

# Perspectives of the 21st Century Taiwan

## 二十一世紀臺灣



Dr. Ng lectures on Taiwan



21st century Taiwan faces many challenges. The future of Taiwan will be fascinating to watch!

Dr. Wing Chung Ng, UTSA

On Tuesday, November 26th, 2013 the East Asia Institute (EAI) hosted Dr. Wing Ching Ng, Professor of History at UTSA for a lecture entitled "Perspectives of 21st Century Taiwan". This event was made possible due to a generous grant from the Taiwan Academy. The room was packed with 50 eager participants. Dr. Ng's lecture was the final installment of the EAI's Taiwan Series.

Ng's presentation was over the perspectives of 21st century Taiwan, much like the title of the event. However, one cannot just jump into the topic. He began his lecture talking about the history that led up to modern day Taiwan.

The first event he covered was the Frontier Society of Qing China, 1683. Many Chinese natives migrated from Fujian and Guangdong to a small island, now called Taiwan.

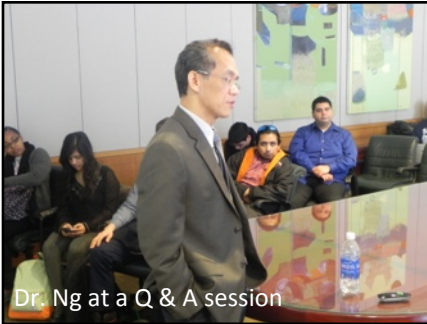
The next point of history covered the 1895-1945 Japanese colonial rule over Taiwan. This was seen as a formal separation from Mainland China. The Japanese rulers forced acculturation through Colonial education. Due to the acculturation, the culture of Taiwan evolved through native speeches, popular entertainment, folk religions, and even the traditional practices. This period was a huge forging era in Taiwanese culture



Taipei 101 Building

and identity.

The Taiwanese Cold War was brought up which was followed by the 2-28 Incident, an anti-government uprising in Taiwan that began on February 27, 1947 which was violently suppressed by the Kuomintang-led government and resulted in the massacre of 10,000 to 30,000 civilians,



Dr. Ng at a Q &amp; A session



A participant asks a question

beginning on February 28, or 2/28. The incident marked the beginning of the Kuomintang's period in Taiwan led by Chiang Kai-shek who retreated to Taiwan from Mainland China. The defeated Chiang Kai-shek ruled the island securely as President of the Republic of China. During this period, the way Chiang Kai-shek's government managed Taiwan made the Taiwanese people the second-class citizens in their own land once again.

Ng also mentioned the economic development of the land and industrialization. He talked about the Four Little Dragons (Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore) of the late 1970s. These four little countries have tied with Europe and the United States as a pillar of modern industrial world order. This led into the beginning of New Taiwan in the late 1980s and the Second Economic Miracle.

Economic Miracle II, as some would call it, introduced the "Silicon Island," started by Morris Chang, who founded Taiwan

Semiconductor Manufacturing Company in 1987. This company pioneered the dedicated silicon foundry industry and is the largest foundry in the world. Additionally, this help proved that Taiwan had high economic standing, not only in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but in foreign reserve as well. With new found economic power, Taiwan has reached out to China and improved in cross-strait relations. Taiwan even aided China's own economic reform, especially in the aftermath of 1989.

Ng also spoke about the Missile Crisis, which was the effect of a series of missile tests conducted by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the waters surrounding Taiwan including the Taiwan Strait from July 21, 1995 to March 23, 1996. The first set of missiles fired in mid-to-late 1995 were allegedly intended to send a strong signal to the Republic of China (ROC) government under Lee Teng-hui, who had been seen as moving ROC foreign policy away from the One-China policy. The second set of missiles were fired in early 1996, allegedly intending to intimidate the Taiwanese electorate in the run-up to the 1996 presidential election. In 2000, a huge historical moment took place where Democratic Progressive Party's (DDP) Chen Shui-bian and Annette Lu won the election.

Ng told the audience that the 21st century is faced with many challenges. First of all, Chen's minority DDP government is handicapped by inexperience. In addition, it is also facing heavy political gridlock and even a corruption scandal. To make matters worse, the economy has become sluggish. Due to many jobs being outsourced, the workforce is

hollowing out. Even the IT industry is facing trouble. Even the budding cross-strait relations with China has fallen into a hard freeze.

Ng pointed out that Taiwan ranked 14 on the list of where to be born list, while the US ranked 16 according to the index of which country will provide the best opportunities for a healthy, safe and prosperous life in the year 2013.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Ng opened up the floor for questions. Many questions were asked. "I know that Taiwan is expanding rapidly. Is there any concern about running out of space?" one student boldly asked. "I know size is always a concern, especially for people from Texas," Dr. Ng started his response with a slight joke based on a popular Texas catchphrase. "But Taiwan hasn't reached that point yet. After all, the island is pretty big. When the time comes, Taiwan might take a page from Singapore and start expanding upwards."

Another question asked was "What is the wealth gap in Taiwan?" Ng invited Dr. Thomas Bellows, Professor of Political Science at UTSA who also attended the lecture to answer this question. Dr. Bellows said, "Just like the wealth gap in the advanced countries, the wealth gap in Taiwan is wide..." The event ended with everyone leaving the lecture, discussing amongst themselves about what they have just learned with Dr. Ng's intriguing voice saying, "The future of Taiwan will be fascinating to watch!"

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