) | | | |
| Reasoned Reject | | 0 | | | 0 | | | | | 0 | | | 2 | | | 3 | | | 5 | | | |
| Others | | 1 | | | 0 | | | | | 0 | | | 1 | | | 3 | | | 3 | | | |
| Total | | | 156 | | | 31 | | | | | 93 | | | 57 | | | 112 | | | 449 | | | |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | Value | | | Df | | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | | |
| Pearson Chi-Square | | 222.093a | | | 16 | | .000 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | | 232.457 | | | 16 | | .000 | | |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | | 33.119 | | | 1 | | .000 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | | 447 | | |  | |  | | |
| a. 12 cells (48.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .21. | | | | | | | | | |
| **Table 13. attitude \* how** | | | | | | | | | | |
| Count (%) | | | How | | | | | | Total | |
| Totally Agree | Agree in Differences | | No Agreement | | Others |
| attitude | Emotionally Support | | 23 | 0 | | 0 | | 3 | 26 | |
| Reasoned Support | | 155(80%) | 15 | | 1 | | 22 | 193(43%) | |
| Emotionally Reject | | 19 | 90(41%) | | 6 | | 106(48%) | 221(49%) | |
| Reasoned Reject | | 0 | 0 | | 0 | | 5 | 5 | |
| Others | | 0 | 1 | | 0 | | 3 | 4 | |
| Total | | | 197(44%) | 106(24%) | | 7 | | 138(31%) | 449 | |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 251.944a | 12 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 285.410 | 12 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 119.298 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 448 |  |  |
| a. 11 cells (55.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05. | | | |

More people chose "no violence" to communicate with others (83%) (Table 11.). No mutual trust and social capital were built in this forum, but the participants were working on it. Cross tabulation of boundaries and confrontation reached statistically very significantly here as well.

Forty nine percent of netizen responses fell into the category of "emotional reject" while another 37% of responses were emotional without rejection. Forty three percent of discussions were classified as "reasoned support" while 69% were "reasoned support" and "friendly reasoned discussion" (Table 12.). These cross tabulations are statistically very significantly at .000.

The majority of discussions (49%) were emotionally rejected. Forty-eight percent of the discussions were rejected, by saying meaningless responses or something else. Forty-one percent of them agree in admitting differences exist. Those reasoned support deliberations were under the "totally agree" model (80%) (Table 13.). More "totally agree" statements (44%) reached very significant statistically findings when cross tabulated "how to confront with others" and "how to consensus (Table 13)."

| **Table 14. confrontation \* how** | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count(%) | | how | | | | Total |
| Totally Agree | Agree in Differences | No Agreement | Others |
| confrontation | Friendly Reasoned Discuss | 19(33%) | 7 | 1 | 30(53%) | 57(13%) |
| Angrily Reasoned Discuss | 14(29%) | 7 | 4 | 24(49%) | 49(11%) |
| Treated Emotionally | 12(14%) | 35(40%) | 0 | 40(46%) | 87(19%) |
| Cursed without Reasoning | 1 | 8 | 0 | 28(76%) | 37(8%) |
| Others | 151(69%) | 50(23%) | 2 | 16 | 219(49%) |
| Total | | 197 | 107 | 7 | 138 | 449 |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | Value | | | df | | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | | |
| Pearson Chi-Square | | 183.174a | | | 12 | | .000 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | | 197.768 | | | 12 | | .000 | | |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | | 81.155 | | | 1 | | .000 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | | 449 | | |  | |  | | |
| a. 5 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .58. | | | | | | | | | |
| **Table 15. Peer Thread \* consensus** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Count (%) | | | consensus | | | | | | | | Total |
| Consensus with Reason | Consensus with Emotion | | No Consensus But Reason | | No Consensus Emotional | Others | |
| Peer Thread | Yes | | 137(31%) | 8 | | 2 | | 4 | 9 | | 160(36%) |
| No | | 17 | 22 | | 81(32%) | | 48(19%) | 86(#$%) | | 254(57%) |
| Others | | 1 | 1 | | 11 | | 5 | 17 | | 35(8%) |
| Total | | | 155(35%) | 31 | | 94(21%) | | 57 | 110(24%) | | 449 |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 294.683a | 8 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 329.242 | 8 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 187.121 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 447 |  |  |

Forty-nine percent of the confrontations constituted irrelevant threads; however, 69% of totally agreed but threaded meaninglessly and 23% of the confrontations agreed with others that there were differences.

