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Identity: In Searching the Meaning of Chineseness in Greater China

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Chineseness in Greater China**

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Identity: In Searching the Meaning of Chineseness in Greater China

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ABSTRACT

Among the people in Greater China (People's Republic of China [PRC], Taiwan and Hong Kong), needless to say, economic incentive, political relations and business relations all conjure up an ethos of relations, if not close bonds, among Hong Kong, Taiwan and the PRC. The rise of China matters to everyone who lives in Greater China. Hong Kong is already part of China. Taiwan, according to the PRC, cannot be independent without running the risk of a war. Yet, my question is that are those Chinese the same in Greater China? Do they have different identities? If living with China is inevitable, do they need to search for a new identity to face the challenges?¹

Keywords: Chineseness, Greater China, identity, national boundaries, Hong Kong, Taiwan

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Introduction

Among the people in Greater China (People's Republic of China [PRC], Taiwan and Hong Kong), needless to say, economic incentive, political relations and business relations all conjure up an ethos of relations, if not close bonds, among Hong Kong, Taiwan and the PRC. The rise of China matters to everyone who lives in Greater China. Hong Kong is already part of China. Taiwan, according to the PRC, cannot be independent without running the risk of a war. Yet, my question is that are those Chinese the same in Greater China? Do they have different identities? If living with China is inevitable, do they need to search for a new identity to face the challenges?

To define identity, one usually will come across national identity and social identity. For national identity, Lowell Dittmer and Samuel Kim argued that "... a nation's identity is normally circumscribed by its boundaries, whose dimensions tend to coincide with such objective criteria as common language, ethnic or racial origin, and political culture..."¹ Henri Tajfel, however, defined social identity as "... *part* [italic in original] of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significant attached to that membership."² More recently, Callahan defined the notion of the identity of Greater China as "contingent" which "allows us to trace out the discursive economies of self/Other relations in Chinese"³

The first one emphasizes the boundary which particularly refers to the political boundaries between nation states. The second definition refers more toward the self-concept of one's membership in a group. The third definition takes us back to the ascribed status that enjoyed by the Chinese in Greater China to use culture and civilization as their collective denominator of their Chineseness. These definitions serve some important roles to conceptualize

our understanding of Greater China's identity. Yet, they are not entirely satisfactory to capture the construction process of the identity of Greater China. For one thing, the political boundary between the PRC and Hong Kong had been redefined after the changeover in 1997 when Hong Kong became part of China. Yet, the political boundary between the PRC and Taiwan is not yet defined by any formal agreement. Taiwan's only constraint is not to go for independence according to the PRC; otherwise reunification can be resorted through the use of force. Besides, the majority of the people in Greater China certainly subscribe to the very general concept of being Chinese. However, the ethnic and socio-economic or political recognition can be very different. If we believe what Benedict Anderson once contended that "Nations, however, have no clearly identifiable births, and their deaths, if they ever happen, are never natural. Because there is no Originator, the nation's biography cannot be written evangelically, 'down time,' through a long procreative chain of begettings,"⁴ we should be willing to accept that many things can therefore be written into the upbringing and the nurturing of the context of Greater China.

This paper argues that both Hong Kong and Taiwan are struggling one way or another to influence, but more often than not to be influenced by the rapprochement of China. It is intriguing to know how and in what ways the general public attribute their future economic, social and economic relations with China. It seems that the construction of identity within Greater China cannot be defined autonomously. It has to mingle with the politics and socio-economic interaction. The thinning and thickening of the degree of Chineseness can be very dynamic. As we have already covered the perspectives of integration and interdependence, we want to know more about the socio-cultural dimensions of the state of affairs of both the Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan. If economic "integrationists" represents one of their choices, I want to know if there are any alternative options to re-construct their relations with China? This paper will introduce the concept "liminal citizenship" to examine the initial process of socio-economic development of Hong Kong's returning to

China. Secondly, in Taiwan, this paper attempts to look at the identity formation through the social construction of the mass media, the so-called “new Taiwanese” (referring to Ma Ying-jeou especially), the development of language policy in Taiwan and the democratization process to explore the socio-political relation within Taiwan.

The central focus of this paper will be on Hong Kong and Taiwan. It does not mean that the identity development in China is un-important. In fact, there are some interactions between identity development within this Greater China region. One of the obvious areas is the idea toward the militarism of the Japanese. Nevertheless, I am arguing that there is a kind of central and peripheral relation that generates among these areas where China has always been considered as the center.⁵ Hong Kong has already been integrated. Taiwan has not been given any choice of independence; and it has once been considered as “renegade province.” It is therefore interesting to understand their evolution and development of their own identity along this encapsulation process.

Liminal Citizenship: Hong Kong Searching for New Identity ***Political Changes and Socio-economic Adaptability***

On the mid-night of June 30, 1997, I was employed by the American magazine *Newsweek* as an interpreter to reach to the border of Hong Kong, which was connected with Shenzhen (a neighbouring Chinese city), to interview those people who came out to celebrate the changeover and to welcome the incoming of the troops from China.⁶ Jubilation, flag waving and cheerfulness culminated with the down-pouring rain to form a unique picture of new political development of Hong Kong. In fact, most of the respondents said that they welcomed the retuning of Hong Kong to China; and it was very good to be governed once again by the Chinese.

