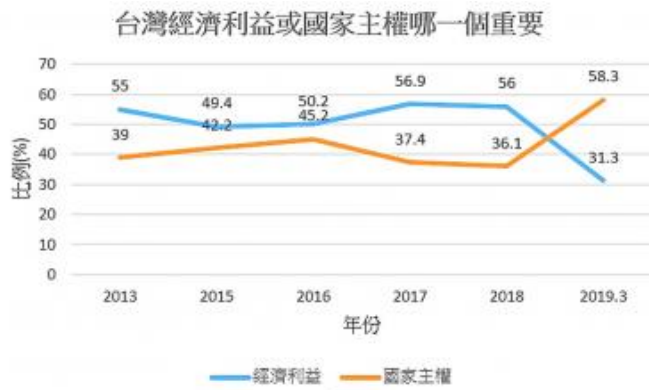


Sovereignty tops economy in poll

Written by Taipei Times

Sunday, 16 June 2019 05:49 -



A graph displaying the results of an Academia Sinica survey presented on Friday shows that a majority of respondents placed national sovereignty above economic gains in cross-strait negotiations.

Photo: Chien Hui-ju, Taipei Times

A survey conducted by Academia Sinica has found that most respondents value Taiwan's sovereignty over economic gains in cross-strait negotiations.

The survey — the latest in a series that began in 2013 — asked respondents to weigh their priorities between pursuing economic benefits and upholding the nation's sovereignty in cross-strait talks.

In 2013, 55 percent of respondents said that economic benefits outweighed the nation's sovereignty, compared with 39 percent who said otherwise.

From 2015, the gap between the groups began to shrink and was at its smallest in 2016, when 50.2 percent said that they valued economic benefits more, while 45.2 percent held the opposite opinion.

However, the gap widened thereafter and in 2017 the number of respondents who said that the economy was more important than sovereignty reached 56.9 percent, followed by 56 percent last year, while the number of people who chose sovereignty first accounted for 37.4 percent in 2017 and dropped further to 36.1 percent last year.

The latest survey, conducted in March, saw that trend completely overturned, with the number

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of respondents prioritizing sovereignty significantly surpassing those opting for economic benefits.

Cross-strait negotiations often involve a choice between keeping the nation's sovereignty intact and pursuing economic benefits, which resembles the dilemma when people are presented with a choice between love or a plentiful life, Academia Sinica Institute of Sociology deputy director Chen Chih-jou (陳其南), who heads a panel on studies of Chinese influences, said on Friday.

The Taiwanese public's stance on the issue would surely affect the way in which the governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait form their action plans, he added.

Noting the significant narrowing of the gap between respondents who chose economic benefits and those who chose sovereignty in 2015, Chen said that was the year following the Sunflower movement, adding that a chronological study of survey results showed that people's shifting preferences correlated with which political party was in power.

When the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) was in government, the longer it was in power, the less the public clamored for economic benefits, he said.

After the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) returned to power three years ago, respondents tended to veer toward the economy again, he added.

Since 2015, the people who prioritized sovereignty were either young people who earned a smaller income or people in lower-income brackets — a trend Chen attributed to a fear of increased competition, rising home prices and an increased cost of living as the result of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait engaging in more frequent economic exchanges.

Younger generations are already on the shorter end of the stick when it comes to mobility in the job market and the resources they are allocated, Chen said, adding that young people now tend to regard Taiwan as their home nation, as they have not been indoctrinated with the nationalist and ethnocentric dogma that the KMT used to preach.

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This “Taiwan identity” could have caused many young Taiwanese to develop a loathing of China, he said.

Regarding the reversal of the trend, Chen said that Chinese President Xi Jinping's (習近平) speech on Jan. 2 proposing a Taiwanese version of the “one country, two systems” framework and warning that Beijing would not renounce the use of force to annex Taiwan, as well as several ensuing unfriendly remarks by the Chinese government, have all made Taiwanese feel threatened, putting tremendous mental pressure on them, which could have led to their disillusionment about looking to China for economic gains.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2019/06/16](#)