Do Contacts Matter? Public Impressions of a Rising China in Taiwan[*]

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Abstract

The emergence of China as a first-tier world power is a critical issue both politically and economically, but what is often overlooked is how more frequent interaction with China influences public opinion. This study is aimed at assessing two competing approaches, "contact" theory and "group threat" theory, in an effort to understand how exposure to and contact with China influence Taiwanese citizens' impressions of China. More specifically, it focuses on how, as cross-Strait relations develop, the public in Taiwan may either have positive views or negative feelings toward China. Methodologically, in addition to the objective measurement of contact (exposure to China) employed in the previous literature, the paper uses a subjective measurement of contact (willingness to interact with China). This study analyzes both individual-level and aggregate-level datasets in the models; in doing this, it takes advantage of a 2014 nationwide telephone survey and considers the effects of the regional context. The findings demonstrate that the subjective measurement shows more variance in public opinion on China than the objective measure, and the contextual variables

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exert conditional influences upon Taiwanese people's overall disposition toward China. The results by and large confirm the validity of contact theory, but also indicate that it is too simplistic and straightforward, and therefore in need of revision. The data reveal that greater exposure is not enough to foster greater trust and cooperation between the two sides; it is increased willingness to interact that creates more favorable impressions.

How we should interpret China's economic transformation and the sociopolitical response to it remains a contentious issue. Stereotypical views of a rising China are important both theoretically and practically, but they have received scant attention from a comparative perspective. The issue of public attitudes toward the rise of China has been researched empirically in only a few western countries (Aldrich and Lu 2015; Aldrich, Lu, and Liu 2014; Gries, Crowson, and Sandel 2010; Page and Xie 2010; Xie and Page 2010; Zhu and Lu 2013), and systematic analyses of public opinion concerning the emergence of China in Asia-Pacific countries remain scarce (cf. Chu, Liu, and Huang 2015; Huang and Chu 2015; Liu and Chu 2015; Welsh and Chang 2015). This study examines the public image of China among the citizens of Taiwan. By reviewing two competing theories of minority politics, namely the "contact" and "group threat" theories, it attempts to explain underlying positive and negative views of China.

There is at least one critical reason for examining public perceptions of China in Taiwan. Over several decades post-1949, and especially after the Korean War of 1950-1953 had clarified and intensified ideological cleavages in East Asia, the Taipei and Beijing governments developed a unique pattern of interaction. Since the violent but inconclusive end of the Chinese civil war, the governments of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China have both claimed to be the sole legitimate political entity representing the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Both governments have publicly declared their intention to unify the country under their respective ideologies. A hostile policy of no contact at the government level severely restricted direct interaction, and the Taiwanese people had limited opportunities for acquiring accurate information about China. Limited and sporadic contacts between the two sides through third parties resulted in the formation of distorted images of China among the Taiwanese people.

Since the late 1980s, the authorities on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have cooperated to introduce a number of major initiatives, including lifting the ban on Taiwanese visiting the mainland in 1987, the "1992 consensus" that sought to facilitate cross-Strait relations by setting aside ideological differences, and the acceleration of socioeconomic and political interaction with China after Ma Ying-jeou's victory in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections (Chao 2003; 2004; Wu, Su, and Tsui 2014). These initiatives gave the Taiwanese people more access to the mainland, allowing them to develop their own impressions of China without third-party interference.

Not surprisingly, it was the previous distorted images of China that formed the basis of perceptions of China among some Taiwanese at a time of renewed communication in the wake

of the ideological thaw and the easing of the political impasse. However, views of China became much less superficial and more multifaceted as Taiwanese gained greater access to the mainland. As Taiwanese trade with and investment in China expand, and as work-related migration from Taiwan to China increases on a large scale, overall impressions of China will surely become even more sophisticated and therefore exert a more decisive impact on future bilateral relations.

With these developments in mind, this study explores three interrelated issues. It first reviews two contending approaches developed by scholars of minority politics, the contact theory and the group threat theory, which are commonly used to explain individuals' attitudes toward other racial/ethnic groups. Second, it identifies the issue of Taiwanese citizens' perceptions of China, and then clarifies the research insights in more detail. Third, it analyzes micro-level and macro-level datasets—a 2014 nationwide telephone survey and four contextual variables—in a hierarchical linear model (HLM) to examine the Taiwanese public's overall disposition toward China. The study concludes by drawing certain theoretical implications from the empirical results concerning the public image of China in Taiwanese society.

I. How Contacts Do Matter: A Test of Two Competing Hypotheses

The theoretical perspective for the analysis of Taiwanese views of China is provided by the existing literature on political behavior within multiracial societies such as the United States. The problem of how to create harmony among a multiplicity of racial or ethnic groups with the potential to distrust each other has long puzzled scholars of minority politics.

There is little consensus on the causes of the mistrust and hostile impressions that exist between heterogeneous social groups with diverse backgrounds. For example, the "dissimilarity thesis" holds that individuals generally prefer to associate with people who have similar belief systems (Rokeach, Smith, and Evans 1960). Another explanation holds that if two groups have divergent belief structures, group members tend to form their political identity through a sense of group attachment and group consciousness (Alesina and La Ferrara 2002; Delhey and Newton 2005). This results in a distance between the two groups and causes them to have negative views about each other. Likewise, the "power threat thesis" is closely linked to individuals' social networks; it indicates that differences in power between social groups are the primary cause of intergroup hostility. When the majority senses that a rising minority is beginning to threaten its

monopolistic control of socioeconomic, cultural, and political interests, it will begin to develop a sense of acrimony toward the minority (Oliver and Wong 2003). Such hatred is always expressed in the form of group conflict, in which the majority tends to attempt to undermine the political influence of the minority (Giles and Buckner 1993; Quillian 1996; Taylor 1998). This conflict produces not only growing mistrust, but also outbreaks of racial confrontation and even a breakdown in civil society.

Previous studies on how to prevent such crises of trust have developed two contending theories. On the one hand, contact theory, as postulated by Allport ([1954] 1979), proposes that bias and negative impressions based on knowledge, stereotypes, and ignorance can be reduced through frequent interaction. When two social groups become more mutually dependent, and communicate and cooperate with each other to achieve beneficial goals, the probability of reciprocal acceptance increases. The diffusion of acceptance among the members of both groups through increasing social experience steadily shapes an environment that is conducive to intergroup friendliness and cooperation (Ellison and Power 1994; Ha 2010; Sigelman and Welch 1993; Stein, Post, and Rinden 2000).

