

Reconsidering Democratization in Taiwan

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Taiwan's democratization is important for a variety of reasons. First, democratization in Asia has been rare. In terms of consolidated democracies in Asia, only four exist: India, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. Other places such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Mongolia have yet to consolidate their democracies. The recent coup in Thailand demonstrates that these new democracies remain quite fragile.

Second, democratization has given Taiwan enormous diplomatic strength among the key democracies of the world including the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the European countries. While these countries maintain a formal "one China" policy, in fact they have implemented *de facto* "one China, one Taiwan" foreign policies with substantial representation in Taipei and permitting Taiwan to have substantial representation in their countries. Taiwan has become an important diplomatic posting. For example, Kevin Magee, the past Australian representative in Taiwan, was the Australian ambassador to Saudi Arabia, a critical post. Mr Magee made Taiwan his first choice for his next posting. Such demand for posting in Taiwan is now quite widespread among the foreign services of various democracies.

In addition, democratization has established very strong roots in Taiwan. Despite less than ideal governmental performance in the fourteen years since 2000, virtually no one in Taiwan wishes to return to authoritarianism.

Despite a considerable literature on Taiwan's democratization, some key analyses continue to have a voice despite strong evidence that they lack merit. Thus, my own *Democratizing Taiwan* demonstrates that Chiang Ching-kuo did *not* begin Taiwan's democratization process even though he did liberalize in the early 1970s and late 1980s before his death. However, when Chiang Ching-kuo died, Taiwan's population could not vote for even half of the central parliamentarians, nor could they vote for president and Mainlanders continued to dominate the government.

My paper to the Second World Congress considers three major topics related to democratization. First, the paper asks whether Chiang Ching-kuo commenced Taiwan's democratization and conclusively concludes that he did not. Second, the

Panel 6 Democracy and Democratization

paper considers some recent research on Taiwan's democratization. Finally, the paper examines whether or not the Sunflower movement fundamentally altered Taiwan's politics and concludes that, while the Sunflowers helped mobilized people in Taiwan opposed to the Ma Ying-jeou government's policies, the Sunflowers in themselves did not fundamentally change Taiwan's political system.