

Taiwan's 2014 Local Election: From Embryonic to Consolidated Democracy

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Abstract

Notwithstanding a number of theories on democratic consolidation, scholars have overlooked the effects of cleavage structure on the consolidation process. In Taiwan, the focus of political contestation has been on national identity. Political polarization stemming from fervent identity mobilization hindered the democratic institutions from intermediating various interests and demands maturely. Thus I argue that national identity hampered Taiwan's democratic consolidation. Nonetheless, economic stagnation since 2008 has gradually shifted Taiwan politics from national identity to the economic left-right cleavage, which underpins the political configuration in Western consolidated democracies. The KMT touted economic growth and represented the relatively well-off, whereas the DPP advocated social justice and championed the economically deprived. The 2014 Taiwan local election confirmed the paradigm shift to class politics. The election established new rules of the game for political competition in Taiwan, and set a new direction for resolving social conflicts. It witnessed a revival of democratic values and attitudes among political actors and mass public. Election results demonstrated what accountability was about in a consolidated democracy. Accordingly I contend that the 2014 local election symbolized the island's transformation from an embryonic to a consolidated democracy.

Keywords

Taiwan; Democratic Consolidation; Class Cleavage; Economic Left-right Cleavage; Democratic Institutions

Taiwan, as one of the “Third Wave” democracies, boasts a competitive multiparty political system with free and fair elections held regularly for public offices at every level today. The island underwent a gradual and peaceful transition from an authoritarian Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) regime to a multiparty democracy in the 1980s and 1990s¹. The first direct presidential election in 1996 marked the beginning of the consolidation phase of Taiwan's democracy². However, unless the democratic rules of the game are agreed upon among major political actors in an embryonic democratic setting, democracy cannot be expected to last for a foreseeable future, and thus to be consolidated. Scholars have proposed a number of theories which posit that the following factors significantly influence democratic consolidation: (1) the presence of democratic political institutions for resolving Taiwan's social conflicts; (2) the values and attitudes that emerge with participatory political actors and mass public; (3) accountability of the political parties for their performance. These theories, nonetheless, overlook the effects of social and political cleavages on democratic institutionalization, values and attitudes of political participants, and the accountability of political actors for their performance; all of these forces largely influence the democratic consolidation process³. The cleavage structure of nascent democracies often revolves around ethnic differences, leading to instability of their democratic institutions. On the contrary, consolidated democracies in the West show the institutional maturity to implement all the traits of democracy, and the class cleavage has long been the basis of political competition in those countries. Thus I join the debate by arguing that the national identity cleavage had hindered Taiwan's democratic consolidation process. I then contend that the 2014 local election signified the paradigm shift to class politics, thus symbolizing Taiwan's transformation from an embryonic to a consolidated democracy.

I employ the Taiwanese case because of the peculiarity of its democratic development. Although there have been peaceful power shifts between the KMT and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and there is virtually no possibility of a return to authoritarianism, political developments in the post-1990s period have led to domestic and international doubts about the quality of Taiwan's nascent democracy. I assert that the critical obstacle to Taiwan's democratic consolidation stemmed from deep unsettled questions about the island's sovereign status within the international community (Republic of China (ROC) vs. Taiwan as an independent country), its territorial boundaries (Taiwan cum mainland China vs. Taiwan only) and the compass of its

¹ Cheng, Tun-jen. (1989) “Democratizing the Quasi-Leninist Regime in Taiwan,” *World Politics*, 41 (4), pp. 471-499.

² Tien, H.M. and Chu, Y.H. (1996). “Building Democracy in Taiwan,” *China Quarterly*, 148, 1141-70.

³ Heo, Uk, and Hahm, Sung-deuk. (2014). “Political Culture and Democratic Consolidation in South Korea,” *Asian Survey*, 54 (5), pp. 918-940.

citizenship (Chinese nationalist vs. Taiwanese nationalist)⁴. The KMT-led Pan-blue advocated Chinese nationalism and adhered to the “one-China principle”, while the DPP-led Pan-green espoused Taiwanese nationalism and expressed aspirations of a sovereign and independent Taiwan⁵. Political parties mobilize electoral support of social groups by appealing to their potential supporters on that social cleavage. I hold that the dominance of national identity impedes the island’s democratic consolidation in the following ways. First, it resulted in a lack of mature political institutions. Parties were not encouraged to structure a rational choice of policy courses on economic redistribution policies, but compete with the emotional and potentially explosive national identity, and to a certain extent, ethnic issues. It follows that Taiwan’s governmental and party systems, in a newly democratized political setting, failed to set a direction for resolving social conflicts rationally⁶. Second, hyper competition on identity politics led to political actors and citizens demonstrating limited behavioural commitment to democratic values. Third, voters’ partisan attachment to a political camp provided parties with inadequate accountability for their performance.

Economic stagnation since 2008, nonetheless, has gradually shifted the focus of Taiwan’s politics from national identity to the economic left-right cleavage. The KMT and DPP played attention to the economy and downplayed identity issues. The KMT espoused a blurred dual Chinese and Taiwanese identity and pursued closer relationship with China for Taiwan’s economic growth. It represented middle class and business conglomerates benefitting from cross-Strait integration. The DPP toned down its Taiwanese appeal and championed the grassroots and small and medium-sized businesses vulnerable to Chinese competition. The 2012 presidential race saw the reorientation of the two mainstream parties toward an incipient class cleavage, yet election results suggested limited accountability for the performance of the KMT administration that time. However, the KMT’s initiatives to ratify the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) aroused concerns among Taiwanese over the country’s social inequalities and democracy, and the subsequent Sunflower Movement in spring 2014 precipitated political awakening of the young electorate. The Pan-green inspired young people to participate and vote overwhelmingly for its candidates in the 2014 local election. Party competition centred upon the schism between the centre-left DPP prioritizing social redistribution and championing for the vulnerable sectors, and the centre-right KMT advocating laissez-faire market economics and favouring middle class and business consortiums. That election followed the political pattern of Western consolidated democracies, where class division underpins the party configuration and

⁴ Chu, Yun-han. (2005) “Taiwan’s Year of Stress”, *Journal of Democracy*, 16 (2), 43-58.

⁵ Dittmer, Lowell. (2004) “Taiwan and the Issue of National Identity,” *Asian Survey*, 44 (4), 475-483.

⁶ Rigger, Shelley. (2005). “The Unfinished Business of Taiwan’s Democratization,” In Nancy Berkopf Tucker (ed.) *Dangerous Strait: The US-Taiwan-China Crisis*. New York: University of Columbia Press, pp. 16-43.

electoral landscape. A landslide defeat for the ruling KMT evinced that identity mobilization was no longer effective, while economic left-right politics and class voting became the dominant pattern for the first time. Hence I hold that the 2014 local election confirmed Taiwan to be a consolidated democracy. First, political parties embraced interests and demands from various social strata, and the electorate chose the candidates representing their economic interests rationally. The election established completely new rules for political competition on the island, thus symbolizing a large step in setting a new direction for Taiwan to resolve social conflicts. Second, the election consolidated democratic values and attitudes among political actors and mass public. Third, voters held the KMT accountable for its overly business-leaning policies. Accordingly I claim that the 2014 local election was a momentous event epitomizing the transformation of Taiwan from an embryonic to a consolidated democracy.

