

**TAIWAN'S NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT
TSAI ING-WEN: FACING FORMIDABLE
PROBLEMS, CHALLENGES
AND DILEMMAS**

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Executive Summary

1. In January 2016 Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairwoman Tsai Ing-wen won Taiwan's presidential election. Her party prevailed in the concurrent legislative election.
2. Both victories were big. President Tsai has a clear mandate. Nonetheless, Tsai's presidency faces very serious, intractable issues.
3. Tsai's victory, as well as that of her party, can best be explained by the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT) and President Ma Ying-jeou's failures and their unpopular branding.
4. Tsai did not win the election based on an agenda of policies that were notably rational, feasible, or promising, though they did have resonance with voters.
5. Tsai studiously avoided radioactive (to her efforts to win votes) political issues: former President Chen Shui-bian, the 92 Consensus, One-China and independence.
6. Tsai's cross-Strait or China policy was pointedly vague. She advocated maintaining the status quo, but did not elaborate and added qualifiers.
7. Tsai's supporters (and voters) and most members of the DPP favour Taiwan's independence. President Tsai's support base may well harm relations with China and the United States.
8. President Tsai's pitch for fixing the economy during the campaign does not accord with what needs to be done now. Taiwan's diplomacy and its military policies face similar problems.
9. Handling these matters in a functional and effective way requires cordial relations with China, which will likely prove difficult.

10. Many observers feel that Tsai became president and the DPP the ruling party at a very inauspicious time. Worse Tsai will be at odds with her party in trying to govern and deal effectively with problems Taiwan faces.