

The Official Mind of British Post-Imperialism: Influencing Parliamentary Opinions during the Anglo-Chinese Negotiations on the Future of Hong Kong, 1982-84.

Abstract (200 words):

Based on newly declassified archival sources, the author argues that parliamentary approval was a major British negotiation strategy during negotiations over the future of Hong Kong. British diplomats insisted to their Chinese counterparts that any agreement on the Future of Hong Kong be subject to parliamentary approval, though such pre-condition was a political and not a legal one. The role of Parliament was manipulated domestically to avoid public scrutiny. Through a series of briefings, the FCO discouraged parliamentarians from discussing or raising questions about the future of Hong Kong for fear of damaging confidence. The approval of Hongkongers, the majority of whom wanted to remain part of the British Empire was originally a prerequisite for the joint agreement. This condition was dropped in the later stages of negotiations when Hongkongers' wishes became unattainable in the face of the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s threat to take unilateral action on Hong Kong, and Ministers even openly discredited voices from Hong Kong. Eventually, Parliament approved the Joint Declaration on the basis of an unsound and tokenistic consultation of the opinion of Hongkongers. In an examination of the official mind in the post-imperial epoch, this paper offers new perspectives on the role of Parliament in British foreign affairs.

Keywords:

Margaret Thatcher, UK-China relations, Handover of Hong Kong, Sino-British Joint Declaration, official mind.

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Introduction

This essay considers the implications of the British negotiation strategy of insisting on British parliamentary approval of the final agreement on the future of Hong Kong. The emphasis on parliamentary approval of the final bilateral agreement on Hong Kong was a constitutional trickery, and the opinions of Hong Kong representatives were dismissed because they got in the way of the FCO's plans for Hong Kong. Open discussions on the future of Hong Kong were actively discouraged through a series of FCO briefings with parliamentarians, because public discussions were believed to have the potential to negatively affect confidence in Hong Kong and the outcome of the negotiations with PRC officials. There were no elected representatives to speak for Hongkongers during the negotiations.ⁱ Nonetheless, the unofficial members of the Hong Kong Executive Council, under the leadership of Sze-yuen Chung, the Senior member of the Executive and Legislative Councils, conveyed the views of Hongkongers to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe, and FCO civil servants through a series of meetings.ⁱⁱ In the end, Parliament approved the government's intention to sign the Joint Declaration and envisaged an overwhelmingly positive future for Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Parliamentary approval of the draft *Sino-British Joint Declaration* was based on an unsound consultation of public opinion in Hong Kong. In what follows, this essay explores the interplay between Parliament (in particular, the House of Commons as a body of political actors of different affiliations) and Government (comprised of the ruling majority in the House of Commons as well as the cabinet of ministers enjoying their confidence) in order to reconsider the role played by Parliament in foreign affairs decision making.

If Stephen Howe is right to argue for the importance of ‘metropolitan policy-making’ during the end of empire, it follows for us to consider what, from a constitutional and deliberative point of view, that process looks like.ⁱⁱⁱ Decisions about decolonisation, similar to decisions about colonisation before them, were often made by civil servants in the Colonial Office.^{iv} Changes in personnel and political complexion at ministerial level had variable effects upon the inclinations of Colonial Office civil servants at various stages of the decolonisation process. For Howe, the degree to which Colonial Office decisions were subjected to wider forms of pressure depended on the perceived importance of the issue within the colony itself, as well as pressure exerted from parliamentarians, private interest groups, journalists, foreign powers, and popular political movements in London.^v John Darwin’s work focuses on the governing inner elite, David Goldsworthy’s on the role of parliament and party leaders, and R.F. Holland’s on the changes in middle-class attitudes.^{vi} Yet, following Howe, we should consider a model in which these three areas interact because of an underlying assumption of decolonisation literature: these areas in British politics operate in a consensual model.^{vii} This essay will therefore look at the role of government ministers and diplomats in the Anglo-Chinese negotiations, and how it interacts with the parliamentarians’ general attitudes towards Hong Kong.

