Navigating Identity Abroad:

Taiwanese Interactions with Chinese in Sweden

Author: Reihuan Wu
Supervisor: Elizabeth Rhoads

Abstract

This study investigates the dynamics of Taiwanese identity among Taiwanese migrants in Sweden, with a specific focus on their experiences and interactions within the local Chinese community. The research draws on data collected from ten in-depth semi-structured interviews and utilises the analytical framework developed by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) to gain a deeper understanding of Taiwanese identity. The findings of the study reveal that daily encounters in Sweden serve to reinforce Taiwanese identity and foster a stronger desire for Taiwanese independence. This desire is also influenced by empathy towards Taiwan's international situation. The strategies employed in conversations with Mainland Chinese individuals and the choice of terminology shed light on the negotiation of Taiwanese identities. By addressing the gaps in understanding Taiwanese interactions in third countries, this research contributes to the broader discourse on Taiwanese identity and cross-Strait relations. It raises important questions about the impact of life experiences on perspectives, engagement with local Chinese people in Sweden, and the resulting effects on Taiwanese cultural and political identity. Through its examination of these dimensions, the research offers a nuanced perspective on the complex interplay between Taiwanese and Chinese identities within the Swedish context.

Keywords: Taiwan, Chinese/Taiwanese identity, overseas Taiwanese identity, ethnic identity, national identity

Acknowledgements

I want to express my utmost appreciation to my supervisor, Elizabeth Rhoads. Her unwavering assistance, support, and motivation have been absolutely invaluable. I am truly grateful for her guidance, her valuable insights, and the positivity she brought to the most challenging moments of this journey. I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have had her as my guide for almost the entire Second Year. From the COSM33 Human Rights, COSM34 Development Theory, to COSM30 Data Collection, and finally, this COSM40 are all my favourite courses at Lund University.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Giovanni Mauri and Lucia Brancaccio for their unwavering support and remarkable patience. Their willingness to lend a listening ear, even during moments of repetition and perceived monotony, has provided me with great comfort. Their consistent encouragement has fueled my determination, and I am truly grateful for their kindness and understanding.

I would also like to give a special acknowledgment to my best friend, Tori Heitmann Jørgensen, for providing me with access to a Macbook when I needed it the most. Additionally, I am grateful to Isabella Silva Ortiz for generously lending me her beautiful iPad Pro for more than a month. I am also thankful to Yixuan Zhao and the LUX and Juridicum libraries for providing me with essential resources to write my thesis. Your contributions have greatly enriched the available resources for my research, and I am sincerely grateful for your generosity.

I cannot express enough gratitude to my family, especially my mom. Her unwavering support, even when she may not fully comprehend the intricacies of my work, has been my rock. Her love and encouragement have been a constant source of inspiration, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have her by my side. 媽，我愛你。

Lastly, I would like to give a special mention to my dear friend, Pin-chu Lai, at Columbia University for coming to my rescue in the eleventh hour and helping me find a crucial book when time was of the essence. Your assistance was truly invaluable, and I am deeply grateful for your support.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

"While 'I am Taiwanese' might be a relatively straightforward response to a seemingly simple question of 'Who am I?' it belies the tangible layers of identity that represent the calculation and influence of a vast array of cultural, political, economic, sociological, anthropological and historical forces operating locally, regionally and globally. These three words, I am Taiwanese, arguably combine to present among the most complex and contentious dynamics in our world today."

- *Identity in the Shadow of a Giant* (Gartner, Huang, Li and James, 2021)

The issue of Taiwanese identity poses a significant challenge within the geopolitical landscape of East Asia, where the topic of Taiwanese identity invariably gives rise to contentious debates concerning its political, national, and cultural aspects, particularly the intense disagreement surrounding its autonomy and international recognition. Indeed, how the people of Taiwan think of themselves is an important issue, as it carries substantial consequences that extend beyond the borders of Taiwan, as stated in the quote. The complexity and contested nature of Taiwanese identity allude to the question of whether the island should be regarded as an independent nation with a diverse yet predominantly Chinese population, or as a Chinese province.

More specifically, the subject of Taiwanese identity raises questions such as: should Taiwan be recognised as a sovereign and independent state, bearing the name of the Republic of China (ROC),[1] or should it be seen as an integral component of a unified China, as asserted by the People's Republic of China (PRC)? Furthermore, should the inhabitants of Taiwan be regarded as culturally Chinese, or should they be seen as a separate cultural entity?

---

[1] The list of names and terms that apply to the island of Taiwan is long. For a detailed review of the multiple names that have been ascribed to the island of Taiwan, see Harrison (2006). In this thesis, the Republic of China (ROC) is used interchangeably with Taiwan. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is equal to China, PRC-China and Mainland China.

Taiwanese identity is a highly contested and dynamic concept that has undergone significant transformations in recent decades. The question of what it truly means to be Taiwanese is far from straightforward and lacks a definitive answer. Responses to this question vary not only across different periods of time and geographical locations but also among individuals themselves. In general, Taiwanese identity is influenced by factors such as cross-Strait relations, the growing influence of China, and the ongoing role of the United States in the political developments across the Taiwan Strait.[2]

Interest in Taiwanese identity has been steadily increasing in both academic and political circles. Particularly in politics, the Taiwanese identity is bound to determine how the people of Taiwan position themselves in the context of China's rise. China's rapid rise as a global power has not only challenged Taiwan's sovereignty but also its national identity. Taiwanese identity is often examined under Taiwanese nationalism and linked to Taiwanese independence, raising international concerns about cross-Strait relations (Dittmer, 2004; Lynch, 2004; Rigger, 1999; Schubert, 2004; Wang and Liu, 2004). As a result, the connections between Taiwan and China hold considerable geopolitical consequences that have the potential to influence the security situation in East Asia. Moreover, the political implications of these interactions contribute to the ongoing development of the Taiwanese identity, which is characterised as a constantly changing, vibrant, and deeply political identity.

Acknowledging the potential political ramifications of Taiwanese identity on cross-strait dynamics, numerous foreign policy think tanks worldwide have undertaken extensive research on this subject in recent years. In August 2023, the Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP), a think tank based in Stockholm, released a special report comprising several papers that delve into various facets of Taiwanese identity (Jing *et al.*, 2023). The papers delve into various subjects, including the identification of the native inhabitants of Taiwan and the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on Taiwan's national character. This thesis will focus on the progression of Taiwanese national identity, which will be the primary subject of the subsequent subchapter, contributing to the continuous discourse surrounding the topic of Taiwanese identity.

---

[2] Bruce J. Jacobs and Peter Kang's (2018) edited volume *Changing Taiwanese Identities* provides a detailed account of the evolving Taiwanese identity since Taiwan's democratisation. As for a recent book on cross-Strait relations, see Syaru Shirley Lin's *Taiwan's China Dilemma* (2016). To understand the role the United States plays in cross-Strait relations, refer to Dean Chen's *US-China Rivalry and Taiwan's Mainland Policy* (2017).

1.2 Research Problem, Aim and Purpose

Previous research has depicted how Taiwanese identity evolved since Taiwan's democratisation in the late 1980s. Numerous academic articles have delved deep into the formation of Taiwanese identity. Scholars from both Taiwan and abroad have extensively investigated how Taiwanese identity has rapidly grown since the lifting of martial law in 1987 (for example, see Wachman, 1994; Harrison, 2006; Tsai, 2007). Given China's rapid rise in recent years, some academic discussions have also explored how Taiwanese identity is evolving under the shadow of China's new hegemony (Gartner *et al.*, 2021).

With the growing interest of researchers in cross-Strait relations and Taiwanese identity, a number of academics have begun to explore the contact and interaction between Chinese and Taiwanese individuals. Certain scholars are delving into the effects of interpersonal exchanges, such as travel to China, on the self-identity of Taiwanese people, while others are examining Taiwanese citizens who reside in China, analysing their degree of integration into the local Chinese society and the changes in their political self-identity (see Wang C.-C., 2019; Wang, H.-L., 2014, and a detailed literature review in Chapter 2).

However, there is a lack of academic discussion surrounding the dynamics between Taiwanese individuals and Chinese individuals residing in third countries. In this context, a third country refers to a society outside of Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Macau, where the Chinese population is in the minority. It is often the case that Taiwanese individuals only have the opportunity to interact with Chinese people locally after relocating abroad. This is particularly true for those Taiwanese individuals who have not previously resided in Mainland China, making their interactions with Chinese individuals in a third country their first significant encounter.

This study, therefore, aims to examine how this unique interaction experience can change the way Taiwanese people perceive Chinese individuals and China as a whole. The research seeks to understand the thoughts of Taiwanese individuals about China following their contact and acquaintance with Chinese people overseas. The study is intrigued by the strategies that Taiwanese individuals employ when engaging with the local Chinese

community in third countries (e.g., the United States, Sweden). Will they choose to assimilate with Chinese individuals or maintain a certain level of distance? How profound are these interactions? What do Taiwanese individuals and Chinese individuals understand about each other through such interactions?

1.3 Research Questions

Consequently, the primary aim of this study is to examine the dynamics of interaction between Taiwanese and Chinese individuals residing in Sweden. The research seeks to explore the experiences of interaction between Chinese and Taiwanese individuals in Sweden, with a specific focus on analysing the potential impact of these interactions on the cultural and national identity of Taiwanese individuals.

The research aims to address the following research questions:

1. How do the life experiences in Sweden shape the perspectives of Taiwanese individuals concerning Taiwan and China?

2. How do Taiwanese individuals residing in Sweden engage with local Chinese individuals and the broader Chinese community?

3. How do the experiences of Taiwanese individuals in engaging with Chinese individuals overseas influence their cultural and political identity?

2. Literature Review

The literature review is divided into three sections. The initial section delves into the development of Taiwanese identity, analysing how it has undergone significant changes over the last thirty years. The second section will discuss studies that investigate the influence of social interactions with China on Taiwanese identity. Finally, the third section focuses on previous research that shares a comparable context with this study, specifically examining Taiwanese identity in an overseas setting. This section will introduce and

discuss various studies that have explored the self-identifications of Taiwanese individuals living abroad, particularly in North America and Europe.

2.1 Shifting Taiwanese Identity

The question, 'what does it mean to be Taiwanese?', has never been obvious or easy to answer. Instead, responses vary across time, geography and individuals. This part of the literature review tries to explain how and why Taiwanese identity is highly political and increasingly convergent with the changing tides of political support on the island.
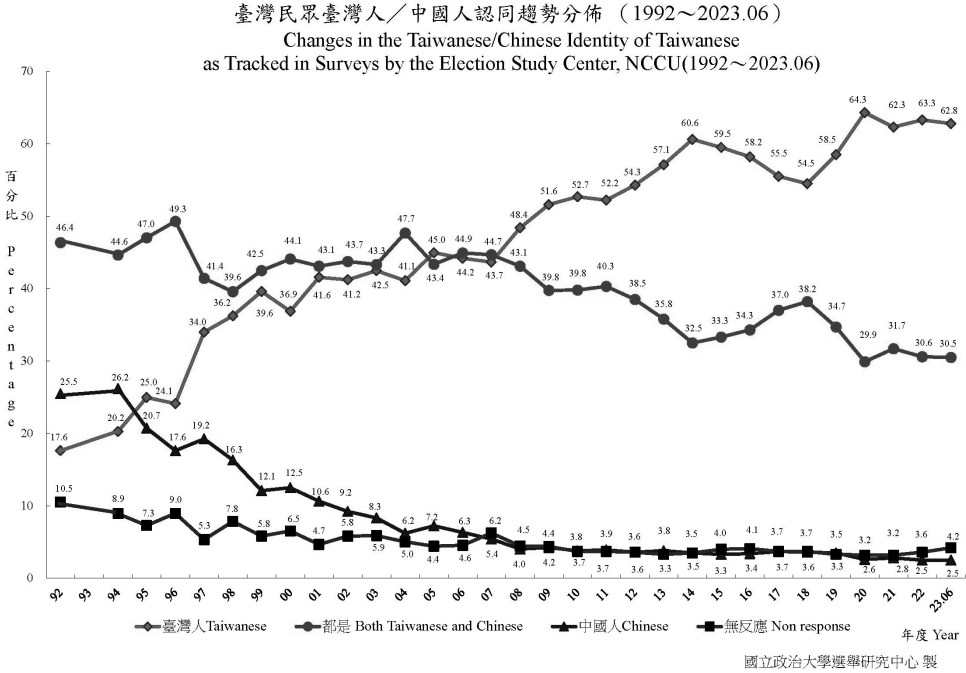
Hall (2003) developed a model to understand the formation of Taiwanese national identity, which is based on the idea that the country's identitarian building process originated from the modernisation of its society; specifically, the growth experienced during the 80s, the democratisation of its institution and political system, the backdrop of international isolation and pressured from the PRC all resulted in contributing to build up a Taiwanese national identity.

