I have been to Taiwan six times, but unfortunately not to Thailand at all, but I promise to do better next time!

I would like to highlight some of the things that I found particularly interesting from both papers, and particularly interesting to South Africans in our stage of democratisation and then I would like to add my own thoughts. Some of the things I will say will be a little controversial, but that is the role of an academic in society.

On the paper on Taiwan, thank you very professor for that very interesting overview.

Obviously to endure, you need economic growth. That come out of your paper. That is an issue in Africa that we need to take note of. We demand democracy in Africa, but often if we do not have economic growth, it may be impossible.

I myself think that democracy is an expensive process. I don not think that poor countries can afford it.

I think that in some cases you mentioned there is too much democracy in Taiwan with 80 political parties. That is a disease we have in South Africa. We have too much democracy, too much debate. You never get anything done if you give 80 political parties a chance to speak; you probably will not achieve anything in their timeframe.

I believe that in your elections you have a group called the Purple Group, who actually spoil their ballot papers. They do not even vote at all. That is unique. You have people who refuse to vote, even though there are 80 choices in your country. They have told me that there is no party in Taiwan that they want to vote for. Even where they have 80, they are still unhappy. That is an unusual situation and perhaps there is too much democracy.

I like the argument that civil society can actually set the agenda. I think that is what civil society is supposed to do. I do not think we should always allow politicians to set the agenda. Democracy demands that civil society be involved in this process.

I like the suggestion that the firm control of the defence budget in Taiwan has undermined the role of the military, which is, of course, essential in any democracy. That is a good lesson for all of us on our continent, to limit the role of the military, perhaps through budgetary controls.

It is very interesting too that you mentioned that 44% of the people on the island now consider themselves Taiwanese, as opposed to a mixture of Chinese and Taiwanese. Now they have true democracy, the ability to express their true feelings, which is a very welcome development.
The two things I was looking for in your paper, which I hope you will include in your next one, is firstly how democracy has progressed in Hong Kong and how that could impact on Taiwan’s thinking. Of course, the progress has not been good in Hong Kong.

And then, secondly, some suggestions on democracy in China, because that is our biggest project. If we want to prevail over the long term, there are 1.3 billion people who need to vote sometime soon, hopefully within the next two decades. We want to see democracy in China. That is the true challenge for all of us in this field.

Thank you for your presentation on Thailand, Doctor. Very interesting. I see 20 military take-overs and 18 constitutions. Obviously, if we want to learn about that, that is the place to go! You have had as may constitutions as Taiwan has political parties!

I found it very interesting that you said you felt the most important thing is who will be the next king in Thailand. In South Africa we have exactly the same question. We do not call him a king, though. We call him the leader of the ANC, because that will determine our future. We all wonder who will succeed Thabo Mbeki as our next leader. We know there will be an election, but we do not know who the next king will be.

You said the relationship between the king and the military is important. For us the relationship between the king and economic policy would be the crisis for us. So that is what we await with anticipation in the future – our next ANC leader and his or her economic policy. So we have similar problems to what you have.

I think heard correctly that you said that for one US dollar you can get health care in Thailand. I will definitely visit Thailand when I am feeling unwell, because Taiwan is much more expensive, I know!

I agree with you that the military is probably not the best instrument with which you promote democracy. They have a military take-over; they try to promote constitutional democracy and then three to five years later they do the same again.

In concluding, let me add five thoughts from myself.

- Mr Park Chung-hee. South Korea achieved enormous economic growth under Mr Park. He was not a democratic; he was a military commander.
- We think of Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore. I am not sure he was too democratic.
- Mr Chiang Kai-Shek in Taiwan was not a democratic leader and we saw enormous economic growth in Taiwan.
- And Mr Deng Xiaoping was the father of China’s economic programme.

I do not think any of them spent much time thinking about democracy, but they produced tremendous economic results. To make it a little controversial, maybe too much democracy does not promote economic growth. Maybe we need a little more strong, firm
leadership if we want to get that 10 per cent growth here. That is for debate. You do not have to agree with me!

The World Bank suggests when we reach an annual per capita income of US$7000 that is the right moment for democracy. So if countries do not earn per annum per capita we probably cannot afford democracy. If I may say, that is one of the key problems in Africa. We just do not have the money, the resources, to be successful democracies. As I said earlier, democracy is an expensive process.

Very importantly for South Africa, the lessons we have to take from the presentations, from our own discussions and thoughts, is how we consolidate democracy. That is the key in this process. Everyone knows how to conduct an election. Thereafter the next ten years are critical and if I may, I would suggest in the case of Taiwan, how you consolidated democracy was that the ruling party lost the presidential election in 2000, with the DPP under Chen Shui-bian winning. So when the opposition party overcomes the dominant political force, that is the proof of democracy in a particular country. The same applied to South Korea. When Mr Kim Dae-Jung took power, that was proof of democracy. The opposition party is crucial in this process. The standing party must fear replacement by the opposition. Otherwise you really do not have a democracy.

The last point I would raise is that democracy is a process, not an event. It is not just an election where everyone is satisfied. It is an on-going, evolutionary process and it is critical that civil society play a very leading role in that process.

Thank you to the speakers for coming all this distance. We hope to visit you soon. We hope the next conference by SAIIA will be much closer to your side of the world!

Thank you very much.