



**Democratic Transition, New Taiwanese  
Identity and Queer Rights Movements in  
Taiwan: Assessing the Linkages**

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# **Democratic Transition, New Taiwanese Identity and Queer Rights Movements in Taiwan: Assessing the Linkages**

## **Abstract**

According to American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, world witnessed the “third wave” of democratization during the period 1970s through the mid 2000. During this period, liberal democracy became the default form of government in many of these newly democratic countries. In the same period, the process of democratization also started in Taiwan. Taiwan’s story of democratic transition along with its awareness for liberal principles is fascinating. Over the years, it grew stronger and this island nation became one of the strongest gender equitable liberal democracies in Asia. Two important outcomes of the democratic transition in Taiwan could be identified - emergence of a new Taiwanese identity and a strong movement for LGBTQ rights. Notably, Taiwan became the first Asian country that legalised same sex marriage. In last three decades, countless LGBTQ activists, civil society groups and allies worked tirelessly in Taiwan to change hearts and minds, hold the government accountable, democratize intimacy, and legally transform sexual citizenship in Taiwan.

While examining the idea of new identity in the context of cross Strait ties, and various queer activisms in Taiwan, this paper will be a comprehensive and critical understanding of liberal democratic principles and its contribution towards the formation of new identity in Taiwan. Based on liberal democratic and queer theory, this paper aims to argue that gender equality is the force multiplier democratization as it empowers civil society. Taiwan’s case is the example of the double transition to democracy and a liberal gender regime and its projection to world politics.

**Keywords:** China, Taiwan, Democracy, Identity, Queer, LGBTQ

## **Introduction**

Taiwan, a strategically important island in the Western Pacific Ocean, is counted by some analysts among the dynamic democracies of the world in 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The People's Republic of China (PRC) considers Taiwan as a part of its own territory; however, it has no sovereign control over it. Significantly, the United States has a crucial role to play in Taiwan's peculiar political status. In fact, the US was the main player in the evolution of the unusual political status and peculiar strategic position of Taiwan in the post Second World War period. Surprisingly, Taiwan also known as the Republic of China (ROC) is a de-facto nation-state with a vibrant democracy with export-oriented economy specializing in sophisticated, capital-intensive and technology-intensive products.

Taiwan is a young democracy in East Asia, which offers a pluralistic and inclusive experience to its residents. According to Taiwan's expert Christian Schafferer, since the democratic transition in 1980's, a pluralist system has permitted "for comprehensive and inclusive public participation in shaping of Taiwan's political conditions" (Dedman 2020). Over the years, it grew stronger and this island nation became one of the strongest gender equitable liberal democracies in Asia. In terms of gender equality, Taiwan ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the world and the rank is much above than China, Japan, Korea and Singapore. Citizens of Taiwan have also embraced enthusiastically human rights and multiculturalism based on the principle of self-determination. The election of Tsai Ing-wen, first women president in East Asia for two terms (2016 & 2020) boosted the scope of women's political empowerment with 42 per cent Parliamentary representation, legislative reforms in all areas of equity and security, and an vibrant women's and queer movement (Brysk 2020).

Taiwan's story of democratic transition along with its awareness for liberal principles is fascinating. Number of studies by prominent scholars could identify two important outcomes of the democratic transition in Taiwan - emergence of a new Taiwanese identity and a strong movement for feminist & LGBTQ rights. Since 1990's, countless LGBTQ activists, civil society groups and allies worked tirelessly in Taiwan to change hearts and minds, hold the government accountable, democratize intimacy, and legally transform sexual citizenship in

Taiwan. However, despite Taiwan's brilliant performance in terms inclusive education and queer rights, it is often overlooked and marginalized by the global community.

What are the factors which are responsible for Taiwan's outstanding record – and how did the new identity and the feminist movement contributed towards the construction of LGBTQ movemnet? Based on the liberal democracy and queer theory, this article attempts to argue that the emergence of civil society, prominent women movement and rapid expansion of LGBTQ rights have made the Taiwan's democracy vibrant and fueled the global aspiration of achieving the international standard of a liberal democratic state. Taiwan embraced liberal democracy which brought enormous changes in the lifestyle and thinking process of the Taiwanese population. While examining the idea of new identity in the context of cross Strait ties, and various queer activisms in Taiwan, this paper attempts a comprehensive and critical understanding of liberal democratic principles and its contribution towards the formation of new identity in Taiwan. In addition, this paper aims to argue that gender equality is the force multiplier democratization as it empowers civil society. The study will also throw light on the characteristics associated with the changes in attitude towards homosexuality. Taiwan's case is the example of the double transition to democracy and a liberal gender regime and its projection to world politics.

### **Taiwan's Democratic Transition: Third Wave of Democracy Argument:**

Taiwan's political journey shares the critical features of new democracies of 21<sup>st</sup> century that emerged successfully from an authoritarian regime. Contemporary American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington in his award-winning book "*the third wave democratization in the late twentieth century,*" published in 1991, talked about the "third wave" of democratization during the period 1970s through the mid 2000. During 1974 to 1991, liberal democracy became the default form of government in many of these newly democratic countries. In the same period, the process of democratization or democratic transition also started in Taiwan.

According to American sociologist Thomas B. Gold (1997), the transition to democracy in Taiwan fits solidly into Huntington's discourse of the third wave. In fact among the new democracies during the third wave, Taiwan stands out among others as the symbol of the first country of democratic transition. Since 1978, Taiwan also had a tough job of mediating between the super powers due its cultural similarity with China and political and defense

support from the US. However, some Taiwanese scholars argue that although Huntington used the term “third wave” to describe the democratic transition, democratization in Taiwan was considered as an example of “transformation.” In case of Taiwan, the initial democratization processes occurred during the third wave; however, the ruling elite remained in charge of transition. The opposition forces also emerged in Taiwan in response to developments in the cross Strait ties and China’s continuous bullying.

Huntington (1991) refers to three categories of democratic transition in his book – transformation, replacement and transplacement. As the elites of Taiwan predominantly took the lead in liberalization and democratization process, Taiwan’s experience could be termed as “transformation” (Gold 1997). However, we could not deny the contribution of the opposition groups in Taiwan in this transformation. The elements of democracy like electoral participation existed at local-government levels in Taiwan prior to 1986. Due to the existence of prior democratic elements, Taiwan’s transition from authoritarianism was fast and pushed by well-organised opposition and Kuomintang’s (KMT) responsive political behavior.