A longitudinal survey spanning three decades was conducted by National Chengchi University (2023) in Taiwan, focusing on identity and identification issues. As presented in Figure 1, the initial survey results, released in 1992, reveals that a mere 17,6% of the Taiwanese population identified as Taiwanese, while 25,5% identified as Chinese and 46.4% considered themselves both Taiwanese and Chinese.[3] This indicates that the Chinese ethnic identity label was widely accepted in Taiwan during the early 1990s. However, as political democratisation and identity localisation gained momentum in the late 1990s, the aforementioned percentages underwent significant changes. By 2012, 54,3% of the population identified as Taiwanese, with only 3,6% identifying as Chinese, and the remaining 38,5% considering themselves both. The latest survey conducted in June

---

[3] The population of Taiwan, which consists of about 23,5 million individuals, can be categorised into four distinct ethnic groups. The first group comprises the aborigines (*yuanzhumin* or 'original inhabitants'), who make up around 2,37% of the population today. These aborigines are descendants of Austronesian peoples who resided on the island long before significant waves of Chinese migration began to occur during the seventeenth century. The second and largest ethnic group in Taiwan today is the *benshengren* ('this province people'), who are the original Han Chinese colonists. The majority of *benshengren* are of Hoklo descent, accounting for 72% of the population, while the Hakka make up 14%. These Han Chinese colonists originated from Fujian and Guangdong and settled in Taiwan prior to the period of Japanese colonisation (1895-1945). Following the Chinese Nationalists' defeat in the Chinese Civil War in 1949, a large group of *waishengren* ('other province people') arrived in Taiwan with the Chiang Kai-Shek led regime. Migrated from various regions of the Mainland, today *waishengren* make up about 14% of the Taiwanese population.

2023 reveals that Taiwanese identity had surged to 62,8%, while Chinese identity had reached an all-time low of 2,5%. Dual Taiwanese and Chinese identity had decreased to 30,5%.

Figure 1: Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese identity of Taiwanese

臺灣民眾臺灣人／中國人認同趨勢分佈 （1992～2023.06）
Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese Identity of Taiwanese
as Tracked in Surveys by the Election Study Center, NCCU(1992～2023.06)

Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University

This survey shows the general increase in identification as Taiwanese across time. Over the past three decades, the percentage of individuals exclusively identifying as Taiwanese has increased nearly fourfold from the initial survey. In contrast, those exclusively identifying as Chinese have significantly dwindled, dropping from 25% in 1992 to a mere 2,5% in 2023. These significant shifts in Taiwanese identity have rendered it a more complex and debated concept compared to other identities. According to Zhong (2016: 5), "Even though most people in Taiwan only identify themselves as Taiwanese, close to a third of the population have not given up their Chinese (*zhongguoren*) identity. Taiwan is still a much divided society when it comes to the basic concept of national identity."

Zhong (2016) argues that although most Taiwanese people reject being called Chinese (*zhongguoren*) when asked about their national identity, they do not deny their ethnic and cultural Chinese identity. What they object to is being called Chinese nationals, especially when China is internationally recognised as the PRC. In short, Taiwanese people don't

10

identify with the Mainland Chinese state (*zhongguo*), although they still see themselves as members of the big Chinese nation (*zhonghua minzu*) (Zhong, 2016: 16).

Gartner *et al.*, (2021) extensively examine the impact of China's emergence as a major global power on Taiwan's identity. Their research reveals that the influence of China's rise is not a straightforward phenomenon. While the economic opportunities presented by the Mainland's growth are appealing, there is a prevailing concern among a significant portion of Taiwan's population regarding the potential absorption by the neighbouring autocratic giant. In this context, the preservation of *de facto* independence, the promotion of liberal values associated with a free and open society, and the maintenance of democratic governance are of utmost importance. In essence, the economic prosperity of China does not diminish individuals' sense of personal connection to Taiwan. On the contrary, it seems to have the opposite effect, as people become increasingly apprehensive about China's expanding power, particularly its economic influence, and its potential to sway outcomes (Gartner *et al.*, 2021: 206).

2.2 Taiwanese Identity in Mainland China

How life experience outside of Taiwan influences Taiwanese people's self identity has also drawn scholarly attention. Numerous studies have examined how contact with Chinese individuals can potentially impact the political identity of Taiwanese people (Wang H.-L, 2004; Wang and Cheng, 2017; Wang C.-C., 2019; 2023). Specifically, scholars have explored how increased interaction between Taiwanese and Chinese people, resulting from the opening of individual travel for Chinese tourists to Taiwan, may shape Taiwanese perceptions of Chinese individuals (Wang and Cheng, 2017). Moreover, there has been discussion among scholars regarding the potential influence of experiences such as studying or doing business in Mainland China on Taiwanese self-identity (see, for example, Wang C.-C., 2019, 2023)**.**

In a Master's thesis submitted to the Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies at Lund University, Wang Hsiang-Lung (2004) investigated Taiwanese students who reside in Shanghai and examined how their life experiences in Mainland China changed their Taiwanese identity and view on Cross-Strait relations. The study found that Taiwanese and Chinese identities are not competitive but complementary: Chinese identity is used to

perform one's cultural expression (*zhonghua wenhua*) or ethnic origin; Taiwanese identity, on the other hand, serves as the political identity of the Taiwanese individuals in Shanghai.

In their study, Wang and Cheng (2017) investigate how the increased interaction between Taiwan and China affects the way Taiwanese individuals view Chinese citizens and the Beijing government. The findings reveal that casual encounters, such as being acquaintances, do not significantly alter Taiwanese citizens' perception of China. Only meaningful relationships, such as true friendships, can mitigate the unfavourable perception towards Chinese citizens. However, the level of contact does not have an impact on Taiwanese people's negative perception of the hostile Chinese state.

2.3 Taiwanese Identity in Foreign Contexts

The previous section of the literature review has introduced how life experiences in Mainland China might impact Taiwanese people's identity. This final section takes the focus away from the Taiwan-China context and instead investigates the influence of interactions with individuals from the People's Republic of China (PRC) in an international setting on Taiwanese self-identity and perception of China. Numerous studies have explored the Taiwanese identity in foreign outside of Taiwan or Mainland China (Moore, 2021; Ho and Li, 2022; Li, 2020; Lin, Pang and Liao, 2020; Sun, 2013; Wang, Wong, Ko, Deng and Chung, 2020). These studies examine how the self-identity of Taiwanese individuals may undergo changes after relocating to a third country where they constitute a minority within the host society.

Fiona Moore's (2021) book *Global Taiwanese: Asian Skilled Labour Migrants in a Changing World* explores the different ways in which Taiwanese skilled migrants use their shared Taiwanese identity as a means for building connections and pursuing business activities. The study considers Taiwanese identities in the transnational context and explores the possibility to consider Chinese identities a global identity instead of tying it to a particular geographic region. Moore (2021: 116) points out,

> The Taiwanese diaspora faces a particularly complicated position, for most
> of its members are simultaneously part of the Taiwanese and the Chinese
> diasporas. [...] Taiwan's position as simultaneously Chinese and
> not-Chinese meant that complicated discourses of Chineseness and

12

not-Chineseness emerged, which were subject to debate, conflict, and attempts at control, but could also, in the diaspora, lead to the development of strong internal and external networks.

Moore (2021: 120) also identifies alternative models for a more encompassing identity: a pan-Asian identity or a global Chinese – *Zhonghua* – identity. In a diasporic context, the idea of global Chineseness, a *Zhonghua* identity, is not necessarily related to China, which leaves room for Taiwanese and Chinese identities to negotiate the discourse of belonging.

Ho and Li (2022) and Wang *et al.*, (2020) present the experience of young Taiwanese immigrants who relocated to the United States for higher education. They identify a shift in young Taiwanese immigrants' identity from Taiwan, a homogenous environment where identity is taken for granted, to the United States, an immigrant context where Taiwanese immigrants are forced to perform their identity. Ho and Li (2022: 16-17) identify two mechanisms that trigger the shift of Taiwanese identity: the first is a context-driven shift from a homogenous environment where identity is taken for granted to an immigrant context where Taiwanese immigrants are forced to 'perform' their identity. In that instance, Taiwanese becomes a more desirable label compared to Chinese. Second is the event-driven shift in which negative experiences with PRC-Chinese immigrants and participation lead young Taiwanese to realise the marginal status of Taiwan. Intra-ethnic conflicts and symbolic violence between overseas Taiwanese and PRC-Chinese manifest as banal nationalism and lead young immigrants to embrace their Taiwanese identity.

Ho and Li (2022) present the experience of U.S.-based Taiwanese migrants and examined identity performances in heterogeneous contexts. Similarly, Li (2020) examines the process of identity negotiation among Taiwanese migrants in Australia, albeit in a distinct geographical context. Li explores how Taiwanese migrants experience and interpret ethnicity and nationalism in their everyday lives, focusing on how they understand the entanglements of ethnic (Chinese) identity, ethnic solidarity (with other Chinese groups, particularly PRC-Chinese), racial discrimination, as well as Taiwanese nationalism when they are in Australia. Li's study highlights that the perception of discrimination reflects and influences people's identity and the resulting ethnic solidarity for both Chinese and Taiwanese.

Studies on Taiwanese identities in the European context are limited, possibly because of the smaller population of Taiwanese people residing in this region.[4] Lin, Pang and Liao (2020) conducted a study that explores the life experiences of Taiwanese individuals participating in the working holiday programme in Belgium. The focus of their research revolves around how these individuals navigate their identity and social lives while residing abroad. While the study primarily investigates the work and life experiences of Taiwanese youths during the working holiday programme, the most intriguing aspect lies in the examination of ethnic identity negotiation practices among Taiwanese working holiday makers in relation to the Chinese community in Belgium. The study reveals that Taiwanese individuals often find themselves employed in ethnic businesses operated by Mainland Chinese in Belgium, thereby transforming the workplace into a significant setting for the negotiation of ethnic identity, identifications, and interactions between Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese individuals.

Sun Tien-Mu's (2013) Master's thesis for Global Studies at Lund University is the most recent study on Taiwanese identity in Sweden. Sun's project studies how studying and working abroad in Sweden shapes young Taiwanese adults' perceptions of their identity and explores the meaning of being Taiwanese in the globalised world. He argues that, after moving abroad to Sweden, Taiwanese people started to realise that their identity is 'not fully controlled by themselves, but rather a part of global imagination, which involves China as a significant other' (Sun, 2013: 52).

2.4 Conclusion

Ten years have passed since Sun's (2013) study took place. Cross-Strait relations have faced challenges and deteriorated in several aspects during this period. Since Tsai Ing-Wen was elected as President of Taiwan in 2016, Beijing has sought to limit Taiwan's international space by pressuring countries not to engage with Taiwan, which led to Taiwan's increased isolation on the global stage. China has also increased its military activities in the Taiwan Strait and around Taiwan, raising concerns about regional stability (see Cole 2020). The protests in Hong Kong have also impacted on Taiwan's relations with

---

[4] Data released by the Taiwanese authorities show that among the 2,05 million Taiwanese citizens living outside their home country, a majority of 1,29 million have chosen to migrate to the Americas. In contrast, a much smaller proportion of around 50,000 individuals opted for Europe (Overseas Community Affairs Council, ROC, 2022).

the PRC. The erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong was widely seen as an indicator of what could happen if Taiwan were to reunify with the Mainland, which deepened Taiwan's scepticism and resistance to closer ties with the PRC and affected the results of the 2020 Taiwanese presidential election (Gartner *et al.*, 2021; Ponce and Wang, 2021). The developments in Taiwan-China relations in the past decade makes it a suitable time to revisit the issues concerning Taiwanese identity now.

