Genya Fukunaga

Queer politics and solidarity: Post–Cold War homonationalism in East Asia

In the twenty-first century, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) was internationally recognized as a component of human rights.[1] Human rights protections for sexual minorities became a key political issue across East Asia, and new LGBT-friendly political elites have accelerated the process of securing these rights from the perspective of lawmaking and legislative reform. In other words, in East Asia the era of discrimination against sexual minorities has passed, and in its place "LGBT-friendly societies" are beginning to emerge.

LGBT movements in East Asia are using massive, high-visibility events such as pride parades as platforms for establishing solidarity. At these events, however, it is not unusual to discern a nationalistic tone in the language celebrating advances in LGBT rights and activism, as in the case of slogans such as "Taiwan: Marriage Equality First in Asia."[2] Rather than resisting the authority of states and their respective administrations, LGBT activists have arguably begun to do the opposite, helping to perpetuate government authority in an ongoing attempt to transform it into a tool to advance LGBT rights and further activist agency.

The present paper will investigate the forging of intimate solidarity between LGBT movements in Japan and Taiwan and the extent to which this was facilitated by the historical and political context in East Asia. It begins by exploring the mainstreaming of the LGBT-friendly discourse in Taiwanese society since the 2000s, as well as the homonationalism underlying the movement. It then examines the links between Japanese LGBT activists' interest in Taiwan and Japan's imperialist desires under the post–Cold War world order. It highlights how the collusion between homonationalism and imperialism allows these two societies to be classified as "LGBT friendly" and "advanced" in contrast to the "backwardness" of China. In conclusion, the paper summarizes the dynamics of queer politics and competing nationalisms in the East Asian geopolitical context, emphasizing the need to decolonize and de-imperialize the LGBT movements and discourses.

A sociological methodology is used to analyze primary sources (e. g., pamphlets and other print media, official websites and related staff blogs, and photographs)

1 Earlier versions of this paper have been presented at conferences and universities in Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and South Korea from 2020 to 2022.

2 This slogan was emblazoned on the banners of the Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights (TAPCPR) at the Tokyo Rainbow Pride parade in 2018.

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gathered from pride parades, film festivals, and other manifestations of queer activism in Japan and Taiwan between 2011 and 2021. The two case studies of this research – Tokyo Rainbow Pride and Taiwan LGBT Pride – have been observed since 2013.

Images and representations of sexual minorities in newspapers, online news, magazines, films, advertisements, and social media are also examined, including media representations of Taiwan in Japan and vice versa. Articles published between 1990 and 2017 from four major Japanese newspapers – *Asahi shinbun*, *Mainichi shinbun*, *Yomiuri shinbun*, and *Sankei shinbun* – and two Taiwanese newspapers – *United Daily News* and *China Times* – are the primary objects of this analysis, as well as all articles with titles that contain the terms "Taiwan" or "Republic of China" in four Japanese conservative-leaning magazines: *Bungeishunjū*, *Seiron*, *Mansurī WiLL*, and *Boisu* (*Voice*). Japanese articles from the late 1990s onward are particularly significant because they reflect the increasing interest in Taiwan on the part of Japanese conservatives.

1 The emergence of Taiwanese homonationalism

1.1 The birth of an LGBT-friendly Taiwan

After the 1990s, the social conditions of sexual minorities in nations across East Asia changed dramatically, but nowhere more so than in Taiwan, which has become known as "the most LGBT-friendly in Asia" (Hao, 2010).[3] In recent years, the English-language media has also highlighted the notion of Taiwan as a "beacon" for Asia (Jacobs, 2014). From the 2010s, Taiwanese activists have adopted this domestically and internationally crafted image of an LGBT-friendly Taiwan to advance their cause. For example, the Taipei City Government proudly congratulated the city's pride parade, which has grown into one of the largest in Asia, and Taiwanese marriage equality activists carried a large banner declaring "First in Asia," in English, through the streets during the 2018 Tokyo Rainbow Pride.

