

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE CRISES IN HONG KONG

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the political leadership and governance crises in Hong Kong after Chief Executive Lam assumed office in July 2017 under Chinese sovereignty and the political framework of “One Country, Two Systems”. After the failure of passing a political reform bill in 2015 without any progress of democratic development, the Hong Kong chief executive was facing several major political tasks. These included whether political reforms would be re-launched to alleviate the legitimacy crisis; whether Hong Kong could maintain a high degree of autonomy when facing increasing pressure and influence from Beijing; and whether the challenges from localist and independence movements of Hong Kong could be tamed. An evaluation of Lam’s leadership would help to understand how these political problems would be solved and to project Hong Kong’s political development. This paper argues that Lam’s leadership stressed “incremental development”, a “reflector model” of governance, “transactional mediation”, and a “role-determined leadership.” These characteristic features of leadership might limit the Lam administration to resolve effectively the governance crises ahead.

Keywords: Democracy, Legitimacy, Hong Kong-China Relationship

Introduction

Hong Kong had experienced serious political polarization since the Occupy Central Movement in 2014. The Movement was launched by the pan-democratic camp to force the Hong Kong and Chinese governments to adopt a genuine democratic method to elect the chief executive of Hong Kong government in 2017, by threatening to occupy the central business district through mass sit-in and demonstrations. The 79-day Movement failed to achieve its aim as the Chinese government refused to back down and to withdraw its restrictive framework on the selection method of Hong Kong chief executive laid down on 31 August 2014. This paper aims to analyze the political leadership of Chief Executive Lam who assumed office to govern Hong Kong in July 2017 under Chinese sovereignty and the political framework of “One Country, Two Systems”. After the failure of passing a political reform bill in 2015 without any progress of democratic development, the Hong Kong chief executive was facing several major political tasks. These included whether political reforms on the

election method of chief executive in 2022 on the basis of universal suffrage would be re-examined; whether the composition of the Legislative Council in 2020 would be changed in general and the future status of functional constituencies in particular; whether the executive-led model of governance can be effectively maintained amid an adversarial executive-legislative relationship; whether Hong Kong can maintain a high degree of autonomy when facing increasing pressure and influence from Beijing; whether the challenges from localist and independence movements of Hong Kong could be tamed; whether the legitimacy crisis of the Hong Kong government could be alleviated; and whether the pressing socio-economic issues such as soaring property prices, widening gap between the rich and the poor, increasing demand for social protection, reducing the burden on the public health system, and shortage of housing supply could be solved. A strong and capable leadership under the chief executive is required to solve all the above governance crises. An evaluation of Lam's political leadership is timely to assess the political development of Hong Kong after twenty years of its reunification with communist China from a British colony.

Leadership as defined by Jean Blondel is “the ability to make others do what they presumably would not have done otherwise; it is the power exercised by an individual to direct members of the polity towards action in a particular direction.”¹ The ways of exercising power by a leader will be shaped by the source of mandate to a leader or the origin of leadership. Similarly, William Welsh defines leadership as “the ability to mobilize human resources in pursuit of specific goals.”² The mobilization ability will be affected by the constitutional basis of power granted to a leader. James Burns adds that leadership is “a process by which leaders induce followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations of both leaders and followers.”³ This process of inducing obedience is shaped by the skills and style of a leader. Bert Rockman introduces an element of change to the concept, which is perceived as “a process of producing significant change.”⁴ This process will be affected by the willingness of the followers to follow. The amount of real change brought by a leader will reflect the impact of leadership. In the same vein, David Loye regards the function of leadership as “the intervention in the social flow to direct change towards ends that are favourable to the leader and his group.”⁵ The extent to which a leader is determined to intervene the environment reflects the scope of his leadership, while the ways to direct change reflect different models of governance. Under these definitions, a systematic study of leadership embraces the analysis of origin of leadership, constitutional bases of leadership, scope of leadership, models of governance, leadership skills, style of leadership, impact of leaders, and willingness to follow.

1 Jean Blondel, *Comparative Government*, New York: Philip Allan, 1990, p.278.

2 William A. Welsh, *Leaders and Elites*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1979, p.18.

3 James M. Burns, *Leadership*, New York: Harper & Row, 1978, p.2.

4 Bert A. Rockman, *The Leadership Question*, New York: Praeger, 1984, p.20.

5 David Loye, *The Leadership Passion: A Psychology of Ideology*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1977, p.3.

With the use of the above framework to evaluate the leadership of Lam, it was found that Lam's political leadership characteristics were very similar to her predecessors. This paper argues that "incremental development" based on the status quo, a "reflector model" of governance, "transactional mediation", and a "role-determined leadership" were adopted by Chief Executive Lam. On the one hand, Lam was given tremendous constitutional power as stated in the Basic Law, she was facing political constraints from the sovereign master of China and the vested interest groups in the pro-establishment camp on the other. Lam could have fully used her constitutional power to transform the Hong Kong polity. Instead, Lam had limited choice but firmly stuck to the narrow meaning of the Basic Law interpreted by Chinese leaders. With an understanding that her bargaining power was weak, Lam was fully aware that her leadership derived from a "political-consultative" basis of authority granted by Beijing and the pro-establishment camp. Under the existing Beijing-Hong Kong imbalanced power relationship and Lam's conservative political mentality, it would be unlikely to expect significant change or innovation in Hong Kong's political system. As such, Lam would find it challenging to deal with the impacts posed by the adversarial Legislative Council, the pan-democratic political parties, the vested interest groups in the pro-establishment camp, the localist and independence activists, and the awakened general public after the Occupy Central Movement.

