

## **Comparison of the Democratic Concepts of the People in Mainland China and Taiwan: Support and Understanding**

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### **Abstract**

Through an empirical comparative analysis, we found that people in mainland China and Taiwan demonstrate strong similarities in their support for democracy, based on democratic suitability, efficiency, preference, and priority. There are also differences in beliefs about democratic values. Compared to people in mainland China, the Taiwanese have a deeper and more widely shared belief in the principles of participation and pluralism, while the differences between their beliefs in the principles of equality, freedom, and checks and balances are narrow. Furthermore, people in mainland China and Taiwan have a strong similarity in their understanding of democracy, that is, they all present a mixed democratic understanding based on substantive bias. Overall, although the differences between mainland China and Taiwan's democratic practices are reflected in the level of value identification from the perspective of democratic support and democratic understanding, the popular democratic political culture in mainland China and Taiwan still has a relatively broad consensus. Thus, the integration and development of cross-strait relations not only has an increasingly profound social and economic foundation but also considerable consensus and mass support on the political and cultural level.

*Keywords:* democratic values, support for democracy, understanding of democracy, cross-strait consensus, both sides of the (Taiwan) Strait.

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In mainland China, enhancing the political mutual trust between mainland China and Taiwan and promote the development of cross-strait relations has always been a topic of concern for mainland China's academic community. On the whole, the existing research starts with the political systems and policies, and the macro-level analysis paradigm has also been widely studied. In addition, historical and structural factors have been discussed by scholars (Yu, 2012; Wang, 2013; Shen, 2016). However, there is a lack of micro-individual analysis from the perspective of the mainland China and Taiwanese people. Since 1949, having been through different social and economic processes, there have also been certain differences in cross-strait political practices, the most obvious of which is the construction and development of cross-strait politics.

A socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics has achieved remarkable development in practice and form based on China's unique development theory in the past few decades, and thus reflects the political advantages of the "Chinese model." Taiwan began the democratization process in the early 1990s, and its institutional arrangements and political practices have developed in the Western model. Due to the differences between the political systems, the political culture on both sides of the Taiwan Strait is also different. Mainland China focuses on traditional Chinese Confucian thought in relation to its ideas of good governance and meritocracy. While Taiwan has also inherited Chinese cultural traditions, it has implemented Western democratic systems.

The democratic concepts of the people on both sides of the strait, directly points to the core questions: What are the similarities and differences between the people on both sides of the strait in terms of their individual democratic concepts while living under different social systems? To what extent is there consensus and compatibility between the democratic political cultures of the two sides of the strait? Based on the Asian Barometer Survey data from mainland China (2015) and Taiwan (2014), this article conducts an empirical analysis and comparative study of these issues.

As mentioned above, scholars have carried out a fruitful analysis of this topic at the macro level. However, if we focus on the individual micro-level, we will establish that people's attitudes towards democracy not only affect the respective democratic political practices on both sides of the strait but also profoundly affect the exchanges

and development of relations between them. Having been through different processes of political development within the same cultural background, what kind of concepts will the people on both sides of the strait have on democracy? Compared with the differences in actual political practice, what are the areas of consensus and the differences between the people on both sides of the strait in their democratic concepts? This is the core issue that this article will explore.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review of this article will focus on the development and differences of the concept of democracy in mainland China and Taiwan. Democracy is regarded as a solution to the relationship between the people and the government, and the will of the people plays a decisive role in a democratic government (Held, 1995). Although both mainland China and Taiwan claim that their systems have realized the principle of popular sovereignty, from the perspective of specific practice, there is a certain degree of difference.

Socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics emphasizes "substantial democracy." Its connotation is conveyed by Xi Jinping's statement that "the people's yearning for a better life is our goal" (Guoping, 2016). Under this logic, a socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics is mainly characterized by concepts such as people-oriented thinking and good governance, while procedural democracy is of lesser importance. Bell (2015) pointed out that Chinese meritocracy includes requirements for leaders to have higher analytical skills, social skills, and moral character. Tang Wenfang (2016) emphasized the mass line<sup>2</sup> as a communication mechanism between the state and society. Although China did not adopt a Western-style election model, it has still produced excellent leaders and a high level of government responsiveness. From the arguments of these scholars, it can be seen that democracy with Chinese characteristics is mainly a kind of performance, governance, and democracy with people-oriented thinking. The main point is that the Chinese

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<sup>2</sup> CCP's fundamental policy. It refers to "Do everything for the masses, all rely on the masses, come from the masses, go to the masses, and turn the CCP's correct propositions into the masses' conscious actions."