These interracial contacts are frequently encouraged by interaction among group members, who in turn spread information about groups within their own group (Brewer and Miller 1996; Gaertner et al. 1992; Jackman and Crane 1986). It is necessary to point out that Allport's ([Allport 1954] 1979) perspective on reducing bias is only applicable in cases where intergroup contacts occur under certain optimal conditions—for instance, the presence of a common goal, equal socioeconomic status, and authority support. The existing literature shows that a gradual reduction in racial bias and an overall increase in favorable feelings among different groups are brought about by means of profound interracial interaction and communication (Oliver and Wong 2003; Pettigrew 1998; Powers and Ellison 1995; Welch and Sigelman 2000; Welch et al. 2001).

Group threat theory, on the other hand, holds that fundamental differences between groups are almost bound to create tensions (Bonacich 1973; Lieberson 1985; Olzak 1992). As minority populations increase in number and become more aware of the feasibility of utilizing political activism to compete with the majority for limited socioeconomic and even political resources, the members of the majority group are likely to develop a sense of animosity against the minority as they feel their own livelihoods to be under threat (Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Taylor 1998). Such antagonism is always strengthened by the belief that voicing criticism can better protect the interests of one's own group (Bobo 2002; Quillian 1996; Schlueter and Scheepers 2010).

There is a considerable amount of evidence to support group threat theory, especially respecting political attitudes between whites and African-Americans in the United States (Glaser 1994; Quillian 1996; Taylor 1998) as well as between whites and Asians in Europe (Bonacich 1973; Lieberson 1985; Olzak 1992). One notable study is Putnam's (2000) examination of the collapse and revival of American society from the perspective of social capital, for which he conducted extensive national surveys involving approximately 30,000 respondents in 41 communities with varying levels of racial and ethnic diversity. These surveys demonstrated that there is less mutual trust and lower levels of social capital in more heterogeneous communities, ceteris paribus. This is a direct contradiction of the contact theory hypothesis that higher social capital in more diverse communities leads to more mutual acceptance and tolerance.

It appears, therefore, that there is no agreement among scholars as to the best means of developing harmony between different social groups. It is necessary to keep in mind that some scholars have found the explanatory power of group threat theory to be limited in some cases and they accordingly have reservations concerning its generalization (Evans and Need 2002; Semyonov et al. 2004; Strabac and Listhaug 2008; Wagner et al. 2006).

Having described two theories concerning the attitudes of the majority and minority races in the context of minority politics in the United States, this study now returns to the issue at hand and what these theories can tell us about it. Since both contact theory and group threat theory were developed in the United States in an effort to shed light on interracial conflict, we should be cautious about applying them to the relationship between residents of Taiwan and mainland China, both of whom are of Chinese descent and share a common linguistic, historical, and cultural background.

So, it is with this in mind that this study employs these notions and theoretical frameworks to assess the question of how contacts between the two groups have changed Taiwanese perceptions of China. Based on the previous work of Wu, Su, and Tsui (2014), this study adopts the following research design. First, I use recent data, particularly from the period after the Sunflower student movement of March 2014 in Taiwan. This movement was sparked by concerns that the China-friendly policies of the Ma Ying-jeou administration would make Taiwan overly dependent on China's huge economy. It was also believed that the benefits accrued by entrepreneurs from cross-Strait interaction were being achieved at the expense of a threat to national security and the depletion of public resources. Second, this study includes both individual-level and aggregate-level datasets—consisting of a telephone survey and

contextual indicators of counties and cities—in its statistical models in order to achieve a more thoroughgoing investigation of the Taiwanese public's disposition toward China.

II. Data, Measurement, and Methodology

Data analyzed in this study were collected as part of the National Science Council research project entitled "Survey of the Image of China," directed by Chung-li Wu of the Institute of Political Science at Academia Sinica and implemented by the Center for Survey Research at Academia Sinica. The survey is based on a nationally representative probability sample of adults living in the 17 counties and cities of Taiwan and Fujian provinces, as well as the five municipalities of Taipei, New Taipei, Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung. Telephone interviews were conducted from December 15 through 30, 2014, and a total of 1,552 eligible respondents were successfully interviewed. The respondents were all twenty years of age or above and residents of the abovementioned areas. Details of the relevant questions and the scale scores for the measures are presented in the appendix.

Since researchers have devised a variety of techniques for measuring the independent variables—the frequency and method of respondents' contact with China—this study develops two indexes to tap the concept.

The first index is direct physical exposure, or the frequency and depth of respondents' exposure to the mainland Chinese milieu, which has traditionally been adopted in most previous studies. The question asked of respondents is how many times they have visited mainland China, alone or with others, not including trips exclusively to Hong Kong and/or Macau during the last five years. It is hypothesized that people who have visited China more frequently would have had greater exposure and therefore acquired more information of actual conditions. This study separates this continuous variable into three categories, those who have no exposure to China (i.e., never been to China), those with little exposure (between one and three visits), and those with frequent exposure (four visits or more).

The second index is an original one, and it is more subjective and capable of being directly related to perceptions of China. In addition to measuring physical exposure, this study includes two questions that assess the psychological exposure of respondents in terms of their willingness to interact with mainland Chinese people on a more intimate level. Some of the earliest research explained racial/ethnic attitudes in terms of individuals' sociodemographic characteristics and to

some extent their interpersonal psychological distance (Bogardus 1933; Byrnes and Kiger 1988; Crandall 1991). According to the social distance approach, willingness is key to determining whether an individual is prepared to accept or to associate with people who have different social characteristics.[1] This index measures whether respondents would like further interaction with mainland China in two ways: by residing in China and through intermarriage between their family members and mainland Chinese. To reduce the effects of social desirability, this study has designed an indirect method of enquiry: asking respondents whether they would like their children, real or hypothetical, to reside in China or to marry a mainland Chinese.

The answers to these subjective questions are scored on a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being the most positive (very likely) and 1 the most negative (very unlikely). I combine the scores for these two questions through simple addition, producing a new scale of 2 to 8. This new index is divided into three categories, willing to interact with China (8 and 7), neutral (6 and 5), and unwilling to interact (4, 3, and 2).