The Political Leadership of Lam: Origin and Constitutional Basis

The Election Committee to elect the Hong Kong chief executive was composed of four sectors with a total of 1,200 members. The four sectors were: (1) Industrial, commercial and financial sector; (2) Professional sector; (3) Labour, social services and religious sector; and (4) Political sector. The methods of returning members from the four sectors varied in different sectors. Some used one-man-one-vote basis while others used one-organization-one-vote basis. In any case, the methods of returning members to the Election Committee were not democratic as they were not based on the principle of universal suffrage. The total number of eligible voters in the election of Election Committee was about 260,000, while the total number of registered voters in Hong Kong was about 3.8 million in 2016. As such, it was often regarded as a small circle election without a popular mandate. The ways that delimited various sectors and the organizations in each sector eligible to return Election Committee members and the number of such members further dented the degree of representativeness of the Election Committee. The delimitation of the various sectors would favour and produce a pro-Beijing majority in the Election Committee. Among the 1,200 members in the Election Committee which elected the chief executive in 2017, there were only 326 members from the pan-democratic camp, while the pro-Beijing camp occupied 874 seats. The line-up of the Election Committee produced a highly predictable outcome that the chief executive candidate from the pro-Beijing camp won the majority votes from the Election Committee. This was to guarantee that the selected chief executive would be accountable and loyal to Beijing. In the 2017 chief executive election, John Tsang (a candidate preferred by the pan-democratic camp) was defeated by his opponent Carrie Lam supported openly by Beijing and the pro-establishment camp. The 2017 chief

executive election was merely an internal fight within the pro-Beijing camp between Lam and Tsang who both shared a similar pro-China political stance. Both of them were senior government officials in the C.Y. Leung administration. Carrie Lam who believed to be a candidate more trusted by Beijing won the chief executive election with 777 votes, while Tsang got 365 votes. The composition and the line-up of the Election Committee formed in 2016 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Composition and the Line-up of the 2016 Election Committee⁶

Sectors	Number of Seats	Seats Gained by the Pro-Beijing Camp	Seats Gained by the Pan-democratic Camp
Industrial, commercial and financial sectors	300	300	0
The Professions	300	61	239
Labour, social services, and religious sectors	300	240	60
The Political sector	300	273	27

Similar to her predecessors, the origin of Lam's leadership mainly derived from a "political-consultative" basis rather than a democratic basis with a popular mandate. The selection method and the composition of the Election Committee indicated that Lam's leadership position was largely backed by the pro-Beijing forces. As Lam was not elected directly by the general citizenry based on the principle of universal suffrage, consultation between the Beijing officials and the pro-Beijing Election Committee members was the main basis in selecting the chief executive. Beijing's consent and support from the vested interest groups in the pro-establishment camp were the major forces that secured Lam's leadership position. In fact, the Basic Law (Article 43 and Annex I) stipulates that the Chief Executive of Hong Kong will be appointed by and accountable to the Central People's Government of China. Unlike Western democracies in which the source of legitimacy for chief executives comes from the people, Beijing's support and endorsement is instead the source of legitimacy for the Chief Executive of Hong Kong.⁷ As Chief Executive Lam was not elected directly by Hong Kong voters on the basis of universal suffrage, it is debatable to justify the claim that Lam was the representative of the Hong Kong people or that the Lam administration enjoyed a high degree of representativeness. In essence, only about 260,000 people were directly

⁶ *South China Morning Post*, 13 December 2016.

⁷ Sonny Lo, *Governing Hong Kong: Legitimacy, Communication and Political Decay*, New York: Nova Science Publisher, 2001.

involved in the selection process of chief executive.⁸ It had been reported that Beijing officials lobbied Election Committee members to vote for Lam.⁹ There were comments that Beijing had anointed Lam as the chief executive of Hong Kong right at the beginning of the election process, although John Tsang was a more popular candidate according to public opinion surveys.¹⁰ The chief executive election in 2017 was commented as a pre-determined race. Lam said she would visit Beijing's liaison office in Hong Kong the next day she was selected as the chief executive was seen as a vote of thanks to the Beijing officials who helped coordinated the selection process. The phenomenon that Lam's leadership originated from China would very likely affect how she governed Hong Kong in general and how she dealt with the pan-democratic camp in particular.

As the Basic Law grants considerable constitutional powers to the chief executive (to appoint members and chair the meetings of the Executive Council; to refuse bills passed by the legislative Council; to dissolve the legislative Council; and to appoint principal officers and judges), Lam was legally the most powerful political figure in Hong Kong under the executive-led government.¹¹ Political parties in Hong Kong under a stunted party system were also weak in power to challenge the chief executive.¹² With such a large amount of constitutional power granted to her by China, Lam's leadership position was also effectively backed up by the Beijing government's support. As China was a principal pillar of Lam's ruling legitimacy and a source of Lam's power, Lam had been mindful of the responses of China to the situation in Hong Kong and was prepared to guard against any issues or actions that would alienate China. Lam defended her working relationship with Beijing's liaison office in Hong Kong, hitting back at a British concern group's comments that China continued to erode Hong Kong's autonomy and freedoms. Lam argued that "these comments are totally unfounded" and that "we have seen no evidence of that while the central government has been fully backing Hong Kong and supporting Hong Kong."¹³ In response to the controversial comments made by the liaison office director Wang Zhimin that Beijing's representative arm in Hong Kong would walk together more and closer with the Hong Kong government, Lam explained that she had taken a slightly more pragmatic approach – but only invited Beijing officials to discuss issues and policies if there was a mainland angle."¹⁴ Beijing's liaison office's comment was condemned by the chairman of the Democratic Party for "explicitly acknowledging that his office had been meddling in Hong Kong affairs."¹⁵

8 *South China Morning Post*, 24 March 2017

9 *South China Morning Post*, 27 March 2017.

10 *South China Morning Post*, 16 March 2017.

11 P.K. Li, "The Executive", in Lam, Lui & Wong (eds), *Contemporary Hong Kong Government and Politics*, Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2012, Chapter 2.

12 S.K. Lau & H. Kuan, "Hong Kong's Stunted Political Party System", *The China Quarterly*, Volume 172, 2002, pp.1010-1028.

13 *South China Morning Post*, 17 January 2018.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *South China Morning Post*, 15 January 2018.

