



Taiwan is a true transnational state

The transnational state is a relatively new conception in global affairs, which posits that heightened interconnectivity is reducing the significance of economic, political and social borders, and increasing communication between individuals, states and other groups. In a word, transnationalism refers to the manifold links, relationships and correspondent cultural filaments that couple people and institutions across the borders of nation-states.

The transnational concept is aligned with identity, individuality and from there, how such uniqueness is positioned in truly communal settings (some also speak of historical elements in the transnational, that is, how fluctuations within the history of one country are impacted by developments in others).

We find in nations a responsibility to learn from differences and diversity. This is a point we should all take to heart. I have said it before: As a foreigner living in Taiwan I have been thrust into a new world of difference, and as a certain “other” in this country, I am yet more obligated to make a difference of my own in my interaction and collaboration with Taiwanese. I will do my best, and may we all.

Much of this discussion centers on language and learning and using new languages (“borders, both visible and invisible,” as one analyst has written). Though often uncomfortable, such efforts are essential to construct and illumine new borders and spaces, better suited for understanding other peoples.

In practice, transnationalism refers to increased versatility and incorporation of processes that connect and define individuals, governments and groups of all kinds — businesses, non-governmental organizations, supranational organizations, educational groups, “emergent organizations,” workers’ cooperatives, community assemblies and even criminal organizations — such that they can mobilize effectively beyond state boundaries.

Taiwan can most assuredly see itself in all of these lights, with many transnational/transitional actors having an impact here. Probably one key actor (though not that as such) is the social movements that have rocked Taiwan in the past few years, with their efforts to redefine politics and culture. Such movements are in effect challenging the role of the state in national affairs and bringing citizens into the conversation.

A look at Taiwan in this light is truly enlightening: From the early democracy demonstrations to the Wild Lily Movement, the Wild Strawberry advocates, through the recent successes in LGBT rights, to the Sunflower protests... It has been a very active scene in Taiwan for many, many years.

With Taiwan having shaped the modern world in significant ways, giving so much back, I wrote last year, that this might one day comprise an epic historicity that will match others of the past.

Education is probably one other key area that is having a transnational impact, and here again Taiwan is in the driver’s seat. The nation is no doubt internationalizing its educational methodologies and systems dramatically, and up to 10 percent of all students in Taiwan (more than 100,000) are now from other countries.

I have experienced this just this in my classes, when Indonesian students and those from other SE Asian countries have attended my English conversation classes. Such interaction is a truly wonderful thing for Taiwan.

“There are no easy labels,” wrote one analyst, “but sometimes, it comes down to a conviction that is felt, rather than reasoned out.”

Taiwan, a transnational state in the true sense, with all that can bring to a nation. Reciprocity, sharing, collaboration, exchange, a fluidity and communicative cloverleaf that will take Taiwan into the 21st century in the most rewarding and fruitful ways.

A version of this editorial appeared in the *Taipei Times* on July 2, 2019

Readers, if you have any comments please write and we will publish it next issue. Send to dpendery@ntub.edu.tw.

Taroko train crash one of nation's worst

By staff writer Jolie Li



Eight-car train , traveling to Taitung, came off the rails in a tunnel just north of Hualien

A train crash in Taiwan on the morning of April 2 is currently receiving world media attention for its seriousness. The death toll of the train crash, 50, including the train driver, is the worst on Taiwan's railways in nearly four decades.

More than 200 people were injured (two passengers from Japan, two from Australia and one from Macau) when a Taroko express train carrying 498 people derailed inside a tunnel after striking a truck that had rolled onto the track, just north of Hualien city on the island's east coast.

Investigators said the train hit the truck that had slipped down an embankment from a maintenance area above the rail line. They are now seeking to determine if there was a mechanical failure or if the driver of the truck failed to engage the parking brake. Officials also reportedly said it wasn't clear why there were any maintenance workers at the site on Friday, which was a public holiday.

A priest, Sung Chih-chiang, told Reuters what surviving passenger Chung Hui-mei told him. "She could not find her daughter. When she yelled, she found her daughter was under the steel panels. She put her ef-

fort to move those pieces one by one, but her daughter's voice became quieter and quieter, and then there was no response," he said. "My whole body fell to the floor of the train," said one rescued woman.

Taiwan's most recent serious train accident was in October 2018. At that time, a high-speed train with 366 passengers was pulled off the track in the Yilan district. Eighteen people died and 168 were injured. According to an investigation report released by local media, the train was traveling at a speed of 140km/h at the time, but was only allowed a maximum speed of 75km/h. The train driver is said to have turned off the automatic speed control system, which resulted in the train traveling too fast.

Before that, the train accident that is said to have been the most catastrophic in Taiwan occurred in 1948. Sixty-four people were estimated to have died when a train burst into flames in northern Taiwan.

For this accident, Taiwan's government announced compensation for the victims' families, and arranged for virus quarantine exemptions for family members overseas

who wished to return to Taiwan for funerals.

In addition, the construction vehicle driver who was initially released on \$500,000 NT bail is being detained on the grounds that he may try to escape, collude with others, or destroy evidence. The governments of China and Japan have sent their condolences to the families of the victims in the accident and announced their willingness to assist Taiwan if the country requests it.

Although rail transport in Taiwan is not as important as in years past, rail transport is still vital for shipping in Taiwan, due to the nation's increasing population density. In 2016, more than 1.09 billion passengers traveled by rail in Taiwan, averaging 2.99 million passengers per day. Train accidents are an undesirable outcome, but sometimes unavoidable.

The manager of the construction site from which the truck rolled, Lee Yi-hsiang, 49, said he was "deeply remorseful" and wanted to give his "most sincere apologies".

Art and other material by <https://toiodailoan.com>, <https://www.bbc.com/vietnamese/>, <https://vi.m.wikipedia.org/>, <https://news.yahoo.com/>.