The Tondu Question: Understanding Taiwanese Preferences on Determining National Future

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Event page and audios

This is an example of how social science research lag behind the real world.
Originally I planned to focus on a new survey and a typology of tondu
But now I will focus more on the election.

Outline
• How do Taiwanese think about Tondu?
• typology, and a new measurement

• Election Results and Implication
• Why landslide defeat of DPP
• The rise and fall of Ko Wen-je

Tondu, or the blue-green partisanship, is always the most salient issue for national elections. Not necessarily the local elections. (Independents have one-third of votes)
I will introduce a new measurement and data.
Also, I will use the variety of tondu to explain the positions of major politicians and the results of the election.

The first part will be more like an academic-oriented presentation. The second part is my viewpoint of analyzing the election. Because of the surprising election results, I will spend more time on the second part.
Does tondu matter in this election? —> Not really. Still, it hides in a lot of issues. for example 無色覺醒.
We observe certain degree of partisan issue realignment.

Takeaway point: numerous world media report the results as voting against Tsai administration’s China policy. These reports ignore the domestic politics, which is the core factor of the election results.
Not true! But the results do reveal the China’s huge impacts.

An academic article always begins with the importance and motivation of doing a research. Currently, I can easily ignore this part of why Taiwan matters because numerous reports by the congress, the think tanks, and scholarly journals have already pointed out.

I have been living in the DC area for 4yrs and I can feel that the atmosphere is very different now. But there is an ongoing debate on how to deal with China. And a debate on the price of it. Many people seem to worry that supporting TW may cost too much to the US. I am not going to elaborate the importance of TW or related issues here. The aim of this talk: I want to share my views with some empirical data and invite more people to understand the issue.

Importance of TW
Taiwan ranked 28 in terms of GDP per capita
48th in population
140th in the size, as large as Maryland
after democratization and the reform and openness of China, less and less people care about Taiwan.
Why Taiwan Matters

- The frontline of the sharp power
- An essential part of the Indo-Pacific Strategy
- Core issue of China’s national interest
- Dynamics of attitudes toward China

Importance of TW
Globally, Taiwan ranked 28 in terms of GDP per capita
48th in population, 140th in the size, as large as Maryland
After democratization and the reform and openness of China, less and less people care about Taiwan.
Foreign media are pulling out the journalists, until very recently the number of journalist increases as media freedom worsens in the mainland. More and more media agencies are going back to TW.

However, there is棄台論 (abandoning TW) in the US —> because China’s rising

Let’s begin with this figure.
Unification/Independence = tondu

This figure for tondu appears everywhere and might be a common sense to people who are interested in TW politics.
We call it as 6-type tondu 統獨六分類
It seems like a majority of people prefer status quo.

Puzzle: What is status quo and what is the time frame for each option?

This has already shown that people do not really think tondu needs to be solved or can be solved in a short period of time.

Researchers always want more details and causes and effects.

One prominent solution is from 吳乃德 Wu Nai-te (Sociology Institute at Academia Sinica). Adopted by 牛銘實 Emerson Niou at Duke. The Taiwan National Security Survey

But this measurement does not solve the puzzle of what is the status quo, and the ambiguous/multiple meanings of independence and unification.
What does this figure mean
*line blue= China is not likely to withdraw military threat to Taiwan.
*line red= used to be Taiwan’s official policy formulated by President Li Teng-hui. Like I said, the last time of official statement was in 1992. Lost its support in this decade.
*line green= Unconditional independence= about 36%, but people under 40 shows 10% more on this attitude.

Although Taiwanese identity has shifted completely, it does not mean that Taiwanese people has consensus on the pursuit of de jure independence. De jure independence will only be “charged forward” when some conditions are met. I would say that people are “rational.”

補充（後來剛好也有記者問到這題）
We observe a decline for supporting independence and an increase on unification. Who or why changes? —> the youth does not change
Who changes?
The trend is similar in terms of Taiwanese identity after 2014. I find that: the youth does not change their attitudes. Even more young people become Taiwanese identifier.

This figure shows attitude change between age cohorts.
I found the same trend using the polls conducted by the MAC on tondu. From 2017 to 2018, people under 30 increases their support on “Independence immediately” and “move toward independence.” (the 6-type tondu) The overall support for independence decreases among elder counterparts.

