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Feeling Blue: Are Taiwanese Youth Becoming Less Pro-Independence?

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Abstract

The goal of this project is to address two interconnected puzzles, one of scholarly inquiry and the other of critical relevance to the foreign policy community: why are Taiwanese youth less pro-independence than in previous years? Why have young Taiwanese voters become more attracted to the pan-blue Taiwan People's Party (TPP) instead of the pan-green Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)? By conducting 20 qualitative focus groups around Taiwan with over 100 college students, this paper begins to theorize why exactly we may be seeing a change in political attitudes within Taiwan's youngest voting demographic. This project is particularly relevant to both the policy and academic communities because it addresses a growing foreign policy question: what explains fundamental changes in voting behavior in Taiwan? How might these changes alter Taiwan's own foreign policy goals? How can we better understand, and subsequently predict, how Taiwanese voters will behave in the future? Understanding how the youngest cohort of voters in Taiwan feels about politics, identity, China, the United States, and their own aspirations will become a paramount question for both scholars and politicians in the coming years. This project is the first to exclusively focus on Taiwan's youngest voting demographic. Despite speculation and inference from other data sources, we lack meaningful data that helps us understand Taiwan's youth. This project will fill an increasingly important gap for both the foreign policy community and academics alike.

Implications and Key Takeaways

- Contrary to common wisdom about young Taiwanese having strongly pro-independence views, research indicates that most of Taiwan's youngest voters are adamantly pro status quo and do not want Taiwan to pursue formal *de jure* independence.

- Support for third parties in the 2024 election has much more to do with a rejection of the DPP and Kuomintang (KMT) as dominant parties than genuine support for Ko Wen-je or the TPP's party platforms. Young voters do not value identifying with a major political party, and instead see Ko and the TPP as a means to express opposition to the status of party politics in Taiwan today.

- Youth voters do have sincere demands for better wages and housing in Taiwan. While some do cite these two social issues as their reason for not supporting the DPP in the 2024 election, focus groups reveal that these social issues are not enough for either major party to win back youth support.

- Taiwanese identity may be shifting for its youngest cohort. How political parties try to appeal to youth voters will have to change because of their qualitatively different view of political parties.

- Support for the status quo is likely to endure across generations. Foreign policy analysts should not anticipate Taiwanese civil society advocating for any major change in the status-quo. Instead, we should anticipate pragmatic voting behavior from Taiwanese citizens in the coming years.

Introduction

Youth politics in Taiwan are changing. Ever since the 2014 Sunflower Movement, a mass social protest that mobilized around anti-PRC influence and pro-Taiwanese independence, a common wisdom emerged around the politics of Taiwanese young people. This so-called "naturally independent generation (天然獨)" are green-leaning, pro-independence, and anti-China.[1] Indeed, research in the years after the Sunflower Movement demonstrates that the young generation that grew up with and were politized by the Sunflower Movement hold such pro-Taiwan leaning views.[2] Through the 2020 presidential election, the youth vote was seen by most Taiwan experts to be pan-green.[3]

In the buildup to the 2024 presidential election, however, there has been a rude awakening for those who follow Taiwan's youngest generation of voters. This new cohort— between 18–25 years old, who did not vote in 2020, and were likely not politicized by the Sunflower Movement —seem to have qualitatively different politics than the slightly older generation above them. The new youngest generation of Taiwanese voters were reported to be less supportive of the DPP and pro-independence politics than many Taiwan observers would have inferred. Indeed, public opinion data in the lead up to the 2024 presidential election showed that the DPP was not the most popular party for 18–30 year-old citizens.[4] In fact, this young cohort was not supportive of any pro-independence leaning party. Instead, their support was coalescing around a new political party: the Taiwan People's Party.

The Taiwan People's Party is headed by former Taipei mayor Ko Wen-je. Ko may be a new name for those who do not closely follow Taiwan's domestic politics, but he has been a regular feature of Taiwan's political scene since the 2014 Sunflower Movement. Ko himself was present at and supportive of the movement, which is where his original base of support came from.[5] When he first ran for mayor in 2014, it was a pan-green, pro-independence base of voters that mobilized for him. The DPP endorsed his candidacy in 2014 and did not run anyone against him. Ko even endorsed Tsai and many DPP candidates in 2014, as well as some fringe pro-independence candidates from the New Power Party. While Ko's rhetoric claimed he was beyond traditional pan-Blue and pan-Green political distinctions, he was considered de facto pan-green.

