SOCIAL FORCES
IN THE RE-MAKING OF CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS
HEGEMONY AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN TAIWAN

André Beckershoff
Social Forces in the Re-Making of Cross-Strait Relations

Adopting a critical political economy perspective this book sheds new light on the social and political struggles that shaped the political dynamics of Taiwan-China relations and cross-Strait rapprochement between 2008 and 2014.

Presenting a careful analysis of primary sources and interviews, the book reconstructs the historical, political and socio-economic factors that shaped Taiwan’s path to the Sunflower Movement of 2014, reinterpreting this process as a struggle over Taiwan’s role in the global economy. It challenges received wisdoms regarding the rise and fall of the rapprochement: First, the study argues that the rapprochement was not primarily driven by political elites but by capitalist conglomerates within Taiwan, which sought a normalisation of economic relations across the Taiwan Strait. Second, it finds that Taiwan’s social movements during that period were not homogeneous but rather struggled to find a common vision that could unite the critics of the rapprochement.

The insights provided not only offer a deeper understanding of Taiwan’s protest cycle between 2008 and 2014, but also serve to recontextualise the political dynamics in post-Sunflower Taiwan. As such it will appeal to students and scholars of Taiwan Studies, East Asian Politics and Social Movement Studies.

André Beckershoff received his PhD from the University of Tübingen, Germany. He specialises in international political economy and social movements. His recent publications include Assessing the Presidency of Ma Ying-jiu in Taiwan: Hopeful Beginning, Hopeless End? (co-edited by Gunter Schubert, Routledge, 2018).
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Social Forces in the Re-Making of Cross-Strait Relations
Hegemony and Social Movements in Taiwan

André Beckershoff
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Finally, I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my parents for their continuous and unparalleled support.
Note on Romanisation

Where known, I have used the romanisation preferred by the individuals or the commonly used romanisation for public figures, organisations or place names. In all remaining cases, Hanyu Pinyin is used.
Abbreviations