Also, KMT supporters significantly change their attitudes. I argue that this does not mean Taiwanese are becoming more pro-China or pro-UNI. In 2014, after the Sunflower Movement, the China threat became the most salient issue and people think it is necessary to express their anti-China stance. After that some people return to a more practical stance.
A new Tondu measurement?

- Pros and cons of previous measurement
- What is Status Quo?
- Are mutually exclusive options possible?

Pros of previous measurement= allows grey area for those who do not have specific preference. But nobody knows what is SQ. nor it differentiate variety of tondu

Why ask these questions: because sometimes the discussion of the tondu preferences cannot be on track due to the disagreement on the very basic definition.

This is an article first published on 菜市場政治學
I try to identity different preferences of tondu and differentiate their key different factors/perceptions.
I try to make mutually exclusive options for tondu.

(skip this part in the presentation)
The first question regards the legitimacy of ROC
Upper half: pan–green —> ROC Taiwan
lower half: pan–blue—> more with ROC
B—> dated back to the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the lack of conclusions on Taiwan's international status

From viewpoint of CCP: only D is unification. all other option is independence.

For example, Former President Ma recently delivered a speech saying that his famous three noes (不統不獨不武), are changed to 不排斥統一，不支持獨立，不使用武力 not opposing unification, no support for independence.

But 中評社 (China Review) had a rebuttal that this is only a small change. they only endorse the stance of 洪秀柱, which is embrace 統一，oppose獨立. They think Taiwanese must embrace/accept unification and oppose independence. “Not opposing” unification is not acceptable for CCP.
Let’s project the tondu on a single dimensional spectrum. Unlike the cleavage in the US is on liberal-conservative or in the Europe where the left-right division is the main focus, tondu is always the most salient partisan cleavage.

Status quo covers a wide range because it does not specify when and how. Even if you support a specific action in the future, one can select status quo right now.

* ROC as instrumental to light green. TW=ROC.
* Deep green—> ROC is an government in exile. We should build a whole new TW immediately.
* ROC as consummatory to “authentic blue” 正蓝. They think PRC is not legitimate and oneday we must unify China with democracy.
* Deep blue—> anti TW independence, make coalition with PRC since 2005. Since 2005 the KMT mainstream politicians go deep blue, abandoning the pursue of legitimate China, cooperating with CCP in order to do anti–TW independence activities.

(Continued on last slide)

Note that we have to assume that most of issues can be specified on this one-dimensional spectrum. This is particularly the case in the national election but not necessarily on local elections. There are some other historical context on each camp, for example, the local factions in rural area. They attach to the blue camp because of some clientelist networks.

In the past, the DPP has supports from the liberal camp, because many social activism can be traced back to the authoritarian era when the social groups fought against the dictatorship.

This time, combined with 10 referendums, we can say that there might be new issue dimensions and new political coalitions occurring.
Data

- Public Opinion and Political Participation
- Polcracy, Election Study Center, National Chengchi University
- Jul 6th-9th 2018
- n=1001
- Citizens > 20yr

Nearly nationally representative. They draw sample from previous TEDS survey.

The sample has slightly higher pr of male and lower PR of people older than 65. According to previous research we can be confident that this survey can be used to represent people under 60.

This project is host by Austin Wang, UNLV, and Yao–Yuan Yeh, U of St. Thomas, Houston. I have several add–on questions. We have not got funding for the followup. Ideally I must test people’s attitude on each nod. But this time the questions are limited.

Ask the specific preference on the national future
A majority of people still choose the middle option.
F: ROC is already independent (but no need to change the name)
G: 不統不獨不武 no uni, no ind, no use of force
These are swing voters.
This is the distribution of tondu preference [without any conditionality].

Generational difference
20-29 significantly higher on A (47.5%) lower on D F G
30-39 significantly lower on E D
40-49 significantly lower on A, higher on F G(63%) —> main group for Status quo?
50-59 significantly higher on E D, 7.3% and 12.7% respectively
60+ significantly higher on D, 13.8%

*Party supporters
KMT: significantly higher on FGED, lower on AB
DPP: significantly higher on A (43.5%), lower on EFG

**Everyone, have a guess the position of NPP and Ko Wen-je!!
Here are some important figures and their position. Why Tsai Ing-wen’s approval rate is low and why DPP suffers a landslide defeat? Deep green —> Tsai is too slow ; Blue—> China is only solution. Angry about Tsai for not recognizing the 1992 consensus and the one China principle (The core content of 1992 consensus is one China principle, which means ultimate unification)

In the past, the tondu issue is the main issue dimension in electoral campaign this time it may be different. It combined with various issues.