Ko, however, became a very different politician once he was elected. His de facto sympathy for pan-green politics radically changed, and his green-leaning

base of support quickly began to question their loyalty to him. His notorious rhetoric of "兩岸一家親 (two sides of the Strait, one family)" was seen as an unacceptable framework for his base of support.[6] He also created a new robust relationship with Shanghai's city government to increase relations between Taipei and Shanghai.[7]

In light of these and other incidents Ko was already seen as more pan-blue than pan-green by 2018.[8] Without the endorsement of pan-green politicians, he struck out and formed his own new political party in 2019, the Taiwan People's Party. Ko recruited mostly existing pan-blue politicians who were open to joining a new party, including former KMT and even deep-blue New Party members. Ko and the TPP even worked closely with Terry Gou, the former CEO of Foxconn and KMT presidential hopeful. After the party saw mild success in 2020, it was able to build momentum for four years under Tsai's second term, during which Ko began making major moves to portray himself as different from other politicians.

Ko would not self-describe as pan-blue or pan-green. Instead, his whole appeal is his claim of being above the partisanship of blue-green politics.[9] He began building an incredibly successful online persona, taking advantage of TikTok, Little Red Book, and other social media platforms that are particularly popular with Taiwan's youngest generation. Ko's speaking style is bold, blunt, belligerent, and very different from how most politicians in Taiwan talk. This direct, almost populist approach has created a strong cult of personality for Ko within Taiwan's youngest generation.

Two connected themes began to dominate the 2024 election: young people are less supportive of the DPP and more supportive of Ko Wen-je, who is more sympathetic to pro-China politics than the DPP. This has created an empirical question that social scientists have been trying to better understand: what exactly are the politics of Taiwan's youngest generation? How do Taiwan's youngest voters vary in comparison to older generations? Are young people in Taiwan actually less pro-independence, and even perhaps, more open to China?

The goal of this paper is to begin a proper empirical study to explain what exactly young people in Taiwan feel about their politics and Taiwan's future. Despite many analysts hypothesizing what exactly young people want, there is a major gap in empirical data and evidence to answer these questions.

Methodology

Rather than assume the politics of young people, this paper begins to build a theory of youth politics from the beginning. To do so requires qualitative data that allows young voters the opportunity to openly and freely express their political ideals and stances. In order to account for as much variation as possible, while also eventually narrowing in on key themes and factors that matter most to young voters, I utilize focus groups with young college-aged students between 18–22 years old on college campuses around Taiwan. Focus groups allow me to collect open answers to large, complex political questions that could not be answered in a survey.[10] They also allow for an opportunity distinct from one-on-one interviews: dialogue between fellow young voters. Unlike an intimate one-on-one interview, focus groups give respondents opportunities to engage, build on, and disagree with other voters. Doing so gave me unique insight into how widely youth political attitudes can vary. Focus groups, however, did illuminate a number of consistent key themes that are clearly part of most youth political attitudes.