Despite the extensive amount of research on Taiwanese identity both at home and abroad introduced in the literature review, however, there is a research gap which this study aims to fill. To begin with, despite the extensive research conducted on Taiwanese identity within the Taiwan-China context, there remains a lack of literature exploring the influence of interactions with Chinese individuals in a foreign nation on the formation of Taiwanese identity. Furthermore, none of the aforementioned studies explore the strategies Taiwanese migrants apply when they interact with Chinese individuals in their daily lives in Sweden. Neither do those studies discuss how the experience of interacting and communicating with the host country's local Chinese community could influence Taiwanese people's perception of China.

In order to understand how experiences obtained from contact with Chinese people influence how the Taiwanese perceive themselves and their relationship with China, this study is therefore designed to explore Taiwanese migrants' relationship with Chinese individuals in Sweden. By getting a better grasp of human-to-human relations shared by people from both sides of the Taiwan Strait in a third country where both the Chinese and Taiwanese are minority communities (in this case Sweden), this study aims to contribute to the academic literature about Taiwanese identity in a globalised context.

Although there are some limitations in selecting Sweden as the focus of analysis, it is still a suitable example for this study. For instance, the interaction behaviours of Taiwanese and Chinese individuals may be influenced by the higher level of democracy and freedom of expression experienced by members of Swedish society. Furthermore, in contrast to major immigrant-receiving countries such as the United States or Australia (reviewed in the previous section), the relatively small size of the Chinese and Taiwanese communities in

Sweden creates a unique dynamic that makes it an interesting case to explore inter-minority relations.[5]

3. Analytical Framework

The primary objective of this thesis research is to explore the various identities of Taiwanese individuals residing in Sweden, particularly in terms of how they navigate and express their identities in relation to Chinese individuals. In order to comprehensively examine and analyse this issue, the study incorporates the perspectives of Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) on identity.

3.1 Beyond "identity"

Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper's 2000 article, "Beyond 'Identity'," challenges the conventional understanding of "identity" in the fields of social sciences and humanities. The authors argue that the concept of "identity" is not suitable for effective social analysis (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 1).

Brubaker and Cooper extensively discuss the various meanings associated with the term "identity" and its conceptual and explanatory implications. They identify and elaborate on five key uses of the term (ibid.: 6-8):

1. The first use of "identity" is to emphasise the distinction between "interest" and highlight non-instrumental modes of social actions. In this context, social actions explained by "identity" are guided by *particularistic self-understandings* rather than *universally driven self-interest.* In simpler terms, individuals engage in certain actions because it aligns with their sense of self, rather than solely for personal gain.

---

[5] As of 2021, Sweden has approximately 2,000 registered immigrants who were born in Taiwan, while the number of Chinese-born immigrants is much higher at 38,000. However, Chinese migrants only rank fifteenth among the largest migrant groups in Sweden, and they are not even the largest group of East Asians. People with Thai backgrounds outnumber those with Chinese backgrounds by 8,000 in Sweden as of 2021 (Statistikmyndigheten, 2022).

2. "Identity" pertains to its *collective* nature, signifying a fundamental and consequential sameness among members of a group. It denotes a shared identity that binds individuals together within a specific social or cultural context.

3. The use of "identity" relates to its association with aspects of "selfhood" on both individual and collective levels. It is invoked to highlight something that is perceived as *deep, basic, abiding, or foundational* to one's sense of self.

4. "Identity" is viewed as a product of social or political action. It is invoked to emphasise the *processual* and *interactive* development of collective self-understanding, solidarity, or the formation of a cohesive group identity. This understanding of identity is crucial in enabling collective action.

5. "Identity" is employed to underscore the *unstable, multiple, fluctuating and fragmented* nature of the contemporary "self". It highlights the notion that identity is not fixed or static, but rather subject to change and influenced by various factors.

In summary, Brubaker and Cooper's analysis of "identity" encompasses its role in distinguishing non-instrumental social actions, its collective nature, its association with fundamental aspects of selfhood, its connection to social and political processes, and its recognition of the fluidity and complexity of the contemporary self.

Following their recognition of the substantial theoretical weight "identity" carries, Brubaker and Cooper delineate three distinct clusters of alternative idioms that have the potential to enhance the analytical framework for "identity", while at the same time mitigating the associated confusion.

1. Identification and categorization

While "identity" refers to a *condition* rather than a *process*, implying a simplistic fit between the individual and the social, the concept of "identification" refers to complex *processes* involved in one's self-identification. "Identification" prompts us to explicitly mention the individuals or entities responsible for the act of identification; it does not assume that this process of identification will automatically lead to internal uniformity, uniqueness, or the formation of a cohesive group, which are often pursued by political entrepreneurs (ibid.: 14).

The process of self-identification and how others identify an individual can differ depending on the specific circumstances and environment. The act of identifying oneself

and being identified by others is inherently influenced by the situation and context in which it occurs.

The authors also highlight the distinction between relational and categorical modes of identification. Relational identification involves identifying oneself or others based on their position in a web of relationships, such as kinship, friendship, or patron-client ties. On the other hand, categorical identification involves identifying oneself or others based on shared attributes, such as race, ethnicity, language, nationality, citizenship, gender, or sexual orientation.

2. Self-understanding and social location

While "identification" denotes an ongoing process, "self-understanding" pertains to an individual's perception of who they are, their social position, and subsequent behaviour. Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 17) propose "self-understanding" as an alternative term for "identity," which emphasises non-instrumental action. Additionally, "self-understanding" implies that personal and collective actions may be influenced by subjective interpretations of self, rather than predetermined interests.

3. Commonality, connectedness, groupness

This final classification deals with the concept of "collective identities", which refers to the feeling of being part of a unique group. The term "commonality" signifies the sharing of common characteristics, while "connectedness" denotes the relational bonds that connect individuals. However, neither "commonality" nor "connectedness" on their own generate the sense of "groupness", which is the feeling of belonging to a distinct, cohesive group.

Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 21) argue that this set of terms establishes an analytical framework that recognizes the various forms and degrees of commonality and connectedness, as well as the diverse ways in which individuals attribute meaning and significance to them. This framework allows us to differentiate between instances of strongly binding and deeply felt groupness, and more loosely structured and weakly constraining forms of affinity and affiliation.

4. Methodology

The methodology chapter discusses the significant methodological approaches employed in this study. The first section explains the approach of data collection and the design of interviews. The second section focuses on the data collection process and sample selection for this thesis, covering the procedure for conducting the interviews, selecting samples, and collecting data. The third section covers ethical considerations, including the ethical standards adopted to obtain data for this thesis and measures taken to safeguard the privacy of the respondents.

4.1 Research Design

Taking into consideration the gaps in the existing literature on the topic, a qualitative approach has been used to understand more in-depth the area of inquiry. For studies that investigate how a specific group of individuals negotiate their identity when encountering other groups in a foreign environment, qualitative methods are deemed most suitable for their exploratory qualities. As Bryman (2012: 368) notes, qualitative research focuses on words rather than quantification in collecting and analysing data. For this reason, this study adopts a qualitative approach for inductively collecting and analysing data and building a theoretical framework. This way a better description of the dynamics between people of different communities will be reached, while also capturing the nuances of identity. To this end, this thesis will primarily use interviews to examine how Taiwanese people navigate their identity when they interact with Chinese counterparts. In this context, the epistemology is predominantly interpretative, elucidating the participants' experiences and behaviours through empirical data by adhering to this design (Clark *et al.*, 2021).

The study adopts a qualitative approach for inductively collecting and analysing data and building a theoretical framework (Pierce, 2008; Bryman, 2012). As the research focuses on Taiwanese expatriates' experiences of interacting with Chinese individuals in Sweden, personal experiences and feelings form the basis of the data, which needs to be separated from existing academic literature. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the appropriate method for exploring the interpersonal relationship between Taiwanese and Chinese people living in Sweden.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the appropriate method for exploring the interpersonal relationship between Taiwanese and Chinese people living in Sweden (Bryman, 2012: 471). The interviews consisted of two major sections, the first concerning the interviewees' self-identity and their relationship with the Taiwanese community in Sweden, while the second focused on their impressions of and experiences interacting with Chinese people in Sweden. The interview questions are shaped from the research questions and the literature review (See Interview Guide in Appendix 1). For example, Zhong's (2016) study that explains the national identity shift in Taiwan helped me clarify political and ethno-cultural identities when designing interview questions. The interviews consisted of thirty questions, including both closed and open-ended ones, as well as additional follow-up questions that arose during the interview to expand on the participants' responses. Professional aspects of interviewees' lives were a common topic of discussion during the interviews.

4.2 Data Collection and Sampling

The fieldwork spanned six months, from January to July 2023, covering Stockholm, Lund, and Malmö. Initially, I made efforts to promote the study in Swedish-based Taiwanese community Facebook groups, but the response was limited. Recruiting respondents online was found to be ineffective in light of the sensitivity surrounding the topic, as potential participants faced difficulties in ascertaining the credibility of my role as a researcher.

During my stay in Stockholm, I eventually became a part of a Taiwanese association consisting of Taiwanese expatriates and spent time with them in Stockholm, thus expanding my network in the Swedish capital, where the majority of Taiwanese residents live. My Taiwanese background facilitated my integration into the Taiwanese expatriate community and enabled me to engage in prominent Chinese festivities like the Chinese New Year and Dragon Boat Festival alongside Taiwanese immigrants residing in Stockholm. These events laid the foundation for establishing connections with individuals who were considered eligible to take part in the study. Subsequently, supplementary participants were recruited through a snowball effect, which was found to be less effective. This was due to the fact that certain participants enlisted through this sampling method, despite being Taiwanese and residing in Sweden, had inadequate exposure to interacting with Chinese individuals in Sweden.

For the above reason, in Malmö and Lund, purposive sampling was preferred to select appropriate participants for the research (Clark *et al.*, 2021). Specifically, an initial step involved disseminating details about the study within a Line group dedicated to Taiwanese students in Lund. Subsequently, numerous students and alumni from Lund University demonstrated their interest in participating in interviews. From this pool, individuals who exhibited greater experience of interaction with Chinese individuals and active involvement in the local Chinese community were deliberately chosen, aiming to acquire a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The study had two key eligibility criteria for participants. First, only individuals who self-identified as Taiwanese are eligible. Second, only those who had resided in Sweden for a minimum of two years were qualified for the interviews. The two-year requirement was instituted to ensure that the research accurately represented the experiences of long-term residents in Swedish society, as opposed to short-term visitors like tourists or exchange students.

Ultimately, ten participants from five different Swedish cities met these criteria and were included in the study (see Table 1). Notably, only one of the respondents was male, which aligns with the predominantly female Taiwanese immigrant population in Sweden.[6] The interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese. Recording features on my mobile device were used to document the proceedings and the participant's answers, while for online meetings, I utilised Zoom to record the interviews. On average, each interview lasted approximately one hour.

Each interviewee was informed about the purpose of recording and the methods employed for data collection. Furthermore, their consent was sought and obtained prior to commencing the interviews. It is important to note that no form of financial or other incentives were provided to any interviewee as a means of encouraging their participation.

After each interview, each recording was transcribed in Mandarin Chinese in full at the discretion of the participants. Subsequently, the interviews were translated into English for further analysis. The English transcripts were then coded via a simple, by-hand process

---

[6] The total count of Taiwanese nationals registered in Sweden as of December 2022 is 2,133, with 1,339 being females and 794 being males (Statistikmyndigheten, 2022).

into several categories, which generated findings and themes after a series of analysing and coding procedures was completed.

The data analysis that followed the process was performed through inductive and deductive reasoning (Clark *et al*., 2021). The interview transcripts were reviewed multiple times in order to find common patterns and key sentences that could have shed light on the research topic.

Table 1: Respondent Profile

No.	Age	Gender	Current City	Years in Sweden	Interview Form	Self-Identification
1	31	Female	Stockholm	3	In-person	Taiwanese, *huaren*
2	29	Female	Växjö	3	Online	Taiwanese, *huaren*
3	26	Female	Malmö	3	In-person	Taiwanese
4	47	Female	Stockholm	7	Online	Taiwanese
5	51	Female	Stockholm	26	In-person	Taiwanese
6	55	Female	Uppsala	30	Online	Taiwanese, Han Chinese
7	27	Female	Lund	2	Online	Taiwanese
8	35	Male	Stockholm	12	In-person	Taiwanese
9	35	Female	Stockholm	5	In-Person	Taiwanese
10	47	Female	Lund	6	In-Person	Taiwanese

4.3 Ethical Consideration and Limitations

The researcher demonstrated an understanding of the potential sensitivity surrounding the investigation of a contentious national identity, particularly for certain individuals. Consequently, the researcher exercised caution by refraining from posing personal inquiries that could potentially reveal the informants' identities, taking into account the size of the community. The researcher prioritised the maintenance of informants' confidentiality throughout the study. It is important to note that the sample groups utilised in this research were limited in scope and do not purport to represent the entirety of the Taiwanese community in Sweden. Therefore, the conclusions drawn in this thesis do not

claim to encompass the perspectives of every individual. Rather, they offer a narrative that aims to capture the complexities of Taiwanese-Chinese group dynamics within an overseas context.