ACE  Alliance against the Commodification of Education
AID  Agency for International Development
AMM  Anti-Media Monopoly Movement
AMMA Anti-Media Monster Alliance
APROC  Asia-Pacific Regional Operations Center
ARATS Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits
ART  Alliance of Referendum for Taiwan
ATJ  Association of Taiwan Journalists
AU  Asia University
BIY  Black Island Nation Youth Front
CCP  Chinese Communist Party
CCU  National Chung Cheng University
CDFFA Credit departments of farmers’ and fishermen’s associations
CEPD  Council for Economic Planning and Development
CER  Committee for Economic Reform
CFL  Chinese Federation of Labor
CGU  Chang Gung University
CMR  Campaign for Media Reform
CNAIC Chinese National Association of Industry and Commerce
CNFI Chinese National Federation of Industries
CNS  China Network Systems
COA  Council of Agriculture
CSAW Cross-Strait Agreement Watch
CSCMF Cross-Strait Common Market Foundation
CSSTA Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement
CTEA Cross-Strait Tourism Exchange Association
DFCSTSA Democratic Front Against the Cross-Strait Trade in Services Agreement
DPP  Democratic Progressive Party
ECFA Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement
EDAC Economic Development Advisory Conference
EOI  Export-Oriented Industrialisation
EPZ  Export processing zone
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESB</td>
<td>Economic Stabilisation Board</td>
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<td>FA</td>
<td>Farmers’ Association</td>
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<td>FJU</td>
<td>Fu Jen Catholic University</td>
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<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<td>GSP</td>
<td>Generalized System of Preferences</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>INPR</td>
<td>Institute for National Policy Research</td>
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<td>ISI</td>
<td>Import substitution industrialisation</td>
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<td>ITRI</td>
<td>Industrial Technology and Research Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>IYF</td>
<td>Independent Youth Front</td>
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<td>JRF</td>
<td>Judicial Reform Foundation</td>
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<td>KMT</td>
<td>Kuomintang</td>
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<td>MAC</td>
<td>Mainland Affairs Council</td>
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<td>MoEA</td>
<td>Ministry of Economic Affairs</td>
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<td>MOTC</td>
<td>Ministry of Transportation and Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASME</td>
<td>National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises</td>
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<td>NAWCF</td>
<td>National Alliance for Workers of Closed Factories</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>National Communications Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCCU</td>
<td>National Chengchi University</td>
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<td>NCKU</td>
<td>National Cheng Kung University</td>
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<td>NCTU</td>
<td>National Chiao Tung University</td>
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<td>NDHU</td>
<td>National Dong Hwa University</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NHBP</td>
<td>No Haste Be Patient</td>
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<tr>
<td>NKNU</td>
<td>National Kaohsiung Normal University</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPF</td>
<td>National Policy Foundation</td>
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<td>NPP</td>
<td>New Power Party</td>
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<td>NSBP</td>
<td>New Southbound Policy</td>
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<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Security Council</td>
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<td>NSYSU</td>
<td>National Sun Yat-sen University</td>
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<td>NTD</td>
<td>New Taiwan Dollar</td>
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<td>NTHU</td>
<td>National Tsing Hua University</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTNU</td>
<td>National Taiwan Normal University</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTPU</td>
<td>National Taipei University</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTU</td>
<td>National Taiwan University</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUK</td>
<td>National University of Kaohsiung</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYMU</td>
<td>National Yang-Ming University</td>
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<tr>
<td>OEM</td>
<td>Original equipment manufacturer</td>
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<tr>
<td>PFP</td>
<td>People First Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.O.C.</td>
<td>Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROCCOC</td>
<td>General Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of China</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>Solidarity of Communication Students Taiwan</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCU</td>
<td>Soochow University</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEF</td>
<td>Straits Exchange Foundation</td>
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<td>SFM</td>
<td>Sunflower Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small and Medium Enterprise</td>
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<td>SOE</td>
<td>State-owned enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAHR</td>
<td>Taiwan Association for Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAITRA</td>
<td>Taiwan External Trade Development Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAO</td>
<td>Taiwan Affairs Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAUP</td>
<td>Taiwan Association of University Professors</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAVUR</td>
<td>Taiwan Alliance for Victims of Urban Renewal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Taiwan Business Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDW</td>
<td>Taiwan Democracy Watch</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEEMA</td>
<td>Taiwan Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers’ Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>TFI</td>
<td>Taiwan Federation of Industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEU</td>
<td>Taiwan Higher Education Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>THU</td>
<td>Tunghai University</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIIA</td>
<td>Taiwan International Workers Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLF</td>
<td>Taiwan Labor Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPP</td>
<td>Trans-Pacific Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRF</td>
<td>Taiwan Rural Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSMC</td>
<td>Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSTA</td>
<td>Taiwan Strait Tourism Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSU</td>
<td>Taiwan Solidarity Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TWC</td>
<td>Third Wednesday Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMC</td>
<td>United Microelectronics Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHA</td>
<td>World Health Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>WLM</td>
<td>Wild Lily Movement</td>
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<td>WSM</td>
<td>Wild Strawberry Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>YAMM</td>
<td>Youth Alliance against Media Monsters</td>
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<td>YLU</td>
<td>Youth Labor Union 95</td>
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When Ma Ying-jeou became president of the Republic of China (ROC) in May 2008, he announced the dawn of a new era in cross-Strait relations. For over two decades, Taiwan had struggled with the growing social and economic interactions with its former adversary, the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Ma’s predecessors Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian had – arguably unsuccessfully – attempted to curb economic exchanges with China to minimise Taiwan’s economic dependence. By 2008, the PRC had not only become Taiwan’s largest trading partner but also the projection screen for the hopes and desires of an increasing number of Taiwanese who sought educational or employment opportunities in China. Ma Ying-jeou, seeking to acknowledge rather than repress these developments, paved the way for the resumption of quasi-official talks between China and Taiwan for the first time in over a decade, resulting in several technical agreements said to facilitate the economic and social interactions across the Taiwan Strait.

After several years of steady but substantial progress, this rapprochement came to an abrupt halt. On 18 March 2014, between 200 and 300 students rushed into Taiwan’s parliament, the Legislative Yuan, overwhelmed security forces and began an occupation that would last for 24 days. The immediate trigger for what is now referred to as the Sunflower Movement (SFM) was the impending ratification of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), a trade pact negotiated between Taiwan and China that was the most ambitious initiative of the Ma Ying-jeou government to date. The SFM not only stalled the ratification of the trade agreement but also nurtured doubts about the government’s pursuit of closer economic and political relations with China. Ultimately, the CSSTA was never ratified, and the SFM heralded the demise of Ma Ying-jeou’s political vision of a rapprochement with China.

Why did the cross-Strait rapprochement, which seemed to have inspired “a period of expectation and hope” (Gramsci 1971: 120) that was the foundation of Ma’s electoral successes in 2008 and 2012, metamorphose into a source of collective disillusionment that prompted a severe political crisis within the span of only a few years? The purpose of this study is to investigate this reversal of fortunes by looking at the role social groups in Taiwan played in both the rise and the fall of the cross-Strait rapprochement. Only by looking beyond the political arena, is it
possible to comprehend why the rapprochement that was once portrayed as beneficial to all Taiwanese came to be seen as profiting only a small circle of economic and political elites.