Democratic Consolidation

As the “third wave” of democratic transitions subsided, political scientists started to analyze how nations which had recently made the transition to democracy would solidify and secure their new political regimes. According to Linz and Stepan, a consolidated democracy is a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives has become “the only game in town”⁷. Democratic consolidation is closely linked to how well political institutions function as they shape the mode of intermediating various interests and resolving conflicts. Diamond, on the other hand, specifies that a consolidated democracy is one in which elites, political organizations and the mass public all embrace democratic norms and attitudes, and eschew anti-democratic behaviour in the political realm⁸. In other words, participating actors must manifest behavioural commitment to democracy by complying with values of the democratic system. Huntington also pointed out in *The Third Wave*, democracy is a set of procedures for selecting leaders and holding them accountable, since every citizen has the power to take away their authority⁹. In the case of Taiwan where its sovereign status within the international system is unsettled, national identity has been regarded as the basis for party configuration and competition in Taiwan. The Pan-blue represented Chinese nationalism and unification with China, whereas the Pan-green endorsed Taiwanese nationalism and independence. As voters select a political party to support in elections, the

⁷ Linz, Juan, and Stepan, Alfred. (1997). “Toward Consolidated Democracies,” in Larry Diamond, ed., *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

⁸ Diamond, Larry. (1999). *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 66.

⁹ Huntington, Samuel. (2012). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. University of Oklahoma Press.

national identity issue is very much in their minds, and their partisan attachment is enduring¹⁰.

Failure of political actors and the general public to achieve a consensus on national identity threatens the legitimacy of the nascent democratic system. J.S. Mill stated that the emotional nature of the national identity cleavage restricted the scope of rational discussion on public policies. Such a society would lack a consensus on how a democratic government should function, and any group of political leaders would fail to gain the trust of all people¹¹. Therefore, Lutz emphasized that a political system could stabilize only if citizens recognized themselves as “a people” psychologically¹². Unless the exchange of political power between parties becomes rational and elections become contests over platforms and competence rather than the emotional appeal of national identity, democratic consolidation will remain incomplete. In Western consolidated democracies, materialist cleavages of class and religious divisions dominate the political scene, shaping the party configuration and electoral landscape in those countries. Party competition revolves around the basic schism between the left preferring a strong role for the state through egalitarian welfare policies and economic redistribution, and the right supporting laissez-faire market economics. Political parties in advanced democracies propose socio-economic policies to appeal to the constituents. The electorate has a higher level of education, helping them master the complexities of public affairs¹³. A vast majority of the voters cast their votes rationally in those societies, anticipating that the parties and politicians they support, if elected, will implement policies beneficial to their economic interests. Class identities have proved a critical factor in voting behaviour in consolidated democracies¹⁴. For instance, affluent household groups tend to support the rightist parties, and the working class favours the leftist parties in many cases¹⁵. Political institutions in consolidated democracies are hence structurally adapted to resolve deep-rooted social conflicts. Any parties failing to deliver election promises

¹⁰ Hsieh, John Fuh-sheng. (2002). “Continuity and Change in Taiwan’s Electoral Politics,” in *How Asia Votes*. John Fuh-sheng Hsieh and David Newman (eds.) New York: Chatham House.

¹¹ Wu, Nai-Teh. (1997). 「國家認同與民主鞏固：衝突、共生和解決」，收於游盈隆編，*民主的鞏固或崩潰*，月旦出版社。

¹² Lutz, Donald. (1988). *The Origins of American Constitutionalism*. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, pp. 6.

¹³ Norris, Pippa. (2000). *A Virtuous Circle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁴ Lipset, Seymour, M. and Rokkan, Stein. (1967) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*. New York: Free Press.

¹⁵ Consolidated democracies in Europe have seen a rise in far-right parties promoting anti-immigrant policies, triggering debates over whether those democracies are regressing to identity politics. Nevertheless, distribution issues underlie the surge in support of anti-immigrant parties. Economic stagnation has widened the income gap in those democracies, and the economically deprived ones fear that immigrants would affect their welfare entitlement. Therefore class cleavage in Western consolidated democracies have remained largely intact.

would be held accountable in the next election. In short, the key to Taiwan's democratic consolidation is whether the economic left-right cleavage can take centre stage in the island's political system.

Dominance of national identity in Taiwan's embryonic democracy

There has been little structural basis on which to mobilize class politics in Taiwan, largely owing to the intelligent economic planning of the KMT administration during the authoritarian era. Land reform in the early 1950s laid a foundation for the island's export-oriented industrialization at a later stage¹⁶. Not only did Taiwan experience sustained economic growth, it also employed small and medium enterprises as a model to distribute the benefits of economic growth widely in the society. Equitable economic growth cum high social mobility thus precluded the rise of class issues. Moreover, the anti-communist ideology of the authoritarian KMT regime marginalized leftist rhetoric from mainstream political discourse. Organized independent labour movement was suppressed, and the anti-left legacies of the authoritarian state were carried over into the democratic era¹⁷. The DPP initially presented itself as more "social democratic" than the KMT, but its policy advocates were very different from genuine leftist ideologies like increasing government involvement in wealth redistribution. The KMT and DPP maintained intimate relationship with business conglomerates for reliable funding. They made substantial reforms to expand social welfare¹⁸, but their initiatives have been motivated primarily by pork-barreling and electoral competition. Once a party puts a welfare policy initiative into effect, the other party tries to outbid it. The two parties were not configured along the economic left-right spectrum.

It was the national identity cleavage that overshadowed economic issues in Taiwan's embryonic democracy. The KMT advocated ROC Chinese nationalism and bitterly attacked Taiwan independence. It strived to maintain the "status quo", i.e. Taiwan under the constitutional order of ROC. On the contrary, the DPP espoused Taiwan nationalism and formal independence from mainland China. The two parties disputed over textbook narratives of Taiwanese history and geography, initiatives to rectify Taiwan's name, and relations with China and US. Splinter

¹⁶ Ash, Robert, Lin, Joseph, and Wu, C.J. (2006), "The Economic Legacy of the KMT and its Implications for Economic Policy Formulation by the DPP," in Dafydd Fell, Henning Kloter and Chang Bi-yu (eds.) *What has changed? Taiwan Before and After the Change in Ruling Parties*, pp. 84.

¹⁷ Wong, Joseph. (2004). "Democratization and the Welfare State," in Joseph Wong (ed.) *Healthy Democracies: Welfare Politics in Taiwan and South Korea*. Cornell University Press: New York.

¹⁸ Ho, Ming-sho. (2006). "Neo-Centrist Labour Policy in Practice: The DPP and Taiwanese Working Class," in Dafydd Fell, Henning Kloter, and Chang Bi-yu (eds.) *What has changed? Taiwan Before and After the Change in Ruling Parties*. Otto Harrassowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden.

parties of the two mainstream parties, rather than appealing on new policy issues, were purifiers focusing on national identity¹⁹. Identity politics between the Pan-blue and the Pan-green became more polarized after the DPP took the presidency in 2000. President Chen Shui-bian shifted the DPP toward Taiwan independence as his terms went on. Chen mobilized the rewriting of the ROC Constitution and referendum legislation, as a political tool in pursuit of “creeping independence”²⁰. He also carried out the name rectification movement and de-sinicisation policies²¹. By contrast, the opposition KMT reverted to orthodox Chinese nationalist appeals, such as using images of Sun Yat-sen in election advertising. The 2004 and 2008 presidential elections featured vehement identity mobilization. Referendums, Taiwan independence and rewriting the constitution became salient issues in the two elections. The temptation to politicize identity politics during even local elections has proven too strong to resist even at the local level, as when Chen Shui-bian portrayed the 2006 election for the mayor of Kaohsiung as a struggle between Taiwan and China.