Communist Party has long declared that it has won the entrustment of history and the trust of the people and has assumed responsibility for governing China. Therefore, it needs to bring good governance to the people. At the same time, governance performance has also become an important criterion in the public's judgment on the operation of public power.

Compared with the socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics developed in mainland China, democratic practice in Taiwan presents a demonstration of Western-style democracy. In the concept of liberal democracy, the masses are also in a key position, and the protection of individual rights by the political system is especially emphasized so that it can be effectively referenced in policy decisions (Held, 1995; 2006). If the people always rely on the ruler, their thoughts on political affairs will remain at the early stage (Verba & Almond, 1963) and they will not be able to get deeply involved in public issues (Dahl, 1989). The promotion of liberal democracy in Taiwan has been gradual; it started with the promotion of grassroots elections, then island-wide elections, and, finally, democratization. The cultivation of the democratic concepts of the people in Taiwan can be traced back to the time of Chiang Kai-shek. In order to consolidate its regime in Taiwan, the Chiang Kai-shek government urgently needed the support of the United States, and it had to create a superficial democratic image (Nathan & Ho, 1993; Rigger, 2004). Although the "Three Principles of the People" policy promoted at that time was more important than nationalism, civil rights could also be regarded as partly related to democratic values. Therefore, although the Chiang Kai-shek government placed more emphasis on the instrumental effects of democracy, this approach quietly formed the initial impression of liberal democratic values in the thoughts of the Taiwanese people (Tsang, 1999; Wu, 2013).

Based on their respective political developments, each side of the strait has a different understanding of democracy and follows different democratic practices. This article will focus on the subjective attitudes of the people on both sides of the strait toward democracy and will try to analyze the following issues from the perspective of public opinion on both sides of the strait: the people's support for and evaluation of democracy itself on both sides of the strait, their recognition of democratic values, and their understanding of the meaning of democracy. The specific areas of consensus and

the differences between the two sides, and their possible impact on the development of cross-strait relations, will be discussed. This article will use the fourth wave of data from the Asian Barometer Survey from mainland China and Taiwan for analysis.

### **Data and Methods**

The data used in this article mainly consists of surveys conducted by the Asian Barometer Survey in Taiwan in 2014 and mainland China in 2015. In the survey in Taiwan, 16 county-level units were randomly selected, and 1,657 valid questionnaires were completed. In the survey in mainland China, a total of 125 county-level units were randomly selected, covering 26 provinces and municipalities, and 3,421 valid questionnaires were completed. The above-mentioned surveys were carried out in strict accordance with social science norms, and the data obtained is of high quality.

Considering the research requirements of this article, the main data analysis of this study will use descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics are a basic tool for measuring, analyzing, and presenting data (Burnham et al., 2004). This article will first show the similarities and differences between the views on the democratic operation and the superiority of democracy between the people of China and Taiwan through narrative statistics, and then present the democratic values of the people on both sides of the strait. Finally, it compares the democratic concepts of the people from the mainland and from Taiwan.

### **Analysis and Results**

#### **Support for and Evaluation of Democracy in Mainland China and Taiwan**

Mainland China and Taiwan have promoted democracy with different values and different institutional arrangements in their respective political practices. People living in different environments on both sides of the strait are bound to be profoundly affected by their respective political systems, resulting in different subjective attitudes towards democracy.

This section will mainly discuss the support for and evaluation of democracy on both sides of the strait. Past studies have divided democratic support into support for democracy in practice and support for democracy as a principle (Chu, Chang, & Hu, 2003). Chu Yun-Han also points out that the two indicators of "satisfaction with democratic operation" and "conviction of democratic superiority" are indicators commonly used by political scholars who study democratic evaluation (Chu, 2004). According to this classification, this article will use the survey data on democratic suitability, democratic operation efficiency, democratic preference, and democratic priority to explore the people's support for and evaluation of democracy on both sides of the strait. The first two belong to operational satisfaction, and the latter two relate to the support for democratic beliefs.