During the first half of her presidency, Tsai’s reforms include: pension, transitional justice, marriage equality, labor right, and renewal energy plan. From the liberal/progressive civil groups, she is blamed to be too slow and too conservative. From the conservative side, she touches too many core interests of them. I think this can be called as lack of clear political strategy and lack of communication/propaganda skills.

A temporary equilibrium

Taiwan is an independent state which possesses all qualifications listed in the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states. But due to many factors the status is not widely recognized and many says that it is just “de facto” not de jure.
Example of why this is not the best and the acceptance may not truly reflect what people want. For the olympic games and other sports event, we are Chinese Taipei. Chinese Taipei is the formulation currently used in a compromise with Beijing. (Ex: USA as British Washington, Scotland as British Edinburgh)

【The no. 13 referendum: do you agree that we apply to use the name Taiwan to compete in the Olympics and international events】
Even under the pressure of China and risks of bigger pressure, 45% of people vote yes on the referendum to “apply” name change

The anti camp mainly argues that if we apply for name change, then we will be kicked out by the IOC then we cannot play in any international event anymore.

I mentioned earlier that in general there are 50% swing voters on tondu Actually there are always different consideration and the context matters From the referendum, the very core of pan-green is roughly 45.2%

(It still makes no sense that Taiwan cannot join organizations such as WHO and ICAO. And in many place Taiwanese are recognized as Chinese or from China)

Invented in 2000 by Su Chi蘇起, former National Security Chief, started to use by both sides since 2008. When President Tsai took power, she refused to accept the term and the core “one China principle”, calling it a historical fact that both sides met in 1992.
In the same data, we design a question for the 1992 consensus. We first ask people how do they think the true definition is.

1. Official stance of KMT administration before 2000:
   On international affair, both ROC and PRC claim to represent the whole Chinese people including both mainland and Taiwan.

2. Interpretation of Ma Ying-jeou administration, 2008–16:
   ROC represents Taiwan, PRC represents the mainland, the two governments belong to the same country waiting for unification.

3. A totally wrong stance:
   ROC represents Taiwan, PRC represents the mainland, the two governments belong to two different countries.

4. CCP stance:
   PRC represents the whole Chinese people including both mainland and Taiwan, and ROC is the local government.

"What Does the 1992 Consensus Mean to Citizens in Taiwan?"
2018/11/10, The Diplomat, with Austin Wang, Charles K.S. Wu, Yao–Yuan Yeh

Surprisingly, only one–third of people choose the correct answer (2), and one–third of people choose a completely wrong one (3). Also, we ask whether the respondent accepts 1992 consensus if the meaning is the four options. Only (3) is accepted by a majority of people.

That is, there is no consensus on what is the 1992 consensus!! We conclude in the article that TW people do not recognize with China’s stance on the one–China principle. People simply want to maintain a normal ties, at least, not being sanctioned by China.
Let’s go back to the spectrum on two phenomenon figures that could potentially change Taiwanese party politics

NPP and Ko wen-je?

Ko’s 2014 victory was endorsed and helped by DPP, including the propaganda machine, the local level mobilization, and teach him about political communication. He was widely supported by civil group, as an united front of beating KMT.

2015 he tries to find a new word for 1992 consensus. but this is a term Xi Jing-ping first used. Then he moves toward the blue camp in various fields, including on agriculture issue, especially the Taipei Agricultural Company, pension reforms, and on transitional justice. He endorses or seeks alliance with many pan-blue politicians, including James Soong 宋楚瑜, 徐欣瑩.

His moving toward pan-blue eventually led to breakup between DPP and Ko in the mayoral election.
Before the election, less and less people talk about 1992 consensus. 兩岸一家親 becomes the new term, like a password. Some people think that Ko is flexible on the tondu issue, and it is not very important for a mayor to answer this question. However, Ko publicly repeat his stance on cross-strait relations several times, including interviews by many international media, and attending the meeting between Shanghai and Taipei officials. Ko’s effort is limited. In this election, KMT candidate Ting shou-chung got 40.82%, exactly the same with 4yrs ago. Ko won by 3000+ votes, less than 0.3%.