As a Taiwanese individual residing in Sweden and an active member of the community and nationality being investigated, the researcher acknowledges the potential influence of personal biases. The researcher's position as an insider within the Taiwanese community is likely to impact the outcomes of this study, and as a result, this thesis will reflect the researcher's perspective as an insider. The participants in the study welcomed the researcher with an open attitude, with some expressing their willingness to participate due to the shared background and language. However, it is important to acknowledge that the research findings may differ if the interviews were conducted by an external researcher.

While the researcher's membership within the Taiwanese community facilitated the research process, it also presented certain limitations. Some aspects of the community and its dynamics were taken for granted, leading to instances where follow-up questions were inadvertently overlooked. This oversight occurred when certain issues appeared obvious and self-explanatory to both the researcher and the respondent. For instance, during discussions on specific word choices made by Taiwanese individuals when conversing with Chinese individuals, the researcher missed the opportunity to inquire further about why certain words were not chosen (See Chapter 5.5). On occasions when such questions were posed, respondents often found the reasons to be self-evident, resulting in a sense of bewilderment towards the researcher's inquiry.

This study adheres to the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (CODEX, 2019). The informants were informed that the interview sessions were exclusively intended for academic purposes, and that the information they provided would be used solely for the purpose of this thesis research conducted at Lund University. Prior to and following each interview, consent was acquired from all participants, and the interview transcripts were subsequently shared with the respondents for review and approval.

5. Findings and Analysis

This chapter proceeds to provide the analysis following the methodological approach highlighted in the previous chapter and its findings. The key findings are presented and elaborated upon in relation to the literature and theory that was discussed in the preceding chapters. Chapters 5.1 and 5.2 delve into the self-identifications of Sweden-based Taiwanese individuals and how their identities have evolved since their relocation. Chapters 5.3 and 5.4 explore the attitudes of Taiwanese people towards China as a nation and towards the Chinese individuals they encounter in Sweden. Finally, Chapter 5.5 analyses the terminology used by Taiwanese people when referring to China and examines how these semantic choices reflect the performance and negotiation of Taiwanese identities.

5.1 Who is Taiwanese?

At the beginning of each interview, I would first ask the interviewee for their definition of "Taiwanese". I asked the question "What kind of person do you think can call themselves Taiwanese?" and noticed that younger interviewees had significantly different answers than older ones. Most interviewees under 40 answered the question directly. They seemed to have already thought about this question. A respondent in her early 30s told me,

> "I have two definitions for Taiwanese. I think people who were born and raised in Taiwan are Taiwanese. The second definition is that I think anyone who identifies as Taiwanese should also be considered Taiwanese."

Another respondent, who was 28 at the time of the interview, replied:

> "As long as you live on this land and identify with this country, you can be considered Taiwanese. I think the idea of bloodline is somewhat outdated. Whether you were born in Taiwan or immigrated here later, if we continue to equate Taiwanese identity with the ethnic heritage of the Han Chinese, then we will miss out on a lot, which is very impractical."

These respondents expressed a certain level of agreement that anyone who identifies as Taiwanese should have an opportunity to be fully included into Taiwanese society. This inclusion is based on the understanding that collective identity, as defined by Brubaker and Cooper (2000), encompasses self-identification, self-understanding and groupness. They also believe that the notion of *connectedness* should surpass the traditional *jus sanguinis* approach to social membership, and that Taiwan's citizenship laws should strive to incorporate people who live in and identify with the island, no matter their ancestral background.

Another respondent, 35, elaborated further on the topic.

> "I believe a crucial point is that if we keep equating Taiwanese with the bloodline of the Chinese, we are missing out on a lot, and it's highly unrealistic. Taiwan is home to various ethnicities, and it is actually moving towards a model similar to Singapore. I can't recall the exact statistics, but I think a certain percentage of Taiwanese under the age of 18 have Southeast Asian heritage from one or both parents. However, in Taiwan, we tend to not pay much attention to Southeast Asian culture and might even view it as backwards.
>
> (...)
>
> It's a question whether our identification with the Chinese lineage is too strong, overshadowing other cultures, or whether, looking at it positively, they are all merging into a new Taiwanese culture, with Taiwanese as the main identity. There are many possibilities in this regard. So, I think as long as you live in this land and identify with this country, I believe you can be considered a Taiwanese. I think the bloodline argument is somewhat outdated. Even if you look at it in European countries, it's quite outdated."

Whilst the younger generation seems to be more prepared to answer who counts as Taiwanese, older respondents seemed to misunderstand the question. A respondent in her late 40s simply responded that most people in her generation identify with Taiwan and consider themselves Taiwanese when I asked who she thinks is Taiwanese.

The variation in responses among individuals of varying age groups could potentially be attributed to the younger respondents' inclination to reflect upon their migration experiences in Sweden. As they immerse themselves in the multi-ethnic and immigrant-receptive Swedish society, they initiate a process of introspection, questioning whether Taiwan could emulate Sweden's model and cease associating Han Chinese ethnicity with the concept of Taiwanese nationhood. Interestingly, while there is a prevailing global inclination towards embracing narrower collective identities and the resurgence of ethno-nationalism, even in Swedish politics (Elgenius and Rydgren, 2018), Taiwanese young people appear to stand in contrast to the current world trend and adopt a more inclusive approach that broadens the concept of *connectedness*.

5.2 Rising Taiwanese Identity

After relocating to Sweden, numerous participants expressed that their sense of Taiwanese identity became more pronounced. It was only upon departing Taiwan that many Taiwanese individuals began contemplating their own Taiwanese identity. Furthermore, their connection to Taiwan deepened as they witnessed the marginalisation of their homeland within the global community and its struggle for international recognition.[7]

A respondent, upon observing Taiwan's peripheral status on the global platform, drew a parallel to the *Orphan of Asia* (1993), a Taiwanese novel originally published in Japanese in 1945. In this literary work, the author portrayed the profound sense of estrangement and isolation experienced by the Taiwanese people under Japanese colonial rule from 1895 to 1945. Although *Orphan of Asia* explores the internal conflict faced by the protagonist as he grapples with his Japanese and Chinese identities in colonial Taiwan, the sense of alienation and detachment also resonates with Taiwan's position in the world today. The empathy evoked by this narrative serves as a compelling catalyst for the Taiwanese to forge a strong sense of identification towards Taiwan.

---

[7] Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 40) made a noteworthy observation in a footnote of their study, stating that minorities who are ethnically and racially distinct from the majority face greater challenges in assimilating into a new society. The authors highlighted that, in the United States, white European immigrants are fundamentally different from other racial minority groups. This perspective offers an intriguing insight into the process of integration, although some scholars have criticised their portrayal of white Europeans as a singular racial entity, given that they were initially divided into various subgroups.

Conversely, a number of participants revealed that they started to embrace their Taiwanese identity to avoid being perceived as individuals from the PRC. To them, China carries a negative connotation that they wish to distance themselves from, which resonates with existing literature, as presented by Ho and Li (2022: 247) that the unfavourable perception of China among Westerners could potentially contribute to the dissociation of Taiwanese immigrants from associating themselves with the Chinese label. The rise of negative sentiments towards China's authoritarian and expansionist policies, particularly in light of the controversies surrounding Hong Kong and Xinjiang, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, has further intensified this detachment. As per Zhong (2016: 12), "One national group's favorable feelings toward another national group do not mean the merge of national identity between the two groups. However, unfavorable feelings toward another group often strengthen one's national identity." Consequently, embracing one's Taiwanese identity has become a practical approach for some Taiwanese to evade the negative connotations associated with China.

As one respondent describes:

> "When you are within the country, you might not think about this issue (of identity) too much. It's possible that it's only when you go abroad that you realise how challenging it is to fight for international recognition. Additionally, when you are abroad and not a local, you start to contemplate who you are. The process of asking yourself, "Who am I?" is a crucial one. I think, for many overseas Taiwanese, this is the initial and important process in shaping their identity and sense of belonging. It's a starting point. You'll discover that everyone's situation is different, but if you don't want to be categorised as Chinese, then who are you? And you'll say, "I am Taiwanese." However, when you realise that you want to identify as a Taiwanese, but this identity hasn't been well-formed at the time, you'll be even more determined to protect this sense of identity."

The respondent's act of questioning "Who am I?" and the subsequent process of adapting to changing circumstances aligns with the concept of *self-understanding* outlined in Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) work. The act of questioning one's own identity arises as a

result of a shift in surroundings, wherein the respondent's position transformed from being part of the majority in Taiwan to becoming a minority in Sweden.

Active engagement with the local community and natives is a crucial factor in the development of Taiwanese self-identity, rather than solely relying on the self-perception of being a minority in a foreign land. A participant, who has been living in Sweden for over twenty years, shares their experience:

> "I consider myself Taiwanese. I feel more strongly about it when I'm in Sweden. Because there have been times when I was approached directly and asked if I am Chinese, whether I was taking the Tunnelbana in Stockholm or just walking down the street. It's not just Chinese people who ask me; Swedish people would also ask whether I am Chinese or not."

Despite having spent two decades of her life in Sweden, she still manages to retain her Taiwanese identity and even strengthens her sense of being Taiwanese as she navigates daily encounters with strangers in her host society. Although the respondent has become accustomed to being asked questions like "Where are you from?" or "Are you Chinese?" These daily inquiries have only reinforced her identification with Taiwan.

The opinion of Taiwanese people regarding the future of their country has been significantly impacted by the reinforcement of their self-identity. Inquiring about their encounters while residing abroad and engaging with local Chinese individuals, it was discovered that the majority of respondents expressed a stronger desire for Taiwan's independence. Interestingly, this aspiration was not necessarily driven by negative experiences with PRC-Chinese, but rather by the recognition of the vast differences between Taiwanese and Chinese people, as well as a heightened sense of empathy towards Taiwan's political predicament on the global stage.

> "After coming abroad, I will feel more strongly that we should quickly become a separate country. I want to cherish what Taiwan possesses even more. I hope that Taiwan is truly recognized as its own nation. In the past, while in Taiwan, I might have felt somewhat indifferent or not had

any particularly strong feelings. However, once abroad, and people constantly don't understand where I come from, that's when my Taiwanese identity actually increased."

Immigrants frequently encounter the challenge of clarifying their origins, as observed in the respondents' experiences. Sun (2013) notes that Taiwanese immigrants, in particular, strive to avoid being mistaken for individuals from other countries, such as the PRC or Thailand, and hope that their European acquaintances possess a better understanding of Taiwan. Ho and Li's (2022) study indicates that these daily interactions prompt Taiwanese students to perform more actively as Taiwanese while residing in the United States. Furthermore, they reveal that these encounters fostered a desire among respondents for Taiwan to gain independence and recognition in the global arena.

To a high degree, this study confirms the findings of Ho and Li (2022) as well as Sun (2013). However, the study distinguishes itself by shedding light on the minor daily annoyances shared by the respondents. These frustrations include being mistakenly identified as Chinese or other Asian nationalities and encountering individuals who possess limited knowledge about Taiwan. Interestingly, these experiences have played a big role in strengthening the Taiwanese people's sense of unity and political identity. As a result, they have become more determined to pursue Taiwan's international recognition as an independent nation, as highlighted in Ho and Li (2022).

It is not unexpected that all participants in the research affirmed that they exclusively respond with "Taiwan" to the question "Where are you from?". None of them expressed their willingness to voluntarily bring up the term "China" in response to this inquiry, regardless of the inquirer's identity. For one respondent, her biggest struggle is not being misidentified as a PRC-Chinese individual, but also the general lack of knowledge about Taiwan among the Swedish public.

> "People on the streets often mistake me for South Korean and ask if I am Korean. Some people here even joke and greet me in Japanese or Thai. But when I say I am Taiwanese, many people's reactions are 'Where is Taiwan?'"