### **Support for Democratic Operation: Democratic Suitability**

The degree of democratic suitability measures the support of the people for the degree of suitability of the democratic operations in the corresponding society. In the questionnaire, the respondents on both sides of the strait each evaluated the suitability of democracy for mainland China or Taiwan, with 1 indicating that it was totally unsuitable and 10 that it was totally suitable. As seen in Table 1, 57.90% of mainland Chinese respondents believe that their respective democracy is suitable for their own society with a score of 6 or above, while the figure for Taiwanese respondents is 75.17%. The top three scores from Taiwanese people are 8 (21.91%), 7 (16.93%), and 10 (14.32), indicating that Taiwanese people believe that the current democratic system is suitable for Taiwan. Although some people are satisfied, most people think there is room for further improvement in their democracy. As far as the Chinese people are concerned, the highest percentage is for the invalid options (22.57%), including "don't know," "unable to choose," and "unanswered," followed by 8 points (16.91%) and 5 points (13.68%). Although 60% of the people in mainland China have shown democratic support in terms of their democratic suitability, when compared with Taiwan there is still a big difference in their support.

**Table 1**

*Democratic suitability score (1–10 points) in %*

Score	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Invalid
Mainland China	1.03	0.63	1.67	2.51	13.68	11.84	11.62	16.91	6.26	11.27	22.57
Taiwan	1.39	0.74	2.16	3.07	12.00	12.72	16.93	21.91	9.29	14.32	5.48
Difference	-0.36	-0.11	-0.49	-0.56	1.68	-0.88	-5.31	-5.00	-3.03	-3.05	17.09

### **Support for Democratic Operation: Evaluation of Democratic Efficiency**

Table 2 shows another perspective of the people's support for democratic operations, a democratic efficiency evaluation. As far as the effectiveness of democracy is concerned, although one-fifth of the people in mainland China did not provide a valid response, more than half (58.06%) of the interviewees clearly affirmed the effectiveness of democracy, which is basically the same as that of Taiwan (57.48%). On further examination, the people of Taiwan have given stronger negative evaluations of the effectiveness of democracy, and the proportion of people who believe that democracy cannot solve social problems is much higher than that of mainland China. The people in mainland China have a far higher sense of the effectiveness of its democratic operation than the people in Taiwan.

This is not surprising; the administrative efficiency and responsiveness of the Chinese government is more efficient than that of Taiwan, which needs to operate through layers of representative institutions and party politics. Regarding the issue of the Taiwanese people's dissatisfaction with the operation of democracy, some scholars believe that this may be because "critical citizens" have gradually appeared in Taiwan<sup>3</sup>, which has a positive effect on the "deepening of democracy" in Taiwan.

<sup>3</sup> The idea of critical citizens, as set out by Pippa Norris (2011), is that, under the democratic system, although citizens are dissatisfied with the governance of the democratic government and criticize it, they are still quite loyal to the democratic system.

However, there are scholars who look at this issue from a more macro perspective. For example, Chu Yun-Han (2004) points out that the controversy caused by representative politics and party politics with the characteristics of Western liberal democracy in Taiwan has gradually disappointed the people in relation to the operation of democracy. This article conducts a cascading correlation analysis between the evaluation of the democratic efficiency of the Taiwanese people and the evaluation of the government's performance, which validates Chu Yun-Han's (2004) point of view that poor government operation has led to the Taiwanese people's dissatisfaction with democratic efficiency.

**Table 2**

*Evaluation of Democratic Effectiveness (%)*

<b>Which of the following statements comes closer to your own view?</b>	<b>Mainland</b>	<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Democracy is capable of solving the problems of our society	58.06	57.18	0.58
Democracy cannot solve society's problems	18.68	35.99	-17.31
Don't know/cannot answer	23.25	6.54	16.71

**Belief in the Superiority of Democracy: Degree of Democratic Preference**

Democratic preference is an indicator that reflects the degree of preference of the people for democratic systems compared to other systems. Scholars often divide people's preference for democracy into instrumental and essential preferences. Instrumental preference means that people feel that democracy is beneficial to them and, therefore, support the democratic system, while essential preference is the belief that democracy is superior based on people's own democratic values and, therefore, their support for the democratic system (Evans & Whitefield, 1995; Diamond, 1999).