However, political change involved many social and cultural factors. After jubilation, it followed by a life-long process of re-integration, which involved different levels of adjustment and struggle. The changeover of Hong Kong was unique in a sense that it was performed in a very peaceful way. Both British government and the PRC joined together in a celebration which was regarded as a historical moment. Not ver often in the historical de-colonization of the former colonies of greater Britain came close to such peaceful transferring of political sovereignty. Whilst de-colonization has been uttered, yet, it is not fair to equalize the changeover of Hong Kong to those former colonies. First, there was no civil war which destroyed millions of lives in those post-colonial independent movements. Second, Hong Kong was governed once again by the Chinese. It appeared to many people that it did not matter too much to those village people whether the troops moving to Hong Kong from China were from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or from the Kuomintang (KMT) as long as they were Chinese at the moment. Third, Hong Kong was very prosperous. It was miles away from the economic situations which depicted those former colonies in Southeast Asia, South Asia or Africa after WWII.

Nevertheless, the merger between Hong Kong and China does provide some soul searching questions to examine the social political development of Hong Kong after 1997. On March 10, 2005, Tung Chee Hwa, announced his resignation due to the reason of health problem.⁷ His resignation called an end of the first phase (eight years) of the implementation of “one country, two systems” after Hong Kong was returned back to China in 1997. In his 2005 Policy Speech, he finally admitted his weakness of governance. He said, “In retrospect, our mindset was inadequately prepared for the dual impacts of political change and economic downturn, nor did we have the necessary experience to respond appropriately.”⁸ This timely self criticism correctly pointed to the very essence of the challenge and problem of governance of Hong Kong under “One country, two systems” principle. However, in the case of Hong Kong, after the collapse of the housing market, the rise of unemployment, the

economic downturn, the SARs outbreak, the half million demonstration on the street on July 1, 2003 and the inability of electing their own chief executive; according to Yeung Au, Hong Kong people began to realise that they should rely on their own. More and more people become self-employed as a result.⁹ It is not because they are particularly entrepreneurial. The very basic reason is that the established bureaucratic system is changing. Those who are sceptical about their employer, who may launch redundant scheme anytime, just escape from their original positions. They enjoy this risky but flexible working style, especially for those who want to remain their own identity. Yet, this trend is also likely to generate a sense of disassociation from the society, resulting in a gradual decline of social capital.¹⁰

As far as I have covered, Hong Kong people try to adapt to the changes. Many economic viable ones have already been able to work or even invest in the regional coastal cities of China to maintain their economic well being. What about the non-viable ones? To mention one example, after the changeover, due to the collapse of the housing market, many people suffered from negative equity (greatly reducing the values of the housing prices). Some of them also suffered from being un-employed because of the down-sizing, etc. Suffering from both problems, many people committed suicide. There was also a contagious effect of choosing a similar method to end one's life. They generally picked up an outer island called Cheung Chau to rent a resort house. They locked themselves up in a sealed room which contained a bucket of burning charcoal. After a while, they suffered from the inhalation of too much carbon monoxide. Such way of dying was described as very popular at some point.

One may argue that this is only a trivial matter. Let's turn to look at another scene about the competition of taxi industry. Normally when you book a taxi, you have to pay extra. Yet, in Hong Kong, when you book an "ultra taxi" you will get discount. However, you should prepare to experience a very shocking scenario where the driver, whilst driving with one hand on the steering wheel,

actually was flipping the pencil to scribble down the address of next call. They are those taxis that in direct competition with those ordinary taxis strolling on the street. The only reason is that the drivers want to earn more. What I am suggesting is that the original economic establishment has been changed. The integration of Hong Kong into China confronts every single individual in Hong Kong with the 1.3 billion strong Chinese. When the global economy has been complaining the damaging effect of Chinese products to their local economies, Hong Kong is just next door to the factory of the world! These are not trivial matters. The adaptability of switching to new relations entails the successfulness of the changeover.

Liminal Citizenship as Historically and Socially Constructed

It seems that there is a process to go through whilst Hong Kong people are in a stage of constructing their “liminal citizenship.”¹¹ The first definition of liminal is ‘relating to a transitional or initial stage of process’. The second definition of liminal is ‘occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold’. It was originally from a Latin ‘limen’, ‘limin’-meaning threshold.¹² Citizenship however refers more to the achieved Chinese status governed by the geographical boundaries rather than the ascribed cultural status.

By liminal citizenship, I refer to those Hong Kong people who are Chinese in nature whilst nurtured in the former British colony, which creates an identity anomie in an initial stage of adjusting themselves to their new Chinese identity.¹³ The transition of Hong Kong from British to mainland China in 1997 is not only a transition of a political entity from one regime to another but also a transition of a set of international elements that have long been engendered Hong Kong as an open society, international city with freedom and outward looking. Such international elements have nurtured the successfulness of Hong Kong from a small fishing village to an international commercial center.

According to the studies by Wong Siu-lun and Zheng Victor W. T. on the issue of Hong Kong identity card (ID) and the issue of *Huixiangzheng* (Identity for Mainland Travelling), we can examine the characteristics of Hong Kong people's liminal citizenship.¹⁴ The ID card represented a process of indigenization of Hong Kong people. The issue of *Huixiangzheng* represented a process of re-unification with China. In other words, with time, Hong Kong people's identity has been changing in connection with the political development of Hong Kong. ID card in Hong Kong was first carried out in 1949. It was mainly because of the winning of the Chinese Communist Party. Hong Kong government wanted to have more control on the identification of the population. More initiatives had been worked out in 1960, 1971 and 1987 to institutionalize and implement the ID card. In 2003, the government began the issuing of smart ID card, which contained different personal data.¹⁵ To combine the ID card with the economic development of Hong Kong in the 1970s and the 1980s, the identity of Hong Kong people had been economically and socially constructed to re-develop their Chineseness and to re-articulate their Hong Kong identity. They know they have a new identity, which belongs to Hong Kong people. However, they also understand that that identity card is to use for the reducing the time to clear the customs between China and Hong Kong, which means the card symbolizes a fast-track identity switching token to change one's identity when they cross the border, perhaps not just once a day but twice! Behind the construction of the Hong Kong identity, economic progress and economic empowerment do constitute their common understanding among themselves. At some point, in the 1980s and after 1989, Hong Kong people even tried to change their identity by using their economic power to "buy" (naturalization) citizenship from Canada, Australia, US, etc.

