

**HONG KONG POLITICS IN 2012:
WEAK LEADERSHIP,
FRUSTRATED SOCIETY**

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EAI Background Brief No. 780

Date of Publication: 27 December 2012

Executive Summary

1. In what turns out to be an eventful year, Hong Kong has seen not only two important elections in 2012 but also a string of scandals involving high level politicians and tycoons, pervasive social disgruntlement, and protests of increasing intensity, frequency and scale.
2. All in all, there is a continuity of major trends from 2011 with an aggravation of the same problems and issues that have dogged the city.
3. Economic integration between mainland China and Hong Kong continues in the midst of slower Chinese economic growth and a volatile global financial market. But the Hong Kong society has also put up a stronger resistance to integration.
4. Hong Kong's governing crisis has also been exacerbated after Chief Executive (CE) CY Leung took office in July 2012, following a controversial CE election in March. Of late, Leung's support ratings even dipped to below 50.
5. This year, it has been particularly hard for the government to gain public trust after the influx of mainlanders into the city, greater intervention from China, and the city's diminishing freedom and civil liberties.
6. Developments in the past year show that Hong Kongers are unconvinced that the city's non-elected executive branch is the true embodiment of public interests and that Hong Kong's autonomy can be protected without a democratic system.
7. Leung himself is mired in a scandal over unauthorized structures on his property and the administration has been rocked by various scandals involving members of Leung's governing team.

8. On top of Leung's poor political judgment and his credibility deficit, the current weak government is also due to the contradiction between the institutional setting and a changing society. The aspirations of the public to participate in policy-making are not met through existing institutions.
9. The situation worsens as government responsiveness to social demands is constrained by the city's fragmented power structure. Following September's Legislative Council election, it is evident that even the pro-Beijing or pro-establishment lawmakers have become more divided in their agendas.
10. Nonetheless, there are signs that engaging with the people is still far from the mind of Leung and that Beijing may take a more interventionist approach in Hong Kong's affairs. In light of these, it is unlikely that Leung's governing conundrum will ease in the coming year.