Nineteen percent of discussions were treated emotionally. Of that numbers 46% coded into "Others," meaningless threading or advertisements, and 40% of the confrontations agreed that they differed with each other on some points. Eleven percent of debates were discussed angrily with reasons, in which 29% of them totally agreed with reasons with their opponents but in a angry manner (Table 14.).

More statements (57%) had no peer thread; no follow up threads, and no debate. Most of the discussions reached consensus with reason (35%); 21% of discussions reached no consensus but displayed reason; 24% were classed as meaningless or as advertisements. Only eight percent of statements received no response (Table 15.). This cross tabulation also reached statistical very significance at .000.

The majority of the thread feedback constituted meaningless content or advertisements (64%). Five percent followed up with emotional reasoning but no consensus. Seven percent followed up to agree or echo the former statement. No consensuses achieved but reasons were expressed (Table 16.). Cross tabulations of in-group response and consensus reached statistical very significance once more at .000.

| **Table 16. In-group Response \* consensus** | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count (%) | | consensus | | | | | Total |
| Consensus with Reason | Consensus with Emotion | No Consensus But Reason | No Consensus emotional | Others |
| In-group Response | No Response | 3 | 1 | 21 | 3 | 14 | 42(9%) |
| Follow up Yes | 8 | 5 | 33(7%) | 4 | 15 | 65(14%) |
| Follow up Curse | 2 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 15 | 22 |
| Follow up Reason | 2 | 4 | 1 | 23(5%) | 1 | 31 |
| Others | 141 | 20 | 35 | 27 | 66 | 289(64%) |
| Total | | 156(35%) | 31 | 94 | 57 | 110 | 449 |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | Value | | | df | | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | | |
| Pearson Chi-Square | | 234.722a | | | 16 | | .000 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | | 190.380 | | | 16 | | .000 | | |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | | 29.330 | | | 1 | | .000 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | | 448 | | |  | |  | | |
| a. 7 cells (28.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.52. | | | | | | | | | |
| **Table 17. Out-group \* consensus** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Count(%) | | | consensus | | | | | | | | Total |
| Consensus with Reason | Consensus with Emotion | | No Consensus But Reasoned | | No Consensus Emotional | Others | |
| Out-group | Friendly Reasoned | | 8 | 11 | | 4 | | 25(6%) | 14 | | 62(14%) |
| Devalued Reasoned | | 2 | 6 | | 4 | | 21 | 20 | | 53(12%) |
| Reasoned Emotionally | | 13 | 4 | | 54(12%) | | 2 | 60(13%) | | 133(30%) |
| Others | | 133(30%) | 10 | | 32 | | 9 | 17 | | 201(45%) |
| Total | | | 156(35%) | 31 | | 94(21%) | | 57 | 110 | | 449 |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Value | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 298.487a | 12 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 294.168 | 12 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 87.661 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 448 |  |  |
| a. 2 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.67. | | | |

The majority of out-group communications resulted in less intersection: 30% of them were reasoned emotionally; 45% were either irrelevant statements or advertisements. Twelve percent of them were reasoned emotionally but no consensus was achieved (Table 17.). These findings also reached statistical very significance at .000.

| **Table 18. confrontation \* consensus** | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count(%) | | consensus | | | | | Total |
| Consensus with Reason | Consensus with Emotion | No Consensus But Reasoned | No Consensus Emotional | Others |
| confrontation | Friendly Reasoned Discuss | 6 | 10 | 3 | 28(6%) | 10 | 57(13%) |
| Angrily Reasoned Discuss | 2 | 7 | 7 | 21(5%) | 12 | 49(11%) |
| Treated Emotionally | 12 | 1 | 33(7%) | 0 | 40 | 86(19%) |
| Cursed without Reasoning | 3 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 26 | 37(8%) |
| Others | 133(30%) | 13 | 43 | 8 | 23 | 220(49%) |
| Total | | 156(35%) | 31 | 94(21%) | 57 | 110(34%) | 449 |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 316.427a | 16 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 302.833 | 16 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 80.756 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 448 |  |  |
| a. 4 cells (16.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.56. | | | |

Out-group discussions tend to interact into irrelevant or advertisements (49%) with 30% of them classifying as consensus with reason. Six percent of friendly reasoned discussion yielded no consensus but were emotional; five percent discussed angrily with reason but no consensus was reached (Table 18.). A very significant

statistical finding was reached at .000. These results are evidence that there was rejection of out-group members. At the same time, netizens' tried not to appeal to be suppressing the minority opinion and out-group members.