Turning to the dependent variables, this study devised five questions to measure various aspects of people's views of China: general feeling about China, impression of Chinese tourists, impression of Chinese electronic products, impression of the quality of the tourism experience in China, and impression of Chinese leaders. As a measure of public attitudes toward China, these questions are certainly not all-embracing, but together they might reflect the respondents' opinions of the Chinese people, society, products, and political leaders.[2] The respondent has

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[1]　Social distance denotes the psychological distance between various groups in society and is different from locational distance. The concept refers to differences of all kinds, such as social class, race/ethnicity, or sexuality. According to Bogardus (1933), a distance scale is a testing scale to evaluate an individual's willingness to take part in social contacts of varying degrees of closeness with members of diverse groups, such as racial/ethnic groups. The scale asks respondents the extent to which they would be willing to accept members of each group as, for example, co-workers in the same occupation, neighbors on the same street, close friends, relatives by marriage, and so on.
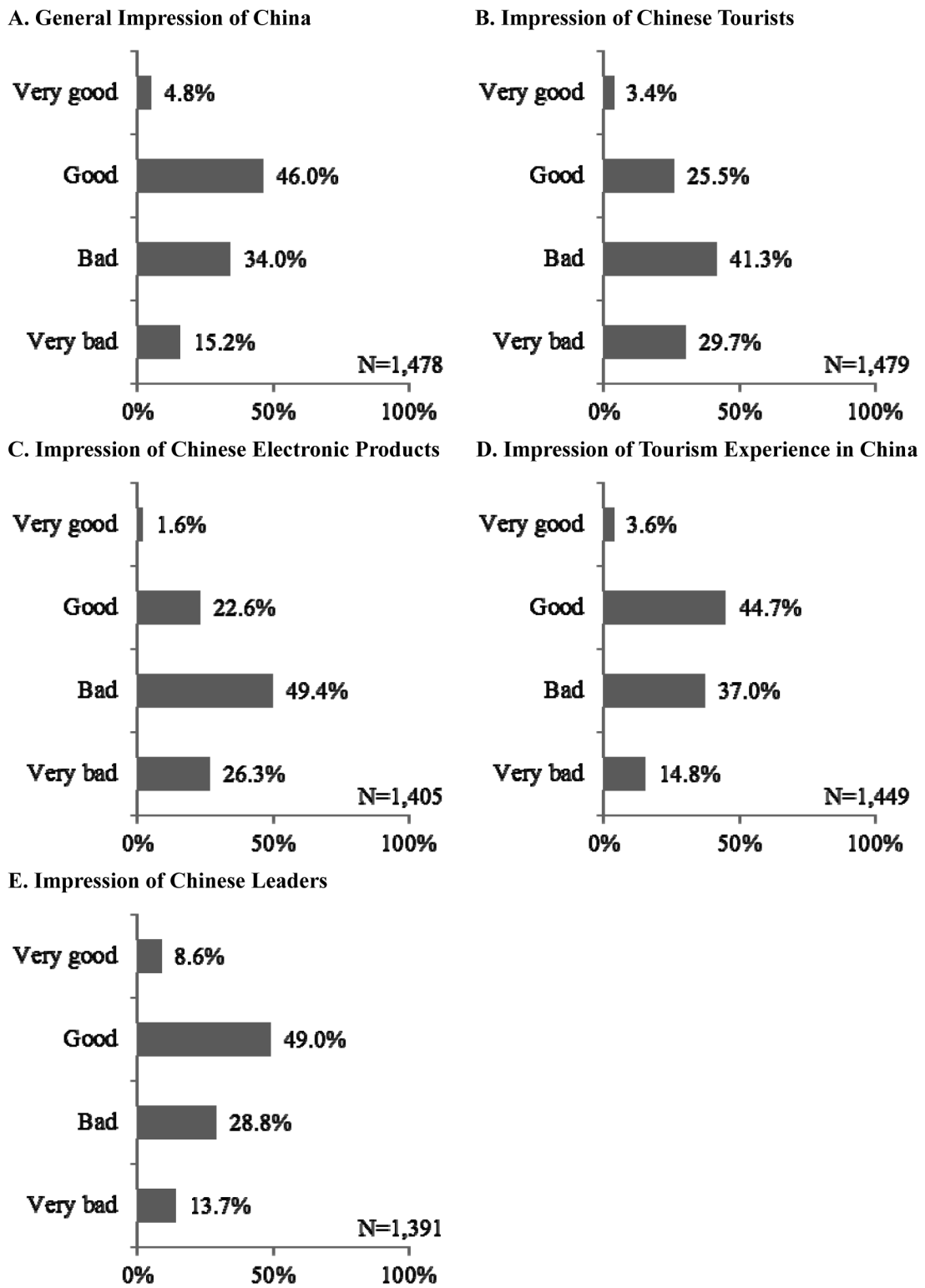
[2]　A constructive remark made by one reviewer was that the scope of Taiwanese people's impressions of China is too narrow; that the picture could have been different if additional questions on such subjects as human rights, political attitudes toward Taiwan, and environmental issues had been considered. Although this is indeed insightful advice, the purpose of this study is to assess how exposure to and contact with China affect Taiwanese citizens' perceptions of China. Therefore, the five measures are all closely related to the notion of "contact," and that is the major reason for including the image of Chinese tourists and electronic devices, and the quality of the tourism experience. Such issues as human rights and the environment in China are important, but ordinary people are not likely to have had "contact" with them, so they are unlikely to have an impact on the public image of China.

the choice of answering: "very good," "good," "bad," or "very bad," on a scale of 1 to 4, with 4 being the most positive ("very good") and 1 the most negative ("very bad").

