# The Economic Determinants of Taiwanese Sentiments towards Reunification with Mainland China*

# (Incomplete)

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**Abstract**

We use panel survey data to document that the effects of mainland Chinese economic growth on Taiwanese support for full political and economic integration are heterogeneous depending on education. For Taiwanese with higher educational attainment, mainland growth increases their support for reunification. For those with lower education, growth reduces their support for reunification and increases their support for official independence.We find similar results for income and the probability of visiting and conducting business in the mainland. Using an online survey experiment, we find similar heterogeneous effects on support for reunification. In addition, educated Taiwanese are more pessimistic about the continuation of the current status quo, the amount of democratic rights under reunification, and are more likely to expect armed conflict and less likely to expect strong U.S. support if Taiwan declares independence. These results suggest that broad-based economic growth under the threat of coercion builds support for autocratic regimes.

**Keywords:** Autocracy, Democratization, Modernization Theory

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# 1 Introduction

The relationship between economic growth and democratization is a central question in political economy. *Modernization theory* famously argues that economic growth promotes the development of democratic institutions and demand for civil liberties (e.g., Lipset, 1959).[1] The evolution is supposedly most salient for the educated middle class because schools instill civic values and teach skills like reading, writing and critical thinking that facilitate democracies by increasing political participation and social capital (Glaeser et al., 2007; Larreguy and Liu, 2024). This theory is motivated by the historical experiences of Western democracies. But it does not explain the recent experiences of countries such as China, Vietnam, and Saudi Arabia, where sustained income growth and the emergence of a large educated middle class have occurred without corresponding strides toward democratization. Moreover, recent cross-country panel data indicate no relationship between income growth and democracy (Acemoglu et al., 2008) and there is a growing debate of whether economic growth and actually delay democratization. For example, Przeworski et al. (2000) shows that autocratic regimes that grow faster tend to remain in place for longer. Growth can also legitimize the incumbent's rule amongst citizens of the country (e.g., Guriev and Treisman, 2019). Moreover, autocratic rule is more nuanced in practice: such regimes often pursue a mixed strategy in which they reward compliance with economic opportunity and material benefits, while maintaining the constant threat of repression against actual or potential political opposition.

We test whether economic growth in autocratic regimes increases support for the regime by raising perceived economic benefits. The effects may differ by education, but the direction is a priori ambiguous. In modern economies, returns to education are high, so more educated individuals may benefit more from growth. At the same time, they tend to be more politically informed and engaged. They may therefore better understand both the benefits of democracy, such as individual rights, and the costs of political change, including repression and economic disruption.

Our paper will examine the heterogeneous effects of growth on support for the autocratic regime for individuals of different educational attainment. To the best of our knowledge, we are the first to study this question systematically with rigorous empirical analysis.

The main empirical challenge for our study is the difficulty of measuring citizen preference in autocratic regimes. The usual ways of measuring political preferences by observing voting behavior or conducting

[1] Barro (1999) finds a positive cross-country relationships between income and democracy.

surveys are problematic because there are no free elections and survey respondents may be intimidated and reluctant to provide sincere responses. We address this difficulty by taking advantage of the unique history and institutional arrangement of mainland China and Taiwan. Mainland China has been openly autocratic and rejected Western-style democracy since 1949. In contrast, Taiwan is *de facto* politically and economically autonomous from the mainland and has been a liberal democracy since the early 1990s. Information about the economy and politics of the mainland are well known in Taiwan. Whether Taiwan should reunify with the mainland, maintain the status quo autonomy, or become officially independent has long been a key issue for its electorate. Since reunification means full political and economic integration under the Beijing-run system, we can assume that support for reunification implies that an individual is willing to accept Beijing's autocratic system in place of Taipei's democratic one. Thus, we can test our hypothesis by studying the relationship between mainland Chinese economic growth and Taiwanese support for reunification.

We combine three data sources: individual-level survey data from the Taiwanese Social Change Survey (TSCS), township-level voting records from presidential and legislative elections, and a novel survey experiment that we designed and conducted. We begin with the TSCS, a nationally representative repeated cross section spanning 1995 to 2022. The survey provides detailed information on political preferences (e.g., support for reunification), education, income, and other individual characteristics. We estimate heterogeneous effects by interacting mainland economic growth with individual education in a specification that includes individual controls, township fixed effects, and linear and quadratic time trends. Township fixed effects absorb time-invariant local characteristics, while time trends capture common secular changes such as Taiwan's political and economic evolution. Identification relies on the assumption that no omitted factors jointly correlated with mainland growth and education drive political preferences. We provide extensive evidence to support this assumption.

The first outcome we examine is support for reunification. On average, 12.2% of survey respondents support reunification, while 54% support the status quo and 23.5% support official independence.[2] We find that relatively uneducated individuals (with educational attainment of less than high school) are less supportive of reunification when mainland China economic growth increases. But for educated individuals (with educational attainment of high school or higher), mainland growth is positively associated with support for reunification.

[2] 10.3% support an unspecified residual category "other".

The changes in support for reunification are statistically similar between "local" Taiwanese (*benshengren*), who have no ancestry from the mainland Kuomintang (KMT) diaspora in the 1940s and 50s, and the "migrants" (*waishengren*), who are descended from the KMT diaspora.[3] But the source of the change differs for the two groups. For migrants, increased support for reunification is mainly driven by reduced support for the status quo. For locals, it is driven by a reduction in support for independence. These results are consistent with the fact that on average, only 10.5% of migrants support independence while 25.3% of locals support independence.

The main empirical concern for the interpretation of our estimates is omitted variables. For example, mainland economic growth can be correlated with growth in Taiwan or its other major trading partners – the U.S. and Japan. In this case, our estimates would be spurious. To address this potential issue, we additionally control for the economic growth of Taiwan, the U.S. and Japan, each interacted with education. The estimates for mainland growth and its interaction with education are robust to the additional controls. Moreover, the growth of Taiwan and its other large tradition partners have different effects on reunification, which supports our interpretation that our main results reflect Taiwanese voters' sentiments about the mainland and are not spurious. We also demonstrate that results are robust to a large number of additional concerns, and alternative standard error estimations. See the paper for a detailed discussion.

To investigate whether survey responses translate into real-world political behavior, we then examine voting data. The cross-strait relationship is *the* divisive issue for the two main political parties of Taiwan. The Kuomintang (KMT) has always advocated for the "One China" policy. Until recently, this meant reunification with the KMT at the head of China. As this possibility has diminished, it came to mean maintaining the status quo. In direct opposition to the KMT, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), a Taiwanese nationalist party, advocates for official independence. We construct a township-level panel and examine vote shares for the KMT and the DDP (in all presidential and legislative elections between 1995 and 2024) as a function of mainland economic growth and the average education of each township in 1990.[4] We find that mainland economic growth is positively (negatively) associated with vote shares for the KMT and negatively (positively) associated with vote shares for the DPP amongst counties with

[3]Over one million individuals moved from mainland China to Taiwan during and immediately after the Chinese Civil War (1945-1949). We discuss this in the Background Section.

[4]Voting data are only available at the township and election year level. Townships are the smallest administrative unit in Taiwan. There are 346 townships.

higher (lower) average educational attainment. The voting results are consistent with the survey results. A caveat for interpreting the voting results is that they cannot distinguish between support for reunification from support for the status quo, which are both part of the KMT platform. Nevertheless, they show that survey responses are consistent with real-world behavior.

To understand the mechanisms driving our main results, we consider the two main channels discussed in the literature. The first is economic: mainland growth can have heterogeneous economic effects on Taiwanese according to their level of education. In our study period, Taiwan (2024 per capita GDP $34,059) is on average more economically developed and technologically advanced than mainland China (2024 per capita GDP $13,306). High-skilled Taiwanese workers have benefited from cross-strait economic engagement, while the large number of unskilled mainland workers have threatened to undermine the wages of low-skilled Taiwanese workers.[5] We investigate the role of the economic channel by examining the effect of mainland growth on the income for educated and uneducated Taiwanese workers. We find that mainland economic growth is negatively associated with income for uneducated Taiwanese workers and positively associated with income for educated workers. This supports the interpretation that the differential effects of mainland growth on support for reunification for educated and uneducated Taiwanese workers is due to the differential economic returns that it offers to high and low-skilled workers.

Educated Taiwanese workers can benefit from trade with mainland growth without leaving Taiwan. But many also visit and work on the mainland to capitalize on economic opportunities. Consistent with the economic considerations driving our results for educated workers, we find that mainland growth is positively associated with the probability that educated Taiwanese have visited or lived on the mainland in recent years. The association is negative for uneducated Taiwanese, though the estimate is statistically imprecise. Also consistent with the role that economics play in driving the main results, we find that when the mainland economy grows at a higher rate, educated Taiwanese are more likely to state that economics is the primary issue for Taiwan, while uneducated Taiwanese are more likely to state that geopolitics is the primary issue for Taiwan.

A second channel operates through coercion and the threat of force. Greater support for reunification among educated Taiwanese may reflect higher perceived probabilities of military coercion by China. They may view forced reunification as likely and thus be more responsive to economic incentives. Alternatively,

[5]For example, to protect the benefits of framers, Taiwan ban lots of agricultural imports from mainland China. See report from Ministry of Agriculture, Taiwan.

they may interpret mainland economic growth as increasing China's military capacity or willingness to use force. Because the observational data do not allow us to directly test these mechanisms, we conducted an online survey between February 12 and March 22, 2026. The study recruited Taiwanese residents aged 20 and older through Facebook advertisements and measured their perceptions of the economic and political consequences of different cross-strait scenarios, as well as how these perceptions vary with education.

Consistent with anecdotal accounts, more educated respondents in the online survey are more politically engaged and better informed. They are more likely to report voting, consume more political and economic news, and hold more accurate beliefs about GDP growth in both Taiwan and mainland China. At the same time, they express more pessimistic views about the future of cross-strait relations and Taiwanese democracy under reunification. They assign higher probabilities to political and military conflict, expect democratic institutions—especially elections—to erode more quickly under reunification, and are more likely to anticipate Chinese aggression following a declaration of independence. They are also less likely to expect full military support from the United States and its allies.

We also embed an experiment that provides exogenous variation in perceived mainland growth, allowing us to validate the empirical strategy used in the observational analysis. The experiment follows a between-subjects design in which respondents are randomly assigned to view news about strong or weak mainland economic performance, or a placebo. We also independently randomize exposure to news about Chinese military activity near Taiwan. After each prompt, respondents report their preferred cross-strait relationship, measured using a continuous reunification index, and their expectations about future income. Consistent with the observational findings, positive news about mainland growth increases support for reunification among more educated respondents relative to the less educated. Effects on expected personal income have the same sign but are not statistically significant. The military treatment yields weaker effects. It does not significantly shift the reunification index, and its interaction with economic information is small and statistically insignificant. One interpretation is that perceptions of military risk are already salient, so additional information has limited effects on average.

Taken together with the survey evidence on beliefs, these results suggest that the response of educated Taiwanese is not driven solely by expected economic gains. Instead, it is consistent with a mechanism in which more educated individuals assign a higher probability to mainland coercion and adjust their preferences accordingly. This interpretation aligns with the view that autocratic regimes can sustain support by combining economic incentives with the threat of force.

In the paper, we also explore several other mechanisms, such as whether support for reunification amongst educated Taiwanese reflects different political values and/or national identity differs across education levels. We also investigate the possibility that support for reunification amongst educated Taiwanese is driven by pro-One China school curricula. The evidence suggests that these mechanisms play limited roles in our paper.

A related, though distinct, possibility is that the identity channel reflects the legacy of political indoctrination or social engineering through schooling. Historians have long emphasized that schools serve as vehicles for nation-building, instilling civic loyalty by promoting common histories, languages, and (real or imagined) shared ancestries . To investigate this channel, we exploit the changes in school curricula in the late 1980s. Before the reform, Taiwanese school curricula focused exclusively mainland Chinese culture and history and explicitly promoted "One China" ideology. Starting in the late 1980s, the curricula broadened to include discussions of both mainland and local Taiwanese history and culture. If pro-One China education drives the results, we should see stronger effects for older cohorts who were educated in the first system. Instead, we find that the estimates are similar across cohorts.

This paper is the first to provide novel and rigorous empirical evidence on how individuals in a stable and functional liberal democracy become more tolerant of an autocratic regime when it offers compelling economic opportunities combined with a military threat. The magnitudes of the estimates are specific to the context of our study. But the insight that autocratic regimes can increase political support by providing economic opportunities to citizens is likely generalizable to other settings.

We add to the closely connected literatures on democratization and autocratic regimes. There is a large literature on the relationship between democracy and economic growth.[6] We are most closely related to studies about the economic resources give autocrats more instruments with which to survive. These studies are mostly theoretical. They emphasize that rulers can remain in power through a mix of repression, patronage, selective redistribution, and institutional concessions to pivotal groups (Acemoglu et al., 2004; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006). In this view, broad economic growth of the type that we study can help stabilize autocracy by expanding the rents available for co-optation, strengthening state capacity, and reducing incentives for rebellion, but it is generally treated as one tool among several rather than

[6]Existing studies in economics find that economic crises drive democratization because the state is forced to extend the franchise to obtain the support of the population (e.g., Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000), and growth is on average higher in democracies (e.g., Acemoglu et al., 2019; Papaioannou and Siourounis, 2008). Recent studies such as Besley and Persson (2019) and Persson and Tabellini (2009) have also provided theoretical treatments of the long-run dynamic relationship between democracy and growth.

as a direct cause of public acceptance of authoritarian rule (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2001; Egorov and Sonin, 2024). These studies tend to frame economic success as a resource that dictators can convert into coalition maintenance and control; and not as the direct reason that ordinary citizens become reconciled to the absence of democratic rights. In this sense, we are more closely related to studies in political science. For example, recent works have argued that China's economic success has contributed to regime legitimacy, public support, and acceptance of authoritarian rule (Wright, 2010; Dickson, 2016). We also add to a new but rapidly growing body of work on geo-economics (Clayton et al., 2023). Existing studies mostly focus on how states leverage financial and trade for geopolitical power (Liu and Yang, 2025).

In studying the China-Taiwan context, we complement Beraja et al. (2023a) and Beraja et al. (2023b), which provides evidence that the state uses surveillance to bolster its political power. Our findings show that the attraction of economic opportunities also contributed to Beijing's power. In this sense, we are related to studies about soft power, the notion that governments can shape political preferences through appeal and attraction (rather than coercion and threats). Recent studies provide evidence on soft power in the context of Hollywood movies being shown in contemporary China (Fan et al., 2022) and in post-WWII Italy (Cannella and Magnaricotte, 2025), and the diffusion of democratic norms with trade flows (Tabellini and Magistretti, 2024).[7]

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the background. Section 3 develops the conceptual framework. Section 4 describes the data. Section 5 presents the empirical results. Section 6 provides evidence from an online survey. Section 7 explores additional mechanisms. Section 8 offers concluding remarks.

# 2 Background

## 2.1 Taiwanese Politics and Economics

After the KMT lost a bitterly fought Civil War against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), 1945-1949, it was exiled to Taiwan. From there, the Republic of China (ROC), was internationally recognized as the legitimate Chinese government for most of the Cold War. The KMT imposed martial law and repressed all political opposition until 1987.

[7] There are many qualitative studies about soft power in political science. See, for example, (Nye, 2004) and the references within.

Both international and domestic politics began to change in the 1970s. On the international front, in 1971, the United Nations recognized mainland China, the People's Republic of China (PRC), as the official China. Today, there is officially "One China" with two autonomous political and economic entities on the two sides of the strait. The governments on both sides of the strait advocate for "One China" with their own party in charge. Other countries, such as the United States, support this nuanced arrangement with a policy of "strategic ambiguity".

Domestically, Taiwan underwent a major political change after the death of its founding dictator, the Generalissimo Chang Kai Chek. His son and political successor, Chiang Ching-kuo, allowed Taiwan to gradually liberalize and appointed Taiwan-born Lee Teng-hui as the next president of Taiwan. Lee held Taiwan's first democratic and direct election for the unicameral legislature, the Legislative Yuan, in 1992. In 1996, Taiwan held its first democratic presidential election and Lee Teng-hui was re-elected to office. Taiwan elected its first (non-KMT) DPP president, Chen Shui-bian, to office in 2000.

The school curricula of Taiwan liberalized in the late 1980s. In 1949, the KMT banned local dialects and the teaching of local histories at school and forced all children to learn Mandarin and study a common Chinese history focused on the mainland. Starting in the late 1980s, the curricula liberalized to allow more prominence to Taiwanese local culture and history, though Mandarin is still the national language for education and official business. The curricula was gradually and intentionally adapted to emphasize democracy and civil values.[8].

*The* main political issue for Taiwan is the cross-strait relationship. Part of the concern is political. Mainland China is an autocracy while Taiwan is a liberal democracy. Another part of the concern is economic. Mainland China is the largest trade partner of Taiwan for decades. Reunification implies both political and economic integration.

Throughout our study period, Taiwan has been wealthier and more technologically advanced than mainland China. In 1990, Taiwan's per capita GDP was approximately $8,170. In 2000 and 2020, it was around $14,840 and $28,734. In 1990, mainland China's per capita income was approximately $347.50. In 2000 and 2020, it was approximately $962.8 and $10,695. All these values are reported in current USD.

Mainland Chinese income, which started at a much lower level than Taiwanese income, grew at much higher rates. During this time, Taiwan was an important source of high-skilled talent. Taiwanese expertise and investments were important for the development of many sectors in the mainland, such as

[8]For detailed discussions of these curricula changes, see for example, Chen et al. (2023) and Hong and Lyu (2025).

manufacturing, services (e.g., restaurants, hotels) and more recently, high-tech. China also became an important market for Taiwanese products and services and a source of raw materials for Taiwan. Today, the mainland (which includes Hong Kong after 1997) is Taiwan's largest trading partner for imports and exports.

The conventional wisdom is that economic opportunities that came from mainland growth disproportionally benefitted Taiwanese who were highly educated, skilled or had financial means. These were the individuals who were able to take advantage of the mainland's needs for talent and investment. Taiwanese with less education and fewer resources were, if anything, threatened by the mainland's economic development. The large number of workers who moved out of rural areas and farms into low-skilled factories or services in urban areas as the mainland grew meant that the number of workers who could compete with low-skilled Taiwanese workers were increasing.

That this concern has been salient can be seen in the many discussions and policies in Taiwan. For example, Taiwan restricts the import of agricultural products from the mainland to protect Taiwan's higher-cost agricultural sector. Similarly, migration from the mainland to Taiwan is limited. This is explicitly motivated by the concern that a large influx of unskilled workers from the mainland would reduce wages for unskilled Taiwanese.