### **The Transition Process**

Democratization of Taiwan began in mid 80’s as it evolved from a one-party authoritarian country to a multiparty liberal democracy. However, the process of Taiwan turning into an open and free society started in late 1970’s. After the demise of KMT leader Chiang Kai-Sheik in 1975, his son and premier since 1971, Chiang Ching-Keo was appointed as the President of Taiwan. President Chinag Ching-Keo took several initiatives for making the society more open as he lifted martial law in 1986 and released many political offenders. The KMT government replaced the martial law with the more democratically acceptable National Security Law and Civil Organization Law. This significant event made the roads for the creation of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which became the first official opposition party of Taiwan. The formation of the DPP in the late 1970’s came as a surprise as it represented voices of the opposition movements during the authoritarian KMT regime in Taiwan. The formation of the DPP was not opposed initially by Chiang Ching-Keo. Undoubtedly, formation of the DPP and the tolerance shown by the KMT leadership marked the democratic transition of Taiwan (Tien 1997). The ruling elite of Taiwan, in the subsequent years, introduced a series of liberalization policies and democratic reforms.

Under Chiang's leadership a significant political transformation took place. Even government posts were opened for indigenous people of Taiwan. Dr. Lee Teng-hui replaced Chiang Ching-Kuo as Taiwan's president after his death in January 1988. The event was a historical as Dr. Lee became the first ethnically Taiwanese head of the state of Taiwan. After coming to power, he took several steps to democratize the administration and reduce the absorption of political power in the favour of mainland Chinese. During Lee's tenure, massive campaigns were held to promote culture and history of Taiwan over a pan-China position. It was a sharp departure from the KMT strategies which had mainly advocated a common Chinese identity. The process of localisation and indigenisation also started. Various reforms happened during Lee's tenure like printing and issuing banknotes from the Central Bank rather than Provincial Bank of Taiwan, in 1991 forced resignation of permanent members of the legislative Yuan (Taiwan's unicameral legislature) and National Assembly, who were elected in 1947 to represent the constituencies of mainland China, giving permission to use Taiwanese dialect in broadcast media and schools. Most importantly, the former nominal representations in the Legislative Yuan was put to stop, which made it clear that the ROC Government having no authority over mainland China, and vice versa.

According to Huntington (1991), the KMT system in Taiwan combined some elements of authoritarianism, democracy, and totalitarianism. Therefore, although various techniques of the authoritarian government continued for few years in Taiwan, number of restrictions, repressive organizations, legal impediments and practices were diminished. So, less than a decade after the transition began, Taiwan has entered in to the consolidation phase of democratization. The transition process involved complicated political manipulations and intense interactions among various political representatives. With the beginning of democratization process, the legal issue of Taiwan reemerged as a controversial topic. The dramatic democratic transition of Taiwan increased the diplomatic crack between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and it became tremendously complicated for Taiwan to finish an agreement with the PRC on reunification without the consent of Taiwanese population (Carpenter 2005).

The KMT government introduced election for a new National Assembly in 1991, followed by an election for a new Legislative Yuan in 1992. Elections were also conducted for governor of Taiwan province and for mayors of Taipei and Kaohsiung, Taiwan's two biggest cities at the end of 1994. Until that time, these posts had been appointed by the President of Taiwan. In

December 1995, the election for the third Legislative Yuan signaled significant achievement in the institutionalization of the electoral process, which actually qualified Taiwan's democracy to be counted in the third wave. It was followed by elections for president, vice-president and the third National Assembly in March 1996, which further consolidated democratic transition in Taiwan. In addition, during the period from 1986 to 1995, the KMT initiated various reform measures, which included presidential decrees, interparty resolutions, legislative reforms and constitutional reforms to weaken the authoritarian behavior of the KMT regime and to create a more liberalized environment. Basically six major areas of democratic consolidation were targeted by such reforms: regime transformation, or the adoption of a democratic constitution; civilian control over the military and security forces ; development of a fair and competitive electoral system; formation of a two-party or multiparty system; institutionalization of a representative legislature; and autonomy of civil society. (Tien 1997)

From 1987 to 1992, the KMT adopted liberalization measures that restored suspended civil rights and lent substance to the democratization. The party also lifted the ban on travel to the mainland and passed a set of new laws guaranteeing freedom of speech, association, and other forms of public assembly. Unlike many countries during third wave, one of the distinguishing features of Taiwan's democratization was that it succeeded during the first try in moving from an authoritarian government with absolutely no democratic experience to a vibrant democracy (Gold 1997). There was no violence and bloodshed during the transition and liberalization preceded democratization in Taiwan as the authoritarian regime started protecting the rights of the individuals and the groups. Mainly the Taiwanese intellectuals took the lead in the struggle for democracy.

Hung-mao Tien (1997) from National Policy Research in Taiwan argues that compared to other countries in Asia, Taiwan's democratic transition has incurred relatively at low social costs. By early 1990's all the key institutions that were supporting authoritarianism were discontinued in Taiwan. In addition, the opposition politicians elected to the Legislative Yuan and the National Assembly started challenging the KMT-dominated authoritarian regime to practice democracy. So, new laws and institutions to support and consolidate democracy were introduced and followed. Interestingly during the process, the incumbent ruling elite was not overthrown or replaced. They remained in power during the critical phase of the transition and monitored the political agenda, direction and the course of the transition. The rapid democratic development

has not led to significant economic decline, social unrest, or serious political turmoil. Therefore, numbers of terms like “transformation,” “reform” or more significantly “transition” are used to describe Taiwan’s democratic transition.

Taiwan’s experience of democratic transition was unique as it displayed unique feature of strategic dialogue between the authoritarian elite and the anti-KMT forces. It also started as a liberalization process by partially opening up the authoritarian system short of choosing governmental leaders through freely competitive elections. Following the liberalization process, the KMT regime released political prisoners, relaxed censorship, opened up issues for public debate, revival of the civil society institutions and introducing new steps for democratic direction, without facing election. Huntington (1991) rightfully pointed out that in Taiwan the direct transition from a stable authoritarian system to a stable democratic system took place through gradual evolution.

### **The Change Makers**

Who were the main actors for this political change in Taiwan? The answer is the newly emerging middle class-intellectuals who came to age during the period of rapid economic growth. It is important to analyse the changes that occurred in Taiwan, which led to the creation of the new middle class. Also, it is crucial to put emphasis on social, political and economic variables of democratic transition.