This discourse of an LGBT-friendly Taiwan originates, in fact, from the nation's political elite. Notably, Ma Ying-jeou of the Kuomintang projected a gay-friendly image as early as the 1998 Taipei mayoral elections (*United Daily News*, 1998) and repeatedly used the term *tóngzhì yǒushàn* (LGBT friendly) in his presidential campaigns during the 2000s. Following Ma's presidency (2008–2016), his successor, Tsai Ing-wen, also expressed support for same-sex marriage in her election cam-

3 Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Chinese and Japanese in this paper are my own.

paigns (Fukunaga, 2016). An example on a local level is the continued official funding of the Taipei LGBT Festival from 2000, which led the city's mayor, Hau Lung-pin (2010), to declare that "Taipei has become known throughout Asia as an LGBT-friendly Rainbow City" (pp. 4–5). Thus, in the 2000s, politicians from the mayor to the president diligently projected an image of LGBT friendliness while failing to address the rapidly expanding backlash against gay rights by Christian conservatives.

The LGBT-friendly discourse is therefore inextricably connected to the strategic performances of the political elite to muster electoral support, which cannot solely be aimed at securing the LGBT vote, given the low estimated number of sexual minorities in Taiwan. Rather, expressing an LGBT-friendly position is an attempt to impress a certain image upon the *majority.* According to Chu Wei-cheng (2005), after martial law was abolished in Taiwan,

> support for minority activism, including that of the LGBT movement, came to be regarded as liberal and progressive. As the tides shifted toward a more progressive society, politicians introduced "image politics" and began to respond positively to the demands of the LGBT movement. (pp. 7–8)

Support for minority human rights came to be considered an indicator of the nation's democratization as it worked to transition out of authoritarianism and integrate democratic principles into society. In short, the protection of LGBT human rights garnered political attention when the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was attempting to overthrow the Kuomintang's single-party rule and advance a policy of democratization.

1.2 Taiwanese homonationalism

In the early 2000s, President Chen Shui-bian spearheaded a series of policies under the moniker of a "Nation of Human Rights," which included protections for SOGI – a prominent part of the political discourse at the time. Having espoused ideas of "democracy," "freedom," and "human rights" after defeating martial law, his party, the DPP, saw LGBT rights as having a high affinity with its progressive policy direction. Taiwan's marginalized position in international society was also significant. According to Satō Kazumi (2007), an expert on the DPP's human rights diplomacy, these Nation of Human Rights policies

> were in pursuit of a new balance of power, attained through two major shifts: namely, a shift in power relations with China and the use of the US as an axis by which to change the relationship between Taiwan and the mainland. (p. 133)

After China's emergence as an economic superpower in the post–Cold War era, Taiwanese dependence on China rose dramatically – a dependence that only deepened with China's increasingly central position in US foreign policy. China had blocked Taiwan from receiving international recognition since the 1970s, and the DPP's Nation of Human Rights was a soft power strategy – based on the mutual interplay of Taiwan–US and Taiwan–China relations – to expand the nation's international presence (Satō, 2007). SOGI, which had accrued significant international attention, served as a tool for Taiwan to catch up to the US as a country with advanced human rights while differentiating itself from the notoriously oppressive Chinese government.

Alongside Israel and South Africa, Taiwan has been considered one of the protectorates of the US empire under the Cold War world order (Kǎ, 2018), coming to play a significant role in US policy. After the island's incorporation into the Cold War system during the Korean War, the US "did not just decide Taiwan's identity – it also became its most important cultural symbol" (Chen, 2006, p. 71). Taiwanese queer politics was similarly drawn clearly into the sphere of US influence (Fukunaga, 2022).

Amid the dramatic influx of media interest in LGBT issues in the 2000s, Taiwan's portrayal of itself as LGBT friendly was accompanied by a rise in the number of articles decrying China as "homophobic" and "backward" (e. g., *United Daily News*, 2005).[4] An analysis of the *United Daily News* and *China Times* revealed that only a few articles (6 and 12, respectively) on sexual minority rights in China appeared in the 1990s. But from the 2000s, the number leaps to over 137 articles, the majority of which are dedicated to the contrast between the LGBT-friendly Taiwan and the regressive China (Fukunaga, 2017).

