

Taiwanese re-elected President Tsai Ing-wen by a landslide on Saturday, a stern rebuke to China which has tried both military threats and economic inducements to get the island to accept its rule and potentially ushering in further tension with Beijing.

China and the months of anti-government unrest in Chinese-ruled Hong Kong took centre stage in the campaign. Tsai held out Taiwan as a beacon of hope for protesters in the former British colony, and firmly rejected Beijing's offer to Taiwan of the "one country, two systems" model.

[China claims Taiwan](#) as its sacred territory, to be taken by force if needed, a threat Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated year ago, though said he preferred a peaceful solution.

"[One country, two systems](#)," which provides for a high degree of autonomy, much as Beijing uses in Hong Kong, has never been popular in Taiwan and is even less so now after the months of protests in Hong Kong.

China made itself even more unpopular in Taiwan in the run-up to the election by twice sailing its newest aircraft carrier through the sensitive Taiwan Strait, denounced by Taipei as an effort at military intimidation.

"We hope that the Beijing authorities can understand that a democratic Taiwan with a government chosen by the people will not give in to threats and intimidation," Tsai told reporters after her victory.

Beijing needs to understand the will of Taiwan's people, and that only Taiwan's people can decide its future, she added.

Underscoring the scale of her victory, Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party also won a majority in parliament.

Tsai beat her main opponent Han Kuo-yu of the Kuomintang party, which favours close ties with China, by more than 2.6 million votes.

The United States, Taiwan's strongest international backer and main arms supplier congratulated Tsai, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo calling Taiwan a "force for good in the world".

The U.S. congratulates Dr. Tsai Ing-wen on her re-election in [#Taiwan's](#) presidential election. Taiwan once again demonstrates the strength of its robust democratic system. Thank you President Tsai for your leadership in developing a strong U.S. partnership.

— Secretary Pompeo (@SecPompeo) [January 11, 2020](#)

“The United States thanks to President Tsai for her leadership in developing a strong partnership with the United States and applauds her commitment to maintaining cross-Strait stability in the face of unrelenting pressure,” Pompeo said in a statement.

## Landslide Win



Taiwanese celebrating Tsai Ing-Wen's victory in Taipei/AP

In total Tsai won almost 8.2 million votes, more than any Taiwan president before since the island held its first direct presidential election in 1996.

Speaking in the southern city of Kaoshiung where he is mayor, Han, who had to fend off constant accusations from Tsai on the campaign trail that he and his party were puppets of Beijing, said he had called Tsai to offer his congratulations.

“No matter what happens, I still hope to see a united Taiwan after we wake up,” Han said, accompanied by a swell of mournful music on stage. “I urge President Tsai Ing-wen to focus on giving people a life where they can live safely and happily.”

Han did not mention China in his concession speech and cancelled a planned news conference.

He had said Taiwan could only be safe and prosperous if it had good relations with Beijing.

“People have been stirred up by the Hong Kong situation and that deceived many people into voting for Tsai,” said Han supporter Huang Lu-lu, 38, clutching a Taiwan at what was supposed to be a victory rally for Han in Kaohsiung.

After his brief speech, the glum crowds dispersed some crying.

## Chinese Reaction

There was no immediate reaction to Tsai's re-election from China, which cut off a dialogue mechanism when she took office in 2016 and has regularly [flown bombers](#) near the island since.

China believes Tsai wants to push for the Republic of Taiwan, a red line for Beijing. Tsai says Taiwan is already an independent country called the Republic of China.

Chinese state news agency Xinhua noted Han's loss and Tsai's victory. There was some criticism on China's Twitter-like Weibo site at China's Taiwan Affairs Office's failure to win over the island.

Tsai's win is all the more embarrassing for China because it follows another landslide victory, in November, for pro-democracy candidates in Hong Kong in district council elections after residents turned out in record numbers.

“I believe friends in Hong Kong will be happy about our collective decision tonight,” Tsai said.

Prominent pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong tweeted that Tsai's victory was a “precious

moment" for the people of Hong Kong.

"Today is the day for the majority of Taiwanese to choose their fate, to safeguard their democracy and freedoms, and most importantly, to say no to CCP's authoritarian invasion," he wrote in English, referring to China's Communist Party.

Taiwanese are broadly sympathetic to the protesters in Hong Kong, an Asian financial hub.

"I saw what's happening in Hong Kong and it's horrible," said first-time voter Stacey Lin, 20. "I just want to make sure I have the freedom to vote in the future."

Speaking in Taipei, the capital, Lin said she had voted for Tsai. "She is the best among all the candidates to protect our democracy," Lin added.

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