It is generally very difficult to become a citizen of the ROC. Usually, the only pathway is via marriages with a Taiwanese citizen and waiting for six years or more, and there are very few political asylum cases.[9] Strict migration controls means that the Taiwanese electorate is not directly influenced by the new voters who immigrate from the mainland (or anywhere else).

### 2.2 Taiwanese Awareness of Mainland Growth and Politics

The economics conditions and political system of mainland China are widely known in Taiwan. The geographic, cultural and linguistic proximity between Taiwan and the mainland means that there are few barriers to information in our study period. Taiwan has 23.4 million residents. As shown in Figure 1, the island is only 126 km away from the mainland and the shores are often visible across the strait. All those living in Taiwan and the mainland today are native speakers of Mandarin Chinese (the official dialect),

[9] According to National Immigration Agency in Taiwan, 252,235 mainland Chinese immigrated to Taiwan through marriage during 1987-2023. Less than half of them attain citizenship in Taiwan.

which has been the only language taught in schools since 1945 on both sides of the strait.[10]

Mainland economic growth is a popular topic in Taiwanese media outlets. Major outlets usually report Chinese quarterly growth rates the same day or one day after they are released in Beijing, which is usually followed by extensive discussions and analyses by pundits and economists. Taiwanese can also access some radio broadcasts, and in more recent years, internet and social media, directly from the mainland.

That mainland China has an autocratic political system is also broadly understood in Taiwan (as it is in the rest of the world). The CCP, which governs the mainland from Beijing, has always been open about its autocratic system and its rejection of Western notions of democratization. Similarly, Beijing has always been clear that reunification means that Taiwan will come under the control of the CCP. Thus, our study assumes that being aware of this, when Taiwanese support reunification, they understand that it means living in an autocratic regime instead of a democratic one.

# 3 Conceptual Framework

## 3.1 Taiwanese Sentiments on Reunification

This section provides a verbal discussion of how mainland growth affects Taiwanese sentiments on reunification, which implies full economic and political integration, and why it can differ for educated and uneducated Taiwanese.

First, we consider the economic channels. Reunification would eliminate restrictions on the migration of labor and capital, expand access to Chinese consumer and labor markets. The integration of Taiwan with the large, lower-wage mainland economy will increase relative demand for Taiwanese high-skilled labor, as comparative advantage shifts toward skill-intensive exports (Dornbusch et al., 1977; Eaton and Kortum, 2002). This channel is particularly relevant for Taiwan, where educated workers are concentrated in export-oriented sectors that already rely heavily on cross-strait supply chains. Removing capital controls would also make it easier for Taiwanese to invest their capital in the mainland. In short, lowering institutional and regulatory barriers to migration would allow Taiwanese professionals to access high-paying labor markets in the mainland's largest cities. It would allow Taiwanese firms to access lower-cost mainland supply chains. Mainland migrants to Taiwan would significantly reduce the cost of low-skilled

[10]The writing system differs slightly. Taiwan (and Hong Kong) uses traditional characters and teaches phonetics with the Wage-Giles system. Mainland China uses simplified characters and teaches phones with the pinyin system. Traditional and simplified characters are mostly mutually understandable.

services in Taiwan.

In contrast, integration can hurt businesses and workers in sectors that are relatively less productive than their mainland counterparts (e.g., low skilled labor and labor-intensive sectors). When the mainland was one of the poorest nations in the world, even workers who were relatively unskilled in Taiwan had skills that most mainland workers did not. However, as the mainland developed and production in sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture started using similar production technologies as Taiwan, low skilled mainland workers became more similar to low-skilled Taiwanese workers. Thus, economic integration would increase labor market competition and reduce wages for low-skilled Taiwanese workers. Given that the mainland started at such a low level of development relative to Taiwan, mainland growth increases this competition.

Second, we consider non-economic channels. Being part of a larger and rapidly growing economy may increase economic and geopolitical prestige, which can be valuable to some Taiwanese. In models of identity formation such as Shayo (2009), individuals choose to identify with groups that offer higher perceived status. As mainland China grows, its global standing and domestic economic strength increase, potentially making Chinese national identity more attractive to Taiwanese citizens. In this framework, identification with China is not fixed, but endogenously responds to changes in the relative prestige of the group.

The main non-economic cost of reunification for the Taiwanese is the loss of having a say in policies. Part of the loss is a result of the relative sizes of Taiwan and the mainland. The Taiwanese population is a small fraction of the mainland population and would have relative little say in policy even if the mainland is a democracy. The fact that the mainland is not democratic makes the loss of influence in policy much more severe. Moreover, the Taiwanese will have to accept mainland restrictions such as the limited freedoms of media and religion, and other civil liberties that the Taiwanese have been accustomed to since the 1980s and 90s. The perceived loss of political influence can increase with mainland growth if a richer mainland government is more autocratic.[11] It is unclear whether either the positive prestige effect or the negative political effect varies by education.

Ultimately, the level of an individual's support for reunification is determined by the net economic, social, and political value of reunification. Whether the positive effects of mainland growth on support for

[11]For example, economic growth can increase government revenues and allow the state to centralize and invest in more direct control (Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022) or state surveillance (Beraja et al., 2023a).

reunification outweigh the negative ones is ex ante ambiguous for all Taiwanese citizens. However, because mainland growth generates higher returns for educated Taiwanese, growth should generate relatively more support for reunification amongst the educated. The empirical analysis in the next section will estimate the net effect of mainland growth in support for reunification with the mainland for educated and uneducated Taiwanese.

### 3.2 Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

The empirical analysis investigates how mainland economic growth affects Taiwanese support for reunification with the mainland, and whether this differs for individuals with various education attainment that have different economic benefits from the mainland. The parsimonious baseline equation can be written as the following.

$$y_{ijt} = \alpha + \beta growth_t \times edu_i + \gamma growth_t + \phi edu_i + X_i + \delta_j + \theta_t + \varepsilon_{ijt}, \tag{1}$$

where outcome $y$ of individual $i$ living in township $j$ in year $t$ is a function of: the interaction of mainland GDP growth rate per capita, $growth_t$, and the years of education attainment of $i$ , $edu_i$; the uninteracted mainland per capita growth rate, individual controls, $X_i$, township fixed effects, $\delta_j$ and linear and quadratic time trends, $\theta_t$. The individual controls, $X_i$, includes age, age squared, sex, and marital status. We cluster standard errors at the township level – the smallest administrative unit in Taiwan.[12] We will later show that the results are robust to alternative methods of estimating the errors.

We are interested in $\beta$ and $\gamma$. $\beta$ captures the relationship between mainland growth and support for reunification or other outcomes for an uneducated individual. $\gamma$ captures the differential effect for an individual with one additional year of educational attainment.

We control for a time trend and its quadratic in place of year fixed effects to account for macro changes over time (e.g., political liberalization in Taiwan) because we are interested in the uninteracted effect of mainland economic growth, $\gamma$,and $growth_t$ is collinear with the fixed effects. Later, we will show that the interaction effects are robust to controlling for year fixed effects instead of the time trends. The township fixed effects control for time invariant differences across locations, such as urbanization and other geographic or slow-changing demographic and economic characteristics. The individual controls account

[12]There are 346 townships in total.

for the fact that educational attainment is correlated with other characteristics that can influence political sentiment towards reunification. Later in the robust section, we will show that the results are robust to controlling for the interaction of these variables with mainland growth.

The main concern for causal interpretation is omitted variable bias. Specifically, there might be omitted variables that vary with mainland growth and individual levels of education, beyond the baseline controls, that influence sentiment towards reunification. We discuss this further and provide evidence to ameliorate this concern after we present the main results.

# 4 Data

## 4.1 Taiwanese Social Change Survey

The main source of data is the *Taiwanese Social Change Survey* (TSCS) for the years 1995 to 2022. The surveys are jointly collected by Academia Sinica and the Institute of Sociology and the Center for Survey Research in Taiwan. They are nationally representative in-person interviews conducted every year on a repeated cross-section of individuals. Each wave samples around 0.1‰ of the population. Within this, a random subsample was surveyed about support for reunification. Our analysis focuses on these individuals. Thus, our baseline sample includes 22,107 individuals surveyed in year 1995, 1998, 2000, 2003-5, 2010, 2012-14, 2016, 2020; in the 220 townships.[13] Figure 8 is a map of our sample. The grey lines show the township boundaries and the black lines show the county boundaries. The townships in our sample are shaded in navy blue. All individual-level regressions and descriptive statistics are estimated using survey weights.

The TSCS includes information about individual attitudes towards reunification with the mainland, level of education, income, and other useful information such as ancestry and whether one has visited or worked on the mainland. We will describe these variables and those from other data sources when they become relevant.

[13]There are 346 townships in Taiwan in total. The townships we do not observe are mostly sparsely populated and in the mountains.

### 4.2 Election Data

We complement the TSCS data with township-level information on all presidential and legislative elections in Taiwan, provided by the Central Election Commission. This dataset includes voting outcomes and turnout for each election at the township level. It covers all eight direct presidential elections (held every four years from 1996 to 2024) and the nine direct elections for the Legislative Yuan—Taiwan's unicameral legislature—held from 1995 to 2024. Until 2004, presidential and legislative elections were staggered; since then, they have been held in the same years.[14] Even though individuals can only vote in person on the election day in Taiwan, the average turnout rate is over 70%, higher than the turnout rate of U.S. presidential elections. Hence, we believe the election data from Taiwan represent the political preference of the mass population.

Because voting data are available at the township-by-year level, in the empirical analysis we match them with average years of education in 1990 at the township level. Figure 8 shows the geographic distribution of average educational attainment across townships.

### 4.3 Descriptive Statistics

We examine the relationship between the years of education and a range of demographic characteristics and political outcomes. We present results in Table 1, where each row reports the mean and standard deviation of a variable, as well as the coefficient and standard errors for the coefficient of this variable from a regression where the outcome variable is the years of education and controls for town fixed effects. Average educational attainment in our sample is 11.09.

Men, younger cohorts, higher-income individuals, urban residents, and those with migrant ancestry tend to have higher levels of education.[15] In contrast, individuals who are or have been married have lower educational attainment, consistent with the fact that older cohorts—who are more likely to be married—

[14] As noted above, there are 346 townships in our sample, which are administrative subdivisions of 21 "counties." In 1990, Taiwan comprised 23 first-level administrative divisions. We exclude two counties—Kinmen and Lienchiang—for three main reasons: (1) they are extremely close to mainland China (the shortest distance is just 2 km); (2) unlike other counties, they were not colonized by Japan; and (3) the TSCS and TEDS surveys do not cover them. The remaining units include two special municipalities (Taipei and Kaohsiung), fourteen counties (Taipei, Taoyuan, Kaohsiung, Hsinchu, Miaoli, Changhua, Nantou, Yunlin, Chiayi, Pingtung, Yilan, Hualien, Taitung, and Penghu), and five provincial cities (Taichung, Tainan, Keelung, Hsinchu, and Chiayi).

[15] The TCSC reports ancestry – whether an individual has a parent with ancestry from the KMT disapora (*waishengren)*. We code anyone who has one or more parent who is a "migrant", and all others as "locals". For young respondents, this means that migrants include those with at least one grandparent from the mainland. For middle age respondents, this includes those with at least one parent from the mainland. There are a few older respondents who came from the mainland as children. For younger respondents, it is possible to measure ancestry with error if their parents have mixed ancestry.

received less schooling on average. Taiwan implemented compulsory education in 1968, which increased schooling levels for younger generations. Migrants have higher educational attainment for historical reasons: many arrived with elite status during the KMT retreat from the mainland and benefited from privileged access to educational and financial resources during the Martial Law period (1949–1987).

These correlations suggest that educational attainment is systematically associated with individual characteristics and political preferences that may influence attitudes toward China. Education is not randomly assigned, and is shaped by historical and policy-driven variation. To account for this, our baseline specification controls for demographic covariates (age, age squared, sex, marital status), town fixed effects, and time trends. We control for the other correlates in the robustness exercises. We will also present sub-sample estimates by migrant status and birth cohort.

The TSCS asks whether the respondent has visited the mainland or has a family member who has stayed there. 28% of respondents report such personal or familial exposure. More educated Taiwanese are more likely to have lived, worked or visited the mainland. For example, high school graduates are 25% more likely to have done so than those who did not complete high school (not presented in tables). These descriptive statistics are consistent with high level of personal interaction across the strait and the conventional wisdom that educated Taiwanese have engaged more with the mainland.

### 4.4 Mainland Growth

Our study takes place during a period of sustained high economic growth in mainland China. Over the thirty-year period of rapid growth, mainland GDP per capita increased from roughly 5% of Taiwan's level in 1995 to approximately 40% by 2023. Figure 3 shows that annual per capita GDP growth in the mainland averaged approximately 9%, with substantial year-to-year variation ranging from 5% to 18% prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic growth rates in Taiwan are approximately 3% on average. They are positive for most years. It is important to note that growth in mainland China is not perfectly correlated with growth in Taiwan. This mitigates concerns that our results are confounded by concurrent economic performance in Taiwan. After we present the baseline estimates, we will present estimates controlling for Taiwan growth rates, as well as the growth rates of Taiwan's other major trading partners.

# 5 Empirical Results

## 5.1 Baseline Estimates

We begin by estimating how mainland Chinese economic growth affects Taiwanese attitudes toward reunification, the status quo, and independence. Table 2 reports results from individual-level regressions using the TSCS. Panel A presents estimates of the interaction between mainland GDP growth and individual education, as well as the uninteracted effect of growth.

Column (1) shows that among individuals with lower educational attainment, faster growth in mainland China is associated with a decline in support for reunification. The negative effect is attenuated—and ultimately reversed—for more educated individuals, who become more supportive of reunification when the mainland grows faster. Columns (2) and (3) indicate that this pattern is largely driven by "local" Taiwanese respondents, with weaker and more imprecise effects among migrants.

Columns (4)–(6) use support for maintaining the status quo as the dependent variable. The coefficients on the interaction term are again positive, and those on the uninteracted growth term are negative, mirroring the pattern observed for reunification. However, most estimates are statistically insignificant, with the exception of column (6), where the interaction term is positive and statistically significant for migrants.

Columns (7)–(9) turn to support for (formal) independence. The coefficients reveal that faster mainland growth reduces support for independence among more educated individuals, while increasing it among the less educated. This pattern is statistically significant for locals (column 8), but not for migrants (column 9). These results complement the findings for reunification and suggest that mainland growth induces a divergence in views across education levels—educated individuals become more favorable to integration, while the uneducated shift away from it. The results are consistent with group-level ideological baselines—locals begin from a higher preference for independence, and migrants from a more pro-China orientation—but the education-by-growth gradient is remarkably similar across groups; each group shifts support for reunification in response to growth, but from a different starting point.

Columns (10)–(12) examine non-responses (i.e., those selecting “other” or providing no answer), and suggest that less educated individuals are more likely to abstain from expressing a position when mainland growth is high, while more educated individuals are more likely to provide a definitive response.

To assess magnitudes, note that average support for reunification and independence is, respectively,

12.2% and 23.5%. The coefficient estimates imply that an increase in the mainland growth rate from 5% to 10% is associated with a 4.24 percentage point (p.p.) decrease in support for reunification among uneducated respondents (a 34.75% decline relative to the mean), and a 2.21 p.p. increase in support for independence (a 9.40% increase). In contrast, among individuals with a master's degree (18 years of education), the same increase in growth is associated with a 1.79 p.p. increase in support for reunification (14.67% of the mean) and a 4.10 p.p. decrease in support for independence (17.45% of the mean). Given that the interquartile range of education in our sample is 7 years, and assuming a current growth rate of 5%, our estimates imply that individuals at the 75th percentile of education are 19% more likely to support reunification and 10% less likely to support independence than those at the 25th percentile.

If we interpret the coefficients in Panel A, column (1), literally, they imply that individuals with less than 13 years of schooling will reduce support for reunification when mainland growth is positive ($0.848/0.067 = 12.67$), while individuals with 13 or more year of schooling will increase support for reunification when mainland growth is positive. In our sample, 60% have graduated from high school.

Panel B replicates the analysis using education terciles, and shows that results are qualitatively similar to those in Panel A. However, the estimates are less precise, likely reflecting the loss of information from discretizing a continuous variable.

## 5.2 Robustness

### 5.2.1 Growth Rates of Other Countries

One concern is that growth rates are correlated across countries and our findings are confounded by the growth of Taiwan's other important trading partners. Mainland China is the biggest trading partner of Taiwan (30% of Taiwan's international trade). The other top trading partners of Taiwan are the U.S. (13%) and Japan (10%) in the analysis. Table 3 presents results where we add controls for the growth rates of Taiwan, the U.S. and Japan, and their interactions with education. We find that the main effects of mainland growth and its interaction with education are similar to the baseline. Thus, our results are not confounded by other growth rates. Moreover, we find that Taiwanese and U.S. growth do not increase support for reunification with the mainland from any group. This is reassuring as a sanity check of our results. The estimated effects of growth in Taiwan and its interaction with education are statistically zero. The estimate for uninteracted U.S. growth is statistically significant at the 1% level, but has the

opposite sign as mainland growth. The estimate for its interaction with education is small in magnitude and statistically zero.

The estimated coefficients for Japanese growth and its interaction with education are both positive and statistically significant. The fact that Japanese economic growth increases support for reunification with the mainland for both educated and uneducated Taiwanese is possibly due the complicated history between Japan, China and Taiwan. Japan colonized Taiwan in the early 20th Century, and then invaded China (1937-1945) during World War II, when the KMT was China's wartime government. The fact that 15-20 million Chinese perished in the eight years of war against Japan is emphasized in schools and many aspects of society (e.g., movies, books) in both the mainland and Taiwan.

### 5.2.2 Additional Controls

We conduct a wide range of sensitivity checks to address alternative explanations and potential biases. Table 8 reports results for support for reunification. First, we control for year fixed effects in column (2), which absorbed the year and year squared in the baseline specification, and all the time variant factors. Then, we augment the baseline specification interacting mainland growth with individual variables in columns (3)-(5).

Next, we control for growth interacts with urban area dummy variable in column (6). This address the concern that the heterogeneous development across township is correlated with support reunification and education attainment. We also account for geographic heterogeneity by controlling for the interaction of mainland growth with township distance to the mainland in column (7). The distance to the mainland addresses the concern that military threat from mainland China correlates with education as more educated people live in the west of Taiwan, which is closer to the mainland.

In the columns (8)-(10), we include some "bad controls" that may influence the mainland growth and individuals attitudes towards reunification. DPP has a pro-Independence and anti-One China agenda. During its incumbency, DPP not only promotes curriculum reforms in removing context about China, but it also compete or go against the mainland in policies and diplomacy. We control for DPP incumbency interacts with education attainment in column (4). As the mainland becomes wealthier, it becomes more challenging for the mainland to maintain a high growth rate, due to the diminution of the catch-up effect. In columns (5) and (6) we control for log mainland GDP and log mainland GDP per capita interact with education attainment.