As Table 3 demonstrates, the absolute preference of the people in mainland China and Taiwan for democracy is, 41.15% and 45.41%, respectively. Regarding the belief that "Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one" the distribution of scores between mainland China and Taiwan is also relatively consistent. There are only about 10% (12.25%) of the people in mainland China agree that sometimes autocracy is preferable to democracy, while this proportion is close to 30% (27.02%) in Taiwan. In addition, a quarter of mainland Chinese respondents failed to provide a valid response.

**Table 3**

*Democratic Preference (%)*

Which of the following statements comes closest to your own opinion?	Mainland	Taiwan	Difference
Democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government.	41.15	45.41	-4.26
Under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one.	12.25	27.02	-14.77
For people like me, it does not matter whether we have a democratic or a non-democratic regime.	21.21	24.29	-3.08
Don't know/cannot answer	25.38	3.28	22.10

**Belief in the Superiority of Democracy: The Priority of Democracy**

Democratic priority is similar to the concept that needs to be tested for democratic preference. The results in Table 4, in an absolute sense, are the priority of the people's belief in democracy. More than 60% of mainland Chinese respondents believe in democratic priority (choosing "strongly agree" or "agree") and more than 80% in Taiwan. This shows that people on both sides of the strait have a higher preference for democracy, and this belief is more widely distributed in Taiwan. In addition, mainland Chinese respondents are relatively inactive at the level of political

awareness. Of the mainland Chinese respondents, 21.38% failed to provide a valid response, while this proportion is only 3.98% in Taiwan.

**Table 4**

*Democratic Priority (%)*

<b>Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?</b>			
<b>“Democracy may have its problems, but it is still the best form of government.”</b>	<b>Mainland</b>	<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Strongly agree	8.77	10.40	-1.63
Agree	57.70	74.47	-16.77
Disagree	11.46	10.35	1.11
Strongly disagree	0.69	0.80	-0.11
Don't know/cannot answer	21.38	3.98	17.4

**Cross-Strait Comparison of Democratic Value Identity**

The above section of this article presents the basic views of the people on both sides of the strait in relation to their respective democracies using a direct measurement method, that is, directly using the term "democracy" in the question item setting to examine the interviewee's intuitive evaluation of democracy. This section will adopt Hu Fu's (1998) democratic value measurement method to analyze the current democratic value identity of the people on both sides of the strait through the indirect measurement of different value dimensions.

Hu Fu (1998) divided democratic value measurement into three aspects based on the three power relations – relations among members of a society, between members and authoritative organizations, and among authoritative organizations. The relationship among all members should have the same power and not be affected by their socioeconomic status. The relationship between members and authoritative institutions can be divided into three aspects: people’s sovereignty, individual

freedom, and a pluralistic society. People's sovereignty means that a government's power comes from the people and must be accountable to the people; personal freedom means that private power is not infringed by the state; a pluralistic society means that members of the society have the right to associate freely without interference from the state. The last aspect is the relationship between authoritative organizations and authoritative organizations. Authoritative organizations need checks and balances to prevent any abuse of power. Based on these concepts, a measurement scale of democratic values has been developed, which is divided into five aspects: the right to equality, the right to participate in political process (people's sovereignty), the right to freedom, the right to pluralism, and the right to checks and balances (Hu, 1998, Chu, Chang & Hu, 2003; Chang, Chu & Tsai, 2005).

In order to understand whether the five dimensions of democratic values in mainland China and Taiwan have achieved a social consensus, the democratic value battery (See Appendix) from the mainland Chinese and Taiwanese questionnaires provides an overall scale. In order to analyze the recognition of the democratic values of the people on both sides of the strait, this article uses the support rate and the degree of dependence to present the psychological orientation of the five dimensions of freedom and democracy of the people on both sides of the strait.