The ‘official mind’ refers to policy makers who had considerable influence over British imperial policy. The term was originally coined by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher in their investigation into the motives for British colonial expansion into Africa in the high Victorian period, when the British Empire was at its zenith. The official mind is comprised of three components: the civil servants in the Colonial Office and Foreign Office, the role of Parliament, and government ministers entrusted with the prerogatives of foreign affairs.^{viii} The institutions that formed the basis of the official mind argument exist to this day.

These components of the official mind of imperialism may be seen together to justify British policy in the world after the age of empire, as the official mind of post-imperialism, exemplified in the case of the transfer of sovereignty of British Hong Kong to the PRC. Following Robinson and Gallagher, this essay uses the official mind to encompass the gamut of political and bureaucratic institutions in the UK, including government ministers, civil servants, and Members of Parliament (MPs).^{ix}

Acts of state, encompassing foreign affairs, are concerns of the prerogative delegated not to Parliament as a voting group, but to ministers of the crown. Elected by their constituencies and responsible to the Parliament by convention, Secretaries of State for foreign affairs reach decisions in cabinet upon the advice of FCO civil servants.^x Parliament has facilitated many discussions about foreign affairs, particularly their financial aspects, but neither the Lords nor the Commons has ever determined them directly.^{xi} In the British official mind of post-imperialism on Hong Kong,^{xii} ambiguity over the role of Parliament was a delaying tactic during the Anglo-Chinese negotiations and a means of avoiding domestic scrutiny in the UK.

Materials and Methods

The author makes use of recently declassified sources to examine the perspectives of British government ministers, parliamentarians and political parties, and civil servants on the future of Hong Kong during the 1982-84 negotiations. Although the likelihood of historians ever gaining access to the internal papers of the PRC government remains small, newly available British documents from the period of the negotiations signal that scholarship on the negotiations over the future of Hong Kong need no longer suffer from a lack of available sources as it did prior to 2013. Previous work relies on personal reflections and public

statements from British government ministers, FCO diplomats, and Chinese officials.

Through sources from the National Archives in Kew, Margaret Thatcher Foundation, the Hong Kong Public Records Office, and the Churchill Archives in Cambridge, the People's History Museum archive in Manchester, and the Women's Library archive at London School of Economics, this essay is able to offer new perspectives on the Anglo-Chinese negotiations. These new sources enable historians to incorporate the issue of Hong Kong within the framework of British political history in a post-imperial epoch.

This essay is not concerned with the diplomatic history of Anglo-Chinese relations *per se*, or the negotiation process, about which there are plenty of well-written books. Rather, it is interested in the role of Hong Kong in British imperial and political history, and about the role of British parliamentary politics in Hong Kong's colonial history in the post-imperial period, both relatively under-researched areas. Building on existing writings on British Hong Kong's colonial history, transnational history within the framework of a metropole-periphery colonial relationship will address our understanding of these areas. The historiography of Hong Kong-London relations is relatively scarce compared to that of other colonies and that of other aspects of Hong Kong history. There are accounts such as that of Norman Miners which describes the reaction of the Hong Kong administration to British attempts to impose moral reform between the 1911 Chinese revolution and the Japanese invasion of 1941. Gavin Ure's work elucidates the Hong Kong government's limited policymaking capabilities based on new policies proposed by the Colonial Office or Hong Kong politicians between 1918 and 1958. Ray Yep's work explains the differences between Governor David Trench's Hong Kong administration and British diplomat stations in the PRC, and how despite these differences, Trench managed to gain London's support for his domestic policies during the 1967 Communist riots.^{xiii} Tai-lok Lui's book on the influence of Labour backbenchers in

1970s over the MacLehose reforms provides a fresh historiographical perspective on the role played by elected British politicians in shaping the domestic policies of Hong Kong.^{xiv} The lack of literature about this metropole-periphery relationship may be explained by Mark Hampton, who suggests that in the second half of the twentieth century, Hong Kong was viewed by the British government and public as a remote place with peripheral value to Britain.^{xv} This observation implies that there was not much parliamentary interest in Hong Kong during the period of the negotiations on the future of Hong Kong. These studies show there is potential for the role of British Parliament in Hong Kong-London relations after the post-war decolonisation years to be explored further.