The three decades of rapid economic development also supplemented Taiwan’s democratic transition. The United Nations and the World Bank data ranked Taiwan as high-income country during 1970’s. Taiwan became an industrialized country by mid 1960’s as manufacturing replaced contribution by agricultural production to GDP. In addition, Taiwan’s service sector in terms of finance, insurance and business services also expanded rapidly by mid 1990’s. There was a rapid growth in per capita income in 1980’s following rapid increase in consumerism in Taiwan. Due to high rate economic growth, Taiwan produced a class of citizens with disposable income possessing a high range of consumer goods. All these changes made Taiwan an upper-middle-income and highly urbanized country as per World Bank’s ranking. Most importantly, Taiwan also displayed impressive record of equitable income distribution due to high level literacy and education.

Taiwan introduced compulsory nine years of education. The literacy rate of Taiwan touched 94% by mid of 1990's. The demographic shift in Taiwan during 1980's produced a new generation individualistic Taiwanese who had focused heavily on economic progress and better standard of living. As the Taiwan's economy flourished, the social formation of the island changed dramatically. Farmers of the island turned into part-time wage workers, women entered the labour force as many new career options are opened up for them. Significantly, huge job opportunities were available for both women and men as private sector expanded rapidly. With all these changes, a new bourgeois class emerged from small and medium-sized businesses, generated high employment and economic competitiveness, which helped stop extreme income polarization. (Gold 1997)

Formerly, the middle class of Taiwan was supporting the authoritarian rulers; however, over the years, they started growing social consciousness and embraced pro-democratic views. Many of them were non-resident Taiwanese professionals who were trained and worked abroad and returned to Taiwan by 1980's. They returned due to the favorable political environment and started participating in various political tasks of democratic transition. So these new Taiwanese were mainly responsible for influencing the democratic practices and ideas in the society as a sum total. However, in Taiwan, a politically salient class antagonism was missing as the big capitalist class did not play a prominent political role. It was mainly professionals, small entrepreneurs, managers and academicians were at the forefront of social and democratic movement. The emerging middle class was at the forefront who were seeking reform and stability and their presence paved the way for a significant democratic movement similar to other third wave nations (Gold 1997).

In addition to the middle class, elections and political parties also played a significant role in the democratic transition of Taiwan. Elections were introduced in 1949 by the KMT to grant legitimacy to the party. Opposition activities basically emerged from these local elections as they competed regularly and campaigned about political reforms. It was mainly opposition activities who organized themselves and contributed towards shaking the authoritarian foundation of the KMT. Similarly, local elections also played their part as the KMT's ruling elite started responding to the demands of local political forces. With the new democratic awakening, the indigenous population demanded redistribution of political power along ethnic lines.

In the last phase of President Chiang Ching-Kuo's term, the KMT introduced the liberalization measures in response to popular demands and the pressure by external forces, especially from Washington. Apart from political awareness, ethnic division in Taiwan along with democratic transition was evident too. The Democratic transition had also pushed two other political processes: the indigenization of political power and nation-building. Democratization shifted a greater share of power on indigenous Taiwanese and simultaneously weakened the domination of the mainlander political elite. So, the democratic transition awakened the secret wishes of many native Taiwanese to seek a national identity from the nation-building stand point rather than dependent on the PRC. So, the complexity of national identity and the interethnic redistribution of power appeared along with the transition strategy (Tien 1997). The DPP had evolved gradually over a time of several years through an informal organisation -- the Association for Public Policy, a quasi-think tank that came into existence in 1984 (Carpenter 2005). The party was moderate in its approach as it adopted nuanced position on Taiwan's foreign policy. It advocated slogans like "what matters is not reunification or independence, but democracy (Carpenter 2005)."

### **New Taiwanese Identity**

Along with the democratic transition, Taiwan also witnessed the emergence of new Taiwanese identity. It became a complex matter as the identity of Taiwan developed out of a history and culture shared with mainland China. However, the identity has been altered and changed through the experience of the island's residents under different political systems, changes in the cross- Strait environment and the influence of prominent leadership (Tsai 2007). The desire for Taiwanese nationalism and national identity took shape in response to the authoritarian KMT rule and its efforts to mould Taiwanese language, culture, art, literature and traditions similar to Chinese Confucian value structure.

Identity is crucial along with the democratic transition as it encompassed recognition, classification, identification, acceptance and belonging. There are numerous factors like common area, geography, common history, languages, culture and society, values and positions of political parties influence and shape the identity of a person. Dr. Chang Yen- TSAI (2007) defined Taiwan's identity as multi-dimensional and multi-layered collective identity based on collective awareness and common history and devoted to preserving at all costs. According to

sociologist Frank Muryard (2012), the political awakening and participation and the newly acquired freedom had a major impact on the way the Taiwanese perceived themselves as citizens and as a nation. After 40 years of an authoritarian rule and the forceful imposition of a Chinese national identity by the KMT, the democratic transitions allowed the citizens to publically question and debate their identity. So, the question of national identity gradually emerged as a major issue in Taiwan's politics and social debate. Specifically, the terms 'Taiwanese' and 'the Taiwanese' are therefore used to refer to all Taiwan-centered events, facts, discourses, and symbolic representations, and to all the people living in the territory controlled by the ROC and with a ROC citizenship (Muryard 2012)

During the KMT era, Chiang Kai-Shek felt obligated to accept the Chinese civilization as the finest and purest in the world. As he dreamt about taking back the mainland from the Communist occupation, the symbols "Chinese" and "China" acquired superior status. On the contrary, the term "Taiwan" and "Taiwanese" were marginalized as Taiwan's population must learn and educate themselves about the Chinese civilization. So, the KMT had forbidden the use of "Taiwan" as an identity and those supporting independence from the mainland were seen as traitors. With the KMT's support, "China" and "Chinese" subordinated "Taiwan" and "Taiwanese" until 1980's. During the KMT rule, the integration of Chinese cultural and political identity was aggressively promoted by the state and party mechanism of the ROC.

However, the changing national identities since 1980's have transformed the course of China-Taiwan conflict. It was mainly Taiwan's prolong political and economic distance from the Mainland China has created sufficient space and time for emergence of separate identity with the territory and people of Taiwan. The new identity was much stronger than the "provincial identification" of the Mainland China.

Basically, the transition to democracy in Taiwan created nationalist competition and aggravated ethnic conflict. So the Chinese national identity lost the dominant position while acceptance of Taiwanese identity was rapidly rising. Democratic transformations in Taiwan have forced the KMT leaders to capture for the popular legitimacy by appealing to Taiwan centered national identity. KMT President Chiang Ching-Kuo even started his own campaign of "cultural reconstruction" that aimed to embrace local Taiwanese cultural distinctions, while also depoliticizing culture (Stockten 2007). Through these campaigns, the KMT planned to preserve

the kind of high Chinese culture that Communist were destroying in the Mainland China. However clear distinctions were made being “Taiwanese” and being “Chinese” as the Taiwanese identity was affiliated with “territorial/political and subjective/psychological criteria” and the Chinese identity was mainly affiliated with “primordial/cultural criteria” (Stockten 2007). So, the KMT’s strategy focused on strengthening a Taiwanese national identity separate from China based on distinctive language, culture, and history of Taiwan.