Explaining the Cross-Strait Rapprochement

Throughout most of the 1990s and early 2000s, scholars were puzzled by the state of cross-Strait relations, which was characterised by the apparent paradox of “political conflict and economic interdependence” (Kastner 2009). When the rapprochement finally seemed to erode this exceptional situation, scholars of the realist school of international relations attributed this shift to the “rise of China”. In their view, the gravitational pull of the Chinese economy was driving an inevitable trend of economic integration that translated into ever-increasing political leverage of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over the smaller economies and polities drawn into its economic sphere. This perspective prompted predictions that portrayed a deepening of economic interdependence and political dialogue as essentially irreversible. As Shambaugh wrote in 2010:

[C]ross-strait relations have now developed to such an extent that the ‘Taiwan issue’ has essentially been resolved. Game over. The ultimate form of union between the island and the mainland is still undetermined, but it will be more a question of form than substance. The essential interdependence that is being built will be enduring.

(Shambaugh 2010: 224)

This “game over”-hypothesis was shared by others. Only weeks before the SFM initiated the reversal of political relations across the Taiwan Strait, Mearsheimer (2014: 39) wrote that “if China continues its impressive rise, Taiwan appears destined to become part of China”. This distinctly undialectical approach, which is only capable of imagining future developments as a linear continuation of present trends, is unsatisfying on many levels. A purely structuralist view based on the “rise of China” is not equipped with the theoretical tools that are necessary to grasp the manifold social and political contradictions, which shape the political, social and economic relations across the Strait.

Another strand of literature thus emphasises the dimension of agency to account for the dynamics of cross-Strait relations. The rise of China becomes the backdrop against which governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait attempt to shape cross-Strait interactions “to either take advantage of or try to offset the ‘spillover’ effect from economics to politics” (Keng and Lin 2013: 169). The rapprochement is then usually attributed to policy changes made by Hu Jintao, who became General Secretary of the CCP in 2002. On the one hand, Hu is seen as having succeeded in increasing Taiwan’s economic reliance on China (ibid.: 176). On the other hand, he is credited with having adopted a more flexible and conciliatory approach to Taiwan after the coercive approach against Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian had been deemed a failure (Chen 2012). Rather than having abandoned the ultimate
goal of unification, the PRC merely adjusted the means of achieving it. This new approach is said to have paved the way for the dialogue between the CCP and the Kuomintang (KMT) (Wu and Dittmer 2013: 26–27), and changes in Taiwan’s domestic politics are ultimately seen as a consequence of this development (Chang and Chao 2009: 112–113). Unlike the realist perspective, these agency-centred approaches do not assume a deterministic view of cross-Strait relations. Hu (2012: 953; 2013: 226–233) sees potential stumbling blocks in the form of Taiwan’s political status, which might result in disputes over its participation in international organisations, and a potential for growing impatience on the Chinese side. Wu and Dittmer (2013: 47), considering domestic and international politics as well as economic factors, also provide a more nuanced view, concluding that “there is no assurance that the current rapprochement will continue”. The question of whether the rapprochement across the Strait would progress or stagnate, however, is only considered with regard to political – i.e., intergovernmental – factors.

The approach of ‘linkage communities’ takes the role of social groups in shaping the cross-Strait rapprochement into account (Wei 1997). It explores how the increasing social contacts across the Taiwan Strait shape the interests of these social groups, which may then act as advocacy groups vis-à-vis the Chinese and Taiwanese governments to drive the integration “from below” (Keng and Lin 2011). It thereby seeks to breathe life into the assumptions of the previously discussed approaches. The most-studied group is that of Taiwanese businesspeople based in China, or *taishang* (Keng and Schubert 2010). These studies assess the direct influence of taishang towards the Chinese (Lee 2008) and Taiwanese (Schubert 2013) governments. Lee (2008: 162) shows that Taiwanese businesspeople based in China were successful in achieving significant influence with local governments in China as the central government recognised their strategic value. With regard to the influence of taishang on policymaking in Taiwan, Schubert (2013: 53) examines their impact on elections through voting and the sponsoring of political parties and their candidates. While the impact of these direct attempts to shaping Taiwan’s cross-Strait policies is seen as rather limited, individual tycoons have been successful through informal political lobbying and by shaping public opinion through the acquisition of media outlets (Schubert and Keng 2012: 148–152). Although these studies provide crucial insights into the impact of Taiwanese businesspeople on policymaking, they need to be complemented by a look at the more indirect ways through which particular social interests shape the conditions under which political processes unfold.

In recent years, several publications have attempted to synthesise the factors discussed above. Scholars have attributed the rapprochement to the emergence of a “united front” (Kaeding 2014: 126; Wu 2017: 440), a “cross-Strait elite” (Matsuda 2015: 32) or a “cross-Strait plutocracy” (Cheung 2010: 21). Sharing similar theoretical premises and arguments, these perspectives can be grouped under the “China Factor” approach. The central premise is that the rise of China has endowed the CCP with the necessary financial resources to broaden its strategy of “using business to steer politics” (Wu 2017: 426–427). “The quintessential feature of Beijing’s influence operations”, Wu (2021: 25) writes, “is providing material incentives to
local collaborators (or co-operators) in return for political ends, often in the guise of innocuous commercial exchanges”. Through these incentives, the CCP is said to have forged a united front that comprises “a cooperative KMT, local political figures, and Taishang” (Wu 2019: 220). “These notables and celebrities have become an army of reservists for the China lobby, beating the drum for the ‘China opportunity’” (Wu 2021: 28), allowing China “to penetrate into all spheres of commercial, social, and cultural activities” in Taiwan (Wu 2017: 431).