Besides, the Chen era evinced a return to the politics of ethnicity, which originated from the ethnic injustices suffered by the native Taiwanese dated back to the authoritarian era²². Though Taiwan’s democratic transition in the 1980s and 1990s achieved a transfer of power from mainlanders to native Taiwanese²³, differences in historical experiences still hampered reconciliation between the two groups. Native Taiwanese felt mainlanders were intruders but dominated the island's economy and politics, while mainlanders felt native Taiwanese were so deeply influenced by Japanese culture that they were too detached from their motherland²⁴. The Pan-green used ethnic hatred to its advantage, by attempting to exclude KMT mainlander

¹⁹ Fell, Dafydd. (2014). “Measuring and Explaining the Electoral Fortunes of Small Parties in Taiwan’s Party Politics,” *Issues and Studies*, 50 (1), pp. 153-188.

²⁰ Kao, Mily Ming-Tzu. (2004). “The Referendum Phenomenon in Taiwan: Solidification of Taiwan Consciousness,” *Asian Survey*, 44 (4), pp. 591-613.

²¹ Examples of name rectification and de-sinicisation included renaming Chiang Kai-shek airport as Taoyuan International Airport, adding “Taiwan” to the ROC passport, removing statues of Chiang Kai-shek throughout Taiwan, campaigns to reapply for membership of the United Nations under the name “Taiwan”.

²² The KMT imposed ROC Chinese nationalism on the native Taiwanese to support its legitimacy as an emigre regime. Mainlanders who had followed the KMT to Taiwan in 1949 enjoyed many privileges that relegated most native Taiwanese to a marginal role in the island’s economics and politics. See Wang, Fu-chang. (2013). “Ethnic Politics and Democratic Transition in Taiwan,” *Oriental Institute Journal*, 2 (22), pp. 81-107.

²³ Hsieh, John Fuh-sheng. (2005). Ethnicity, National Identity, and Domestic Politics in Taiwan,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 40 (1-2), pp. 13-28.

²⁴ Tsai, Chang-Yen. (2007). “National Identity, Ethnic Identity, and Party Identity in Taiwan,” *Maryland Series in Contemporary Asian Studies*, 1 (188), pp. 1-33.

politicians like Ma Ying-jeou from legitimate political activity²⁵. In fact, ethnicity has constituted the most important social base for the partisan support of the two political camps. Min-nan Taiwanese are more likely to be in favour of Taiwan independence, whereas mainlanders tend to support reunification with the Hakka Taiwanese somewhere in between. As it turned out in various elections, the DPP's supporters were mainly Min-nan Taiwanese, while the KMT was backed by a mixture of ethnicities, notably overwhelming support of mainlanders²⁶. Political parties hence offered confined rational policy discourse on economic redistribution and environmental protection, but were tempted to focus on identity-related policies. As will be discussed in the next section, the DPP skillfully employed blatant identity mobilization to divert public attention from deteriorating social inequalities during the Chen era. Political elites exploited the emotions of their ethnic voters to their advantage and subsequently antagonized ethnic relations. Most importantly, radical political maneuvering of Taiwan independence and referendums escalated the island's tensions with China and US, leading to instability across the Strait. Therefore Taiwan's political institutions lacked maturity as they failed to set a direction which was conducive to intermediating various interests and resolving social conflicts. Their obsession with national identity merely polarized the already divisive political system and exacerbated conflicts among different social groupings. Moreover, party polarization motivated by identity cleavage had a detrimental effect on the values and attitudes of the political elites and mass public toward democracy. Post-election protests by the Pan-blue over the election outcomes in 2000 and 2004 were serious cases of political violence. Moreover, the Pan-blue legislators expressed their discontent towards the pro-independence President Chen by frequently blocking his proposed legislation, such as his budget plan and arms procurement bill. Anti-democratic attitudes of the participatory parties acted as critical constraints to democratic consolidation.

The Blue Camp has enjoyed a 6-4 advantage over the Green Camp under the basic electorate structure since Taiwan's democratization. However, hardline Pan-green voters account for a high proportion of the Pan-green electorate, whereas moderate Pan-blue voters are the vast majority within the Blue camp²⁷. Since fundamentalists tend to be more motivated to go to booths than moderates, turnout rates of the Pan-green voters have traditionally been higher than the Pan-blue

²⁵ Hughes, Christopher. R. (2011). "Negotiating national identity in Taiwan: between nativisation and de-sinicisation," in Ash, Robert and Garver, John W. and Prime, Penelope (eds.) *Taiwan's democracy: economic and political challenges*. Routledge research on Taiwan series. Routledge, New York, USA and London, UK.

²⁶ Taiwan Election and Democratization Surveys: Presidential vote and ethnicity, 2004, 2008 and 2012.

²⁷ Supporters of the Pan-blue and Pan-green can be divided into the hardline and moderate voters. Hardline Blue voters are Chinese nationalists and embraces unification with China. Hardline Green voters are Taiwan nationalists and supports Taiwan independence. Moderate voters are inclined to maintaining the status quo. While moderate Blue voters oppose Taiwan independence, moderate Green voters oppose unification with China.

counterparts. Hence turnout rates of the moderate Pan-blue constituents would determine whether the Blue Camp could capitalize on its inherent electoral advantage²⁸. As shown in tables 1, 2 and 3, the Pan-blue usually acquired between 45 to above 60 percent of the votes in elections at every level, and the Pan-green increased from slightly less than 30% to a little over 40% now.

Table 1. Vote Shares of Pan-blue and Pan-green in Presidential Elections (%)

	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012
Pan-blue	68.9	60	49.9	58.45	54.37
Pan-green	21.1	39.3	50.1	41.55	45.63

Source: Online database of Central Election Commission at < <http://db.cec.gov.tw/>>, accessed 15 September 2015.

Table 2. Vote Shares of Pan-blue and Pan-green in Parliamentary (Legislative Yuan) Elections (%)

	1992	1995	1998	2001	2004	2008	2012
Pan-blue	53	59.1	53.5	50.1	46.8	55.2	51.52
Pan-green	31	33.2	29.6	41.9	43.5	40.4	43.57

Source: Ibid. to Table 1.

Table 3. Vote Shares of Pan-blue and Pan-green in Local Executives Elections (%)

	1993	1997	2001	2005	2009	2010	2014
Pan-blue	50.4	43.5	47.5	52.3	47.9	44.54	52.67
Pan-green	41.2	43.3	45.3	43.1	45.3	49.87	43.89

Source: Ibid. to Table 1.

There was inadequate accountability for political parties over their performance under the electoral landscape. As Pan-blue voters constituted the majority of the Taiwanese electorate, the

²⁸ 陳張培倫, (2012). “藍綠基本盤戰力展示,” *iSun Affairs*, 11.