| **Table 19. interaction \* consensus** | | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count(%) | | consensus | | | | | Total |
| Consensus with Reason | Consensus with Emotion | No Consensus But Reason | No Consensus Emotional | Others |
| interaction | No Attention | 6 | 2 | 26 | 2 | 9 | 45(10%) |
| Follow up Agree | 2 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 1 | 19 |
| Follow up Curse | 6(10%) | 2 | 12(19%) | 3 | 39(63%) | 62(14%) |
| Rational Reasoned | 3 | 9 | 3 | 38(8%) | 5 | 58 |
| Others | 139 | 18 | 37 | 14 | 57 | 265(59%) |
| Total | | 156 | 31 | 94 | 57 | 110 | 449 |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 340.604a | 16 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 267.750 | 16 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 29.588 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 448 |  |  |
| a. 7 cells (28.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.31. | | | |

Eight percent of the deliberation found to be "rational reasoned" ended up with no emotional consensus. Among those who followed up with curses, 63% deviated into other topics or advertisements; 19% ended up with no consensus but reasoned with curses; 10% reached consensus with reasoning but accompanied by cursing (Table 19.). Cross tabulated consensus and interaction reached statistical very significance at .000.

| **Table 20. forum \* polarized Tendency** | | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Count(%) | | Polarized Tendency | | | | Total |
| Polarization | Unclear | No polarization | Others |
| forum | Home | 12(6%) | 81 | 2 | 26 | 121 |
| Guest | 5(3%) | 13 | 10 | 74 | 102 |
| Others | 183(92%) | 22 | 6 | 15 | 225 |
| Total | | 200(45%) | 116 | 18 | 115 | 449 |

| **Chi-Square Tests** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 377.950a | 6 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 369.378 | 6 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 82.680 | 1 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 448 |  |  |
| a. 2 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.10. | | | |

When users felt at home on a site, they were more likely to become polarized; 6% of the polarization was found among those who felt they were participating at a home site and 3% of polarized interactions occurred among those who were guest participants (Table 20.).

In review of the findings, there is a tendency toward group polarization and hate talk found in this forum. In-group recognitions distinguish netizens from out-group members. In-group teammates usually communicate "emotionally agreed with reasons" while out-group members were most likely to be "disagreed without reasons." Deliberation was not efficient because netizens tried to protect themselves by responding unclearly, but interestingly, to elaborate threading, even meaningless ones, in order to participate online. Some effort at self-restraint was found in interaction, though. Some interactions even showed kindness in discussions while providing reasons to their opponents. However, most of the communications exhibited an emotional attitude of superiority in the interactions. Group polarization tended to be statistically very significant in this forum during ECFA signing.

Political trust is the belief that the political system or some part of it will produce preferred outcomes even if left unattended. Studies indicate that from the rational choice perspective, political trust can be explained by political actors' calculation of material interests.[[91]](#footnote-91) The interaction, confrontation, and attitudes distinguished between in-group and out-group members suggest that there is obviously lack of trust among members of Chinese community who participated on Sina US, "The Taiwan Strait Forum," according to this study.

Distrust makes cross-strait relations tense. Tensions were reflected among the two authorities, three major political parties, and people who live in different political systems because of lack of trust.[[92]](#footnote-92) Separation since World War II has made China and Taiwan totally different in terms of belief systems, political settings, and cultural diversities. Differing views and values are what result in different approaches to problems and problems solving.[[93]](#footnote-93) Hence, that people cross-strait hold different points of view toward the strait relationship and feel distrust toward each other is not surprising. Thus, it is nature to see clear distinctions and conflict between in-groups and out-groups and boundary differences in discussions when dealing with possible cross-strait interaction. The unclear threading may indicate netizens blur elaborations to protect their identities.

Though ECFA is ostensibly a matter of economics, it is also a political one in essence.[[94]](#footnote-94) Interactions across the Strait since 1949 are fated to be political regardless of other economical, cultural, or human interest issues since there are more differences than similarities across the Strait in terms of governing--Beijing remains totalitarian while Taipei is a voting democracy. The ECFA matter is just one of example of the issues regarding with both sides have to conquer major differences to achieve consensus. All governmental issues are inevitably political ones,[[95]](#footnote-95) but with the demand for mutual settlement of "economics before politics, easier issues ahead of greater difficulties" between Beijing and Taipei,[[96]](#footnote-96) both hope interactions will narrow the difference in time. When officials negotiate under ECFA, ordinary people from China, Taiwan, and overseas can't wait to deliberate the next interaction possibilities across the Strait by voluntarily expressing themselves online via forums, like Sina US, "The Taiwan Strait Forum." Boasting itself as the primary virtual Chinese community in north America, "The Taiwan Strait Forum," of Sina USA,[[97]](#footnote-97) suggests the possibility of continued offline interaction after ECFA. This could be viewed as a positive beginning to real time communication among people across the Strait in reality.

