



Review of Taiwan: A Contested Democracy under Threat, 2024

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This book about Taiwan is co-authored by Jonathan Sullivan, Associate Professor in the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham and previously Director of the China Policy Institute. His co-author is Lev Nachman, an Assistant Professor in the College of Social Science at National Chengchi University in Taipei and a Non-Resident Fellow at the Atlantic Council and the National Bureau of Asia Research. The authors have written a book that is informative to both experienced scholars and new scholars who have a focus concerning issues about Taiwan. Given that Taiwan is so much in the news during these current times, it is nice for any reader to have a comprehensive and easy to understand book on the subject.

The Qing Dynasty, with its capital in Beijing, took control of Taiwan in the 1684 (p. 17). In 1911, disillusioned with the failing Qing dynasty, Sun Yat-sen founded the Republic of China (ROC), a place where Sun thought should have Chinese values (p.21). Even with the Japanese temporary holding of Taiwan, from 1895 through the World War II era, Taiwan remained largely culturally Chinese (pp. 21 – 22). The KMT (*Kuomintang*) is the Chinese Nationalist Party that came from Mainland China to Taiwan, as Mao took over the Mainland of China. It has advocated a close relationship to Mainland China (p. 149). Furthermore, the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) was founded during Taiwan's democratization, in creating a party that advocates Taiwanese sovereignty (p. 149). The third major party, the NNP (New Power Party) was founded by certain activists after the 2014 Sunflower Movement. This party is unequivocally pro-independence. In the past has allied with the DPP, but currently is more critical of the DPP (p.149). The Sunflower movement was a protest movement against the CSSTA (Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement), which some Taiwanese viewed as a trade agreement to be unequal with the PRC benefiting more than Taiwan (p.44). Eventually both the KMT and the DPP agreed to shelve the proposed legislation (p. 44).

It should be pointed out that the geographical term "Taiwan," refers to the largest of four islands under the jurisdiction of the ROC. The other three islands under the ROC are Kinmen, Penghu and Matsu (p. 49). "Empirically speaking the ROC is a discrete, functionally autonomous, liberal democratic polity that is de facto independent" (p. 49). However, there are some important caveats in discussing this. The ROC has its own currency, military, political system, and taxes. There is some foreign policy allowed "within parameters that are affected by its disputed status" (p. 49). If genuine statehood is required for membership in an international organization, the ROC cannot participate in that organization (p. 49). In fact, the PRC tries to "influence what Taiwan can do informally" (p. 49).

There are important economic ties between Mainland China and Taiwan.

The most important trade partner of Taiwan is Mainland China. The volume of trade between Mainland China and Taiwan greatly exceeds that of the trade between the United States and China. Also many Taiwanese business people reside more or less in Mainland China (p.71). The vast semiconductor manufacturing industry in Taiwan exports to many countries throughout the World (pp.119 - 123).

Numerous diplomatic agreements have been made between China and the United States regarding Taiwan. In sum, they recognize that Taiwan is a part of China (pp. 79 – 113). The degree of Taiwanese autonomy with the requirement of Taiwan being part of China has been debated in great detail for years. The authors of this book go into great detail about how terms are defined by the Taiwanese, China, and America. There are some differences and the book goes into great detail about these differences.

The reader can sense the gravity of the situation where some people Taiwan is to remain part of China through any means short of armed conflict. A war over Taiwan would not be good for Taiwan or anyone else. The reader of this book will probably

experience the strong desire of the authors for a peaceful solution to recognizing Taiwan's unique position in global politics.¹

(!) Various proposals about the status of Taiwan exist. Naturally Taiwanese examine how Hong Kong has been treated by Mainland China. Hong Kong had a special political arrangement with Mainland China. Many policy analysts believe that Mainland

China did not fully honor the agreement. If the reader of this book review could consult this article by Gentle (2022), the reader, could ascertain the situation. Gentle, Paul F. (2022) "The Loss of the Special Trade relationship between the U.S. and Hong Kong" *SocioEconomic Challenges*, 6, (2): pp. 67 – 82.