This article uses the following methods to recode the democratic value battery: 2 points for strongly agree, 1 point for agree, -1 for disagree, -2 for strongly disagree, and 0 points for do not know; these points are then added up to get the average value as the democratic orientation index. The index uses 0 as the middle point. A score of 0 or more indicates a positive dimensional orientation, and a score below 0 indicates a negative dimensional orientation. The support rate for democratic orientation in Table 3 is the percentage with a score greater than zero.

In terms of whether there is a consensus on democratic values, Hu Fu (1998) suggests that a support rate higher than 75% indicates that the group has a strong positive consensus, and a support rate higher than 60% demonstrates a weak positive consensus. The support rate of democracy can reflect the proportion of the population in Taiwanese society that holds stronger democratic norms, that is, the popular support for democracy, but it cannot show the strength of the people's identification

with democracy. Therefore, we have introduced an attachment to democracy value to further test it. The attachment value is composed of the orientation index of each dimension of democracy, with 0 being the democracy–authoritarianism dividing point. The higher the index, the stronger the identification with democracy.

**Table 5**

*Support and Attachment Ratio for Democratic Values (%)*

	Support Ratio			Attachment		
	Mainland China	Taiwan	Differences	Mainland China	Taiwan	Difference
<b>Equality</b>	68.89%	87.38%	-18.49%	0.80	1.11	-0.31
<b>Participation</b>	28.47%	70.67%	-42.20%	-0.14	0.73	-0.87
<b>Freedom</b>	24.45%	36.52%	-12.07%	-0.17	0.21	-0.38
<b>Pluralism</b>	12.31%	52.55%	-40.24%	-0.41	0.50	-0.91
<b>Checks and Balances</b>	43.63%	61.73%	-18.10%	0.04	0.30	-0.26

The left half of Table 5 is the support rate of the people on both sides of the Strait for democratic values. As far as mainland China is concerned, only the principle of equality exceeds 60% and the principle of checks and balances exceeds 40%. The degree of recognition of the principles of participation and pluralism is quite different from that of Taiwan. The differences for the degree of recognition of participation and pluralism on mainland China and the Taiwanese are about 40%, and the degree of recognition of the principle of freedom is slightly lower than that of the Taiwanese. In the view of the mainlanders, the current recognition of democratic values is a concept of equality, and it also has a certain degree of checks and balances. As far as the Taiwanese are concerned, the support rate for the principles of equality, participation, and checks and balances is more than 60%, and there is a significant social consensus.

The support rate for the pluralism principle is also more than half, but the recognition of the principle of freedom is low.

The right half of Table 5 presents the attachment to democratic values of mainland Chinese and Taiwanese. As the results show, the attachment of the Taiwanese is positive in all five dimensions, which means that they have a higher degree of recognition of democratic values.

As far as the mainland Chinese are concerned, the principle of equality and checks and balances is positive, and the principle of equality shows a strong degree of dependence. It is clear that the mainland Chinese insist on political equality, and they also attach importance to the checks and balances between government departments. However, the principle of participation, the principle of freedom, and the principle of pluralism all show negative values for them, which means that the mainland Chinese do not support liberal democracy. These negative principles are related to the emphasis on governance results and quality in the democratic practice model of mainland China.

The comparison between the above-mentioned support rate and the degree of dependence shows the areas of consensus and the differences between the people on both sides of the Strait in terms of democratic values; views on the principles of participation and pluralism are quite different, while those on the principles of equality and checks and balances are similar, and the principles of freedom on both sides of the Strait are not rated highly. This also shows that the preference of the people on both sides of the Strait for democratic values is closely related to the practice of cross-strait democratic politics; democracy in mainland China emphasizes people's satisfaction with their government's governance and focuses on the output of the political system, while democracy in Taiwan emphasizes the people's participation and procedural democratic norms.

### **Comparison of Democratic Understanding between Mainland China and Taiwan**

This section divides the people's understanding of democracy into procedural democracy and substantive democracy; specifically, the former emphasizes procedural principles, such as free and fair elections and deeply rooted principles of the rule of

law, while the latter is biased towards the substantive aspects of democracy, emphasizing how government actions meet the needs of the people. The questionnaire is designed using four question groups based on the characteristics of democracy. Each group contains a question item measuring norms and procedures, political rights, social equality, and governance quality. The classification is merged into substantive democratic understanding.

