Please Be My Friend: The Taiwanese Public's Ally Preferences between the United States and China[*]

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Abstract

This study takes advantage of Taiwan public opinion data to examine citizens' views on whether their country should ally with the United States or China. It tests two hypotheses on how citizens arrive at their choice of an ally: ambivalence toward both the US and China, and an evaluation of which of the two countries is the more powerful. The results reveal that the proportion of the Taiwanese public that would pick China as an ally (41.7%) is almost the same as the proportion that would opt for the US (44.5%). Pan-Blue supporters and those favoring unification with China have a higher probability of choosing China, while Taiwan independence supporters and those identifying as Taiwanese only are less likely to choose China as an ally for Taiwan. Logistic regression analyses show that more ambivalent citizens are more likely to choose China, and that judgement of which country is most powerful is a conditional predictor of choice of ally.

Keywords: US-China relations, ambivalence theory, ally selection, public opinion

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There is a long history of research in international relations into the strategies employed by small (or secondary) states in navigating a global security landscape dominated by the great powers. How small states can maximize their chances for self-development and survival as independent sovereign entities capable of exercising their influence and determining their own fate remains a salient issue (Ingebritsen et al. 2006; Keohane 1969). Changes in the international system following the end of the Cold War and the emergence of China as a major power have also prompted interest among scholars and policymakers in the behavior options of small states.

Despite the lack of consensus regarding how a "small state" should be defined, scholars have made progress in understanding the various needs, challenges, opportunities, and limitations of these states (Archer, Bailes, and Wivel 2014). Small states can choose one of several strategies for achieving greater stability and security. They can align—"bandwagon"—with the external source of danger, join an alliance to "balance" against some other dominant power or prevailing threat, follow a "hedging" strategy that is neither purely balancing nor bandwagoning (Lim and Cooper 2015), or maintain their autonomy by staying neutral (Vaicekauskaitė 2017). The adoption of one of these strategies by a particular state reflects the circumstances and susceptibilities of that state, but all of these strategies have the same overall objective: to obtain more security and gain more influence in relation to other actors in the international system.

In this study, we examine the alignment strategies for Taiwan, an island-state in East Asia. Unlike scholars who broach the topic from the perspective of the state or the level of political elites, we focus on how Taiwan citizens assess the island's alliance options. In a representative survey of Taiwanese, we asked the question, "If Taiwan could select only ONE ally, which country should Taiwan choose?" In particular, we forced respondents to make a choice between the United States, the established global hegemon and superpower, and China, the assertive new challenger and revisionist state in today's international politics.[1]

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[1] From a theoretical standpoint, it may be argued that by forcing respondents to choose between the US and China, we are actually presenting them with a "false dilemma." As one anonymous reviewer noted, "Taiwan does not need to pick only one country as its ally, and it could successfully maintain a balance between the two powerful states." Our general response to this critique is that while we concede that it is possible for Taiwan not to take sides and to maintain good relations with both China and the US, we feel that the conditions under which Taiwan could effectively adopt a two-handed (or hedging) strategy are quickly disappearing. In lay terms, does Taiwan possess the capacity to "have its cake and eat it?" Another related question is, why would the superpowers put up with countries that engage in such behavior? Given these questions, we believe that the study's research question is a fair one; moreover, it can yield interesting insights into how ordinary citizens regard allies and Taiwan's relationship with the great powers.

I. Why Taiwan?

Our interest in the opinion of the Taiwanese people lies in the fact that since Taiwan began its democratization process over three decades ago, the electorate has become an important player in the policymaking process, effectively holding "veto power" over government policy (Chu and Nathan 2008). As Dahl (1971, 1) states, "a key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens." Since public opinion—itself a collection of citizen views and preferences—is an influential force in the determination of public policy, decision makers ignore it at their peril.

Now, the question whether public opinion affects government policy—particularly foreign policy—in democracies, and how it might do so, has been the subject of long-running debate in political science. Broadly speaking, scholarship in the aftermath of World War II yielded what came to be known as the "Almond-Lippmann consensus": a pessimistic and cynical view that held that public opinion on foreign policy issues was not only ill-informed and volatile, but also lacked coherence and structure (Converse 1964; Holsti 1992). Moreover, these scholars argued that because voters are likely to prioritize and focus on domestic concerns, elected leaders are often free to pursue a foreign affairs agenda with little regard for what ordinary citizens think. They therefore concluded that, in the final analysis, public opinion has little if any impact on foreign policy.

In reaction to the above postwar consensus, an extensive body of research has emerged over the past few decades challenging the consensus's main propositions (Holsti 1992; 2004; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987). As many have documented, public attitudes toward foreign affairs do indeed have coherence and structure, and the public reacts to foreign issues or world events in predictable, prudent, and reasonably sensible ways (Aldrich et al. 2006; Kertzer and Zeitzoff 2017; Page and Shapiro 1992). Some of these studies also illustrate the pathways through which the general public can affect foreign policy outcomes in democracies. For example, the public can shape foreign policy by influencing who gets elected to office—that is, voters use the ballot box to select those politicians whose foreign policies are most congenial to them. Public opinion can also influence policy by constraining what leaders do after taking office, simply because ignoring the public or pursuing unpopular policies can be politically costly, weakening a policymaker's mandate to govern effectively, making it harder to achieve other policy goals, and worst of all, contributing to that politician's defeat in the next election (Gelpi and Grieco 2015;

Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2018).

The debate over the impact of public opinion is not only interesting in and of itself, it is also important for understanding, explaining, and predicting what foreign policies a democracy will pursue. Yet in the search for insights into the connection between public opinion and foreign policy, we often have little idea of what ordinary citizens actually think about particular foreign affairs issues or what their preferred choices are, and we are even more ignorant about how they arrive at their opinions or preferences. Hence, this study contributes to the literature by examining the alliance preferences of Taiwanese citizens and exploring the possible factors that affect their choice. To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to investigate the Taiwan public's alliance preferences.

Furthermore, our decision to limit the choice of potential allies to just two—the US and China—was deliberate, because these two powers mean more to Taiwan than any others do from an economic, national security, or foreign relations perspective. In all candor, almost every country in Asia—and increasingly in other regions of the world—is confronted with a binary choice between the US and China, and Taiwan is no exception. What sets Taiwan apart is its unique and multifaceted relationship with China, and its security arrangement with the US under the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 (TRA).