Columns (11) and (12) use alternative inference strategies. The results so far present standard errors that are clustered at the township level. We can alternative standard errors at the county level using wild bootstraps (Cameron et al., 2008) and estimate Conley (1999) spatial standard errors with a 25 km cutoff. The results remain robust, suggesting that spatial correlation or clustering choice does not drive our findings.

For brevity, we focus on support for reunification as the outcome variable. Appendix Table A.1 presents the same robustness checks for support for the status quo, independence and "others".

### 5.3 Voting Outcomes

A natural question when interpreting the survey results is whether stated preferences correspond to real-world political behavior. To address this, we turn to township-level voting outcomes from all presidential and legislative elections held between 1995 and 2024. There have been nine legislative elections (1995, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, 2020, and 2024) and eight presidential elections (1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2016, 2020, and 2024). The two elections were held in alternating years until 2004 and have been held concurrently since. These data, provided by the Central Election Commission, include vote shares and turnout for each election at the township level.

Taiwan has consistently high electoral participation. Turnout averages approximately 75% for presidential elections and 68% for legislative elections. Voting eligibility requires ROC citizenship, a minimum age of 20, and residency of at least six consecutive months (four months for legislative elections).

The major political parties differ in both their cross-strait positions and economic platforms. The KMT favors closer ties with mainland China and is generally more supportive of business interests and liberalization. For instance, under President Ma Ying-jeou (2008–2016), the KMT promoted direct flights, expanded tourism, and encouraged bilateral investment and trade. In contrast, the DPP emphasizes labor protections, economic self-reliance, and reduced integration with the mainland. President Chen Shui-bian's "No Haste, Be Patient" policy, introduced in his first term, imposed caps on mainland investment and discouraged deepening cross-strait ties. Consistent with these positions, support for the KMT is typically interpreted as support for maintaining the status quo or gradual integration, while support for the DPP reflects a preference for official independence.[16]

[16]Appendix Table A.2 documents the correlation between average town and yearlevel measures of the survey responses and vote shares.

We estimate an equation similar to the baseline, equation (1), using voting outcomes as the dependent variable at the township-by-election-year level. Education, measured in 1990, is used to capture heterogeneity in the local response to mainland growth. All other control variables are also measured in 1990 and are interacted with growth in mainland China to absorb potential confounding trends.

Table 5 presents the regression estimates, which closely parallel the survey-based results. The estimates are more precise for presidential elections than for legislative elections, consistent with the idea that presidential races place greater emphasis on foreign policy. Columns (1)–(3) show that the interaction between education and mainland growth is positively associated with KMT vote share, mirroring the baseline findings on support for reunification. Similarly, columns (4)–(6) show a negative association with DPP vote share, consistent with the survey-based estimates of support for independence. These patterns are robust to alternative measures of education, including average years of schooling and the high school completion rate. Columns (7)–(9) show no consistent effect on the vote shares of other parties, suggesting that mainland growth primarily reallocates support between the KMT and the DPP.

To interpret the estimates, note that the average vote share for the KMT and DPP is 41.9% and 42.6%, respectively. The interquartile range of average township-level education is 1.27 years. At a mainland growth rate of 5%, our estimates imply that the KMT vote share in a township at the 75th percentile of education is approximately 2 percentage points higher than in a township at the 25th percentile ((0.128x0.05x1.27)/0.419 = 0.02). Because township-level variation in education is smaller than at the individual level, the implied magnitudes in Table 5 is correspondingly smaller than in Table 2.

### 5.4 Reunification and Income

The baseline results show that economic growth in autocratic regimes increases support or tolerance for the regime. One explanation for this result is that the economic returns to mainland economic growth may be different for educated and uneducated Taiwanese. To investigate this economic channel, we examine the relationship between mainland Chinese growth and Taiwanese income. Table 6 re-estimates the baseline specification using log(1 + real individual income) as the dependent variable. Columns (1)–(3) report results separately for the full sample, locals, and migrants. The estimates are consistent with those in Panel A of Table 2: the interaction between mainland growth and education is positive, while the uninteracted effect of mainland growth is negative across all subsamples. This pattern implies that economic growth in the mainland increases income for more educated individuals, but reduces income

for the less educated. The results are consistent with conventional wisdom that educated and skilled Taiwanese have been able to capitalize on mainland growth, while relatively uneducated and low-skilled Taiwanese have been made worse off by increased competition from low-skilled mainland labor.

Columns (4)–(6) include interactions between educational attainment and Taiwan's own growth rate, along with the uninteracted Taiwan growth term. The interaction with mainland growth is similar to columns (1)-(3). This shows that the estimated relationship between mainland growth and income in Taiwan are not confounded by Taiwanese economic growth. This is consistent with Figure 3, which showed that growth in the mainland and Taiwan are not perfectly correlated.

We also find that the returns to Taiwanese economic growth are different from the returns to mainland growth. Unlike mainland growth, we find that for all Taiwanese and locals (columns 4 and 5), income rises for both educated and uneducated individuals when Taiwan grows faster, though the gains are larger for the educated. For migrants (column 6), who are a minority in Taiwan, the uninteracted Taiwanese growth estimate is negative, but statistically zero.

The results imply that domestic growth raises income broadly, while growth in the mainland produces more unequal effects that disproportionately benefit higher-skilled individuals. That the mainland growth increases the incomes of educated Taiwanese and lowers the incomes of uneducated Taiwanese provides positive evidence for the economic mechanism.

For educated Taiwanese to exploit the economic advantages of mainland economic growth, they would need to understand the details of the mainland economy and its institutional details. To investigate this, we examine whether a Taiwanese person has any personal knowledge of the mainland as the outcome variable. According to Ministry of the Interior of Taiwan, over 2.5 million (10.6% of Taiwan population) Taiwanese visited the mainland in 2024. Based on the 2020 China Population Census, there were 157,886 (0.67% of Taiwan population) Taiwanese living in the mainland.

For this analysis, we use a second data source: the Taiwan Election and Democratization Study (TEDS). Like the TSCS, TEDS is a nationally representative survey, conducted annually from 2001 to 2020, but unlike the TSCS, it includes detailed questions on personal and familial engagement with mainland China.[17] TEDS asks "how many trips an individual has made to the mainland (excluding Hong Kong and Macau) in the past five years" and whether "an individual or a family member has made

[17]Each wave samples 0.05-0.1‰ of the population. TEDS was initiated by National Chengchi University and supported by National Science and Techology Council, Taiwan. Unlike the TSCS, which conducts on-site interviews for all respondents, around half of the interviews in TEDS are conducted through phone or internet.

investments, conducted business or held employment in mainland China".

We construct a binary outcome variable equal to one if the respondent reports having made at least one trip or answers "yes" to the second question. We estimate a regression specification similar to the baseline, using the three-year moving average of mainland growth as our measure of economic conditions. This smooths out short-term volatility and better captures the sustained economic trends likely to influence individual decisions to travel, work, or invest abroad.

Columns (1)–(3) of Table 8 show that more educated individuals are more likely to have visited or lived in the mainland when mainland growth is higher. This finding is consistent with the economic mechanism discussed above: as the mainland economy expands, high-skilled Taiwanese face stronger incentives to seek out professional opportunities, forge business ties, or explore investment options across the strait—channels that are less accessible or attractive to the less educated.

TEDS also solicits information on what respondents view as the primary challenge for Taiwan. It is an open ended question, where the surveyors write in the respondents' answers. We code the answer as "economic" if it included the following words: "Economy", "Finance", "Investment", "Industry", and "Entrepreneur". We code the issues as "geopolitical" if the answer included any of the following words: "Chinese Communist Party", "Mainland", "Cross-Strait", "Reunification", "Independence", "Military Defense", "Sovereignty" and "United Nation". Columns (4)-(6) of Table 8 show that educated individuals are more likely to cite the economy as Taiwan's primary issue when the mainland has high economic growth, while less educated voters are more focused on geopolitical concerns such as sovereignty or cross-strait conflict during these times. This suggests that the economic framing of reunification is more salient among the educated, consistent with a material-based re-evaluation of regime preferences.

## 6 Online Survey

The observational analysis in Section 5 exploits year-to-year variation in mainland GDP growth across TSCS survey waves from 1995 to 2022. We complement this analysis with an online survey, presented next. The survey serves two purposes. First, it provides direct evidence on how beliefs and perceptions differ by education, helping to shed light on the mechanisms behind our main results. Second, it embeds an experiment that allows us to validate the identification strategy used in the observational analysis by introducing exogenous variation in perceived mainland growth.

### 6.1 Survey Experiment

We recruited participants through Facebook advertisements targeting residents of Taiwan aged 20 and older during February 12, 2026 through March 22, 2026.[18] The experiment follows a 3×2 between-subjects factorial design, illustrated in Figure B.2. After completing background questions on demographics, political attitudes, and media consumption, respondents are exposed to two prompts in sequence: one economic and one military. The economic treatment has three arms: a prosperity narrative describing strong Chinese growth, a downturn narrative describing weak economic performance, and a placebo consisting of weather news. The military treatment has two arms: news about recent Chinese military activity near Taiwan, and a placebo consisting of a non-political news story. Treatments are randomly assigned. After each prompt, respondents report their preferred cross-strait relationship on a continuous scale ranging from immediate reunification to immediate independence, and their expected personal income over the next ten years.[19] Note that unlike the TSCS, which categorizes preferences into discrete groups (reunification, status quo, or independence), our survey elicts a continuous measure. This allows us to use more information in the estimates. To maintain comparability with the TSCS, we also construct binary indicators: independence (index $< 0.5$), status quo (index $= 0.5$), and reunification (index $> 0.5$).

We estimate the following specification for individual $i$ residing in township $j$:

$$y_i = \alpha + \sum_{k\in\{H,L\}} \left[\beta_1^k T_i^k \times M_i \times E_i + \beta_2^k T_i^k \times E_i + \beta_3^k T_i^k \times M_i + \beta_4^k T_i^k\right] \tag{2}$$
$$+ \gamma_1 M_i \times E_i + \gamma_2 M + \phi E_i + X_i'\delta + \mu_j + \varepsilon_i,$$

where $T_i^H$ and $T_i^L$are indicators for the prosperity and downturn economic treatments (the weather control is the omitted category); $M_i$ is an indicator for the military-news treatment (the lost dog control is omitted); $E_i$ is years of education; $X_i$ includes controls for marital status, sex, and a quadratic in age; and $\mu_j$ are township fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the township level.

[18]Respondents who clicked on the advertisement were directed to a Qualtrics survey hosted by the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Participants received a compensation of 150 National Taiwan Dollars (NTD, approximately 5 USD) in electronic gift cards upon completion, with a chance to win an additional 1,000 NTD. Figure B.1 shows the recruitment advertisement. Table A.3 reports the sample funnel: 823,487 views of the advertisement led to 36,744 clicks, of which 2,358 individuals consented to participate. After applying our baseline filters, age 20 or older, non-bot verification (reCAPTCHA score >= 0.5), and non-missing individual characteristics, we retain 1,354 respondents for analysis.

[19]The experiment was conducted in Chinese. We show a translated questionnaire in the end of Appendix **??**.

The full factorial structure generates all two-way interactions (economic x education, military x education, economic x military) and the triple interactions (economic x military x education). The coefficients of primary interest are $\beta_2^k$, which capture how the economic treatments' effects vary with education; $\gamma_1$, which captures how the military treatment's effect varies with education; and $\beta_1^k$, which test whether economic and military treatments interact differentially by education level. Random assignment ensures that treatment indicators are orthogonal to potential outcomes.[20]

### 6.2 Results

Figure 6 plots the mean reunification index by education across the six treatment cells. In the Econ+ & Placebo panel, the education gap in support for reunification narrows relative to the Placebo & Placebo panel. This reflects a shift away from reunification among less educated respondents, while more educated respondents remain largely unchanged. This pattern mirrors the observational findings in Section 5 and supports the interpretation from the panel analysis.

Table 8 reports estimates from specification 2 for four outcomes: the continuous reunification index in column 1, and binary indicators for independence, status quo , and reunification in columns 2-4.

Column 1 shows that among less educated respondents, the prosperity narrative shifts preferences away from reunification and toward independence. This effect attenuates and reverses as education increases. Both the uninteracted High Econ term and its interaction with education are statistically significant. The implied crossover occurs at approximately 16 years of education, roughly a bachelor's degree. Below this threshold, positive news about the Chinese economy reduces support for reunification; above it, it increases support. Columns 2 and 4 show the same pattern on the extensive margin. The prosperity treatment increases the probability of supporting independence among less educated respondents and increases the probability of supporting reunification among more educated respondents.

The downturn narrative produces little evidence of a meaningful effect. Across most columns, both the uninteracted downturn term and its interaction with education are small and statistically insignificant. A plausible explanation is that respondents already perceive the Chinese economy as weak: in the baseline survey module, the average estimate of mainland China's GDP growth rate is below 2 percent, lower

[20] Appendix Table 8 presents balance tests: we regress each of 15 baseline covariates, including education, income, presidential vote choice, demographics, and geographic location, on each treatment indicator. Two out of the 45 coefficients are statistically significant at the 5% level, which is consistent with successful randomization. The Joint P-value for treatments are all larger than 0.1, it also suggests the experimental randomization.

than respondents' estimate of Taiwan's growth rate. Information about a Chinese economic slowdown is therefore broadly consistent with prior beliefs and has limited persuasive power.

The military news treatment does not shift the continuous reunification index in column 1; neither the uninteracted military term nor its interaction with education is statistically insignificant. However, column 4 shows a significant interaction with education. Among less educated respondents, the military treatment reduces support for reunification, while among more educated respondents this effect is attenuated and eventually reversed. This suggests that military information may operate primarily on the extensive margin, pushing some respondents across the status quo threshold without shifting the overall intensity of preferences.

All triple interaction coefficients are small and statistically insignificant across all four columns. Chinese military belligerence does not appear to amplify or dampen the effect of economic information on political preferences, and vice versa. This does not rule out military threat as part of the broader mechanism behind why more educated Taiwanese become more supportive of reunification when mainland China is perceived as economically strong. We examine that mechanism directly in the next section.

### 6.3 Educated Taiwanese

A post-experiment survey module then collects detailed data on economic perceptions, cross-strait expectations, and attitudes toward reunification and independence. Our main goal was to understand Taiwanese perceptions of the costs and benefits associated with the different cross-strait scenarios, and how they vary with education.

The experiment collects survey data beyond the primary outcomes, allowing us to examine how education correlates with respondents' perceptions of the cross-strait relationship. Table 9 reports the relationships between various perception measures and education. These correlations provide suggestive evidence for the mechanisms underlying the education heterogeneity documented in the preceding sections. Understanding *why* more educated and less educated Taiwanese respond differently to economic information is one of the main motivations for conducting this experiment.

**Media consumption and perceptions of economic growth.** More educated respondents are more likely to acquire political and economic news through international social media, newspapers and television. They also report higher estimates of recent economic growth in both Taiwan and mainland China, with a particularly strong relationship for mainland China. Relative to official figures, respondents

on average underestimate recent growth on both sides of the Strait, especially in mainland China, and more educated respondents report perceptions that are closer to these benchmarks. These patterns suggest that education is associated both with greater exposure to external media and with systematically different perceptions of recent economic performance across the Strait.

**Political engagement.** More educated respondents are also more politically engaged. They are significantly more likely to report voting in the 2024 election and to have voted for DPP candidates, while education is not meaningfully associated with support for KMT or TPP (Taiwan People's Party) candidates. These patterns suggest that more educated Taiwanese are more attentive to politics, but that the education gradient in political engagement is not a general shift toward all parties. Instead, it is concentrated in turnout and in support for the DPP.

**Status quo fragility and expected conflicts.** More educated respondents expect the status quo to end significantly sooner. The average respondent expects the current arrangement to last about two decades, far below the upper bound offered in the survey, suggesting that respondents do not view the status quo as permanent. Regarding cross-strait conflicts, the education gradient is insignificant for economic conflict but statistically significant for both political and military conflict. More educated respondents anticipate greater political and military tension in the coming years.

**Elections under reunification.** Respondents were asked how many years various levels of elections would continue if Taiwan reunified with China. On average, less important elections are expected to last longer: village elections are expected to survive roughly sixteen years, while presidential elections are expected to survive fewer than ten. More education is associated with expecting faster disappearance of elections at all levels, with the gradient steepest for the most important offices. More educated respondents understand that Beijing would quickly eliminate meaningful democratic participation, especially at the higher levels.

**China's response to Taiwan's independence.** All forms of Chinese retaliation are perceived as highly likely, with the notable exception of a full invasion, which has a lower average and more dispersed responses. More education is associated with a statistically significant increase in the perceived probability of every scenario, including full invasion. The more educated view China's likely response to a Taiwanese declaration of independence as more aggressive and comprehensive.

**U.S. and allied support.** Most forms of U.S. and allied support are perceived as likely, from sanctions to diplomacy. The exception is full military engagement, which fewer than half of respondents

view as likely. More education is associated with *higher* expected diplomatic support but *lower* expected full engagement, both statistically significant. The more educated expect the U.S. to provide diplomatic and limited military support, but not to fight a full scale war on Taiwan's behalf.

Taken together, these perceptions paint a coherent picture. More-educated Taiwanese view the status quo as fragile, anticipate aggressive Chinese retaliation if independence is declared, and are skeptical that the U.S. would fully engage militarily in a cross-strait conflict. At the same time, they understand that reunification would mean the rapid end of democratic elections, especially at a higher level. Combined with the differential economic returns documented earlier that educated Taiwanese benefit more from cross-strait integration, this creates a rational calculus that makes reunification relatively less unappealing when the Chinese economy is perceived as strong. Less educated Taiwanese face the same geopolitical realities but lack the economic upside, tilting the net calculus toward independence.

# 7 Additional Mechanisms

This section considers two additional mechanisms. They are complementary and not exclusive to the economic and coercion mechanisms discussed earlier. This frist is that mainland growth may influence attitudes toward reunification through social and political forces, including shifts in national identity and political values. One version of this mechanism is an identity-based status channel, as discussed in the conceptual framework. In models such as Shayo (2009), individuals derive utility from identifying with high-status groups. If a growing China is seen as economically and geopolitically ascendant, then individuals may be more likely to identify as Chinese when the mainland grows. This shift in identity, in turn, may make reunification more psychologically acceptable or even desirable.