**Table 6**

*Democratic Understanding (%)*

		Mainland	Taiwan	Difference
Group 1	Government narrows the gap between the rich and the poor.	21.59	32.50	-10.91
	People choose the government leaders in free and fair elections.	29.01	26.32	2.69
	Government does not waste any public money.	11.16	17.77	-6.61
	People are free to express their political views openly.	19.80	19.40	0.4
	Do not understand the question/Cannot choose/No answer	18.44	4.02	14.42
	Procedural democratic understanding	48.81	45.72	3.09
	Substantive democratic understanding	32.75	50.27	-17.52
Group 2	The legislature has oversight over the government.	18.50	13.08	5.42
	Basic necessities, such as food, clothes, and shelter, are provided for all.	31.55	34.44	-2.89
	People are free to organize political groups.	3.43	9.18	-5.75
	Government provides people with quality public services.	26.57	38.72	-12.15
	Do not understand the question/Cannot choose/No answer	19.95	4.58	15.37
	Procedural democratic understanding	21.93	22.26	-0.33
	Substantive democratic understanding	58.12	73.16	-15.04

**Table 6**

*Democratic Understanding (%)*

		Mainland	Taiwan	Difference
Group 3	Government ensures law and order.	29.84	31.56	-1.72
	Media is free to criticize the things the government does.	7.97	6.57	1.4
	Government ensures job opportunities for all.	28.43	40.08	-11.65
	Multiple parties compete fairly in the election.	13.66	16.39	-2.73
	Do not understand the question/Cannot choose/No answer	20.10	5.40	14.7
	Procedural democratic understanding	21.63	22.96	-1.33
	Substantive democratic understanding	58.27	71.64	-13.37
Group 4	People have the freedom to take part in protests and demonstrations.	5.87	14.64	-8.77
	Politics is clean and free of corruption.	24.23	28.63	-4.4
	The court protects the ordinary people from the abuse of government power.	35.11	29.50	5.61
	People receive state aid if they are unemployed.	14.23	22.36	-8.13
	Do not understand the question/Cannot choose/No answer	20.55	4.87	15.68
	Procedural democratic understanding	40.98	44.14	-3.16
	Substantive democratic understanding	38.46	50.99	-12.53

As seen in Table 6, in the first group of results, more than 40% of the people on both sides of the strait understand procedural democracy, while the percentage of mainland Chinese (32.75%) who have substantive democratic understanding is about 20% points lower than that of Taiwan. The results of the second group and the third group are similar, with 20% of respondents on both sides of the strait choosing procedural understanding, while substantive understanding is close to 60% in mainland China and 70% in Taiwan. The distribution of the fourth group is similar to the first group. In addition, in each set of measurements, about 20% of mainland Chinese citizens failed to give a valid response, while this proportion is only about 5% in Taiwan.

If we choose the option representing procedural democracy in each group to be coded as 1, and the substantive democracy option or other options to be coded as 0, and then add the scores of the four groups of questions, we can get a program formula of 0 to 4 of democratic understanding variables. A score of 3 and above means a stronger understanding of procedural democracy. This ratio is 18.35% in mainland China and 20.77% in Taiwan. A score of 1 or below means a strong understanding of substantive democracy, with the percentages in mainland China and Taiwan at 57.30% and 58.35%, respectively. This shows that the people on both sides of the strait are consistent in their understanding of the meaning of democracy, and they place more emphasis on substantive democracy, represented by social equality and governance performance, than procedural democracy.

### **Discussion**

Based on the analysis, the understanding of the term democracy shows that the people on both sides of the strait can be considered to have a strong consensus. In the process of China's development, the mainland Chinese have experienced an improvement in government governance performance, coupled with the influence of traditional Chinese people-oriented thinking, and the government is highly responsive to the needs of the people. The mainland Chinese naturally prefer a democratic understanding of social welfare and governance performance. In Taiwan's democratic development, during the competition of political parties, the people's requirements for good government governance have strengthened people's substantive democratic concepts.