By the same token, after 1949 and particularly after the Korean War in 1953, China began to restrict people's coming from Hong Kong to China for fear that spies might penetrate China from Hong Kong, where capitalist ideology was considered as crime. If the Hong Kong people wanted to go back to China,

they needed to carry a single entry recommendation form issued by the Chinese government; and the form would be taken back by the Chinese government after they returned back to Hong Kong.¹⁶ In other words, Hong Kong people's identity was re-constructed as "outsider" which further accelerated their alienation from the Mainland China. The hostility relaxed after the Open Door policy in 1978, the recommendation form was replaced by a multiple entry document, which could be used for ten years. Later, the document was replaced by an entry card which also simplified the procedure of entry. After the smart ID card issued in 2003, eventually, Hong Kong people could be able to enter China without any document. Through ID card and travel document, Hong Kong people's identity has been constructed and re-constructed when integration with China becomes more intense.

The historical development in 1997 officially brought Hong Kong and China together. The threshold of the liminal status however needs time to reduce. In fact, after eight years of Tung's administration, people in Hong Kong began to realize that there was price to pay through the process of identification reconstruction. To move too close to China (hyper-assimilation) will result in losing Hong Kong's identity. In terms of economic development, some criticisms question the status of Hong Kong as a financial center within China's influence. They question not the direct control from China, but the self regulation and relaxation of rules and financial policies of Hong Kong when more and more financial and economic clout have been controlled by the Chinese capital.¹⁷

In terms of social and cultural identity, Hong Kong people speak Cantonese rather than Mandarin. Hong Kong uses complicated Chinese characters rather than simplified characters. Such cultural identities however have been considered as not progressive enough to catch up with the unification with China because Mandarin is the official language. Hong Kong people need to communicate with the Mainland Chinese in Mandarin. However, many Hong Kong people may ask, even they can communicate in Mandarin,

will they be considered as Mainlanders? When they fully adapt to use Mandarin, will they not be required to perform more functions which considered as more congruent to be Chinese? Certainly, the identity gap between Hong Kong and China is not as wide as what Rudyard Kipling once mentioned East is East, West is West. Nevertheless, the liminal citizenship has to be reconciled through ways in which adaptability can be facilitated beneficially to both sides. Otherwise, Hong Kong people will lose their own identity, and perhaps their own advantages.

Evolution and Development of Taiwan's Identity

The Clear and Presence Influence of China

Identity searching in Taiwan has become more important today than that in the past because the political parties have been trying to make use of Taiwanese identities to reconstruct the political loyalty of the Taiwan people. Democratization in Taiwan also arouses national identity of the people by using ethnicity as well as language to reconstruct new political culture which affects the political climate in Taiwan. Taiwan's economic development in the 1970s and 1980s contrasted with the economic backwardness in China that further distanced them apart. After the open door policy in 1978 and the continuation of economic growth, the economic gap between China and Taiwan becomes narrow.

Yet, in terms of Cross Strait relations, the change of political culture cum democratization will affect the political inclination between independence and unification. The pressing need for locating Taiwan's identity accelerated after the handover of Hong Kong in 1997. In his study *Ethnic Identity and Nationalism in Taiwan*, John Sheng Chu echoed that "On July 1, 1997, when Hong Kong was returned to China after years of prosperity under British colonization, Taiwan's unclear political status and future relationship with Mainland China once again caused major tensions in the minds of Taiwanese and Chinese."¹⁸

However, the very core relation between Taiwan and China is still the meaning of being Chinese. As what Gary Klintworth had pointed out that

“In one way or another, it was China that provided the basic ingredients for Taiwan’s rise to fame and fortune. Japan built the economic foundations of modern Taiwan and the United States supplied critical financial aid and military protection to speed it on its way. But it was from China that the Chinese people migrated and derived their Chineseness.”¹⁹

On another issue, the searching for identity in Taiwan has also been dramatized by the political economy of the foreign direct investment to China. The economy of Taiwan is split between two groups: the haves and have-nots. The haves are those people who have been investing heavily in China in economic as well as political capital. They tend to be more positive toward the economic relations between China and Taiwan. In July 2005, the *CommonWealth* magazine in Taiwan questioned whether *Taishang* (Taiwanese businessmen) were still based on Taiwan.²⁰ Six out of ten biggest foreign investors were from Taiwan. The fact is that, they warn, the very latest development of *Taishang* begin to employ more Chinese bureaucrats. They even do not rely on capital from Taiwan.²¹ The have-nots are those people who do not or could not invest in China, resulting in placing all their political stakes in Taiwan. They feel that their economic opportunity and international space have been restrained.²² Such dichotomy of the economic capital will certainly affect the political inclination of the Taiwanese, making the use of identity to reformulate their political, cultural, economic and social bondage in Taiwan. In other words, the more the economic interaction with the PRC, the more necessary to establish one’s identity.

Construction of Taiwanese Identity through Mass Media

The identity of Taiwanese is a very complicated issue. Its very notion of the meaning of identity embedded in its history, colonization development, ethnic composition, Cross Strait relations, political development,

democratization and nationalism. Historically speaking, Taiwan has been described as an “immigrant society” which effectively consolidates Taiwanese social solidarity through history. Nevertheless, due to her unique development, the searching for Taiwanese identity should also be studied along the history, economic development and democratization.

