
TSAI ING-WEN SET FOR VICTORY IN TAIWAN

-

09.01.2020

Foreign Policy (8 January 2020)

Taiwanese voters go to the polls on Saturday in the most contentious elections since Taiwans transition to democracy. Incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen has made the election into a referendum on Taiwans identity, painting her opponents as ready to hand the self-ruled island to Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Victory for Tsai now seems certain. She is consistently polling at over 50 percent, while her primary challenger, the onetime rising star Han Kuo-yu, lingers at around 15 percent. In recent months, fortunes have changed for Tsais Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which suffered a serious defeat in 2018 local elections. Even in August, Tsai was barely ahead of Han, but support for her has risen as his polling numbers have crashed.

In large part, thats because of Chinas response to the democracy movement in Hong Kong. Tsais DPP is ardently anti-Beijing. The main opposition party, Kuomintang (KMT), is increasingly associated with pro-China policy [] its origins on the mainland as the Chinese Communist Partys foe. The mainland attitude toward Hong Kong has hurt the case for reconciliation between China and Taiwan: The DPPs most recent advertisement plays to this, explicitly linking Taiwans cause with Hong Kongs.

Economic concerns. Han has argued that Taiwans economic prospects will be threatened if it remains hostile to mainland China. Initially, that worked with voters, but Taiwans relatively prosperous economy and record-low unemployment have worked against the narrative. Han, meanwhile, faces accusations that he has been surreptitiously aided by the mainland from the start. Concerns over Chinese influence have been a major part of the election, with the DPP blaming the KMT for disinformation campaigns.

Failed policy. Tsais likely victory will deal another blow to the Chinese Communist Partys long-term strategy of one country, two systems: the idea that Taiwan could nominally accept Beijings authority while retaining its own laws for a period, as with Hong Kong and Macao. Beijings soft sell has failed, but the mainland obsession with Taiwans so-called return to China wont go away. Military options may even start to look more palatable.

Read more at: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/08/taiwan-election-identity-tsai-ing-wen-china-disinformation/>

Kaynak/Source: