

The democratic evolution of Taiwan in light of the 2014 Sunflower Movement

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Abstract

In March 2014 four hundred student activists occupied Taiwan's Legislative Yuan, protesting against the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement and the Kuomintang government's foreign policy towards China. The movement was dubbed the Sunflower Movement by the media. The Sunflowers have changed the course of cross-strait dialogue and influenced Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement in September 2014. This paper deals with the development of the post-World War II relationship of Taiwan and China including the progress of cross-strait communication after the democratization of Taiwan. Tracking the most significant historical events, the paper provides an overview of the evolution of the Taiwanese democracy. Reviewing the most prominent social movements of postcolonial Taiwan, the paper discusses today's party politics in terms of the opposing Pan-Green and Pan-Blue Coalitions, Taiwan's state of democracy and freedom of press. A comparative assessment of the Sunflower Movement and the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement is performed based on the following characteristics: i) roots and public support of the movements; ii) media coverage of the events; iii) achievements of the movements; and iv) contribution of the protests to China's cross-strait and Hong Kong policies. The paper concludes that the Sunflower Movement has brought light to the public's discontent with Taiwan's China policy, the country's increasing dependency on the Chinese economy, and the alarmingly high rates of youth unemployment. The dissatisfaction is likely to result in future protests similar to the Sunflower Movement, particularly if no firm change occurs in the party politics.

Introduction

On March 19, 2014, hundreds of student activists of the Black Island Nation Youth occupied the assembly hall of the Legislative Yuan of Taiwan. The twenty-four-day occupation has generated mass protests all around Taipei. The media labelled the unrest Sunflower Movement, after a florist handing out flowers to the students during demonstrations. The Sunflowers were protesting against the ratification of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement, a trade liberalization pact with China. The students feared the economical and political consequences of the treaty, as it was negotiated behind closed doors in the mainland. This paper summarizes the most significant historical events of the post-1945 period and provides an overview of the evolution of the Taiwanese democracy. Reviewing the most prominent social movements of postcolonial Taiwan, the paper discusses today's party politics in terms of the opposing Pan-Green and Pan-Blue Coalitions and Taiwan's state of democracy and freedom of press. A comparative assessment of the Sunflower Movement and the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement is performed, in order to gain a better understanding of East-Asia's current political tendencies and their possible advancement in the future.

1. Taiwan's road to democracy

As the winner of the first Sino-Japanese War, Japan occupied Taiwan in 1895. The territory remained under Japanese rule as a colony until 1945, when it was ceded to the mainland's Republic of China (ROC). However, the long awaited reintegration of Taiwan in the mainland stirred conflicts. Chinese soldiers arrived at the island as conquerors, needing interpreters to be able to communicate with the Taiwanese people, not understanding local culture or heritage. The soldiers were frustrated with the Taiwanese technical, industrial, and infrastructural advancement. During the Japanese colonial period Taiwan was primarily used for its agricultural resources, thus, Japan established a modern infrastructure on the territory to maximize its utility. Additionally, the political consciousness of the Taiwanese people, gained mostly from being a colony for half a century, caused friction with the nationalist mainlanders. The locals were disappointed, as Taiwan's administrative system was taken over by the mainland's nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) government, replacing high ranking Taiwanese officers with loyal mainlanders. The appointed governor, Chen Yi established a corrupt administration in which officials embezzled Japanese and Taiwanese property, labeling them prize of war. The Chinese malfeasance caused a significant setback in the Taiwanese economy. In 1947 the production levels dropped to a quarter of the 1942 merit (Jordán, 2005, p. 182.). Additionally, the government covertly smuggled most of Taiwan's food supplies to the mainland to support the soldiers fighting in the Chinese Civil War. The setback in the production and the illegal exports led to a famine (Jordán, 2005).