Chen Dung-Sheng summarized that:

“Historically, Taiwan was an immigrant society, but most of its early immigrants were males. Therefore, social organizations based on blood relationships did not become dominant at the beginning of Han society. Instead shared ethnicity (co-origin) or co-dialect of immigrants from the mainland performed an important role in connecting individuals. ... The characteristics of the immigrant society have made Taiwan experience a different pattern of transformation of social solidarity principles.”²³

In terms of ethnicity, there are inter differences between Taiwanese and mainlander. One of the most famous historical incidents was 2-28 incident in 1947 when many Taiwanese were killed by the ruling KMT government.²⁴ For ethnic issues, there are intra ethnic differences among Hakka, Minnan and Aborigine within the Taiwanese. According to Chen Pin-Hao, ethnicity is very important in understanding the formation of Taiwanese identity because it helps to locate the power relations and the understanding the political changes in Taiwan.

“Theoretically, ethnic identity is not only useful in assessing some issues such as party support or policy preference. It also enhances our understanding of how ethnicity becomes a force in mobilizing political participation. It is with the presence of ethnic identity that ethnic origin then becomes a meaningful factor in explaining political behaviours among the Taiwanese people.”²⁵

In the data analysis of the 1995 Taiwan Social Change Survey conducted by the Academia Sinica of Taiwan, Chen assessed the degree of influence of different mass media channels, for example TV news, radio, printed media, in the construction of the national identity of four groups of people in Taiwan: Taiwanese nationalist (pro independence), Chinese nationalist (pro unification),

pragmatist (yes to both) and conservatives (no opinion).²⁶ The finding was that “The present study showed that media use made only a moderate impact among the Taiwanese people regarding the issue of national identity.”²⁷

Certainly, even within Taiwan, the interpretation of ethnicity is considered to be very alarming. One has to deal with the issue very carefully otherwise it will become the bone of contentions between political parties which want to occupy the sphere of political influence through the manipulation of ethnic differences.²⁸ In practice, however, we have seen the rise of ethnic influence in Taiwan’s politics ever since Chen Shui-bian has become the president. For instance, the aboriginal ethnic group “Tailu”, which was officially recognized as the 12th indigenous group in 2004, began to launch the self-administration movement.²⁹

If ethnicity establishes the very foundation of identity development in Taiwan, mass media has become more active to popularize their expression of identity. After the lifting of the martial law in 1987, Taiwan’s media has been relaxed. The liberalization and “democratization” of mass media in Taiwan gave rise to the blossoming of the media industry. According to Gary Rawnsley and Minh-Yeh Rawnsley’s study on Taiwan’s media reform, up to the mid of 2003, Taiwan has 602 newspapers, 174 radio stations, four national television stations and hundreds of cable channels.³⁰ However, they also warned that quantity did not equal to quality. The emancipation of mass media symbolizes political freedom. Therefore any reform or criticism from the government or the authority will be regarded as abridging the freedom of speech, making the vicious circle of the production of some low quality, indecent and simply poor programmes. They especially criticize the TV media.

“However, the market does not guarantee quality. As competition intensifies, the media are less willing to invest in innovative programming and instead battle to capture the same middle-ground audiences with the same formats. This is particularly serious in television, where the national stations now compete with the cable channels that are gaining popularity.”³¹

To name but a few interesting phenomenon, on the TV screen of news report, there is an anchor presenting with subtitles running at the bottoms, on the top and sometimes on the right telling the audiences other pieces of news happening elsewhere. If this is not information explosion, this kind of multi-dimensional news encroachment will certainly paralyse your sense, if not your mind. In addition, among the hundred strong television channels in Taiwan, the coverage and the degree of diversification are literally to instigate people from listening to or understanding of local social, economic and political relations and across the strait. Some cluster of channels cover stock market predictions by some financial experts and some other cluster of channels covering Buddhism preaching, amongst many other news channels, etc.

If those channels reflect some of the preferences of the audiences, one possible explanation would be that there are many audiences who want to search for alternatives. Buddhism, for instance, is an alternative for those who want to disassociate from the capitalist creed or market modernity, which is supposed to be flooded with sins and different kinds of wrongdoings. By listening to the Buddhism preaching, one's mind and soul can be relieved, sometimes redeemed if following closely those preaching. The belief in redemption and the Buddhism spirit, perhaps other Chinese religions as well, may also help explain the reason why the institutionalization of democracy is less consolidated in Taiwan than that in other Western societies, making corruption, scandals and administrative ineptness mingling easily with the political system. Although some channels seem to be tacky and even indecent, the government has no alternative but just to put up with this kind of media with an ostrich policy. Of course, from the TV station's points of view, the production of such programmes may probably be the only source of income because there are viewers; and therefore there are advertisements.³² Yet, it also can be interpreted as a way in which neither does the government want to offend the people (the voters) nor does it want to offend the media (the umpire).³³ Nevertheless, it appeared that Taiwanese government began to stiffen the TV

and media by cancelling licences of channels covering sexual and tacky nature.³⁴

The New Taiwanese: Ma Ying-jeou

In his book *The Road to Democracy: Taiwan's Pursuit of Identity*, Lee Teng-hui recalled a scenario which happened during the political campaign in the late 1990s when both Ma Ying-jeou (the newly elected KMT Chairman in 2005) and Lee were on the stage. Lee confronted Ma and said to him that "Listen, my friend Ma, where are you from? What *are you* [italic in original]?" Ma, according to Lee, responded with great dignity that "I was brought up in Taiwan and raised on the nourishing food of Taiwan. I love Taiwan. I am a new Taiwanese."³⁵ Lee further elaborated the meaning of New Taiwanese as:

"The effect of 'new Taiwanese' is to confirm Taiwan's identity; the term sums up the achievement of the Taiwanese people in having created their own government and having established a political system that works for them. It reminds us all that the people of Taiwan are committed to building a flourishing and unbiased society."³⁶

Thereafter, the term New Taiwanese became a concept which derived many debates on the notion of the meaning of being a Taiwanese and the searching for identity.³⁷ Peter Yu, a professor from Ming Chuan University in Taiwan, argued that if there is New Taiwanese, there must be "Old Taiwanese." It is also important, according to him, to look at the transformation and the dialectical development of the term New Taiwanese.³⁸ Yet, what does it mean by "New Taiwanese"? Obviously, it seems that it is very hard to generalise the concept because it was derived from a politician in a unique circumstance referring to a unique candidate. It is very hard to know exactly the meaning behind this concept.