Pan-blue parties were encouraged to appeal to their core support base during elections. Pan-blue parties would not feel obliged to deliver generalized economic benefits to the society. The Pan-blue secured a majority in vote shares in most elections, whatever their political and economic performance. Hence, if the Pan-green could break its vote ceiling in an election owing to Pan-blues' poor governance, it would indicate a revival of accountability in Taiwanese politics, thus symbolizing a milestone of democratic consolidation.

Gradual shift to class cleavage

Taiwan's party competition has shown signs of departure from identity-centred politics to economic left-right division since the KMT returned to power in 2008. It was the interplay between economic and political factors that brought about the cleavage shift. Taiwan's economic stagnation over the past decade has led to an increasingly inegalitarian society. Cross-Strait economic integration has put Taiwanese industries under heavy pressure, as many Taiwanese enterprises have relocated their production bases to China in search of a better cost-structure. Domestic investment lagged while capital outflow increased, much of it bound for China. Not only has the economy slowed down over the past decade, unemployment has also risen. Economic growth rates ranged between approximately 5.5% and 8.5% in the 1990s²⁹. Growth rates dropped to an average of 4.43% in 2000-2007, and plunged further to 3.14% in 2008-2014. Unemployment rates surged from an average of 2.04% in the 1990s to 3.70% in 2000-2007, and worsened to 4.57% in 2008-2014³⁰. Unsurprisingly income and wealth distribution deteriorated. The ratio of the income of the richest quintile households to the poorest has risen from 5.33 in the 1990s to 6.03 in 2000-2007, and the figure rose to 6.14 in 2008-2014³¹. This is not bad by international standards, but is definitely worse than the equitable growth years in the past. Economic malaise, with an increasingly uneven distribution of wealth, was bound to make people aware of their class status and distributional position. That has laid a foundation for class politics to evolve into a salient political cleavage.

Even so, the economic left-right cleavage did not take centre stage earlier in the DPP era, notwithstanding widening income disparity. It was because President Chen successfully diverted

²⁹ Chi, Eunju, and Kwon, Hyeok Yong. (2012). "Unequal New Democracies in East Asia: Rising Inequality and Government Responses in South Korea and Taiwan," *Asian Survey*, 52 (5), pp. 900-923.

³⁰ DGBAS, "Important Indicators Based on Manpower Survey Results," <<http://eng.dgbas.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=37778&ctNode=3339>>

³¹ DGBAS, "Percent Share of Disposable Income by Quintile Group of Households and Income Inequality Indices," <<http://eng.stat.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=3417&CtNode=1596&mp=5>>

public attention to national identity, and there was a reservoir of political energy to be tapped by identity mobilization³². The KMT, noticing the declining Chinese identity, has emphasized economic issues and downplayed national identity. It has nevertheless accommodated the Taiwan identity appeal since Ma Ying-jeou became the party chairman in 2005³³. That shift has somewhat frozen the identity issue, which has long been the DPP's favoured battlefield³⁴. The fact that the KMT won with a 17-point margin in the 2008 presidential election suggested that identity politics was no longer a powerful mobilization tool. Economic and retrospective voting dictated the electoral results for the first time³⁵. The DPP, upon post-election soul searching, selected Tsai Ing-wen to be its party chairwoman. Tsai is a Western-educated former academic who was not an ideological firebrand. Tsai followed the KMT in laying emphasis on the economy, and toning down national identity. The revised political agendas of KMT and DPP were in line with mainstream public opinion. First, the population has moved toward a multifaceted Taiwan identity containing a pure Taiwanese identity and a double identity of both Chinese and Taiwanese identities, despite the top-down efforts of Chen Shui-bian in desinicizing Taiwan. Second, the vast majority of Taiwanese prefer the preservation of Taiwan as an autonomous and independent political entity, i.e. the "status quo"³⁶. The KMT and DPP consequently moved to a moderate pragmatism of proclaiming Taiwan's state sovereignty, while constructing a cleavage around socio-economic issues to gain political advantage.

The KMT's economic policy was based on a philosophy of opening to China and tax cuts with emphasis on large enterprises. It pointed out that active participation in the Chinese market would stimulate production and exports as well as attract investment from overseas-based Taiwan companies, thereby generating higher growth³⁷. Unfortunately the promised economic

³² Wu, Yu-shan. (2013). "From Identity to Economy: Shifting Politics in Taiwan," *Global Asia* 8:1 (Spring), pp. 114-19.

³³ When Lien Chan was the KMT chairman, he made gestures to show his love for Taiwan. But Ma Ying-jeou was proved more effective in employing the Taiwan identity theme. Ma used his election campaign activities to express his love for Taiwan, such as employing a "Long Stay" programme to work with farmers and workers. Ma's campaign slogan of "no unification, no independence, no use of force" can be seen as moving the KMT to the centre regarding national identity.

³⁴ Wu, Naiteh. (2012). "Will Economic Integration Lead to Political Assimilation?" in Peter Chow (ed.), *National Identity and Economic Interest: Taiwan's Competing Options and Their Impacts on Regional Stability*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 187-202.

³⁵ Wu, Yu-Shan. (2013). "From Identity to Economy: Shifting Politics in Taiwan," *Global Asia*, 8 (1), pp. 114-119.

³⁶ Rigger, Shelley. (2001). "Maintaining the Status Quo: What it means, and why the Taiwanese prefer it," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 14 (2), pp. 103-114.

³⁷ Muyard, Frank. (2010). "Mid-Term Analysis of the Ma Ying-jeou Administration: The Difficulty of Delivering the (Right) Goods," *China Perspectives*, 2010 (3), pp. 5-21.

benefits to the Taiwanese population have not been shared equitably after Ma Ying-jeou signed the Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with China in 2010. Managers and professionals who can coordinate production and provide technological support to factories in the mainland have greater job opportunities and higher economic status than before. At the same time, mainland products have been permitted to import into Taiwan since the ECFA. Small and medium-sized businesses that have not relocated production to the mainland now have to compete with cheap imports made with cheap mainland labour, and that forces the society to race to the bottom. Farmers and blue-collar workers naturally suffer from stagnant wages and even unemployment. Worse still, the ECFA has resulted in Taiwanese businesses (Taishang) investing heavily and accruing substantial profits in China. They bring enormous amounts of money back to the island, but few of them invest in productive industries. While property taxes are undervalued, those capitalists put their money in Taiwan's real estate market³⁸. It has created a bubble that puts housing out of reach for ordinary citizens. There was hence a potential fusion of social justice and quality of life issues that Tsai Ing-wen could capitalize on. Tsai grasped the opportunity to position the DPP as champion of the young people, farmers, and small and medium enterprises vulnerable to Chinese competition. While the KMT embraced cross-Strait integration for economic growth, the DPP, though not repudiating the ECFA in principle, takes a cautious stance on cross-Strait economic integration³⁹.

Classes that either benefit from or are harmed by cross-Strait integration have been polarized into the pro-economic integration camp and the pro-economic independence camp since 2008. Classes with high levels of skills, in particular managers and professionals, tend to support integration and the Pan-blue. Individuals with limited skills, such as blue-collar workers, petty bourgeoisie and farmers, tend to be resistive to cross-Strait integration, so they constitute the support base of the Pan-green⁴⁰. Simultaneously post-2008 elections showed the reorientation of the KMT and DPP toward class issues. In the 2012 presidential election, the KMT focused on economic achievements after the signing of the ECFA. The DPP used a lighter tone in its Taiwan identity appeal and projected itself as pragmatic on policies vis-a-vis China. Tsai Ing-wen instead

³⁸ Hou, Monique. (2010). "Tax System Controversy: Taiwan, 'Island of Inequity'?" *CommonWealth Magazine*, 445, 22 April.