Even if they were directly asked if they were Chinese, the majority of respondents stated that they would answer, "No, I am Taiwanese." Only one person expressed doubts towards the question:

> "I would ask them to define 'Chinese' first. I would ask them, 'How broad is your definition of China?'"

Most respondents express their rejection of being referred to as 'Chinese' when asked about their national identity. This discovery is consistent with previous research that asserts that, in the mind of most people living in Taiwan, the term 'Chinese' has been monopolised by or exclusively given to the people living in Mainland China (Zhong, 2016: 7).

Although no one accepted being called "Chinese", some interviewees said they could consider themselves *huaren* 華人 alongside their Taiwanese identity. While the term *huaren* is also commonly translated to "Chinese" in English, the term literally means "people of Chinese ethnicity" in Chinese, which might make it an acceptable label for some individuals. Unlike the politically charged and ideologically grounded term *zhongguoren*, *huaren* is more focused on Chinese cultural identity, which makes the term a better match with Taiwanese people's self-identification. As a result, some from Taiwan refuse to be named *zhongguoren* but are comfortable to refer to themselves as *huaren* (Chang and Holt, 2015: 8).

Respondents reported differently on the term *huaren*, with some saying they consider themselves both Taiwanese and *huaren*. One respondent, who is ethnically Han Chinese, confirmed that both *huaren* and Taiwanese are equally acceptable to describe her identity. However, another respondent showed more reluctance to identify with *huaren*, reporting:

> "When I first arrived in Sweden [in 2011], cross-strait relations were warming up. At that time, I thought of myself as a *huaren*, but now I find the word awkward and don't feel that way anymore. I struggle with the term *huaren* because, in English, it translates to "Chinese." But to me, the English word "Chinese" refers to "people from the PRC." If I want to say I'm a Han Chinese from Taiwan, how would I say it? But that's not

right either because calling a Taiwanese person *huaren* would be confused with "Chinese from Taiwan," or a "PRC-Chinese in Taiwan. So it was a struggle at that time. It was probably around 2012 when Taiwan began having social movements when my identification changed. That's when I started to feel like I had this identity as a Taiwanese person, and it has been that way ever since."

The reluctance to keep identifying themselves as *huaren* is an example of shifting identity of Taiwanese in recent years. The respondent reported the confusion in the definition of the term *huaren*, and decided that Taiwanese is the best label to describe their identity. This shift happens alongside the changes in cross-Strait relations in the 2010s, when the student-led social movements in 2014 reinforced some people's identification with Taiwan.

Finally, another participant expressed that she considers both *huaren* and *taiwanren* as acceptable terms for her. However, she prefers not to be perceived solely as Han Chinese by blood due to some part of her Aboriginal ancestry. Given her mixed lineage, she finds the term *taiwanren* to be the most fitting in terms of her identity, as opposed to *huaren* or *yuanzhumin* 原住民 (aboriginal). For individuals with a mixed ethnic background, *taiwanren* 台灣人 (Taiwanese) is more suitable than *huaren* as a term that describes their identity as the term *taiwanese* does not specifically ascribe a ethnicity to the identifier.

"I usually say that I am *taiwanren*, but if people ask, I can say that I am *huaren*. But I also have aboriginal ancestry, so I would feel that I would be more Taiwanese. [...] I don't want to tell everyone that I am 100% *huaren* as some of my ancestors were indigenous."

5.3 Impressions on China/PRC

At the time of the study, Taiwan's relationship with China continued to be fraught, with the PRC continuing to pursue its claim to Taiwan with increasing degrees of aggressiveness since Tsai Ing-wen's election to the office in 2016 marked the end of *rapprochement* in cross-Strait relations during Ma Ying-jeou's presidency (2008-2016).

During the period of 2008 to 2016, Taiwan maintained a cordial relationship with Beijing under the leadership of KMT president Ma Ying-jeou. However, after assuming office in 2016, his successor Tsai Ing-wen, who is the leader of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), adopted a more stringent stance towards the Mainland. The Tsai administration pledged to reassess its ties with Beijing due to mounting dissatisfaction and frustration over the lack of transparency in KMT-negotiated agreements with the Mainland. Concurrently, Tsai also worked towards strengthening the relationship between Washington and Taipei. As Taiwan's relationship with the U.S. has grown stronger in the past few years, Beijing has become increasingly hostile towards Taipei's proximity to the U.S. (Cole, 2020; Gartner *et al*., 2021).

Therefore, most respondents reported "complicated feelings" towards China when discussing what the country means to them. China, being the ancestral homeland of all the Taiwanese respondents, holds historical and cultural significance. Presently, China stands as a great power in the world, fostering extensive economic and social interactions with the Taiwanese population. As reaffirmed by a respondent:

> "China is a country with which Taiwan shares a lot of historical connections and interpersonal exchanges. It's where most people's ancestors are from. Politically, I believe we are very different. But we can't ignore the fact that we share some common roots."

The response provides solid evidence that individuals from Taiwan recognize their ethnic and cultural ties to China, as emphasised by Wang (2004) and Zhong (2016). These scholars emphasise that Taiwanese individuals perceive China as their cultural and ethnic origins. Nevertheless, the respondent reiterated that Taiwan maintains a significant political distance from China. Another respondent shared the same view:

> "I appreciate China's culture, but I dislike China's politics and nationalism."

Here, the respondent draws a clear differentiation between China and the PRC, highlighting the possibility of individuals embracing Chinese culture while simultaneously

opposing the political stance of the PRC. When referring to China's culture, the respondent refers to the country as a whole. However, when discussing politics, China specifically denotes the PRC.

The study was conducted during a time when tension in the Taiwan Strait was rapidly rising and the fear of possible military conflict was shared among the people of Taiwan. The bilateral relations between Taiwan and China had significantly deteriorated after Nancy Pelosi, the then U.S. House Speaker, visited Taipei in August 2022, which Beijing strongly condemned. In response, China planned military exercises that effectively surrounded Taiwan (Hioe 2022). In March 2023, during a visit to California, Tsai met with Kevin McCarthy, the new House Speaker, who became the highest-ranking U.S. official in almost thirty years to meet a Taiwanese president on U.S. soil. Before Tsai's visit, China had issued a warning of a comparable reaction, which included condemnation, the imposition of new sanctions, and a display of military strength in the Taiwan Strait (Campbell 2023).

The security threat that China poses to Taiwan deeply affects the Taiwanese people in Sweden, despite being separated by a distance of five thousands miles. Some respondents reported concerns over potential conflicts in the Taiwan Strait. China's formidable size and economic prowess have left a lasting impression on numerous respondents, which resonates with the analysis presented by Gartner *et al.* (2021). One participant reported,

> "China is complicated to me. It's a massive neighbouring country, a country next door. It is ambitious, aggressive and even threatening to me."

It is realistic to identify in the response from this interviewee, the "high level of anxiety from the people of Taiwan" over the rise of Mainland China as described by Zhong (2016: 12). Indeed, China remains the most serious threat to Taiwan's security and existence. Another participant shared similar views, while putting more focus on the threat that China poses to democracy.

> "China is a major global power with abundant resources, influence, and military strength. In my perspective, the world is divided into two camps:

democratic and authoritarian. China is a prominent voice within the authoritarian camp, and it is fervently seeking to assume a leadership position on the world stage."

Note that some respondents spoke of China as if it's a separate entity. To illustrate, one respondent stressed that China is a vast "neighbouring country", suggesting that, based on their perspective, China is regarded as a different nation. The respondent elaborated further,

"To me, China should be considered as another country with historical ties. It's another country with frequent interactions. I feel that we are still different from them, but I cannot deny that there are some connections between us. For example, when I attend Swedish language classes designed for immigrants, I might meet some Asian classmates, and as long as I meet Asian classmates, whether they are from Thailand, Japan, or even from the Mainland, I tend to feel a relative closeness. So, for me, I identify with them culturally because we share a common history. However, I cannot identify with them on the nationalism front."

Some respondents described China as some kind of a "bully", which could resonate with Beijing's recent efforts to diplomatically isolate Taiwan. Since Tsai Ing-wen's election in 2016, China has intensified its efforts to restrict Taiwan's international space.[8] In order to prevent Taiwan from being recognised as an independent country on the global stage, Beijing has also pressured multinational corporations, including airlines and hotel chains, to list Taiwan as a Chinese province. Understandably, these attempts to undermine Taiwan's international presence are perceived negatively by Taiwan's citizens and certainly impacts China's image in Taiwan. Consequently, the Chinese state is often perceived as displaying aggression by the Taiwanese.

"I think China is an aggressive country, like if there are a group of students in the classroom, I think Taiwan is the hard working kid - do good

---

[8] Nine countries have switched allegiance to China since Tsai Ing-wen became president in 2016. While more than 180 countries have established formal relations with the PRC, only 13 countries remain Taiwan's formal diplomatic allies as of October 2023 (Davidson, 2023).

homework and have a decent family background - but they are often ignored by the teachers or classmates. China is like the kid whose family is super rich. From time to time, they would bring candies and sweets to share with their friends. After sharing, they will turn around and say, "That kid just looks bad? Let's beat him up." Let's punch him." That's how China feels for me as a Taiwanese."

5.4 Engaging with Chinese Individuals

Prior to relocating to Sweden, the individuals surveyed had varying levels of interaction with individuals from the PRC. Among the ten respondents, two had attended university in Mainland China, while one had resided in China as a *taishang*.[9] These three individuals had notably higher levels of engagement with PRC-Chinese nationals prior to their arrival in Sweden. In contrast, the remaining respondents, who had not lived in China, had more limited contact with Mainland Chinese nationals. The majority of participants reported that they had no contact with Chinese individuals during their time in Taiwan, and if they did, the interactions were superficial in nature, such as encounters with exchange students or a classmate from kindergarten. Such a result aligns with the hypothesis of this study: in Taiwan, the vast majority of Taiwanese have very limited contact with people from China.

Almost all respondents further noted that their interactions with PRC-Chinese individuals became more substantial and meaningful after their departure from Taiwan and resettlement overseas. This finding aligns with previous research on Taiwanese identity in a global context, such as the study conducted by Lin, Pang, and Liao (2020) in Belgium and the research conducted by Li (2020) in Australia.

The majority of participants indicate that their interactions with Chinese individuals primarily occur within the context of their professional or educational environments. While

---

[9] Taiwanese entrepreneurs residing and conducting business activities in Mainland China are commonly referred to as *taishang* 台商. This term is an abbreviation of *taiwan shangren* 台灣商人 , which directly translates to Taiwanese businessmen in English. The precise number of *taishang* operating in Mainland China lacks official statistical data. However, approximate estimations suggest that up to 1.2 million Taiwanese individuals, accounting for approximately 5% of Taiwan's population, are believed to reside in China. Among this population, a significant portion comprises *Taishang* and their accompanying family members (*The Economist*, 2020).

a few respondents mentioned limited contact with Chinese individuals in their day-to-day lives, those who pursued higher education in Swedish universities consistently reported a greater level of engagement with their Chinese peers. As per the Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslersämbetet), China stands as the second most prominent source country for international students enrolling in Swedish institutions during the academic year 2021/22, with a total of 2,302 Chinese students commencing their studies.[10]

Several research participants expressed their inclination towards exercising great caution when encountering an unfamiliar individual from Mainland China. In the context of engaging in conversations pertaining to matters like national identity or political inclination, individuals generally acknowledge the sensitivity of these subjects and frequently opt to downplay themselves while observing the other person's stance. Lin *et al.* (2020: 203) indicate that the downplaying strategy is a useful method to prevent further polarisation and escalation of conflict while interacting with Mainland Chinese individuals.

Taiwanese people frequently adopt this approach due to the uncertainty surrounding the political inclinations of their Chinese counterparts. An interviewee shared her experience from when she first moved to Sweden as an international student and attended a university that traditionally had a considerable number of students from Mainland China:

> "In my programme, there are nearly as many Chinese students as students from other countries. Compared to meeting classmates from other countries, when I meet someone from China for the first time, I tend to speak more cautiously. I don't want to ask or be asked about each other's nationality. I always feel a bit uneasy when a Chinese person asks me where I'm from, and the situation can feel a bit awkward."