However, if this term refers to Ma Ying-jeou in particular, we may be able to search some elements from Ma to nourish the term. Ma Ying-jeou was born

in Hong Kong on July 13, 1950 in Kwong Wah hospital, which is not a private but public hospital serving general public and ordinary people. I was told by his father, the late Mr Ma Ho-ling, who was the political advisor, speech writer and basically think tank of Chiang Kai-shek that at some point during the fall of the KMT, he raised his family (including Ma Ying-jeou) by opening a small café in the late 1940s and the early 1950s in Kai Tak amusement park (demolished already) in Kowloon providing snack as well as having some singers performing occasionally for a short period of time in the café before he moved to Taiwan later. Ma Ying-jeou was later graduated from the National Taiwan University and also obtained a law degree from Harvard University.³⁹ Thereafter, he served the government in different positions. Finally, he became the Mayor of Taipei before becoming the Chairman of the KMT in the first direct election for Chairmanship of the KMT in 2005. For personal characteristics, he also considered to be a new force to reform the KMT, especially on the corruption issues. In the KMT Chairman election on July 16, 2005, he took 75 percent more votes than his counterpart, Wang Jin-ping.⁴⁰

These qualities and personal history demonstrate some of the uniqueness of Ma himself. It seems that institutionalized *curriculum vitae* is what he has developed along his previous working experience and educational background. Such CV also provides a very convincing score result, which signposts one good remark to add onto the voting during the election. In addition, among the Taiwanese, his background also gives rise to some good image for the Taiwanese to project, if not assimilate with Ma because of his achievement, his educational background and after all the meritocracy behind him.⁴¹ It is not sure whether this image can be translated into his political capital. Nevertheless, to look back, his vision on Cross Strait relations has always been very clear. When he was the spokesman and Vice Chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council in Taiwan between 1991-1993, he painted the picture of Cross Strait relations:

“People in the ROC on Taiwan would like to see peaceful and democratic changes, not revolutionary chaos, on the Chinese mainland... the ROC

government should (1) stick firmly to the final goal of national unification while pursuing neither immediate unification with nor permanent separation from the mainland; (2) establish order in cross-Straits interchange and prudently manage its pace on the basis of the Guidelines for National Unification; and (3) maintain sufficient defence capability and continue its current “pragmatic diplomacy” to broaden its international relations...Communist Chinese leaders love to boast that what they practise on the mainland is ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’. People in the ROC in Taiwan sincerely hope, on the contrary, that there will be more and more Chinese characteristics, and less and less socialism on the Chinese mainland.”⁴²

He subscribed to unification and Chineseness along his vision on Cross Strait relations. He also mentioned order behind the relations. If these represent his political ideology on Cross Strait relations, these elements may also be characterized the so-called New Taiwanese. In a recent discussion during Chinese New Year in February 2006, Ma further encouraged the mainland Chinese to join KMT. In terms of cross strait relations, he mentioned that unification is possible when the economic, political and social differences between China and Taiwan become narrowed.⁴³ When asked by Stephen Sackur, the host of HARDtalk (one of the BBC TV programmes) on 21 February 2006, Ma regarded the trip of Lian Chan was to resume the dialogue between Taiwan and Beijing in a way to bring peace and stability to Taiwan people. He mentioned that after Lian’s speech at Beijing University there was already a relaxation of the hostility in China toward Taiwan. Therefore, Taiwan government should keep negotiating with Chinese government, and this is the only way.⁴⁴

Language and Taiwanese Identity

Language is important in defining one’s identity. Mandarin has been use in Mainland China as the formal language. Yet, there are many dialects being spoken by many people in China. For example, Cantonese, the second most important dialect, has been used by many Chinese within as well as outside China. I still remember that when I paid visit to my grandfather’s village in Guangdong, where people mainly speaking in Cantonese, in the early 1980s,

there were labels saying *Tongzhimen qingjiangputonghua* (Comrades please speak in *Putonghua* [Mandarin]) inside those stores. In other words, although formal language has been adopted by the PRC, in practise, people do speak their own dialects to an extent that the government has to encourage people to speak the formal language. Apart from Chinese societies, Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia also speak different dialects. Basically, 'The diversity and heterogeneity of the use of Chinese dialects for communication varies according to country of residence, generational differences and social and economic background.'⁴⁵

In Taiwan, language has always become the bone of contention by the government to justify its authority and legitimacy. According to Wachman, the arrival of the KMT in Taiwan after the defeat by the CCP in 1949 also brought the movement of purification of language, which meant Mandarin should be used as a formal language. He described

"In the very earliest years after the KMT arrived, teachers still used both Mandarin and Taiwanese to explain material in class. In 1953, the government mandated that neither Taiwanese nor Japanese be used as a language of instruction, and in 1964 a law was passed forbidding the use of Taiwanese in schools or official settings. This was accompanied by a campaign that emphasized the grace of Mandarin and the comparative vulgarity of Taiwanese."⁴⁶

Therefore, the status of *Taiyu* (Taiwanese language) was officially suppressed under KMT's language policy. According to Henning Klöter, the KMT also set up *jiuchadui* (patrols) to enable the using of the official language in school as formal language.⁴⁷ In 1976, The Broadcast and Television Law began to limit the use languages other than Mandarin on television and on radio.⁴⁸ However, in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, Taiwan began to move toward the liberalization and democratization process. Partly, it was because of the relaxation of government policy due to liberalization. Partly, it was due to the economic development of Taiwan in the 1970s and the 1980s, which conjured up the nationalistic ideas on the importance of Taiwan. Coupled with the

democratization process later, local language became more and more politicized.