Aiming to find a common point of national political unity for the ethnic division on Taiwan and to encourage residents to localize their sense of cultural identity, irrespective of their place of birth, President Lee announced the term “new Taiwanese” identity during the 1998 Legislative Elections. President Lee’s main motive was to highlight the idea of nation-state, which exists in Taiwan. The “new Taiwanese” identity basically sought construct the nation-state of contemporary Taiwan instead of nation-state of the PRC. It also established Taiwan as actor within international space separate from the mainland China.

According to Chang Yen- TSAI (2007), three important forces – social, political and cultural factors mainly affected the identity of Taiwan. Out of these factors, political factors have contributed most towards the formation of the Taiwanese identity whereas cultural and social factors have played a less significant role (TSAI 2007). Undoubtedly, the democratic transformation and consolidation has created opportunities for diverse interests, opening the doors for the political reformist and opposition groups to publicly raise the issue of permanent separation and independence of Taiwan. In addition, the democratization process provided a political platform for the nascent Taiwanese identity to challenge, and eventually replace, orthodox Chinese identity. (Muyard 2012)

According to Hans Stockton (2007), although there are different interpretations about the meaning of Taiwanese identity, there are three key determinates of national identity in Taiwan. First, the emergence of a new generation in Taiwan, who were not part of the Chinese Civil War. They grew up in an anti-Communist environment and have no emotional attachment to the mainland. Second, the creation of a new national identity has been a reaction against the authoritarian system and symbols of the Mainlander-dominated ROC in Taiwan. Finally, the process of regime opening and democratization in Taiwan over the last three decades has created the institutional and civil space where a collective debate could take place on national

identity that departed from Taiwan as solely a repository of high Chinese culture. (Stockton 2007)

The DPP played a significant role in the formation of the new Taiwanese identity as well. Taiwan has been considered as a national symbol and “China” has become less significant during the rule of the DPP. The DPP primarily a party that supported Taiwan’s independence, saw Taiwan as having a distinct national identity and announced to declare its independence from China. Before the formation of the DPP, opposition movements were not separate from the separation or independence movements in Taiwan. The DPP’s ideology, however, was different from other opposition movements as it included both democratic activists and independence advocates, which led to the coexistence of two groups in the party: radicals who were militant proponents of a new independent Taiwan and moderates who stressed the democratic process of self-determination in shaping Taiwan's future (Yang 2006).

The remarkable democratic transition of Taiwan since the mid-1980s had enlarged diplomatic space between both the sides of the Strait and turned it really tough for Taiwan to finish a pact with the PRC on reunification without the approval of Taiwanese people (Hua 2006). Reacting to Taiwan’s self-assured declaration of its independent sovereignty over the islands, a significant amount of population in Taiwan started to identify themselves as Taiwanese rather than Chinese, which resulted in China’s reflections on the viability of peaceful unification (Carpenter 2005). One major consequence of the process of democratization was the appearance of two opposing Taiwanese identities – the native Taiwanese versus the status quo Taiwanese identities – who expressed opposing stand on cross-Strait ties and Taiwanese domestic politics (Yang 2006: 114). However, both Taiwanese identities shared a similar notion as a de facto sovereignty of Taiwan and foreign policy of Taiwan. The new democratic method permitted and pulled the fights between the two identities into the policy-making practice, which dictated Taipei’s interaction with PRC in next 10 years. Dr Philip Yang (2006) argued that the new identity was less about certain unique language, culture, or ethnicity than about Taipei’s response within its democratic method towards Taiwan’s international status and the cross-Strait tension. He referred both the above-mentioned identities as “Taiwan-centered national identities (Yang 2006: 114).”

After coming to power, the DPP made the first attempt for the alternation of power as the native Taiwanese identity served as a core value for it. The hardcore Taiwanese identity basically appeared as a reaction against an authoritarian government and suppression of culture and tradition of the native Taiwanese people. This identity was against the KMT and China's hegemony. The KMT government for decades forcibly wanted to feed the Taiwan's citizen the idea that Taiwanese share the same heritage of the Chinese ancestry. However, the idea was rejected by the native Taiwanese. As they were highly frustrated due to the PRC's continuous military threats and diplomatic isolation, the native Taiwanese people favored a sovereign Taiwan and the de jure independence. They advocated separate Taiwanese identity different from mainland Chinese identity. In a polling conducted by the National Chengchi University in December 2004, around 43.7 percent of interviewers recognised them as Taiwanese only. Only 6.1 percent of population identified as Chinese.

The democratic elections in Taiwan were also internal engineer of Taiwanese identity. The Taiwan's politics was divided into Pan Blue and Pan Green camps - one advocating Taiwanese identity and latter advocating Chinese identity. In addition, both the camps maintained different projections toward the ties between Taiwan and China. In the time being, in the face of vigorous international exposure, number of Taiwanese turned self-conscious of their common identity while facing of China's warning. One of the main reasons the Taiwanese population felt that their identity and consciousness were challenged due to unprecedented rise of China. The Pan Green camp represented by the native Taiwanese identity used the elections as a medium for Taiwan's sovereignty instead of China and to create the Taiwanese identity. For them the ROC government had the exclusive right over Taiwan. They advocated that as per the guidelines of UN Charter on self-determination, the sovereignty of the island belongs to its people.

### **The New Civil Society**

Civil society in Taiwan had a key influence in democratic transition as well as to subsequent democratic consolidation. The democratization process also enhanced the role of civil society and rights for advocacy. However, when the transition of civil Society in Taiwan took place, it followed the path of transformation from state corporatism to societal corporatism (Tien 1997). The KMT authorities, under the state corporatism, operated a hierarchical system of control

over social groups, noncompetitive business, and industrial organizations to prevent citizens from challenging the authoritarian party-state. So, the new refined civil society sought the goals of democratizing and altering state-society relations.

As the KMT's control mechanism began to weaken, a liberal societal corporatism emerged wherein leaders of the most important associations were no longer bound to the state and rejected the notion that the government is the protector of the common good. In addition, like many third wave democracies, the transition was influenced by influx of returnees during 1990's mostly from the US and their active participation in social movements and advocacy for human rights. Prominent activist Peter Huang returned from exile to set up the Taiwan Association for Human Rights that played a prominent role in advocacy for transitional justice and human rights institutions during the first DPP administration.