---

[10] Germany is the primary source country for international students coming to Sweden, with a total of 4,166 students arriving in the academic year 2021/2022. Among these students, the majority, comprising 2,346 individuals, were exchange students. In contrast, the majority of Chinese students, specifically 2,003 out of 2,302, pursued degree programmes rather than participating in exchange programmes. Additionally, 167 students arrived from Taiwan in the same academic year (Universitetskanslersämbetet, 2021).

The lack of trust or mutual understanding between the interviewee and her Chinese peers could be the underlying cause of this uncomfortable situation. For some participants, the awkwardness between Taiwanese and Chinese people could be attributed to the political hostility emanating from the PRC, which in turn created a noticeable distance between Taiwanese and Chinese students at universities. Despite the fact that there are significantly more Chinese students than Taiwanese students at her university, the interviewee mentioned that she had more Taiwanese friends than Chinese friends. Another respondent who works at an IT company in Stockholm shared a similar experience.

> "It kind of feels like the Chinese people are colleagues who I meet at work, but the Taiwanese people are the friends who I hung out with after work."

This trend seems to be common among many respondents, unless the Taiwanese community in their city of residence is very small. One interviewee from Växjö, a town located in southern Sweden, revealed that she did not know anyone else from Taiwan and was compelled to form friendships with Chinese individuals.

Most respondents have expressed their personal differences and preferences when it comes to discussing topics with Chinese people. However, the majority of them have indicated that they dread discussing politics with Chinese individuals. This hesitation is not limited to political matters concerning cross-Strait relations, but it appears that any political topic makes Taiwanese people reluctant to engage in conversation.

One respondent reported that although she doesn't like to discuss politics with Chinese people, she also said she does not entirely reject the idea. Whether or not to talk about politics depends on the other person's attitude. She said she would first use some neutral words to probe the other person before deciding whether to continue with the political discussion based on their attitude.

Another participant also said they would refrain from bringing up politics with their Chinese peers. But itæs not entirely impossible to discuss politics with Chinese people.

"As I get older, I feel that I have become more aware of how I want to spend my time, and through experience, I have learned that discussing certain things is not helpful. Because neither I nor the other person can make any decisions, it's actually like a Swedish way of thinking - let's agree to disagree. You just know that both sides are different, and you should respect each other; there is no need to discuss it further. Unless the other person really wants to discuss it, I will tell them my true thoughts. But I would always ask them first, "You sure you want to hear my thoughts?" If they say yes, then I will say, "OK, let's talk about it."

Another interviewee said she hated talking about politics with Chinese people, no matter if they want to talk about current affairs or things that happened before.

"Of course, what I dislike the most is talking about politics. I don't like discussing either current or historical politics. This is because everyone has their own political stance, even if they have lived here [in Sweden] for some time."

Yet another respondent also shared a similar view.

"I tend to avoid discussing any topics related to politics. If I still want to talk to this person [in the future], I will try to stay away from those topics."

She shared an episode when her Chinese classmate from her SFI class touched on politics in class.

"We attended the same Swedish language class. Once, my Chinese classmate said something like, "we are all the same," I still remember quickly trying to downplay that conversation. I don't want to touch upon that subject at all. I respect their opinions, but I also don't want them to change mine. So I tried to redirect the conversation to something else."

Another interviewee stated that she would reject any opportunity to engage in political conversations with PRC-Chinese, even if they have friendly views towards Taiwan.

> "I actively avoid the topic. Even if the other person tells me that they think Taiwan is more free [than China], as soon as they start talking about something like that, I don't want to continue the conversation. Regardless of anything, I just avoid the topic of politics. As long as you know it and I know it, and we don't have to talk about it with each other anymore."

Yet another person shared the reluctance to talk about politics with their Chinese acquaintances. They think engaging in meaningful discussions with PRC-Chinese people is fundamentally difficult.

> "I feel that for them, it may be difficult to answer no matter what they think in their hearts. Sometimes I think their true thoughts are the same as ours, but they may be afraid of being reported, eavesdropped on, falsely accused, or something similar. After all, these people have families in China. So I think that keeping a distance is actually good for both of us. It is also for their own good. Even if they have any thoughts, they cannot change anything. This is a fact that everyone knows, and it seems that there is not much meaning to pursue it further. For me, it may feel a bit powerless."

Overall, the majority of Taiwanese participants exhibit reluctance when it comes to engaging in political conversations with individuals from Mainland China, irrespective of the subject matter. Certain interviewees have expressed their inclination to completely avoid political discussions, while others may consider participating in such dialogues depending on the attitude of the other party involved. Nevertheless, a subset of interviewees holds the belief that engaging in political discourse with Mainland Chinese individuals may not yield fruitful or meaningful outcomes due to disparities in political ideologies and the challenging circumstances faced by individuals from Mainland China.

Consequently, some individuals prefer to maintain a certain level of distance from such discussions, even if they possess amicable sentiments towards one another.

Regarding the topics that people like to chat about with Chinese people, interviewees of different age groups expressed different preferences. For all interviewees, the most common topics of conversation are general greetings, current events (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) and other common topics. Many interviewees mentioned that they like discussing food-related habits, especially in Sweden, where authentic Asian food is scarce. One respondent said,

> "My favourite topic to talk about is food. I think it's the most neutral topic. And Asians like to eat, so I think food is a good topic. It is the easiest to talk about."

Some younger interviewees also like to compare their lives before coming to Sweden with their Chinese peers: talking about previous school life, examination systems, and other topics. Older interviewees like to talk about their children's education and real estate property-related issues. In general, daily life is a topic everyone enjoys talking about, and the topics that the respondents like to chat with their Chinese friends about differ slightly depending on their life stage.

Although people from China and Taiwan hang out with each other, it seems that the contact is limited or kept relatively superficial. The superficiality in the interpersonal relationships observed in this study can be attributed to various factors. Firstly, as discussed in 5.3, the deterioration of cross-strait relations and the presence of military threats from China have instilled negative perceptions among Taiwanese people towards the Chinese, which often include feelings of intimidation and aggressiveness. Moreover, in comparison to establishing connections with individuals from other countries, Taiwanese individuals tend to exercise greater caution and exert more effort in observing and testing whether each other is friendly or shares similar political views. Many respondents conveyed that it is more challenging to develop meaningful relationships with Chinese individuals who exhibit ideological opposition towards Taiwan.

Additionally, the lack of interactional experience or mutual understanding between Taiwanese and Chinese individuals may also contribute to Taiwanese individuals who have just moved to Sweden not knowing how to interact with Chinese individuals (and vise versa), leading to a choice to maintain a safe distance from each other. These factors may result in interactions between Taiwanese and Chinese individuals being limited to neighbourhood or professional settings, with engaging in discussions on sensitive political matters proving to be a challenging endeavour.

5.5 Naming China

> "Taiwanese identities are constituted and reconstituted in the shifting and switching of names for China; in the application of these names to alternative domains of Taiwanese life; in the waning and waxing of names following tides of history and polity; and in the increasingly contested meaning of names."
>
> − *Language, Politics and Identity in Taiwan: Naming China* (Chang and Holt, 2015)

The Chinese language plays a crucial role in facilitating communication between the people of Taiwan and China. Both sides communicate in Mandarin Chinese, although they possess distinct accents that enable people from two sides to differentiate each other. During interviews, the researcher observed that Taiwanese individuals have developed various semantic strategies when engaging in conversations with PRC-Chinese.

Of particular interest is the wide array of terms that Taiwanese people employ when referring to China. In their book *Naming China* (2015), Chang and Holt analyse five terms for China that have been used by ROC presidents in official speeches spanning six decades. While all those terms signify China, each one reflects a unique historical context, conveys associated expressions, and allows for the negotiation of ideological positioning. Chang and Holt (2015) show how the use of names for China can become politically charged and stir up controversy.[11]

---

[11] The five terms examined in Chang and Holt (2015) are *gongfei* 共匪 (communist bandits), *zhonggong* 中共 (Chinese communists), *dalu* 大陸 (the mainland), *dui'an* 對岸 (the opposite shore) and *zhongguo* 中國 (China).

On a personal level, Taiwanese individuals also developed a wide range of terms and strategies when conversing with PRC-Chinese. They carefully choose their words, and the subtle nuances in their word choices imply different individuals' self-identifications. Through interviews with respondents, five commonly used terms in Taiwan to denote China are identified: *zhongguo*, *dalu*, *neidi*, *zuguo* and *nimen nabian*. Each of these terms encompasses a distinct set of meanings, and they can be used interchangeably to refer to China.

5.5.1 *Zhongguo* 中國

Chang and Holt (2015: 159) calls *zhongguo* a muddy and polysemous concept. The Chinese call their country *zhongguo* in their language, which in English translation, simply translates to "China." To break down the term, *zhongguo* comprises two characters *zhong* 中 (middle, centre) and *guo* 國 (nation), hence literally means "Middle Kingdom" or "Central Country."

Although *zhongguo* is a basic and widespread term, it is paradoxically regarded as one of the most contentious names a Taiwanese person can use to denote China. The connectivity and tension between China and Taiwan provides the context against which the term derives its meanings. To put it simply, the more "Taiwan" wants to be positioned independently from China,the more "China" is assigned to China. Calling China by its name *zhongguo* constitutes a convenient assertion of Taiwanese identity (ibid.: 192). The shifting perspectives on Taiwanese identity is in line with the literature review referenced earlier. Over the past few decades, there has been a consistent rise in individuals who solely identify as Taiwanese, while the number of those identifying as both Taiwanese and Chinese, as well as Chinese only, has declined.

The majority of Taiwanese interviewees report that they are more inclined to avoid using *zhongguo* when talking to PRC-Chinese. Although they are aware that the term itself just means China and is neutral in itself, Taiwanese respondents in general still reported avoiding *zhongguo* as the term implies a distinction that *zhongguo* and *taiwan* are two separate political entities. In other words, the term *zhongguo* from a Taiwanese mouth can

sound alienating to a Chinese ear. *Zhonguo* is also politicised in a way that repeating the term might stir up controversy between two peoples. According to a respondent,

> "I don't use *zhongguo* [in front of Chinese people] because I think that using this term will make the distinction between Taiwan and China too obvious. Sometimes, when I mention the word *zhongguo*, it will actually cause a debate with the other person. I feel that the word *zhongguo* will cause some degree of backlash from them."

Only one respondent informed me of their regular usage of *zhongguo*. They also reported experiences of conflict between them and Chinese people. Another respondent who used to say *zhongguo* exclusively shared an anecdote. When asked about how she would talk about China to the Chinese people here, she replied that,

> "I used to say *zhongguo* all the time because that's how everyone calls it in Taiwan. Nowadays, I always use *dalu*. In fact, when I first came to Sweden, I used *zhongguo*. I thought it was fine, right? My Chinese friend is a girl that studies science, so I expected her not to react to this. One day I asked, "What's it like in *zhongguo*?" She frowned and said, "What do you mean *zhongguo*?" I think I better try harder to not provoke them. I later referred to China as *dalu* and had no problem since."

5.5.2 *Dalu* 大陸

The seemingly neural geographic name, *dalu,* is a term that literally means "mainland" or "continent" in English. In the Chinese context, it refers to the part of China that is geographically located on the Asian continent. Seemingly devoid of ideology, the word *dalu* often refers to China, designating the land (since it is *the* Mainland), which does not include Hong Kong, Macau or Taiwan.

The widespread practice of using "Mainland" to designate China started in the ROC's official discourse, but continues and indeed has even become more prominent today.

People have become so accustomed to the terms' appearance that the term continues to play a key role in Taiwan's identity projects (Chang and Holt, 2015: 119).

Taiwanese respondents generally agreed that *dalu* is an acceptable term when they talk to Mainland Chinese individuals, as it implies a more geographic undertone in its meaning. Calling China *dalu* is a relatively safe way of referring to Mainland China without referring to each other as "nation" or other terms that might hint at national identity. To the respondents, using the word *dalu* does not risk antagonising folks from the Mainland as much as using the word *zhongguo* might, and is therefore considered as a practical way to avoid confrontation.

Multiple respondents reported that while they would call China *dalu* in front of PRC friends, *zhongguo* is the preferred word when they speak to her fellow Taiwanese friends.

> "When I mention their country, I will call it *dalu* and observe their reactions first. I will not say *zhongguo* in front of them, because I don't know how their reactions will be. I myself would never use *dalu* with my Taiwanese friends though."