Post-colonial historians tend to underplay the role of British colonists and overstress the contribution made by the local population; however, the story of Hong Kong does not fit neatly into the narratives of oppression by coloniser of the colonised. Scholarship on Hong Kong, particularly PRC-sponsored accounts, as Steve Tsang and John Carroll have pointed out, tend to downplay the colonial past of Hong Kong and stress its Chineseness.^{xvi} Were the Anglo-Chinese negotiations on Hong Kong an episode of British imperial history or the concluding chapter of the colonial history of Hong Kong? Winks writes that ‘much that was once viewed as Imperial history became the history of a national identity’.^{xvii} This essay seeks to reconcile these two seemingly distant strands of history.

Emphasis on parliamentary approval as a negotiation strategy

Percy Cradock, a sinologist who acted as the British chief negotiator of the agreement on the Future of Hong Kong, recalled in his memoirs that there were three main phases of negotiations regarding the future of Hong Kong. The first phase from October 1982 to July 1983 encompassed the struggle to have Chinese officials agree to commence talks at all.

During the second phase from July to October 1983, FCO negotiators attempted to retain a British administrative presence by conveying the importance of British presence in Hong Kong.^{xviii} British administration of Hong Kong was insisted upon by Thatcher in the first and second phases, but dropped in the third phase because the talks seemed to be on the verge of breaking down.^{xix} The third phase was from October 1983 onwards, ‘the stage of conditionality’, which moved forward the negotiations on the mutual understanding that, if the negotiators on both sides could make the Chinese proposals acceptable, the British government would be prepared to commend the result to parliament.^{xx} Cradock also outlined the limited prospects for an extension of British administration of Hong Kong beyond 1997 and subsequently convinced Thatcher to accept his negotiation strategy for both the second and third phases.^{xxi}

Yet, British negotiation strategy throughout the talks had been one of conditionality from the beginning of the formal negotiations, not only in the third phase, as Cradock claims in his memoir. With previous literature taking Cradock’s claim at face value, the role of Parliament appeared to have been overlooked. That it was important that the British Parliament find the outcome of the negotiations acceptable was emphasised to Chinese officials and Hongkongers.^{xxii} Thatcher spelt out the role of Parliament to PRC Premier Zhao Ziyang and Chinese Communist Party chairman Deng Xiaoping during first round of negotiations in September 1982. The Chinese leaders insisted the sovereignty of Hong Kong fall to them. Accepting this position meant an abrogation of the treaties that ceded and leased British Hong Kong by an Act of Parliament.^{xxiii} An FCO special study on Hong Kong elaborated on the need for an Act of Parliament ‘to sanction the relinquishment of sovereignty and any limitations specified in those arrangements on the powers of Parliament to legislate for Hong Kong or on the responsibility of HMG for the government of Hong Kong’. This

practice, since 1890, ‘may well have assumed the strength of a constitutional convention’.^{xxiv}

Thatcher further argued that an abrogation of the treaties alone was insufficient but hoped for the replacement of the previous treaties with a new treaty. Then, she said to Zhao,

if our two governments could agree [to] defined agreements about the future administration and control of Hong Kong, and I was satisfied that they would work, that they would command confidence, and that they were acceptable to the people of Hong Kong, and if I could justify them to the British Parliament, there would then be a new situation in which I could *consider* the question of sovereignty.^{xxv}

She reiterated this position at her meeting with Deng Xiaoping the next morning.^{xxvi}

PRC officials must have felt that they held all the cards. PRC officials delayed the bilateral negotiations on the future of Hong Kong, stating formally to their British counterparts that a precondition for talks was a British recognition that the PRC would have sovereignty over British Hong Kong in 1997.^{xxvii} They launched a ‘propaganda campaign designed to persuade Hongkongers of the inevitability of Chinese sovereignty’, threatening Thatcher that the PRC ‘may publicise its “plan” for Hong Kong’ during the People’s Congress meeting’, in June 1983.^{xxviii} Cradock suggested, the ceding of British sovereignty over Hong Kong Island and Kowloon might be turned into a ‘working hypothesis’ to get discussions started. Thatcher wrote on Cradock’s report, ‘[c]an’t we just use *their* technique and indicate that we gave them a *signal* in our opening statement [in September 1982] about *sovereignty*, bearing in mind that I have to put it through Parliament *and* with as little trouble as possible for *all* our sakes’.^{xxix} Both British negotiators and their Chinese counterparts attempted to use pre-conditions for the talks to their advantage.