Taiwan also witnessed prominent social movements in last three decades: starting with 1990s Wild Lily student movement and 2014 Sunflower student Movement. The six-day Wild Lily student protest in 1990 advanced Taiwan's transition to democracy with the successful demand for political reform in the wake of the one-party selection of President Lee Teng-hui. Sunflower Movement in 2014 started with a resistance for a proposed services trade accord with China rallied over 100,000 citizens and occupied the legislature, resulting in suspension of the pact. The movement socialized the new generation of civil society and strengthened social networks among the overlapping populations of students, civil libertarian rights advocates protesting police repression, and supporters of Taiwan's national autonomy vis-à-vis China. (Gold 1997)

Taiwan's model proved that the civil culture emerged coincidentally with democratic transition and matured during democratic consolidation. It was the democratization process that generated positive attitudes, behaviours and norms that characterized a civil culture. Some of the important attributes displayed by the Taiwan's emerging civil society were collective action, non-usurpation of state roles, and civility of modern private society. It basically resembled the elements of democratic corporatism similar to those of Northern Europe and Japan. In addition, during 1980's important social-protest movements emerged. The important issues covered by these movements included the liberalization of state-corporatist control, protection of minorities and other disadvantaged groups, human rights, labor-employer conflict, consumer

and environmental protection, and the retreat of the KMT from university campuses and the armed forces. By compressing decades' worth of issues into a single decade, Taiwan's protest movements reinforced the newly emerging opposition parties (Gold 1997)

### **Feminist and Queer Movements**

Among the most significant social movements in Taiwan, empowered women's movement and rapid progress on women's rights has strengthened democracy and enhanced international reputation beyond the level of its regional peers to the international standard of social democratic middle powers (Brysk 2020). The dual transition to liberal democracy and a liberal gender regime in Taiwan have empowered civil society, fostered legitimacy at home and abroad, and followed a strategy of compensatory transnationalism to overcome international isolation. The economic and political development that took place during the democratic transition facilitated women's empowerment in Taiwan. Taiwan's society moved from a patriarchal structure of social organization to a more open society.

In last three decades, Taiwan has been facing international isolation and China's bullying; however, its economic growth, democratic transition and social mobilization have created a favorable environment for human rights reforms. In addition, Taiwan's move towards modernization through liberal education and economic growth facilitated both an engaged civil society and liberalization of gender roles. Although democratic transition facilitated women's rights and feminist movement in Taiwan, the KMT-ruled authoritarian domination helped to create the first generation of women political activists, who were often the wives and daughters of imprisoned dissidents or journalists, as well as women with more liberty to mobilize for protection of women's right in the restricted authoritarian environment (Brysk, 2020). In addition, women right's of Taiwan have challenged China's pretensions of ideological hegemony and a source of soft power. Compared to China's socialist norms of gender equality, Taiwan has practiced more egalitarian norms and practice concerning women's education and political leadership. It has succeeded in achieving more progressive legislation and change in women's status.

In addition, the democratic transition in Taiwan has created an environment for critical debate and discussion on the crucial issues of labour rights, political awareness and minority rights

within the domestic political arena. Since 1990's, the women's movement in Taiwan was a great success by promoting, organizing and mobilizing debates of gender equality in the areas of equal pay and opportunities, children rights and protection against domestic abuse (Gold 1997). Women rights were the landmark right reforms in Taiwan as the Article 10 of Taiwan's 1991 Constitution guarantees equal rights and security for women. Some of the important issues brought to attention by the women's movement are the Act for the prevention of Prostitution of Children and Youths passed in 1995; the Revision of family Provision in the Civil Code passed in September 1996; the Act for the prevention of domestic violence passed in May 1998; and the Act for the Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Assault Problems passed in 1996; and the Equal Employment Act for Men and Women passed in 2000 (King, 2007). All these developments reflected evolving relationship between democratization, social movement and state feminism.

Taiwan's society also witnessed a rapid transition in reproductive relations that established the foundation for a liberal gender regime. There was a significant demographic transition, which resulted from changes and development in women's education, labor participation, and status. Interestingly, Taiwan has a smaller sex-ratio gap compared to the neighboring Asian countries, including China and has improved the imbalance with government policies including legal prohibitions of prenatal sex selection. Basically, a generation of feminist movements during the period 1998-2000s molded and benefitted from democratic transition and Taiwan's quest for international recognition. During that period, women's movements mobilized a combination of protest sometimes triggered by a cause and legislative advocacy that resulted in a sweeping succession of laws and policy measures, followed up by expertise and participation in the resulting institutional bodies (Brysk, 2020).

In the post transition period, NGO's run by women mainly featured internationally educated and transnationally networked lawyers and academics. So, most movements focused on bringing legislation against gender violence, bringing gender quotas, the design of women's agencies, and strategies for marriage equality. Major attention towards the gender and women's interest created the path clear for research institutions focusing exclusively on gender and women, inclusion of gender into the academic arena and popularity of women's groups. The original driving force of the women's movement in Taiwan was the *Awakening Magazine*

*Publishing House*, which was renamed as the Awakening Foundation in 1987. This feminist publishing house was established in 1982 as a magazine for spreading feminist and international thinking by academician Lee Yuanchen and her colleagues. The Awakening Foundation launched a series of successful legislative reform campaigns of varying duration for Gender Equity in Employment (passed in 2002), Gender Equity in Education (passed 2004), 1990 campaign for amendments to the Civil Code, establishment of a domestic violence Hotline 113 (1992), changes in Guardianship (1998), reform of matrimonial property rights (2002), and equal rights to children's surnames (2007) (Brysk 2020). In addition, the Awakening also produced strong female leaders who advocated democratization and women's political rights in Taiwan.

Some other significant organizations on gender and women that came out during 1990's are the Taipei Women's Rescue Association, Women's Protection Centre, Taipei Women's Development Centre, Rainbow Project, Women's Rescue Foundation, Homemaker's Union and Foundation, Women's Welfare Foundation, Garden of Hope Foundation, and Modern Women's Foundation (King 2007). In addition, the Feminist Scholars Association and a Federation of Women's Groups comprising over 60 organizations contributed a lot towards gender equality and women rights in Taiwan.

