

**TWO YEARS IN OPPOSITION: TAIWAN'S
DEMOCRATIC PROGRESSIVE PARTY
MOVES FROM DEFEAT TO REVIVAL?**

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EAI Background Brief No. 567

Date of Publication: 8 October 2010

Executive Summary

1. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of Taiwan, after eight years in power, lost the legislative and presidential elections in early 2008. It was then severely troubled by corruption scandals, factional conflicts and over-radicalization of its pro-dependence stance.
2. A former senior government official, Tsai Ing-wen, who had worked for both the Kuomintang (KMT) and the DPP administrations since the early 1990s, was elected the DPP's chairwoman in May 2008.
3. For a long time, there have been two general factions – the radical and the moderate – on Taiwan's independence issues in the DPP. While the radicals had dominated the party under the leadership of former President Chen Shui-bian, Tsai is believed to be a moderate.
4. Tsai managed to skillfully tackle the embarrassing relations between the DPP and Chen Shui-bian who was then accused of serious corruption, and maintained the general solidarity of the radicals and the moderates in the party.
5. Tsai initiated a series of reforms to minimize Chen's negative legacy in the party such as corruption practices and the radicals' dominance. The independence and power of the DPP's Anti-corruption Committee was significantly improved to curb party members' corruption practices.
6. To reduce the radicals' dominance in the party, the DPP thoroughly reformed its nomination procedures for important elections. The DPP membership was also under the new leadership's close supervision to minimize "dummy members."
7. On the other hand, the Ma Ying-jeou administration failed to improve Taiwan's economy by the end of 2009 and was severely criticized by the public for its mishandling of some important national issues.

8. The DPP achieved four consecutive electoral victories in 2009 and early 2010; additionally, Tsai was re-elected as the DPP's chairwoman with a greatly improved vote margin. Both cases show a strong sign of the DPP's revival.
9. The debate between the DPP and the KMT on Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) demonstrated the two parties' divergent vision and strategic thinking about the future of Taiwan. Pro-independence and progressiveness will be two important elements in the DPP's Ten-Year Manifesto, its policy agenda for Taiwan.
10. The remaining two years before the presidential election in early 2012 will not be less challenging for the DPP as the performance of the Ma administration has improved in 2010 and is expected to be even better after ECFA became effective on 12 September 2010.
11. Other urgent challenges facing the DPP include its undetermined policy agenda for Taiwan and some important local executives' resistance against the party due to their failed nomination for the year-end five special municipalities election.