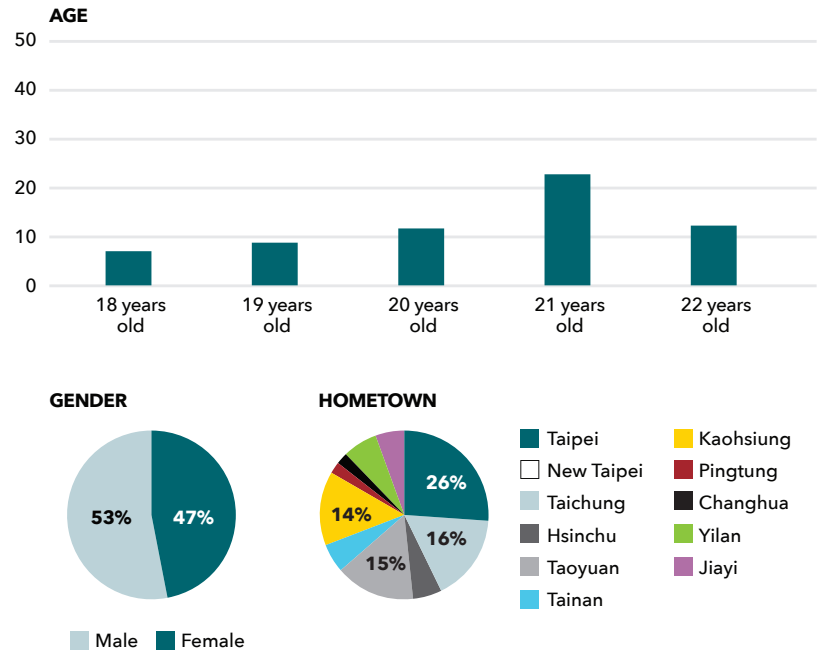
The qualitative data presented here cannot and does not claim to represent all young voters in Taiwan. Instead, it highlights key variations and themes within youth politics. Future survey research will better highlight more specific trends within youth politics. However, before surveys can be properly conducted, qualitative research is integral for deriving hypotheses and identifying what exactly what surveys should be testing. The data here should not be taken as representative. Instead, it should be read as an analytical starting point that highlights key themes for further, more narrow investigation.

Twenty focus groups were conducted at 16 different universities around Taiwan, with 107 participants in total, averaging five participants per focus group. All participants were undergraduates ranging from 18–22 years old. Although most universities were located in Taipei, only 42 percent of participants were from Taipei or New Taipei, with 58 percent coming from outside of Taipei.

Results

Before delving into the findings from the focus groups, there is one key finding to address upfront. Although I did not conduct any formal written surveys with the focus group participants, I did have them fill out a short

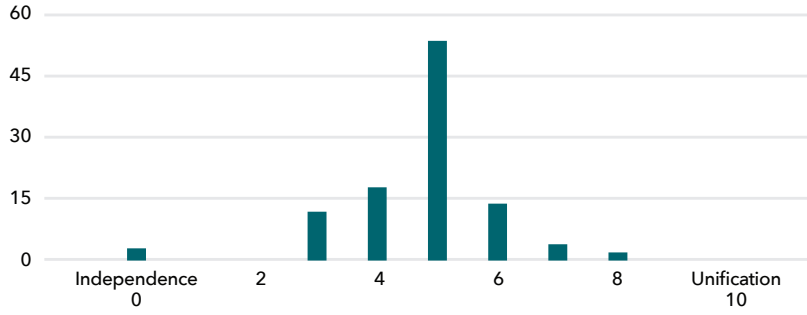
FIGURE 1. Age, Gender, Hometown



questionnaire that asked their age, hometown, etc. I took advantage of the opportunity, however, to ask one survey question: on a scale of 0–10, with 0 being very pro-independence, 5 being pro-status quo, and 10 being very pro-unification, where would you place yourself? The language I used was consistent with how most surveys in Taiwan ask about support for independence, status quo, and unification.

If the main question of this paper asks if young voters are feeling politically "blue," then this one survey question offers immediate insight: No, they do not. Young voters are not skewing more towards unification. They are also not, however, skewing "green," although there were more green-leaning respondents than blue-leaning respondents. Most critically, the majority of respondents placed themselves neatly in the middle. Young people that participated in my focus groups were overwhelmingly pro-status quo.

FIGURE 2. Attitudes Towards Independence-SQ-Unification



Contrary to common wisdom that all young people must be deep green pro-independence supporters, my immediate findings challenge this wisdom. Instead, young voters see themselves as far more moderate in what they want for Taiwan's future compared to more radical positions on Taiwan's contested status. This single question was a valuable source to contextualize and ground my discussions and analysis of these focus groups. Although we may already have a short answer to the larger question of what "color" young people are feeling, the question now becomes *why* they are so overwhelmingly pro-status quo as opposed to pro-independence.

After coding and analyzing the focus group data, I found three key themes around how young people feel about Taiwan's future: embracement of status quo politics, a rejection of party identity, and livelihood uncertainty. In the following section, I will share some of the discussions had surrounding each of these topics.