Due to the success of women's movement in the 1990s, Civil Code reforms have gradually changed the male-favor provisions to gender-neutral ones, including parental rights, child custody, marriage property, surname of the children, and so on. The traditional norm of a family constituted by the marital union of a man and a woman in which the husband enjoys more rights than the wife has been transformed to a model defined by a joint partnership of two persons (Tang et al. 2019). Taiwan's impressive economic growth, and the demand for larger and more skilled and educated workforce led to the gradual inclusion of women in the labour force. Along with rise of women in the higher education, women were increasingly being recognised for their contribution to the household income and skilled labour for the economy as they constituted 44 percent of Taiwan's labour force by 2000's. Over a period of time the social value systems of Taiwan and perceptions of women and career and women and family saw a dramatic shift in the priorities of female population. Also, in terms of political empowerment, women were appointed to high power positions and politically significant posts not limited to

women's issues and the social welfare arena. In the area of cross-strait relations, Tsai Ing-wen was a senior advisor in the National Security Council (NSC), supposed co-author of the July 1999 'Special State-to-State Relationship' concept, was also given the post of Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Chairwoman (2000-2004). Currently, Tsai Ing-wen is counted among the most successful female head of the states in the world.

The legislative reforms and the policy established the first wave of feminist movement in Taiwan by the early 2000. In last three decades, Taiwan set up all three institutional modalities: gender quotas, mainstreaming, and an Executive Committee/agency for gender equality on the intersectoral model—with mandated civil society representatives. All these are developed during the DPP administration 2000-2008 led by President Chen Shui-bian. There are quotas mandating at least 1/3 gender neutrality in the legislature as well as different formulas for government committees, schools, and boards of public enterprises. From 2006 onwards, every department of Taiwan's government was instructed to establish a Gender Taskforce following the guidelines with gender mainstreaming. Today, gender committees are mandatory in all local governments, Ministries, and the Executive Yuan.

The DPP has maintained a strong association with the feminist activities, which produced the first woman President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016. From 1990's, the DPP campaigned on with pledges of reform in family law, gender equity, and later same-sex marriage equality. The DPP become the pioneer of most reforms associated with gender equality and liberal policies. In addition, the DPP had adopted an internal 25% gender quota from the 1990s. There was a virtuous cycle from women's mobilization to representation to reform; by 2014, Taiwan had passed the Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence laws of the 1990s with an upgraded form significantly with features such as inclusion of unmarried couples and LGBTQ populations. As the civil society received recognition and reform, the second wave of feminist movement started in Taiwan which also included LGBTQ rights.

The development of liberal democratic ideas often contributes to social tolerance. In addition to the new Taiwanese identity and the women's movement, a social movement for sexual and gender minorities appeared in Taiwan around 1990s since the abolition of Martial Law in 1987. The historical event was considered as a turning point in terms of opening up the development of civil society in Taiwan and formation of LGBTQ organizations. After electing the first non-

KMT president in 2000, the new generations of Taiwanese have keenly embraced human rights, which included rights for gay and lesbians and welcomed multiculturalism based on the principle of self-determination. So, this new Taiwanese identity has been essentially manifested by yearnings for democratisation and liberation from any kind of domination in the name of transitional justice.

Before 1990's, little attention was given to issues related to homosexuality or civil rights of sexual minorities in Taiwan. Before the democratic transition, the subject of homosexuality was associated with abnormality, deviancy, disease, and immorality in Taiwan. Even same-sex desire was seen as a form of mental illness and AIDS in the PRC during the 1980's. When the first case of AIDS was identified in Taiwan in 1980's, various articles were published in which AIDS was associated with homosexuality and product of Western lifestyle like promiscuity. However, the perception about homosexuality changed along with process of democratization and expansion of liberal ideas among the new Taiwanese.

The establishment of liberal democracy and three decades of political and social struggle in Taiwan created more space and progress for the idea of LGBTQ rights. Actually when the feminist movement and mobilization picked up momentum, they urged to view political liberalization as necessary pre-condition for gender equality. In addition, human rights for other minority groups such as gays and lesbians, sex workers and their children, transgender people were also achieved limited degrees of success in a rigidifying social atmosphere. An active LGBTQ movement has developed rapidly in Taiwan in the context of political and social liberalization. Taiwan first saw the starting of gay and lesbian organizations in 1990's. The process started with "Between Us," first lesbian group founded in 1990. Students in various universities of Taiwan also started organizing as two student societies for gays and lesbians were set up at National Taiwan University in the mid-1990s. Even religious organizations opened doors for homosexuals as two gay-friendly religious organizations, the Tong-Kwang Light House Presbyterian Church and the Buddhist group "Tong Fan Jing Sheh" were founded in 1996. The Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association, Taiwan's first formally registered gay activist group, was set up in 1998.

Compared with other Asian countries, Taiwan seems to have created more room and progress for the LGBTQ rights, yet not without local complications. Taiwan also saw opposition to gay movements as numerous antigay marches were organized by conservative Christian groups to openly denounce homosexuality as an abomination of God. Due to the pressure by Christian child-protection groups, a series of new laws, litigation, and regulations has been introduced since 2000 that now criminalizes practically all sex-related publications, video images, and in particular, Internet communication. These new set of laws aimed to target sexual minorities and their channels for cultural representations.

The demand for the protection for human rights started during 1970's and 1980's during the KMT era in Taiwan. Later, it took the form of demanding right to work and freedom from economic exploitation. The labour mobilization was supported by the democratic movement to prioritize political liberalization in the form of nation-state building. During the same time feminist organization and mobilization picked up momentum and they urged to view political liberalization as necessary precondition for gender equality. Taiwan also wanted to change its international image so wishing to improve the image of Taipei among international metropolies, then – Taipei mayor Ma Ying-jiou decided to allocate moderate funding for gay groups to orchestrate a gay civil rights forum in 2000 that featured American gay activists Nan Hunter and Michael Bronski. Since 1990's, Taiwan has shown tremendous effort on legal formation and progress to meet the expectation of international community.

The struggle for legal rights for gay rights started gaining momentum since 2001. Even a failed attempt to recognize gay marriage and adoption rights written into Human Rights Protection Act was made. All these favourable developments created an environment of openness as the LGBTQ groups began organizing annual gay pride marches in Taiwan since 2003, which is now considered as huge achievements secured by LGBTQ groups elsewhere in Asia. Taiwan's Ministry of Education also replaced the demeaning definitions of gays and transgendered people as "resulting from childhood gender identity problems or from sexual aberrance" from its official online *Chinese Language Dictionary* in 2003 after persistent protests by LGBTQ groups (Chuen, Juei –Ho, 2010). In terms of civil liberty, the Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights was founded in 2009 by the feminist Awakening Foundation, the Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association and the Tong- Kwang Light House Presbyterian Church, among

other organizations, and was joined by the Taiwan Adolescent Association on Sexualities in 2011. However, due to the influence of Chinese Confusion culture on the social and family structure, many gays and lesbians prefer to stay “invisible,” or “hide in the closet,” rather than participate in the public activities of Taiwan.