Why do people on both sides of the strait show a similar substantive democratic orientation in their understanding of democracy, while the support ratio of Taiwan is slightly higher than that of mainland China? This article believes that there are two possible interpretations. First, from the perspective of democratic politics, although Taiwan has achieved three party rotations, procedural democracy cannot satisfy the people, and the performance of government governance has not been effectively improved through party competition. As a result, the substantive democratic performance that emphasizes government governance has become an issue of greater



concern to the people of Taiwan, and this has shaped the people's understanding of democracy in Taiwan. Second, from the perspective of political and cultural theory, it can be explained by the "scarcity hypothesis" postulated by Inglehart (1981, p. 881), which indicates that a person's priority goal is limited by the socio-economic environment. When the supply of certain items is relatively insufficient, people will subjectively give them a higher value. As Taiwanese society already has procedural democracy but is faced with poor governance, it is natural for Taiwanese people to choose substantive democracy during face-to-face interviews.

The percentage of invalid responses was higher among respondents from mainland China for several survey items. This reflects the different levels of political awareness of the people on both sides of the strait in understanding democracy. The reason people in mainland China have more invalid responses may be related to their lack of understanding of democracy or their lack of experience with the implementation democracy. It may also be due to a perception that the government in mainland China might be sensitive to comments about these issues.

### **Conclusion**

This article finds that in terms of democratic support, the people in mainland China and Taiwan generally support democracy itself, but the Taiwanese attitude towards democracy is deeply influenced by government performance. From the perspective of democratic values, the people on both sides of the strait have a consensus on the principle of equality and checks and balances, but there are obvious differences in the principle of participation and the principle of pluralism. This difference is related to the different forms of democratic practice in mainland China and Taiwan. From the perspective of democratic understanding, the people on both sides of the strait are consistent in their understanding; substantive democracy, including social equality and governance performance, has obvious advantages, but it also includes part of the concept of procedural democracy.

Through the analysis of this article, we can see that the differences between the current democratic attitudes held by the people on both sides of the strait are closely

related to their respective democratic practices, and while there are differences, there is also consensus.

The consensus for democracy of the people on both sides of the strait helps to explore the basis of public opinion for the development of cross-strait relations from the perspective of democratic politics. Data analysis found that the subjective attitudes of the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait towards democracy are not as large as expected from general discussions. On the contrary, there are many similarities. People on both sides of the strait have a consensus in their preference for good governance, their need for social equality, and their recognition of the principle of checks and balances, and their understanding of democracy is biased towards substance rather than procedure.

Therefore, this article believes that, in the process of cross-strait interaction, both sides should focus on improvements in governance performance and public service quality and ensure this substantial democratic governance result is more widely perceived and experienced by the people on both sides of the strait.

Since people in mainland China and Taiwan have relatively strong subjective needs for social welfare and government governance, the common points of cross-strait democratic political practices are also clearly presented: improving governance performance, improving governance quality, and meeting people's democratic expectations from a substantive perspective. The political practice for democracy on both sides of the Strait, which seems to have a large division, actually has common points in the subjective concepts of democracy of the people in mainland China and Taiwan. In this way, the consensus of public opinion could help to develop cross-strait relations and to strengthen the mutual trust between people from mainland China and Taiwan.

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## **Appendix**

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### **Democratic value battery**

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#### **Equality**

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Women should not participate in politics in the same way as men.

People with little education should have the same right to a say in politics as people with a high level of education.

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#### **Participation**

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Just as with the parents of a big family, the people should obey government leaders' decisions on state affairs.

As long as there is a moral leader, we can let them decide everything.

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#### **Freedom**

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Whatever the opinion, it should be decided by the government.

If everyone's ideas are inconsistent, society will be chaotic.

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#### **Pluralism**

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Only one political party should be allowed to participate in elections and lead the government.

In one place, if there is one group in the east and one group in the west, it will affect local stability and harmony.

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#### **Checks and balances**

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When the country faces difficulties, the government can ignore the law to deal with this difficult situation.

The courts should accept the opinions of the local government when trying major cases.

If the government is often restricted by the legislature, it is difficult to tackle important issues well.

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