**7. Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to understand netizens who come from different nationalities (mainland China, Taiwan, North America, etc.) but are self-identified as members of "the Chinese community" through their interactions with their peers (in-group) and adversaries (out-group) in a virtual forum. Would the prevailing opinion override the minority one with polarization? How differently do netizens treat in-group and out-group members? We examine the dynamics of deliberation among them to discover if the phenomenon of group proliferation occurs.

Tolerance of diversity and discussion are cornerstones of democracy; a democratic society requires freedom of speech, diversity of views, exchange of information, and active citizenship. Netizens of "the Taiwan Strait" represent different political backgrounds which challenge online democratic interaction. The Chinese net community of "The Taiwan Strait", Sina US, discuss shared memories with each other to establish an imagined community. In addition, some of them try to exercise reason and self-straint in order to achieve consensus. However, the differences among them generally prevent consensus. The tendency to group polarization, extremism, and hate talking was clear. Netizens from China, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese identify themselves by posting or threading into "pro-reunification," "pro-status quo" and "pro-independence" or "Chinese friendly" and "Taiwanese friendly." Endless ideological quarrels result.

Beijing and Taiwan understand that cross-strait relationships are in transformation. This study follows former research to confirm that virtual interaction does reflect real social interaction. When restrictions on real personal interaction cross-strait are lifted in the virtual context, people rush into communication unprepared. In post ECFA era, this virtual interaction revealed that miscommunication due to unfamiliarity, distress, and distrust after over 60 years of separation do exist cross-strait. Whether cross-strait relations is going to be peaceful or hostile depends on how Beijing and Taipei perceive each other. The nature of online interactions could be seen as a way to better predict the real and future Straits relationship. It is reasonable to suggest that only time and freer discussions can ultimately minimize the hostile perceptions and lessen polarization. As long as there is in-group and out-group separation, miscommunication cannot be prevented among civilians. Deliberation as well as consensus will not be achieved unless Beijing releases control over media agendas. Both off- and online netizens are currently prevented from determining their own agendas by censorship. Without such censorship, many differences may be reduced over time.

**Index 1. Research questions and operational definitions**

1. boundary:

1.1. Does anonymity distinguish boundary between in-group and out-group members?

1.1.1. How do netizens represent themselves online?

1.1.1.1. Real Name,

1.1.1.2. Anonymous,

1.2. Is online identity determined by in-group identity?

1.2.1. How do netizens self locate?

1.2.1.1. Home,

1.2.1.2. Guest,

1.2.1.3. Others;

1.2.2. Is an in-group follow up to thread?

1.2.2.1. Peer Thread found,

1.2.2.2. No Peer Thread found,

1.2.3.3. Others;

2. in-group/ out-group

2.1.1. Is in-group and out-group classification found among netizens?

2.1.1. Do followers of a post/the thread see the former thread/post of an in-group member?

2.1.1.1. .Peer,

2.1.1.2. Not Peer,

2.1.1.3. Peer and Not Peer Both found,

2.1.1.4. Others;

2.2.1. Does the poster/the thread follower find friends among netizens?

2.2.1.1. Friend found,

2.2.1.2. No friend found,

2.2.1.3. Others;

3. Interaction:

3.1. Does in-group or out-group association matter in interaction?

3.1.1. What is the poster's/the thread follower's attitude toward others?

3.1.1.1 Emotional Support,

3.1.1.2. Rational Support,

3.1.1.3. Emotional Rejection,

3.1.1.4. Rational Rejection,

3.1.1.5. Others;

3.1.2. How does the poster/ the thread follower dialogue, interact with out-group members?

3.1.2.1. Friendly, Rationally Reasoned,

3.1.2.2. Emotional, devaluation of Reason,

3.1.2.3. Emotional Not Reasoned,

3.1.2.4. Others;

3-2 How did forum participants treat peers and opponents respectively?