The methodology adopted in this research consists firstly of cross-tabulation analyses. This is followed by ordered logistic regression estimations designed to evaluate the simultaneous effect of several independent variables on the dependent variables. Cross-tabulation involves the division of the respondents into subgroups according to the categories of the independent variables. Bivariate relationships are assessed within each of the subgroups. However, cross-tabulation is not an effective method for assessing several variables simultaneously. The relative impact of independent variables is better approached by means of multiple regression analyses. Therefore, multiple regression models will be tested in the second stage of the analysis.
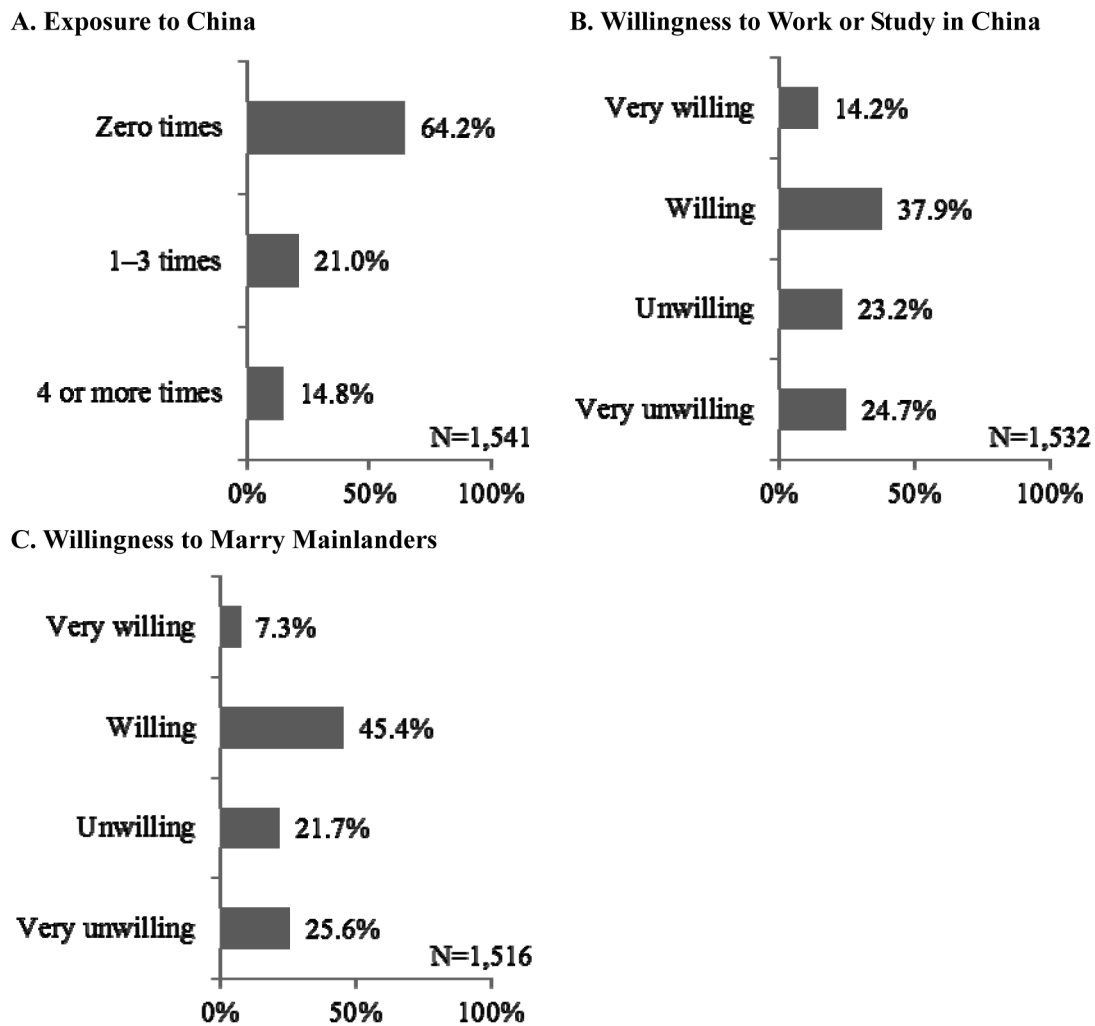
III. Multidimensional Views of a Rising China

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the relationship between method of contact and the Taiwanese public's perceptions of China, in general or more specifically, in a bipolar, progressively positive or negative sense. The respondents' answers to the five questions on the image of China are shown in Figure 1. Two important conclusions can be drawn from the data. First, the subfigures reveal some striking differences between the indicators. By and large, they indicate that nearly three out of five Taiwanese people have a positive impression of the leaders of the Beijing government, and about 50 percent of citizens consider the tourism experience in China to be satisfactory and have generally positive feelings about China. The public's assessment of the Chinese people and Chinese manufactured products is much less positive than their impression of China overall. Fewer than 30 percent of Taiwanese people have a favorable impression of Chinese tourists and only a little over 24 percent recognize the quality of electronic devices imported from China.

A. General Impression of China

Very good	4.8%
Good	46.0%
Bad	34.0%
Very bad	15.2%

N=1,478

B. Impression of Chinese Tourists

Very good	3.4%
Good	25.5%
Bad	41.3%
Very bad	29.7%

N=1,479

C. Impression of Chinese Electronic Products

Very good	1.6%
Good	22.6%
Bad	49.4%
Very bad	26.3%

N=1,405

D. Impression of Tourism Experience in China

Very good	3.6%
Good	44.7%
Bad	37.0%
Very bad	14.8%

N=1,449

E. Impression of Chinese Leaders

Very good	8.6%
Good	49.0%
Bad	28.8%
Very bad	13.7%

N=1,391

Source: Survey of the Image of China.

Figure 1　Multidimensional Impressions of China

A. Exposure to China

B. Willingness to Work or Study in China

C. Willingness to Marry Mainlanders

Source: Survey of the Image of China.

Figure 2   Contact with China

Taiwanese people's contacts with China are displayed in Figure 2. Approximately two out of three respondents had not travelled to mainland China, whether for a family visit or for study, work, or investment purposes, in the previous five years. About 21 percent had a small degree of exposure (between one and three visits), and roughly 15 percent had frequent exposure (four or more visits). Interestingly, more than 50 percent of respondents said they would be willing to allow their offspring to work or study in China, and even to marry a mainlander.

I begin my analysis by looking at correlations between the two independent variables and the dependent variable—the Taiwanese public's general feeling toward China.[3] The values of

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[3] There is one important reason for adopting the single item "general impression of China" as the

chi-square significance of cross-tabulations presented in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that both the objective and subjective measurements have a strong and statistically significant association with Taiwanese citizens' general views of China. As displayed in Table 1, 52.5 percent of the individuals who had never been to China had a negative ("very bad" or "bad") perception of China, compared to 42.5 percent of those who had visited between one and three times, and 44.4 percent of those with the most exposure to China. Only 47.5 percent of the respondents who had never been to China professed to having a favorable ("very good" or "good") impression of China, compared to 57.6 percent of those who had visited one to three times and 55.6 percent of the most frequent visitors. From this preliminary distribution, a decisive trend among the sample of greater exposure leading to a more positive impression is identified. Simply put, Taiwanese people who have visited the mainland more frequently are more likely to view China in a positive light than those who are less frequent visitors or have never been at all.

Table 1　General Impression of China by Exposure to China

	Very good	Good	Bad	Very bad	Total
Zero times	35 (3.8%)	405 (43.7%)	323 (34.8%)	164 (17.7%)	927 (100%)
1–3 times	20 (6.3%)	163 (51.3%)	101 (31.8%)	34 (10.7%)	318 (100%)
4 or more times	16 (7.2%)	108 (48.4%)	74 (33.2%)	25 (11.2%)	223 (100%)

Source: Survey of the Image of China.
Notes: Pearson chi-square=20.420; p=.002; D.F.=6; N=1,468.