The high unemployment rate and inflation, the spreading famine, and the growing tension between mainlanders and locals led to the February 28 Incident in 1947, one of the most prominent fights for democracy in Taiwan's history. On February 27, two State Monopoly Commission agents had got into a quarrel on the street with a Taiwanese woman, ending with one of the fleeing agents shooting dead a bystander. The following day demonstrations started with thousands of people marching the streets, demanding the prosecution of the agents, the reestablishment of the Taiwanese administration, the abolishment of the martial law, and implementation of democratic reforms. More than a thousand people died during the rally. Although Governor Chen Yi publicly agreed to

negotiate with the protesters, on March 8 13,000 KMT troops arrived in Taiwan, eradicating the demonstrations. The death toll of the Kuomintang's retaliations is estimated to be between 10,000 and 30,000 civilians (Schubert, 2012, p. 67.). During the following years of White Terror 140,000 people were imprisoned or executed for suspected opposition of the regime (Schubert, 2012, p. 68.).

However, further conflicts stirred as nationalist refugees from the mainland had started to pour into Taiwan, fleeing from the Chinese Civil War. The migration created a friction because Taiwan's post-war economy could not bear the excessive influx of refugees, resulting in an even further increase of the already high unemployment rate. By November 1948, an estimated 31,000 people arrived weekly in Taiwan (Jordán, 2005, p. 194.). According to the census, Taiwan's population between 1946-1950 was an estimated 6.7 million, which increased to 8.3 million during the 1951-55 period. As data shows, the incoming mainlanders represented a significant political force (Jordán, 2005, p. 360.).

In 1949 after being defeated by the Communist Party in the Chinese Civil War, Director-General of the KMT, Chiang Kai-shek moved the government of the ROC from the mainland to Taipei, establishing an authoritarian regime lasting until 1986. Shortly after the KMT's arrival in Taiwan, assessing the reasons for the party's defeat in the civil war, the KMT was reorganized to appeal to a wider crowd (Jordán, 2005, p. 200.). From 1949 the KMT had started implementing reforms to boost the economy and rebuild the strong Taiwan the Japanese colonialists left behind (Jordán, 2005). With financial aids from the United States adding up to a total of \$1.4 billion between 1949-1967, by the 1970s Taiwan's export driven economy had become one of the most dynamically growing ones in Asia (Jordán, 2005, p. 224.). This astonishing development is commonly referred to as the Taiwan Miracle.

Over the course of the 1970s the United States opened diplomatic discourse with the People's Republic of China (PRC), as latter's relationship with the Soviet Union deteriorated. On October 25, 1971, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed Resolution 2758 restoring the rights of the PRC in the organization, recognizing its government as the only lawful representative of China and a member of the Security Council. The Resolution expelled Chiang Kai-shek's representatives, concluding that they had occupied their positions unlawfully (UN Resolution 2758, 1971). On February 28, 1972, after President Nixon's visit to China, the United States and the PRC issued the Shanghai Communiqué, in which the United States confirmed that there was only one China, and Taiwan was a part of it (Shanghai Communiqué, 1972).

The Shanghai Communiqué marked a shift in the Sino-U.S. relations. Over the decade most of the international community switched recognition to the PRC, which by 1979 led to Taiwan's complete international isolation. In 1978 the United States announced to break diplomatic ties with Taiwan in order to strengthen their relationship with the PRC (Schubert, 2012).

Due to Chiang Kai-shek's ill health, his son Chiang Ching-kuo became Taiwan's Premier in 1972, in 1975 he was appointed Chairman of the KMT, and in 1978 was elected President of the ROC. Under his rule the KMT implemented reforms aiming the reduction of intra-party corruption (Schubert, 2012).

Due to Taiwan's international isolation the KMT's popularity deteriorated throughout the 1970s, contributing to the emerge of the Dangwai¹ Movement. In less than a decade the

¹ Dangwai literally means outsiders to the party, referring to the ruling KMT (Schubert, 2012).

movement came to be a strong opponent to the KMT, using their own media platforms to reach and mobilize voters. On December 10, 1979, the escalating conflict between the KMT and the Dangwai Movement led to the Kaohsiung Incident. The Dangwai, in celebration of the International Human Rights Day, organized a demonstration that rapidly spiraled into a confrontation between the masses and the police, resulting in the imprisonment of the movement's leaders. During his imprisonment, Dangwai leader Lin Yi-hsiung's mother and twin daughters were murdered by unknown assassins in their family home. The KMT's involvement in the massacre was not proven, but Lin's house at the time of the attack was under government surveillance. After the events, the international community, led by the United States, pressured the KMT to abolish the authoritarian regime. In the 1983 national supplementary elections the Dangwai Movement won several mandates. In 1986 shortly after Chiang Ching-kuo announced that martial law would be lifted, the movement evolved into the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)² (Schubert, 2012).

