

**TAIWAN POLITICS 2019/2020:
TSAI ING-WEN'S POLITICAL
COMEBACK**

QI Dongtao

EAI Background Brief No. 1501

Date of Publication: 13 February 2020

Executive Summary

1. Taiwan held its 15th presidential and 10th legislative elections on 11 January 2020. Incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was re-elected, with a clean sweep of 8.17 (57.1%) million votes. The DPP also maintained its majority in the Legislative Yuan with 54% of the seats (61 out of 113 seats).
2. In her second term, Tsai may be more assertive and proactive in dealing with various issues backed by the DPP-controlled Legislative Yuan. Economy and national security are likely to be her top priorities.
3. With the anticipation that Tsai will not radically pursue independence, Beijing is likely to be more concerned about how Washington will work with Taipei to contain China, particularly in incorporating Taiwan into its Indo-Pacific strategy against China.
4. The perspective of adaptability suggests that the political party with higher adaptability can identify advantages and disadvantages created by the changing environment, and maximise advantages and minimise disadvantages to win the political competition.
5. Tsai and the DPP minimised their internal disadvantages by not promoting highly controversial policies, reconnecting with young voters and shifting public attention from economic issues to security ones.
6. They also successfully played up on the sense of a national security crisis by maximising on the external advantage of the China factor. Chinese President Xi Jinping's January speech on Taiwan and the Hong Kong protests were effectively used to build up this sense of crisis, particularly among young voters.

7. In contrast, the KMT (Kuomintang) presidential candidate, Han Kuo-yu, turned his internal advantages, such as his role as Kaohsiung mayor, into disadvantages, and failed to minimise his disadvantage on cross-Strait relations.
8. In the short term, Taipei, Beijing and Washington will most likely continue with their 2019 strategies in 2020, while Taipei and Beijing could adopt a tougher stance towards each other.