Table 2　General Impression of China by Willingness to Interact with China

	Very good	Good	Bad	Very bad	Total
Unwilling	10　(1.6%)	175 (28.0%)	265 (42.5%)	174 (27.9%)	624 (100%)
Neutral	28　(4.5%)	357 (57.5%)	199 (32.0%)	37　(6.0%)	621 (100%)
Willing	33 (16.5%)	128 (64.0%)	30 (15.0%)	9　(4.5%)	200 (100%)

Source: Survey of the Image of China.
Notes: Pearson chi-square=295.624; p=.00; D.F.=6; N=1,445.

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dependent variable in further analyses. As can be seen from the data in Figure 1, Taiwanese people's impressions of China are multidimensional, so it may be somewhat controversial to collapse these five items into a continuous variable through simple addition. I confess that one limitation of this study is the lack of comprehensive measurement of the public image of China, and it would be necessary to collect a dataset on this in order to carry out further studies.

The results displayed in Table 2 indicate that there is more variation in opinion on China where the subjective measure (willingness to interact) is concerned than there is concerning the objective measure (exposure to China). Of those who were "unwilling" to let their children settle on the mainland, 70.4 percent had a negative ("very bad" or "bad") feeling about China, compared to 19.5 percent of those who were "willing" to do so. Of those respondents who were "willing" to allow their offspring to settle in China, 80.5 percent had a favorable ("very good" or "good") view of China, and this percentage declined significantly among those who were "neutral" (62.0 percent) and "unwilling" (29.6 percent).

The above analysis confirms the hypothesis, at least initially. Given the positive correlation between increased exposure and more positive attitudes, it is found that those who are willing to allow their children to go to the mainland are more likely to hold positive impressions of China. The data in Tables 1 and 2 yield some interesting findings, but these relationships, while illuminating, may be spurious when other control variables are considered. One way to solve this problem is through a multivariate analysis; in this case, an ordered logistic regression analysis is appropriate.

IV. Discussion of Findings

Behavioral research has shown that an individual's political attitudes are a complex function of various sociopolitical determinants. For this reason, some sociodemographic factors (gender, age, ethnicity, and education) and cognitive ones (party identification,[4] national identity, and unification/independence preference) are taken into consideration in this study as independent variables. Beyond these sociodemographic and cognitive factors, the literature on political behavior leads one to hypothesize that individual attitude sets are also subject to various other determinants.

Here, a number of contextual variables are considered. Previous studies explain political behavior in terms of the social environment of individuals and their interpersonal relationships (Campbell et al. 1960; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944). The evidence on this point

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[4] Instead of employing specific political parties as the units of analysis, this study divides party identification into supporters of the "pan-Blue" (i.e., the Kuomintang [KMT], the People First Party [PFP], and the New Party [NP]), the "pan-Green" (i.e., the Democratic Progressive Party [DPP], the Green Party [GP], and the Taiwan Solidarity Union [TSU]), and independents.

indicates that where people live, and to some extent their interpersonal relationships, affect their political involvement. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954, 200), for instance, argue that social networks formed through voters' social circumstances influence their political attitudes and preferences. Miller (1977) affirms that argument, claiming that the party identification of individuals is influenced more by their living environments than by their careers. This is because an individual's social environment determines his/her information context which further affects political behavior (Huckfeldt, Ikeda, and Pappi 2000; Huckfeldt, Sprague, and Levin 2000).

To test for contextual effects, this study investigates four variables in a hierarchical logistic regression model: unemployment rate, number of tourists, urban land price, and household income.[5] These are designed to test whether general views of China are influenced by the respondent's place of residence. The reason for employing contextual characteristics as explanatory variables is the presumption that an individual's social environment is central to the development of his/her perception of China.

The analysis is performed in Stata 12.3 using ordered logistic analyses, selected according to the characteristics of the dependent variable.[6] The results of the estimates are displayed in Table 3.[7] The first model evaluates the effects of a respondent's background characteristics. The second model adds to that three long-term political attitudes—partisanship, national identity, and unification/independence preference. The third model then includes an assessment of how the two variables of contacts shape the general perception of China. Finally, Table 4 contains an HLM model exploring the effect of regional contexts upon respondents' overall disposition toward China. Taken as a whole, the chi-squared statistics of the omnibus test of the models

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[5] The source for unemployment rate and household income growth rate in 2014 is the "Important Statistical Indicators of Counties and Cities" (縣市重要統計指標：http://statdb.dgbas.gov.tw/pxweb/ Dialog/statfile9.asp）. The data for the number of tourists in 2014 come from the "Executive Information System, Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Transportation and Communications, Republic of China" (中華民國交通部觀光局行政資訊系統：http://admin.taiwan.net.tw/statistics/market.aspx?no=133）. The source of data on the 2014 urban land price is the "Monthly Bulletin of Interior Statistics" (內政統計月報：http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/month/list.htm）.

[6] Although the scale for the dependent variable ranges from "very good," "good," "bad," to "very bad," on a scale of 1 to 4, methodologically speaking it should be treated as an ordinal variable rather than an interval one.

[7] The ordered logit model is also known as the proportional odds model because the odds ratio of the event is independent of the choice of category (j). The odds ratio is assumed to be constant for all categories (Fienberg 1980, 110; McCullagh and Nelder 1989, 151-155).

and the overall model fit demonstrate, at the very least, an encouraging initial step toward a persuasive and respectable explanation of public perception of China.[8] The parameter estimations show statistical significance for some variables, and they will be discussed below.

Table 3   Ordered Logit Regression Estimates for General Impression of China

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
Intercept 1	3.142***	.207	2.881***	.260	2.366***	.273
Intercept 2	-.001	.172	-.639*	.229	-1.296***	.252
Intercept 3	-1.728***	.179	-2.695***	.243	-3.553***	.271
Gender (Male)	.192#	.101	.213*	.112	.157	.111
Age (60 years or above as reference group)						
20–29 years	-.846***	.227	-.415#	.239	-.585*	.248
30–39 years	-.364#	.173	-.244	.183	-.310	.189
40–49 years	-.443**	.161	-.436**	.170	-.505**	.176
50–59 years	-.182	.147	-.272#	.155	-.325#	.161
Education (primary school and below as reference group)						
Junior high school	.109	.235	.105	.249	.030	.259
High or vocational school	.335#	.200	.267	.214	.182	.223
Some college and higher	.284	.194	.041	.209	-.221	.220
Ethnicity (Taiwanese Minnan as reference group)						
Taiwanese Hakka	.222	.148	.004	.155	-.008	.159
Mainlander	.850	.147	.079	.161	.018	.166
Party identification (independent as reference group)						
Pan-Blue supporter	–	–	.626***	.147	.519**	.152
Pan-Green supporter	–	–	-.711***	.149	-.596***	.154
National identity (both as reference group)						
Taiwanese	–	–	-.567***	.124	-.316*	.130
Chinese	–	–	.057	.257	.033	.263
Unification/independence preference (maintain the status quo as reference group)						
Taiwan independence	–	–	-.701***	.135	-.640***	.139
China unification	–	–	.806***	.183	.602**	.187
Exposure to China (zero times as reference group)						
4 or more times	–	–	–	–	.138	.157
1–3 times	–	–	–	–	.264#	.137