Chief Executive Lam also hit out at critics of the joint co-location plan for the cross-border high-speed rail link endorsed by the National People's Congress (NPC) of China, describing them as irrational in failing to accept the city's constitutional order 20 years after Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty.¹⁶ The co-location arrangement implied that Chinese national laws would be enforced in a section of the Hong Kong high-speed rail terminal leased to the mainland. Critics questioned how the co-location arrangement would not breach the Basic Law as the Basic Law did not mention the authority of the Hong Kong government to lease a land to the Chinese national government to apply mainland laws in Hong Kong. Yet a pro-China think tank explained that the constitutional order mentioned by chief executive Lam meant the supremacy of the decision of the NPC as the supreme state organ under the constitution of the China.¹⁷ Lam reiterated in her first policy address that "the proposal of implementing a co-location arrangement at the West Kowloon Station is a practical and effective solution in line with One Country, Two Systems and does not contravene the Basic Law."¹⁸ Lam's attitude on the mainland Hong Kong relationship was very similar to her predecessor C.Y. Leung. Lam in her policy address emphasized that "everybody with a passion for Hong Kong has the responsibility to ensure that One Country, Two Systems advances in the right direction, the obligation to say no to any attempt to threaten our country's sovereignty, security and development interests, as well as the duty to nurture our next generation into citizens with a sense of national identity."¹⁹ The stipulation of the Basic Law that the Chief Executive is accountable to the central government of China defines the dynamics of Beijing Hong Kong relations.²⁰ Thus the origin and constitutional basis of Lam's leadership suggests that the interests of China will be duly respected and seriously considered in formulating Hong Kong government policies, which also shapes the scope of her leadership and her model for governing Hong Kong.

The Scope of Leadership and Model of Governance

As leadership is concerned with a process of producing significant change and making others act in the direction which leaders choose, the scope of leadership is referred to as the "extent of change" which leaders wish to bring about.²¹ The effort of change could be directed towards either "progress" or "a return to the past". This can lead us to distinguish between leaders who aim at transforming society by bringing about significant changes to the existing framework and leaders who are primarily concerned

16 South China Morning Post, 12 January 2018.

17 Ta Kung Pao, 12 January 2018.

18 *The Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address*, 11 October 2017, p. 72.

19 *The Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address*, 11 October 2017, p. 1.

20 Sonny Lo, *The Dynamics of Beijing Hong Kong Relations*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008.

21 Jean Blondel, *Comparative Government*, New York: Philip Allan, 1990, p.278.

with keeping the status quo by making compromises and transactions to maintain the existing framework. A review of Lam's stance on Hong Kong's development suggested that Lam was keen on maintaining the status quo rather than breaking new grounds in various policy areas.

On the social welfare front, the Lam administration seemed to shy away from taking bold reforms of the welfare services with an aim to overhaul the government's minimal approach. To tackle the ageing problem as part of social policies, Lam raised the idea of importing workers for care services. Despite strong opposition from the labour sector, Lam said her administration would explore the possibility of increasing imported labour for sectors such as subsidized care services for the elderly.²² But three labour sector lawmakers said they were firmly against more foreign workers, adding it was unacceptable as it would drag down the pay of local workers. The practice of community care service vouchers would be continued to allow users to pick services that best suit their needs. Critics pointed out that the use of vouchers might not lead to better services provided by the private market. Civic Party leader Alvin Yeung commented that "the government continues to shirk responsibility and push the elderly to the market."²³ Yeung also criticized the chief executive for not mentioning universal pensions in her first policy address. No major policy ideas were proposed with respect to medical services and health care protection. Medical sector professionals concurred that only minor refinements were suggested under the existing medical framework and infrastructure.²⁴ On the environmental front, Friend of the Earth (Hong Kong) commented that only a handful of environment-related initiatives were proposed – much of them already put forward by the previous administration.²⁵ The government's conservative stance was regarded as outdated as most of the policy proposals in Lam's policy address was simply a continuation of the long standing social welfare and services policy without any change of philosophy or substance. The same social philosophy of giving help only to the needy and the same economic philosophy of financial prudence was followed by the Lam administration. There were no new thoughts on the elderly provisions in Hong Kong, no new breakthrough over universal retirement protection scheme, no new initiatives about comprehensive medical insurance plans for the general public, and no new ideas about environmental protection.

On housing, Lam did not have convincing and effective measures to cool down the over-heated property market. The private property market became the arena for property developers and speculators to generate huge profit. The price of private housing has skyrocketed that it is unaffordable by most of the general public. On public housing, Lam followed largely the housing policy formulated by the previous administration by offering public rental housing, subsidized home ownership scheme, green form

22 *South China Morning Post*, 12 October 2017.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ming Pao*, 18 October 2017.

25 *South China Morning Post*, 23 October 2017.

subsidized home ownership scheme, and home ownership scheme secondary market. Lam introduced “starter homes” for Hong Kong middle-class families. Ironically, Lam admitted that the land supply for these starter homes would have to come from sites already owned by private developers or to be bought from the government.²⁶ Experts wondered whether Lam’s proposals to boost the supply of housing in the city will in the end would just benefit a cartel of big property developers.²⁷ A non-governmental research group on land issues raised a concern that “a whole lot of people will be pushed to the private property market, which has been dominated by a few developers.”²⁸ More people would be pushed to buy starter homes and home ownership flats in the semi-private property market. In the end, these subsidized housing units would be available for speculation in the private market. On the one hand, Hong Kong had repeatedly been crowned the world’s most expensive city in which to buy or rent property in recent years. On the other hand, more than 280,000 applicants were waiting for public housing, with families facing an average wait of four or five years for a flat.²⁹ A member of the Legislative Council housing panel observed that “the number of public housing applications is now almost at 300,000, but the government’s target to build 200,000 public rental flats in 10 years has already deviated from actual needs.”³⁰ All in all, a former Legislator Council member Albert Cheng concluded that Lam was no different from Leung and that the housing proposals in her policy address were mostly old wine in new bottles.³¹

Chief Executive Lam did attempt to propose a grand project “Lantau Tomorrow Vision” in her second policy address released in October 2018 to solve the housing problems in Hong Kong.³² She proposed to build several artificial islands through a large-scale reclamation project in the Lantau Island for providing more public and private housing estates. The project was estimated to cost up to US\$60 billion to create 1,700 hectares for housing. Lam’s proposal turned out to be unpopular. In a survey by the University of Hong Kong’s public opinion programme, 33% of respondents were satisfied with the policy address, down from 48% recorded in 2017, while 34% were not satisfied, compared with 14% in 2017.³³ The popularity rating of Chief Executive Lam also showed the largest drop after the announcement of the 2018 policy address.³⁴ Legislators from both pan-democratic camp and pro-establishment camps grilled the

26 *The Chief Executive’s 2017 Policy Address*, 11 October 2017, p.51.

27 *South China Morning Post*, 13 October 2017.

28 *Ibid.*

29 *South China Morning Post*, 21 December 2017.

30 *Ibid.*

31 *South China Morning Post*, 20 October 2017.

32 *The Chief Executive’s 2018 Policy Address*, 10 October 2018.