Being Pro-Status Quo

The biggest challenge with any discussion of "status quo" is what exactly people mean by it, and the discussions in these focus groups were no exception. Despite overwhelming identification with the status quo, understandings of what it meant varied. Ironically, students were also seemingly aware of how difficult it is to discuss the status quo, despite identifying so strongly with it.

"It really is ambiguous in almost every situation," said one participant, "even more than 'independence' or 'unification,' I feel like we all have a different understanding of what exactly status quo means."

So how did people define the status quo? There were seemingly two interpretations of the status quo among participants: by identifying what they want for Taiwan and what they don't want. Specifically, most defined supporting the status quo by expressing how much they do not want independence or unification. "I want the status quo. To me that means not unifying with China, and not saying anything too radical about independence. Status quo lets us keep our lifestyle, so that's why I support it." "Yes," another said in response, "independence is dangerous and unification is dangerous. I just do not want war."

Others defined status quo by discussions of international relations. For example, some emphasized Taiwan's international recognition: "We all know that we already have everything that makes us feel like a country…laws, government, it is just we do not have a lot of diplomatic allies, but this also keeps us safe. I guess that is what status quo means to me. That we accept this lack of allyship in exchange for getting to exist as a peaceful democracy." Some in this group pushed back, however, and highlighted that it really isn't a question of allies, but of the United States and China. "There is really only one ally and one enemy that matters though when it comes to the status quo: the US and China."

Similar discussions over the status quo focused largely on Taiwan's precarious position in the Taiwan Strait and fear of unification with China. One group discussed what happened in Hong Kong as a warning for Taiwan. "When I saw the protests in Hong Kong, I knew that unification would always be a bad idea. That is why I want to keep the peace with the status quo, because I don't want to change how we live our lives like they did in Hong Kong. If we unify, we lose our rights and our lives will change. The status quo, even though it is ambiguous, it lets us be safe." "But" said another in response, "the problem is we have to be on good terms with China. If we cut off ties that is also changing the status quo. We need more peaceful relations with China—not unification, but we need to be able to communicate with them."

Some did acknowledge the ambiguity around defining Taiwan's *de facto* independence and status quo:

> We are already independent. We all know that. Nothing about our lives makes us feel like we are not independent, except for the fact that we know we cannot say we are independent, because that would be dangerous." Someone added, "Plus, what so many people in the DPP mean by independence, is to say it out loud, while most of us know that if we are just quiet about it, we can remain peaceful.

What do these reflections on the status quo from young people indicate? First, there is serious need of stronger empirical studies that properly account for the various ways Taiwanese civil society defines and interprets the meaning of "status quo." Although we already know the meaning of the term varies widely within civil society regardless of generation, there does not seem to be a consensus in how to define the term among youth voters.

Broadly, the way young voters defined the status quo was consistent with how other political figures or organizations define the status quo, in either one of two ways. First, many see the status quo as *de facto* independence, meaning Taiwan's *unofficial* status as a free democracy, but without formal *de jure* statehood, is the status quo. For others, defining the status quo is more about what Taiwan should *not do*. For this group, the status quo is defined more by explicitly stating that they do not want to pursue formal *de jure* independence, nor do they want unification with China. For this group, their pro-status quo stance is not about whether or not Taiwan is or is not functionally independent, but rather about defining what actions Taiwan ought to take to ensure it remains functionally independent. Although these two approaches are not mutually exclusive, respondents did seem to emphasize either one or the other.

Why were young people pro-status quo? Why did they not want to pursue formal independence? Instead of holding strong, deep-green desires for formal independence, as is often the perception of young people in Taiwan, participants in these focus groups were overwhelmingly pragmatic. Young voters want the status quo because they want peace and normalcy. Supporting the status quo because it helps keep the peace is a view consistent with representative polling in Taiwan. The youngest demographic in Taiwan does not seem to skew more radical or more extreme than the general public. Instead, they share the view that 80 percent of Taiwanese society hold: to support some version of the status quo, rather than pursue formal independence or unification.