[8] An examination of the correlation coefficients of the independent variables reveals that the partial coefficients are not highly multicollinear. Due to limitations of space, the data analysis cannot be presented in detail. The author is happy to provide such information to anyone who is interested.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.	Coefficient	S.E.
Willingness to interact with China (unwilling as reference group)						
Willing	–	–	–	–	1.799***	.156
Neutral	–	–	–	–	.716***	.134
-2 Log likelihood	720.523		1,852.453		2,373.821	
chi-square of overall model fit	62.191		378.867		515.936	
D.F.	10		16		20	
Nagelkerke R-squared	0.047		0.262		0.348	
N	1,438		1,405		1,372	

Source: Survey of the Image of China.

Notes: Cell entries are unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors. #p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Table 4　HLM Estimates for General Impression of China

	Coefficient	S.E.
Intercept	-4.337***	.404
Gender (male)	.194#	.111
Age (over 60 years as reference group)		
20–29 years	-.565*	.248
30–39 years	-.278	.189
40–49 years	-.447**	.176
50–59 years	-.292#	.161
Ethnicity (Taiwanese Minnan as reference group)		
Taiwanese Hakka	-.292#	.161
Mainlander	-.100	.165
Education (primary school and below as reference group)		
Some college and higher	-.071	.220
High or vocational school	.264	.221
Junior high school	.207	.258
Party identification (independent as reference group)		
Pan-Blue supporter	.512**	.153
Pan-Green supporter	-.538**	.154
National identity (both as reference group)		
Taiwanese	-.380**	.130
Chinese	-.066	.264
Unification/independence preference (maintain the status quo as reference group)		
Taiwan independence	-.741***	.140
China unification	.570**	.189

	Coefficient	S.E.
Exposure to China (zero times as reference group)		
4 or more times	.142	.159
1–3 times	.293[#]	.137
Willingness to interact with China (unwilling as reference group)		
Willing	1.719[***]	.200
Neutral	1.109[***]	.125
Unemployment rate (relatively high [decrease 0.2%–0.4%] as reference group)		
About the same (decrease 0.5%)	-.296[#]	.135
Relatively low (decrease over 0.6%)	-.164	.290
Number of tourists (decrease [below 0%] as reference group)		
About the same (0%–1%)	.258	.220
Increase (over 1%)	.463[*]	.213
Urban land price (relatively low [increase less than 10%] as reference group)		
Increase moderately (increase 10%–20%)	.171	.236
Relatively high (increase over 20%)	.162	.242
Household income (decrease [below 0%] as reference group)		
About the same (increase 0%–5%)	.412[*]	.200
Increase (over 5%)	-.187	.563
Number of observation	1,371	
Number of group	21	

Source: Survey of the Image of China.

Notes: Cell entries are unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors. [#]$p<.10$; [*]$p<.05$; [**]$p<.01$; [***]$p<.001$.

As the data show, the variables of gender and age have significant effects on people's perceptions of China. To be more precise, the figures reveal that women in general tend to hold more negative views of China than men. In addition, age is consistently and rather strongly related to evaluation of China. Respondents aged fewer than sixty are more likely to have negative dispositions than those aged over sixty. Collectively, these sociodemographic factors explain a modest amount of variance in feelings about China.

Party identification has long been considered a highly significant determinant of political behavior in Taiwan. As is generally found, partisanship has a critical impact on impression of China. While pan-Blue supporters are more warmly disposed toward China, pan-Green supporters have a more unfavorable general attitude than independents, a finding that conforms to the research expectation. The pan-Green political alliance's ideological platform is based on Taiwan having a separate identity from China and the need to implement policies that enhance

Taiwan's cultural, economic, and political separation from the mainland. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that those who profess support for pan-Green political views tend to believe that greater interaction with China has negative consequences, and accordingly their perception of China as a "threat" to Taiwan leads to an overall unfavorable impression. While pan-Blue supporters' views of China may vary based on economic and cross-Strait policies, the pan-Greens can be regarded as being defined largely by their unified support for the maintenance of greater social distance between the two sides of the Strait.

The same kind of lopsidedness is found for national identity, or what is sometimes termed "ethnic consciousness," which is widely regarded as a key factor in research on Taiwan's politics (Fell 2005; Wachman 1994). Over the decades when Taiwan was ruled by a KMT-controlled, mainlander-dominated authoritarian regime, a China-centered ideology was the mainstream value. However, since the beginning of the democratization process in the mid-1980s, a Taiwanese-centered consciousness has gradually risen to prominence. This is confirmed by there being a greater number of citizens who identified themselves as "Taiwanese only" compared to those who chose "Chinese only." It is found that those who identify solely as Taiwanese are inclined to hold a negative view of China, compared to those who identify themselves as both Taiwanese and Chinese. Conversely, those who identify as Chinese show no statistically significant correlation in the analyses.

Intimately connected with national identity is the debate over the unification/independence issue. Previous studies indicate that this is a theme that attracts a great deal of attention in Taiwan politics, and it is also considered to be a pivot variable in research on political behavior (Hsiau 2000). With "maintaining the status quo" as the reference, both Taiwan independence and China unification show equally statistically significant and strong correlations. As hypothesized, the findings suggest that individuals who favor independence have markedly unfavorable views of China, while the impressions of those who are pro-unification are positive.

In the model, the influence of contextual variables—unemployment rate, number of tourists, urban land price, and household income—is also taken into account. The reason for considering these factors is simple and straightforward: it is generally accepted that to gain the goodwill of Taiwanese society and the Taiwanese people, the Chinese authorities have encouraged greater economic engagement leading to interdependence between the two sides. From this we may deduce that those who reside in an area that has closer business relations with China will support closer economic ties, as a more open market would be more likely to bring them economic

benefits.

As shown from the HLM model in Table 4, only two environmental variables emerge as statistically significant and in the anticipated direction, while the others predict only a little variance in the identified model. As hypothesized, those people who reside in areas where the number of tourists has increased and which have a greater prospect of benefiting from cross-Strait economic interaction are more likely to have a positive overall impression of China. Similarly, in a situation in which Taiwan has experienced several years of low economic growth, Taiwanese people whose household income has remained constant over that period tend to have a much more positive attitude toward China.