Indeed, the choice between the US and China is a difficult one for Taiwan. First, let us consider China. Separated by a narrow strait no more than 110 miles across, Taiwan and China share, as far as the majority of Taiwan citizens are concerned, not only a common ancestral background, but also similar culture, language, and traditions. Economic interdependence has been growing since the latter began its program of reform and opening up, making China Taiwan's largest trading partner by far. Yet China also poses an existential security threat to Taiwan and its democratic way of life, as Beijing claims sovereignty over the island and does not recognize its status as an independent and legitimate state. The Chinese government has neither renounced the right to use force against Taiwan, nor has it relented in its efforts to diplomatically isolate Taiwan and limit the island country's international space. China's authoritarian regime, tight control over society, and dubious record on safeguarding human rights and freedoms also make it unappealing to Taiwanese voters who have enjoyed the fruits of democracy.

By contrast, the US is the sole guarantor of Taiwan's security at present. Though formal diplomatic relations were severed in 1979, the US has maintained close but unofficial ties with the government and people of Taiwan through the TRA. As stipulated by this Act, America

has an "abiding interest" in the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and views the use of force against Taiwan as a matter of grave concern (Bush 2017, 18-19). To that end, the US sells defensive weaponry to Taiwan so that it can maintain sufficient self-defense capability to deter a Chinese attack. Nevertheless, even with the TRA and other US government statements and guidelines—such as the "Six Assurances to Taiwan"—firmly in place, feelings of uncertainty about America's commitment to Taiwan persist on the island.[2]

Doubts about the strength of US support for Taiwan have also increased as China has become more powerful (Wang 2013, 108). With Donald Trump in the White House, Taipei is fearful about being used as a "pawn" or a "bargaining chip" in the great power competition (*The Straits Times*, July 1, 2017),[3] especially under Trump's "America first" foreign policy and in view of the on-going US-China trade conflict. Thus, as is the case with China, Taiwanese may also have mixed feelings about the US, even though the two countries share a deep commitment to democratic values, freedom, and human rights.

II. Research Hypotheses

Unless a state has decided to pursue a policy of complete neutrality (Switzerland is the best example), most states establish alliances or enter into cooperative schemes with some other (more) powerful actors in the system. For the purposes of this study, we consider two basic choice-making processes that ordinary people might employ in choosing an ally for Taiwan.

As mentioned above, the Taiwanese public has a complex relationship with China. As Achen and Wang (2017, 4) emphasize, "for Taiwan's citizens... China represents simultaneously a cultural heritage, a security threat, and an economic opportunity." They note that cross-Strait

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[2] Readers interested in Taiwan citizens' confidence or skepticism about Washington's commitment to defend the island under different scenarios can consult the Taiwan National Security Survey (TNSS), which is sponsored by the Program in Asian Security Studies at Duke University. Since 2003, the TNSS has tracked responses to the question of Taiwanese confidence in US support. Conversely, readers interested in how the US public and foreign policy elites view sending American troops to defend Taiwan may refer to the annual surveys conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. According to the last survey in which the Taiwan question was included, no more than one-third of Americans favored the use of US troops to defend Taiwan (Smeltz et al. 2015, 29).

[3] Jermyn Chow, 2017, "Taiwan risks being used as strategic pawn, analysts warn," *The Straits Times*, July 1, https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/taiwan-risks-being-used-as-strategic-pawn-analysts-warn (accessed November 8, 2019).

relations are the most salient issue and cause of cleavage in Taiwan, as the China factor "affects almost all aspects of the island citizens' political attitudes and behaviors" (Achen and Wang 2017, 11). To cope with these mixed and multidimensional meanings of China, Taiwan citizens have developed a "pragmatic but ambivalent" attitude toward China (Wang 2017, 42).

Yet what is ambivalence? Broadly conceived, ambivalence is the "co-existence of both positive and negative evaluations" of an attitude object (Lavine et al. 1998, 401), or "an individual's endorsement of competing considerations relevant to evaluating an attitude object" (Lavine 2001, 915). In the aftermath of a resurgence of interest in attitudinal ambivalence among psychology researchers (e.g., Cacioppo, Gardner, and Berntson 1997), recent public opinion research has increasingly acknowledged that individuals' political attitudes and beliefs may not necessarily be unidimensional and bipolar as traditionally conceptualized (Craig and Martinez 2005; Rudolph and Popp 2007; Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin 1995). Instead, citizens regularly internalize both sides of some issue or attitude object, forming and developing thoughts and feelings that are not simply positive or negative, but simultaneously positive and negative, or "ambivalent" (Lavine 2001, 915). To date, studies of political ambivalence have focused on policy issues (e.g., Alvarez and Brehm 1995; Feldman and Zaller 1992), candidates (e.g., Lavine 2001), and political parties (e.g., Basinger and Lavine 2005).

In this study, we contend that people's views about an individual country may also be assessed by their positive and negative reactions toward that country, and measured in the same way as issue ambivalence, party ambivalence, or candidate ambivalence. Taking this a step further, we hypothesize that Taiwanese feelings of *ambivalence* with respect to China or the United States would extend to the choice of selecting one (or the other) as Taiwan's ally. In other words, our concept of citizens' ambivalence in the process of ally selection focuses not merely on their overall attitudes toward an individual country, but also on the extent to which they consistently favor one country over the other (e.g., strongly liking the US and strongly disliking China), or whether they are instead inconsistent, favoring one country in some aspects and the other country in other dimensions.

Based on earlier discussion of the pros and cons of allying with each country, we infer that the average Taiwanese would likely have more mixed, tentative, or ambivalent feelings about China than they would about the US. This hesitancy in picking China is reflected in the amount of effort that is sometimes needed to explain why Taiwan would be better off partnering with Beijing than with Washington. Put another way, choosing the US is "easier to justify" to others;

by contrast, choosing China likely requires more thought and effort, given the hostile and often contentious relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait over the past seven decades.

Now, there is no denying that many Taiwanese citizens also have mixed feelings or doubts about the US, particularly in relation to Washington's actual manifestations of support for Taiwan. The older generation of Taiwanese may vividly recall how the US "abandoned" the Republic of China in the late 1970s when it decided to switch diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China. Nevertheless, after four decades of repairing relations between Washington and Taipei, we do not think that the Taiwanese public's attitudes toward the US today would be as hostile (or as contradictory) as those associated with China, even with an unconventional and unpredictable leader like President Donald Trump at the helm in Washington. Therefore, we formulate our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. The Taiwanese public's choice of an ally between the US and China is positively related to their level of ambivalence. Specifically, the probability of choosing China as an ally increases as citizens' level of ambivalence increases, while the opposite pattern is true for choosing the United States.