³⁹ When Ma Ying-jeou broached the ECFA, the DPP called for an outright repudiation of the proposal. That was particular clear in its repeated attempts to promote a national referendum on ECFA. The majority of Taiwanese, nevertheless, have acknowledged the importance of cross-Strait integration for Taiwan's economic development. Once the ECFA had been passed the DPP stepped back from their opposing stance. The DPP instead called for deceleration rather than negation of ECFA. The shift could be attributed to the intimate relationship of the DPP with a number of Pan-green Taishang like Hsu Wen-lung and Chang Jung-fa.

⁴⁰ Wong, Kevin Tze Wai. (2010). "The Emergence of Class Cleavage in Taiwan in the Twenty-First Century: The Impact of Cross-Strait Economic Integration," *Issues and Studies*, 46 (2), pp. 127-172.

repeatedly attacked Ma for the failure of his major economic policies to deliver generalized benefits⁴¹. She advocated creating a welfare state with a strong safety net for those left behind, such as middle class and blue-collar workers⁴². Tsai's social justice appeal was highlighted by her piggy-bank initiative, which was designed to contrast small donations to the DPP by regular people with the KMT representing the interests of business conglomerates⁴³. In fact, over a hundred prominent local entrepreneurs came out in support of Ma in the final week of the campaign. That could be interpreted as capitalists lining behind a pro-growth party against a party with social democratic inclinations. Ultimately the KMT successfully switched the decisive campaign theatre to cross-Strait relations in the 2012 elections. Ma equated the choice of president to a choice between cross-Strait stability, embodied by the 1992 Consensus of "one China, each side with its own interpretation", and uncertainty if Tsai was elected. It turned out that Ma won reelection and the Pan-blue held its majority in the parliament. The Pan-green could not break through its 45% partisan support ceiling, suggesting limited accountability for economic malaise under the Ma administration⁴⁴.

Although the KMT and DPP had fundamental differences on economic strategies vis-à-vis the Chinese market, their positions on social policies were not as far apart as one might expect, especially when Ma Ying-jeou pursued a series of bold socio-economic reforms after his reelection. First, the KMT permitted a dramatic spike in oil and electricity prices to alleviate deficits from pre-election freezes on energy pricing. Second, intending to promote equitable tax contributions, Ma added a capital gains tax on income from securities transactions⁴⁵. Third, under pressure from the Pan-green, Ma released his plans to reform the pension scheme of the military, civil service and education sectors, which had cost the government dearly to maintain⁴⁶. Since the three sectors had traditionally been the KMT's core constituencies, the KMT faced the

⁴¹ Schubert, Gunter. (2012). "No Winds of Change: Taiwan's 2012 National Elections and the Post-Election Fallout," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 41 (3), pp. 143-161.

⁴² Batto, Nathan. F. (2014). "Continuity in the 2012 presidential and legislative elections," in Jean-Pierre Cabestan and Jacques deLisle (eds.) *Political Changes in Taiwan under Ma Ying-jeou: Partisan conflict, policy choices, external constraints and security challenges*. Routledge: New York.

⁴³ Fell, Dafydd, and Chen, Charles. (2014). "Lessons of Defeat and Success: Taiwan's 2012 Elections in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 43 (3), pp. 13-43.

⁴⁴ Sullivan, Jonathan. (2013). "Taiwan's 2012 Presidential Election," *Political Studies Review*, 11, pp. 65-74.

⁴⁵ Chen, Ming-Tong. (2013). "Taiwan in 2012: Curse of the Second-Term President?" *Asian Survey*, 53 (1), pp. 206-213.

⁴⁶ The proposed termination of the year-end bonus for some retired government employees was one of the key reforms. Moreover, the reform package included lowering the 18% preferential interest rate enjoyed by certain government employees to 9% in a few years.

risk of conceding many votes in future elections. On the above policies Ma faced fierce opposition from the DPP and the vested interests, and he was compelled to dilute the reforms. However, it is noteworthy that Ma's reform initiatives incorporated some of the DPP proposals to address the distributional problems on his watch.

Discontent among the young people and the Sunflower Student Movement

Unfortunately the KMT administration was still far from assuaging the widespread apprehension among young people over the direction of Taiwan's economy. Taiwan experienced a rapid expansion of higher education during the past two decades. Yet, Taiwan's stagnant economy has made the island's labour market unable to accommodate that many university graduates, and it follows that the unemployment rate for those young people with tertiary education is around one percent higher⁴⁷ than the overall unemployment rate. Furthermore, many enterprises depressed the entry-level salary to NT\$22k, which was even lower than the 1998 level. Notwithstanding its controversial nature, the Ma government pushed through the CSSTA to open up the service sectors to China. Young people felt anxious about Taiwan's increasing dependence on the mainland economy, which could exacerbate job losses and inequalities. Young people expressed their clamorous discontent toward Ma's "China leaning and corporation-centred policies"⁴⁸, in the Sunflower Student Movement of spring 2014.

The CSSTA controversy could be traced back to June 2013, when the Ma administration signed the CSSTA with China. The legislature, upon demand from the Green Camp, agreed to conduct a careful review and vote on all provisions in the agreement and hold twenty public hearings before reviewing the CSSTA. After the final public hearing the KMT announced within 30 seconds that the second reading of the CSSTA was finished and ready for the plenary review on March 17, 2014. That anti-democratic move triggered the Sunflower Student Movement. On March 18, several hundred students stormed and occupied the assembly hall of Taiwan's Legislative Yuan for twenty-four days, accusing the KMT legislators of flouting democratic procedures in its efforts to push the CSSTA bill through. They alleged the government of lack of transparency in negotiating the CSSTA vis-a-vis China, and voiced particular concern for the impact that Chinese penetration in Taiwanese economy would have on the island's vulnerable

⁴⁷ DGBAS, "Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment,"
<<http://eng.stat.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=12683&ctNode=1609&mp=5>>

⁴⁸ Some student leaders of the Sunflower Movement had previous experience in social movements. They were involved in the Wild Strawberries Movement, Anti-Media Monopoly Movement, and protests over the death of army conscript Hung Chung-chiu.

small and medium businesses⁴⁹. Student and civic group activists promoted their cause through new social media outlets, including an “official” Sunflower Movement Facebook page sharing news, and a Twitter account. Domestic public opinion swung in favour of the student movement as well, with more than half of the public declaring support for the activists’ demands⁵⁰. Therefore, the Sunflower Movement was a powerful grassroots movement which tapped into a latent segment of the population that was worried about the economic and political consequences but remained detached from the CSSTA issue⁵¹. The movement at last prevented a swift passage of the CSSTA and put the Cross-Strait Agreement Supervision on the legislative agenda.