3.2.1. How did the poster/the thread follower respond to in-group interaction with an out-group?

3.2.1.1. No Response,

3.2.1.2. Follow up Say Yes,

3.2.1.3. Follow up with Curse,

3.2.1.4. Follow up with Reason,

3.2.1.5. Others;

3.2.2. How did the poster/the thread follower respond toward an in-group?

3.2.2.1. Emotional Support,

3.2.2.2. Reasoned Support,

3.2.2.3. Emotional Rejection,

3.2.2.4. Reasoned Rejection,

3.2.2.5. Others;

3.2.3. How did netizens treat an out-group member when the opponent spoke or wanted to speak with a specific poster online?

3.2.3.1. Pay No Attention,

3.2.3.2. Follow up to Agree,

3.2.3.3. Follow up to Curse,

3.2.3.4. Reasoned Rationally,

3.2.3.5. Others;

3.2.4. How did netizens post or follow up threads to confront out-group members?

3.2.4.1. Reasoned Friendly, Rational,

3.2.4.2. Reasoned Angrily, Devalued,

3.2.4.3. Treated Emotionally, Not Reasoned,

3.2.4.4. Curse without Reasoning,

3.2.4.5. Others;

3.2.5. Did netizens interact with violence?

3.2.5.1. Yes,

3.25.2. No,

3.2.5.3. Others;

3.2.6. Was there any in-group follow up to thread?

3.2.6.1. Yes,

3.2.6.2. No One,

3.2.6.3. Others;

4. Consensus:

4.1. Was consensus enhanced or reduced in the forum?

4.1.1. Did dialogue achieve consensus?

4.1.1.1. Consensus Achieved by Reasoned,

4.1.1.2. Consensus Achieved but Emotional,

4.1.1.3. No Consensus Achieved But Reason Attempted.

4.1.1.4. No Consensus Achieved, Dialogued Emotionally,

4.1.1.5. Others;

4.1.2. Was there polarization in dialogue?

4.1.2.1. Yes, Agreement to Intensify Polarization,

4.1.2.2. Not Clear, Topic changed,

4.1.2.3. No, there's Disagreement but no Polarization found,

4.1.2.4. Others, Meaningless Thread, or Change of Topic;

4.1.3. How was Consensus Achieved?

4.1.3.1. Totally Agreed,

4.1.3.2. Agreed with Exceptions,

4.1.3.3. No Agreement Found,

4.1.3.4. Others.

**Index 2. Coding Book and Coding Guide**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Coding Book | Coding Guide |
| 1.Sample number | Sample arranged in accordance with serial number. |
| 2. Post and thread Group  (100) post A  (101) Follow up Thread A-1  (102) Follow up Thread A-2 | Last two digital ended with "00" is for "post." Every thread following up with same post will be noted as 101, 102, etc. We will start post from 100, then 200, and 300... |
| 3. How did netizens represent themselves online?  (1) Real Name  (2) Anonymous; | "1" for "Real Name" is netizen who comes online with real name, while "two" is one who participates with an alias, code name, or anonymous who entry. |
| 4. Was the post/ thread original or copy?  (1) Original,  (2) Copy; | Whoever self posts or threads, we code as "1," while those who copy and paste to dialogue we code "2." |
| 5. How does netizen self locate one-self?  (1) Home,  (2) Guest,  (3) Others; | If it is a post, we can't determine whether the poster comes online as a guest or not, so we code it "Other." If it is a follow up thread, we compared the thread to the former statement to determine if it is "home," "guest," or "Other." When we refer to "other," the response is either advertisement or meaningless. When we code a response as "guest," the contribution represented itself as opposition to the post or the thread ahead of it. |
| 6. Does the poster/the thread follower see thread follower/ poster as an in-group member?  (1) Peer,  (2) No Peer,  (3) Both,  (4) Others; | If it is a post, we can't investigate whether the poster comes online as a guest or not, so we code it " Others." If it is a follow up thread, we code it into "Peer," "No Peer," "Both," and "Others." "Others" refers to meaningless statements or advertisements. |
| 7. Does the poster/ the thread follower finds friends among netizens?  (1) Friend found,  (2) No friend found,  (3) Others; | If it is a post, we can't investigate whether the poster comes online as a guest or not, so we code it " Others." If it is a follow up thread, we code it into "Friend found," "No friend found," and "Others." "Others" is meaningless statements or advertisements. |
| 8. What was the poster's/ the thread follower's attitude toward others?  (1) Emotional Support,  (2) Rational Support,  (3) Emotional Reject,  (4) Rational Reject,  (5) Others; | If it is a post, we can't investigate whether the poster comes online as a guest or not, so we code it " Others." If it is a follow up thread, we code it into "Emotional support," "Rational support," "Emotional reject," "Rational reject," and "Others." "Others" consists of meaningless statements or advertisements. |
| 9. How does the poster/ the thread follower dialogue, interact with an out-group?  (1) Friendly, Rationally Reasoned,  (2) Emotionally, devalued Reasoning,  (3) Emotionally Not Reasoned, (4) Others; | No mater if it is a post or a thread, we code it into one of them: "Friendly, Rationally Reasoned," "Emotionally, devalued reasoned," "Emotionally not reasoned," and "Others." Coded in accordance with the one, post or thread, that if this one responded to deliberate. Otherwise, later thread would put into comparison with the former one. |