Second, we hypothesize that when respondents answer the question about their preference for an ally, their answers are related to their individual judgments about the material capabilities of the countries concerned. It would be logical to pick the more powerful country as one's ally, assuming everything else about those countries, including the threat levels they pose, is equal. The underlying assumption is that if two possible allies, A and B, are equal in every respect except that one is stronger than the other, then one would be better off befriending and siding with the more powerful one, not confronting or making an enemy of it.[4] So based on these observations, we formulate the second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. The Taiwanese public's choice of an ally between the US and China is positively related to their judgment about which of the two countries is the more powerful.

III. Data and Methods

We use the data provided by the 2017 Survey of the Image of China, which was collected as a research project sponsored by Taiwan's Ministry of Science and Technology. This survey

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[4]   This line of reasoning resembles the logic of the traditional bandwagoner: a person who only considers either the absolute or relative power of states when choosing allies, not prevailing threats (Walt 1987).

is based on a nationally representative probability sample of adults living in all of Taiwan's 22 cities and counties, including the six special municipalities of Taipei, New Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Tainan, and Kaohsiung. Computer-assisted telephone interviews were conducted on December 19-25, 2017. The survey was completed by 1,809 eligible respondents, for a sampling error of ±2.3% at the 95% confidence level. The wording of the questionnaire, the scale scores of the measures, and descriptive statistics of all the variables are presented in the appendices.

The dependent variable is a Taiwan citizen's choice of an ally between China and the US—if given the option of choosing only one—with China coded as 1 and the US coded as 0. Responses other than these two options, such as "neither," "both," "no opinion," "another country," and "don't know/can't say," were treated as missing and thus dropped from further analysis.[5] The first explanatory variable, the level of a respondent's ambivalence toward the US and China, was developed via 12 four-point Likert-type questionnaire items about the respondent's impressions and perceptions of the US and China (six questions for each country). For each of the two countries, survey respondents were asked about (a) their overall impression of the country, (b) the state of the potential ally's economy, (c) the strength of its military, (d) the level of democracy as practiced in the country, (e) the potential ally's cultural level, and (f) its overall level of friendliness toward Taiwan.

For each of the six questions above, a positive answer (very good/good, very high/somewhat high) adds one point to that country's score, while for a negative answer (very poor/poor, very low/somewhat low), one point is deducted. Under this coding scheme, each respondent could have between zero and six things she finds positive (or "likes") about the US, and between zero and six things she finds negative (or "dislikes") about the US. The same process is repeated for respondents' views of China.[6] Following Basinger and Lavine's (2005) work on voters'

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[5] Approximately 13.8% of the respondents provided answers other than the two options offered. While we were initially concerned that dropping these cases might lead to biased results, additional analysis using the multiple imputation method produced largely similar parameter estimates as the ones reported in this study.

[6] Note that the total score for likes or dislikes for each country is six or less, since there are only six questions asked for each country. Maximum ambivalence occurs when a respondent has an equal level of liking and disliking for both countries. If a respondent "likes" or "dislikes" the US and China in identical terms (for example, six positive reactions and zero negative reactions for both countries, or three positives and three negatives each for both countries), he/she is said to be completely ambivalent. Conversely, minimum ambivalence occurs when a respondent likes everything about one country (six positive and zero negative reactions) and dislikes everything about the other (zero positive and six

ambivalence toward political parties, we created an index using the formula below:

$$Amb = \frac{US + CN}{2} - |US - CN|$$

where $US =$ (the number of "likes" or strengths about the US + the number of "dislikes" or weaknesses about China)/2, and

$CN =$ (the number of "likes" or strengths about China + the number of "dislikes" or weaknesses about the US)/2

For the second explanatory variable, the "more powerful country" is measured by two items. Respondents were asked, "Of the US and China, which country do you think is the most powerful in the world *today*?" and "Of the US and China, which country do you think will be the most powerful *in 20 years*?" By adding a temporal element to the questions, we gauge whether respondents are optimistic about the future capabilities of the US and China.