Although the protests were anti-economic integration, student activists were not motivated by identity issues. Participants highlighted the debate about whether Taiwan should pursue economic growth by overdependence on China, which could result in declining economic opportunities for the youth. The Sunflower Movement enlightened Taiwanese on the importance of the country’s democracy, that Chinese influence would put the island’s democracy under siege and it was every citizens’ job to protect and advance the country’s democracy. Although the KMT legislators circumvented standard democratic procedures, the mass public exhibited their solidarity in defending Taiwan’s democracy at all costs. Previous social movements like the 2008 Wild Strawberries Movement were also protests against the KMT for its anti-democratic behaviour, but those movements could not solicit as much public support as the Sunflower Movement did. The revival of public commitment towards the democratic system, as seen in the Sunflower Movement, was a large step towards democratic consolidation. The local election at the end of the year, moreover, would be a critical test of whether Taiwan has become a consolidated democracy.

2014 Local Election

Albeit labeled “local election”, the 2014 election was considered nearly as important as the national level elections. It was the largest ever local contest in Taiwan, as all local elections, ranging from mayors of cities and counties to borough chiefs are held at the same time. Its nationwide nature, its political nationalization by the KMT, and the anti-KMT wave clearly gave

⁴⁹ Rowen, Ian. (2015). “Inside Taiwan’s Sunflower Movement: Twenty-Four Days in a Student-Occupied Parliament, and the Future of the Region,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 74 (1), pp. 5-21.

⁵⁰ TVBS. (2014). “Anti-CSSTA Student Movement Poll after the 330 Black Shirt Rally,” March 31, <<http://www.tvbs.com.tw/export/sites/tvbs/file/other/poll-center/20140401141358351.pdf>>

⁵¹ Ho, Ming-sho. (2015). “Occupy Congress in Taiwan: Political Opportunity, Threat, and the Sunflower Movement,” *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 15, pp. 69-97.

a national dimension to the poll. The contest played out against a background of non-redistributive growth and increasing economic disparity with decreasing or stagnating low salaries for the majority. Homelessness and unemployment amid a burgeoning luxury apartment market in Taiwan have become provided the DPP ammunition to attack the ruling KMT. The general public has taken a cautious attitude towards opening up to Chinese capital, but Ma alienated the KMT from ordinary citizens as he continued to pursue his agenda of establishing free economic pilot zones. Understandably Ma saw his popularity linger at extremely low levels⁵². Ma has become so politically toxic nationwide that most KMT candidates attempted to keep aloof of Ma during the campaign.

The Campaign

Owing to media concentration and the national pre-eminence of the candidates, coverage of the electoral campaigning largely concentrated on the long-time KMT stronghold of capital Taipei, and the strategic municipality of Greater Taichung. If the KMT lost Taipei, it would be regarded a disastrous Pan-blue defeat in its northern heartland. If the DPP snatched Taichung from the KMT, that would grant the Pan-green a virtual monopoly in Central and Southern Taiwan. In Taipei, the KMT mayoral candidate comes from a prestigious business family. His Pan-green opponent was a physician without experience in politics⁵³. The Pan-green campaign used the KMT candidate's family wealth and privileged status to portray him as the scion of a rich family and distant from ordinary people. In contrast the Pan-green nominee characterized himself as a professional free of business ties. The Pan-green candidate, steering away from his previous Taiwan independence affiliations, vowed to "reset" Taiwan politics by ending the Blue-green divide and advancing fairness and justice. He endorsed constructing more rental-only public housing and rent subsidies for the disadvantaged. His appeal appeared to resonate with many voters as he led in opinion polls by a comfortable margin. In a desperate attempt, the KMT tried to polarize the campaign into a classic Blue-green battle around national identity, pushing the "save the ROC" card to rally deep-Blue voters. The KMT old guards even described the Pan-green candidate as "a descendant of the Japanese emperor's loyal subjects"⁵⁴. The KMT

⁵² According to surveys conducted by TVBS, the approval ratings of President Ma have lingered around 10 to 15 percent since a few months into his second term. Around 60 to 75 percent of the survey respondents have expressed disapproval of Ma's performance. See TVBS. (2014). "頂新黑心食用油品事件民調," October 23, <<http://www.tvbs.com.tw/export/sites/tvbs/file/other/poll-center/20141024191519500.pdf>>

⁵³ The DPP formed an "Opposition Alliance" with the physician Ko Wen-je, and it decided not to field a candidate for the Taipei mayor. The DPP endorsed Ko, whom it regarded as pro-DPP.

⁵⁴ Hsiao, Alison. (2014). "2014 ELECTIONS: Ethnic discrimination seen in KMT attacks," *Taipei Times*, November 21, 3.

calculated that the basic electorate structure in Taipei favoured the Pan-blue, so it could win by counting on the support of the Pan-blue voters.

In Greater Taichung, the KMT candidate boasted the city's real estate development during his terms like the architecturally eye-catching opera house, but the DPP contender argued that the projects contributed more to growing income inequality than to the welfare of local people. The DPP touted better public transportation, social welfare and a downtown renewal⁵⁵, whereas the KMT candidate sought the endorsement of big businesses. The chairman of Foxconn Terry Gou pledged to expand his investment in Greater Taichung if the KMT nominee was reelected, making class issues rise to the surface. In fact, Gou publicly declared his support for the KMT local magistrate candidates in Taipei, Taichung, Yunlin and Kaohsiung. The DPP took the opportunity to criticize the Pan-blue for its intimate relationship with the rich⁵⁶.

The DPP also made an issue of the corruption scandals of a number of KMT local magistrates across the island. The KMT held fifteen local seats before the 2014 local election, yet most of the local leaders were not faring well. Several incumbent KMT city and county magistrates, some of whom alleged of official impropriety and collusion with business conglomerates, were ranked bottom positions in the local magistrates' approval survey conducted by the *CommonWealth Magazine*⁵⁷. Those corruption cases essentially hurt the KMT's image. The DPP campaign called on the electorate to vote the corrupt KMT leaders out, and give the DPP a chance for improving people's welfare. Amid rising discontent with growing social inequality, the DPP campaign aimed to fuel popular rejection of the KMT administration for colluding with the island's wealthy class.

Considering the election campaign of the KMT and DPP across Taiwan, the 2014 local election resembled the contests in Western consolidated democracies. The KMT and DPP focused on their respective socio-economic policy platforms. The DPP policy rhetoric emphasized the interests of traditional, small and medium businesses, peasants, workers and younger generation. The DPP supported administrative measures to cater for the basic needs of the working poor. Though the KMT policy rhetoric overlapped with that of the DPP to some extent, the KMT

⁵⁵ "Taichung mayoral race sees rerun of 2005 contest," *Taiwan Today*, October 30, 2014.

⁵⁶ Chen, Hui-ping, and Chen, Yu-hsuan. (2014). "2014 ELECTIONS: Gou draw fire for investment pledge," *Taipei Times*, November 26, < <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2014/11/26/2003605332/1>>

⁵⁷ 天下編輯部. (2014). "2014「縣市大調查」體檢全縣市 6成風險偏高," *CommonWealth Magazine*, September 2, < <http://www.cw.com.tw/article/article.action?id=5060864>>

stressed the need to stick to laissez-faire economics to promote growth, whereas the DPP prioritized a larger government role in wealth redistribution for the vulnerable groups amid cross-Strait integration. The KMT represented the interests of the Taishang and middle class, particularly managers and professionals; while the DPP touted a robust safety net for the economically deprived and the petty bourgeoisie constituencies. In advanced democracies, the KMT would be viewed a party inclined towards the centre-right, while the DPP would be considered a centre-left party. The crystallization of class politics suggested Taiwan was following the cleavage structure underlying Western consolidated democracies.