Whether contact has changed Taiwanese attitudes toward China is the major concern of this research. The same logic correlating exposure to China and willingness to go there with overall disposition can also be clearly seen in the parameter estimations for the logistic analyses. However, the parameters of the "exposure to China" variable merely show a positive but conditional correlation between exposure and impression of China. This means that, compared to those with no exposure (i.e., never been to China), those with some exposure (between one and three visits) clearly display a favorable attitude toward China. However, the attitude of those with frequent exposure (four visits or more) is not significantly different from people who have had no contact with China, indicating that frequent contact with the mainland does not necessarily produce a positive overall impression of China.

Regarding the subjective measurement, the data show a consistent correlation between willingness to interact with China and general disposition toward China. The positivity of their parameters shows a correlation between greater willingness to interact and more positive views of China. That is, being more willing to allow one's children to go to mainland China corresponds to a more positive impression of China. It reveals a strong divergence of opinion regarding China among those who are positive or neutral about sending their offspring there, as compared to those who are negative. The strong statistical significance, as well as the large magnitude, of the positive parameters linking willingness and neutrality with impression of China reflects the established bipolarity of Taiwanese affinity with China. It is even the case that, in terms of the significance of contact, it is willingness to interact that leads to a more positive view of China, rather than frequency of exposure, ceteris paribus.

V. Conclusion

The issue of cross-Strait relations and the China factor has long been the focus of attention in Taiwan's political life, and in addition, it is deemed to be a key variable in research on the ideological differences between political parties (Chu 2004; Hsieh and Niou 1996; Wu 2005; 2016). Given Taiwan's unique historical background and sociocultural environment, cross-Strait relations and other related issues (e.g., ethnicity, national identity, and disputes over unification with or independence from mainland China) are all causes of social cleavage.

The China issue is likely to be even more salient in the wake of the DPP's overwhelming victory in the 2016 presidential and legislative elections. At the time of writing, the Tsai Ing-wen administration is facing a series of challenges that stem from cross-Strait relations. The channels of communication between Taipei and Beijing are hardly running freely, and it is far from clear how dialogue between the two sides can be maintained. The Taipei government is also presented with the difficult task of surviving in an atmosphere of increasing tension between the United States and China. To make matters worse, since the Sunflower student movement of 2014 and the protests against changes to the senior high school curriculum in 2015, the Taiwan public's opinion of the Beijing government has deteriorated and Beijing is generally portrayed as a political threat. In these circumstances, the public image of China has become a critical topic in Taiwan politics.

This study empirically evaluates whether contacts between Taiwan and China do matter where Taiwanese perceptions of China are concerned. The analysis is based on two competing theories: contact theory and group threat theory. According to contact theory, increased contact between two social groups tends to enhance mutual trust and cooperation, causing the two sides to develop more positive impressions of each other. Group threat theory, in contrast, argues that more interaction and coexistence within the same environment inevitably increases competition between the two groups for limited socioeconomic resources. The consequence of this competition is an increased sense of threat, with perceptions becoming more negative as contacts become more frequent and relationships more complicated.

This study examines which of the two theories better explains relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. The findings confirm, but also revise, the notion of contact theory. The evidence demonstrates that those who have greater exposure to China, defined by the number of times they have visited China in the previous five years, have a more favorable attitude toward

China. Conversely, those who have little or no experience of going to China are least likely to have a positive overall image of the country.

This trend was further reflected in the correlation between social distance and impression of China.[9] When asked about their willingness to allow their children to go to China for work, study, or marriage, those who were most willing also had the most positive impression of China. This correlation between willingness to interact with China and overall impression reinforces contact theory. Increased contact has led to more positive opinions of China, and these positive opinions are likely to lead to yet more contact. This positive relationship is therefore shown to be bidirectional rather than unidirectional.

The Taiwanese public's perceptions of mainland China are also correlated with political ideology and social environment. Some of the variables are statistically significant, including party identification, national identity, and unification/independence preference. As expected, a positive correlation is apparent for increased number of tourists, and this implies that beneficiaries of Taiwan's economic integration with China tend to have a more favorable opinion of China. Together, these variables allow us to see which of Taiwan's sociodemographic attributes are associated with affinity with China. An overview of the control variables shows that those who identify themselves as pan-Blue supporters and who support reunification with China have more positive attitudes toward China than those who are pan-Greens, who see themselves as Taiwanese, and who support Taiwan independence.

While this finding by and large confirms the "contact" thesis, it may be necessary to improve its theoretical frame. In my opinion, contact theory is appealing because it is theoretically straightforward, takes social institutions into account, and squares fairly well with previous research in the United States on interracial communication and cooperation. Its weaknesses are closely related to its strengths, however. In essence, it is clearly a too simplistic and intuitive perspective. It is also naïve to assume that increased exposure to different social groups alone will foster a more harmonious and cooperative society. This study suggests that the theory should be modified to account for the results. Interestingly, "friend" and "foe" attitudes are mirror images of each other. The data demonstrate that more exposure is not enough.

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[9] One reviewer constructively pointed out that this study is based on a cross-sectional survey and there was no time-series or panel data. I admit that the lack of panel data that can be used to address the validity of the findings is a weakness of this work, so there is obviously potential for future research in this field.

Increased willingness to interact seems to be more critical in creating a favorable disposition, thereby cultivating greater mutual trust and cooperation.

<div align="center">*   *   *</div>

Appendix 1　Survey Questions and Coding of Variables

General Impression of China. "Is your overall impression of mainland China good or bad?"（您對於中國大陸的整體印象，是好還是不好？）(4=*very good*; 3=*good*; 2=*bad*; 1=*very bad*)

Impression of Chinese tourists. "Is your overall impression of tourists from mainland China good or bad?"（您對於來台觀光大陸遊客的印象，是好還是不好？）(4=*very good*; 3=*good*; 2=*bad*; 1=*very bad*)

Impression of Chinese electronic products. "Is your overall impression of the electronic products made in mainland China (for example, Mobile Internet, Lenovo, ZTE Corporation) good or bad?"（請問，您對於中國大陸 3C 電子產品品牌［例如：小米機、聯想、中興電子］的印象，是好還是不好？）(4=*very good*; 3=*good*; 2=*bad*; 1=*very bad*)

Impression of tour quality in China. "Is your overall impression of the tourism experience in mainland China good or bad?"（您對於到中國大陸旅遊品質的印象，是好還是不好？）(4=*very good*; 3=*good*; 2=*bad*; 1=*very bad*)