While the China Factor approach has produced valuable research on mechanisms that shape the rapprochement, in particular with regard to Taiwan’s media sector (Huang 2017; Lin and Lee 2017), its explanatory power is constrained by a number of considerable theoretical flaws. First, it overemphasises the authorship of the CCP, which is seen as “utiliz[ing] its huge financial capacity to ‘buy Taiwan’” (Wu 2017: 431), while the KMT is cast in the role of a compliant junior partner. This reduces, second, the role of Taiwan’s bourgeoisie to that of “local collaborators” (ibid.: 430) for China, neglecting the fact that the bourgeoisie is capable of articulating and pursuing their own interests and has the capacity to shape the terrain on which political processes unfold. Conceiving of the rapprochement as “mainly driven by top-down policies from both governments” (Cheung 2010: 26) thus sees social forces only at the receiving end of the rapprochement, not as devising, organising and moulding it. Finally, subaltern groups are conceived of as being passive. Farmers or “naïve” students (Kaeding 2014: 128) are portrayed as groups that are “tak[en] advantage of”, while “the media are increasing [sic] manipulated” (ibid.: 127–128) by the CCP. This view fails to acknowledge that the involvement of students, farmers and other subaltern groups in the cross-Strait rapprochement is not the result of simple manipulation. These subaltern groups are aware of opportunities in China, and in certain ways, these interests are addressed by improved relations between China and Taiwan.3 These flaws of the China Factor approach are also reflected in research on social movements in Taiwan informed by this perspective, so we will return to these questions below.

**Approaches to Cross-Strait-Related Social Movements in Taiwan**

Prior to the SFM, social movements that are now considered episodes of the protest cycle related to the cross-Strait rapprochement received little systematic attention. The dominant paradigm for the study of social movements in Taiwan was primarily informed by the country’s democratic transition (Ho 2010; Hsiao 2011; Fan 2019). In 2013, publications on social movements in Taiwan declined to a low level after plateauing throughout the 2000s (Ho et al. 2018: 121), a fact that can be partly accounted for by the decline of social movements under the Chen Shui-bian government (Ho 2005).

The SFM changed this. Several publications shed light on the SFM itself (Ho 2015; Rowen 2015; Beckershoff 2017), and the events of 2014 not only reinvigorated Taiwan’s society but also the academic interest in the study of social movements. Movements that had received little attention before were now cast in a new light, leading scholars to reconsider the Wild Strawberry Movement (Hsiao 2017), the Anti-Media Monopoly Movement (Ebsworth 2017; Wong and Wright 2018)
and various local movements (Chen 2017; Cole 2017) that were now understood to have been related to Taiwan’s China-focused accumulation strategy. As a result, the object of inquiry was no longer the individual movement, but a protest cycle related to cross-Strait relations as a whole (Wei 2016; Hsu 2017; Ho 2018b; Wu 2019).

The shift towards interpreting these movements as responses to the China Factor (Kaeding 2015: 210–212; Wu 2017: 426, 436–437; Hsu 2020), however, comes with the cost of retrospectively imposing a homogeneity on the protest cycle for which there is no empirical basis. Forced into the epistemological straitjacket of the China Factor, the protest cycle appears as a more or less linear evolution from the Wild Strawberry Movement (WSM) to the Anti-Media Monopoly Movement (AMM) and the cycle’s point of culmination, the SFM. As the reconstruction of these movements below will show, however, each episode of contestation was characterised not only by a rich complexity of grievances but also by tensions and internal struggles among currents that resulted from the various trajectories of groups that participated in the movements. This study will by no means argue that China is not a major factor in social mobilisation between 2008 and 2014. Neglecting these internal contradictions, however, obscures the potential alternative paths that were open to the movement at various junctures, and if China ultimately prevailed as the principal motif of the movement’s self-conception, an empirical analysis is necessary to explore why this path was chosen among the various alternatives that were considered at different times.

The tendency to interpret the protest cycle from the China Factor perspective was cemented after the emergence of Hong Kong’s Umbrella Movement in late 2014 invited comparisons between the two cases. While there is ample reason for such a comparison, it comes with the pitfall of overemphasising the common factors in these movements. In the case of the Umbrella and Sunflower Movements, this common element was found in the China Factor (Kaeding 2014, 2015; Yuen 2014; Ho 2019a; Wu 2019), and various publications emphasised how China-related factors such as identity (Kwan 2016; Au 2017a,b) affected these movements. This perspective further reinforced the view that the SFM and the movements preceding it are best understood as a response to China’s attempt to incorporate Taiwan. Consequently, the multiplicity of grievances that informed the protest cycle in Taiwan is excluded, considerably limiting the potential of comparative approaches. It not only consolidated the epistemological homogenisation of the protest cycle in Taiwan but also removed it as a case for comparative research with similar movements elsewhere around the globe, such as the Occupy or Gezi Park movements.