For policymakers in Washington, DC and Taipei, this should be a welcoming sign. Although broader surveys are needed to confirm the extent to which the youngest demographic is pro-status quo, initial data here indicates there needn't be concern that new voters in Taiwan are likely to seek changes to Taiwan's formal status that would rock the boat or cross any red lines. Instead, this young demographic is likely to support the status quo in line with what Taiwanese voters have wanted for decades. US-Taiwan policy in both DC and Taipei should subsequently continue their agendas of maintaining the status quo in line with what voters–particularly young voters–want for Taiwan's future.

Rejecting Party Identity

What does youth support for Ko Wen-je mean for their perceptions of parties and party politics? Focus groups revealed a large amount of variation in how people actually felt about Ko. Although many respondents said they planned to vote for him, not everyone expressed genuine support for Ko or his party. Instead, much of the love felt for Ko from the youngest generation had more to do with rejecting the DPP and the KMT. This divergence between those who were voting for Ko in order to protest vote against the DPP or the KMT, versus those who genuinely supported him, was strikingly clear.

"Ko is who I will probably vote for," said one participant. She continued, "but he is not really my favorite candidate. I just don't know how else to express that I do not want to always have the same two parties always in politics." In response, another person said, "I agree. But I actually really like Ko. I thought he was a good mayor. He is able to actually communicate to us in a way that makes sense." Said another, "He does what he wants. He isn't limited by political parties or by what parties want him to say." It was this particular theme that caught my attention among many discussions of Ko—the idea that he does not have to adhere to party politics, or at least the culture of party politics that participants have come to expect of politicians—was one of the charismatic appeals of Ko.

In another conversation, the group discussed the various YouTubers and TikTok accounts that supported Ko. "So many online personalities love Ko. It has helped me see that he's far more capable than anyone else. Plus, when you see him talk to reporters, he responds differently than other politicians. His

logic makes more sense to us [young people]." Others felt differently. "I don't care as much about Ko himself. I think some of the online campaigns in support of him feel a bit over the top." "I would never vote for the KMT, so Ko is sort of all I have left."

One focus group, however, put their frustration in a way that went beyond basic questions of support for Ko, and ultimately identified the broader theme regarding party identity:

> The DPP and KMT are treated like religions. But I don't see them that way. My parents' generation seem to treat a political party like it's their religion." After making this comment, another person responded, "Yes! It is like brainwashing! They want to brainwash you like religions do. I feel like we're constantly trying to be brainwashed from one party to the other." Another picked up, "So because of the way parties are treated, for me voting has lost a lot of its meaning. If you vote, great, if you don't I respect that, too. It doesn't really matter.

In every focus group, there were deep discussions around rejecting the DPP and the KMT. Not everyone rejected these two parties—plenty of young people planned to vote for the DPP and for Lai. However, there was still a sense of dissatisfaction and lack of party loyalty among Lai voters. As one participant put it, "Lai does not seem like a very good guy to me, and I would never vote for the KMT, and I don't really like Ko either. I'll vote for Lai, but just because he happens to be the least bad to me." Another participant agreed with them: "Yes, I remember when Tsai ran, Lai tried to attack her, and it became a faction battle. Lai doesn't seem like a very good guy to me either. He seems more loyal to his faction than anything. But who else can us green voters vote for?" One participant also elegantly explained why she and so many supported Ko: "I think a lot of us young people misunderstand Ko and think he is some sort of extra-special politician, but that is just because he is new, and we don't know what to expect from him as a president." It was not necessarily genuine support for Ko or his party, but rather the fact that he represented something other than the two major parties, that inspired support.

A clear theme emerged across focus groups surrounding how young people related to and identified with the KMT and the DPP. Participants across

backgrounds strongly seemed to reject the importance of party identity: a sense of loyalty and attachment to one of these two parties. Previous research shows that the salience of party identity has been declining in Taiwan for years. However, participants were not simply identifying as "independents" or choosing not to identify with a party. There was a perception that party identity was pejorative and undesirable.

What was most shocking, however, is that rejection of the DPP and the KMT had little to do with their actual political platforms. Instead, there were two key frustrations surrounding this rejection of party identification: the quality and character of these two parties, and the ossified, ubiquitous presence they hold over Taiwanese politics. Put differently, young people were clearly frustrated by perceptions of corruption and dirty politics, but also the perception that a good political Taiwanese person must have some amount of loyalty to one of the two big parties.