Consistent with the identity framework, Table 10 shows that mainland growth increases the likelihood that Taiwanese respondents identify as "Exclusively Chinese" or "Chinese and Taiwanese," and reduces the likelihood that they identify as "Exclusively Taiwanese."[21] This shift holds across all education groups. However, this pattern does not explain the divergent responses to growth observed in support for reunification. In particular, less educated individuals—who become more likely to identify as Chinese when the mainland grows—also become less supportive of reunification. The lack of heterogeneity by education suggests that identity shifts alone cannot explain the main pattern of results. That

[21] Few individuals identify as exclusively Chinese (Appendix Figure A.1 plots the shares of individuals identifying as each group over time).

is, status-driven identification with China increases with growth, but this does not translate into greater support for reunification among the less educated, who may still perceive reunification as economically or politically costly.

The second is that the results can be explained by political indoctrination through education, in particular through early-life exposure to mainland-centered curricula. During the early decades of KMT rule, school curricula explicitly promoted a Chinese national identity and the importance of unification with the mainland. Following democratization, beginning in the late 1980s, the curricula were reformed to include local and regional history, de-emphasize unification, and promote democratic values. If ideological schooling shapes how individuals respond to mainland growth, we would expect the effects of growth on support for reunification to be stronger among older cohorts educated under the earlier system, and weaker among younger cohorts educated after the reforms.

To test this, we estimate a triple interaction of mainland growth, education, and an indicator for being born after 1980—i.e., after the curriculum reforms began. Table 11 reports the results. The triple interaction term is statistically indistinguishable from zero across specifications, except in column (12), which reflects non-response or undecided attitudes among migrants. To further explore cohort variation, we replace the post-1980 indicator with birth cohort dummies. Figure 7 plots the resulting coefficients and 95% confidence intervals. Appendix Table A.6 shows the full set of estimates. Across specifications, we find no meaningful differences in how different cohorts respond to mainland growth.

Taken together, these results suggest that curricular indoctrination does not account for the education-based heterogeneity in responses to mainland growth. While schooling may shape baseline national identity, it does not appear to determine how individuals react to changing geopolitical and economic conditions. Instead, the evidence supports the view that identity-based and ideological mechanisms may reinforce baseline attitudes but do not drive the divergence in political preferences in response to growth. Our main results are best explained by differences in expected material returns to integration, rather than differences in early-life political messaging or identity alignment alone.

# 8 Conclusion

The relationship between economic growth and support for democratic institutions is a central question in political economy. While modernization theory predicts that growth fosters demand for democracy,

recent experience in fast-growing autocracies suggests a more nuanced relationship. This paper studies whether economic growth in an autocratic regime can increase support for that regime among individuals living in a stable democracy, and how these effects vary with education.

Using individual-level survey data from Taiwan, we examine how mainland Chinese economic growth affects support for reunification. We find strong heterogeneity by education. Among less educated individuals, mainland growth reduces support for reunification and increases support for independence. Among more educated individuals, the effects reverse. These patterns are robust to a wide range of controls and appear in both stated preferences and voting outcomes. We provide evidence that these differences reflect heterogeneous economic exposure: mainland growth increases income and economic engagement for more educated Taiwanese, while reducing income for the less educated.

To complement the observational analysis, we field an online survey with an embedded experiment. The survey documents systematic differences in beliefs across education groups. More educated respondents are more informed, more politically engaged, and more pessimistic about the durability of the status quo. They assign higher probabilities to military conflict, expect faster erosion of democratic institutions under reunification, and are less likely to expect full support from the United States. The experiment introduces exogenous variation in perceived mainland growth. Consistent with the observational findings, positive news about mainland growth increases support for reunification among more educated respondents relative to the less educated.

Our findings suggest that individuals who have lived their entire adult lives in a wealthy and stable liberal democracy may nonetheless be willing to support incorporation into an autocratic regime when the economic incentives are strong enough and the military threat is real enough. These results underscore the central role of material concerns and coercive force in shaping political preferences and can help explain why the economic rise of countries such as China and Vietnam has not produced the wave of democratization anticipated by many observers.

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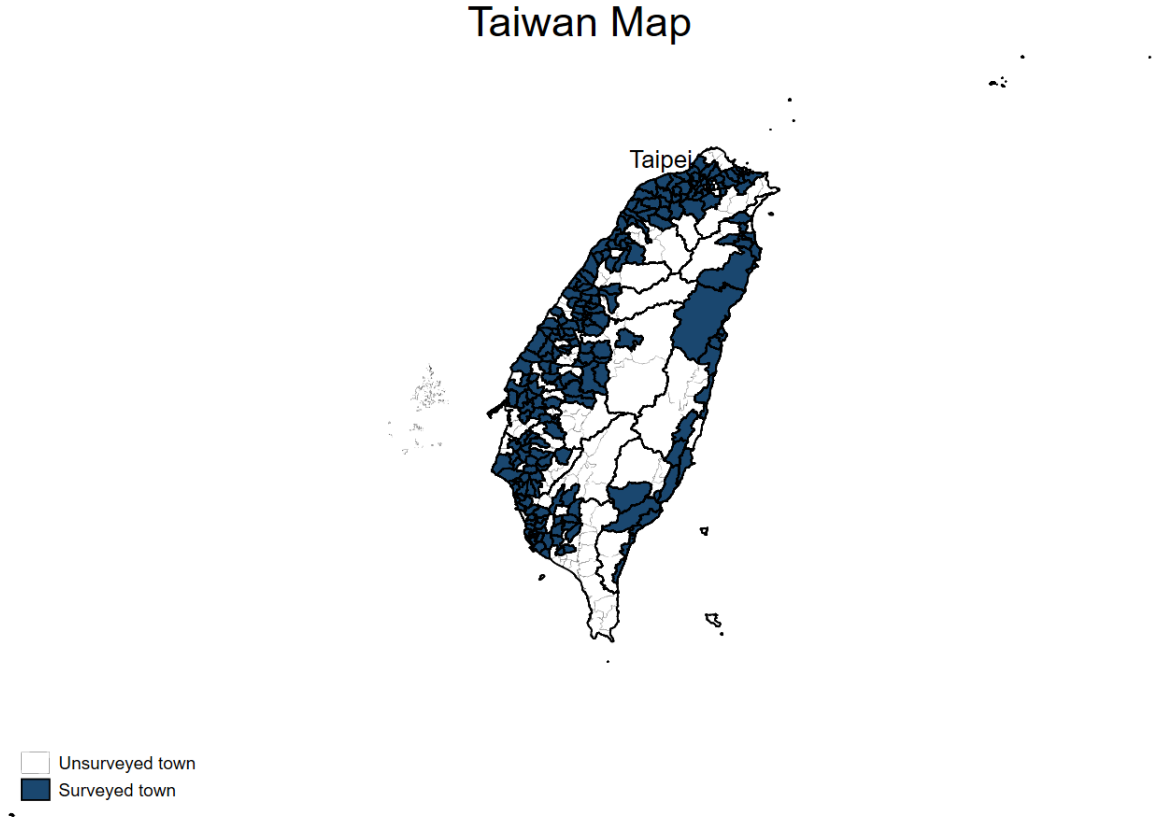
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Figure 1: The Location of Taiwan



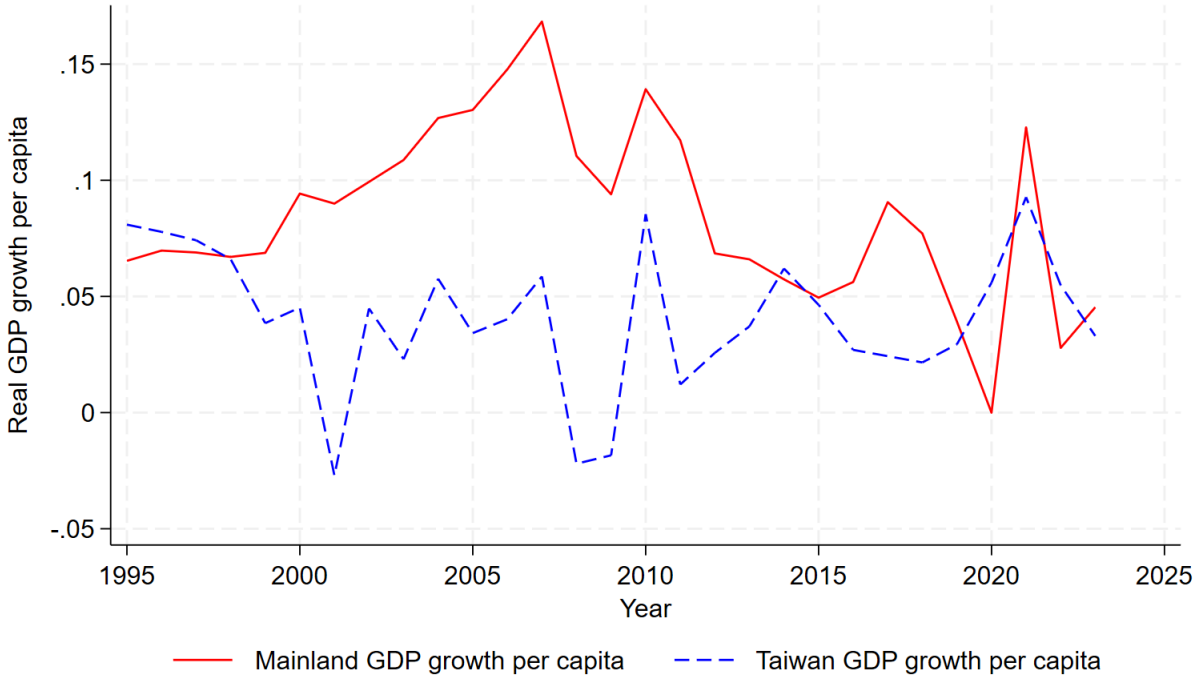

*Note:* The map shows the location of Taiwan. Taiwan is in the east of Mainland China, the southwest of Japan, and the north of Philippine. The closest distance between Taiwan island and Mainland China is 126 km. The map is generated by Sora powered by OpenAI.

Figure 2: The Administrative Division in Taiwan



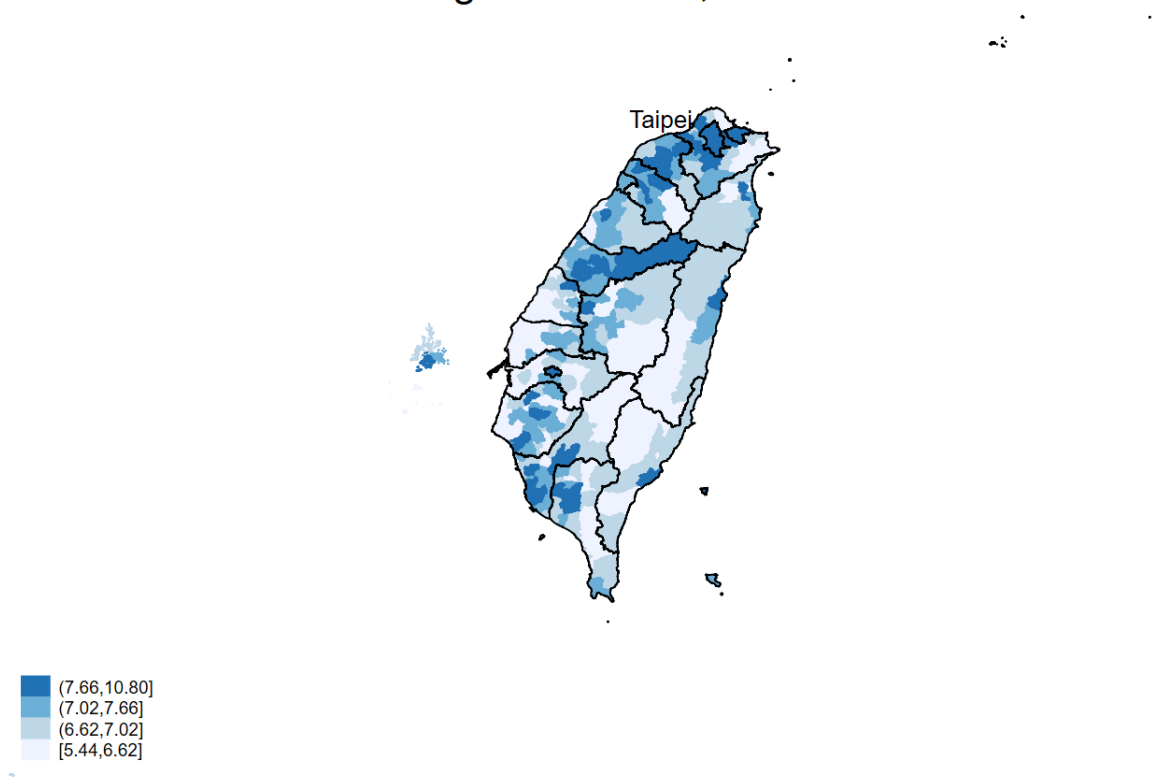

*Note:* The map shows the administrative division of Taiwan. The area with black boundary is a county. The area with grey boundary is a town. Towns are within county. The capital of Taiwan, Taipei, is in the north part of Taiwan island.

Figure 3: The GDP Growth per capita of Mainland China and Taiwan



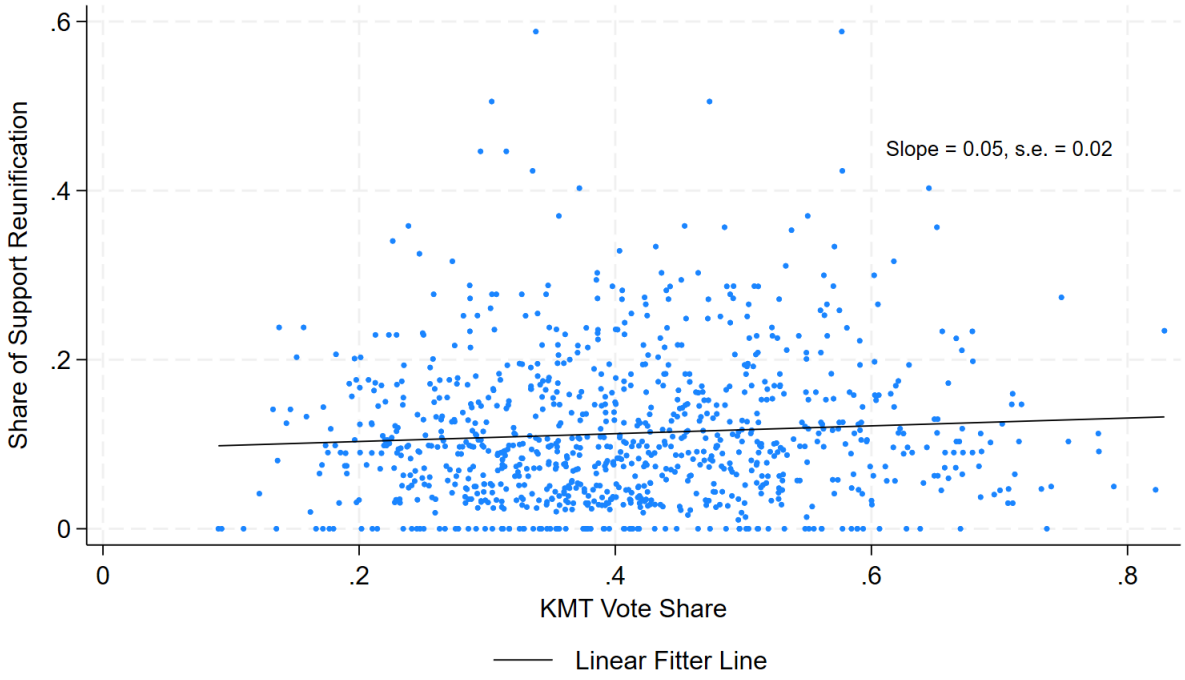

*Note:* The figure shows the real GDP growth per capita of Mainland China and Taiwan, from 1995 to 2023.

Figure 4: The Average Years of Schooling in 1990



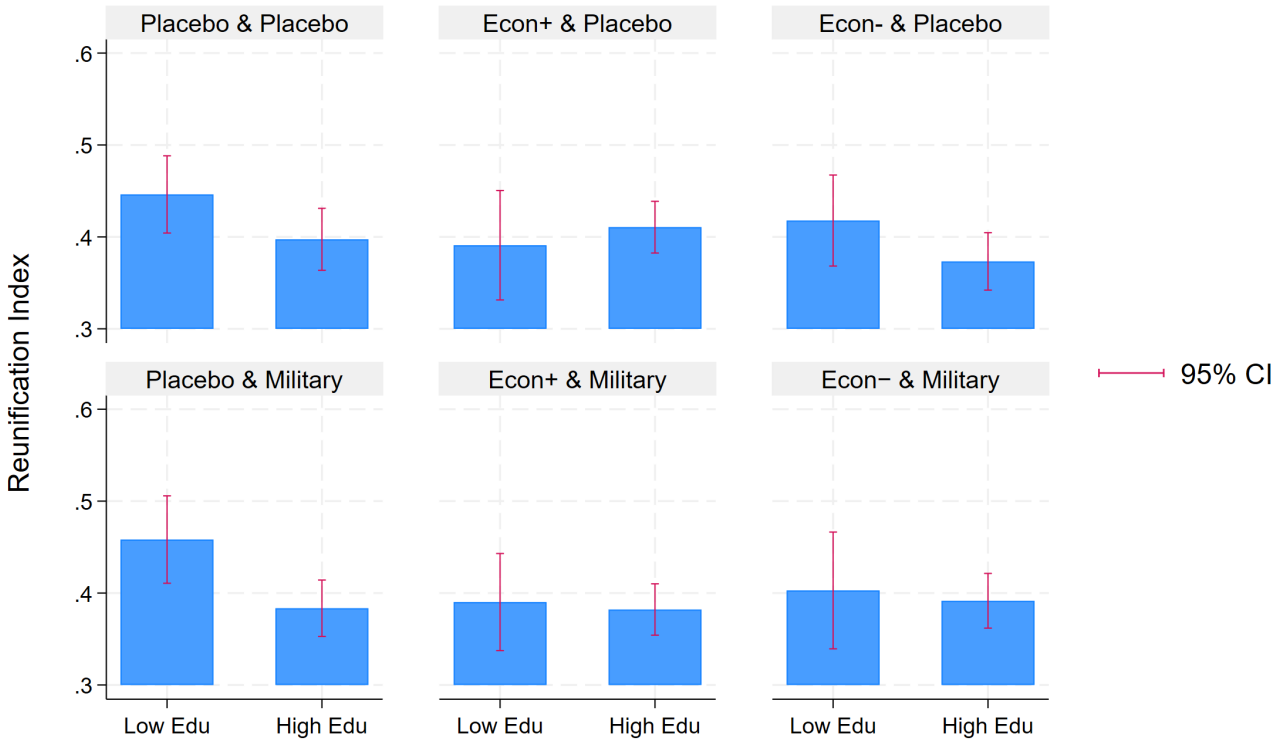

*Note:* The map shows the town-level average years of schooling in 1990. The data is generated by the full sample of 1990 Census. The black line is county boundary.