By shedding light on the factors that contributed to protest in Taiwan beyond the China Factor, this study will argue that the comparison with Hong Kong should be complemented by comparisons to social movements that go beyond the China Factor as a common element. South Korea, for instance, suggests itself not only due to its similar socio-economic and political trajectory as an East Asian newly industrialised economy that is significantly shaped by its adherence to neoliberal developmentalism (Cho and Jessop 2001) but also because it experienced similar social movements (Lee 2014b), including movements against agricultural imports from the US (Ho and Hong 2012), rising tuition fees (Shin et al. 2014; Wei 2016: 155–160; Della Porta et al. 2020: 17) and youth unemployment (Sohn 2019).
Two further strands of literature are of note. The first of these explores the role of social media in Taiwan’s protest cycle. Scholars have studied the impact of social media on local (Tsatsou and Zhao 2016; Hsiao 2018) and international mobilisation (Chen et al. 2015) as well as the implications of “online-only” participants (Hsiao and Yang 2018). In addition to commonly known social media, Taiwan’s own PTT platform has received attention (Cader 2017; Hsiao 2017). The authors generally agree that social media are a helpful tool to maintain and activate networks, to support the coordination of mobilisation processes and to channel political ideologies (Au 2016). It is, however, doubtful that social media can replace the “offline” structures that are the result of long and arduous processes of day-to-day organising (Hsu 2009: 103–104). It is therefore necessary to carefully reconstruct the emergence of social networks that were then activated during social movements. In addition to looking at how movements made use of existing social media platforms, scholars have highlighted how Taiwan’s activists established their own platforms to live-stream from the Legislative Yuan, launch crowdfunding initiatives or establish platforms to coordinate tasks during the occupation (Cheng 2015; Lee 2015; Liao et al. 2020). The authors largely praise the positive effects of these innovations. Lee (2015), however, also shows how the self-imposed around-the-clock media presence constrained the movement and contributed to the containment of radical demands. This promising avenue will be further explored in this study.

A final body of literature emerging from the academic engagement with the cycle of social contestation in Taiwan is concerned with its effects on Taiwan’s political system. Authors have studied how the emergence of new political parties in the aftermath of the SFM affected Taiwan’s political spectrum (Fell 2018; Ho 2018a) and how extant parties have recruited SFM activists (Ho 2019b) or allowed them to run as candidates (Wang 2020). While these studies have shown that the SFM has introduced new issues into Taiwan’s domestic political discourse and has the potential to upset the dominance of the country’s two major parties, the relation between activists and political parties still demands further clarification. While Brading (2017: 161), for instance, argues that “the DPP, with its Taiwanese roots and swift decision to recast its political stance through a change to its leadership, became better placed to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of young Taiwanese”, Nachman (2018) finds significant tensions between SFM activists and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and suggests the DPP received activist votes out of strategic anti-KMT considerations rather than a correspondence of political visions. By shedding light on the particular internal dynamics of the protest cycle itself, this study can provide further context to these questions and contribute to an assessment of whether the institutionalisation of Sunflower activism has to be seen as reinvigorating party politics or as a weakening of movement activism.

The Rapprochement as a Contested Hegemonic Project

The discussion above has identified several shortcomings of the extant approaches that have been proposed to explain the dynamics of cross-Strait relations. In essence, these shortcomings can be attributed to the inadequate ways in which these
approaches conceptualise the role of social groups. The neglect of how social forces within Taiwan have contributed to driving the rapprochement results in an overemphasis of the authorship of the CCP, reducing Taiwan’s bourgeoisie to the role of compradors and conceiving of the subaltern as groups that have merely been manipulated into supporting the process. The social contestation of the rapprochement is then portrayed as the resistance of a homogeneous civil society against the increasing influence of China over Taiwan, obscuring the degree to which other factors have contributed to grievances and thus social mobilisation. The predominance of the ‘China vs. Taiwan’ and ‘state vs. civil society’ angles limits the explanatory power of these approaches.

