

Party Politics in Taiwan Revisited

Dafydd Fell

SOAS, Department of Politics and International Studies,
University of London, UK

In 2005 I published my first book *Party Politics in Taiwan* (Routledge). The book examined party change in the first decade of Taiwan's multi-party politics. I attempted to measure how Taiwan's parties had adjusted their issue emphasis and positions on the core dimensions of national identity, social welfare and political corruption. Having tracked change, the book then used a range of data to try to explain what forces were driving patterns of party continuity and change. The book argued that democracy was working in Taiwan, in that party competition involved what I termed moderate differentiation of parties and led to tangible improvements in policy areas such as social welfare and political corruption. Ten years later seems to be an appropriate time to revisit my earlier research, especially as some of the core findings have been challenged in the light of developments since 2004. In this paper I consider whether we have seen radical changes in the dominant issues, the direction of party issue change and the dynamics that are driving change. I also reassess the methodological approaches that are best suited to measuring party change. Lastly, the book offers the opportunity to revisit the debate over the quality of Taiwan's democratic party politics. In other words, can we still say democracy is working in Taiwan?