

Taiwan's Claim to Multiculturalism before and after 2008: The Impact of Changing Ruling Parties on Immigration Policies

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Over the last ten years immigration has gone from being a marginal to an increasingly salient feature in Taiwan's political scene. This trend has been reinforced by the growing number of spouses and their children who have become citizens and thus gain full political rights. Migrant spouses and their families have now become a major political constituency that parties and politicians can no longer ignore.

A central condition often raised for a country becoming a consolidated democracy is that it has experienced and survived changes in ruling parties through elections. Clearly Taiwan satisfies this condition, but what interests us here is whether the changes in ruling parties have actually had a significant impact of Taiwan's immigrant community. During election campaigns parties appeal to voters through enticing electoral promises and also warn supporters of the dangers of the opposing party staying in office or coming to power. However, experience shows though that changes in ruling party often result in far more continuity than change.

The term multi-culturalism has been highly fashionable in Taiwan for political elites regardless of partisan affiliation since the late 1990s. Issues related to migration policy and treatment of new Taiwanese has increasingly been debated in and between election campaigns in Taiwan. Thus in this paper we are interested in examining whether the changes in ruling parties in 2008 have actually strengthened Taiwan's claim to be a promoter of multi-culturalism. We are aiming to build on research published in 2004 and 2006 that examined continuity and change during the KMT and DPP eras (Fell, Klöter and Chang).