IV. Discussion of Findings

Respondents' perceptions of the US and China in six aspects or dimensions are presented in Figures 1 through 6. Overall, Taiwan citizens (a) have a better impression of the US; (b) consider China's economy to be in much better shape; (c) feel that both countries are equally strong militarily; (d) have much higher regard for the level of democracy in the US compared to China, which is patently not a democracy; (e) think that the US has a higher cultural level than China; and (f) judge the US to be much friendlier to Taiwan than China.
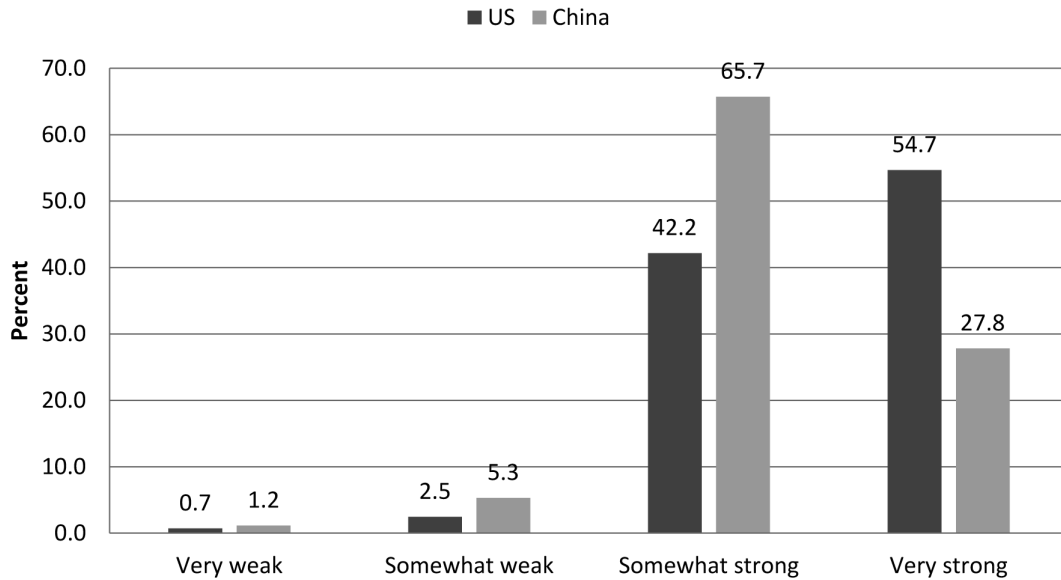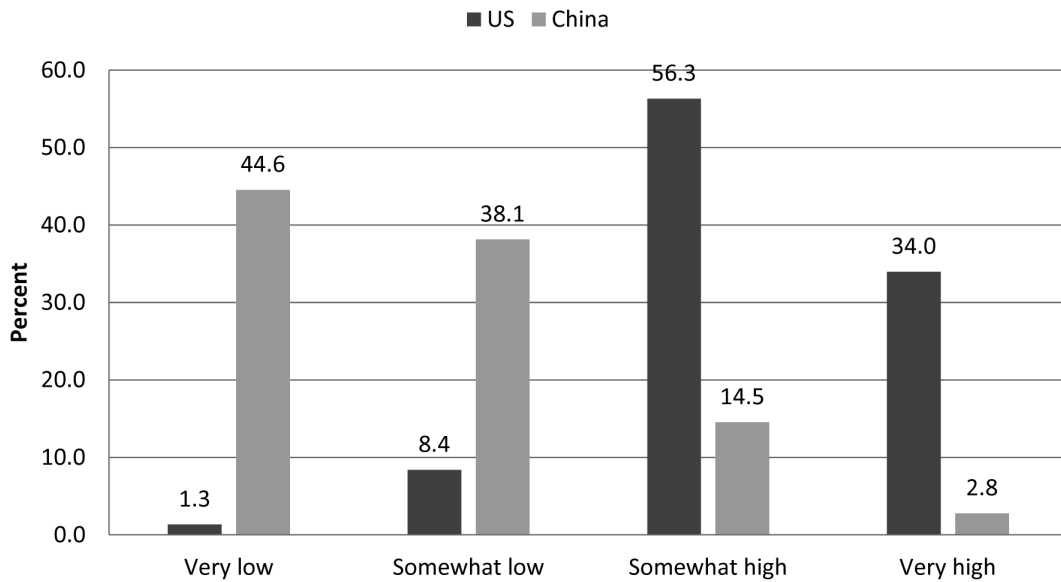
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negative reactions).
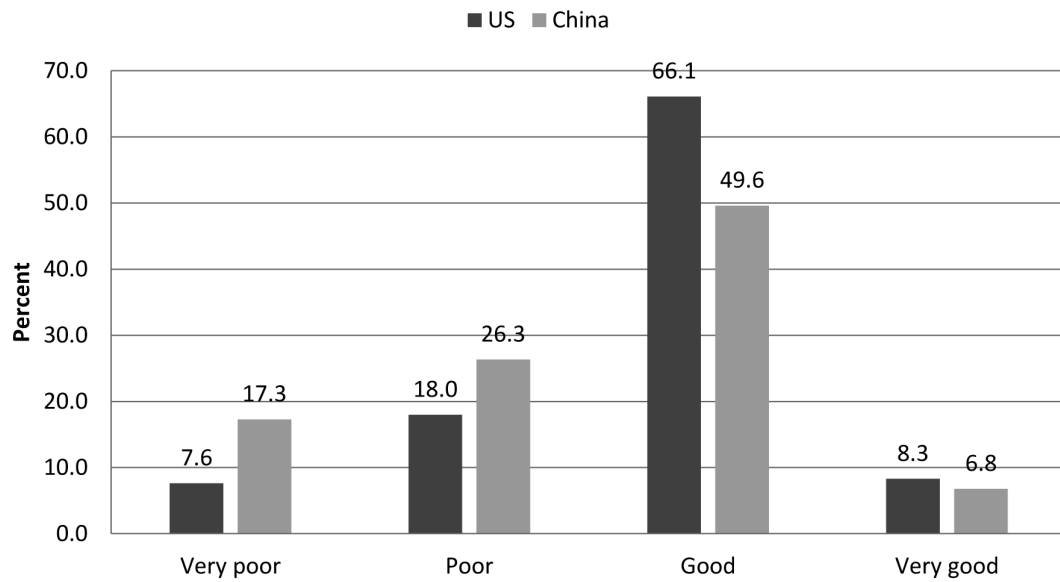
Source: The 2017 Image of China Survey.

Figure 1　Taiwanese Public's Overall Impression of the US and China
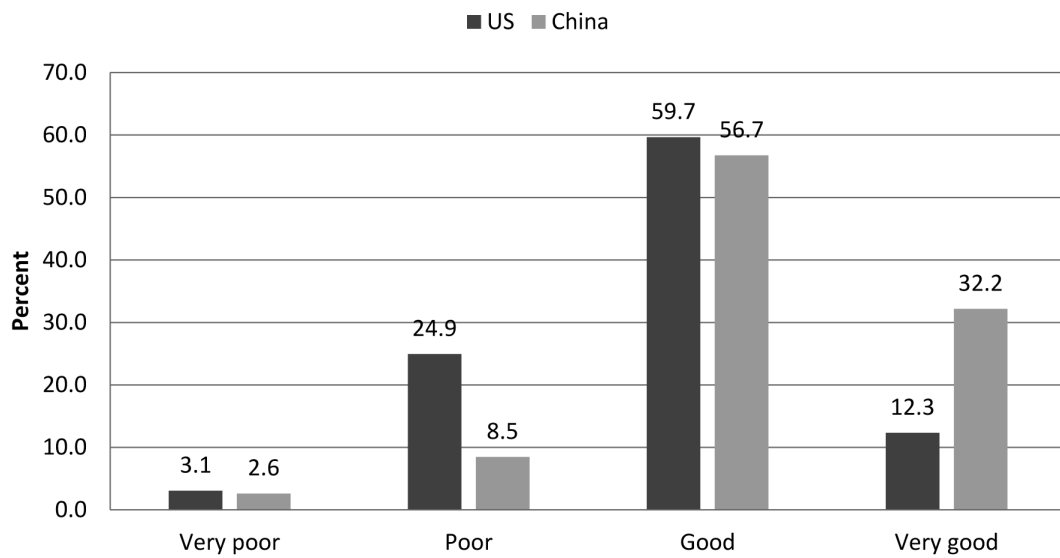
Source: The 2017 Image of China Survey.