The aim of the present study is to shed light on the social struggle over Taiwan’s relationship with the PRC that unfolded within Taiwan. To this end, we will here adopt an analytical perspective that allows us to reinterpret the cross-Strait rapprochement as a contested hegemonic project, that is, the attempt by Taiwan’s bourgeoisie to organise consent to a normalisation of economic relations across the Taiwan Strait. The major argument, which will be substantiated over the following six chapters, can be summed up as follows: As Taiwan’s previous social formation – characterised by a developmental state growth regime – reached exhaustion both in terms of economic success and domestic as well as international legitimacy, its internal contradictions contributed to the relocation of industrial production to China. From this reorganisation of production from the late 1980s onwards emerged social forces, which increasingly depend on the access to global markets, especially China. Facing political obstacles to achieve closer economic ties with China, Taiwan’s bourgeoisie organised a common project that relied on key organic intellectuals and business groups to articulate and disseminate a narrative that portrayed closer economic ties with China as natural, normal and necessary, and universalise their particular interests by offering ideological and material concessions to subaltern groups in Taiwan. This raises the question under which conditions the subaltern groups consented to this process and when they rejected it. To achieve a critical understanding of this dynamic, this study reconstructs the strategies and mechanisms through which the forces that constitute the hegemonic project operate. The analytical emphasis lies on understanding how these initiatives managed to include or marginalise subaltern forces and where, by contrast, attempts to secure consent from broader strata of Taiwan’s society were met with resistance.

To this end, Chapter 2 reconceptualises the cross-Strait rapprochement as a contested hegemonic project. The Gramscian notion of hegemony allows us to shift the analytical attention to social forces that seek to secure the consent to Taiwan’s neoliberal developmentalist accumulation strategy. Drawing on the works of Rosa Luxemburg and Henri Lefebvre, the chapter then sets out to provide methodological pointers for a process analysis of hegemonic contestation as the struggle over social forms of everyday life.

Chapter 3 discusses the historical and structural origins of the hegemonic project that attempts to secure consent for neoliberal developmentalism in Taiwan. These dynamics are mainly conditioned by the ways in which the contradictions of
the developmental state were resolved. The neo-mercantilist accumulation strategy paired extraversion with protectionism. Although the liberalisation of the 1990s and 2000s saw an increasing erosion of internal and external barriers to accumulation, trade relations with the PRC were exempted from this for political reasons. The emergence and politicisation of Taiwan’s bourgeoisie set into motion the implementation of a neoliberal developmentalist project that relies on the “normalisation” of trade relations with the PRC.

The following three chapters will then provide a process analysis of hegemonic contestation in Taiwan. Three phases can be distinguished. The first of these phases, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, is characterised by the hegemonic project’s attempt to de-politicise the rapprochement by portraying it as the technocratic management of technical issues arising from a quasi-natural trend towards economic integration. The analysis will expound on how this narrative was promoted by a network of civil society organisations representing the interests of Taiwan’s bourgeoisie. Although the WSM emerged in response to hegemonic interventions, its reconstruction will shed light on the ideological and material constraints that prevented a more effective social mobilisation.

Chapter 5 explores the hegemonic project’s response to this social challenge. It reconstructs a shift from a narrative of technocratic management to one that attempts to naturalise closer relations across the Taiwan Strait by emphasising cultural proximity. This shift relied on the establishment of a broad network of civil society organisations to integrate subaltern groups like students or workers. This process will be illustrated by the case of increased cross-Strait cooperation in the media sector, a hegemonic initiative that in turn prompted the emergence of several centres of contestation. A detailed analysis will show how these currents were forged into the AMM.

Chapter 6 then reconstructs how the hegemonic initiatives designed to restore Taiwan’s global competitiveness were experienced in the everyday lives of Taiwan’s students, farmers and workers, contributing to an accumulation of grievances that resulted in the adoption of radical forms of ideology and practice. The signing of a trade agreement between China and Taiwan acted as a catalyst for the 2014 SFM. Against extant analyses, this study will argue that the SFM was characterised by a struggle over the adequate forms of politicisation that accounts for the fragmentation of movement currents during and after the movement.

The concluding chapter, finally, will discuss the implications of this analysis for our understanding of social and political dynamics in post-Sunflower Taiwan.

Limitations and Contributions of the Study

Although this research design will allow us to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of cross-Strait relations under Ma Ying-jeou, a few notes are in order. A first limitation resulting from the research design is the empirical focus on Taiwan’s society. Even though the processes examined here are necessarily related to the PRC, this study is mainly concerned with how social forces in Taiwan attempt to
universalise their particular interests or contest the attempted universalisation of
the interests of other groups. Due to the scope of this study, the interest formation
and potential social contestation in China is not considered. This should, however,
not affect the validity of the findings presented here, as the CCP enjoys a relative
autonomy from civil society and its political goals and the means it has employed
to achieve these have remained constant over the period examined here.

A second drawback arising from the analytical perspective adopted here is that
the mode of presentation does not follow a uniform structure across the various
chapters. While each episode of hegemonic contestation was studied following the
same mode of inquiry, the mode of presentation differs as the structure of each
chapter is dictated by the need to depict and explain the particular dynamics that
conditioned each episode. Furthermore, the presentation of findings does not follow
a strict chronological order. Drawing on a distinction proposed by Jessop (2003: 4),
the aim is not to provide a chronology of hegemonic contestation in Taiwan, but
rather a periodisation, which privileges the reconstruction of the underlying factors
that characterise each distinct phase, at times resulting in “intersecting and overlap-
ping time horizons” (ibid.). In particular, the analyses presented in chapters five
and six overlap chronologically, as the trajectory of certain groups, currents and
movements can only be distinguished on a methodological level.