Impression of Chinese leaders. "Generally speaking, is your overall impression of the national leaders of mainland China good or bad?"（一般而言，您對於大陸國家領導人的印象，是好還是不好？）(4=*very good*; 3=*good*; 2=*bad*; 1=*very bad*)

Exposure to China. "In the past five years, how many times have you and your family members travelled to mainland China (not including Hong Kong and Macau) for a family visit, study, work, or investment?"（請問，在過去五年，您和您的家人去大陸探親、讀書、工作、投資，但不包括去香港、澳門，去過幾次？）(the continuous variable is divided into three categories: 1=*zero times*; 2=*1–3 times*; 3=*4 or more times*)

Willingness to interact with China. "If you have sons or daughters, are you willing to let them go to the mainland for study or work?"（請問，如果您有兒子或女兒，願不願意讓他們到大陸讀書或工作？） and "If you have sons or daughters, are you willing to let them marry mainlanders?"（請問，如果您有兒子或女兒，願不願意讓他們跟大陸人結婚？）(4=*very willing*; 3=*willing*; 2=*unwilling*; 1=*very unwilling*) (the variable is combined through direct addition of the respondents' separate answers to the two questions into new values of 2 to 8. This study then divides this new additive index into three categories: *willing* [8 and 7], *neutral* [6 and 5], *and unwilling* [4, 3, and 2])

Gender. Respondent's gender.（受訪者的性別）(1=*male*; 2=*female*)

Age. Respondent's age measured in years.（請問您是民國哪一年出生的？）(the continuous variable is divided into five categories: *20–29 years*, *30–39 years*, *40–49 years*, *50–59 years*, *over 60 years*)

Ethnicity. Ethnic background of respondent's father.（請問您父親是臺灣客家人、臺灣閩南人、大陸各省市還是臺灣原住民？）(1=*mainlander*; 2=*Taiwanese Hakka*; 3=*Taiwanese Minnan*)

Education. Respondent's level of educational attainment measured on a four-tier scale.（　請問，您的最高學歷是什麼［臺語：您最高讀到叨位］？）(1=*primary school and below* [through 6th grade]; 2=*junior high school* [grades 7 to 9]; 3=*high or vocational school*; 4=*some college and higher*)

Party identification. "There are a number of political parties in Taiwan, to which political party are you particularly close?"（臺灣有許多的政黨，請問哪個政黨和您的主張比較接近？）(1=*pan-Blue* [Kuomintang, People First Party, New Party, and leaning toward pan-Blue]; 2=*pan-Green* [Democratic Progressive Party, Green Party, Taiwan Solidarity Union, and leaning toward pan-Green]; 3=*independent* [vote for candidate rather than party and none of the above])

National identity. "In our society, some people say they are Taiwanese, some people say they are Chinese, and some people say they are both Taiwanese and Chinese. Do you think you are Taiwanese, Chinese, or both?"（在我們社會裡，有人說自己是臺灣人，也有人說自己是中國人，也有人說都是。請問您認為自己是臺灣人、中國人，或者都是？）(1=*Taiwanese*; 2=*Chinese*; 3=*both*)

Unification/independence preference. "In our society, some people say Taiwan should be independent immediately, some people say Taiwan should be unified with mainland China immediately, and some people say Taiwan should maintain the status quo. Which of these positions do you agree with?"（在我們的社會裡，有人說臺灣應該儘快獨立，也有人說臺灣和大陸應該儘快統一，也有人主張應該維持現狀，請問，您自己比較贊成哪一種說法？）(1=*China unification*; 2=*Taiwan independence*; 3=*maintain the status quo*)

Appendix 2   Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Observation	Mean	Standard deviation	Maximum	Minimum
Level 1					
General Image	1,478	2.595	.800	4	1
Gender	1,552	1.499	.500	2	1
Age	1,512	51.000	13.562	93	22
Ethnicity	1,510	2.574	.716	3	1
Education	1,551	1.810	1.007	4	1
Party identification	1,517	1.784	.774	3	1
National identity	1,544	1.852	.963	3	1
Unification/independence preference	1,519	2.377	.860	3	1
Exposure to China	1,541	3.026	11.441	200	0
Willingness to interact with China	1,506	2.293	.694	3	1
Level 2					
Unemployment rate	21	-.486	.156	-.200	-.900
Number of tourists	21	-.748	2.709	4.300	-7.700
Urban land price	21	16.382	9.109	36.250	1.130
Household income	21	5.175	7.389	32.830	-1.520

Sources: Survey of the Image of China. The data for unemployment rate and household income growth rate in 2014 come from the "Important Statistical Indicators of Counties and Cities"（縣市重要統計指標）. The number of tourists in 2014 is the "Executive Information System, Tourism Bureau, Ministry of Transportation and Communications, Republic of China"（中華民國交通部觀光局行政資訊系統）. The data on the 2014 urban land price is the "Monthly Bulletin of Interior Statistics"（內政統計月報）.

Notes: There are 22 counties and cities on the first level, but only 21 on the second level. Lianjiang County has been excluded because it had only one respondent. The units for unemployment rate and the number of tourists in 2014 are percentages.

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接觸有效嗎？民眾對於崛起中國的普遍印象

吳重禮 *

《本文摘要》

　　中國崛起成為世界重要的強權國家，就政治和經濟而言，這無疑是個關鍵課題，然而與中國更多的交流互動如何影響民眾觀感，這項議題仍有待探索。本文旨在檢證兩個相互競逐的觀點，亦即「接觸理論」(contact theory) 和「團體威脅理論」(group threat theory)，以試圖瞭解兩岸交流互動如何影響臺灣民眾對於中國的印象。更確切地說，本文聚焦於，隨著兩岸接觸益形頻繁密切之際，臺灣民眾對於中國的整體觀感，究竟產生正面效果還是負面認知？在研究方法方面，除了沿用既有學術文獻使用的客觀接觸測量（前往中國的次數）之外，本文採用主觀接觸測量（與中國互動的意願）。在研究模型方面，本文分析個人層級和集體層級的資料；前者為 2014 年全國電話調查數據，後者則是縣市地區的脈絡效果。實證資料顯示，主觀接觸測量比客觀接觸測量更能解釋民眾的中國觀感；其次，地區脈絡變數對於臺灣民眾對於中國的整體認知，也有若干的解釋效果。整體而言，研究結果支持接觸理論的適用性，儘管如此，本文認為，該理論可能有流於簡化和直觀之虞，因此有其修訂之必要。相關數據證實，徒然增加雙方往來的頻繁次數，並不足以促進兩岸的信任和合作；反之，提升交流互動的主觀意願，始有助於提升彼此的正面觀感。

關鍵詞：中國崛起、接觸理論、團體威脅理論、中國印象、社會距離

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