Figure 2　Taiwanese Public's Opinion of the US and Chinese Economies

US ■ China

70.0

65.7

60.0
54.7

50.0

42.2
40.0

Percent

30.0
27.8

20.0

10.0
5.3
0.7   1.2   2.5

0.0
Very weak   Somewhat weak   Somewhat strong   Very strong

Source: The 2017 Image of China Survey.

Figure 3   Taiwanese Public's Opinion of the Military Strength of the US and China

US ■ China

60.0
56.3

50.0

44.6

40.0   38.1
34.0

Percent

30.0

20.0

14.5

10.0   8.4

2.8
1.3

0.0
Very low   Somewhat low   Somewhat high   Very high

Source: The 2017 Image of China Survey.

Figure 4   Taiwanese Public's Opinion of the Level of Democracy in the US and China
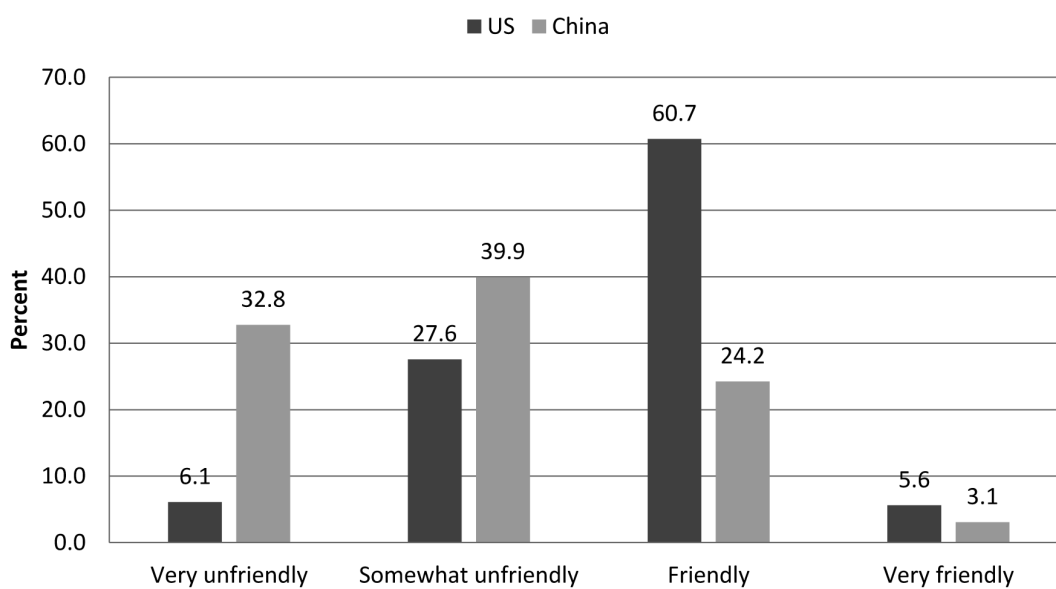
■ US　■ China
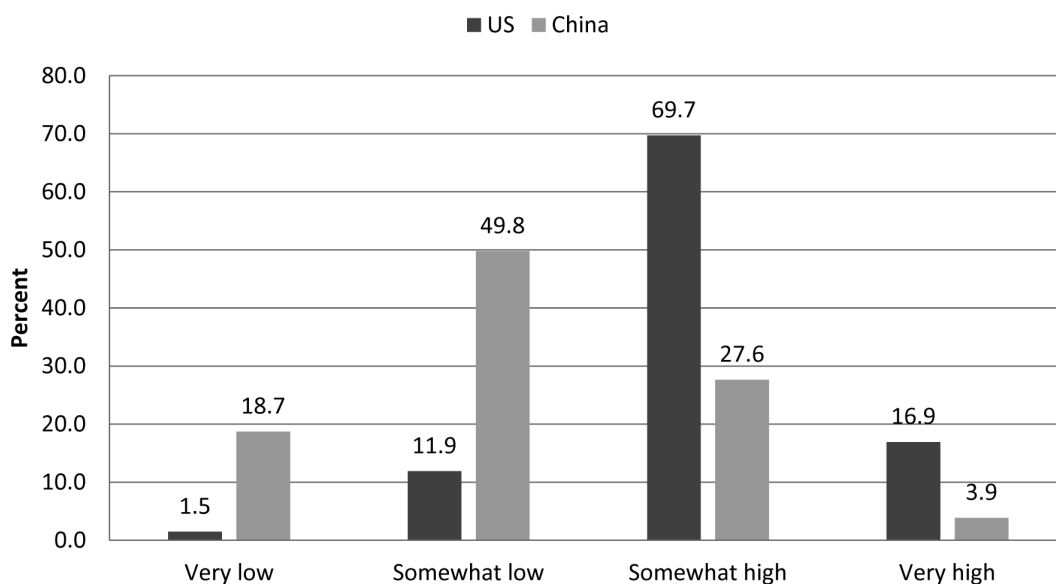
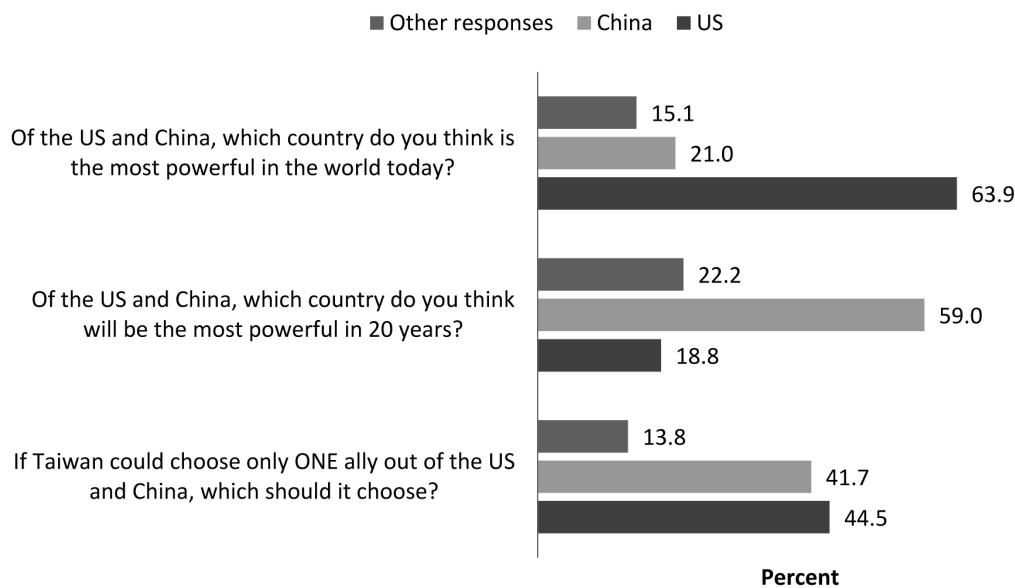Source: The 2017 Image of China Survey.