Figure 5: The Correlation of Share of Support Reunification and KMT Vote Share




*Note:* The figure shows the correlation between Share of Support Reunification and KMT Vote Share. The Share of Support Reunification is aggregated from individual and year level to the town and year level in TSCS. The KMT Vote Share is the election outcome of nearest election (current or future). The correlation is positive and significant at the 5% level.

Figure 6: The Reunification Index by Experiment Treatments and Education




*Note:* The figure shows the mean of Reunification Index by Treatments and Education from our online experiment. Econ+, Econ-, Military refers to Treatments in News about good Chinese economy, bad Chinese economy, and Chinese military activities. Low Edu are individuals who do not have a undergraduate degree and High Edu are individuals who have at least a undergraduate or a higher degree.

Figure 7: The Heterogeneous Effects of Growth x Edu by Cohorts

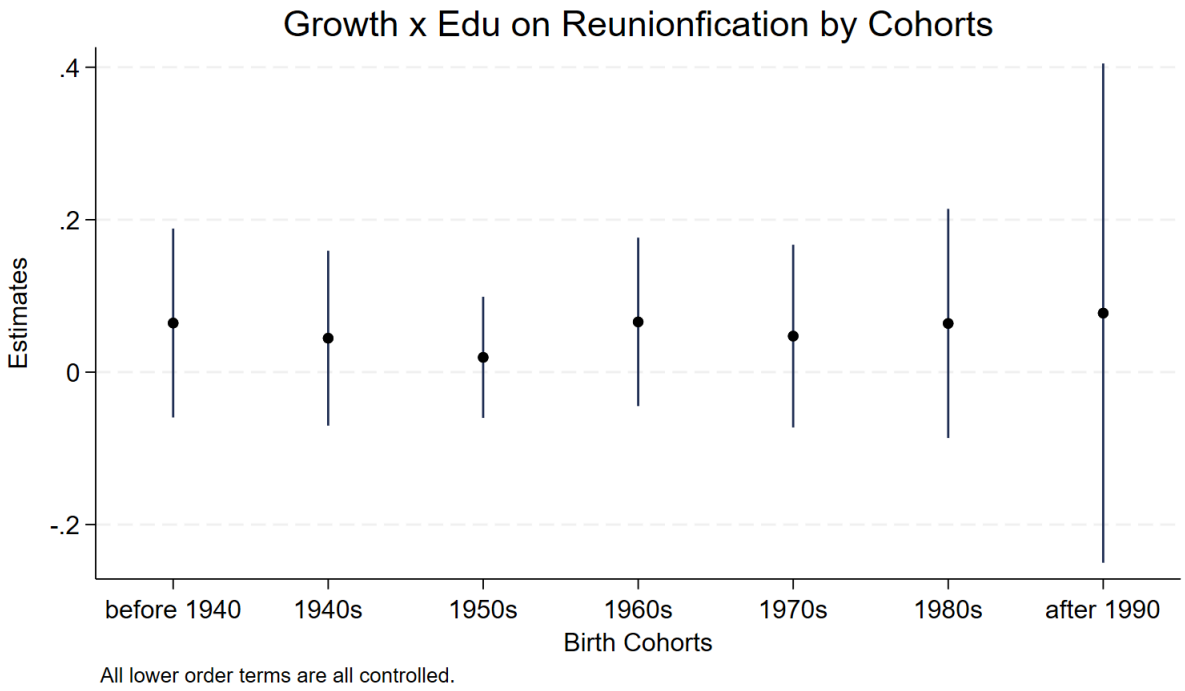


Table 1: Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

| | Dependent Variable: Years of Education Attainment | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean | Std. Dev. | Coef. | Std. Err. | Obs |
| (1) | Male | 0.50 | 0.50 | 1.376 | (0.067) | 22096 |
| (2) | Birthyear | 1962.50 | 17.26 | 0.174 | (0.003) | 22096 |
| (3) | Age | 45.79 | 16.94 | -0.165 | (0.003) | 22096 |
| (4) | Married | 0.74 | 0.44 | -3.910 | (0.104) | 22096 |
| (5) | Income | 9.87 | 5.11 | 0.205 | (0.008) | 20406 |
| (6) | Migrant | 0.11 | 0.31 | 1.131 | (0.116) | 22096 |
| (7) | Urban | 0.68 | 0.47 | 0.378 | (0.001) | 22096 |

Notes: Each row is one regression. Observations are on the individual and year level. Each regression controls for township fixed effects. Standard errors are all clustered in the town level.

Table 2: The Effects of Mainland China Growth on Support Reunification

| | Depedent Variables | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) | (12) |
| | Support Reunification | | | Support Status Quo | | | Support Independence | | | Others (undecided or missing) | | |
| | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants |
| Dep. Variable Mean | 0.122 | 0.109 | 0.260 | 0.541 | 0.529 | 0.555 | 0.235 | 0.253 | 0.105 | 0.103 | 0.109 | 0.080 |
| | A. Years of Education Attainment | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Growth X Edu | 0.067 | 0.064 | 0.011 | 0.044 | 0.033 | 0.236 | -0.070 | -0.067 | -0.066 | -0.040 | -0.031 | -0.181 |
| | (0.018) | (0.017) | (0.088) | (0.037) | (0.038) | (0.118) | (0.032) | (0.033) | (0.070) | (0.026) | (0.028) | (0.085) |
| Growth | -0.848 | -0.816 | -0.593 | -0.818 | -0.705 | -2.806 | 0.441 | 0.412 | 0.356 | 1.225 | 1.109 | 3.043 |
| | (0.291) | (0.274) | (1.207) | (0.587) | (0.617) | (1.656) | (0.440) | (0.473) | (0.819) | (0.462) | (0.482) | (1.278) |
| Edu | 0.002 | 0.000 | 0.000 | -0.002 | -0.002 | -0.015 | 0.006 | 0.008 | 0.004 | -0.006 | -0.007 | 0.011 |
| | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.007) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.010) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.007) |
| Obs. | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.031 | 0.027 | 0.060 | 0.025 | 0.026 | 0.015 | 0.034 | 0.036 | 0.048 | 0.080 | 0.084 | 0.056 |
| | B. Middle and Higher Education (Education Terciles) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Growth | 0.381 | 0.339 | 0.555 | 0.318 | 0.415 | -0.644 | -0.407 | -0.459 | 1.446 | -0.292 | -0.295 | -1.356 |
| x Middle Edu | (0.185) | (0.183) | (1.307) | (0.421) | (0.429) | (2.040) | (0.319) | (0.331) | (1.165) | (0.320) | (0.329) | (1.245) |
| Growth | 0.662 | 0.630 | 0.097 | 0.381 | 0.271 | 1.103 | -0.718 | -0.683 | 0.802 | -0.325 | -0.218 | -2.002 |
| x Higher Edu | (0.221) | (0.211) | (1.155) | (0.470) | (0.485) | (1.839) | (0.396) | (0.412) | (1.048) | (0.304) | (0.315) | (1.223) |
| Growth | -0.508 | -0.472 | -0.696 | -0.580 | -0.586 | -0.136 | 0.092 | 0.113 | -1.423 | 0.996 | 0.945 | 2.255 |
| | (0.251) | (0.234) | (1.181) | (0.518) | (0.546) | (1.773) | (0.370) | (0.394) | (1.003) | (0.407) | (0.425) | (1.227) |
| Middle Edu | 0.032 | 0.018 | -0.033 | -0.004 | -0.023 | 0.165 | 0.018 | 0.045 | -0.184 | -0.046 | -0.040 | 0.052 |
| | (0.016) | (0.016) | (0.105) | (0.035) | (0.036) | (0.167) | (0.027) | (0.028) | (0.114) | (0.027) | (0.028) | (0.101) |
| Higher Edu | 0.035 | 0.011 | 0.024 | -0.038 | -0.042 | -0.008 | 0.054 | 0.085 | -0.121 | -0.051 | -0.053 | 0.105 |
| | (0.019) | (0.019) | (0.094) | (0.040) | (0.041) | (0.155) | (0.032) | (0.033) | (0.105) | (0.026) | (0.027) | (0.100) |
| Obs. | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 |
| adj. R-sq | 0.032 | 0.026 | 0.059 | 0.026 | 0.026 | 0.016 | 0.034 | 0.036 | 0.050 | 0.076 | 0.079 | 0.054 |

Notes: We use Taiwan Social Change Survey (1995-2022) in the analysis. Observations are on the individual and year level. Middle Edu or Higher Edu refers to individuals who have at least middle school or college education attainment. All regressions include town fixed effects, linear and quadratic year trends, and individual controls (age, age squared, sex, marriage). Standard errors are clustered at the town level.

Table 3: The Effect of Others' Growth

| | Dependent Variables | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Reunifcation | Status Quo | Independence | Others |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
| Growth X Edu | 0.077 | 0.038 | -0.067 | -0.047 |
| | (0.018) | (0.037) | (0.031) | (0.027) |
| Growth | -1.177 | -0.850 | 0.266 | 1.761 |
| | (0.284) | (0.601) | (0.415) | (0.479) |
| Taiwan Growth x Edu | -0.058 | 0.229 | -0.205 | 0.034 |
| | (0.037) | (0.059) | (0.045) | (0.050) |
| Taiwan Growth | 0.202 | -4.551 | 3.079 | 1.270 |
| | (0.508) | (1.117) | (0.820) | (0.734) |
| U.S. Growth X Edu | 0.022 | 0.031 | -0.025 | -0.028 |
| | (0.070) | (0.127) | (0.083) | (0.103) |
| U.S. Growth | -2.527 | 1.370 | -2.552 | 3.709 |
| | (0.801) | (1.760) | (1.124) | (1.427) |
| Japan Growth X Edu | 0.128 | -0.432 | 0.357 | -0.053 |
| | (0.036) | (0.075) | (0.053) | (0.063) |
| Japan Growth | 1.241 | 4.501 | -2.494 | -3.248 |
| | (0.639) | (1.304) | (0.840) | (0.940) |
| Education | 0.002 | -0.009 | 0.012 | -0.006 |
| | (0.002) | (0.004) | (0.003) | (0.003) |
| Obs. | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.036 | 0.032 | 0.040 | 0.086 |

Notes: We use Taiwan Social Change Survey (1995-2022) in the analysis. Observations are on the individual and year level. The dependent variables are all shown in the previous Tables. All regressions include town fixed effects, linear and quadratic year trends, and individual controls (age, age squared, sex, marriage). Standard errors are clustered at the town level.

Table 4: Alternative Specifications: Support Reunification

| | Dependent Variable: Support Reunification | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Baseline | Control for Year FE | Control Growth x: sex, marital status | Control Growth x Migrant, Migrant | Control Growth x Income, Income | Control Growth x Urban Area | Control Growth x Distance to Mainland | Control DPP in Power x Edu | Control log Mainland GDP x Edu | Control log Mainland GDP per capita x Edu | Cluster s.e. at county level (bootstraps) | Conley s.e (cutoff = 25 km) |
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) | (12) |
| Growth X Edu | 0.067 | 0.078 | 0.057 | 0.060 | 0.067 | 0.066 | 0.065 | 0.070 | 0.063 | 0.062 | 0.067 | 0.067 |
| | (0.018) | (0.017) | (0.020) | (0.017) | (0.019) | (0.019) | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.020) | (0.020) | (0.013) | (0.015) |
| Growth | -0.848 | / | -0.519 | -0.877 | -1.338 | -0.839 | 0.333 | -0.908 | -0.896 | -0.901 | -0.848 | -0.848 |
| | (0.291) | / | (0.377) | (0.284) | (0.321) | (0.439) | (0.594) | (0.286) | (0.294) | (0.295) | (0.232) | (0.234) |
| Edu | 0.002 | 0.001 | 0.002 | 0.000 | 0.001 | 0.002 | 0.002 | 0.001 | 0.005 | 0.005 | 0.002 | 0.002 |
| | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.009) | (0.008) | (0.001) | (0.001) |
| Obs. | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 20406 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.031 | 0.051 | 0.031 | 0.046 | 0.035 | 0.031 | 0.032 | 0.032 | 0.033 | 0.033 | 0.031 | 0.031 |

Notes: We use Taiwan Social Change Survey (1995-2022) in the analysis. Observations are on the individual and year level. All regressions include town fixed effects, linear and quadratic year trends, and individual controls (age, age squared, sex, marriage). The respective lower order terms are controlled in each specification. Standard errors are clustered at the town level in columns (1)-(10). Growth in column (2) is absorbed by year fixed effects.

Table 5: The Effect of China Growth on Voting

| | Dependent Variables | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | KMT Vote Share | | | DPP Vote Share | | | Others Vote Share | | |
| | (1) All | (2) President | (3) Legislative | (4) All | (5) President | (6) Legislative | (7) All | (8) President | (9) Legislative |
| **Dep. Variable Mean** | **0.419** | **0.417** | **0.421** | **0.426** | **0.442** | **0.410** | **0.187** | **0.171** | **0.199** |
| | **A. Years of Educational Attainment** | | | | | | | | |
| Growth | 0.128 | 0.198 | 0.097 | -0.070 | -0.110 | -0.028 | -0.067 | 0.110 | -0.217 |
| X Average Edu, 1990 | (0.034) | (0.033) | (0.055) | (0.030) | (0.020) | (0.057) | (0.091) | (0.017) | (0.150) |
| Growth | -2.497 | -5.165 | 0.433 | -1.630 | 1.706 | -6.069 | 10.252 | 3.509 | 16.790 |
| | (4.495) | (3.201) | (8.213) | (2.670) | (1.597) | (5.345) | (9.571) | (1.807) | (13.961) |
| Obs. | 5980 | 2866 | 3114 | 6014 | 2866 | 3148 | 5147 | 2150 | 2997 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.369 | 0.513 | 0.307 | 0.708 | 0.879 | 0.656 | 0.210 | 0.412 | 0.188 |
| | **B. High School Education** | | | | | | | | |
| Growth | 1.110 | 1.825 | 0.823 | -0.665 | -1.021 | -0.259 | -0.380 | 1.053 | -1.641 |
| X High School Education Share, 1990 | (0.336) | (0.341) | (0.532) | (0.299) | (0.204) | (0.558) | (0.926) | (0.168) | (1.551) |
| Growth | -1.733 | -3.655 | 0.959 | -2.228 | 0.841 | -6.288 | 10.608 | 4.437 | 16.357 |
| | (4.700) | (3.334) | (8.430) | (2.808) | (1.729) | (5.620) | (9.928) | (1.839) | (14.796) |
| Obs. | 5980 | 2866 | 3114 | 6014 | 2866 | 3148 | 5147 | 2150 | 2997 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.369 | 0.513 | 0.307 | 0.708 | 0.879 | 0.656 | 0.210 | 0.412 | 0.188 |

Notes: We use use election dataset (1995-2024) provided by Central Election Comission of Taiwan in the analysis. Observations are on the town-year-election level. High school education refers to people who have at least high school education attainment. All regressions include town fixed effects, linear and quadratic year trends, mainland growth interacts with town controls in 1990 (average age, average age squared, female share , marriage share, and urban dummy), and the uninteracted term of town controls. Estimates are all weighted by the number of eligible voters in town and year level. Standard errors are clustered at the town level.

Table 6: The Effect of China Growth on Income

| | log (1 + Real Individual Income) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants |
| **Dep. Variable Mean** | **9.87** | **9.82** | **10.32** | **9.87** | **9.82** | **10.32** |
| Growth X Edu | 3.007 | 2.910 | 4.287 | 3.189 | 3.072 | 4.866 |
| | (0.350) | (0.366) | (1.023) | (0.350) | (0.365) | (1.081) |
| Growth | -53.118 | -51.395 | -73.058 | -54.221 | -52.223 | -80.873 |
| | (5.945) | (6.149) | (17.360) | (6.020) | (6.208) | (18.131) |
| Taiwan Growth X Edu | | | | 1.080 | 0.928 | 3.165 |
| | | | | (0.438) | (0.467) | (1.098) |
| Taiwan Growth | | | | 0.397 | 0.707 | -17.772 |
| | | | | (6.701) | (6.845) | (17.774) |
| Edu | -0.087 | -0.083 | -0.229 | -0.133 | -0.123 | -0.387 |
| | (0.030) | (0.031) | (0.093) | (0.037) | (0.038) | (0.120) |
| Obs. | 20406 | 18163 | 2199 | 20406 | 18163 | 2199 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.127 | 0.132 | 0.091 | 0.129 | 0.134 | 0.102 |

Notes: We use Taiwan Social Change Survey (1995-2022) in the analysis. Observations are on the individual and year level. There are fewer observations as the 1998 survey did not ask questions about income. All regressions include town fixed effects, linear and quadratic year trends, and individual controls (age, age squared, sex, marriage). Standard errors are clustered at the town level.

Table 7: The Effect of China Growth on Visiting or Staying in Mainland and Primary Issues

| | Dependent Variables | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
| | A. Visited or Stayed on Mainland | | | B. Primary Issues | | | | | |
| | | | | Primary Issue: Economy | | | Primary Issue: Geopolitics | | |
| | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants |
| **Dep. Variable Mean** | **0.264** | **0.249** | **0.391** | **0.344** | **0.344** | **0.344** | **0.123** | **0.116** | **0.173** |
| Growth X Edu | 0.144 | 0.132 | 0.213 | 0.099 | 0.108 | 0.027 | -0.043 | -0.039 | 0.016 |
| | (0.032) | (0.033) | (0.130) | (0.022) | (0.024) | (0.061) | (0.017) | (0.017) | (0.067) |
| Growth | -0.373 | -0.210 | -1.379 | -1.304 | -1.348 | -0.996 | 0.649 | 0.619 | -0.274 |
| | (0.451) | (0.459) | (1.798) | (0.296) | (0.314) | (0.857) | (0.205) | (0.209) | (0.944) |
| Edu | 0.009 | 0.010 | -0.008 | -0.006 | -0.007 | -0.002 | 0.014 | 0.013 | 0.007 |
| | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.014) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.008) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.007) |
| Obs. | 18361 | 16274 | 2067 | 39529 | 34551 | 4933 | 39529 | 34551 | 4933 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.087 | 0.084 | 0.086 | 0.063 | 0.066 | 0.056 | 0.039 | 0.035 | 0.077 |

Notes: We use Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study (2001-2020) in the analysis. Observations are on the individual and year level. Growth in the columns (1) - (3) is the three-year moving average of growth as the depedent variable is within last three years activity. All regressions include town fixed effects, linear and quadratic year trends, and individual controls (age, age squared, sex, marriage). Standard errors are clustered at the town level. The "Primary Issue: Economy" in columns (4)-(6) are the issues with words: "Economy", "Finance", "Investment", "Industry", and "Entreprenuer". The "Primary Issue: Geopolitics" in columns (7)-(9) are the issues with words: "Chinese Communist Party", "Mainland", "Cross-Strait", "Reunionfication", "Independence", "Military Denfense", "Sovereignty", and "United Nation".