This broader theme of rejecting party identity—specifically refusing to identify with one of the two major parties —has two potentially major implications for understanding the youngest cohort of voters in Taiwan. First, there is a potential shift in the meaning of Taiwanese identity for young voters. For decades, especially post-democratization, the DPP and the KMT have become fundamental aspects of Taiwanese identity. Whether or not you identify fully with one of the parties, or just traditionally vote for one of them, these two parties have played a central role in what it means to participate in Taiwanese democracy. For this youngest generation, however, there appears to be a desire to separate the importance of these two political organizations from what it means to be Taiwanese. Instead of seeing these two political parties as integral parts of Taiwanese identity, young people are less likely to put so much importance on identifying with one of these two parties.

Second, the decline of party identity saliency has important implications for electoral politics in Taiwan. If we are to understand how and why young people in Taiwan were so much less inclined to support the DPP in the 2024 election, we must first understand that their whole approach to political parties and the importance of political party identity may be qualitatively different from older generations. Even though the majority of participants were pro-status quo, with views that are highly skeptical of the PRC and even the KMT, it is unlikely that the youngest generation will easily side with the DPP.

Even if their political views are closest to the DPP, participants were not simply measuring which party to vote for based off political platforms.

Instead, there is a frustration and disenfranchisement with the political party system in Taiwan. Rather than being seen as the political vehicles that are necessary to decide the future of Taiwan's contested status, younger voters see the DPP and the KMT as organizations that hinder, as opposed to help, Taiwan's political process. Despite both parties spending much of their campaign rhetoric emphasizing their respective roles in Taiwanese history, these appeals are less and less likely to win over young voters, even if they may be aligned on policy issues.

Where might this change of identity come from? One potential explanation may be populism. For years, political scientists have been studying the spread of anti-establishment views and skepticism of political elites through the theoretical lens of populism. Although populism in Taiwan is still a relatively new area of study, it has the potential to serve as a critical starting point for understanding political skepticism towards parties among Taiwan's youth. Theories of populism would argue that what we are seeing among not just the youth who feel the desire to reject identifying with one of the major parties, but potentially Ko supporters more broadly, is actually a Taiwanese form of populism. Whether Ko himself is actively selling this ideology, or if it is something that the youth generation have come across through other means, I have noticed strong populist themes within how many young voters describe their feeling towards why they rejected the KMT and the DPP. Future studies of youth politics in Taiwan must at least take populism into account and test whether or not it truly can help us understand this growing trend of political distrust.

Livelihood Uncertainty

Youth voters appear to be highly pro-status quo, but also do not seem to strongly identify (or want to strongly identify) with either major party. What then, do young people actually care about? What are the political issues that are most important for young voters? For those who closely followed the 2024 election, it will be no surprise that wages and housing were among the most widely cited topic.

"We are the 'rent forever' generation. We are never going to be able to buy our own home. I may not ever even get to move out from my parents. Taipei has become so unaffordable, and I do not know how we are supposed to live." This theme of 'rent forever' was a commonly cited phrase in focus groups, with a specific emphasis on how young people *wanted* to buy a house, but simply could not envision themselves ever doing so. The repercussions for their inability to buy a place to live, for many of them, felt astronomical in how impactful it would be on their lives. "If I cannot buy a house, I'm not going to get married. If I do not get married, I am not having kids. If I do not have kids, Taiwan's economy is not going to grow."

This sense of existential anxiety about their future, specifically because of housing, was ubiquitous across focus groups. There was also sincere frustration from this youngest demographic over how little most seemed to care about the livelihood of young people during the election. "Taiwan is so focused on cross-strait relations that it has forgotten the need to take care of us [young people]. The poor are poorer, the rich are richer," said one respondent. This sense of frustration over how much attention cross-strait politics received during the presidential election was a consistent theme among young people, among both those that supported Ko and those that did not. "It is not that we don't care about China. Of course we do not want China to attack Taiwan, and we do not want to become part of China. But what are we supposed to do when that is all we talk about?" In response, another participant said, "The next president needs to focus on helping us young people. If Taiwan keeps up this way with only the same issues with no improvement for everyday life, Taiwan will be reduced to nothing."