On July 15, 1987, martial law was abolished. In November the travel ban that kept Taiwanese people from the mainland for 40 years, was lifted. In January 1988 press censorship was revoked. On May 1, 1991, the 1946 ROC constitution came into force. Additional constitutional changes were implemented in order to secure democratic values (Schubert, 2012).

During Taiwan's democratic transition emerged a social movement, the Wild Lily Student Movement. An estimated 5,000-6,000 students staged a sit-in protest between March 16-22, 1990, in front of the Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial. Approximately 10,000 residents supported them on the streets. The Wild Lilies demanded direct popular presidential elections. They have succeeded and the Wild Lily Student Movement since has become one of the most prominent social movements of the democratic Taiwan (Fan, 2004).

Today's Taiwanese democracy shows many similarities with mature Western democracies. Voter turnouts are high and so is political activity of the citizens. Most people vote according to their political beliefs rather than the candidate's suitability. The two opposing coalitions are the pro-China Pan-Blue (includes the KMT) and pro-independence Pan-Green Coalition (includes the DPP) (Ho et al., 2013).

In its 2015 report Freedom House tagged Taiwanese media as one of the freest in Asia, limited only by indirect influence of the PRC, self-censorship, and political polarization. The report mentioned cases where journalists were pressured by their news outlets during the 2014 local elections to take either Pan-Blue or Pan-Green side. Another issue indicated by Freedom House was the Taiwanese media owners' business interests in the PRC, forcing them and their journalists to censor their China-related coverage (Freedom House, 2015).

2. The evolution of cross-strait relations

Chiang Ching-kuo had passed away on January 13, 1988, his successor both as Taiwan's President and the KMT's Chairman was the native Taiwanese Lee Teng-hui, who served as president between 1988-2000.

After the Taiwanese democracy was secured, in 1991 Lee announced that the ROC's sovereignty was limited to Taiwan and certain offshore islands, and recognized the PRC's sovereignty over the mainland. In the early 1990s both countries created agencies responsible for cross-strait relations, and several meetings took place between their representatives.

² Formal legalization of opposition parties only happened in January 1989.

Although an agreement could not be reached about the One-China policy, the negotiations were peaceful, and the relationship seemed to progress (Schubert, 2012).

In 1995 President Lee visited his alma mater, Cornell University, against the PRC's and President Clinton's prior warning. After Lee spoke up against the PRC during the visit, Beijing dismissed all further cross-strait talks. The dispute escalated into the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. Between July 21, 1995, and March 23, 1996, the PRC conducted several missile tests in the Taiwan Strait as a warning to potential Taiwanese independence movements (Jordán, 2005, 311. o.).

The outcome of the 2000 presidential elections drastically changed cross-strait politics, as the DPP's Chen Shui-bian won. In his inaugural speech he emphasized that Taiwan would abide the existing status quo with China, and proposed a reconciliation, pledging that his government would not declare independence unless the PRC used military force against Taiwan (Chen, 2002).

The efforts of President Chen caused backlash both from the mainland and the KMT. The PRC's condition for reopening cross-strait talks was for Taiwan to accept Beijing's "One China" principle, which was inadmissible for Taiwan. In spite of the DPP's endeavor to establish bipartisan cooperation, the China-oriented KMT used its majority in the Legislative Yuan to obstruct the legislation. After the KMT lost its majority in the 2000 legislative elections the DPP changed strategy and set out a Taiwanization policy in order to strengthen Taiwanese nationalism. In August 2002 President Chen proclaimed Taiwan and the PRC "two states on each side" and announced his intention to create a new constitution for Taiwan. In the 2004 presidential elections Chen secured his office, and in the legislative elections in December the DPP obtained a majority in the Legislative Yuan. In 2006 Chen and his family members were involved in a series of scandals, and after leaving office in May 2008, Chen was charged with embezzlement of public property and money laundering (Schubert, 2012).