DPP’s Yao Wen-chih got 17.29%. The distribution of vote is the same with 4yrs ago (2018 Yao+Ko=2014 Ko)

An example of why tondu is not very important in the election. Golden Horse Award, the Chinese-language Oscar. One week before the election

Best Documentary Film Maker Fu Yue called for Taiwan to be recognized as an “independent entity” during her acceptance speech, fighting back tears as she said, “this is my biggest wish as a Taiwanese”

The participants from China who go to the stage after Fu Yue all express the views that Taiwan belongs to China, and almost all of the performing artists, singers, actors, film makers in China all express their stance of one-China online 微博：中國一點也不能少.

The controversy quickly spread online. But the impacts on election is limited.
NPP’s dilemma
NPP is a pro-independent new party established after the sunflower movement. Led by 黃國昌, the leader of many anti-China activism, including the sunflower movement. Also Freddy Lim, dead metalist from Chthonic band who is the first rock star to enter the congress. Vivid pro independent figures.

HOWEVER, the median voter of NPP is not more deep green than DPP. Rather, in terms of preferences on national future and Taiwanese identity, NPP median voter is more moderate than we imagined. (BUT this needs further data to confirm)
That is also the reason why they split on the issue of making coalition with Ko.

They got 16 seats in local council, out of 40 candidates.

Let's turn to the election result.
Landslide defeat, very similar to what happened in 2014 but just different color.

10 Referendums: new tools for mobilization and it does work for the conservative camp
KMT x 3 + pro nuclear power camp
Name change application on national sport team.
anti-LGBTQ camp x3 vs Pro-LGBTQ camp x2

The result is also landslide defeat for the marriage equality camp and the environmentalists.

Many candidates stress that they want to build business ties with China. But everyone says that this has nothing to do with politics. China policy is rarely discussed in the campaign.

“Boost Economy” 拚經濟 is the magic word for the campaign
“Let’s boost economy and forget about politics!!!”

1. Overall disapproval is very high.
DPP lost more in districts with more high-education and young people. In 2016, Tsai won more votes in these places. These districts also tend to vote yes on referendum no.13 (name change).
2. populist style, charismatic Han Kuo-yu.
Kaohsiung is a industrial city, so you can think of the Rust Belt.
3. distrust on political elites —> local politics matter! local mobilization more important than national propaganda.
4. new approach of mobilization: 10 Referendums
Successful coordination btw conservative camp and KMT.

(Liberal voters vs homophobia voters)
Not a gain for KMT.
Local congress—> KMT gains 3.5% votes, 8 seats total. Compared to 1 million votes gain in the mayoral and magistrate election, this is very minor. DPP lost 53 seats, about 6% votes.

Numerous reports from international media largely ignore the domestic factors for the election. Most of media depict the results as a turn to China. This is not true.

China’s influence: (Quote NY Times: Russian-style meddling)
The web army 網軍 — a huge amount of netizens from foreign IP address flooded in every public forums online. The TV shows report a majority of time on KMT candidates, especially Han Kuo-yu 韓國瑜。

The US officials have warned that Taiwan is vulnerable to the disinformation from China. But the interview was censored by the media TVBS (even in China the CCP does not delete what the US embassy says online)
Midterm Local Election

- Sharp power
- China vs US
- The signal interpreted by international media may have negative impacts
- Also the case for the marriage equality issue

(Continued on last slide)
Disinformation and misinformation play very important roles during the campaign (maybe we can say its since 2016). That being said, the choice may not really reflect the true demands from people.

“During the campaign, Tsai repeatedly urged people to rally behind the DPP to counter China's increasingly aggressive stance on Taiwan since she came into power in May 2016 and its attempts to meddle in the elections, and to give a boost to her reform agenda.”

However, I think it is too late to say these. The authorities in charge have done almost nothing (especially the National Security Bureau and the National Communication Commission). Also, the DPP candidates are distrusted/unwelcome, so it is difficult to persuade people that China is meddling. China’s sticks and carrots are taking huge effects!!
Taiwan, an island approximately as large as Maryland, will rank 42 compared to the 50 states here. 23 million people (four times as Maryland), second highest density just after Bangladesh. 9th–10th largest American trading partner. It has become a full fledged democracy since the 1990s.