The analytical precedence the cycle of hegemonic contestation takes over indi-
vidual episodes means that, third, this study does not seek to provide an exhaustive
account covering all features of each of the social movements considered here.
While competing imaginations and potential alternate paths will be explored, in
many cases more could have been said on various aspects of each movement. An
exhaustive account of the AMM, for example, would need to discuss the move-
ment’s transition into parliamentary politics, covering the political debate on anti-
monopoly legislation. Conversely, there were hegemonic initiatives that could
have been discussed at further length. One example is the Economic Cooperation
Framework Agreement (ECFA). The limited protest against the ECFA, however,
did not spill over into an episode of generalised social contestation. Given the limi-
tations of space, these aspects will therefore not be fully explored.

The contributions of this research project are twofold. Empirically, this study
sheds light on the involvement of social forces driving the rapprochement from
within Taiwan. The analysis illustrates the degree to which Taiwan’s bourgeoisie
has been instrumental in setting up networks of civil society organisations that
sought to organise consent for closer economic relations across the Taiwan Strait.
Furthermore, the detailed analysis of the social contestation related to the rap-
prochement results in a more nuanced understanding of social movements in Tai-
wan. Rather than assuming a homogeneous civil society in Taiwan, the following
chapters illuminate how these movements were fraught with internal tensions that
were the result of an intense and highly contradictory process of organisation. Both
of these insights will serve to contextualise the competing visions that will shape
Taiwan’s political and social dynamics for years to come. Theoretically, this study
exhibits how the analytical perspective of hegemonic contestation is able to bridge
domination- and resistance-focused approaches. These theoretical contributions will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

Notes

1 Lee (2010: 66; 2014a: 68–69) later suggests, however, that the privileges and influence enjoyed by Taiwanese businesspeople in China declined as the political rapprochement reduced their strategic value to the central government while the increased competition from foreign and Chinese businesses reduced the local governments’ dependence on Taiwanese investments.

2 In an attempt to generalise the findings of China’s relation with Taiwan and Hong Kong and make the approach applicable to more cases, the China Factor approach has recently been merged into the debate on China’s ‘sharp power’ (see Fulda 2020).

3 Clark and Tan (2016: 339), for instance, note that even after the SFM, one third of young Taiwanese want to pursue employment opportunities in China.

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Introduction


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2 Theoretical Approach
The Cross-Strait Rapprochement as a Contested Hegemonic Project

The writings of Antonio Gramsci have inspired countless empirical research projects and theoretical debates, the survey of which is far beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather than attempting to reconstruct the depth of how his thought has been applied to current issues, the following sections will interrogate his thought with the aim of outlining a conceptual apparatus that can help us decipher the cross-Strait rapprochement as a contested project. To this end, the chapter will bridge two approaches within Gramscian-inspired research: the domination-focused and the resistance-focused approaches (Huke et al. 2015). In a way, these two currents are already present in Gramsci’s work. Living the dialectical unity of theory and practice, Gramsci was as much a student of the historical and political factors that shaped the terrain of inter-war Italy as he was an activist on that terrain. And while Gramsci’s political ambition was to construct an emancipatory project by and for Italy’s working class, his political activities were inseparable from his comparative analysis of the successful and failed attempts by the bourgeois class to organise its hegemony. Within Gramsci’s writings, therefore, we have two moments that are dialectically linked: the moment of analysing how dominant classes produce and reproduce their supremacy on the one hand, and the moment of studying past and present forms of resistance in order to point out the potential for constructing a progressive movement on the other.

To some degree, it is therefore surprising that this unity, while often invoked, is rarely realised in research (see criticisms by Drainville 2004: 29; Winter 2011: 152–153; Huke et al. 2015; Shields 2015: 671). Since a selection of notes from Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks was published in English in 1971, a large body of literature has emerged on the question of the reproduction of bourgeois rule. Only more recently, Gramscian ideas have received systematic treatment in the study of resistance movements. Nevertheless, there seems to be little constructive dialogue between both sides – on the contrary, the relationship between the two camps seems to be marked by mutual criticism (Shields 2015: 671). This is all the more puzzling if one considers that the origin of the division into opposing (or to put it in a more conciliatory way: complementary) strands in contemporary research is not so much theoretical as it is epistemic: While both strands agree on the basic theoretical arguments advanced by Gramsci, it is their specific research interest that
leads them to privilege either the reproduction of domination or the formation of protest and resistance movements.