The difference in word choices (using *dalu* in front of Mainland Chinese but *zhongguo* with Taiwanese) showcases the way identity performance and negotiation is done by Taiwanese individuals. If using *zhongguo* can be seen as fully manifesting one's Taiwanese identity, *dalu* serves as a practical alternative to downplay that identity in the presence of Chinese individuals. Another respondent reported something similar when they just arrived in Sweden and had the chance to first interact with Chinese people.

> "I think that I used *dalu* to some extent out of consideration for the other person. However, *dalu* was already the very bottom line for me, and I couldn't use any other terms."

To numerous respondents, saying *dalu* is a more friendly way to denote China than *zhongguo*. However, as the term has historically been applied in Taiwan's official discourse throughout the KMT regimes, a refusal to call China *dalu* endures in some public discourse. The reluctance can be found particularly by the DPP and its supporters,

as Chang and Holt argue (2015: 121). Similar tendency to avoid using *dalu* can be found in conversations between Taiwanese individuals where there are no Mainland Chinese present. As there is no Mainland Chinese involved in the conversation, Taiwanese people do not need to worry about hurting anyone's feelings. In contrast, the utilisation of the term *dalu* among Taiwanese individuals is often avoided due to its potential political connotation towards the KMT, as previously elucidated.

A respondent who used to live in China shared her strategy for word choices. Although she sometimes calls China *zhongguo* in front of Chinese people, she reported that she has never been questioned about it. In order to achieve a harmonious balance between her self-identity and performance, she adopted a blend of using both *dalu* and *zhongguo* in her approach.

> "I would mix *zhongguo* with *dalu* in my speech. I don't stop myself from saying *zhongguo* just because they might think I'm wrong or offending them, but they know I mean the same thing. I didn't adjust it deliberately. I just mixed the two words and they knew what I meant."

5.5.3 *Neidi* 內地

In Chinese, *neidi* literally means "inner land" or "inland", and is generally used to refer to Mainland China. As *nei* means *inner*, the word produces a distinction of Mainland China from territories such as Hong Kong and Macau which are located outside the mainland. In the political and legal language of the PRC, *neidi* refers to all the territory claimed by the PRC, with an exclusion of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. In some cases, the Chinese government uses *neidi* in reference to the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau, while the equivalent term used for Taiwan is *dalu*.[12]

---

[12] *Taiwan jumin laiwang* **dalu** *tongxingzheng* 台灣居民來往大陸通行證 (Mainland Travel Permit for Taiwan Residents) is a document issued by the PRC for the residents of Taiwan to facilitate their travel to the Mainland. It allows Taiwanese residents to enter and exit Mainland China for various purposes, such as tourism, business, or visiting relatives. The equivalent document for Hong Kong and Macau residents is called *gangao jumin laiwang* **neidi** *tongxingzheng* 港澳居民來往內地通行證 (Mainland Travel Permit for

All respondents under 40 told me that they would not use the word *neidi* in their speech, while some older respondents consider it an acceptable term. To younger respondents, calling Mainland China an "inner land" can give the implication that Taiwan is the "outer land" of the same country. As one participant says,

> "I don't know exactly why, but calling China *neidi* feels like a betrayal to my Taiwanese identity. Perhaps it's because this word is politicised. In Taiwan, only actors or singers who want to expand their careers in China and enter the Chinese market would refer to China as *neidi*. This is because they want to make *renminbi* and are afraid of upsetting the Chinese consumers."

The respondent is seemingly unaware of the original context of *neidi*. Unlike *zhongguo* or *dalu, neidi* simply is a term that contradicts their self-understanding, which clarifies why the term is not well-liked among the respondents.

5.5.4 *Zuguo* 祖國

In the Chinese language, *zu* 祖 means "ancestor" and *guo* 國 means "country". Combining the two characters, *zuguo* becomes a term that means "ancestral land" or "motherland" in English. The concept of *zuguo* is deeply ingrained and valued in Chinese culture, and it is often associated with a sense of belonging to one's country.

No respondent claimed that they frequently use the term *zuguo* to refer to China in conversation with Chinese people. However, this is not due to consideration for the feelings of the Chinese interlocutors. On the contrary, they choose not to say *zuguo* because they believe that this word would compromise their identification for Taiwan. While other respondents simply told me they wouldn't use the term *zuguo*, one respondent elaborated her opinion towards it. According to her,

---

Hong Kong and Macao Residents). While both *dalu* and *neidi* refer to the Chinese Mainland, Chinese authorities make a distinction by picking the word *neidi* for Hong Kong and Macau and *dalu* for Taiwan.

"I wouldn't use *zuguo* because Chinese people often use the phrase *huidao zuguo de huaibao* 回到祖國的懷抱 (return to the embrace of the Motherland). I feel that the word *zuguo* has a connotation that is too strong for me. It gives me the feeling that they want us to go back there. We also generally don't use this word in Taiwan."

Despite acknowledging their ancestral ties to Mainland China and valuing traditional Chinese culture, Taiwanese individuals have developed a negative perception towards the term *zuguo* due to its politicisation in the Chinese public discourse as shown in the well-known phrase *huidao zuguo de huaibao* in the Taiwanese public. As a result, they reject using either *zuguo* or *neidi* to refer to China. In this sense, *dalu* or *zhongguo* remain the more common options of words for the purpose.

5.5.5 *Nimen nabian* 你們那邊

As shown in this chapter, Taiwanese people have developed many terms to denote China; however, occasionally, a more general term can suffice without the potential of causing offence. During the interviews, some respondents reported the use of *nimen nabian* in their conversation with Chinese peers. In the Chinese language, *nimen nabian* means "your side", and unlike other politically charged terms, *nimen nabian* remains a neutral term commonly used in everyday speech. As it does not imply any ideological inclination to either China or Taiwan, the risk of antagonising each other is low.

Perhaps due to the term *nimen nabian* being too general in its literal meanings, the term did not come up in the interviews with the majority of respondents. Some respondents confirm that *nimen nabian* is a good euphemism, enabling individuals to engage in tactful communication without delving into political matters.

"If I wanted to say something more diplomatic, I might say *nimen nabian*. For example, *nimen nabian yiqing zenmoyang?* 你們那邊疫情怎麼樣? (How's the COVID-19 situation over there?) It is actually a very convenient way of saying things."

Despite differences in writing systems, people across the Taiwan Strait share Mandarin as a lingua franca for communication. Taiwanese individuals have adopted creative approaches in their interactions with Mainland Chinese people to express their identity and negotiate their position. The selection of words used to refer to China has been varied, indicating the diversity of their linguistic strategies. These individuals have devised a diverse set of terms, such as *zhongguo*, *dalu*, *neidi*, *zuguo* and *nimen nabian*, to refer to China when communicating with PRC-Chinese.

Due to its political sensitivity and potential to cause offence, Taiwanese individuals tend to refrain from using the term *zhongguo* when conversing with Mainland Chinese, despite its frequent use among Taiwanese people. Conversely, *dalu* is often considered a safer alternative due to its more geographical connotation. The younger generation of Taiwanese people tend to avoid using *neidi* as it may suggest that Taiwan is the "outer land" of China. Similarly, *zuguo* is also avoided by Taiwanese individuals for similar reasons. Finally, *nimen nabian* is a useful term that can be easily employed in everyday speech without the risk of offending either side.

Taiwanese identities are constituted and reconstituted in the shifting and switching of names for China. As this chapter has examined, most Taiwanese individuals have a tendency to steer clear of language that could potentially offend their Chinese counterparts, opting instead for terms that are considered to be more "safe" and "neutral". For many, the ideal terminology is one that does not take a stance on whether Taiwan is a part of China or not. The process of negotiating one's identity indicates that individuals are highly likely to avoid language that could potentially reveal their political beliefs. While younger and older generations of Taiwanese immigrants may have varying preferences when it comes to word choice, the overarching goal is to remain apolitical and avoid any contentious issues.

6. Conclusion

This thesis has examined how Taiwanese individuals navigate their identity while residing in Sweden and engaging with the local Chinese community. Through a detailed analysis of interview data gathered from in-depth interviews with ten Taiwanese individuals with long-term residency in Sweden, this study contributes to our understanding of the complexities surrounding national identity for the people of Taiwan, particularly within the context of living abroad. This concluding chapter will first lay out the major findings of this study, followed by a reflection on possible future research directions.

The thesis found that Taiwanese individuals' exposure to Sweden's diverse, multi-ethnic society triggers a reevaluation of the conventional links between Han Chinese ethnicity and Taiwanese nationhood. Adopting the analytical framework of Brubaker and Cooper (2020) was particularly useful in understanding how the experience of migration serves as a catalyst for these individuals to critically examine and redefine their identity. The thesis argues that everyday encounters in Swedish society play a pivotal role in reinforcing Taiwanese identity, with the minority experience exerting a significant influence on the formation of identity.

In descriptive terms, the findings indicate that interactions between Taiwanese and Chinese individuals gain prominence following their relocation to abroad, which aligns with the findings in relevant studies (Lin, Pang and Liao 2020; Ho and Li, 2022). Political discussions are approached cautiously, showcasing an awareness of the sensitivity surrounding cross-Strait relations. This cautious approach serves as a strategic measure to prevent conflict, underscoring the delicate nature of engaging in political discourse. Anxiety about potential conflicts in the Taiwan Strait, coupled with negative perceptions of China's aggression, also contributes to a cautious stance among Taiwanese immigrants.

Consequently, interpersonal relationships between Taiwanese and Chinese individuals often remain on a superficial level, with the study recognising the impact of negative perceptions from cross-Strait relations, contributing to a sense of caution and distance on interpersonal level. The research sheds light on the challenges inherent in establishing

49

meaningful connections, particularly when ideological differences concerning Taiwan exist.

The study also sheds light on a heightened desire for Taiwan's independence among respondents. This aspiration is not solely fueled by negative interactions with Chinese individuals but rather by a heightened empathy for Taiwan's complex political position on the global stage as well as a nuanced recognition of the stark cultural differences Taiwanese individuals feel when they engage with Chinese individuals.

Lastly, the study outlined the strategies that Taiwanese individuals employ when they engage in conversations with Mainland Chinese people. The study provided an analysis of the terminology Taiwanese people adopt when referring to China and examined how these semantic choices reflect the performance and negotiation of Taiwanese identities.

The investigation into Taiwanese identity and the dynamics of cross-Strait relations continues to develop as a subject of study. This research contributes as a fragment of the larger puzzle in understanding the ever-changing Taiwanese identity, while also providing a foundation for future investigations into the multifaceted factors that shape the identity of Taiwanese individuals. Future research can also seek to enhance our understanding of identity and self-identification through adopting other perspectives or frameworks, as it can help broaden our knowledge of how Chinese and Taiwanese citizens perceive their own identities in foreign contexts, exploring how this sense of identification and the associated relationships evolve when individuals move away from their home countries.

Throughout the course of this study, it became apparent to me that it would be beneficial to incorporate Chinese individuals in order to examine how their experiences abroad and interactions with Taiwanese counterparts may influence their perception of Taiwan. Given the limited research conducted on the Chinese perspective, it is imperative for future studies to investigate whether the attitudes of Chinese people towards Taiwan undergo any transformations before and after establishing connections with Taiwanese individuals. An intriguing aspect to explore, for instance, would be whether there is a change in their support for statements such as "Taiwan is an inseparable part of China" after becoming acquainted with Taiwanese individuals.

Lastly, the design of this study can also be applied out of the China-Taiwan context. At the outset of this investigation, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine had been ongoing for a year, and upon conclusion of the research, the dispute remained unresolved. In a similar vein to the Chinese and Taiwanese communities residing in Sweden, Russians and Ukrainians also exist as minority groups within Swedish society, and both groups share Russian as a common language. The dynamics of interaction between Ukrainians and Russians in Sweden is an intriguing question. While the current study does not explore the intricacies of Ukrainian-Russian relations, it is worth examining whether interactions between Ukrainians and Russians in Sweden could influence the perceptions of Russians towards Ukraine from a scholarly perspective.

References

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Campbell, C. (2023). China's Response to Taiwan's President Meeting with Kevin McCarthy Hints at Long Game. *Time,* 6 April. [online] Available at: https://time.com/6269158/tsai-ingwen-kevin-mccarthy-meeting-analysis/.

Campbell, J. L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J., and Pedersen, O.K. (2013). Coding In-depth, Semi-structured Interviews: Problems of Unitization and Intercoder Reliability and Agreement. *Sociological Methods and Research*, *42* (3), pp. 294-320. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124113500475

Chang, H.-C., and Holt, R. (2015). *Language, politics and identity in Taiwan : naming China*. London ; New York: Routledge.

