

**Hong Kong Chief Executive Off to a Rocky Start**  
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***Lots of early missteps mean CY Leung faces trouble***

Why is Hong Kong so hostile to its new chief?

Neither of Leung Chun-ying's two predecessors in the post-1997 Hong Kong Special Administrative Region faced such widespread public anger, distrust and absence of goodwill on taking office as he has.

That is highly unusual. Hong Kong residents normally cut new leaders a lot of slack and reserve judgment till they prove duds (like Tung Chee-hwa) or obsequious time-wasters (like Donald Tsang).

The two previous chief executives spanned 15 years of wasted opportunity. Hong Kong is impatient for an effective leader who will make up for squandered time. There was much relief when Leung slid into the slot after former chief secretary Henry Tang self-destructed. He seemed the lesser evil if only because he looked less incompetent.

Initially Leung's commitment to alleviate housing affordability for the middle class, end the shameful 'caged housing' conditions of the very poor, accelerate low-cost housing for the masses and improve air quality resonated with the public. He seemed willing to break away from the vested interests of the property tycoons who had wielded excessive influence on government policy.

**Rocket launchers send a chill**

CY's formal swearing-in before president Hu Jintao on the 15th anniversary of the HKSAR did not have the desired effect. The televised spectacle of the president in a jeep, inspecting a parade ground filled with saluting military formations backed by rocket launchers, sent a chill through a population unused to the mailed fist. It did not puff up nationalistic pride in the motherland as intended.

The chief executive then chose to take his oath and deliver his inaugural speech in Putonghua. Both of his predecessors addressed residents in Cantonese. That rejection of the native tongue at his investiture more than anything else signaled that Leung was Beijing's man for the territory, not Hong Kong's man for Beijing. He could very well have started formally in Putonghua and eased into Cantonese to give due respect to both national and SAR sensitivities.

PLA paratroopers ceremonially descending on Victoria Park, Hong Kong's annual July 4 vigil ground for the Tiananmen victims, was also a not so subtle message to the local population.

**What is it that scares people?**

In 1985, at barely 31 years, Leung was nominated to the Basic Law Consultative Committee (BLCC) to draft Hong Kong's mini-constitution. He was later promoted to Secretary General of the BLCC. Such fast-track promotion of one so youthful is not normal Communist Party practice.

In March 2012 just six days before the selection of the next chief executive, Florence Leung Mo-han, a former underground communist party member who immigrated to Canada, published her memoir titled "My Time in Hong Kong's Underground Communist Party." She remarked that Leung would have been an underground CCP member as it was party discipline to only appoint senior cadres to sensitive positions.

Florence Leung was president of the Hok Yau Club from 1962 to 1974, which is listed as a non-profit NGO to provide student support services and organize youth activities. She admits in reality the Hok Yau Club operated under instructions from the CCP in China to recruit Hong Kong youth for collective misguidance. "Their futures are ruined. That was the biggest mistake of my life which I regret the most".

Leung's campaign office hurriedly denied that he was a party member. The local party press Ta Kung Pao vigorously denounced Florence Leung. After the March 25 chief executive election, CY Leung signed a widely publicized pledge that he was not a member of any political party - which is a Basic Law requirement of the chief executive.

In March 29, four days after the election, the national People's Daily hailed "Comrade Leung's" victory on its website. Neither Tung Chee-hwa nor Donald Tsang was referred to as 'comrade' by the CCP. That is a term reserved for party members. When Hong Kong media publicized that give-away, the Comrade prefix was deleted on the web page.

Respected barrister and Queen's Counsel Martin Lee Chu-ming is convinced that Leung is a covert CCP member and represents the greatest threat to Hong Kong's individual rights, rule of law, free press and democratic development. Martin Lee has served 23 years in the Hong Kong legislature under both British and SAR administrations. He was a founding chairman of the Democratic Party.

### **Evasions on fundamentals**

Leung has consistently avoided giving straight answers to queries about the pace of democratic reform leading to the direct election for the next chief executive by universal suffrage in 2017. He evades the issue of the replacement of functional constituencies. He repeats that the Article 23 security bill is not a priority for his administration (yet). These evasions add to the collective anxiety of Hong Kong and sharply increase mistrust.

Leung's series of misleading explanations about the illegal structures at his Victoria Peak house badly damaged his credibility. He was the one who declared when Henry Tang's illegal structures surfaced that he did not have any in his home. He attacked Tang's integrity and fitness for office.

For a property surveyor not to be aware of such building regulation infractions is a stretch. He then implied that these could have been erected prior to his purchase as he had bought the twin lots ten years ago. It turns out he was the original buyer direct from the developer. CY is due to appear before the legislative council to address these concerns. His supporters and detractors are looking forward to the whole truth.

### **New team does not inspire confidence**

Among Leung's line-up of five new faces is Rimsky Yuen as secretary for justice. Rimsky had accepted an invitation when he was chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association to

become a member of the Guangdong Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee (CPPCC).

Legislator Ronny Tong turned down a similar invitation when he was chairman of the Bar Association. He felt it would lead to conflicts of interest between two incompatible legal systems. Several democrats and civic party legislators have called for Rimsky to resign his CPPCC membership. It is believed that he has done so.

The Leung administration depends on the support of the pro-establishment legislators to push his agenda through. However as his recent defeat in Legco to fast-track his government revamp showed, he has not won over the Liberal Party and the corporate functional constituency representatives of the tycoons who supported Henry Tang.

His illegal structures exposure has further incensed them. They are unlikely to rush to his aid. He has to negotiate the unusual situation of a pro-establishment camp that is split. He has not reached out to the democratic camp as the CCP considers them unpatriotic.

The September elections for the new term legislative council seats have all politicians wary of the current public mood, which is angry, distrustful and upset by the interference of the China Liaison Office in Hong Kong politics. There is no eagerness even among the pro-Beijing parties to be seen to be too close to CY Leung lest public anger derail their chances of re-election.

Leung's incoming administration will have to limp along till after the September elections and the new configuration of seats. If he gets a solid pro-Beijing majority to push his bills through fast, he may be able to achieve his ambitious social, housing and economic programs. Otherwise Hong Kong is in for another five years of ineffective leadership.

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