Figure 5　Taiwanese Public's Opinion of the Cultural Level of the US and China

■ US　■ China

Source: The 2017 Image of China Survey.

Figure 6　Taiwanese Public's Opinion of Friendliness toward Taiwan of the US and China

Figure 7 shows the responses to the survey items concerning which of the two countries is most powerful today and which is likely to be the most powerful in 20 years' time, as well as the respondent's eventual choice of an ally for Taiwan. The data show that 63.9% of the public think that the US is the most powerful state in the world today, compared to 21% of respondents who think the strongest state is China. However, when they are asked which country they think will be the most powerful in 20 years, an opposite pattern emerges: 59% of Taiwan citizens now believe that China will be the strongest state, while only 22.2% remain positive about America's superpower status, a switch of nearly 42%. The respondents' choices of an ally for Taiwan are presented at the bottom of the figure. It shows that 44.5% of respondents chose the US as an ally, while 41.7% think that Taiwan would be better off aligning with China.

Source: The 2017 Image of China Survey.

Figure 7   Taiwanese Public's Opinion Concerning the Most Powerful Country and Their Choice of Ally

What factors can be used to predict the Taiwanese public's choice of an ally? We performed multivariate analyses in Stata 14 to examine the relationship between the two explanatory variables described above and the dependent variable. Given the binary nature of the dependent variable, a logistic regression is used to determine the impact of different factors on the respondents' ally preferences.

We incorporated as independent variables several sociodemographic and cognitive factors

that previous research has found to be significant determinants of citizens' political attitudes and behaviors (Achen and Wang 2017; Fell 2005). Sociodemographic variables are those related to the respondents' gender, age, educational attainment, and ethnicity. Correspondingly, cognitive factors are the respondents' party identification, national identity, and their preferences on Taiwan's future status (i.e., attitudes concerning the unification-independence issue).

Table 1 displays the results of the multivariate logistic regression. Taken as a whole, the model performs well in terms of its significant Wald chi-squared statistics and respectable model fit. Moreover, in post-regression analysis we did not find multicollinearity to be a problem, as the mean VIF for all variables in the model is 1.31, and none of the individual VIFs exceeds 1.72, which is well below the common cut-off value of 5.

As the data show, the effect of ambivalence on the respondents' choice of ally is positive and statistically significant. This result suggests that Hypothesis 1 is supported: holding all other variables constant, the probability of picking China as an ally increases as citizens' level of ambivalence increases.

The effects of the two "most powerful country" variables on the choice of ally, however, are conditional, and at times not statistically significant. According to Hypothesis 2, there is a high probability that respondents will pick as an ally for Taiwan the country that they consider being the most powerful. Therefore, a respondent who selects the US (China) as the most powerful country today should have a higher relative probability of preferring an alliance with the US (China). This same logic applies to the evaluation of which of the two countries will be the most powerful in 20 years. The parameter estimations from Table 1 show that while respondents who selected China as the most powerful state today are more likely to choose China as an ally (as compared to those with other opinions), the estimate is not statistically significant at the conventional .05 level. Yet those who believe that China will become the most powerful country in 20 years do have a significantly higher probability of choosing China over the US as an ally for Taiwan. In other words, the results here suggest that Taiwanese citizens' preference for allying with China is mainly associated with whether they think China will replace the United States as the world's leading superpower in the *future* (which may or may not happen), not with their opinion concerning which of the two is the most powerful *today* (which most respondents agree is the United States; see Figure 7). Hence, we only find partial support for Hypothesis 2.

Table 1   Logit Regression Estimates for Taiwanese Public's Choice of Ally

Variables	DV: Choice of Ally (China = 1; US = 0)	
	B	Robust S.E.
Ambivalence toward US and China	.457**	.078
Most powerful country today (Other as reference group)		
United States	-.751*	.327
China	.211	.365
Most powerful country in 20 years (Other as reference group)		
United States	-.459	.353
China	.646**	.242
Party identification (Independent as reference group)		
Pan-Blue supporter	.530**	.204
Pan-Green supporter	-.413	.262
National identity (Both as reference group)		
Taiwanese	-.492*	.196
Chinese	.715	.408
Preference for Taiwan's future status (Maintain the status quo as reference group)		
Unification with China	1.416***	.234
Taiwan independence	-.899**	.313
Gender (Female=1)	-.322	.180
Age (Over 60 years as reference group)		
20-29 years	.291	.362
30-39 years	.367	.375
40-49 years	.303	.273
50-59 years	-.007	.244
Education (Some college and above as reference group)		
Elementary school or below	-.268	.383
Junior high school	.256	.418
High school	.264	.218
Ethnicity (Taiwanese Minnan as reference group)		
Taiwanese Hakka	.060	.261
Mainlander	.280	.252
Constant	.174***	.083
Log pseudo likelihood	-613.754	
Wald Chi-square	279.14***	
DF	21	
Pseudo R-squared	.362	
N	1,398	

Source: The 2017 Image of China Survey.

Notes: *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001; two-tailed tests of significance.

The logistic regression model above provides the effects of other variables such as respondents' party identification, national identity, and preference concerning Taiwan's future status. With respect to party identification, the results indicate that, relative to independents, pan-Blue supporters are more likely to choose China as an ally, reflecting their generally warmer disposition toward China. The ally choices of pan-Green supporters, however, are not significantly different from the independents, indicating perhaps that the influence of party identification on ally choice is limited to those in the pan-Blue camp. Moreover, those with an exclusively Taiwanese identity are less likely than those with dual Taiwanese-Chinese identity to select China as an ally.[7] Not surprisingly, members of the public who support unification with China would like Taiwan to form an alliance with China, and those who are pro-independence would pursue an alliance with the US. Intriguingly, none of the demographic variables has any significant effect on the dependent variable.