Language policy on the restriction of using *Taiyu* and other local dialects became relaxed in the late 1980s. In 1987, three of the state television stations began to use *Taiyu* to broadcast news.⁴⁹ Elective *Taiyu* language courses were introduced in 1990 in Yilan County among the elementary and junior high schools; The Interior Minister officially admitted that the repressive language policy was wrong; and the Minister of Education also included “local culture education” to the curriculum of the elementary and junior high schools.⁵⁰ After the victory of DPP in 2000, language policy (this time in a revered manner) resurfaced as the major policy to re-create Taiwanese nationalism under Chen Shui-bian’s government. In Klöter’s own assessment, “The inclusion of Taiwanese and other local languages into the school curriculum marks a crucial turning point in Taiwanese language policies.”⁵¹

From the PRC’s points of view, the indigenization of *Taiyu* and other local dialects in Taiwan was used by the DPP government to facilitate *de facto* independence of Taiwan. The objective is mainly to enhance Taiwanese identity and to alienate if not disassociate China from Taiwan.⁵² Through five steps of empowering language policies, Zhao regarded the Taiwanese government as trying to construct a social and cultural environment to further implement independence. The five steps are:

1. abandoning existing language to raise the status of the local dialects;
2. creating written language for *Taiyu* in order to institutionalize, standardize and modernize the language;
3. creating different phonetic for *Taiyu*, *Hakka* and other Austronesian languages;
4. decreasing the number of teaching hours on classic Chinese and increasing the number of teaching hours on local culture;

5. establishing new departments in high schools and creating new web sites on studying and researching *Taiyu*.⁵³

The movement toward the indigenization of *Taiyu* was both government induced as well as democratization driven. As we have mentioned before, the victory of the DPP deliberately reinforced the status of *Taiyu*. Yet, under the democratic election, every Taiwanese politician has to be able to use *Taiyu* to communicate, if not please the voters. *Taiyu* becomes the medium between voters and candidates. Not to mention speaking, one still needed to be asked (sometimes by their political enemies, sometimes by their voters) their levels of Taiwanese ingredients (how many generations of living in Taiwan). Languages, nationalism and democratization in Taiwan are reinforcing one another. Ju Haitao, an editor of a Chinese magazine in China, contended that “political democratization in Taiwan and liberalization empower Taiwanese nationalism as well as their individual thinking by increasing their political freedom. ... Yet, when more interaction begins to develop across the Strait, people will start to realize the real nature of Chinese identity is not the narrow one that created by the Taiwanese government.”⁵⁴

How successful does language policy re-create Taiwanese identity, especially the youngsters? According to Yang, the so-called de-sinitization, either through language or cultural, is not successful. On the contrary, there are more new graduates who want to work in China, more post-graduate students who want to study in China, more new Chinese book stores selling simplified version Chinese books in Taiwan and more youngsters who want to travel in China.⁵⁵ This is a very important issue, further by Yang, because if the Chinese government truly appreciates this newly development in Taiwan, they can make use of the trend to create an environment to cultivate genuine relations and re-capture the heart of these people in order to open more space for unification.⁵⁶ Referring to my argument before, the formal language also signifies a token to unification between China and Taiwan among the haves who invest in China,

empowering both the formal languages as well as the capital. The socially constructed language environment in Taiwan is very intriguing. When knowledge is power, language is power too. This is a challenge to both governments.

Democratization and Identity Construction

For the Taiwanese, democracy is considered to be one of the most important political achievements in Taiwan because it was the first time in Chinese history that democracy was ever practised on Chinese soil.⁵⁷ Yet, from the political development of Taiwan's points of view, according to T. Y. Wang, the rapid democratization in Taiwan also allowed the Taiwanese identity to be created through the institutional changes in the political and party development.⁵⁸ In looking at the political and economic changes in Taiwan, the democratization process enables some cultural factors: languages, ethnicity, etc to be re-aggregated and re-articulated through the party formation as well as through the systematic election. As John Fuh-sheng Hsieh argued, "But, as Taiwan moved from authoritarianism to democracy, ethnicity lost some of its salience in politics, and in its stead, national identity became a much more important factor in dividing people into different political camp."⁵⁹ In other words, democratization in Taiwan gives rise to the nation building, from which national identity will be very different from those mainland Chinese who never experienced the fruit of democracy.