Particularly useful for this analysis is the conceptual framework of homonationalism, which Jasbir Puar (2007) used to critique the mainstream gay rights movement's assimilation into nationalism after 9/11. She argued that the War on Terror was justified through two mutually reinforcing concepts – (1) the connection of Islam to "terrorist bodies" and (2) the reinforcement of US moral superiority through the mobilization of homosexual subjects in the service of nationalism – which created a condition she termed "homonationalism" (Puar, 2007, p. 13). According to Puar (2017), homonationalism uses "acceptance" and "tolerance" for gay and lesbian subjects as the barometer by which the legitimacy of, and capacity for, national sovereignty are evaluated (p. 51). In the US, the rise of homonationalism subsumed queer bodies into an assertion of the nation's modernity and "sex-

4 Note that by the "government of China" here, I refer to the administration of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rather than the special administrative regions (SARs) of Hong Kong and Macau.

ual exceptionalism," while relegating Muslims into terrorist bodies (Puar, 2007, p. 2). In Taiwan, the debut of homonationalism was connected to the Nation of Human Rights strategy, which used the US as a model to posit Taiwan as unique in "Asia" – "The most LGBT-friendly in Asia" (*China Times*, 2014, October 31) – a narrative inseparable from the portrayal of China as the irreconcilable "other."

As has been argued, the now internationally popular discourse of Taiwan as the most LGBT friendly in Asia was originally passed down from the nation's political elite throughout the 1990s and 2000s. The following section examines how this homonationalist discourse has been received by the Japanese media and activists.

2 Imperial desires

2.1 The competition for Asian hegemony

Taiwan's homonationalist discourse was popularized in Japan in the 2010s. A recent *Mainichi shinbun* article, for example, linked the creation of an LGBT-friendly Taiwan to the concept of democratization ("'Dōshi' ni yasashii Taiwan," 2017). In fact, Japanese LGBT activists have had a longstanding interest in Taiwan that predates this trend. Internalizing the narrative of an exceptionally LGBT-friendly Taiwan, these activists have sought to surpass or catch up to Taiwan, pursuing ideological supremacy in Asia through their activism.

Perhaps the most striking example of this is Tokyo Rainbow Pride (TRP), which revealed its roadmap in 2014 in the lead-up to the 2020 Summer Olympics and Paralympics. Although the roadmap has since been deleted from the TRP website, its goals could be divided into roughly two levels:

1. to become the largest LGBT event in Asia by 2017; and
2. to "expand the movement" from "Japan to the world" by 2020. (TRP, 2014)

Taiwan's LGBT Pride was not mentioned in the roadmap, but it is clear from writer and radio host Ogiue Chiki's (2012) interview with TRP staff that these goals – particularly the first –was based on Taiwan's LGBT Pride.

This roadmap reveals three major points about TRP's strategy. First, by using the rhetoric of the largest LGBT event in Asia – placing Taiwan (and its LGBT Pride) on a pedestal as both exemplar and competitor –TRP engaged in a struggle for ideological hegemony in Asia, which would fuel the growth of Taiwanese homonationalism.

Second, the US plays a significant role as its point of reference. The Stonewall Riots and the first pride parade in New York were used as historical benchmarks in the TRP roadmap (Tokyo Rainbow Pride, 2014). Using cyberethnography, Itakura (2015) pointed out that TRP considers the US to be "the origin of sexual liberation" (p. 17) and pride parades in Japan or other parts of the world to be contributions to US moral supremacy (p. 16). Indeed, its rhetoric distinguished the US from the rest of "the world," confirming the myth of US sexual exceptionalism.

The third significant point is TRP's efforts to assimilate into the national status quo. This is visible in its emulation of Taiwan's LGBT Pride under the auspices of influencing Asia by 2017, and even more so in its second goal of expanding to the world by 2020. TRP's activism is not based on resistance to the government, but rather draws agency from the advancement of Japan as a "queer-friendly nation" (Itakura, 2015, p. 18) that commands praise and recognition from Asia and the world.