33 *South China Morning Post*, 12 October 2018.

34 *Ming Pao*, 12 October 2018.

chief executive over the Lantau project for being too expensive and failing to provide short-term housing solutions.³⁵ The Lantau Tomorrow reclamation project could not be regarded as a completely new overhaul initiative as reclamation had been used to create more land in the past. Chief Executive Lam admitted during a question-and-answer session of the Legislative Council that “Hong Kong has been relying on reclamation since the beginning.”³⁶ Lam’s idea of dealing with housing problem remains to be incremental although the scale of reclamation was bigger. There was still no fundamental change in the ideological premises on the nature of public housing and the speculative private housing market.

On the thorny issue of political reforms, Lam stopped short of mentioning democracy in the 2017 and 2018 policy addresses. Only one short paragraph was written about the future of the selection of Hong Kong’s chief executive by universal suffrage. In the 2017 policy address, Lam said “I fully understand the aspirations of the community, in particular our young generation, for universal suffrage. Yet, we cannot ignore the reality and rashly embark on political reform once again.”³⁷ Lam did not make a promise or a clear message about whether the government would re-introduce the political reform bill about the election of chief executive on one person one vote basis. The method to elect the chief executive in 2022 remained uncertain. Lam only pledged in the policy address that “I shall do my best to work towards creating a favourable social atmosphere for taking forward political reform within the framework of the 831 Decision of the Standing Committee of the NPC.”³⁸ The pan-democratic camp was disappointed about the lack of commitment of Lam to push forward the implementation of universal suffrage to elect the chief executive in 2022. Civic Party leader Alvin Yeung criticized Lam for not delivering a plan to reconcile social division caused by the failure of political reforms. Yeung believed that the lack of political reform was exactly a major reason behind Hong Kong’s deep-seated problems.³⁹ After all, Lam reaffirmed that future political reform would be made within the restrictive framework made by the NPC on 31 August 2014, without any determination to ask the parties concerned to invent a new framework for discussion.

A quick scan of Lam’s policy platform revealed the emphasis on maintaining the status quo with piecemeal changes. Lam’s incremental scope of leadership was associated with her “reflector model” of governance, which largely envisions the government as a ratifier of the social and political consensus, a representative of its diversity, or a responder to dominant and intense societal demands.⁴⁰ In contrast, a “director model” emphasizes planning, directed social and political change, active

35 *South China Morning Post*, 12 October 2018.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *The Chief Executive’s 2017 Policy Address*, p.9.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *South China Morning Post*, 12 October 2017.

40 Bert Rockman, *The Leadership Question*, New York: Praeger, 1984, p.30.

intervention in processes of socio-political development, and positive government action to propel change.⁴¹ In essence, a “reflector model” emphasizes minimum government effort to produce minimum change, while a “director model” emphasizes maximum government effort to produce maximum change. Lam in her maiden policy address said that the government’s roles must also keep abreast of the times to seize the opportunities for steady social and economic development. There was an expectation that Lam would propose some bold policies or overhauls to direct Hong Kong into a new course of development. Yet reading from the policy agenda prepared by Chief Executive Lam, the general public got an impression that Lam’s governing philosophy was conservative and stability oriented. All Lam’s policy proposals were just either technical refinement of existing policies or short term changes rather than brand new policies with long term vision backed by any ideological premises.

Chief Executive Lam is what Barbara Kellerman describes as a “role-determined” leader who fills her role in the manner of the punctilious bureaucrat, being dictated by her role, the rules, and the surrounding environment.⁴² In contrast, a “role-determining” leader would enact his role in a highly personal style, with behaviours beyond those prescribed by rules and the surrounding environment.⁴³ The narrow scope of Lam’s leadership and restrictive mode of governance had thus shaped her leadership skills and style.

Skills and Style of Leadership

In order to convince opponents and followers to achieve a common goal, Richard Neustadt suggests that a leader must have the skills to win over others to his support and a willingness to engage with others in political battle.⁴⁴ Other scholars such as Erwin Hargrove have also suggested that leaders should be able “to hold discussions with those who work in their immediate circle and to exhibit the ability to persuade, to maneuver and manipulate, and to structure situations.”⁴⁵ Kellerman states that the most fundamental leadership skill is “interpersonal competence” which is the leader’s ability to maneuver skillfully and to use others for his own purposes.⁴⁶ This is similar to Andrew McFarland’s “dynamic mediation” which is a process minimizing multilateral conflicts by upgrading common interests.⁴⁷ The process of “dynamic mediation”

41 *Ibid.*

42 Barbara Kellerman, *The Political Presidency*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p.14.

43 *Ibid.*

44 Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, New York: Praeger, 1960, p.33.

45 Erwin C. Hargrove, *The Power of the Modern Presidency*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1974, p.78.

46 Barbara Kellerman, *The Political Presidency*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p.16.

47 Andrew S. McFarland, *Power and Leadership in Pluralist Systems*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969, p.177.

involves a mutual exchange of benefits among the leader, followers, and opponents. Edwin Hollander suggests that “when leaders are effective, they give something and get something in return. This social exchange, or transactional approach to leadership, involves a trading of benefits.”⁴⁸ Similarly, Burns proposes that “the relations of most leaders and followers are transactional – leaders and followers approach each other with an eye to exchanging one thing for another.”⁴⁹

Lam recognized the importance of cementing a highly polarized society by forging more cooperation among different political groups in the political spectrum. Controversial issues such as the co-location arrangement of cross border checks for the mainland Hong Kong express rail link, the introduction of national security legislation as required by the Article 23 of the Basic Law, the disqualification of Legislative Council members owing to improper oath taking, the disqualification of localist candidates running for the Legislative Council election owing to their pro-independence stance, and the introduction of national anthem legislation as required by Beijing had divided the general citizens, politicians, and political parties. Lam mentioned in her policy address to improve executive-legislature relationship. Lam hoped that “through co-operation, the government could reach consensus on issues that are controversial and yet strategically important for the long term development of Hong Kong.”⁵⁰ Although Lam tried to show that she was sincere in achieving a better executive-legislature relationship by citing that she responded positively to the request of Legislature Council to increase the frequency of the chief executive’s question and answer sessions, Lam could not convince people that how more question and answer sessions could solve the political deadlocks and the tension between the executive and the Legislative Council. Lam said she would build an interactive platform for communication and co-operation with the Legislative Council.⁵¹ Yet this is said easier than done without fundamentally restructuring the composition of the Legislative Council, the rules and procedures of the Legislative Council, and the powers and privileges of the Legislative Council.