To help us interpret these results, Figure 8 visualizes the average marginal effect of all the variables on the choice of ally. Average marginal effect is the change in the probability in the outcome variable for a unit of change in the explanatory variable. For the ambivalence variable, one unit of increase in the respondent's ambivalence level increases the probability of selecting China as an ally by .07 points (*Hypothesis 1*). Likewise, picking the US as the most powerful country today decreases the probability of choosing China as an ally by .11, whereas picking China as the most powerful country in 20 years increases that probability by .10 (*Hypothesis 2*). The largest average marginal effects on the choice of ally are exerted by preferences on the unification-independence issue.

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[7] The reverse is also true: people who identify as Taiwanese only are *more* likely to pick the US as an ally.
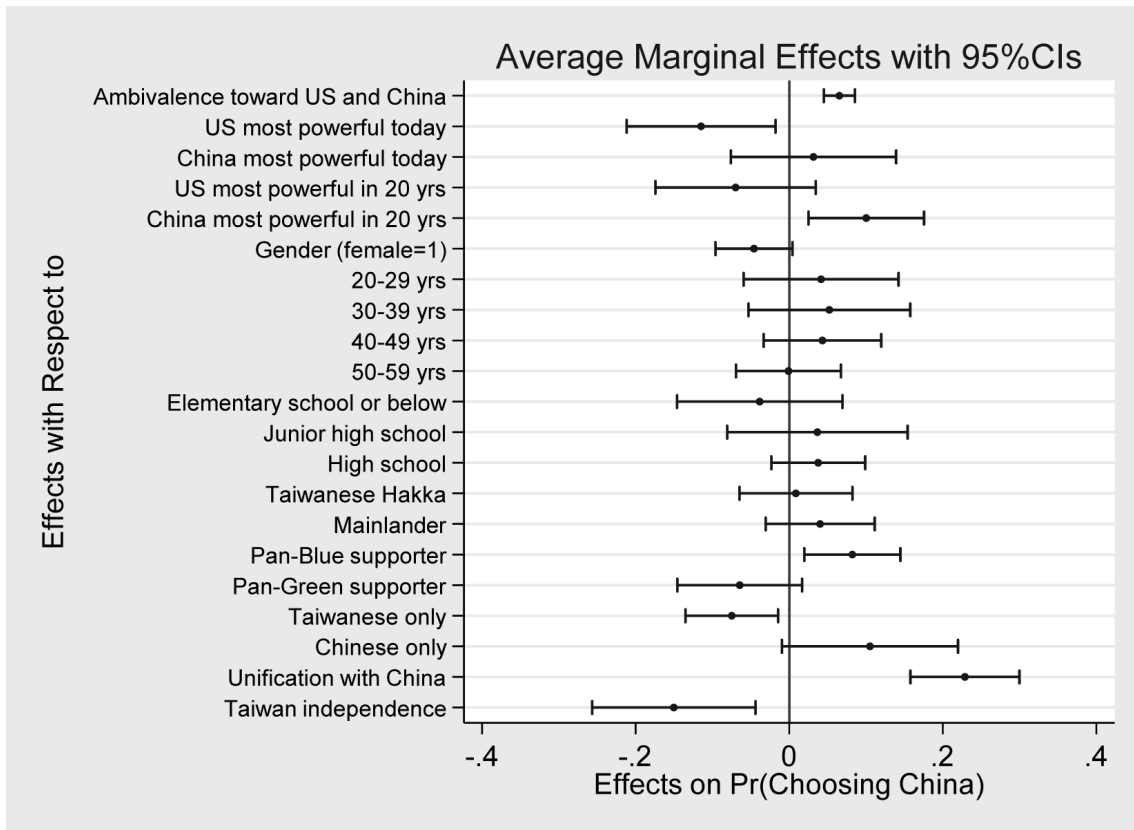
Source: The 2017 Image of China Survey.

Notes: The dots represent the point estimates, while the horizontal lines depict 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 8   Average Marginal Effects of All Variables on the Choice of Ally

V. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that an almost equal percentage of the Taiwanese public would pick China as an ally as would choose the US. As things stand today, Taiwan and the US have a close, robust friendship, thus meeting the expectations of about half of the Taiwan electorate. The paradox is, if the US is generally well regarded by the Taiwanese public and given that Washington has thus far not indicated that it plans to abandon Taiwan or use the island as a bargaining chip, why would less than half of the Taiwanese public prefer the US as an ally?

Our data do not challenge the media stereotype that pro-independence supporters tend to prefer America while pro-unification and pan-Blue supporters generally have an affinity with China. Respondents' evaluations of which country is the most powerful today and which will be the most powerful in 20 years can also be used to predict their preferred choice of ally (the US

in the first instance and China in the second), which could be a sign of Taiwanese pragmatism, or perhaps a reflection of citizens' strategic behavior. Level of ambivalence toward the US and China is also related to ally choice, but to a lesser extent.

In the years since Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was inaugurated as president of Taiwan, cross-Strait relations have generally been worse than during the previous two decades. It seems that by solidifying its relationship with Washington, the DPP administration has invited more intimidation/coercion from Beijing. Yet despite the fact that the Chinese government continues to ramp up pressure on Taiwan, our data show that a large portion of the population remain unfazed by this and continue to think that it would be best for Taiwan to ally with China.

We believe that the present study offers two lessons for current and future policymakers. The first is that Taiwanese citizens are just as divided when it comes to ally choices as they are on other political issues in Taiwanese society, so decision makers must be ready to communicate and defend their preferences on this matter. The second lesson is that, given the study's findings, policymakers must also face the fact that they cannot satisfy everybody, no matter what they do. So, when confronted with the choice of allying with either the US or China, leaders would be wise to follow the ancient Chinese maxim of "choose the lesser of two evils and the better of two options" (兩害相權取其輕 , 兩利相權取其重), while still keeping Taiwan's national interests intact. Moving forward, a task for the future is to investigate whether citizens' alliance preferences are persistent or stable over time, and whether and how they are informed or influenced by current events.