In 2014, the same year of TRP's roadmap, signs of solidarity between TRP and Taiwan's LGBT Pride became increasingly visible in the donation of parade floats, organizer exchanges, and so on. Now, organizers from both countries have begun to vie openly for ideological supremacy in Asia. In 2017, when the constitutional court in Taiwan ruled that the laws forbidding same-sex marriage were unconstitutional, TRP members at Taiwan's LGBT Pride carried a flag that declared "Celebrating Taiwanese Marriage Equality. Press Forward Japan!" At TRP the following year, as mentioned earlier, Taiwanese activists flourished banners proclaiming, "First in Asia." In this way, Japanese homonationalist desires and Taiwanese homonationalist discourses are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

2.2 A pro-Japanese Taiwan in the post–Cold War era

As demonstrated, lurking behind Japanese activists' obsession with the LGBT-friendly Taiwan is an ideological competition for supremacy in Asia. This is predicated by the dominant Japanese view of Taiwan as pro-Japanese, which is a perspective broadly shared in activist circles as well. For example, Gotō Jun'ichi (2012), director of Out Japan, an LGBT marketing firm, described Japanese gay men's fascination with Taiwan as follows:

> Every year, about 1,000 gay Japanese individuals travel to Taiwan en masse to participate in Taiwan's LGBT Pride.... You might wonder why in the world so many Japanese people would head to Taiwan.... The biggest reason is a feeling of gratitude toward our allies and friends in the Taiwanese gay community for their outpouring of support after last year's earthquake. *In other words, the greatest reason is that Taiwanese people are Japan-friendly* [emphasis added]

> …. To us [Japanese gay individuals], Taiwan is like a paradise. It's a place where you can openly express yourself and set your heart and body free.

The significant financial support provided by the Taiwanese in the immediate aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011 has been seen as proof of their "pro-Japan" standing – a topic of continued discussion in both countries.[5]

However, the discourse of a pro-Japanese Taiwan only became popular in Japan in the late 1990s. In the Japanese newspapers and periodicals analyzed for this paper, support for Taiwan's sovereignty claims appears to have been nonexistent from the 1950s until the 1980s, as were depictions of it as either pro- or anti-Japanese. In fact, I was unable to find rhetoric classifying any government or region as either pro- or anti-Japan until the 1990s – the few exceptions I was able to confirm pertained to sporadic trade or diplomatic tensions with the US or southeast Asia (see, e. g., "Bankoku kara," 1979; "Tokekomanu Nihonjin," 1973). In the late 1990s, when the right-wing media's portrayal of China and South Korea as anti-Japanese became mainstream, a complementary discourse positioned Taiwan as a pro-Japanese state.

Amid the scholarly literature on the dramatic growth of conservative discourse in Japan in recent years (e. g., Hayakawa & Nogawa, 2015; Jomaru, 2011; Kurahashi, 2018) is the simultaneous emergence and growth of rhetoric portraying China (or South Korea) as anti-Japanese and Taiwan as pro-Japanese. The latter rhetoric was quickly adopted and popularized (in both Japan and Taiwan) as part of a growing movement to reevaluate the Japanese colonial rule of Taiwan.

Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Cold War system in East Asia – as seen in the divided Korean Peninsula and the Third Taiwan Straits Crisis (1995–1996), for example – became even more entrenched, with the US presence in the region strengthening to such an extent that political conditions have been called part of a "pseudo–Cold War system" (Oguma, 2014). When South Korea and Taiwan emerged as democracies with feminism and other social movements, strife over historical consciousness – best exemplified by the "comfort women" issue – took center stage.