Many focus groups made a nuanced link between the needs of daily life to the future of Taiwan. While it may be easy to see young people focusing on wages and housing as a form of not caring about Taiwan's contested status or Taiwan's future, for many the two were interlinked. For many participants, if you care about Taiwan maintaining its freedom, young peoples' needs need to be taken care of. But to only debate the broader, theoretical issue of status quo versus independence politics was no longer enough for participants. Instead, they want politicians to also connect their daily needs with the future of Taiwan's sovereignty.

Conclusion

Are Taiwanese youth feeling more 'blue?' They certainly seem to be far more jaded with politics, parties, and the process of elections in a way that is alarming for Taiwan's overall democratic health. However, they are not becoming more KMT or pro-China leaning. On the contrary, they are becoming far more pro-status quo. This adamant support for the status quo, rather than pursuing formal independence, is rooted in pragmatism and a desire for peace, something that is not unique to Taiwan's youngest demographic.

Where there is departure, however, is in how young people related to political parties. Young people reject the need to identify with major political party. Their reasoning varies, but largely revolves around a dissatisfaction with how the two major political parties behave along with a societal expectation that a good Taiwanese person sides with one of the major parties. Instead, young people want politicians to focus on what they see as the most fundamental issue with their future: wages and housing. Not simply because these are boiler-plate talking points for young people, but because for this demographic, Taiwan's future is tied to whether or not young people can lift themselves up. If politicians ignore the livelihood of young people, then there may be serious repercussions for Taiwan's future.

Although this focus group data offers potential implications for the future of Taiwanese identity and voting behavior, what takeaways are there for the US foreign policy community? First, the common wisdom that all young people are radically pro-independent or are more likely than not to desire formal independence, should be challenged. Instead, the status quo should be seen as the default position across age groups, including the youngest voting demographic. This means that, in the future, Taiwanese civil society is likely to continue its demand for no change. As president, William Lai and the DPP will have to continue to respect that the majority of Taiwanese voters want to maintain the status quo rather than pursue any formal change in Taiwan's sovereignty. While this was an assumption for older generations, the fact that young people are also adamantly pro-status quo adds another layer of deterring change on whatever party is in office.

It also has important implications for how we see young voters in future elections. Young voters are not dogmatically aligned with the DPP, or any major party. Despite their seemingly strong support for Ko and the TPP in the last major election, this should not become a given or assumed in the

upcoming 2026 local elections or the 2028 national elections. Focus groups revealed that young people do not value identifying strongly with one particular party. We subsequently should not assume that they will continue to vote for Ko or the TPP, or Lai and the DPP. Instead, our assumptions about the future of youth voters should be flexible and contextualized in whatever is currently affecting the daily lives of young people most.

The US foreign policy community should anticipate that most people in Taiwan are unlikely to want to pursue major changes to the status quo. Despite some vocal advocates for either formal independence or formal unification, the vast majority of people in Taiwan support the status quo. This is especially true for the youngest generation of Taiwanese voters. Contrary to expectations that they may be more pro-independence leaning, current findings suggest far more pragmatic politics. Voting behavior in Taiwan is likely to reflect this support for the status quo in the coming years as Taiwan looks towards the 2028 national elections.

Strong support for the status quo also carries important implications for those following the PRC's ambitions to unify Taiwan. If the PRC is able to see how popular the status-quo is among the Taiwanese public—especially the youth—then this could help deter their perception that action for unification needs to be taken sooner than later. While some theorize that the PRC believes the "window is closing" in terms of its timeframe to unify Taiwan, the fact that there is still widespread support for the status quo should put the PRC at ease. When more people in Taiwan support how things currently exist and do not wish to seek formal independence, it means that the PRC should not feel that urgent action for unification needs to be taken.

Based on these initial results from focus group data, future research will turn its attention to conducting survey and survey experiments that are able to more accurately explain changes in youth political attitudes. Although data from these focus groups can shed light on what major themes are worthy of study when it comes to youth politics, additional research is needed in order to show broader trends and relationships between these factors.

The views expressed are the author's alone, and do not represent the views of the US Government, Carnegie Corporation of New York, or the Wilson Center.

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