Table 8: The Effects of Experimental Treatments on Support Reunification

| | Dependent Variables | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) Reunification Index | (2) Independence = 1 Reunification Index < 0.5 | (3) Status Quo = 1 Reunification Index = 0.5 | (4) Reunification = 1 Reunification Index > 0.5 |
| High Econ x Edu | 0.015 | -0.039 | 0.011 | 0.028 |
| | (0.006) | (0.011) | (0.012) | (0.012) |
| High Econ | -0.245 | 0.623 | -0.176 | -0.447 |
| | (0.089) | (0.185) | (0.204) | (0.181) |
| Low Econ x Edu | -0.000 | -0.017 | 0.005 | 0.012 |
| | (0.006) | (0.013) | (0.017) | (0.012) |
| Low Econ | -0.024 | 0.382 | -0.184 | -0.197 |
| | (0.089) | (0.211) | (0.257) | (0.186) |
| Military x Edu | 0.004 | -0.020 | 0.006 | 0.014 |
| | (0.010) | (0.020) | (0.020) | (0.006) |
| Military | -0.071 | 0.394 | -0.163 | -0.231 |
| | (0.162) | (0.332) | (0.325) | (0.096) |
| High Econ x Military x Edu | -0.002 | 0.028 | -0.008 | -0.021 |
| | (0.011) | (0.027) | (0.020) | (0.012) |
| High Econ x Military | 0.020 | -0.504 | 0.210 | 0.294 |
| | (0.169) | (0.428) | (0.322) | (0.187) |
| Low Econ x Military x Edu | 0.002 | 0.030 | -0.025 | -0.004 |
| | (0.008) | (0.018) | (0.021) | (0.014) |
| Low Econ x Military | -0.028 | -0.612 | 0.509 | 0.103 |
| | (0.138) | (0.325) | (0.362) | (0.228) |
| Edu | -0.010 | 0.024 | -0.005 | -0.020 |
| | (0.006) | (0.013) | (0.014) | (0.008) |
| N | 1346 | 1346 | 1346 | 1346 |
| adj. R-sq | 0.033 | 0.062 | 0.049 | 0.029 |

Notes: We use data from online experiment in the analysis. Observations are on the individual level. Reunification index is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 1. The variables in columns 2-4 are dummy variables. Independence equals to 1 if Reunification index $< 0.5$. Status quo equals to 1 if Reunification index $= 0.5$. Reunification equals to 1 if Reunification index $> 0.5$. All regressions include town fixed effects and individual controls (age, age squared, sex, marriage). Standard errors are clustered at the town level.

Table 9: Individual Education and Perceptions to Current and Future Cross-Strait Relationship

| | Coefficient | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| **Acquire Political and Economic News through:** | | | |
| International Social Media | 0.028 | 0.744 | 0.436 |
| | (0.008) | | |
| International Newspaper or TV | 0.019 | 0.295 | 0.456 |
| | (0.005) | | |
| **Perceptions of Economic Growth Last Year (%):** | | | |
| Taiwan | 0.078 | 3.929 | 4.257 |
| | (0.051) | | |
| Mainland China | 0.132 | 1.684 | 4.849 |
| | (0.034) | | |
| **2024 Election:** | | | |
| Election Turnover | 0.020 | 0.705 | 0.456 |
| | (0.010) | | |
| Vote DPP Candidates | 0.019 | 0.348 | 0.476 |
| | (0.008) | | |
| Vote KMT Candidates | -0.002 | 0.194 | 0.395 |
| | (0.006) | | |
| Vote TPP Candidates | 0.004 | 0.163 | 0.370 |
| | (0.005) | | |
| **Status Quo:** | | | |
| Years of Maintaining Status Quo | -0.617 | 20.609 | 12.891 |
| | (0.264) | | |
| **In the Next Few Years, Cross-Strait Conflicts in:** | | | |
| Economy | 0.001 | 0.643 | 0.046 |
| | (0.001) | | |
| Politics | 0.013 | 0.680 | 0.204 |
| | (0.003) | | |
| Military | 0.044 | 0.623 | 0.752 |
| | (0.014) | | |
| **If Reunify, Years of Having :** | | | |
| Village Election | -0.337 | 15.782 | 13.445 |
| | (0.177) | | |
| Town Mayor Election | -0.438 | 14.523 | 12.833 |
| | (0.183) | | |
| County Mayor Election | -0.672 | 13.530 | 13.088 |
| | (0.234) | | |
| President (Taiwan Regional Leader) | -0.782 | 9.217 | 12.344 |
| | (0.196) | | |
| **If Taiwan Declare Independence, Will China :** | | | |
| Harass Taiwan through Air Forces or Navy | 0.012 | 0.848 | 0.359 |
| | (0.005) | | |
| Embargo or Ban Tourism | 0.010 | 0.826 | 0.380 |
| | (0.005) | | |
| Blocakade Taiwan | 0.009 | 0.839 | 0.368 |
| | (0.003) | | |
| Struck Military or Admin Institutes | 0.009 | 0.824 | 0.381 |
| | (0.004) | | |
| Fully Invade | 0.015 | 0.694 | 0.461 |
| | (0.007) | | |
| **If Taiwan Declare Independence and China Initial Military Conflicts, Will U.S. and Other Allies Provide:** | | | |
| Diplomacy Support | 0.021 | 0.790 | 0.408 |
| | (0.004) | | |
| Sanction China | 0.007 | 0.643 | 0.479 |
| | (0.004) | | |
| Defensive Weapons, Military Training and Consulting | 0.008 | 0.709 | 0.454 |
| | (0.008) | | |
| Share Military Intelligence and Provide Weapons | 0.007 | 0.710 | 0.454 |
| | (0.005) | | |
| Fully Engage | -0.018 | 0.452 | 0.498 |
| | (0.004) | | |

Notes: This table shows the correlations between individual education and perceptions to current and future cross-strait relationship (column 1) and their mean and standard deviation (columns 2 and 3). Standard errors are clustered at the town level.

Table 10: The Effect of Chinese Growth on National Identity

| | Dependent Variables | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) |
| | A. Chinese | | | B. Exclusively Taiwanese | | | C. Others | | |
| | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants |
| **Dep. Variable Mean** | **0.380** | **0.340** | **0.715** | **0.591** | **0.631** | **0.253** | **0.029** | **0.029** | **0.032** |
| Growth X Edu | 0.070 | 0.069 | 0.133 | -0.066 | -0.066 | -0.133 | -0.003 | -0.003 | -0.000 |
| | (0.029) | (0.031) | (0.102) | (0.030) | (0.032) | (0.098) | (0.014) | (0.014) | (0.085) |
| Growth | 0.018 | 0.014 | 0.003 | -0.017 | -0.013 | -0.001 | -0.001 | -0.001 | -0.002 |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.011) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.010) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.008) |
| Edu | 0.607 | 0.646 | -0.861 | -0.984 | -1.059 | 0.882 | 0.377 | 0.413 | -0.021 |
| | (0.471) | (0.509) | (1.564) | (0.471) | (0.508) | (1.528) | (0.189) | (0.186) | (1.144) |
| Obs. | 20241 | 17980 | 2226 | 20241 | 17980 | 2226 | 20241 | 17980 | 2226 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.126 | 0.111 | 0.115 | 0.125 | 0.111 | 0.128 | 0.022 | 0.025 | 0.001 |

Notes: We use Taiwan Social Change Survey (1995-2022) in the analysis. Observations are on the individual and year level. "Chinese" in columns (1)-(3) equals to one if individuals identify themself as "Exclusively Chinese" or "Both Chinese and Taiwanese". All regressions include town fixed effects, linear and quadratic year trends, and individual controls (age, age squared, sex, marriage). Standard errors are clustered at the town level.

Table 11: Heterogeneous Effects: Cohort Differences

| | Depedent Variables | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) | (12) |
| | Support Reunification | | | Support Status Quo | | | Support Independence | | | Others (undecided or missing) | | |
| | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants | All | Locals | Migrants |
| Dep. Variable Mean | 0.122 | 0.109 | 0.260 | 0.541 | 0.529 | 0.555 | 0.235 | 0.253 | 0.105 | 0.103 | 0.109 | 0.080 |
| Growth X Edu | 0.057 | 0.046 | 0.021 | 0.014 | 0.007 | 0.205 | -0.034 | -0.032 | -0.021 | -0.037 | -0.021 | -0.205 |
| | (0.023) | (0.022) | (0.091) | (0.040) | (0.041) | (0.124) | (0.032) | (0.033) | (0.074) | (0.029) | (0.031) | (0.093) |
| Growth X Edu X | -0.016 | -0.012 | 0.213 | 0.054 | 0.046 | -0.280 | -0.072 | -0.044 | -0.335 | 0.034 | 0.010 | 0.402 |
| Post 1980 Cohort | (0.070) | (0.073) | (0.376) | (0.140) | (0.143) | (0.492) | (0.121) | (0.127) | (0.426) | (0.065) | (0.068) | (0.198) |
| Growth | -0.727 | -0.651 | -0.484 | -0.539 | -0.436 | -2.748 | 0.069 | 0.044 | -0.048 | 1.197 | 1.043 | 3.281 |
| | (0.295) | (0.282) | (1.221) | (0.595) | (0.625) | (1.688) | (0.443) | (0.478) | (0.848) | (0.477) | (0.497) | (1.362) |
| Edu | 0.003 | 0.002 | 0.000 | -0.000 | -0.001 | -0.013 | 0.004 | 0.007 | -0.000 | -0.007 | -0.008 | 0.012 |
| | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.007) | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.010) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.007) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.008) |
| Obs. | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 | 22095 | 19617 | 2438 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.033 | 0.029 | 0.060 | 0.028 | 0.028 | 0.016 | 0.041 | 0.042 | 0.055 | 0.081 | 0.084 | 0.056 |

Notes: We use Taiwan Social Change Survey (1995-2022) in the analysis. Observations are on the individual and year level. All regressions include town fixed effects, linear and quadratic year trends, and individual controls (age, age squared, sex, marriage). Standard errors are clustered at the town level.

# APPENDIX

## A: Figures and Tables

Figure A.1: Trends of Self-identity

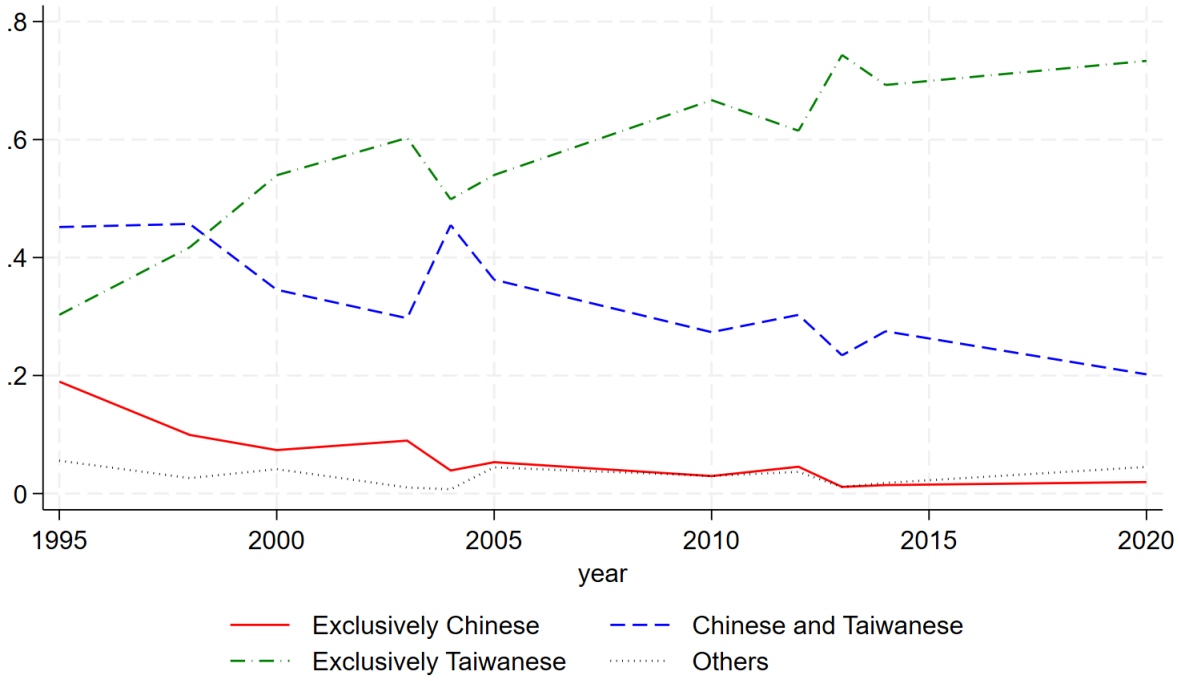


Table A.1: Alternative Specifications: Support Status Quo, Independence, and Others

| | Baseline (1) | Control for year FE (2) | Control Growth x: sex, marital status (3) | Control Growth x Migrant, Migrant (4) | Control Growth x Income, Income (5) | Control Growth x Urban Area (6) | Control Growth x Distance to Mainland (7) | Control DPP in Power x Edu (8) | Control log Mainland GDP x Edu (9) | Control log Mainland GDP per capita x Edu (10) | Cluster s.e. at county level (bootstraps) (11) | Conley s.e (cutoff = 25 km) (12) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A. Dependent Variable: Support Status Quo | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Growth X Edu | 0.044 | 0.027 | 0.032 | 0.045 | 0.062 | 0.046 | 0.045 | 0.049 | -0.009 | -0.009 | 0.044 | 0.044 |
| | (0.037) | (0.037) | (0.039) | (0.037) | (0.038) | (0.036) | (0.037) | (0.038) | (0.040) | (0.040) | (0.039) | (0.019) |
| Growth | -0.818 | / | -0.473 | -0.813 | 0.123 | -0.971 | -1.748 | -0.870 | -0.133 | -0.125 | -0.818 | -0.818 |
| | (0.587) | / | (0.694) | (0.589) | (0.654) | (0.704) | (0.995) | (0.609) | (0.629) | (0.628) | (0.673) | (0.581) |
| Edu | -0.002 | -0.002 | -0.001 | -0.003 | -0.005 | -0.002 | -0.002 | -0.003 | 0.058 | 0.048 | -0.002 | -0.002 |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.004) | (0.017) | (0.015) | (0.004) | (0.002) |
| Obs. | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 20406 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.025 | 0.054 | 0.025 | 0.026 | 0.031 | 0.026 | 0.026 | 0.026 | 0.027 | 0.027 | 0.025 | 0.025 |
| | B. Dependent Variable: Support Independence | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Growth X Edu | -0.070 | -0.059 | -0.057 | -0.067 | -0.079 | -0.068 | -0.069 | -0.084 | -0.013 | -0.012 | -0.070 | -0.070 |
| | (0.032) | (0.031) | (0.033) | (0.032) | (0.034) | (0.032) | (0.032) | (0.032) | (0.034) | (0.034) | (0.031) | (0.010) |
| Growth | 0.441 | / | 0.048 | 0.454 | 0.503 | 0.839 | -0.225 | 0.626 | -0.227 | -0.235 | 0.441 | 0.441 |
| | (0.440) | / | (0.528) | (0.437) | (0.484) | (0.515) | (0.790) | (0.443) | (0.476) | (0.476) | (0.432) | (0.309) |
| Edu | 0.006 | 0.006 | 0.005 | 0.008 | 0.007 | 0.006 | 0.006 | 0.009 | -0.059 | -0.049 | 0.006 | 0.006 |
| | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.013) | (0.011) | (0.003) | (0.002) |
| Obs. | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 20406 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.034 | 0.050 | 0.035 | 0.044 | 0.036 | 0.035 | 0.034 | 0.035 | 0.036 | 0.036 | 0.034 | 0.034 |
| | C. Dependent Variable: Support Others (undecided or missing) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Growth X Edu | -0.040 | -0.047 | -0.033 | -0.038 | -0.050 | -0.044 | -0.041 | -0.035 | -0.041 | -0.042 | -0.040 | -0.040 |
| | (0.026) | (0.026) | (0.027) | (0.026) | (0.027) | (0.027) | (0.027) | (0.026) | (0.031) | (0.031) | (0.026) | (0.024) |
| Growth | 1.225 | / | 0.944 | 1.236 | 0.712 | 0.971 | 1.639 | 1.152 | 1.256 | 1.261 | 1.225 | 1.225 |
| | (0.462) | / | (0.492) | (0.462) | (0.505) | (0.642) | (0.911) | (0.462) | (0.503) | (0.504) | (0.485) | (0.500) |
| Edu | -0.006 | -0.005 | -0.006 | -0.006 | -0.004 | -0.005 | -0.006 | -0.007 | -0.004 | -0.004 | -0.006 | -0.006 |
| | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.016) | (0.014) | (0.002) | (0.003) |
| Obs. | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 20406 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 | 22095 |
| Adj. R-sq. | 0.080 | 0.090 | 0.080 | 0.081 | 0.090 | 0.080 | 0.080 | 0.081 | 0.080 | 0.080 | 0.080 | 0.080 |

Notes: We use Taiwan Social Change Survey (1995-2022) in the analysis. Observations are on the individual and year level. All regressions include town fixed effects, linear and quadratic year trends, and individual controls (age, age squared, sex, marriage). The respective lower order terms are controlled in each specification. Standard errors are clustered at the town level in columns (1)-(10). Growth in column (2) is absorbed by year fixed effects.

Table A.2: Correlates of Support Reunification and Votes

| | Dependent Variables: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| | Share of Support Reunification | | Share of Support Status Quo | | Share of Support Independence | |
| KMT Vote Share | 0.097 | | 0.217 | | -0.254 | |
| | (0.038) | | (0.065) | | (0.046) | |
| DPP Vote Share | | -0.155 | | -0.203 | | 0.305 |
| | | (0.043) | | (0.057) | | (0.036) |
| N | 955 | 932 | 955 | 932 | 955 | 932 |
| adj. R-sq | 0.263 | 0.257 | 0.117 | 0.106 | 0.158 | 0.176 |

Notes: We aggregate the Support Reunification (Status Quo, and Independence) to town and year level, and match them with voting outcomes of current or last election. All regressions include year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the town level.