| 10. How did the poster/ the thread follower respond when an in-group interact with an out-group?  (1) No Response,  (2) Follow up Say Yes,  (3) Follow up to Curse,  (4) Follow up to Reason,  (5) Others; | If it is a post, we can't investigate whether the poster comes online as a guest or not, so we code it " Others." If it is a follow up thread, we code it into "No response," "Follow up say Yes," "Follow up to Curse," "Follow up to Reason," and "Others." "Others" is meaningless statements or advertisements. |
| 11. How did netizens treat an out-group when the opponent spoke or wanted to speak with a specific poster online?  (1) Pay No Attention,  (2) Follow up to Agree,  (3) Follow up to Curse,  (4) Reasoned Rationally,  (5) Others; | If it is a post, we can't investigate whether the poster comes online as a guest or not, so we code it " Others." If it is a follow up thread, we code it into "Pay No response," "Follow up to Agree," "Follow up to Curse," "Reasoned Rationally," and "Others." "Others" consists meaningless statements or advertisements. |
| 12. How did netizens post or follow up to thread in confront with an out-group?  (1) Reasoned Friendly, Rationally,  (2) Reasoned Angrily, Devalued,  (3) Treated Emotionally, Not Reasoned,  (4) Cursed without Reasoning,  (5) Others; | Coded in accordance with the post or thread, that this one responded to. Otherwise, a later thread would be put into comparison with a former one. Choose from "Reasoned friendly, rationally," "Reasoned angrily, devalued," "Treated emotionally, not reasoned," "Curse without reasoning," and "Others." |
| 13. Did netizens interact with violence?  (1) Yes,  (2) No,  (3) Others; | If it is a post, we can't investigate whether the poster comes online as a guest or not, so we code it " Others." If it is a follow up thread, we code it into "Yes," "No," and "Others." "Others" consists of meaningless statements or advertisements. |
| 14. Was there an in-group follow up to thread?  (1) Peer Thread found,  (2) No Peer Thread found,  (3) Others; | If it is a post, we can't investigate whether the poster comes online as a guest or not, so we code it " Others." If it is a follow up thread, we code it into "Peer thread found," "No Peer thread found," and "Others." If more than one meaningless contribution was found, we indicated that those meaningless threads had become an in-group coded as "Peer thread found" instead of "Others." |
| 15. Did dialogue achieve consensus?  (1) Consensus Achieved by Reasoning,  (2) Consensus Achieved but Emotionally,  (3) No Consensus Achieved But Reasoning Attempted,  (4) No Consensus Achieved, Dialogued Emotionally,  (5) Others; | If it is a post, we can't investigate whether the poster comes online as a guest or not, so we code it " Others." If it is a follow up thread, we code it into "Consensus achieved by reasoning," "Consensus achieved but attempted reasoning," "No consensus achieved but try to reasoned," "No consensus achieved, dialogued emotionally," and "Others."  If the sample indicated a response to a specific comment, we coded interaction according to these two statements, otherwise, we coded the sample statement as interaction with the one preceding it. |
| 16. How was Consensus Achieved?  (1) Totally Agreed,  (2) Agreed in Differences,  (3) No Agreement Found,  (4) Others. | If it is a Post, we can't judge if it was self indentified as participating in a home site or not; we coded it into "Others." If it is a follow up thread, we coded it into "Totally Agreed," "Agreed with Differences," "No Agreement Found," and "Others." If more than one "meaningless" found, we indicated that those meaningless threads had formed an in-group coded as "Peer thread found" instead of "Others." "Others" consists of meaningless statements or advertisements. |
| 17. Was there polarization in dialogue?  (1) Yes, there's Agree to worsen Polarization,  (2) Not Clear, Change Topic,  (3) No, there is Disagreement but no Polarization Found,  (4) Others, Meaningless Thread, Change Topic; | If it is a post, we can't judge if it was self indentified as participating in a home site or not; we coded it into "Others." If it is a follow up thread, we coded it into "Yes, there's agreement to worsen polarization," "Not clear, change of topic," "No there's disagreement but no polarization found," and "Others." If more than one meaningless found, we indicated that those meaningless threads had formed an in-group found coded as "Peer thread found" instead of "Others." "Others" consists of meaningless statements or advertisements. |