This bifurcation into opposing research foci and methods conceals the degree to which domination and resistance are mutually constitutive. To overcome this opposition of empirical perspectives, this chapter aims to shift the emphasis on the dialectical (i.e. relational and process-based) aspects that can already be found within Gramsci’s own writings. The following sections propose a praxeological rearticulation of Gramscian concepts, arguing that ultimately both perspectives condense in a process that will be called *hegemonic contestation*: the struggle over forms of everyday life. This point, where domination and resistance are fused into one real and observable process, is consequently privileged as the empirical point of departure.

To arrive at this rearticulation, the first section introduces Gramsci’s central concepts as well as the set of questions around which they emerged. It builds on criticisms within Gramscian literature to reconstruct the dialectical dimensions that are inherent to the notion of hegemony and thereby overcome the domination-resistance dichotomy. The second section argues that such a dialectical conception of hegemonic struggle necessitates a turn towards everyday life as the empirically relevant site of struggle, as the forms of everyday practice are both object and medium of contestation. This praxeological rearticulation of hegemony, however, demands new tools to guide the empirical inquiry. Section three therefore combines these arguments into an outline of a dialectical process analysis, providing three concepts that can guide the empirical analysis.

**From Hegemony to the Contestation of Hegemonic Projects**

The political thought of Antonio Gramsci (1881–1937) emerged at a historical juncture that shaped his analyses in a profound way. Imprisoned under Benito Mussolini’s fascist rule in Italy, he spent the last years of his life making sense of the social and political developments in Italy by analysing and conceptualising similar conjunctures in Italian and European history and history of thought. The thread that holds together his writings from this period, which later became known as the *Prison Notebooks*, is the question of revolutionary practice. Gramsci, who had been the leader of the Communist Party of Italy, asked why a socialist revolution had been possible in underdeveloped Czarist Russia but not in the capitalist core countries of Western Europe, where the workers’ movements had arguably been much stronger. His tentative answers emerged through a series of theoretical criticisms and arguments as well as historical analyses, the conclusion of which is condensed in the following passage:

In Russia, the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks[.]

(Gramsci 1971: 238)
While the Russian state collapsed first with the overthrow of the Romanovs and then with the capture of the Winter Palace, Gramsci argues that in capitalist social formations the state is supported by the “formidable complex of trenches and fortifications of the dominant class” (Gramsci 2012: 390), which is analytically distinct from the state apparatus. Social reproduction was safeguarded not only through the repressive institutions of the state but through a social process that aimed at the continuous organisation of consent to this form of rule. From this crucial insight, Gramsci developed his notion of hegemony as a form of political rule that is primarily based on the consent of the masses and where force and coercion become secondary.

To become hegemonic, a social group has to complement domination with leadership (Gramsci 1971: 57) “by presenting itself as ethico-political, [i.e.,] as the representative of universal moral values and as the carrier of rational and objective principles independent of narrow socio-economic and socio-cultural interests” (Fontana 2008: 92). In other words, the key to organising consent is to universalise the leading group’s particular interest, portraying it as the “motor force of a universal expansion, of a development of all the ‘national’ energies” (Gramsci 1971: 182) and “have the conditions for [a class’s] existence and development … accepted as a universal principle” (Gramsci 1995: 353). As will be discussed in more detail below, this comprises the articulation and diffusion of an inclusive ideology, the implementation of a corresponding and comprehensive mode of living, but also the active integration of the interests of subordinate groups. With regard to empirical research, hegemony directs our attention to the specific mechanisms of universalisation and the organisation of consent, or in Gramsci’s (1971: 59) words: “In what forms, and by what means, did [these groups] succeed in establishing the apparatus (mechanism) of their intellectual, moral and political hegemony?”

The terrain on which the process of organising hegemony unfolds is civil society, which encompasses “the ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’” (ibid.: 12). Gramsci here specifically lists the press and publishing houses, newspapers and journals, libraries, groups and clubs (Gramsci 1995: 155), the church, trade unions and schools (Gramsci 1994: 67), as well as capitalist firms (Gramsci 1971: 261). The power of the leading groups rests on and permeates this molecular web of institutions, each of which contributes to organising consent to this rule – often against resistance from the subaltern classes (Overbeek 2004: 125). Civil society in the Gramscian sense is therefore not an idealised realm beyond class relations and class struggle, nor can it be understood as a realm that is in opposition to the state (Buttigieg 2005). Rather, it is the terrain on which the struggle for hegemony among the various groups of society takes place (Gramsci 1971: 235–239).

A key role in this struggle for hegemony belongs to a group that Gramsci calls organic intellectuals. They are defined not by the “intrinsic nature of intellectual activities” (ibid.: 8) but by the function they take in the process of organising hegemony (ibid.: 12). This function has two aspects: On the one hand, these organising activities are aimed at rivalling or subaltern groups in civil society, where organic intellectuals “create the conditions most favourable to the expansion of their own class” (ibid.: 5–6). On the other hand, organic intellectuals also have a