Table A.3: Experiment Sample Sizes

| Phase | Sample Size |
|---|---|
| Recruitment | N = 823,487 views of ads |
| | N = 363,993 Facebook accounts reached |
| | N = 36,744 clicked on ads |
| | N = 2,358 consented to participate |
| Baseline | N = 1,500 completed the survey experiment |
| | N = 1,447 are 20 years old or older |
| | N = 1,369 are not bot, with Q_RecaptchaScore >= 0.5 |
| | N = 1,354 are used in analysis with no missing individual characteristics |

Table A.4: Sample Demographics and Voting

| | | Experimental Sample | | | TSCS (2020) and 2024 Presidential Election | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean | Std. Dev. | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | N |
| (1) | Edu (Years of Schooling) | 15.558 | 2.178 | 1354 | 12.282 | 4.328 | 1771 |
| (2) | Individual Income (10,000 NTD) | 51.142 | 49.528 | 1354 | 31.332 | 31.108 | 1771 |
| (3) | Female | 0.523 | 0.500 | 1354 | 0.544 | 0.498 | 1771 |
| (4) | Birthyear | 1985.284 | 13.563 | 1354 | 1969.561 | 16.727 | 1771 |
| (5) | Ever married | 0.418 | 0.493 | 1354 | 0.746 | 0.435 | 1771 |
| (6) | Migrant | 0.292 | 0.455 | 1354 | 0.103 | 0.304 | 1771 |
| (7) | 2024 Election Turnover | 0.705 | 0.456 | 1354 | 0.719 | | |
| (8) | Vote KMT Candidates | 0.194 | 0.395 | 1354 | 0.241 | | |
| (9) | Vote DPP Candidates | 0.348 | 0.476 | 1354 | 0.288 | | |
| (10) | Vote TPP Candidates | 0.163 | 0.370 | 1354 | 0.190 | | |

Notes: This Table shows the demographic and voting statistics from our facebook experiment sample, demographic statistics from TSCS (2020), and voting statistics from 2024 Taiwan Presidential Election. The Mean in rows 8-10 is the vote among eligible voters.

Table A.5: Balance in Individual Characteristics

| | Treatments | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) |
| | Econ+ news | Econ- news | Military news |
| Edu | -0.018 | 0.224 | 0.113 |
| | (0.124) | (0.124) | (0.119) |
| Individual Income (logged) | -0.084 | 0.001 | 0.041 |
| | (0.088) | (0.089) | (0.083) |
| Vote KMT | 0.001 | 0.020 | 0.038 |
| | (0.023) | (0.023) | (0.022) |
| Vote DPP | -0.035 | 0.032 | -0.002 |
| | (0.027) | (0.028) | (0.026) |
| Vote TPP | -0.028 | -0.004 | -0.042 |
| | (0.021) | (0.021) | (0.020) |
| Election Turnover | -0.062 | 0.048 | -0.005 |
| | (0.027) | (0.026) | (0.025) |
| Female | 0.006 | -0.022 | 0.007 |
| | (0.029) | (0.029) | (0.027) |
| Birthyear | -0.421 | 0.632 | 0.375 |
| | (0.788) | (0.787) | (0.739) |
| Ever married | -0.007 | -0.046 | 0.011 |
| | (0.028) | (0.028) | (0.027) |
| Number of children | -0.065 | 0.021 | 0.009 |
| | (0.054) | (0.057) | (0.053) |
| Migrant | 0.022 | 0.002 | 0.001 |
| | (0.026) | (0.026) | (0.025) |
| Finished military duty | -0.016 | 0.017 | 0.005 |
| | (0.027) | (0.027) | (0.025) |
| Oversea experience | 0.023 | 0.004 | 0.030 |
| | (0.018) | (0.018) | (0.017) |
| Location latitude | -0.011 | -0.084 | 0.014 |
| | (0.057) | (0.057) | (0.053) |
| Location longitude | -0.006 | -0.037 | 0.020 |
| | (0.029) | (0.029) | (0.028) |
| Joint P-value: | 0.567 | 0.152 | 0.357 |

Note: Each cell is a single regression by regressing corresponding individual characteristics on one of the corresponding Treatment. Joint P-value is estimated from regressing Treatment on all the individual characteristics. Robust standard errors are shown in parentheses.

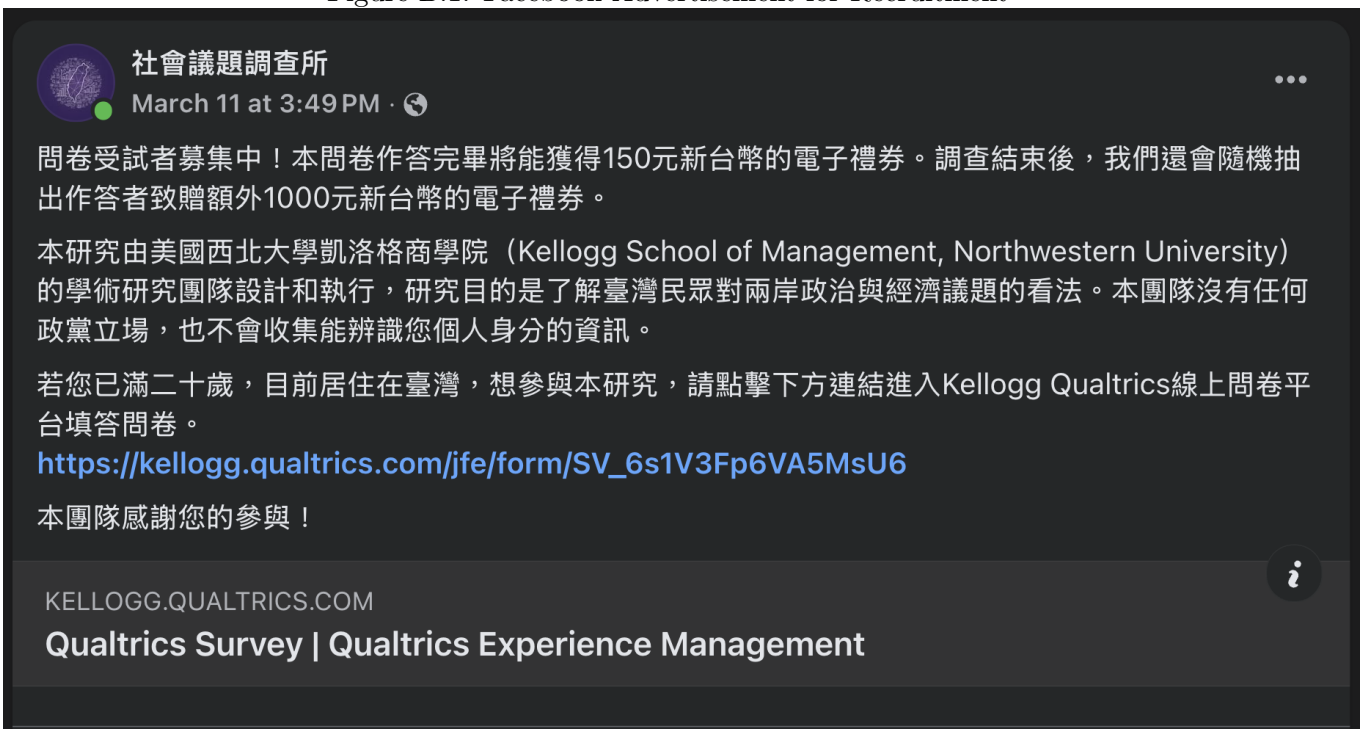
Table A.6: The Heterogeneous Effects of Growth x Edu by Cohorts

| | Dependent Variable: Support Reunification |
|---|---|
| | (1) |
| Growth x Edu x i.Cohort | |
| Before 1940 | 0.064 |
| | (0.063) |
| 1940s | 0.045 |
| | (0.058) |
| 1950s | 0.019 |
| | (0.040) |
| 1960s | 0.066 |
| | (0.056) |
| 1970s | 0.047 |
| | (0.061) |
| 1980s | 0.064 |
| | (0.076) |
| After 1990 | 0.077 |
| | (0.166) |
| N | 22095 |
| adj. R-sq | 0.035 |

Notes: We use Taiwan Social Change Survey (1995-2022) in the analysis. Observations are on the individual and year level. All regressions include town fixed effects, linear and quadratic year trends, and individual controls (age, age squared, sex, marriage). Standard errors are clustered at the town level.

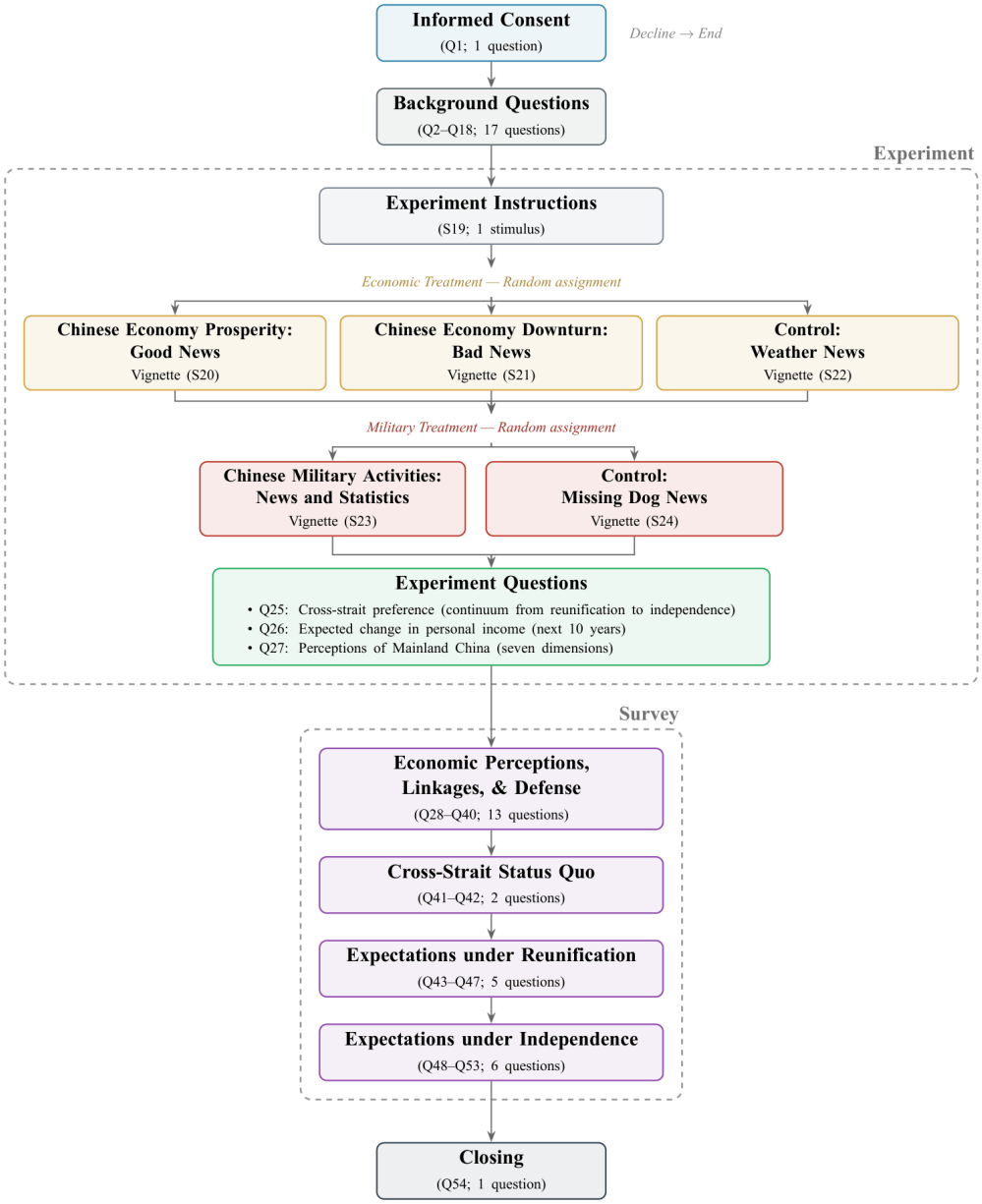
## B: Experimental Design

Figure B.1: Facebook Advertisement for Recruitment




*Translation in English:* Participants wanted for a survey! After completing the survey, you will receive a NT$150 electronic gift card. After the survey closes, some participants will also be randomly selected to receive an additional NT$1,000 electronic gift card. This study is designed and conducted by an academic research team at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University. The purpose of the study is to understand Taiwanese's views on cross-strait political and economic issues. Our research team does not hold any political party position, and we will not collect personally identifying information. If you are 20 years old or above and are currently living in Taiwan and would like to participate, please click the link below to complete the survey: [link] Thank you for your participation!

Figure B.2: Experimental Design



# Taiwan_Facebook

Full Survey Instrument (English Translation)

Document generated: March 22, 2026

## Survey Flow

**EmbeddedData**
ParticipantID = `${rand://int/1000000000:9999999999}`

**Standard**
Informed Consent (1 Question)

**Block**
Background Questions (17 Questions)

**Standard**
Brief Experiment Instructions (1 Stimulus)

**Standard**
News about Mainland China's Economy (3 Stimuli)

**Standard**
Cross-Strait Military News (2 Stimuli)

**Block**
Survey Experiment Questions (3 Questions)

**Block**
Economic Perceptions and Linkages (13 Questions)

**Block**
Cross-Strait Status Quo (2 Questions)

**Block**
Expectations under Reunification (5 Questions)

**Block**
Expectations under Independence (6 Questions)

**Standard**
Closing (1 Question)

**Standard**
Randomization Code (2 Questions)

# Informed Consent

### Q1 Informed Consent Statement (Please Read Carefully)

This study is conducted by an academic research team at Northwestern University. The purpose of this research is to understand the views of Taiwanese citizens on political and economic issues. We have no partisan affiliation and will not collect any personally identifiable information. Before proceeding, please read the following information in its entirety and confirm that you understand it before deciding whether to participate.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time by simply closing the browser window. The survey takes approximately fifteen minutes to complete. The research team will not ask for your name, phone number, address, or any other personally identifiable information; all responses will be stored anonymously and used solely for academic research purposes. They will not be shared with any external parties. Any future dissemination of research data will be conducted in a manner that precludes the identification of individual respondents.

To ensure data quality, this survey includes simple attention checks and data quality screening. If your response time is unusually fast, if you clearly have not read the questions, or if your response patterns suggest inattentive answering, your responses may be classified as low quality. In such cases, compensation may be withheld even if you complete the survey. As long as you read each question carefully and answer honestly, this will not be an issue. Upon completing the survey and passing the quality checks, you will receive an electronic gift certificate worth approximately 150 New Taiwan Dollars (NTD).

Please complete the survey in a quiet, distraction-free environment. If you are uncertain about a question, simply select the option that best reflects your views—there is no need to look up external information. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact us by email at taiwan.survey@kellogg.northwestern.edu. The principal investigator is Professor Nancy Qian.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Northwestern University. If you wish to learn about your rights as a research participant, or if you would like to contact a party independent of the research team, you may reach the IRB directly at irbcompliance@northwestern.edu.

Eligibility: You must be at least twenty years of age and currently reside in Taiwan. If you meet these criteria and agree to participate, please select "I agree to participate" below, which indicates that you have read and understood the information above. If you do not agree, please select "I do not agree to participate," and no data will be recorded.

- ◯ I agree to participate in this study
- ◯ I do not agree to participate in this study

*[Skip To: End of Survey If Q1 = I do not agree to participate in this study]*

# Block: Background Questions

*[Timing (First Click / Last Click / Page Submit / Click Count)]*

**Q2** Year of birth (Minguo / ROC calendar)

**Q3** Biological sex

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Other

---

*[Display Q4 If: Q3 = Male]*

**Q4** Military service status

- ◯ Completed active duty
- ◯ Completed alternative service
- ◯ Exempted
- ◯ Awaiting service

*[Display Q5 If: Q4 = Completed active duty Or Q4 = Completed alternative service]*

**Q5** Year of service completion (Minguo / ROC calendar)

---

**Q6** Marital status

- ◯ Married
- ◯ Single
- ◯ Divorced
- ◯ Separated
- ◯ Widowed

**Q7** How many children do you have? Please enter the sex and year of birth (Minguo / ROC calendar) for each child. If you have no children, please skip this question.

| | Sex | Year of Birth (Minguo) |
|---|---|---|
| (1) | | |
| (2) | | |
| (3) | | |
| (4) | | |
| (5) | | |

**Q8** Are any of your parents, grandparents, or great-grandparents *waishengren* (Mainlanders who relocated to Taiwan after 1945)?

◯ Yes (at least one)

◯ No

**Q9** Primary place of residence

County/City / Township/District ▼ Taipei City … Lienchiang County~Dongyin Township

**Q10** Elementary school attended (county/city, township/district)

County/City / Township/District ▼ Taipei City … Lienchiang County~Dongyin Township

**Q11** Name of elementary school attended

**Q12** Highest level of education attained

◯ None (illiterate)

◯ Self-taught (literate, private tutoring)

◯ Elementary school

◯ Junior high school

◯ Junior vocational school

◯ Senior high school

◯ Comprehensive high school

◯ Senior vocational school

◯ Non-commissioned officer academy

◯ Five-year junior college

◯ Two-year junior college

◯ Three-year junior college

◯ Military/police advanced program

◯ Military/police specialist program

◯ Open junior college (commercial)

◯ Open university

◯ Military/police officer academy or university

◯ Institute of technology / University of science and technology

◯ University (bachelor's degree)

◯ Master's degree

◯ Doctoral degree

**Q13** Highest level of education attained

Institution

Field of study (if not applicable, enter "None")

---

**Q14** Current occupation

**Q15** What is your average monthly gross (pre-tax) income in New Taiwan Dollars?

◯ No income (e.g., working in a family business without a salary)

◯ NTD 0–9,999

◯ NTD 10,000–19,999

◯ NTD 20,000–29,999

◯ NTD 30,000–39,999

◯ NTD 40,000–49,999

◯ NTD 50,000–59,999

◯ NTD 60,000–69,999

◯ NTD 70,000–79,999

◯ NTD 80,000–89,999

- ◯ NTD 90,000–99,999
- ◯ NTD 100,000–109,999
- ◯ NTD 110,000–119,999
- ◯ NTD 120,000–129,999
- ◯ NTD 130,000–139,999
- ◯ NTD 140,000–149,999
- ◯ NTD 150,000–159,999
- ◯ NTD 160,000–169,999
- ◯ NTD 170,000–179,999
- ◯ NTD 180,000–189,999
- ◯ NTD 190,000–199,999
- ◯ NTD 200,000–299,999
- ◯ NTD 300,000 or above

---

**Q16** Have you ever worked or studied in a country or territory outside of Taiwan?

- ◯ No
- ◯ Yes (please specify the location(s) in the following question)

*[Display Q17 If: Q16 = Yes (please specify the location(s) in the following question)]*

**Q17** Please list all countries and territories outside of Taiwan where you have worked or studied (e.g., Argentina, Eswatini).