Chen, R.-L. (2013). Taiwan's identity in formation: in reaction to a democratizing Taiwan and a rising China, *Asian Ethnicity*, *14*:2, pp. 229-250, Available at: DOI:10.1080/14631369.2012.722446

Clark, T., Foster, L., Sloan, L., and Bryman, A. (2021). *Bryman's social research methods*, Sixth edition. ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Cole, J.M. (2020). *Cross-strait relations since 2016 : the end of the illusion.* Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group (Routledge research on Taiwan).

Davidson, H. (2023). 'Not about the highest bidder': the countries defying China to stick with Taiwan. *The Guardian*. 3 Apr. [online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/04/not-about-the-highest-bidder-the-countries-defying-china-to-stick-with-taiwan.

Dittmer, L. (2004). Taiwan and the Issue of National Identity. *Asian Survey 44*(4): pp. 475-483. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.4.475

Dreyer, J.T., Gold, T.B., and Rigger, S. (2003). The Evolution of a Taiwanese National Identity. Asia Program Special Report, No. 114. *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.* [online] Available at: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/asia_rpt114.pdf

Election Study Center, National Chengchi University. (2023). 'Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese identity of Taiwanese', last modified 12 July 2023. [online] Available at: https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc?fid=7804.

Elgenius, G., and Rydgren, J. (2018). Frames of nostalgia and belonging: the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in Sweden. *European Societies, 21*(4), pp.583–602. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2018.1494297.

Gartner, S.S., Huang, C-H., Li. Y., and James, P. (2021). *Identity in the Shadow of a Giant: How the Rise of China is Changing Taiwan*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Hall, B. (2003). Modernization and the Social Construction of National Identity: The Case of Taiwanese Identity. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, *47*, pp.135–169. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/41035585.

Harrison, M. (2006). *Legitimacy, Meaning and Knowledge in the Making of Taiwanese Identity.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230601697

Hioe, B. (2022). Pelosi's Taiwan Visit: The Substance and the Aftermath. *The Diplomat,* 4 August. [online] Available at: https://thediplomat.com/2022/08/pelosis-taiwan-visit-the-substance-and-the-aftermath/.

Ho, M.-S., and Li, Y.-T. (2022). 'I became a Taiwanese after I left *Taiwan*': identity shift among young immigrants in the United States. *Identities*, *30*(2), pp.1–20. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289x.2022.2109859

Huang, L-L., Liu, J.H., and Chang, M. (2004). 'The double identity' of Taiwanese Chinese: A dilemma of politics and culture rooted in history. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *7*: pp 149-168. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-839x.2004.00141.x

Jing, B-J., and Lodén, T. (2023). Assessing the Development of Taiwanese Identity. *Institute for Security and Development Policy*. [online] Available at: https://isdp.eu/publication/assessing-the-development-of-taiwanese-identity/

Kjellgren, B. (2001). Sveriges kineser. Archived on 25 October, 2017. Retrived from the Wayback Machine. *Invandrarrapport nr. 4*. Available at: https://web.archive.org/web/20171025195914/https://www.immi.se/ir/ir2001/kineser.htm

Li, Y. (2020). 'I was discriminated against because I was seen as PRC‑Chinese': The negotiation between ethnicity and nationalism among Taiwanese migrants in Australia. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *71*(5), pp.1016–1030. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12786.

Lin, H.M., Pang, C.L., and Liao, D.C. (2020). Work, Life, and Identity Negotiation in a Foreign Land: A Study of Taiwanese Working Holiday Makers in Belgium. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *12*(2-3). Available at: https://doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v12.i2-3.6946.

Lin, S. S. (2016). *Taiwan's China Dilemma: Contested Identities and Multiple Interests in Taiwan's Cross-Strait Economic Policy*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lynch, D. C. (2004). Taiwan's Self-Conscious Nation-Building Project. *Asian Survey 44*(4): pp. 513-533. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.4.513

Overseas Community Affairs Council, ROC. (2022). Overseas Taiwanese Compatriots Population (*Haiwai Taiwan Qiaomin Renshu*). [online] Available at: https://www.ocac.gov.tw/OCAC/File/Attach/492837/File_314104.pdf [Accessed 13 Nov. 2023].

Pierce, R. (2008). *Research Methods in Politics*. London: Sage.

Ponce, A.F., and Wang, C.-H. (2021). The Hong Kong crisis and its effect on the 2020 presidential election in Taiwan. *Political Science*, *73*(3), pp.234–249. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/00323187.2022.2042337.

Rigger, S. (1999). Social Science and National Identity: A Critique. *Pacific Affairs 72*(4): pp. 537-552.

Schubert, G. (2004). Taiwan's Political Parties and National Identity: The Rise of an Overarching Consensus. *Asian Survey 44*(4): pp. 534-554. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.4.534.

Statistikmyndigheten. (2022). Sveriges befolkning efter födelseland/-region, medborgarskap och bakgrund, 31 december 2022. [online] Available at: https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansat tning/befolkningsstatistik/pong/tabell-och-diagram/utrikes-fodda--medborgarskap-och-utla ndsksvensk-bakgrund/sveriges-befolkning-efter-fodelseland-region-medborgarskap-och-ba kgrund-31-december-2022/ [Accessed 13 Nov. 2023].

Sun, T.-M. (2013). Taiwanese Identity in a Global Context: Young Taiwanese Sojourners in Sweden. *lup.lub.lu.se.* [online] Available at: http://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/record/4004369.

The Economist. (2020). *Why commercial ties between Taiwan and China are beginning to fray*. [online] Available at: https://www.economist.com/business/2020/11/19/why-commercial-ties-between-taiwan-an d-china-are-beginning-to-fray.

Tsai, C.-Y. (2007). *National Identity, Ethnic Identity, and Party Identity in Taiwan*. Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland.

Universitetskanslersämbetet. (2022). Antal inresande studenter 2021/22. [online] Available at: https://www.uka.se/vara-resultat/statistik/hogskolan-i-siffror/statistik?statq=https://statistik -api.uka.se/api/totals/60 [Accessed 31 Oct. 2023].

Wachman, A.M. (1994). *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization: National Identity and Democratization (1st ed.)*. Routledge. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315286976

Wang, C. (2023). Does Cross-Regime Contact Change the Evaluation of Democracy? Evidence From Taiwanese Student Delegations Visiting Mainland China, *Political Studies Review, 21*(4), pp. 761–782. Available at: doi:10.1177/14789299221119909.

Wang, C.-C. (2019). Social Contact and Taiwanese Political Identity Change in Taiwanese Student Delegations Visiting Mainland China. *Asian Survey*, *59*(5), pp. 937–958. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/26848410

Wang, H.-L. (2004). Insider? Outsider? The Identity of Taiwanese in Shanghai. *lup.lub.lu.se*. [online] Available at: http://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/record/1327537.

Wang, L., Wong, Y. J., Ko, S.-J. S., Deng, K., and Chung, Y. B. (2020). "I am very proud to be Taiwanese": Taiwanese internationals' experience of race, ethnicity, and nationality in the United States. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 11*(4), pp. 199–210. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/aap0000179

Wang, T.-Y., and Liu, I.C. (2004). Contending Identities in Taiwan: Implications for Cross-Strait Relations. *Asian Survey* 44(4): pp.568-590. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2004.44.4.568

Wang, T. Y., Cheng, S., and Chang, S. (2017). Taiwan Citizens' Views of China: What Are the Effects of Cross-Strait Contacts? *Journal of East Asian Studies*, *17*(2), pp. 233–243. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/26336031

Wu, Z. (1993). *Yaxiya de guer. [Orphan of Asia]*. Taipei: Yuanjing.

Zhong, Y. (2016). Explaining National Identity Shift in Taiwan. *Journal of Contemporary China*, *25*(99), pp.336–352. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1104866.

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

The purpose of the project is to study the way in which Taiwanese people negotiate identity and construct networks, using their identities as Taiwanese and/or Chinese to examine how they interact with PRC-Chinese. All answers will remain confidential, and participants' identities will be disguised in any publications of the project's findings.

Forewords

First, about research ethics and cautions. I will never use your name or any personal information in my thesis. Your response will be completely anonymised with other interviews. I will ask for your consent again after the interview and can provide you a transcript of the interview later. I might use a quote from what you said, but it will be kept unidentifiable to the readers. You do not have to answer every question if you don't feel like it.

Interview Questions

  I.   Basic Information

        Name, Gender, Age, Job, Education, Current City, Original City

  II.   Taiwan-related questions

1. When did you come to Sweden? How did you move here?
2. How would you identify yourself?
3. What is it to be Taiwanese? Who is Taiwanese?
4. How would you describe the Taiwanese community in Sweden?
5. How close are you to the Taiwanese community here?
6. Do you think being part of the Taiwanese community helped you settle down in your adopted society?
7. Would you agree that your Taiwanese identity has strengthened after moving to Sweden? If so, why?
8. Would you agree that your Chinese identity has strengthened after moving to Sweden? Why?

9. Being a Taiwanese person residing in Sweden, do you think you are more connected to China?

10. How would you introduce yourself in front of people you just met for the first time? Where would you say you are from?

11. If someone asks you, "are you Chinese?" What would be your reply? Why?

12. What would be your reactions when a Chinese person refers to you as Chinese?

III. China-related questions

1. What does China mean to you?

2. What adjectives would you use to describe China?

3. Do you agree that you are 'politically Taiwanese' but 'culturally Chinese'?

4. Do you have contact with Chinese people in Sweden?

5. Do you have a good Chinese friend? Can you tell me about your relationship with them?

6. Did you know any Chinese people when you were in Taiwan? Who were they?

7. Did you meet Chinese people there? Tell me about your relationship with them.

8. Do you know Chinese people here in Sweden?

9. Prior to coming to Sweden, did you have contact with Chinese people?

10. How do you meet people from the PRC? Is it from school, work, or?

11. What is your impression of Chinese people here in Sweden?

12. What do you talk about when you talk to them?

13. What do you **not** talk about when you talk to them?

14. Are there subjects or topics you would avoid sharing with them? If so, what are these?

15. Why do you decide not to talk about it?

16. How do you refer to China in front of Chinese people? What words do you use?

17. What are your thoughts about these words? Do you use them? Why or why not?

   a. 中國 (Zhōngguó)

   b. 大陸 (Dàlù)

   c. 內地 (nèidì)

   d. 祖國 (Zǔguó)

   e. 你們那邊 (nǐmen nàbiān)

IV. Others

  1. Are there any other questions I should have asked?

  2. Is there anyone else I should talk to?

Appendix 2: Glossary of Acronyms and Chinese Terms

Acronyms

ROC	Republic of China	中華民國	*zhonghuaminguo*. Taiwan
PRC	People's Republic of China	中華人民共和國	*zhonghuarenmingongheguo*. China, Mainland China
KMT	Kuomintang	國民黨	Chinese Nationalist Party, a political party founded in 1919, which took over Taiwan following the 1949 migration from the Mainland and remained in power until 2000.
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party	民主進步黨	Democratic Progressive Party, a political party in Taiwan. Incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen (2016-2024) is the leader of the party.
NCCU	National Chengchi University	國立政治大學	A national university in Taipei, Taiwan
CCP	Chinese Communist Party	中國共產黨	The sole ruling party of the People's Republic of China
ISDP	Institute for Security and Development Policy		A foreign policy think tank based in Stockholm, Sweden

Chinese Terms

yuanzhumin	原住民	Taiwanese aborigines, the indigenous people of Taiwan
benshengren	本省人	"This province people", the descendants of the original Chinese colonists of Taiwan
waishengren	外省人	"Outside province people," Chinese people who emigrated to Taiwan from the Mainland in 1949, and their descendants
zhongguo	中國	China, central kingdom
zhonghua minzu	中華民族	Members of the Chinese ethnic group. *Minzu* means ethnicity or race
zhongguoren	中國人	People of the Chinese state. *Ren* means people
han	漢	The Chinese ethnicity
taishang	台商	Taiwanese entrepreneurs in China
huaren	華人	People of Chinese ethnicity
dalu	大陸	Mainland, continent
neidi	內地	Inner land, inland
zuguo	祖國	Ancestral land, mother land
nimen nabian	你們那邊	Your side