1. Yi-Wen Fang, "Exploring The Strait Interaction After ECFA Signed By The Cooperative Game Theory," *Congress Monthly*, Vol. 39, No. 9, 2011/09, pp. 52-79.People from both sides of the Strait interact in a deeper and a wider scope in accordance with ECFA, which leads the relationship into a new era of struggles among systems. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Wei-Dong Zu, "Revisit Course of the Strait in Discussing the Outlook Across the Strait," Paper Presented at Consolidate and Develop the Strait Relationship on Political, Economic, Cultural and Public Opinion Conference, (Anwhei：Haungshen), 2011/07/05~09. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. "Coopetition" is a blend of cooperation and competition. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Yi-Wen Fang, *op. cit.*, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Jianming Xu, "Cross-Strait Relations, Taiwan's Political Ecology, and Chinese National Identity" Review of Mainland China's Policies towards Taiwan in the Past Twenty Years," *Modern China Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Zong-he Bao and Yu-shan Wu (eds.), *Contending Approaches to Cross-Strait R*elations, "Explore Conditions and Difficulties in Cross-Strait Unification from Conformity Theory" by Gao Lang, (Taipei: Wunan, 1999), pp. 41-76. The UE developed from closer economic integration. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Zong-he Bao and Yu-shan Wu (ed.) , *op. cit.*, "Argued in the Theory of Cross-Strait Relations" by Yu-Shan Wu, (Taipei: Wunan, 1999), p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Jianming Xu, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Beijing insists that there is only one China, the People's Republic of China. Any country which establishes governmental relations with Beijing has no choice but to cut off diplomatic ties with Taiwan, Republic of China. This is the so-called "One China" policy insisted upon by Beijing. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Cletus C. Coughlin and Eran Segev, "Foreign Direct Investment in China: A Spatial Econometric Study," *Working Paper* 1999-001A, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Research Division, July 1999, pp. 1-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. http://www.mofcom.gov.cn/tongjiziliao/tongjiziliao.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Stanton Jue, "The 'One China' Policy: Terms of Art," *Chinese American Forum*, Vol. 21, Issue 3, (January 2006), pp. 3-7. "One China" policy: China and Taiwan began discussions between nominally non-governmental bodies set up by both sides to agree on the notion of "one China, but deliberately left open exactly what that meant" in 1992. China broke off the talks in 1999 after Lee Teng-hui, ex-president of Taiwan, a member of KMT by then but expelled later, proclaimed that Taiwan and China were separate states. This is so-called "92 consensus," which became the core differences between pro- and anti-reunification in Taiwan. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. No author's name, "Turning Taiwanese: A Survey of Taiwan, The Islanders Are Developing a Distinct Identity," *Economist*, Vol. 374, Issue 8409, p4A-6B, January 15, 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Kuomingtang (KMT), People First Party (PFP), New Party are so-called "Pan-blue" that tend to advocate closer relationship with mainland China. Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) are "Pan-green" which claim ultimate Taiwan independence. These five parties are five political parties in Taiwan. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Huoyan Shyu, "Populism in Taiwan: The Rise of a Populist-Democratic Culture in a Democratizing Society," *Asian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 16, No. 2, August 2008, pp. 130-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Shu-Fen Lin, "The 'Popular Democracy vs. Civil Society' Debate in Taiwan Revisited," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (October 2009), pp. 227-252. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ben Xu, "China's Totalitarian Propaganda and Plagued Public Language," *Modern China Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2009, pp. 49-76. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. No author's name found, :Chinese Flood to Report Corruption," *Tibetan Review*, Vol. 44, Issue 8, (August, 2009), p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Tianjian shi and Diqing Lou, "Subjective Evaluation of Changes in Civil Liberties and Political Rights in China," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 19, No. 63, (January, 2010), pp. 175-199. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Jon R. Taylor and Carolina E. Calvillo, "Crossing the River by Feeling the Stones: Grassroots Democracy with Chinese Characteristics," *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, Vol. 15, Issue 2, (Association of Chinese Political Studies, 2010), pp. 135-151. Those local voting election were held under the concept of "socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics" inspired by Deng Xiaoping to pass on to Hu Jintao. