

Tomorrow, president-elect Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) is to be sworn in as the nation's president. Officially, she will become president of the Republic of China (ROC). However, the world will know her as the president of Taiwan. The occasion represents a fresh start in many ways — for she is also the nation's first female head of state.

On May 20, 1996, then-president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) started his second term as president, this time as the first directly elected ROC president. It was the beginning of a new epoch for Taiwan, the democratic era born of the “silent revolution.”

Four years later, on May 20, 2000, Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) was inaugurated as president, overseeing Taiwan's first post-war period transfer of political power and bringing the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) into government. Chen secured a second term, but it was hardly plain sailing: the “one country on each side” of the Taiwan Strait concept he proposed in 2002 was quite at odds with the “four noes and one without” assurances he had made in his 2000 inaugural address.

The year 2008 saw President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) restore the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) to power, and despite being elected for a second term in 2012, his administration made all too apparent the fact that the KMT is essentially a foreign regime, which led to the party's recent implosion.

Tsai has resurrected the DPP. True, she failed in her bid for the presidency in 2012, but this year's elections saw her party savaging the KMT, winning not only the presidency, but a legislative majority as well.

The KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) are forces obstructing the development of Taiwan's democracy; both will be keeping an eye on the new government, united in their views on what China is. One can imagine how difficult things will be for Tsai and the DPP.

With Tsai's inauguration tomorrow, it will not only be Taiwanese waiting with anticipation for what she will say in her address: the governments and peoples of many countries around the world will be watching to see in what political direction she intends to take the country. The

Working together to create a new society

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People's Republic of China (PRC) will certainly be scrutinizing her every word.

This is to be the DPP's second stab at governing. It might take two terms of a Tsai administration, with the KMT consigned to opposition, for Taiwanese politics to settle down. However, it is crucial that Tsai builds upon what has gone before, while also taking the nation in a new direction.

Yes, Tsai needs to proceed with caution and not upset the applecart too much. She absolutely cannot allow herself to make the same mistakes Chen did in his 2000 inaugural address, when he made the "four noes and one without" assurances.

She needs to be soft yet resolute, and in her address she needs to express Taiwan's aspirations for prosperous development and for furthering freedom and justice. Caught between the KMT and the CCP, the 23 million people in this country simply seek the normalization of their small yet beautiful nation. How could the world deny them that?

Lee was a symbol of the intellectual elite emerging from the flames of Japanese colonial rule. Chen was born in the post-war period and represented a local, Taiwanese force emboldened by and emerging from the Kaohsiung Incident. Tsai, also born in the post-war period, is less shackled to the Kaohsiung Incident and represents the next generation.

Now is the time for everyone in this nation, irrespective of their roots or where their families originally came from, to work together to rebuild this nation and to create a new society. Now is the time for Taiwan to have new national aspirations, working toward a new vision of society.

Lee Min-yung is a poet.

Translated by Paul Cooper

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