

TAIWAN'S HISTORY TEXTBOOK GUIDELINES ISSUES

Katherine TSENG Hui-Yi & LIM Tai Wei

EAI Background Brief No. 1351

Executive Summary

1. Protests by high school students in Taiwan against history textbook guidelines revision erupted in 2014, which later culminated in protesters' demand to withdraw the revision in August 2015. The demand was subsequently rejected.
2. The revision was deemed flawed in two aspects: procedural violation of the special committee and alterations that substantially affect history textbook writing. The guidelines were issued according to directives from the Ma administration.
3. Issues on historical issues that were previously written in a thought-provoking style is substituted by a conventional question-and-answer instructional format.
4. The Tsai Ing-wen government (2016-present) withdrew the revision and replaced it with a new one in July 2017. This new guideline restores the issue-oriented discussion format and adopts multi-cultural perspectives in analysing Taiwanese issues.
5. It also discards the Han Chinese-centred perspective by discussing issues in a regional and global order perspective instead of a solely nativist view.
6. The newly formulated historical course, which focused on local developments in Taiwan, is one reason behind these anti-Guidelines students' opposition to the revision which revived the outdated Chinese-Han-centred history perspective. The course began in 1997 and has continued to thrive since.
7. Taiwanese youths in the 20-29s developed a clearer consciousness of "being a Taiwanese" and stronger mistrust of China. They were also influenced by the 2014 Sunflower Movement.
8. Tensions aroused under the Tsai government have influenced Taiwanese perceptions of mainland China. While more Taiwanese agree that the people on

both sides of the strait belong to the Chinese nation, a higher percentage of youths in the 20-29 age bracket identify themselves as Taiwanese.

9. Changes in historical perspectives is another reason. The older worldview/perspective, featuring Han Chinese centrism and anti-communism ideology, has been abandoned after democratisation in the 1990s.
10. A new perspective, characterised by Taiwan consciousness and Taiwan's de facto statehood, has flourished in the wake of political and social developments on the island.