Under the current political structure, the chief executive is disconnected from the Legislative Council as the chief executive is barred from being a member of any political party. The chief executive election ordinance bars the chief executive from being a member of any political party. Thus there is no “ruling party” to govern Hong Kong which is governed by a non-partisan chief executive. The chief executive has to rely on the pro-establishment parties in the Legislative Council to pass her bills and policy proposals. Under this political framework, the chief executive has to bargain with all the political parties from the pro-establishment and pan-democratic camps in the Legislative Council for support. As there are many vested interested groups in the pro-establishment camp and the pan-democratic camp never recognize the legitimacy

48 Edwin P. Hollander, *Leadership Dynamics: A Practical Guide to Effective Relationships*, New York: Praeger, 1978, p.2.

49 James M. Burns, *Leadership*, New York: Harper & Row, 1978, p.2.

50 *The Chief Executive’s 2017 Policy Address*, 11 October 2017, p.9.

51 *Ibid.*

of the chief executive, the tasks of finding compromise and building a workable relationship between the executive and the legislature are difficult if not possible. Lam had attempted to find a consensus among the contending forces with respect to these political issues, but failed to create a commonly acceptable formula between the pan-democratic camp and the government. Political transactions and exchanges had taken place, but they were mainly among Lam, conservative businessmen, leftist pro-China politicians, and Beijing officials. Lam's decisions on the above issues all seemed to go along with the wishes of the conservative and pro-China factions; however, the pan-democrats all opposed Lam's decisions on these issues. As the pan-democrats had been excluded from Lam's power centre, consensus was thus reached only between Lam and the conservative pro-establishment factions. A conservative political decision-making model had been adopted to exchange for business and Chinese support to Hong Kong. Lam and the pan-democrats, however, had not been able to convince and persuade each other, hence failing to reach a deal in the transaction process.

If leadership ability is partly measured in terms of the ability to make consensus and transactions among the leader, opponents, and followers, then Lam had failed to certain extent to draw the support of her main opponents, namely, the pan-democratic camp, by reaching any meaningful political consensus and transactions. Perhaps Lam was torn between two conflicting positions on many political issues, but she seemed to have acted consistently towards a more conservative political model. Most of her close advisors had been drawn from conservative socio-economic elites and leftist factions at the expense of the pan-democratic camp. As the pan-democrats had been excluded from formal political structures, they and Lam lacked a forum for political mediation, communications, exchanges, compromises, and transactions. If balance of political power and interests was an objective that Lam hoped to achieve in Hong Kong, her current policies and immediate advisory circles had failed to integrate pan-democratic interests and forces. As the pan-democratic camp won majority seats (19 out of 35) and votes (55%) from the directly elected geographical constituencies as well as the territorial-wide super district council constituency (58% votes) of the Legislative Council in 2016, it would be sound to incorporate the pan-democratic forces into the government in order to build up comprehensive political transactions for attaining a higher degree of legitimacy.

The study of leadership inevitably involves the study of leader-follower relationships based on the styles used by leaders and the responses engendered in followers.⁵² As a majority of citizens in Hong Kong voted for the pan-democratic camp in the 2016 elections, Lam needs to change either her own political orientations or those of the citizens in order to achieve a leader-follower consensus. In the words of Jerzy Wiatr, "Leadership is a relationship which consists of systematically influencing others so that they behave according to leaders' desires ... Some congruence between followers' behavior and leaders' desires is the definitional characteristic of leadership."⁵³

52 William A. Welsh, *Leaders and Elites*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1979, p.18.

53 Jerzy Wiatr, "Political Elites and Political Leadership: Conceptual Problems and Selected Hypotheses for Comparative Research, *Indian Journal of Politics*, December 1973, p.139.

The key point is that effective leadership requires a congruence of behaviour and desires between followers and leaders. The immediate question for Lam then is how to make the majority of the followers to share her political desires. Incongruence between the Hong Kong citizens' behavior and Lam's desires would demonstrate a weak leader-follower relationship.

There are generally four methods of influence that leaders can use: (1) control over followers' gains and costs through reward and punishment; (2) persuasion through altering his followers' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding the common good; (3) affective control through charisma and personal appeal; and (4) control over the followers' environment through bringing additional pressures on followers to induce the desired change of attitude or behavior.⁵⁴ Leaders with a democratic style tend to rely on persuasion, while leaders with an authoritarian style tend to rely on control to change followers' behavior and orientations.⁵⁵ Lam adopted the above methods in an attempt to change followers. She awarded like-minded people by appointing them into her power centre while distancing her opponents by excluding them. She attempted to persuade both pan-democrats and the general citizenry to accept more integration and co-operation with the mainland. She also tried to convince followers by using her personal appeal as a competent and rational leader, with rich administrative experience as a long time civil servant. Lastly, she warned that Hong Kong was facing increasingly grave challenges and that Hong Kong had to capitalize on the opportunities arising from the Belt and Road Initiative as well as the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area development. In the continuum between the authoritarian and democratic styles of leadership, Lam adopted a soft authoritarian style. Lam tried to present an image of a more open-minded leader with more eagerness to listen to different views especially from the young people. Yet the Lam administration remained firm on crushing the localists by disqualifying several individuals from participating in the Legislative Council by-election held in March 2018. Lam presented herself as a leader of soft authoritarian style with an emphasis on control rather than a leader of democratic style accepting and integrating differences.

Willingness to Follow and Leadership Impact

Not all leaders are successful and effective in governing their societies and leading their followers towards achieving the common good. A leader can produce a significant impact or make no change on the political and socio-economic life of followers. Although a leader is expected to engage in a number of important activities (such as crisis management, programme design, morale building, priority setting, and political coalition building) in order to achieve the common good, whether a leader has the ability to mobilize human resources to carry out these activities is another question. Kellerman suggests that there are four factors affecting citizens' willingness to follow the leader:

54 Barbara Kellerman, *The Political Presidency*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p.19.

55 William A. Welsh, *Leaders and Elites*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1979.

(1) the desire to receive a reward or avoid punishment; (2) the desire to be similar to an admired leader; (3) the desire to abide by the leader's values; and (4) dependency needs.⁵⁶

The popularity of a leader suggests how willing followers are to follow their leader. Public opinion surveys indicated that Lam's popularity had remained low since before and after she was elected as Chief Executive on 26 March 2017 by the Election Committee. In a public opinion survey conducted by Lingnam University of Hong Kong during 20-22 March 2017, only 25.1% of the respondents supported Lam, while 52.5% of respondents supported John Tsang.⁵⁷ Another survey conducted by a news media also showed similar result in which Lam gained only 32.1% support while Tsang gained 52.8% support.⁵⁸ These surveys showed that Lam was not seen as a popular chief executive by a clear majority of the Hong Kong people. The general public was concerned with the alleged intervention of the China's Liaison Office in the election of the chief executive to fix the election result. They were also worried that Lam would impose pro-China policies on the people of Hong Kong such as the legislation of national security bill.