<p style="text-align:center">*　　　　*　　　　*</p>

Appendix 1   Survey Questions and Coding of Variables

Gender. Respondent's gender. (0=*Male;* 1=*Female*)

Age. Respondent's age measured in years. (A continuous variable divided into the following five categories: *20-29 years*, *30-39 years*, *40-49 years*, *50-59 years*, and *over 60 years*)

Education. Respondent's level of educational attainment scored on a four-point scale. (1=*Elementary school and below* [through 6th grade]; 2=*Junior high school* [grades 7 to 9]; 3=*High or vocational school*; 4=*Some college and above*)

Ethnicity. Ethnic background of the respondent's father. (1=*Taiwanese Hakka*; 2=*Taiwanese Minnan*; 3=*Mainlander; Taiwanese Indigenous People and new Taiwanese immigrants treated as missing*)

Party identification. "There are many political parties in Taiwan. Which political party better represents your views?" (1=*pan-Blue supporter* [Kuomintang, People First Party, New Party, and those leaning toward pan-Blue parties]; 2=*pan-Green supporter* [Democratic Progressive Party, Taiwan Solidarity Union, New Power Party, Green Party, Social Democratic Party, and those leaning toward pan-Green parties]; 3=*Independent* [I vote for the candidate rather than the party, and none of the above])

National identity. "In our society, some people consider themselves as Taiwanese, and others view themselves as Chinese, while still others see themselves as both Taiwanese and Chinese. Do you consider yourself as Taiwanese, Chinese, or both?" (1=*Taiwanese*; 2=*Chinese*; 3=*Both Taiwanese and Chinese*)

Preference for Taiwan's future status. "In our society, some people say that Taiwan should declare independence as soon as possible, others believe that Taiwan should be unified with mainland China as soon as possible, while still others think that Taiwan should maintain the status quo. Which of these statements do you agree with the most?" (1=*Unification with China*; 2=*Maintain the status quo*; 3=*Taiwan independence*)

Choice of Ally. "If Taiwan could choose only ONE ally out of the US and China, which should it choose? (An ally can be defined as a partner in military, diplomatic, and/or economic affairs.)" (A binary variable coded as: 0=*US*; 1=*China*; *Other responses* [both, neither, another country, don't know, and no opinion] coded as missing)

Evaluation of the world's most powerful country today. "Of the US and China, which country do you think is the most powerful in the world today?" (A nominal variable coded as: 1=*US*;

2=*Other* [both, neither, another country, don't know, and no opinion]; 3=*China*)

Evaluation of the world's most powerful country in 20 years. "Of the US and China, which country do you think will be the most powerful in 20 years?" (A nominal variable coded as: 1=*US*; 2=*Other* [both, neither, another country, don't know, and no opinion]; 3=*China*)

Ambivalence toward US and China. This index is developed from the 12 four-point Likert-type questionnaire items below:

Q1/Q14. "What is your overall impression of [US/China]? (1=Very good; 2=Good; 3=Poor; 4=Very poor; Other responses coded as missing)

Q2/Q15. "What is your impression of the state of economy of [US/China]? (1=Very good; 2=Good; 3=Poor; 4=Very poor; Other responses coded as missing)

Q3/Q16. "What is your opinion of the military strength of [US/China]? (1=Very strong; 2=Somewhat strong; 3=Somewhat weak; 4=Very weak; Other responses coded as missing)

Q4/Q17. "What is your opinion of the level of democracy of [US/China]? (1=Very high; 2=Somewhat high; 3=Somewhat low; 4=Very low; Other responses coded as missing)

Q5/Q18. "What is your opinion of the cultural level of [US/China]? (1=Very high; 2=Somewhat high; 3=Somewhat low; 4=Very low; Other responses coded as missing)

Q6/Q19. "How friendly or unfriendly is [US/China] toward Taiwan? (1=Very friendly; 2=Somewhat friendly; 3=Somewhat unfriendly; 4=Very unfriendly; Other responses coded as missing)

For each of the questions above, a *positive* response (e.g., "very good/good," "very high/ somewhat high") adds one point toward that country's score (i.e., the number of strengths or what the respondent "likes" about the country), while for a negative response (e.g., "very poor/poor," "very low/somewhat low") one point is deducted. Under this scoring scheme, each respondent would have a number of "likes" and "dislikes" about the US, as well as a number of "likes" and "dislikes" about China. The maximum sum of the likes <u>and</u> dislikes for each country is six, since only six questions are asked about each country.

After tallying the respondents' total number of likes and dislikes about both the US and China, their level of *ambivalence* is calculated using the following formula provided by Basinger and Lavine (2005):

$$Amb = \frac{US + CN}{2} - |US - CN|$$

where US = (the number of "likes" or strengths about the US + the number of "dislikes" or weaknesses about China)/2

CN = (the number of "likes" or strengths about China + the number of "dislikes" or weaknesses about the US)/2

Appendix 2　Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Number of observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Gender (female)	1,809	.508	.500	0	1
Age (by groups)	1,802	3.186	1.429	1	5
Education (by level)	1,801	3.043	1.071	1	4
Ethnicity	1,752	1.983	.530	1	3
Party identification	1,750	2.072	.833	1	3
National identity	1,770	1.859	.970	1	3
Preference for Taiwan's future status	1,683	2.045	.654	1	3
Choice of ally (0=US; 1=China)	1,533	.484	.500	0	1
The most powerful country today	1,805	1.571	.816	1	3
The most powerful country in 20 years	1,800	2.401	.785	1	3
Ambivalence toward US and China	1,809	.655	1.373	-3	3

Source: The 2017 Image of China Survey.

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請與我做朋友：
臺灣民眾對於美國與中國之間的盟友選擇偏好

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《本文摘要》

　　本文藉由分析我國民意調查資料，旨在檢視臺灣民眾對於美國與中國兩者之間，結盟國家的選擇偏好。本文驗證一般民眾在選擇國家結盟對象的兩個研究假設：首先為對於美國與中國認知的「雙歧」(ambivalence) 態度，其次為評估兩個國家何者更具影響力。研究結果顯示，臺灣民眾選擇中國作為盟友的比例 (41.7%)，與支持美國作為盟友的比例 (44.5%) 頗為接近。依據實證資料，泛藍支持者與傾向中國統一者較偏好選擇與中國進行結盟，與此同時，認同自己為臺灣人與支持臺灣獨立者較不偏好選擇中國為結盟對象。本文採取「勝算對數模型分析」(logistic regression analyses)，統計數據顯示，保持雙歧態度的民眾較傾向選擇中國作為結盟對象；相關數據證實，另一項研究假設亦具有相當解釋力，亦即一般民眾判斷哪個國家更具影響力的認知，是左右他們選擇結盟對象與否的重要考量。

關鍵詞：美中關係、雙歧理論、結盟選擇、民意調查

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