For Japan, which had benefited from its special relationship with the US in the postwar decades, the democratization and rapid economic growth of its former colonies made it impossible to continue evading responsibility for the colonization of its neighbors and wartime atrocities. Japan pursued a large-scale historical revisionist project, redefining the Greater East Asian War as a "defensive war," de-

5 For a critique of the politics surrounding Japan–Taiwan mutual support following large-scale disasters, see Zhào (2018).

nying both its aggression in the lead-up to the war and crimes committed therein. Moreover, a deep-seated anticommunist ideology facilitated the conservative stigmatization of China as anti-Japanese (see, e. g., Kō, 2012a, 2012b; "Nittai dankō 20-nen," 1992). This also arguably stemmed from fear after the bubble burst, which devastated national pride as an economic superpower, just as China was emerging as "the world's factory" in the late 1990s. Consequently, as Japan faced pressure from China and South Korea to assume responsibility for its war crimes and colonization, its right-wing media responded by asserting that Taiwan is a pro-Japanese nation (e. g., "Atarashii Nittai kankei," 2000; "Rī moto Taiwan sōtō," 2008; "Taiwan oishisa," 2000).

In Taiwan, the democratization of the 1990s and 2000s was accompanied by a new definition of nationalism and a dramatic increase in public support for the Taiwanese independence movement. The historical context deserves a brief explanation. After Japan's defeat in WWII, the Kuomintang seized power in Taiwan, positing themselves as the legitimate rulers of "China" and watching carefully for opportunities to launch a continental counteroffensive. The Kuomintang single-mindedly pursued Sinicization through educational and cultural initiatives, but the nation's democratization and China's rise to global prominence spelled the end for its One China policies by the 1990s. The transition from the Kuomintang to the DPP in 2000 was, importantly, accompanied by a shift in national identity from the "Republic of China" to "Taiwan" (Wakabayashi, 2008). A reactionary movement then emerged, aiming to reevaluate the heretofore-critiqued history of Japanese colonization.

The main leader of this movement was Lee Teng-hui, president of the Republic of China. Born and raised under Japanese colonialism, Lee began to actively campaign in both Taiwan and Japan from the late 1990s under the position that Japanese colonization had contributed significantly to Taiwan's modernization (Ching, 2019). Both Lee and his reevaluation of the so-called "Japanese Era" were ecstatically welcomed by Japan's right-wing media (e. g., Kobayashi, 2000, p. 31). There was a rapid increase in Japan's conservative discourse justifying Japanese imperialism and colonialism, an integral part of which was an emphasis on Taiwan's status as a pro-Japanese state. This, in turn, became one of the wellsprings of the modern Japanese perception of Taiwan as pro-Japanese.

3 East Asian modernity

This paper has so far investigated how the discourse of a pro-Japanese Taiwan was created by the right-wing media in the context of a renewed imperial consciousness in Japan. But how is this discourse connected to queer politics?

First, it is necessary to investigate the origins of the discourse which claims that Taiwan and Japan are an *unmei kyōdōtai* (sharing a common destiny) characterized by "modernity." For example, an article in a major Japanese newspaper, *Sankei shinbun*, in the early 1990s based its argument on an "anti-Japanese united front" born from the "anti-Japanese nationalism" of China and South Korea, concluding that, "strategically, it would be far better to strengthen ties with Taiwan – with whom we share a closer sense of values – than China" ("Nittai danko 20-nen," 1992). Here, it should be noted that in the 2000s the ambiguously defined "sense of values" came to stand for *minshu* (democracy), *jiyū* (freedom), and *jinken* (human rights) – all terms that indicate modernity. For example, according to Kō Bun'yū (2007), also known as Peter Wenshiung Huang, a Taiwanese independence advocate who has long been active in Japanese society, Japan and Taiwan have "shared fates, shared communities" based on "their mutual pursuit of the universal human values of democracy, freedom, and human rights" (p. 85). As a counterpoint, Kō (2012a, 2012b) defined China, the propagator of anti-Japanese sentiment, as an irreconcilable, unforgivable other.[6] Following in his footsteps, the Japanese right-wing media discussed Taiwan as a supportive comrade with a shared community and shared fate, while simultaneously decrying Chinese crimes against freedom and human rights (see, e. g., "Nittai danko 20-nen," 1992).