Similar to her predecessor Leung, Lam was also the second chief executive-elect to receive a negative net approval rating (-7%) before starting her term, with 50% of 1,002 respondents surveyed by University of Hong Kong from March 27 to March 30 2017 opposing her as chief executive, compared with 43% supporting her.⁵⁹ Lam scored 55.6 points when respondents were asked to rate her out of 100. When Donald Tsang took the top job in 2005, he had an approval rating of almost 75% and a support rating of over 72.3 points out of 100. Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's first chief executive, scored almost 70.1 points when he was elected in 1997. The survey even showed that the 70% of the respondents in the age group between 18 and 29 opposed Lam as the chief executive. A popularity poll conducted in November 2017 revealed that Lam's popularity rating was 50%, just reached the passing mark.⁶⁰ Lam also got low level of support even from the elite circle. In the Election Committee to elect the Chief Executive, Lam only got 777 votes from 1,200 votes or just 64.8%. This showed that Lam lacked widespread support from the elite in the small circle election. Since popularity is essential for any political leader to govern effectively, Lam would face an uphill battle with no scope to claim that she enjoyed a mandate from the people. From the very beginning of Lam's journey to govern Hong Kong, Chief Executive Lam failed to command the confidence and support of the people of Hong Kong. The willingness of the people to follow Lam's leadership would be weak and fragile, which could in turn affect the impact of Lam's governance.

56 Barbara Kellerman, *The Political Presidency*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1984, p.19.

57 *Ming Pao*, 24 March 2017.

58 *Ming Pao*, 22 March 2017.

59 *Ming Pao*, 6 April 2017.

60 *Ming Pao*, 15 November 2017.

The impact of leaders, in the words of Blondel, could be measured by assessing the extent to which they are able to change the framework within which the population approaches public policy problems, as well as by the concrete reforms which they bring about.⁶¹ According to this logic, leaders who intentionally administer the system as it is and do not aim to alter policies may be regarded as having very little impact, although the unintended consequences may be large. The essence of Blondel's argument is that the assessment depends on the extent to which that society is predisposed by the leader and the followers to undergo change.⁶² Thus, the form of change that a leader undertakes and the consensus between the leader and followers on the direction of change are essential factors affecting the impact of leadership. Change could take the forms of accelerative change (a quick pace of changes), incremental change (piecemeal changes), and innovative change (a complete change).⁶³

Basing on the intended forms of change that Lam had undertaken and the degree of consensus between Lam and the people, the impact of Lam's leadership on Hong Kong seemed to have been slight, with mainly incremental changes. On administrative and political systems, Lam's policy address suggested to re-open the forecourt of the Central Government Offices for holding public meetings or processions; to augment the civil service establishment growth of not less than 3% in 2018-19; to establish a new civil service college; to revamp the Central Policy Unit; to restructure the Efficiency Unit; to increase the frequency of chief executive's question and answer sessions, and to strengthen district administration. However, most of the above promises were neither new nor big changes to the existing practices. Most important all, Chief Executive Lam did not promise to re-launch the political reform bill to realize the selection of the chief executive by universal suffrage in 2022 as well as the election of all members of the Legislative Council by universal suffrage in 2020. Advancing democracy by taking bold political reforms seemed not on the top list of Lam's policy agenda. The scope of proposed changes and the lay back attitude on political and administrative reforms had exhibited Lam's incremental form of change. Hong Kong might again lose the opportunity to achieve full democracy within five years, as Hong Kong lost lots of opportunities in democratic development in the last decade.⁶⁴

With regard to economic and social reforms, Lam proposed that her administration would take up two new roles other than service provider and regulator. The two new roles were facilitator and promoter. Lam defined the government as a facilitator "should be visionary, scrutinize existing policies and measures pursuant to policy objectives, remove obstacles for industries, and strengthen co-ordination and co-operation across government bureau and departments, and provide one-stop consultation and services,

61 Jean Blondel, *Comparative Government*, New York: Philip Allan, 1990, p.287.

62 *Ibid.*

63 Bert Rockman, *The Leadership Question*, New York: Praeger, 1984, pp.22-24.

64 N. Ma, "Democratic Development in Hong Kong: A Decade of Lost Opportunities", J. Cheng (ed.) *The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region in its First Decade*, Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2007, Chapter 2.

with a view to maximizing the benefits for the community.”⁶⁵ In Lam’s mindset, the government as a promoter meant “by strengthening the links between Hong Kong and the mainland as well as other countries, elevating Hong Kong’s status as Asia’s world city, attracting mainland and overseas enterprises and representatives, proactively conducting government-to-government interactions and lobbying, we seek to further expand Hong Kong’s external relations.”⁶⁶ The roles of being a facilitator and promoter are basically conservative and status-quo oriented as they are just aimed at facilitating and promoting changes rather than breaking existing frameworks and installing overhaul. As shown in Lam’s policy addresses, the policy initiatives were just refining the existing policy framework or promoting more results under the current policy directions. Lam also did not offer new thoughts or philosophy. To sum up her policy address, Lam pledged to follow the principles of being “innovative, interactive and collaborative”.⁶⁷ The whole policy speech however did not offer any new philosophy or comprehensive programmes to further enhance the well-being of society. It seemed that Lam was more concerned with introducing ad hoc and piecemeal changes to further improve the social and economic environment.