After Chen's scandal the 2008 and 2012 local and presidential elections were won by the KMT. Taiwan's incumbent president since 2008 has been Ma Ying-jeou. In his 2008 inauguration speech President Ma accentuated his intent to achieve peace with the PRC and declared his support for the "no unification, no independence and no use of force" policy. He called upon both sides to seek reconciliation, emphasizing their common Chinese heritage (Ma, 2008).

Soon after he was elected, on October 25, 2008, the repercussions of President Ma's China policy led to demonstrations known as the 1025 rally to safeguard Taiwan. The DPP backed protests broke out after the infamous Chinese milk scandal. Hundreds of thousands of people marched the streets of Taipei, protesting against the KMT's ties to the mainland, demanding President Ma's resignation ("Taiwan opposition rally", 2008).

Shortly after, on November 6, 2008, emerged the Wild Strawberries Movement³. The Strawberries opposed the government's actions regarding the official visit of PRC representative Chen Yunlin⁴. During the visit, the KMT removed symbols of Taiwanese national identity and did not use the state's official name, the Republic of China. The student movement demanded a public apology from President Ma and the abolition of the Assembly

³ The name is partly a tribute to the 1990 Wild Lily Student Movement and partly a reference to millennials, often compared to strawberries in Taiwan, for being pretty and sweet, but easy to bruise (Rowen, 2015).

⁴ President of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits in Beijing.

and Parades Act⁵. The Wild Strawberries occupied Liberty Square for several months (Rowen, 2015). During the early protests approximately five hundred students participated, which dropped to a hundred once they had to return to college for exams (“Taiwan: Students”, 2008).

3. The Sunflower Movement and the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement

The Sunflower Movement was a student movement that occupied the Legislative Yuan of the ROC on March 19, 2014. The occupation lasted for twenty-four days. The students were protesting against the ratification of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), a trade liberalization pact between China and Taiwan, signed on July 21, 2013. The CSSTA was a follow-up treaty to the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), the ratification of which had already caused an uproar in 2009.

On May 17, 2009, the DPP organized a rally, later named the 517 protest, against the ECFA. Protesters argued that the pact was threatening Taiwan’s sovereignty and several sectors of its economy. The DPP estimated 600,000 participants (“About 600,000 protest”, 2009). Despite the demonstrations the ECFA was signed on June 29, 2010 (“Taiwan president”, 2010).

As a follow-up of the ECFA, the CSSTA would open 80 sectors of the PRC’s economy to Taiwanese investors and 64 sectors of the ROC’s economy to Chinese capital. Since the agreement was negotiated and signed in Shanghai without any details about the process released to the public, the KMT agreed to hand in the bill for bipartisan scrutiny before passing it (Rowen, 2015).

The opposition’s main argument against the CSSTA was a research, conducted by the government’s Chung Hua Institute for Economic Research, estimating that the treaty would only boost Taiwan’s GDP with 0.025-0.034%, while putting the SMEs, media culture, and democratic values at risk. Another argument was President Ma’s 9% approval rating, which suggested he had no mandate to push through a major bill (Rowen, 2015, p. 6.). On their Reddit page the Sunflowers also argued that 38% of Taiwan’s economy relies on China, and further increase of this number would have a lasting impact on Taiwan’s democratic values and freedom of speech (Reddit, 2014). This corresponds with the previously discussed Freedom House report, emphasizing the effect of media owners’ cross-strait business interests on the freedom of the press.