When the martial law was lifted on July 15, 1987, Taiwan began to move toward political openness and liberalization. According to Christopher R. Hughes, the democratization process of Taiwan was heavily instigated by the overseas Taiwaness influence. He contended, "By 1986, this overseas opposition had become impatient with its counterpart in Taiwan. Some successes had been achieved in the United States through agitating Senators to Taiwan in August 1986, and the passing of a resolution on 1 August by the

House of Representatives Foreign Relations Committee, urging the KMT to lift its ban on new political parties.”⁶⁰ Eventually the opposition party DPP was established on September 28, 1986. Since democratization is a process, the political openness and the development of opposition party helped lay the ground work of institutional democracy in Taiwan. “Depending on one’s definition”, maintained by Alan Wachman, “one might even say that with the elections of the Legislative Yuan in December 1992, Taiwan has become democratic.”⁶¹

If anything can really constitute one’s national identity, the first direct election in 1996 of Lee Teng-hui and the peaceful transferring of power from KMT to DPP in the 2000 election were two major developments of Taiwanese national identity. On the Taiwan side, throughout these political developments, the social and political identity of the general public in Taiwan were fertilized by their experiences of the fruit of democracy and political freedom. According to a study of the political development of the four generations of Taiwanese by Andy Chang and T. Y. Wang, there was a significant change of the national identity of the Taiwanese, especially the young generation. They concluded, “... the identity of Taiwanese citizens has experienced significant changes during the eight-year period between 1994 and 2002. Many of them, especially the younger generations, have increasingly moved away from a Chinese identity and have adopted a dual identity, considering themselves as both Chinese and Taiwanese.”⁶²

Whilst Taiwanese were developing their dual identity during this period, Chinese government was very much fear of the flirting with this political development by the Taiwanese political leaders and the declining of the Chinese identity among the new generation.⁶³ On the China’s side, it seemed fair to say that China was quite ill-prepared for such political development in Taiwan to be nurtured to such extent during this period. The climax of anxiety culminated in the 2004 presidential election when Chen was re-elected by a

hairpin margin. China's Taiwan policy began to allow both "carrot and stick" to work together. The *Taiwan White Paper* and the Anti-Secession Law were two major ground works to set the agenda of unification. On the flip side, carrots included direct flight in the early 2005, meeting Taiwanese political leaders, relaxation of agriculture import from Taiwan and other cultural exchanges. However, it seems fair to say that democratization has gone very fast in Taiwan, allowing some autonomy and determination to be decided by the society and the civic culture. From Cross Strait political development, this may be the only absolute advantage that Taiwan is having an upper hand over re-unification with China. In addition, this may be the only way that can fundamentally change the political rhetoric on Cross Strait relations, if not the political reform in mainland China.

Conclusion

I have mentioned the experience that developed along the identity building of Hong Kong people after the changeover in 1997. One of the major influences is that economic adaptability pushes those Hong Kong people to their very limit to piece with the rise of China. Some of them who are weak in adaptation and adjustment, resulting in resorting to the social welfare from the government, if not committing suicide. Although we cannot be able to re-interview those people who died in Cheung Chau whether they were died out of the pressure of the economic down turn, psychological problem or un-adaptability of the changeover, we certainly realize that the raise with the fastest economic engine of the world is not an easy game. Deng Xiaoping once said that Hong Kong would remain un-change for 50 years. Yet, in referring to their social, political and economic identity, things have been changing in tandem. Their liminal citizenship, through the study of the transformation of the ID card and the creation of the *Huixiangzheng*, demonstrates their re-construction of identity along the integration with the Mainland China. This is an on-going process. This is a unique story for the Hong Kong people.

To understand, many people in Taiwan become disinterested in either the jumping onto the bandwagon of the rise of China or to stick with the idea of independence. They are being indifferent of the political and social situation. The mass media in Taiwan provides some “neurotherapy” to the public with “dancing dopamine” (tacky TV shows), if not “information Prozac” (news) to cure the general public’s depressive feeling towards the economy or the politics. National identity, the political rhetoric of the New Taiwanese, language policy and the democratization process are constructing a very unique Taiwan which is very different from China in many aspects. As Khan Farooq argued “The subject of identity is the central question for every human being and nation because it not only defines who we are but also how we should live.”⁶⁴ Among the people in Greater China, perhaps, there is not much disagreement on whether they are Chinese or not. However, the ways in which how they should live are definitely very different. In the international environment, the rise of China gives rise to many talking points for people in general and some speculations and analysis among policy makers and academic workers.⁶⁵ Yet, among those Chinese (Hong Kong and Taiwan) who experience and live with the date-to-date rapprochement of the “clear and present influence” of the PRC, there comes those middle-ground ways for them to choose away from the political and economic extremes. Yet, this categorisation may not be exclusive in trying to capture the whole development of the general public towards public affairs. They point to some illustrations which may be useful in trying to examine the social response in Taiwan toward the rise of China.

Notes:

- ¹ Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim, "In Search of a Theory of National Identity," in *China's Quest for National Identity*, edited by Lowell Dittmer and Samuel S. Kim (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 6.
- ² Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 255. Please refer to Peter Hays Gries, "The Koguryo Controversy, National Identity, and Sino-Korean Relations Today,' *East Asia: An International Quarterly*, Vol. 22, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 3-17.
- ³ William A. Callahan, *Contingent States: Greater China and Transnational Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004): xxx.
- ⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (London: Verso, 1991), 205.
- ⁵ For instance, on the backdrop of the ceremony of the changeover on the night June 30, 1997, the flags of the PRC and Hong Kong were not in same size. The flag of the PRC was much bigger than the flag of Hong Kong. This is a symbolic meaning of power relations.
- ⁶ Some of them are indigenous people. Some of them are urban dwellers.
- ⁷ "CE's Remarks on His Resignation" [<http://www.info.gov.hk>] (accessed March 10, 2005).
- ⁸ Chee-Hwa Tung, "Working Together for Economic Development and Social Harmony," *Policy Speech: 2005*. January 12, 2005.
- ⁹ Yeung Au Lai Kit, "New Thinking in Living," *Xinbao* (Hong Kong Economic Journal), July 28, 2004, 12.
- ¹⁰ See Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000) for detail discussion on the losing of social capital in the United States.
- ¹¹ I was benefited from my former colleague, T. Lephung, of introducing this concept to me.
- ¹² *Oxford Dictionary of English*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford university Press 2003): 1016.

