

THE HONG KONG CHIEF EXECUTIVE ELECTION AND ITS AFTERMATH

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EAI Background Brief No. 713

Date of Publication: 13 April 2012

Executive Summary

1. After a fiercely contested race, Leung Chun-ying beat his key rival Henry Tang Ying-yen and emerged winner in Hong Kong's fourth Chief Executive (CE) election on 25 March 2012.
2. That two pro-establishment candidates were running in the race means that Beijing had given the nod to both and either one winning the election would be acceptable to it. Beijing had also succeeded in preventing a re-ballot.
3. Garnering just 57.8% of the votes among the 1,193 electorate and with a popular support of 35%, Leung has been dubbed as a CE-elect with “three lows” – low number of votes, low popular support, and low unifying power.
4. Leung will take office amidst pervasive social discontent, mistrust of the government, and a sense of estrangement from mainland China among the populace. His challenges lie in putting together a credible and competent government, dispelling social mistrust, and gaining legislative support.
5. The way Leung came to power, propped up by Beijing and in an unfavorable socio-political climate, means that his governing difficulties will be compounded. Leung may need help from the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government to assemble his government.
6. Leung will probably refrain from pushing for the enactment of Article 23 in the short term so as not to rile Hongkongers and further weaken his already low popularity. With Beijing' backing, Leung can boost his popularity by implementing populist measures.
7. Although Leung, who has no strong ties with the British government and the city's tycoons, is somewhat different from his predecessors, it does not mean

that he will be less beholden to the tycoons who dominate Hong Kong's property market.

8. Even if Leung has the political will to reform the land system, he will have to proceed with caution so as not to destroy the wealth generating property sector.
9. Leung's governance will be hampered by the split among the pro-establishment legislators. And because of his perceived hardliner approach towards civil liberties and the preservation of Hong Kong's core values, Leung will be closely watched by the pan-democrats and Hongkongers.
10. Beijing may have more reservations about implementing direct election in 2017 after witnessing how a small circle election could also veer off course. The denial of genuine universal suffrage to Hongkongers may generate social tensions and exacerbate existing scepticism over "one country, two systems."
11. Hong Kong's long-running institutions, civil service, rule of law and economy shall function as usual under the new CE. Leung is unlikely to make policy breakthroughs, nor is he likely to end the governing conundrum that has plagued Donald Tsang's administration.