The CSSTA was extremely unpopular among young people. Taiwan’s economy has been suffering from high rates of unemployment during Ma’s presidency. Lack of employment among young people is the most critical issue, unemployment rates have been the highest among the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups. In the past five years the unemployment rate was highest among the 20-24 age group. In May 2008, when Ma assumed office, the unemployment rate was 3.8% (10.5% in the 20-24 age group) and by August 2009, it peaked at 6.1% (16.3% in the 20-24 age group). In March 2014 when the Sunflower Movement emerged, the rate was 4.0% (13.2% in the 20-24 age group) (National Statistics, 2015). Furthermore, as a result of the rising number of tourists from the mainland, consumer prices have been increasing while wages have been stagnating (“Losing hearts”, 2014).

⁵ A law that had been ratified during the authoritarian regime, used by the government to suppress unwanted demonstrations.

On March 17, 2014, the KMT announced that the promised review period was over, without letting the opposition actually revise the terms, and that the CSSTA would be submitted for ratification on March 21 (Rowen, 2015). They argued that the DPP forced them to act so, as their members attempted to obstruct the legislation (Ramzy, 2014).

On March 19, 2014, at 4 am four hundred student activists of the Black Island Nation Youth occupied the assembly hall of the Legislative Yuan and after escorting out the officers on duty, barricaded the doors. Thousands of students protested outside the building, staging a sit-in to support the occupiers and block the streets, particularly at nights when police interference was most likely to occur (Chao, 2014).

Students were not removed from the building due to the intervention of Speaker Wang Jin-pyng, President Ma's most influential opponent in the KMT. On March 20, Speaker Wang using the occupation to help him in his intra-party power struggle with Ma, promised the students that they can stay in the building. Speaker Wang disregarded Premier Jiang Yi-huah's order to send riot police forces into the building and ignored President Ma's call for an emergency meeting after the day of the occupation. The DPP stood by the students as well, supporting them as needed but staying as passive as possible in order to avoid accusations of the occupation being a DPP plot. The movement's name comes from a florist donating sunflowers to the front line of the protesters, who quickly adopted it as their symbol (Rowen, 2015).

Majority of the public backed the Sunflowers. According to a TVBS poll, 63% of the respondents supported the revision of the CSSTA, and only 18% wanted it to be passed without any modification (Cole, 2014 quoting the TVBS Poll Center, 2014).

The Sunflowers were also greatly supported by the Taiwanese civil society. Social activism is historically strong in Taiwan as during the authoritarian regime the lack of organized parties pushed activists to orient around NGOs. During the Legislative Yuan's occupation NGOs provided students with needed resources and supported them in areas they lacked experience, for instance networking and certain organizational tasks (Hioe, 2014).

What made the Sunflower Movement so effective was its use of social media outlets, as they used the internet for both internal and external communication. Not yet public press releases were shared among students via Google Docs, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and UStream were used to coordinate the participants and gain an international following. Latter was crucial to pressure President Ma into postponing the signing of the bill, since Taiwan's international perception was of high importance to him as a Harvard educated lawyer (Chao, 2014). The Sunflowers shared information in Chinese, English, Japanese, Arabic, Polish and Portuguese (Rowen, 2015).

Not only the Sunflowers used the internet to their advantage during the occupation. As the local media's coverage of the Sunflower Movement was biased, portraying the protesters as vandals, the 4am activist group set up a website (<http://4am.tw>) reporting on everything that was happening in Taipei without censorship. Using a crowdfunding campaign to raise money, 3,621 Taiwanese citizens contributed to the cause. The organizers used most of the donations to buy a full-page advertisement in the New York Times (Democracy at 4am, 2015). The advertisement featured police brutality occurred at the night of March 23 when two hundred Sunflowers tried to take over the building of the Executive Yuan, with the support of 3,000 protesters staging a sit-in on the streets outside. The following day pictures and recordings of young protesters with bloody faces and riot police forces attacking students flooded the internet (Chao, 2014).