Thus, the conservative discourse has come to follow a clear pattern in presenting China as oppressive to minorities and encroaching upon freedom and human rights, in direct contrast to a democratic and free Taiwan, which protects human rights and is thereby equipped with a modern sense of values. Significantly, Japan's LGBT movement has also adopted this perspective, and China has come to be portrayed as "uncivilized" or "delayed." A man who works as a go-go boy at the East Asia Gay Club Party was the target of an article in TRP's (2017) official magazine, which stated, "Chinese people have a somewhat serious, animalistic, and scary image," while "in comparison, I thought Taiwanese people were nice" (Kenta, 2017, p.7). In this way, the Japanese homonationalist gaze not only racializes Taiwanese and Chinese people, but also establishes a racial hierarchy between them.

In another example, Gotō Jun'ichi (2010) cited a Japanese review, published on a popular gay men's website of which he is the editor-in-chief, of the Chinese gay romance film *Chūnfēng chénzuì de yèwǎn* (*Spring Fever*, 2009) which had just been screened in Japan:

6 Alongside Taiwanese independence activists based in Japan, such as Kō Bun'yū and Kin Birei, other figures have also garnered support for a positive view of Japanese colonialism in the Japanese right-wing media from the 1990s. For a scholarly exploration, see Mori (2001).

> Modern Japanese gay men may find that *Spring Fever* paints a somewhat surprising picture of the difficulties of same-sex male romance. Many might wonder if this is truly the current reality in China....
>
> It's totally different from what you might see in a gay [*gei*] film from the West, where there exists a strong gay community within which same-sex marriage and even children are included in an optimistic outlook on gay life.
>
> Amid the severity of living in a society that does not accept homosexuals [*dōseiaisha*], the protagonists nevertheless throw themselves body and soul into an excruciating romance, isolated and alone. This renders the open love between the two men practically a revolutionary act. In this sense, it is a work that seems to keenly convey the heavy weight of freedom.

The original film uses the Mandarin Chinese term *tóngzhì* (comrade) to render male–male romantic relationships, which is similar to the Japanese term *gei* (gay) in that it has come to be associated with a positive identity. In referring to the protagonists as *dōseiaisha* (homosexuals), the above review missed these nuances in the film and presented male–male love in China as the polar opposite of the West with its "strong gay community" and "gay life" (even though the Japanese subtitles for the film used the term *gei* to translate *tóngzhì*). This review implied that, in China, gay people are to be pitied as "homosexuals," a rhetoric that aligns perfectly with the discourse of Taiwanese homonationalism.[7]

As demonstrated, the connection between Taiwan and Japan is strengthened through a twofold system, with the ideals of democracy, human rights, freedom, and other so-called modern values on one level, and the denouncement of the purportedly anti-Japanese China as backward – or even hostile to these values – on the other. Discourse painting Taiwan as pro-Japanese originated from the Japanese right-wing media's revisionist interpretations of imperialism and colonialism, ultimately shaping the mainstream image of Taiwan in Japan. The Japanese LGBT movement is no exception, contrasting the image of a modern pro-Japanese Taiwan with the putative China – a discourse that has a strong affinity with Taiwanese homonationalism.

4 Gender/sexuality politics in post–Cold War Asia

This section will investigate gender/sexuality politics in East Asia from the post–Cold War perspective. After World War II, East Asia was incorporated into the Cold War regime, and the East Asian order was reorganized by the US, which seized hegemony in the region (Chen, 2006). The demise of the Empire of Japan

7 See, for example, "Zhǐyǒu gémìng tóngzhì" (1996), a Taiwanese newspaper article that argued that only revolutionary *tóngzhì* (comrades) exist in China, not gay *tóngzhì*.

did not bring decolonization to East Asia. In the Cold War era, the US "displaced, replaced, and subsumed the Japanese empire," and transitional justice was not realized in the process (Ching, 2019, p. 7). In building an anticommunist bloc, the US restored Japan as the economic linchpin of the Pacific Rim alliance, which brought about a division of labor – Okinawa, Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines were to bear the brunt of US military functions and installations, which enabled economic growth in mainland Japan (Ching, 2019).