Election Results

The results saw a landslide victory for the DPP and the worst defeat of the KMT in Taiwan's electoral history in terms of both seat and vote shares. The DPP took four special municipalities of Taichung, Taoyuan, Tainan and Kaohsiung, excluding the victory of the DPP-endorsed independent in the capital Taipei. It also took control of nine cities and counties. The DPP kept all its incumbent seats, and its vote shares in victories in Yilan, Changhua, Chiayi County and Pingtung were its best records ever in local elections there. As to the Pan-blue, the KMT retained merely six of its previously held fifteen districts. In the six elections for head of the special municipalities, the KMT held only New Taipei City by a razor-thin margin. In particular, well-funded KMT mayoral candidates lost their traditional northern strongholds of Taipei, Keelung, Taoyuan and Hsinchu. In terms of vote cast across all localities, the Pan-blue received 43.89% of the votes, while the Pan-green acquired an unprecedented 52.67% of the votes, including the pro-DPP candidate Ko Wen-je. The basic electorate structure, that the Pan-blue is backed by 55% of the population nationwide and the Pan-green 45%, no longer held true in the elections. Even worse, the KMT no longer enjoys an absolute advantage in city and county councils. The DPP has virtually matched the KMT in the total number of seats across the island, and become the largest party in six local councils. The *China Times* depicted the election results ironically as “only the presidential office remains for KMT after its total defeat”⁵⁸.

The outcome of the vote in Taipei showed a resounding win for the Pan-green with 57% overall vote share and victory in all municipal districts, including those most associated with the KMT's traditional supporter groups of mainlanders, military and civil servants. The polarizing identity campaign of the KMT was apparently ineffective. The KMT candidate was not able to rid himself of his wealthy image, thus alienating himself from ordinary people⁵⁹. On the other hand,

⁵⁸ 管嫻媛, 江慧真. (2014). “國民黨輸到只剩總統府 1949 年來選舉最大潰敗,” *China Times*, November 30, A1.

⁵⁹ “A vote of no confidence in KMT,” *Taipei Times*, November 30, 2014, 8.

the Pan-green campaign struck a chord among middle-of-the-road voters and disillusioned KMT voters. The Pan-green contender also secured overwhelming advantage among the younger electorate⁶⁰. It is noteworthy that KMT has had solid support in the city, where even former president Chen Shui-bian, despite his very strong record as Taipei mayor, failed to break the 45% vote share ceiling. Hence the Pan-green candidate skillfully transcended the blue-green divide with his social justice appeal. The Pan-blue suffered a serious setback in Taichung as well. The DPP contender ended the KMT incumbent's 13-year governance of the city. The DPP secured 57% of the votes, against the KMT's 43%. Gou's endorsement backfired as it only amplified the KMT's image of serving the big corporations' interests at the expense of the middle and lower classes. Not surprisingly, all of the four candidates backed by Gou lost by a significant margin of over 15 points.

Not only did the KMT suffer defeat in the North, it also handed its traditional stronghold of the Mid-North over to the Green Camp, notably the city of Taoyuan⁶¹. Taoyuan was the home of a number of military bases and military dependents' villages, and most of its residents were pro-KMT. However, the city was undergoing a subtle demographic shift, a real estate boom, and the economically transformative Aerotropolis mega project around its international airport which altered its electorate structure. Taoyuan's new residents and voters, many pushed out of Taipei and New Taipei by sky-high housing prices, had found housing increasingly unaffordable due to the estate boom in the city. The extensive land expropriations planned to benefit the big developers in the Aerotropolis project and corruption scandals associated with the KMT incumbent were responsible for the KMT incumbent's defeat⁶².

Turnout for the election was 67.59%, similar to that of the local polls in 2009 and 2010. The unsatisfactory results of KMT candidates amid a moderate overall turnout suggested higher abstention among Pan-blue voters, out of either a wish to sanction the KMT or an inability to support its candidates. In particular, the KMT lost the traditional supporters of the military, civil service and education sectors over Ma's pension reforms. However, Pan-green votes saw

⁶⁰ According to the TVBS survey taken two days before the Taipei mayoral election, the Pan-green had the highest support rate in the 20-29 age group, followed by the 30-39 age group. In the 20-29 group, support rate of the Pan-green was 67%, whereas the KMT got 19% only. See TVBS. (2014). "台北市長選前兩天選情民調," November 27, <<http://www.tvbs.com.tw/export/sites/tvbs/file/other/poll-center/20141217220943598.pdf>>

⁶¹ More precisely, North includes Taipei City, New Taipei City, Keelung City, Kinmen and Matsu. Mid-North includes Taoyuan, Hsinchu City, Hsinchu County, and Miaoli. Ma Ying-jeou had the highest vote shares in the Mid-North region in the 2008 and 2012 elections.

⁶² Muiyad, Frank. (2015). "Voting Shift in the November 2014 Local Elections in Taiwan: Strong rebuke to Ma Ying-jeou's government and policies and landslide victory for the DPP," *China Perspectives*, 2015 (1), pp. 55-61.

significant growth, and the surges in the former KMT territories of Taipei, Taichung and Taoyuan were especially noteworthy. That indicated strong enthusiasm of the Pan-green electorate in voting for change, including farmers, blue-collar workers and small and medium enterprises. But this time young voters contributed to the DPP vote spike significantly. The Sunflower Movement earlier in the year was a historical awakening of political consciousness among young people, who began to actively participate in politics to defend Taiwan's democracy and social justice. The younger generation tends to use new social media to discuss political issues and shape public opinion, and the Pan-green Camp adroitly engaged with the social media, like Facebook, YouTube videos, and PTT. For instance, the entire election campaign of the Pan-green Taipei mayoral candidate was led by the Internet: small online donation, the promotion of policy initiatives, and mobilization to events, as opposed to the KMT's campaign which was backed by large enterprises and employed expensive TV ads. Unsurprisingly the Pan-green redistribution-oriented campaign strategy struck a chord with the youth. The enthusiastic involvement among the youth electorate in the 2014 local elections was manifest in the youth's exceptionally high turnout rates. There are over 5 million eligible youth voters, yet voting rates among youth used to be merely around 60% in previous contests, remarkably lower than the other age groups. The root of the problem was the KMT and DPP's obsession with national identity and neglect of other issues in the past. Young people, different from the voters above 40, often do not recognize themselves in the old Blue-green ideological battles, but place economic well-being and social justice as their priorities⁶³. President Ma had won the votes of young people in recent elections with his economic pledges, but this time it was different. Postelection surveys revealed that the turnout rate fared 74% for the 20-29 age group and 78% for the 30-39 group⁶⁴, both being way above the average. The Pan-green candidates enjoyed considerable advantages among the two groups⁶⁵, thus precipitating the landslide defeat of the KMT in the 2014 election.

Election results sent a clear message to the Ma administration. Having reached a tacit consensus on Taiwan's democracy and sovereignty, Taiwanese voters are no longer motivated by the old ideological national identity cleavage. Taiwanese are instead demanding that candidates propose concrete measures to improve their livelihood and economic development. During the election campaign, the KMT advocated opening Taiwan's borders to Chinese investment for growth and

⁶³ Rigger, Shelley. (2006). *Taiwan's Rising Rationalism: Generations, Politics and Taiwanese Nationalism*, pp. 26.