Following these events the leaders of the occupation organized a rally for March 30. With an estimated 350,000 participants the demonstration was the largest nonpartisan, pro-democracy protest in the ROC's history. Following the rally, President Ma offered to meet the leaders of the Sunflower Movement, Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting privately but they refused unless the President agreed to broadcast the meeting to the public. As Ma declined a deadlock ensued until April 6, when Speaker Wang visited the Legislative Yuan and pledged the students that the CSSTA would not be passed without further review. The KMT's spokespeople immediately confirmed that Speaker Wang's statement was not approved by the party. However, after Speaker Wang's promise the leaders of the Sunflower Movement decided to leave the building on April 10 (Rowen, 2015).

4. The aftermath of the Sunflower Movement

Protests did not stop with the students' departure from the Legislative Yuan, thus, the government barricaded several streets of Taipei, including the 228 Peace Park, commemorating the victims of the February 28 Incident. Civic activists used the public's antagonism aimed at the leadership of the country to sabotage the KMT's plan to build Taiwan's fourth nuclear power plant. Lin Yi-hsiung supported the movement by starting a hunger strike on April 22, 2014. To show their support for Lin, activists occupied the Taipei Train Station on April 27. Riot police arrived at the scene with water canons to disperse the crowd. However, the following day the government backed down and announced to suspend the power plant project (Rowen, 2015).

The Sunflowers separated into a number of smaller groups, the most notable being the Taiwan March led by Lin Fei-fan, Chen Wei-ting, and Huang Kuo-chang. None of the groups decided to use the widely recognized sunflower symbol. Several students of the Sunflower Movement were hired by DPP youth committees, others were employed as campaign advisors to mayoral candidates. On November 29, 2014, the KMT suffered an unprecedented defeat in the local elections. Even the traditionally KMT biased Taipei has elected an independent mayor, Dr. Ko Wen-je, who allied with the Pan-Green Coalition. Minor parties affiliated with the Sunflowers, like the Green Party of Taiwan and the Tree Party won seats as well (Rowen, 2015).

After the landslide victory of the DPP, President Ma resigned as Chairman of the KMT on December 3.

5. A comparative assessment of Taiwan's Sunflower Movement and Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement⁶

On September 22, 2014, two civic groups of high school and university students started a class boycott in Hong Kong, demanding the National People's Congress to revoke its decision about the guidelines for the 2017 Chief Executive election. The decision denied Hong Kong voters the universal suffrage they were promised in 2007, allowing them to only vote for candidates selected by a nomination committee, heavily influenced by Beijing. On September 26, a group of students tried to occupy the Civic Square, but police forces immediately arrested them. The following day demonstrations arose, and thousands of protesters stormed the government headquarters. On September 28 the police used tear gas to break up the

⁶ The Umbrella Movement includes the groups Federation of Students, Scholarism, and Occupy Central with Peace and Love.

crowd. The pictures quickly spread on the internet⁷, making the mass of protesters grow even faster. The events led to a seventy-nine-day occupation of three key districts of Hong Kong (Yuen, 2015).

Hereinafter I attempt to compare the two movements based on the following characteristics: i) roots and public support of the movements; ii) media coverage of the events; iii) achievements of the movements; and iv) contribution of the protests to China's cross-strait and Hong Kong policies.

i) The Sunflowers' main focuses were to block the Legislative Yuan from passing the CSSTA and to protest against the government's China policy. They were backed by the public and the civil society. Their main arguments against the CSSTA were 1. negotiations happened behind closed doors; 2. economic dependency on China was opposed by the public; 3. the treaty was more beneficial to China; 4. opening sectors of the Taiwanese economy to China would affect Taiwan's freedom of speech and press.

The primary cause of the Umbrella Movement was Beijing's denial of universal suffrage, but it was just as much about growing income inequalities. The chief executive and the ruling elite have unbalanced power over Hong Kong's economy. The fact that former is nominated by Beijing, and latter has significant business interests in the mainland, validates the students' frustration with the system (Hilgers, 2015). Both in Taiwan and Hong Kong the public opinion is that previous economic cooperations with the mainland only enriched the pro-China elite ("Losing hearts", 2014).