US intervention in the Asia Pacific went beyond simply containing communism to seizing hegemony in the region at the level of knowledge production (Yoneyama, 2016). This enabled the US to assume the highest level of responsibility for directing and supervising the countries of the region with regard to "progress, democracy, and modernity," which was supported by the perception of it as an exceptional nation that offered democracy and freedom. The military regimes in Taiwan and South Korea thoroughly suppressed the demands of the people for democracy in the name of anticommunism. And rather than protecting the local people, the US supported these regimes while positioning itself as the protector of democracy through the Cultural Cold War (Kishi & Tsuchiya, 2009).

According to Lisa Yoneyama (2016), who is well known in transpacific Cold War and post–Cold War studies, gender politics played an important role in this Cold War process of knowledge production. In fact, women's rights and gender equality are key components of US exceptionalism, which holds that the US is an exceptional nation that transcends even international human rights standards in terms of achieving democracy and freedom. An important historical basis for this is the success of the Allied Occupation policies that brought women's suffrage and liberation to Japan (Yoneyama, 2016, pp. 83–84). In the post–Cold War period, this exceptionalism has come to encompass discourses on sexuality. This relates to Puar's (2007) argument, noted earlier, that US hegemony and imperialism are supported by "homonationalism" – a conceptual frame for understanding how mainstream gay politics in the US have become associated with nationalism after 9/11, which has also manifested as racism against Muslims.

As I have pointed out recently, assimilationist discourses became mainstream in the Taiwanese gay movement for marriage equality, which had started as a radical social movement in the 1990s that emphasized the differences between homosexual and heterosexual people. When faced with a conservative backlash in the 2010s, however, the activists began to argue that homosexual people were quite ordinary, not so different to others. The discourse of inclusion in the institution of marriage became mainstream. When homonormative lesbians and gays who do not deviate from heteronormativity claim to be "good citizens," they do not assimilate into the "Republic of China" with its historical background in mainland China, but "Taiwan," a nation that is now inclusive of homosexuality and boasts of its

modernity and tolerance toward the international society. Thus, the homonationalism that praises "LGBT-friendly Taiwan" is also gaining support in East Asia as a discourse that shares values with the US and other former Western Bloc countries but, at the same time, differentiates itself from homophobic China.

5 Final thoughts: Homonationalism as a historical shift

Recently, Japan and Taiwan's LGBT movements have been using metropolitan pride parades as important stages on which to develop "solidarity." The present paper has argued that a close reading of the TRP's strategy reveals that its focus on Taiwan is the result of an underlying desire for and competition over Asian ideological hegemony. Moreover, it pointed out that the TRP's internalization of US sexual exceptionalism further complements Taiwanese homonationalism. The Japanese LGBT movement's perception of Taiwan as pro-Japanese has its roots in the conservative discourse that justifies Japanese colonialism and imperialism. In recent years, Taiwanese nationalism has also subsumed gay rights issues, which are now proudly displayed as part of Taiwanese homonationalism (Kă, 2018).

According to Puar (2017), homonationalism is not simply a synonym for racism, but also indicates a "historical shift" – that is to say, homonationalism's origins and expansion are tied to a nation-state's transition from a strict adherence to heteronormativity to the inclusion of homonormativity (p. 51). In the present paper, the theoretical framework of homonationalism was used to analyze the mainstream acceptance of Taiwan's LGBT movement. The homonationalistic discourse in Taiwan, sparked by US homonationalism, has gained considerable importance, such as the slogan declaring Taiwan to be "the most LGBT-friendly in Asia." But most crucial, perhaps, is the fact that it – purposefully – does not fully reject US sexual exceptionalism, and instead seeks to assert a Taiwanese version of the concept – hence the stress on "Asia." In short, as demonstrated throughout this paper, Taiwanese homonationalism and LGBT movement adopted US sexual exceptionalism with very few modifications, and they are defined by the nation's self-portrayal as modern and progressive in direct contrast to the "othered" China. The homonationalistic desire of Japanese gay activists to make Japan a queer-friendly nation to be admired in the "world" resonates with the Taiwanese homonationalist discourse through the racialization of Taiwanese and Chinese people and the establishment of racial hierarchies between them.