⁶⁴ Taiwan Thinktank. (2014). “九合一選舉投票行為調查 選後民調分析記者會 會後新聞稿,” December 2, <<http://www.taiwanthinktank.org/chinese/page/5/61/2909/0>>

⁶⁵ Besides the case in the capital Taipei, a number of key constituencies like Greater Taichung also saw large advantages enjoyed by the Pan-green over the KMT nominees. See TVBS. (2014). “台中市長選前兩週選情民調,” November 16, <<http://www.tvbs.com.tw/export/sites/tvbs/file/other/poll-center/20141117180811263.pdf>>

was backed by the country's middle and wealthy class. On the contrary, Pan-green found its support base in the underprivileged, particularly young people, through emphasis on class fairness and distributive justice. Accordingly the 2014 election epitomized a critical departure of Taiwan's politics from identity to an economic left-right cleavage, following the political configuration of the Western consolidated democracies. The paradigm shift confirmed Taiwan as a consolidated democracy in three ways.

First, it set out completely new rules of the game, reorienting the direction for the island to settle social disputes. Ma's cross-Strait policies, under which social inequality worsened, were a salient issue in the election. Despite limited differences on social policy rhetoric between the KMT and DPP, Taiwanese voters selected the Pan-green candidates, anticipating that the candidates, if elected, would prioritize an economic strategy beneficial for social equality. Partisan support based on national identity has faded, as traditional Pan-blue constituencies punished Ma for his socio-economic reforms. Political parties offered a meaningful choice of economic platforms to represent interests and demands of different social classes. Rational policy debates became the norm, thus fostering maturity of democratic institutions. Second, the election saw a consolidation of democratic values and attitudes among the mass public. Rational young voters were awakened by the anti-CSSTA Sunflower Movement. They anticipate that more intrusion from and control by Chinese business conglomerates would in the long run undermine the island's democracy. The young electorate participated enthusiastically in the election, showing their undaunted determination to defend Taiwan's democratic system and values. The KMT was punished for its efforts to fast-track the legislative approval for the CSSTA. Nonetheless, it is also noteworthy that there were neither political strife, acts of violence, nor a "November surprise" to intervene the campaign process and imperil the legitimacy of election results. The KMT leaders showed behavioural commitment to democracy by accepting the defeat, and alteration of power at the local level underwent in a peaceful manner. Third, the election demonstrated clearly what accountability was about in a consolidated democracy. The Premier resigned, and Ma Ying-jeou stepped down from the KMT chairmanship. But more importantly was that voters held the ruling KMT accountable for widening wealth gap under its watch, in stark contrast to previous elections where the Pan-blue and Pan-green had their respective ranges of vote shares no matter how they performed. The Pan-blue had not been held responsible for inability in delivering equitable economic growth, because they were able to get a majority of votes in various elections by consolidating their own bases. The fact that the Pan-green broke its vote ceiling in 2014 potentially marked a realignment of voters along the class cleavage. Political parties are now accountable for their unsatisfactory performance, that rational Taiwanese voters would no longer support the parties which fail to meet their expectations.

Concluding Remarks

Scholars put forward various theories which suggest that democratic consolidation hinges on the following factors: (1) the presence of democratic political institutions for resolving Taiwan's social conflicts; (2) the values and attitudes that emerge with participatory political actors and mass public; (3) accountability of the political parties for their performance. These theories, nonetheless, fail to notice the effects of social and political cleavages on those factors. Ethnic cleavage often underlies the political configuration of embryonic democracies, whereas the consolidated democracies in the West tend to centre on class politics. I thus attempted to join the debate by arguing that the salience of national identity had obstructed Taiwan's process of democratic consolidation. I then proposed that the 2014 local election confirmed the cleavage shift to class politics, and it symbolized a key milestone for Taiwan's evolution from an embryonic to a consolidated democracy.

I asserted that the critical obstacle to the island's democratic consolidation originated from the emotional and potentially explosive national identity issues. With the Pan-blue espousing Chinese nationalism and the Pan-green expressing nativist aspirations, dirty, frenetic campaigning and resorting to emotionalism often characterized elections at all levels. National identity and ethnic disputes hindered democratic consolidation in three ways. First, it led to immature political institutions which were not conducive to intermediating various interests and demands and resolving social conflicts. Political parties were encouraged to compete with identity mobilization, rather than offering meaningful policy choices on different social redistribution initiatives. Ethnic relations deteriorated, as the political system merely exacerbated social tensions. Second, democratic rules and values were often scorned by political actors and mass public. Violent post-election protests were not uncommon. Third, vote shares of the two political camps were relatively stable, with the Pan-blue enjoying slight advantage. The Pan-blue were hence seldom held accountable for their socio-economic performance.

Nonetheless, economic malaise has laid a foundation for economic issues to evolve in party competition since 2008. Cross-Strait economic integration has become increasingly controversial, and classes that either benefit from or are harmed by the process are polarized into two opposite camps, namely the pro-economic integration camp and pro-economic independence camp. While the KMT played down its Chinese nationalist image, it espoused active integration into the Chinese economy for growth. The DPP followed the KMT in toning down the Taiwanese identity discourse and focused on the economy. The KMT now represents the relatively well-off. On the other side, the DPP championed for the underdogs, the young people, farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises vulnerable to Chinese competition. A new class cleavage emerged in the 2012 presidential election, but cross-Strait stability ultimately returned the election to a classic Blue-green battle that time. Nevertheless, the Sunflower Movement in spring 2014 aroused political awakening of the young generation, who suffered from

inegalitarian wealth distribution in the society. The following 2014 local election witnessed the demise of identity mobilization, as the KMT saw its worst ever defeat in Taiwanese elections. The Pan-green gained enthusiastic support of the underprivileged class, especially the young electorate previously seen as politically apathetic. Distribution issues proved to be where the DPP competitive advantage lies, when Pan-green broke the 45% ceiling with an unprecedented 52.67% vote share, and its nominees won in a landslide in key constituencies with a social justice campaign platform. Economic left-right politics and class voting became the dominant pattern in the 2014 election for the first time, and was hence an epoch-making event encapsulating the evolution of Taiwan from an embryonic to a consolidated democracy.

First, the election established entirely new rules of the game for political competition on the island, setting a new direction for resolving social conflicts. Political parties attempted to appeal to different social classes with economic policy initiatives, and the electorate rationally chose the candidates representing their economic interests, rather than their national identity and ethnic orientations. Rational policy debates became the norm, and mature democratic institutions generated a favourable environment for settling deep-rooted social contentions. Second, there saw a revival of democratic values and attitudes in the election. The electorate expressed their distaste of the KMT circumventing democratic procedures. Young voters, feeling worried about the detrimental effect of Chinese penetration into the Taiwanese economy on the island's democratic system, participated ardently in the election to vote the KMT out. That demonstrated the Taiwanese' behavioural commitment to protect the island's democracy at all costs. Last but not least, unpopular KMT leaders were held accountable for their performance. Deteriorating social inequality under President Ma's overly pro-China policies were critical to the KMT's defeat. Amid a potential realignment of the electorate, the Blue Camp no longer held its inherent electoral advantage over the Pan-green. Political parties are now required to construct comprehensive socio-economic policy initiatives to articulate interests and demands of different social strata.