It was reported that even as Chief Executive Lam pledged a new beginning, many old divisions in the Legislative Council were apparent in reactions to her maiden policy address.⁶⁸ The chair of New People’s Party from the pro-establishment camp noted that “Lam stopped short of saying that she would push forward any political reform and those who are hoping for more democracy in Hong Kong would be disappointed.”⁶⁹ In the pan-democratic camp, Democratic Party chairman said the proposed economic and welfare policies would not relieve the societal tension in the city.⁷⁰ Civic Party leader also criticized Lam for not delivering a plan to reconcile the social division in the city. Professor Wilson Wong of the Chinese University commented that the Lam administration did not introduce fundamental institutional change but only used more government spending as a tactic to get public support.⁷¹ If public opinion surveys reflected a certain degree of truth, the consensus between Lam and the general citizenry on major policy areas was low. As Lam’s proposed changes had been limited and the leader-follower consensus had been low, the impact of Lam’s leadership was expected to be slight. The impact of Lam’s leadership was also weakened by various governance crises that the Lam administration faced.

65 *The Chief Executive’s 2017 Policy Address*, p.3.

66 *Ibid.*, p.4.

67 *Ibid.*, p.4.

68 *South China Morning Post*, 12 October 2017.

69 *Ibid.*

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Ming Pao*, 12 October 2017.

Governance Crises of the Lam Administration

After assuming power in July 2017, the Lam administration had been facing governance crises of various sorts that are undermining its effective leadership and governance. The first was the integrity crisis sparked from a government scandal that involved the Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng. It was about illegal structures found at Cheng's home and Cheng's mortgage deed for one property, which did not mention a basement, leading critics to suggest she lied to her bank.⁷² The Building Department found 10 illegal structures at Ching's home and 10 more were later identified at three other properties owned by Cheng. The Secretary for Justice explained that she had been too busy with work to notice the illegal extensions.⁷³ Cheng refused to resign as she was firmly backed by Chief Executive Lam who reiterated that she had great trust in Cheng. Hundreds of protesters took to the streets asking for the removal of the justice secretary. Instead of firing Cheng, Chief Executive Lam asked the public to be tolerant. The pan-democratic camp initiated two no-confidence motions against Cheng in the Legislative Council, yet Cheng survived with the domination of pro-establishment legislators in the Legislative Council. Another motion to summon Cheng to the legislature also failed owing to the help of pro-establishment legislators in the Legislative Council. Although Cheng remained in office, it was a huge political price that Chief Executive Lam had to pay for fixing the integrity debt of her top official.

The credibility of the Lam administration in the eyes of the general public had been seriously dented. This would only deepen the legitimacy crisis of the Hong Kong government which does not enjoy popular mandate. The records of the Legislative Council direct elections in the past showed that the pan-democratic camp which advocated genuine democracy with true universal suffrage to elect the chief executive and the whole Legislative Council gained around 60% of votes from the general public. These 60% of voters generally thought that the government formed under the current system could not represent directly the interests of the people. With popular mandate, the directly elected legislators from the pan-democratic camp often mocked the chief executive as a product of small circle election without bearing popular sovereignty. Any government scandals and dishonesty would further erode the legitimacy of the government, thus making governance more difficult and challenging for the Lam administration.

The confidence of the general public in the Lam administration was further undermined by the increasing hard line and hand-on approach taken by Beijing over Hong Kong. This led to a confidence crisis as the general public questioned whether Hong Kong would be able to maintain its core values such as freedom of speech and political liberty. The worry was that China would further erode the governing power of the Hong Kong government and thus the high degree of autonomy enjoyed by Hong Kong would decline. The Chinese constitution was amended in March 2018 to add a line that "the leadership of the Communist Party of China is the most essential feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The socialist system is the basic system of the People's Republic of China

72 *South China Morning Post*, 1 February 2018.

73 *Ibid.*

and that sabotage of the socialist system by any organization or individual is prohibited.” After the amendment of the Chinese constitution, a Hong Kong member of the Standing Committee of the NPC had said that “from now on, it may contravene the constitution and the Basic Law and even affect one’s eligibility to stand in an Legislative Council election for one to yell bring an end to the one-party dictatorship.”⁷⁴ It was reported that this view had made citizens worry their freedom of speech might be curtailed and that it was detrimental to Hong Kong people’s confidence in One Country, Two Systems.⁷⁵

Concerns over further political vetting in Hong Kong elections mounted as a mainland official said city residents who called for an end to one-party dictatorship in China might be disqualified from running for local office.⁷⁶ Pan-democrats and some legal experts decried such comments as a betrayal of Hong Kong’s core values as such comments jeopardized the city’s freedom of expression.⁷⁷ The Chinese government also stepped up its control over any possible plots to make Hong Kong independence. President Xi declared firmly that “any actions and tricks to split China are doomed to failure and will meet with the people’s condemnation and the punishment of history.”⁷⁸ Beijing warned that it would show zero tolerance for the advocacy of Hong Kong independence and that it would not let anyone use Hong Kong’s autonomy as cover to infiltrate or sabotage the mainland. China justified the decision to disqualify and to adopt political screening on Legislative Council election candidates by saying that calls for self-determination and independence were the same in nature – both were violations of the Basic Law. The general public is expecting Lam to demonstrate her determination to defend the autonomy of Hong Kong and the interests of Hong Kong citizens. As China has stated clearly that Beijing has complete jurisdiction over Hong Kong in the Policy Paper over Hong Kong and that Beijing would “walk together more with Hong Kong”, the Chinese government’s intention to exercise more control over Hong Kong is apparent. The Lam administration has to tilt carefully the right balance between Beijing and Hong Kong under the One Country, Two Systems with a high degree of autonomy for winning public trust and support for her leadership and governance.

The effectiveness of Lam’s leadership and governance was perhaps mostly weakened by a fragmented legislature, leading to a hollow out crisis. The 2016 election results of the Legislative Council produced a polarized and adversarial legislature. The pan-democratic camp occupied 19 directly elected seats from geographical constituencies, while the pro-establishment camp took 16 seats. In the directly elected city-wide territorial constituency, the pan-democratic camp captured 3 seats while the pro-establishment camp got 2 seats. From the indirectly elected functional constituencies, the pro-establishment camp took 22 seats, while the pan-democratic camp took 8 seats. In total, the pan democratic camp got 30 seats while the pro-establishment camp got 40 seats. The line-up of the 2016 Legislative Council is summarized in Table 2.

74 *Ming Pao*, 21 March 2018.

75 *Ming Pao*, *Ibid.*

76 *South China Morning Post*, 21 March 2018.

