

**THE 2011 HONG KONG DISTRICT  
COUNCIL ELECTION:  
A NEW POLITICAL LANDSCAPE?**

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## **Executive Summary**

1. On 4 November 2011, 1.2 million voters, or 41% of the electorate, turned out to vote in Hong Kong's District Council (DC) election.
2. Conducted every four years, the DC election is among the three major elections in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. DCs advise the government on community matters in the district under their jurisdiction and organize community activities.
3. Pro-Beijing and pro-establishment candidates increase their share of seats from the last election in 2007, winning 43% of the 412 DC seats, while pro-democracy candidates won 20%.
4. The election outcome was reported by the media as an “utter defeat” for the pan-democrats and a “landslide victory” for the pro-establishment and pro-Beijing camp. A deeper analysis, however, reveals implications that are not so straightforward.
5. Rather than signifying a crushing defeat for the pan-democrats, the results of this DC election indicate a shift towards stronger support for the pro-Beijing camp in the form of new voters mostly in the 50 and above age group mobilized by the camp.
6. New migrants from mainland China might have also lent their support to the pro-establishment camp. Other middle-class voters, angered by the Civic Party for championing foreign domestic helpers' right of permanent residency in Hong Kong and obstructing the building of a Hong Kong-Macau causeway, might also have cast “protest votes.”
7. Internal discord among the pan-democratic camp had caused pro-democracy candidates to lose a number of seats in this DC election.
8. The importance of working the ground is also evident from the results. The lack of resources and relative incompetence in the provision of community

services have worked to the detriment of the pro-democracy parties. Worse still, the parties are also divided.

9. Political leanings and labels have also lost their relevance in this DC election. The pro-democrats can no longer enjoy a high moral standing just by championing democratic values. This explains why pro-democracy political stars with no prior community experience failed to win seats in this election.
10. Voters appear to be more concerned with livelihood, social order, personal benefits and welfare issues. If all politics is indeed local, at the end of the day, politicians have to focus on local issues that concern jobs, income and other mundane affairs.
11. People Power's failure to win a single seat in this election sends a clear sign that voters in Hong Kong's maturing political culture do not approve of its radical ways, and that opposition for the sake of opposition no longer works.
12. In past elections, pan-democrats had always captured 60% of the votes while the pro-establishment parties took 40% of the votes. This time, however, the "6:4 golden ratio" has been broken, leading some to surmise that a new political landscape may be evolving.
13. While this possibility cannot be entirely ruled out, it is still too early to tell if the greater popular support for the pro-establishment camp, as indicated by this election, is here to stay. A lot hinges on the extent to which the pan-democrats can reorient themselves ahead of the coming LegCo election to recover lost ground.
14. The pan-democrats have to reconnect with and appeal to middle-class voters by striking a balance between livelihood issues and non-material values. They also have to strengthen their mobilization power and diligently work the ground in order to draw new voters to their side. Finally, resolving their internal discord and presenting a united front will prevent the unnecessary loss of votes.