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Jack Linchuan Qiu, "Virtual Censorship in China: Keeping the Gate Between the Cyberspaces," *International Journal of Communications Law and Policy*, Issue 4, (Winter 1999/2000), p.9. Chinese internet users would not risk to participate online for personal safety, nor blessing. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Matthew Hoddie and Diqing Lou, "From Vice to virtue: Changing Portrayals of Minorities in China's Official Media," Asian Ethnicity, Vol. 10, No. 1, (Feburary 2009), pp. 51~69. A content analysis of minority-centered articles appearing in *the People's Daily* newspaper between the years 1950 and 2001 had been coded to find that minorities are most frequently depicted as representatives of primitive cultures. The Chinese government has stepped away from its earlier practice of characterizing 'primitive' minority cultures as pathologies detrimental to the political and economic development of the state in favor of a more recent emphasis on the virtues associated with minority lives. The authors suggest that this transformation in government rhetoric is attributable to changes in both Chinese politics and society. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Shulong Chu, "Post-Cold War Security Strategy of China's Development", *World Economics and Politics,*" (Beijing), 1999, No. 9, pp. 11-12. Also, Robert S Ross, "The Stability of Deterrence in Taiwan Strait," National Interest, Issue 65, Fall 2001, pp. 67-76. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Tzong-Ho Bau and Yu-Shan Wu (eds.), *Contending Theories in the Study of Cross-Straits Relations*, "Explore Conformity Condition and Difficult in Cross-Straits from Theory Point of Views," by Lang Kau, (Taipei：Wu-nan), 1999, p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Sina.com, http://corp.sina.com.cn/eng/sina\_intr\_eng.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Internet Landscape H12011, Resonance China,(Shanghai: China Social Media Agency), http://www.resonancechina.com/2011/07/20/chinas-top-5-websites-with-largest-reach/resonancechina\_-2011h1-internet-landscape/. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Marketwire via COMATEX, "Government Regulation Causes Sina and Sohu's Traffic to Skyrocket," Zacks Investment Research Proven Ratings, Research & Recommendations, 2011/08/04. http://www.zacks.com/research/get\_news.php?id=216u6556.Chinese government blocked Facebook, Twitter and YouTube that offer growth opportunities, value, and strong potential return for Sina.com and Sohu.com. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Xiaoru Wang, "Behind the Great Firewall: The Internet and Democratization in China", Unpublished doctorate dissertation, Communication in the University of Michigan, 2009, pp. 3-4.A college student, Sun Zhigang, was detained by Guangzhou police for not having a temporary resident permit that was required for all migrants who look for jobs outside of their hometown. He was beaten to death while he was still under police custody. His parents posted his case and a petition letter on Sina.com after authorities refused to investigate Sun's case. This case was picked up by both new and traditional media, generating more than 4000 comments from netizens within 2 hours to force the case onto the national political agenda. Public opinion forced the government to change the Custody and Repatriation system three months later. The officials responsible for Sun's death also were convicted in court in 2003. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. 17.2% of Chinese internet users aged under 18, 35.2% between 18~24, 19.7% between 25~30, 10.4% between 31~35, 8.2% between 36~40, 6.2% between 41~50, 2.2% between 51~60, 0.9% aged above 60 according to 2007 CNNIC Internet Report. http://www1.cnnic.cn/download/2007/cnnic19threport.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. 17.1% below high school, 31.1% high school, 23.3% college diploma, 25.8% bachelor's degree, 2.3% master's degree, 0.4% doctoral degree. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. CNNIC reported that 32.3% of Chinese internet users are students. 29.7% of them are staff of enterprises; 6.2% of them are school teachers and staff. 4.3% of them are staff of government agencies or party-organizations. There were 8.6% of staff of non-profit organizations, 9.65 of self-employed people, 0.4% of peasants and farmers, and 7.2% of unemployed people. Others include military personnel were 1.7% according to the survey. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. In terms of locations for the internet use, 76% at home, 33.4% at work place, 32.3% at internet Café, 12.6% at school, 0.9% in public places, 0.2% use in places other than the above. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Yongming Zhou, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-180. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Xiaoru Wang, "Behind the Great Firewall: The Internet and Democratization in China", Unpublished doctorate dissertation, Communication in the University of Michigan, 2009, pp. 1-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
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