In the last three decades, four Acts with the aim to support LGBTQ rights in Taiwan passed, which are:

1. HIV Infection Control and Patient Rights Protection Act. The Act was announced in 1990, amended in 2007; previously known as “AIDS Prevention and Control Act”
2. Act of Gender Equity Education, which was enacted in 2004.
3. Act of Gender Equality in Employment of 2008.
4. The Same Sex Legalization Marriage Act passed in 2019.

The LGBT movement has started by promoting basic human rights for everyone. Taking the first steps, Taiwan Government announced AIDS Prevention and Control Act in 1990. The Act ensured that HIV positive patients received free medical treatment.

Education plays a significant role to support LGBTQ rights development. By passing the Gender Equality Education Act in 2004, the education system in Taiwan has integrated the issue of tolerance into the curriculum. The act required all schools to refrain from discriminating against students on the basis of gender, gender temperaments, gender identity, or sexual orientation in teaching, activities, assessments, rewards and penalties, benefits, or services. This law also requires all levels of schools to allocate time to educate students to further their understanding of LGBTQ people. So the students started learning about gender equality and diversity at primary level of the school. All these measures aimed at reducing the cases of homophobia bullying in the schools. So, the Gender Equality Act recognized the existence and dignity of LGBTQ people through liberal education. So, before introducing the bill on same-sex marriage, inclusive education including sexual diversity was developed in order to develop nondiscriminatory perspectives to young children.

In the early 2000’s onwards, arguments and debates in favour of legalizing same-sex marriage increasingly emerged in Taiwan. Legalization of same-sex marriage turned in to a political

debate as the Taiwan government linked same-sex marriage legalization to the democratization and internationalization. It also required the support of the civil society. So, the civil society in Taiwan performed the activities to disseminate the knowledge about LGBTQ to Public and finally the awareness about LGBTQ rights was established. The ROC, according to the Taiwan 2013 Human Rights Report, implemented LGBTQ anti-discriminatory measures. But the Report referred to marriage as being between a man and a woman. Aiming to providing legal protection to “non-traditional” families, the Diverse Family Formation Act (DFFA) was proposed in 2013.

Similar to new identity, the DPP’s advocacy towards gender equality and the LGBTQ rights is significant too. Once the DPP administration started, the Taiwanese society expected to see their commitment on legalization same-sex marriage. After coming to power in 2000, ending fifty-odd years of KMT rule, the DPP has developed a strong political identity as a party that is committed to realizing an economically prosperous, cosmopolitan, liberal, and free Taiwan. Being a member of Liberal International, the DPP has started lobbying by alternative gender and LGBTQ organizations, including the demand for marriage equality. During the tenure of Chen-Shui-bian, the first DPP President, set up a Presidential Human Rights Task Force that included prominent human rights advocates and lawyers. The DPP government also passed Employment Service Laws in 2007, which barred social and workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

In last 30 years, along with the admirable progress has been made in terms of feminist and queer movements, Taiwan also achieved impressive success while introducing gender inclusive education. After introducing nation’s first women’s studies program in 1985, the National Taiwan University started the first sexuality studies course in 1995. By 2015, more than half of Taiwan’s universities started offering courses on gender and sexuality. To check the cases of homophobia and bullying, the DPP government also built unisex bathrooms to address the demands of LGBTQ students in schools and universities. In 2010, the Ministry of Education even announced that primary school textbooks would include topics on LGBT rights and anti-discrimination. In order to promote inclusivity, connections were made between inclusive curricula and social changes. So, Taiwan taught the existence and dignity of LGBTQ+ people at early stage through inclusive education.

Both KMT and the DPP supported same sex marriage legalization and the bill on same-sex marriage legalization was proposed again after the administration of DPP President Tsai Ing-wen in May 2016. The first attempt was made in 2013. When the administration of President Tsai started, residents of Taiwan started to see her commitment on legalization same-sex marriage with the support of civil society namely LGBTQ activists and queer rights organizations. With the DPPs continuous support for queer movements and gender equality, Taiwan became the first country in Asia to legalise same sex marriage on 24 May 2019.

### **Assessing the linkages**

Currently, Taiwan is considered as the most LGBTQ-friendly country in Asia. However, compared to Western developed countries, the attitude of the East Asian people towards homosexuality is less tolerant as per few studies conducted. Due to the dominating influence of Confucianism which puts strong emphasis on the family-kinship system, homosexuality is considered as a challenge on the values of family lineage. Confucianism, a Chinese belief system, which focuses on personal beliefs and ethics, social hierarchies, is a dominant ideology in East Asia. It was assumed Taiwan, like other East Asian countries, should be culturally constrained from developing democratically because of the diligence of a Confucian ethic.

In Taiwan, no Confucian value has any statistically significant relationship with democracy (Fetzer & Soper, 2013). While the relationship between Confucian values and support for authoritarianism was strong in China and Singapore, this bond appears to have weakened in Taiwan. In reality, Taiwan became an ideal place to test the relationship between Confucianism and support for liberal-democratic values. Politically, over the past several decades, Taiwan has evolved into a vibrant, multi-party democracy where human rights, women's, and aboriginal rights are well protected in both theory and in practice. In addition, the Taiwanese society offers social scientists an unrestricted, transparent research environment.

Majority of studies regarding the change of attitude towards homosexuality comes from Western democracies and much less is known about East Asia. Since 1980's, the rapid economic progress and democratization seems to have contributed to a more open social space for the young. The main idea of liberalism as identified by Sartori was the protection of individual freedoms and democracy with equality, which is not limited to political equality but

grows out of and promotes a measure of social and economic equality as well. With the process of democratization, Taiwan put emphasis on rights-based liberal state identity and transition to a liberal gender regime. It adopted development patterns that facilitated women empowerment to produce more and better distributed economic growth. Taiwan also having international aspiration is influenced by international liberal political trend, which have made it important for this aspiring nation to pledge support for the concept of human rights, most importantly for LGBTQ rights. So, in order to avoid international isolation, Taiwan concentrated on liberal branding and established a middle-power democratic regime along with gender equity. Globally, gender equity is connected with more multilateralism, humanitarianism and strong advocacy for international rights.