---

**Q18** In the 2024 presidential election, your vote was cast for:

- ◯ Candidate No. 1: Ko Wen-je / Cynthia Wu
- ◯ Candidate No. 2: Lai Ching-te / Hsiao Bi-khim
- ◯ Candidate No. 3: Hou You-yi / Jaw Shaw-kong
- ◯ Eligible to vote but did not vote
- ◯ Not eligible to vote

# Brief Experiment Instructions

**S19** You will now read several news articles from credible media sources. More detailed instructions will be provided on the following pages.

◯ I have read this

# Block: News about Mainland China's Economy

*[Timing (First Click / Last Click / Page Submit / Click Count)]*

**S20 [Economic Prosperity Narrative]**

Since the launch of the Reform and Opening-Up policies in the 1980s, Mainland China's economy has sustained rapid growth. Shanghai is one of the most emblematic cities. In 1980, the average annual disposable income per household in Shanghai was approximately NTD 10,000. By 2024, average disposable income per household had risen to over NTD 1.5 million. Many other major cities—particularly along the eastern seaboard, such as Shenzhen and Guangzhou—now report per capita GDP exceeding NTD 500,000.

The photographs of Shanghai below—depicting towering skyscrapers, dense commercial districts, and thriving consumer activity—illustrate how more than four decades of economic growth have enabled many residents to enjoy prosperous and affluent lives.



Night view of The Bund, Shanghai.




Shoppers queue outside a Louis Vuitton store.



A supercar gathering on a Shanghai street.



A restaurant fully packed during the dinner rush.



Containers awaiting loading at the Port of Shanghai in the early morning.



Travelers crowd a high-speed rail station.

◯ I have read this

**S21 [Economic Downturn Narrative]**

Since 2020, economic growth in Mainland China has slowed markedly. Many factories have shut down, resulting in widespread unemployment among middle-aged and older workers. Conditions for younger workers are equally bleak: in 2024, the employment rate for new university graduates stood at just 55.5 percent—meaning nearly half of all graduates faced immediate unemployment upon completing their studies.

The real estate market has likewise deteriorated. Average housing prices in Shanghai have fallen by more than 30 percent relative to their recent peaks, leading to substantial erosion of household wealth. In many cases, property values have declined below the outstanding mortgage balance.

Mainland China also confronts significant structural problems in its labor market. The so-called "996" work culture—9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week—is pervasive across many firms. Workers endure prolonged periods of high stress and exhaustion, yet remain vulnerable to wage arrears and delayed payments, with limited recourse for labor rights protections.

Income inequality is severe. Available data indicate that approximately one billion Mainland Chinese residents earn less than NTD 10,000 per month—roughly 70 percent of the total population. For these individuals, even sustained effort yields low real earnings. The combined burden of living expenses, family support, and rising prices places them under extraordinary financial strain.




Long queues at Yonghegong Temple in Beijing, where people pray for success in finding employment.



Residents protest collectively against a developer's deliberate suspension of construction.



An exhausted worker rests on unfinished goods at a factory in Mainland China.



An abandoned railroad track and makeshift shelters beside the rails.




A shopping mall with numerous vacant stalls.




Teachers who have gone unpaid for months protest to demand timely salary disbursement.

◯ I have read this

**S22 [Control Group: Mainland China Winter Weather Narrative]**

Winter temperatures in Mainland China have been warmer than average this year, yet temperatures have exhibited pronounced fluctuations, with sharp alternations between warm and cold spells. Influenced by factors including global warming, La Niña conditions since the turn of the century have frequently coincided with warmer-than-average winters in Mainland China, and in some years have produced outright warm winters. The winter climate in Mainland China is shaped not only by tropical sea-surface temperature anomalies but also by Arctic sea ice extent, snow cover, and mid-to-high-latitude atmospheric circulation systems—the outcome of multiple interacting factors.

Global warming operates through two channels. On the one hand, there is a clear upward trend in average winter temperatures across the continent. On the other hand, because temperatures in the Arctic are rising substantially faster than in tropical and subtropical regions, the meridional temperature gradient at mid-latitudes has weakened, attenuating the westerly jet stream. As a result, winter temperature volatility in Mainland China has intensified, and close attention must be paid to the adverse effects of abrupt temperature surges and plunges on economic activity and daily life.



A family plays in the snow and has a snowball fight at the first snowfall.



An ice castle.



Fishermen catch fish on the frozen surface of a lake.



Skiers on a snowy mountain slope.



Tourists relax in a hot pool beside a ski resort.

◯ I have read this

# Cross-Strait Military News

*[Timing (First Click / Last Click / Page Submit / Click Count)]*

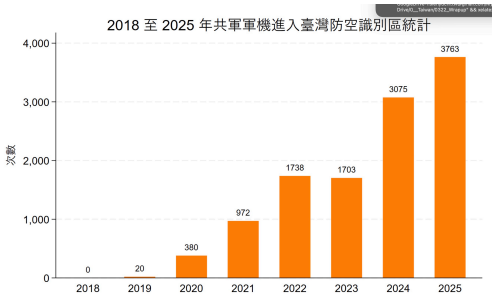
**S23 [Taiwan Strait Military Situation]**

Tensions in the Taiwan Strait have escalated in recent years.

The frequency and scale of PLA aircraft incursions have increased markedly. According to publicly available data from the Ministry of National Defense, the number of PLA aircraft sorties entering Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) surged from approximately 20 in 2019 to more than 3,700 cumulative sorties in 2025—an increase exceeding a hundredfold in just six years.

Over the past four years, the PLA has conducted as many as seven rounds of large-scale military exercises encircling Taiwan. The exercise zones have progressively encroached upon Taiwan proper; during the 2025 "Just Mission" exercise, PLA operations came within fewer than 10 nautical miles of the island. Furthermore, Mainland China's no-fly restrictions severed all transportation links between Taiwan and its outlying islands, affecting over 100,000 residents—a blockade whose scope approached a "de facto blockade" military simulation. PLA long-range rocket artillery units launched 27 rockets from Pingtan and Shishi in Fujian Province. In the same year, Mainland China twice mobilized approximately 2,000 fishing vessels in the East China Sea, arraying them in a 400-kilometer-long formation dubbed the "Great Wall at Sea," which compelled commercial vessels to reroute and served as a practical rehearsal for maritime blockade operations.

On the conventional military buildup front, the U.S. Department of Defense estimates that the PLA Rocket Force expanded its arsenal by nearly 50 percent over four years, bringing total missile inventory to approximately 3,500 units. Mobile launch platforms deployed along the southeastern coast can not only cover most of Taiwan's critical military and infrastructure targets but also simultaneously project anti-access/area-denial capabilities toward Japan's Okinawa and the U.S. base on Guam. The PLA Navy has also expanded, now operating more than 370 combat-capable vessels of various types, with projections indicating a further expansion to 435 ships by 2030—which would make it one of the world's largest navies by vessel count.




According to Ministry of National Defense data, PLA aircraft began frequent incursions into Taiwan's ADIZ starting in 2019. As shown, sortie counts increased more than a hundredfold in six years.




According to Ministry of National Defense data, PLA aircraft began frequent incursions into Taiwan's ADIZ starting in 2019.




In late 2025, the PLA launched the "Just Mission" exercise targeting Taiwan, with exercise zones fully encircling Taiwan's surrounding waters.




In late 2025, the PLA launched the "Just Mission" exercise targeting Taiwan. A Taiwanese Navy vessel and a PLA Navy warship in a close-range standoff.

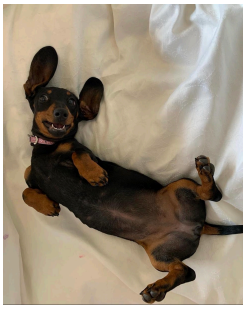
◯ I have read this

**S24 [Control Group: Valerie the Dachshund]**

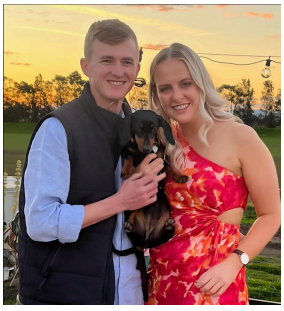
On the 25th, a dachshund named Valerie was rescued on Kangaroo Island, located approximately 14 kilometers off the coast of South Australia, and her survival story immediately made headlines. In November 2023, Valerie went missing while her owner was visiting the popular tourist island. Kangaroo Island Wildlife Rescue reported that volunteers spent over 1,000 hours searching, deploying multiple vehicles, "several cameras, and traps" before finally locating Valerie. The organization was established in the aftermath of Australia's catastrophic 2019–2020 "Black Summer" bushfires.



Valerie the dachshund.



Valerie the dachshund.



Valerie’s owner, Georgia Gardner, with her partner, Joshua Fishlock.



Valerie playing at home after her safe return.

◯ I have read this

## Survey Experiment Questions

*[Timing (First Click / Last Click / Page Submit / Click Count)]*

**Q25** What is your personal preference regarding the relationship between Taiwan and Mainland China (cross-strait relations)?

Reunification with Mainland China (far left) | Maintain the status quo | Taiwan independence (far right)



---

**Q26** Over the next ten years, taking into account political, economic, cross-strait, and other macroeconomic factors, how do you expect your personal income to change?

Decrease substantially (far left) | No change | Increase substantially (far right)



---

**Q27** To what extent do you believe the following statements accurately describe Mainland China?

Strongly disagree (far left) — Strongly agree (far right)

Its people enjoy a high standard of living.



It exerts significant regional and international political influence.



It has substantial capacity for technology and innovation.



Its infrastructure is modern and well developed.



Its society maintains a high degree of order and stability.



Its people exhibit a high level of cultural literacy.



It is respected by the international community.



# Block: Economic Perceptions and Linkages

**Q28** What do you estimate was the GDP growth rate of each of the following economies over the past year?

%

Taiwan




Mainland China




---

**Q29** Through which channels do you typically obtain political and financial news? (Select all that apply.)

**Online Channels**

- ☐ International social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, etc.)
- ☐ Taiwanese social media platforms (PTT, LINE, Dcard, etc.)
- ☐ Mainland Chinese social media platforms (Xiaohongshu, WeChat, Douyin, TikTok, etc.)

**Traditional Media**

- ☐ Taiwanese television channels (SET, ETTV, TVBS, etc.)
- ☐ Taiwanese newspapers (Liberty Times, United Daily News, China Times, etc.)
- ☐ Mainland Chinese media (CCTV, People's Daily, Xinhua, etc.)
- ☐ International media (BBC, CNN, NHK, etc.)

**Other**

- ☐ Family members
- ☐ Friends and colleagues
- ☐ Other (please briefly specify on the next page)
- ☐ I rarely follow political or financial news

*[Display Q30 If: Q29 = Other (please briefly specify on the next page)]*

**Q30** If you selected "Other" in the previous question, please briefly describe the channel(s).

---

**Q31** Which of the following economies do you consider to have the greatest impact on Taiwan's economic performance? (Rank from 1 to 5 in order of decreasing influence; drag to reorder.)

| Rank | Economy |
|---|---|
| _____ | Mainland China |
| _____ | United States |
| _____ | Japan |
| _____ | European Union (EU) |
| _____ | ASEAN-5 (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand) |

---

**Q32** Have you personally had any of the following experiences in Mainland China (including Hong Kong and Macau)? (Select all that apply; leave blank if none.)

☐ Traveled to Mainland China for tourism or to visit relatives/friends

☐ Lived or studied in Mainland China

☐ Worked, conducted business, or established a company in Mainland China

---

*[Display Q33 & Q34 If: Q32 has any option selected]*

**Q33** Approximately how many times have you visited?

1 100



---

**Q34** What was the longest duration (in days) of a single stay in Mainland China?

1 365



---

**Q35** To the best of your recollection, have any of your close family members or friends had any of the following experiences in Mainland China (including Hong Kong and Macau)? (Select all that apply; leave blank if none.)

☐ Traveled to Mainland China for tourism or to visit relatives/friends

☐ Lived or studied in Mainland China

☐ Worked, conducted business, or established a company in Mainland China

---

*[Display Q36 & Q37 If: Q35 has any option selected]*

**Q36** To the best of your recollection, what is the maximum number of times any single close family member or friend has visited?

1 100



---

**Q37** To the best of your recollection, what was the longest duration (in days) of any single stay by a close family member or friend in Mainland China?

1 365



---

**Q38** If the Taiwanese government were to levy an additional "national defense surcharge" earmarked exclusively for defense and military expenditures, what share of your annual income would you consider an acceptable and reasonable contribution?

0% 100%



---

**Q39** What is the maximum length of mandatory military service you would find acceptable (in months)? (Taiwan's current conscription term is 12 months.)

0 months 36 months



**Q40** What is the maximum age for reservist call-up obligations that you would find acceptable? (Taiwan's current discharge age for reservists is 36.)

Age 18 Age 50

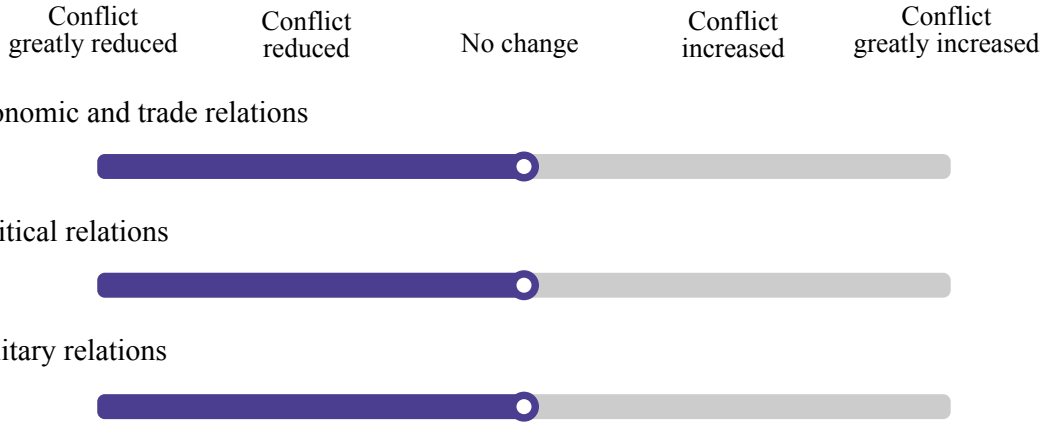


# Cross-Strait Status Quo

**Q41** How many more years do you believe the current cross-strait status quo can be sustained?




**Q42** Over the next several years, how do you expect the relationship between Taiwan and Mainland China to change in each of the following dimensions?



# Block: Expectations under Reunification

**Q43** Please imagine that Taiwan has already been reunified with Mainland China, and answer the following questions.

◯ I have read this

---

**Q44** If Taiwan had already been reunified with Mainland China, how would you believe each of the following would change over the next several years?

| | Decrease substantially | Decrease | No change | Increase | Increase substantially |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cost of living (rent, food, daily necessities, utilities, etc.) | | | | | |
| Household income | | | | | |
| Asset values (real estate, equities, etc.) | | | | | |
| Social safety net benefits (public education, pensions, national health insurance, etc.) | | | | | |

---

**Q45** If Taiwan had already been reunified with Mainland China, how long would you believe direct elections at each of the following levels of government could continue to be held?

| | 0 years (elections cease immediately upon reunification) | | | | | | | | | 50 years (or longer) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Village/borough chief | | | | | | | | | | 25 |
| Township (town/city) mayor | | | | | | | | | | 25 |
| Township (town/city) representative | | | | | | | | | | 25 |

County magistrate / city mayor




County/city councillor




Legislator (member of the Legislative Yuan)




President (leader of the Taiwan region)




---

**Q46** Suppose Taiwan had already been reunified with Mainland China. How would you expect each of the following aspects of your daily life to change over the next several years?

Decrease substantially | Decrease | No change | Increase | Increase substantially

The right to publicly criticize the government



The right to participate in collective public action (assemblies, demonstrations, protests, etc.)



Government restrictions on access to international and independent media



Government restrictions on internal migration



Government restrictions on cross-border financial transfers



Risk of government expropriation or confiscation of property



---

**Q47** Suppose Taiwan had already been reunified with Mainland China. How long would you believe Taiwan's mandatory military service term would be in the coming years? (Taiwan's current conscription term is 12 months; Mainland China does not have mandatory conscription.)


0 months
120 months

# Block: Expectations under Independence

**Q48** Please imagine that the Taiwanese government has declared independence, and answer the following questions.

◯ I have read this

---

**Q49** Suppose the Taiwanese government declared independence today. How would you believe each of the following would change over the next several years?

| | Decrease substantially | Decrease | No change | Increase | Increase substantially |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cost of living (rent, food, daily necessities, utilities, etc.) | | | | | |
| Household income | | | | | |
| Asset values (real estate, equities, etc.) | | | | | |
| Social safety net benefits (public education, pensions, national health insurance, etc.) | | | | | |

---

**Q50** Suppose the Taiwanese government declared independence today. How would you believe each of the following would change over the next several years?

| | Decrease substantially | Decrease | No change | Increase | Increase substantially |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Difficulty of traveling to Mainland China (including Hong Kong and Macau) for tourism or family visits | | | | | |
| Difficulty of traveling to countries other than Mainland China for tourism or business | | | | | |
| Cost of trading with or investing in Mainland China | | | | | |
| Cost of trading with or investing in other countries | | | | | |



---

**Q51** Suppose the Taiwanese government declared independence today. What actions or measures would you believe Mainland China might take? For each scenario, indicate whether you believe it would or would not occur.

| Scenario | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| PLA aircraft incursions, naval vessel shadowing, or coast guard patrols | ☐ | ☐ |
| Trade embargo or suspension of tourist visits | ☐ | ☐ |
| Establishment of exclusion zones (air and maritime) or temporary closure of certain shipping lanes | ☐ | ☐ |
| Strikes on key military or government facilities in Taiwan | ☐ | ☐ |
| Full-scale military invasion of Taiwan proper | ☐ | ☐ |

---

**Q52** Suppose the Taiwanese government declared independence and Mainland China subsequently initiated a military conflict. What forms of support would you believe the United States and its allies would provide? For each type of support, indicate whether you believe it would or would not be provided.

| Type of Support | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Diplomatic statements or symbolic gestures of support | ☐ | ☐ |
| Economic sanctions against Mainland China | ☐ | ☐ |
| Expanded provision of defensive weapons, training, and advisory missions | ☐ | ☐ |
| Intelligence sharing and logistical support during the conflict | ☐ | ☐ |
| Direct military intervention and participation in armed hostilities | ☐ | ☐ |

---

**Q53** Suppose the Taiwanese government declared independence today. How long would you believe Taiwan's mandatory military service term would be in the coming years? (Taiwan's current conscription term is 12 months.)

0 months 120 months



# Block: Closing

**Q54** Please share your thoughts and suggestions regarding this survey. Your feedback will help us further improve the survey design.