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- ¹³ In a recent discussion, some academic workers have begun to question the identity of Hong Kong people. See *Ming Pao*, (Hong Kong), July 11, 2004, D19.
- ¹⁴ See their two articles on *Ming Pao Monthly* (Hong Kong), May 2003, 48-51 and *Ming Pao Monthly* (Hong Kong), May 2004, 62-65.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., *Ming Pao Monthly* (Hong Kong), May 2003, 49.
- ¹⁶ Op. cit., *Ming Pao Monthly* (Hong Kong), May 2004, 62-65.
- ¹⁷ *Hong Kong Economic Journal Monthly*, May 2005, 20-21.
- ¹⁸ John Sheng Chu, *Ethnic Identity and Nationalism in Taiwan*, MA dissertation, University of Southern California (December 1998): 1.
- ¹⁹ Gary Klintworth, *New Taiwan, New China: Taiwan's Changing Role in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Melbourne: Longman, 1995), 81.
- ²⁰ *CommonWealth* (Taiwan), July 1, 2005, 83-86.
- ²¹ Ibid., 86.
- ²² Interview with scholars in Taipei, Taiwan, May 4, 2004.
- ²³ Dung-Sheng Chen, "Taiwan's Social Changes in the Patterns of Social solidarity in the 20th Century," in *Taiwan in the Twentieth Century: A Retrospective View*, edited by Richard Louis Edmonds and Steven M. Goldstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 61.
- ²⁴ See T. Lai, R. H. Myers and H. Wou, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).
- ²⁵ Pin-Hao Chen, *National Identity and Media: The Taiwanese Case*, PhD Dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University (August 2001): 26.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 31-32.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 90.
- ²⁸ Fu-chang Wang, *Ethnic Imagination in Contemporary Taiwan* (Taipei: Socio Publishing Co. Ltd, 2003).
- ²⁹ *China Times* (Taiwan), July 31, 2005, A.10.

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- ³⁰ Gary D. Rawnsley and Minh-Yeh T. Rawnsley, "Media Reform Since 1987," *China Perspectives*, No. 56 (November-December 2004): 48
- ³¹ Ibid., 54.
- ³² Interview with Taiwan scholars in Brussels, October 11, 2004.
- ³³ Interview with scholars in Chiayi, Taiwan, May 1, 2004.
- ³⁴ *Lianhe Zaobao* (Singapore) [http://www.zaobao.com/gj/zg050802_501.html] (accessed August 2, 2005)
- ³⁵ Teng-hui Lee, *The Road to Democracy: Taiwan's Pursuit of Identity* (Tokyo: PHP Institute, Inc., 1999), 192.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Peter Kien-hong Yu, *The Crab and Frog Motion Paradigm Shift: Decoding and Deciphering Taipei and Beijing Dialectical Politics* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), 71-89.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 72-73.
- ³⁹ *Yazhou Zhoukan*, July 31, 2005, 25.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 24.
- ⁴¹ For instance, his graduation from Harvard University certainly gives some weight to his own merit. Chinese people do admire a lot toward those ironic symbols of the US such as McDonalds and Harvard University. See James L. Watson, ed., *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997)
- ⁴² Ma Ying-jeou, "Policy Towards the Chinese Mainland: Taipei's View," in *In the Shadow of China: Political Developments in Taiwan Since 1949*, edited by Steve Tsang (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1993), 210-211.
- ⁴³ Zhaobao.com(Singapore).<http://www.zaobao.com.sg/gj/zg060212_506.html> (accessed 12 February 2006).
- ⁴⁴ It was the conversation between Ma and the host HARDtalk, which was broadcasted on 21 February 2006 at night in BBC 24.

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- ⁴⁵ Gordon C. K. Cheung, "Chinese Diaspora as a Virtual Nation: Interactive Roles between Economic and Social Capital," *Political Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (2004): 677.
- ⁴⁶ Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 108.
- ⁴⁷ Henning Klöter, "Language Policy in the KMT and DPP Eras," *China Perspectives*, No. 56 (November/December 2004): 58.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 58.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 62.
- ⁵² Huike Zhao, "The Characteristics of 'Taiwan Independence' in the Language-Planning of the Taiwan Authorities," *Taiwan Yan Jiu* (Taiwan Studies), No. 2 (2005): 54-59.
- ⁵³ Ibid., 55-57.
- ⁵⁴ Haitao Ju, "The Contemporary 'National Identity' of the Taiwanese," *Taiwan Yan Jiu* (Taiwan Studies), No. 3 (2005), 9.
- ⁵⁵ *China Review* (Hong Kong), August 2005, 35.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 36.
- ⁵⁷ T. Y. Wang, "National Identity and Democratization in Taiwan: An Introduction," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 40, No. ½ (February/April 2005): 5.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid, 5-12.
- ⁵⁹ John Fuh-sheng Hsieh, "Ethnicity, National Identity, and Domestic Politics in Taiwan," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 40, No. ½ (February/April 2005): 13.
- ⁶⁰ Christopher Hughes, *Taiwan and Chinese Nationalism: National Identity and Status in International Society* (London: Routledge, 1997): 41.
- ⁶¹ Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization* (Armonk and London: M.E. Sharpe 1994): 31.

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- ⁶² G. Andy Chang and T. Y. Wang, "Taiwanese or Chinese? Independence or Unification? An Analysis of Generational Differences in Taiwan," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 1/2 (February/April 2005): 42.
- ⁶³ Yun-han Chu, "Taiwan's National Identity Politics and the Prospect of Cross-Strait Relations," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (August 2004): 487. (484-512).
- ⁶⁴ Khan (2004): 11.
- ⁶⁵ "Peaceful Rise," *The Economist*, June 24, 2004 and Yasheng Huang, "China is not Racing Ahead, Just Catching Up," *Financial Times*, June 8, 2004, 19.

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