

## *The Dilemmas of Becoming Chinese in Taiwan*

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### *Abstract*

After the Civil War of 1945–1949, Taiwan and mainland China were separated and developed two different systems: a British-American liberal-democratic capitalist system, and a socialist system with one-party dictatorship. Although differences between the two sides developed, there was still a consensus on “Chinese identity” during the rule of Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo in Taiwan. This “Chinese identity” began to waver and the idea of “Taiwan identity” gradually emerged around the 1980s. As a result, the struggle between unification and independence in Taiwan sharpened. “The Taiwan nativists” (*dupai*) want to achieve the ideal of “independent nationhood.” “The Chinese culturalists” (*tongpai*) hope to maintain exchanges and interactions with the Mainland to create a win-win situation, and finally lead to a unified China. The current ratio of independence to unification (eventual not immediate), in terms of votes in the 2020 presidential election, is 57 percent for the Taiwan nativists and 43 percent for the Chinese culturalists. The Chinese culturalists firmly believe that cross-straits competition is grounded in institutional (rather than existential) competition, and experiments in Taiwan will contribute to the future of “China.” But they are facing three dilemmas. The first is pressure from mainland China with the possibility of military invasion. The second is pressure from the Democratic Progressive Party upholding Taiwan independence. And third, generational change: because of their lineage, educational, and cultural background, the Chinese culturalists are of an older age group, and as time goes on, the number of supporters will gradually decrease.

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