Puar (2017) critiqued a particular aspect of homonationalism – "pinkwashing" –defining it as the strategic use of LGBT rights to improve the image of a given ad-

ministration. Indeed, Israel's use of pinkwashing was a global PR success, rooted not only in the actions of the individual nation-state, but also in the historical and geopolitical context of the US-led world order in which it was enacted. Likewise, Taiwanese homonationalism did not appear from a vacuum: rather, it emerged from the East Asian order defined by an ideology that Yoneyama (2016) has called the "American Cold War geopolitical imaginary" (p. 85).

6 Conclusion

In an attempt to expand and develop Puar's (2007) conceptual framework of homonationalism in the East Asian geopolitical context, this paper has analyzed the influence of US sexual exceptionalism and homonationalism on Taiwan and Japan. The LGBT movements in Taiwan and Japan have worked to establish collaborative ties in recent years, but underlying this solidarity is the former's hegemonic desires toward Asia and the latter's imperial desires under the post–Cold War world order. This collusion between imperialism and homonationalism allows Japan and Taiwan to be classified as "LGBT-friendly, advanced societies," while simultaneously decrying nations like China as "undeveloped" and "half-savage" in regard to sexuality. This provides an important perspective for understanding the current escalating hostilities between China and the US and its supporters, Japan and Taiwan. Such a discussion also shares a view with a study by Liu and Zhang (2022), who, in a paper titled "Queer Subjectivities and Homotransnationalism Across Sinophone Societies," examine the transnational struggles of LGBTQ groups in their respective societies, highlighting the dynamics of queer politics and competing nationalisms in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Their discussion also points out that Puar's homonationalism bears geopolitical limitations in describing the dynamics of sexuality in a single national context.

US sexual exceptionalism has been supported in post–Cold War East Asia. As discussed in Fukunaga (2022), perceptions of homosexuality in Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan have always referred to external standards – these East Asian societies have transformed their domestic discourses on homosexuality by referring to trends in the US and international human rights norms that have been institutionalized mainly by the United Nations (UN). The US has always occupied a special position in all their LGBT movements. In fact, at the 2019 Seoul Queer Parade, a speech celebrating the 50th anniversary of Stonewall included a reference to the US as "an important starting point for the global queer movement," reflect-

ing the perception of the US as a progressive and exemplary nation in terms of gay rights.[8]

According to Chen Kuan-Hsing (2006), a Taiwanese scholar of inter-Asian cultural studies, the decolonization of East Asia is yet to be realized, as prevailing structures of the Global Cold War and the postwar international order have affected, or continue to affect, East Asia in the post–Cold War era. He also advocated the parallel pursuit of three projects: decolonization, de-imperialization, and de-Cold War in Asia. This paper's approach to examining the politics of sexuality in East Asia in the context of the post–Cold War regime was one attempt to respond to this call.

Since the late 2000s in Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong, the Protestant right, inspired by trends in the US, has led a backlash that has primarily targeted gay rights. Religious studies scholar Nami Kim (2016) cautions, however, that critical interventions against the backlash must be practiced in ways that do not inscribe a colonial–imperialist logic that presents gay rights only as an indicator of modernity or democracy (pp. 82–83). Otherwise, a state that does not support gay rights will be seen as backward, "uncivilized," and undemocratic, thus reinforcing US imperialism, which is secured by sexual exceptionalism. Therefore, we must distance ourselves from discourses that enable disconnection from local politics by identifying gay rights as a marker of civilization. Moreover, it is essential to critically examine how discourses of gay rights or LGBT human rights have developed in the local, national, and global politics of post–Cold War East Asia, and how discourses of sexuality have been linked to nationalism and imperialism.

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8 This quotation is from a speech made in Korean by the MC on a stage set up in Seoul Plaza at the Seoul Queer Parade in South Korea on 9 June 2019.

cieties of East Asia, without which I would not have been able to complete this work.

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