Along with the change in the attitude towards homosexuality, Taiwan witnessed evolving queer activism in Taiwan. The queer activism become the main idea behind evolving rainbow coalition, a grouping derived from a social movement for sexual and gender minorities involving transforming identities in Taiwan (Po- Han, 2017). The movement, based on a pursuit of self-determination and self-liberation, has created a platform for a cosmopolitan identity of Taiwaneseess to grow. It was against any kind of abusive religious authority in deployment of sexuality. Beyond an 'LGBT' 'rights' movement, "the rainbow coalition" was a social movement making a larger-scale mobilisation of people and pursuing a social change. The main inspiration for the movement was the women's rights movement in the 1990's, and they were increasingly integrated for decades.

Lee Po-Han (2017) argues that the rainbow coalition movement contributed towards the producing "Taiwanessness" and formed as a countering force transcending the myths of nation-state and demanding the universalistic cohort to be more cautious when exporting 'new rights.' In addition, the emotional and material factors of being-queer/Taiwanese construct a desire for an imagined cosmopolitanism to consolidate the bonds between marginalised and vulnerable members within the society (Po-Han, 2017). The movement tried to bring a cosmopolitan sense of Taiwaneseess, which owes much to the Taiwan's 'queer' existence in terms of geopolitics.

In Taiwan's history, there was no anti-homosexuality law until the authoritarian Chiang Kai-shek's regime enacted the law of indecency, which prohibited the wearing of inappropriate outfits ascribed to one's gender roles. Taiwan's liberal approach and advocacy for human

rights have served as a counter to China's ideological hegemony and cultural imposition. Taiwan practices more egalitarian principles concerning women's education and political leadership, has achieved more progressive legislation and transformation in women's position and greater acceptance for homosexuality. Taiwan's consistent track record on gender equity also facilitates broader patterns of transnationalism and recognition by international community.

According to the study conducted by Institute of Sociology in 2016, Taiwanese have developed more accepting attitudes towards homosexuality. One of the main reasons identified by the study is education. State-supported superior education and nontraditional values concerning marriage, sexual morality, and gender roles helped to change the attitude toward homosexuality. While assessing the linkages between identity and queer movements with liberalism, this paper argues that economic growth, development in education and democracy often contribute to social tolerance. A number of studies shows that as countries turn more economically developed, their residents tend to develop more liberal attitudes on a range of issues, including gender equality, sexual morality, and homosexuality. With the advent of industrialization, changes in production methods tend to alter education and employment patterns and increase wealth, which liberate individuals from concerns about material resources and fundamental survival (Cheng, Wu & Adamczyk 2016) After basic needs are fulfilled, people are better able to pursue higher level needs like individual freedom and self-expression.

The young and new generation "Taiwanese" became more aware about various issues related to gender and LGBTQ rights and displayed attitudinal change towards homosexuality. Various cross-national studies have found that economic growth is a major contributor to liberal thinking on homosexuality. Also, well-educated individuals tend to hold a tolerant attitude towards homosexuality compared to less educated. Researchers also connect this attitude with democracy as it makes a space for LGBTQ rights by structuring a more socially tolerant society. Western democracies are therefore more tolerant on the subject of homosexuality than ex-communist countries.

The above mentioned connection is clearly visible in Taiwan. Along with democratic changes, Taiwan's economy started to show impressive growth during 1980's. The section of people who feel that homosexuality is justified has also increased along with the Gross National

Income (GNI) in the same period. In the period 1971 to 1990, the GNI per capita grew by more than seventeen times, from \$451 to \$8,431 as per Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics 2014. The impressive economic growth has paved way for more lenient social and political attitudes on range of issues. Democracy was fully established in 1996 paving the way for political liberalization. Industrial growth and economic prosperity and improved the average level of education in Taiwan.

The demographic shifts in Taiwan produced a new generation of political class as the influence of the mainlanders started to fade. As many of the mainlanders who fled Taiwan in 1949 started to die off, the political scene had started to change in the island. The change produced a new generation individualistic Taiwanese who had focused heavily on economic progress and better standard of living. The democratic transition was initiated as economic development started leading to even more changes in values. After the lifting of the martial law, the socio-political climate in Taiwan has become more liberal ultimately strengthening democracy and revitalizing civil society. Based on the new identity and political thinking and opposing China's hegemony, the DPP emerged as a major political force in Taiwan. Along with improved education and higher income levels, conservative values regarding family, sexuality, and gender roles have turned more liberal. Public awareness of LGBTQ rights and liberties has also risen eventually leading to a more liberal and tolerant society. As Taiwan experienced democratization and economic prosperity over the years, people from Taiwan proud with new identity turned more supportive about the morality of homosexuality. The DPP government even linked same-sex marriage legalization to the democratization and internationalization.

According to the Freedom House Report 2021, Taiwan is a prominent democracy in Asia, scoring 94 out of 100, which is based on civil liberties and political participation. It developed rapidly through an open economy with investments in human capital and diversified globalization Taiwan also shows significant progress in terms of gender equality and protection of LGBTQ rights. The feminist face of Taiwan's soft power is represented by Taiwan's first transgender Cabinet member Audrey Tang. President Tsai appointed Tang as a Digital Minister at age by 35. Tang was a 'civic hacker' in Taiwan's 2014 Sunflower Movement, and has become a prominent symbol of LGBTQ pride in Taiwan.

Taiwan has benefitted significantly from its free society and gender friendly tolerance by attracting trade, talent, and tourism. It also hosts a cohesive yet adaptive civil society with an extensive diaspora facilitated and was reinforced by democratization. Taiwan's path to becoming the first country in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage could be attributed to the combination of an active LGBTQ movement, multiparty strategizing, and government efforts to differentiate Taiwan from the PRC in international arenas.

Today, majority of the people in Taiwan identify themselves as Taiwanese whatever their ancestral origins are. They also call their country 'Taiwan' rather than the ROC and many believe the two terms to be roughly equivalent. Taiwan's unique political status and de facto sovereignty has made the ROC government by various means look for international support with an allied stance with other liberal democracies to counter China's de jure status and political bullying. This desire creates an emotion of anti-totalitarianism into *Taiwanese*ness and provokes Taiwanese discomfort towards Confucian style of nationalism and identity. Undoubtedly, Taiwanese people with their efforts and struggle achieved success in consolidating democracy, strengthening the identity and setting an example of creating a gender inclusive society.

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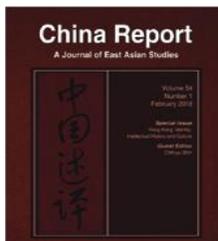


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