

**THE NEW TAIWANESE IDENTITY:  
IMPLICATIONS AND  
CHALLENGES**

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## **Executive Summary**

1. In the recent decades, a new Taiwanese identity shaped largely by political and cultural factors has emerged. Politics led and shaped the identity construction process during the Kuomintang (KMT or Nationalist Party) authoritarian rule.
2. The KMT government initiated various programmes to fortify its credence as the heir to traditional Chinese culture. Geographical insularity also nourished the Taiwanese identity before it gained historical and social momentum.
3. Democratisation that culminated in the late 1980s brought positive impacts on identity reconfiguration by re-organising societal stratification and lessening institutional rigidity caused by political interference. It also enables identity reconfiguration to be proceeded in an inclusive manner.
4. Multiculturalism has played a significant role in identity formation in the post-democratisation era. It promotes equality amidst lingering hierarchical discrimination and help secure an equal status for various groups in policymaking.
5. In 1997, the aboriginal people in Taiwan asked for constitutional amendments to protect their rights. Among the three major groups, only the mainland Chinese group showed strong resistance to this multiculturalism concept for fear of losing their previous advantages.
6. The Chen Shui-bian administration (2000-2008) used multiculturalism as a political tactic to boost public approval rates and mitigate against backlashes because of corruption scandals and domestic mal-governance.
7. Several incidents in 2001, 2005 and 2007 provided evidences of overt inter-connection between politics and identity reconfiguration.
8. The Ma Ying-jeou administration (2008-2016) had followed this multiculturalism approach and revitalised the Chinese cultural factor in the identity reconfiguration.

Ma however failed to clarify the relations between Taiwanese Chinese culture (his proposal) and Chinese culture in the Mainland.

9. The Tsai Ing-wen administration also follows this multiculturalism discourse. Society also shows solid support for deepening identity reconfiguration based on this approach.
10. The challenges lie with the objective re-evaluation of the Chinese cultural factor in subsequent identity reconfiguration, and the threat of dwindling economic development and the thus-triggered xenophobic sentiments.