As previously discussed, the majority of the Taiwanese people supported the Sunflowers. The polls in Hong Kong showed a more diverse public opinion. The movement was more popular among young people but even in the 18-29 age group only 41% supported them, while 31% opposed the movement. Among people over 50 only 27% supported the Umbrellas and 54% opposed the movement (Kan, 2013, 78. o.).

ii) The Sunflower Movement happened the same time as the crisis in Ukraine, therefore, international news had little to no space for Taiwan in their coverage. Hence, students were forced to use other channels to get their message through, promoting the movement via social media.

The Hong Kong protests were better covered by international media outlets, as there were more foreign journalists in Hong Kong than in Taipei. The Umbrellas' cause was also easier to present appealingly for Western audiences, simplifying it as a rally for democracy, even if that was only a vague description of the movement. Taiwan's history with China and the protesters' arguments against the CSSTA were too complex to translate to audiences not familiar with the topic (Rowen, 2014).

iii) The Sunflowers managed to postpone the ratification of the CSSTA and to block the nuclear power plant project. They also forced the KMT to retreat on its China policy and won the local elections for the DPP.

Beijing refused the Umbrellas' demand for universal suffrage, and the Hong Kong government declared its loyalty to Beijing. Since pro-democracy politicians promised to veto the bill, voters were left with no prospect of electoral reforms. Demonstrations dismantled due to several factors, such as protesters turning the public opinion against themselves, Hong Kongers getting wary of the traffic conditions, and local business owners complaining about

⁷ Pictures have shown students defending themselves against the police with umbrellas, thus, the demonstrations were labelled the Umbrella Movement (Yuen, 2015).

their income loss. Nonetheless, the Umbrellas achieved to gain international media interest and stood up against Beijing, fighting for democratic values (Barber, 2014).

On June 14, 2015, thousands of Hong Kongers marched the streets again, calling upon pro-democracy politicians to veto the electoral reform, as they promised. The bill required a two-thirds majority to pass, hence the government needed the support of four pro-democracy politicians (Wong, 2015). On June 18, the bill failed, getting only eight votes out of seventy in the Legislative Council (Forsythe - Wong, 2015).

iv) PRC President Xi Jinping has made it clear on several occasions that Beijing's goal is to make Taiwan accept the "One Country, Two Systems" formula of Hong Kong. The PRC used Hong Kong as an example of what Taiwan could be in the future if it accepted the reunification. When Beijing refused Hong Kong voters the promised universal suffrage, even pro-China President Ma declared Taiwan's full support of Hong Kong (Sui, 2014). Additionally, an unprecedented alliance was formed between the students of Taiwan and Hong Kong. During the Sunflowers' occupation of the Legislative Yuan, several civic activists from Hong Kong visited the site. After the riot police brutality at the occupation of the Executive Yuan, students in Hong Kong rallied outside the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (Wen, 2014).

In return several Taiwanese activists declared their support for the Umbrella Movement. When meetings started in Hong Kong in June 2014 to discuss possible plans for demonstrations, several Sunflowers attempted to fly to Hong Kong, including leaders Lin Fei-fan and Chen Wei-ting, but Beijing denied their entry (Sui, 2014). On September 28, 2014, a hundred demonstrators stormed the Hong Kong Representative Office in Taipei. The activists staged a sit-in protest in the lobby, standing up against the Hong Kong police brutality and demanding President Ma to suspend cross-strait negotiations (Wen, 2014).

Conclusions

In 2014 Taiwanese students, backed by the civil society, organized one of the most important social movements in Taiwan's history. The Sunflower Movement achieved its original goal, as the Legislative Yuan did not ratify the CSSTA. The Sunflowers brought light to deeper issues of the Taiwanese politics such as the general dissatisfaction with the KMT's China policy and the alarming condition of the economy. Increasing dependency on the Chinese economy, Taiwan's growing political vulnerability, and the high rates of youth unemployment may lead to further demonstrations. The achievements of the Sunflowers have influenced Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement, changing the course of cross-strait and Hong Kong-China dialogue, connecting students of both sides. As throughout Taiwan's history several social movements arose against the government's politically unappealing actions, protests similar to the Sunflower Movement may emerge in the future.

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