77 *Ibid.*

78 *Ibid.*

Table 2: The Line-up of the Legislative Council (2016-2020).

	Pan-democratic Camp	Pro-establishment Camp
Geographical Constituencies (direct election)	19	16
(votes share)	(55%)	(40%)
City-wide Territorial Constituency	3	2
(votes share)	(58%)	(42%)
Functional Constituencies (indirect election)	8	22
Total	30	40

As the directly elected seats from both the geographical and city-wide territorial constituencies were split up by the pan-democratic and pro-establishment camps, the two camps claimed different interests for the general public. The Legislative Council had therefore become polarized into two adversarial factions representing two divergent views of the electorates. The pan-democratic camp held different beliefs from the pro-establishment camp.⁷⁹ The Lam administration would find it difficult to find a compromise and consensus from lawmakers of both camps to support her policy proposals. Although the pro-establishment camp got an overall majority of seats in the Legislative Council, most of these seats came from functional constituencies. Lawmakers from functional constituencies were indirectly elected and they could hardly claim as people's representatives. The pro-establishment camp thus lacked a solid base to get firm public support from the general public. As such, the support given to Lam from the pro-establishment camp offered little help to raise Lam's legitimacy to govern.

Internal divisions within both the pan-democratic camp and pro-establishment camps made the executive-legislative relation more perplexing. The rise of localism and the successful election of six localists in the 2016 Legislative Council split the unity of the pan-democratic camp. The localists advocate Hong Kong first supporting self-determination or independence, while the traditional democrats support Hong Kong under Chinese sovereignty. The localist camp emphasize more on adversarial means while the traditional democrats rely more on negotiation. The split within the pan-democratic camp makes the Lam administration more difficult to seek cooperation and negotiation with the camp. Moreover, the pro-establishment camp is far from united to give Lam a constant and reliable support in the Legislative Council. The chief executive election in 2016 split up the pro-establishment camp as the two candidates (Carrie Lam and John Tsang) were supported by different factions within the camp. The

79 M. Sing, "Hong Kong's Democrats Hold Their Own", *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 20, No.1, 2009, pp.98-112.

competition between the two rival candidates caused unease among members of the pro-establishment camp. Despite winning the chief executive election, Lam's victory was unconvincing as she has been the second lowest since the first Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa won 320 of 400 votes (80%) in 1996. In 2007, Donald Tsang was elected with 649 votes (81.5%) from the 800-strong Election Committee. Leung got 689 votes (57.4%) out of the 1,200-strong Election Committee. Lam gained 777 votes (64.8%) out of the 1,200 electors of the Election Committee. As a consequence, Lam was encountering with a divided and hostile Legislative Council as well as a fragile alliance with the pro-establishment camp. This had already been the case before Lam took up office, as Hong Kong was noted by Ma as "weak and fragmented state".⁸⁰

Conclusion

Chief Executive Lam's leadership characteristics share a lot of common traits with her predecessors. Lam's leadership bears the following characteristics: (1) her authority derives from a political-consultative basis with the backing of China and constitutional powers; (2) a conservative and incremental scope of leadership has been undertaken on political, social, and economic aspects; (3) a reflector model of governance has been employed, with an emphasis on the role of government as a ratifier of social demands; (4) she acts as a role-determined leader loyal to Beijing leaders; (5) political transactions have mainly been made among Lam, the pro-China political forces, and the business; (6) the willingness of citizens to follow Lam has been weak; and (7) a low degree of leader-follower consensus has been recorded. The leadership characteristics of Lam are summarized in Table 3.

It is not surprising that the chief executives of Hong Kong, including Tung, Tsang, Leung, and Lam, share similar leadership characteristics because of the following reasons. First, the chief executives of Hong Kong are all elected under the

Table 3: Political Leadership Characteristics of Chief Executive Lam.

Origin and Constitutional Basis of Leadership	Political-consultative basis rather than a democratic basis with a popular mandate
Scope of Leadership	Conservative and incremental development based on the status quo
Model of Governance	Reflector model, role-determined, restrictive
Skills of Leadership	Political transactions mainly with the pro-establishment camp
Style of Leadership	Soft authoritarian
Leader-follower Relationship	Low degree of leader-follower consensus

80 N. Ma, *Political Development in Hong Kong: State, Political Society, and Civil Society*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007, Chapter 4.

same election method with limited representation. Second, they are all appointed by and hence are accountable to Beijing as Beijing's subordinate. Third, they run the same executive-led system which is characterized by an adversarial and disconnected executive-legislative relationship. Fourth, they all need to restrict the political power and influence of the pan-democratic camp which is barred from taking over political power and leadership. Fifth, political participation of the general public in the policy-making process is limited in an undemocratic system without popular mandate. The chief executives of Hong Kong suffer from the institutional handicaps which largely restrict their leadership ability and governance capacity. It seems doubtful that these political leadership characteristic features can effectively deal with Hong Kong's political, social, and economic problems.

The current political environment is complicated by the rise of localism, a more fragmented political spectrum, the emergence of a group of alienated youth, and an increasing influence from Beijing; an economy which is threatened by an overheated property market; and a society filled with more social discontent caused by a huge wealth gap. As noted by Cheung, the political system in Hong Kong under an executive-led government was "disabled" governance.⁸¹ A simplistic and bureaucratic type of leadership will be insufficient to deal with a polarized, alienated, and politicized Hong Kong. Lam's refusal to mediate the differences of the pro-establishment and pan-democratic camps in the Legislative Council dispute on the proposed changes to the rules and procedures of the Legislative Council meetings reflected the limited role and leadership of the chief executive in solving political disputes.⁸² Perhaps Lam has to review and map out a stronger leadership for building Hong Kong for a new era to deal with various governance crises. A strong political determination to balance all the interests of the political actors and strong adherence to public aspirations will make Lam a different chief executive from her predecessors. There are opportunities for Lam to develop a stronger and more popular leadership and to be different from her predecessors. The huge fiscal reserve of the Hong Kong government allows more generous government expenditure on various social spheres to alleviate social problems of various sorts. China's Belt and Road Initiative and the opening of the mega bridge linking up three cities in the Bay Area may provide economic opportunities for investment and employment. After all, Lam's softer personality than her predecessor may enhance her political charisma, hence the leadership to govern.

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82 *South China Morning Post*, 13 December 2017.

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Biographical Note

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