The PRC’s ability to walk away from the talks and impose their unilateral plans on Hong Kong was its trump card. It was an option that Britain could ill-afford. FCO diplomats believed a unilateral declaration by the PRC of their plan for Hong Kong would undermine

confidence in the colony. It risked demoralising Hongkongers and negatively impacting investor confidence in Hong Kong— a mass exodus of capital from Hong Kong defeats the purpose of British Hong Kong as an entrepôt in the Far East. On 10 March 1983, Thatcher proposed, and the cabinet accepted, to go one step further than the formula of conditionality in September 1982. Thatcher wrote to Deng from a draft prepared by Cradock:

[...] provided that formal agreement could be reached on arrangements for maintaining the stability and prosperity of the colony which were satisfactory to the people of Hong Kong and to the British Government as well as to the Government of China, she would be prepared, subject to the agreement of the Cabinet, to *recommend* to Parliament that sovereignty over the whole of Hong Kong should be transferred to China.^{xxx}

FCO civil servants accented the importance of briefing the Opposition. Politicians ‘should understand that we do not rule out a move on sovereignty but that this would be subject to the very strong proviso that first an agreement must be worked out which would be acceptable to Parliament and the people of Hong Kong’.^{xxxi}

In October 1983, the conditionality in Thatcher’s letter to Deng in March 1983 was extended from that of sovereignty to the right of administration.^{xxxii} Thatcher agreed to Cradock’s and Howe’s suggestion that Britain ‘could say in effect that if arrangements could be devised to ensure the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong while giving the Chinese the right of administration we would be prepared to recommend such arrangements to Parliament’.^{xxxiii} The opinion of Hongkongers was entirely removed from consideration in this prescription. In contrast, Cradock claimed at a House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee public evidence session in 1993 that, during each stage of the negotiations, British negotiators had ‘said “subject to the agreement of the people of Hong Kong”, if you remember. That came in in every letter that was sent, so I do not deny that for a moment’.^{xxxiv}

By this stage, the condition that the outcome of the negotiation had to be acceptable to Parliament was a constitutional sleight of hand, which only appeared to delay an outcome on the question of the future of Hong Kong. The repeated attempts by British negotiators to 'educate' their Chinese counterparts on the importance of British administration in Hong Kong beyond 1997 failed. However weak the British position had become, FCO diplomats still wanted to replace the old treaties with a new one that would ensure the confidence and prosperity of Hong Kong. Throughout all stages of the negotiation, British negotiators used Parliament as a condition to achieve this goal. The other condition that the agreement had to be acceptable by Hongkongers was removed at the last stage of negotiation together with the continuation of British administration of Hong Kong. British sovereignty over Hong Kong Island and Kowloon was hard to retain, but it might be exchanged for a more realistic position: British administration of Hong Kong beyond 1997, and later in the negotiations, some sort of guarantee that Hong Kong would remain unchanged for fifty years from 1997.

It is difficult to show whether FCO diplomats persuaded their ministers to concede British sovereignty over Hong Kong, since there is always a possibility that subordinate staff simply construct their advice on the assumption that these are the preferences of their superiors. Yet the geopolitical reality of Anglo-Chinese relations and the lack of British leverage in the negotiations was clear. Thatcher seemed to have accepted this reality in the second half of the negotiations by agreeing to relinquish British sovereignty as well as administration of Hong Kong, in exchange for a more feasible bargain on Hong Kong.

The tactic of misleading the PRC into thinking that Thatcher's Government did not have total control over the outcome of the negotiations may have had limited success. It brought the PRC back on the negotiating table and may have influenced the PRC's position

from one of total control over Hong Kong to a written agreement that encompassed the principles of ‘Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong’ and ‘One Country, Two Systems’ until 2047. Despite the Conservative majority in the Parliament, efforts were put into briefing parliamentarians to ensure compliance with the plans of FCO civil servants.

Defining the role of Parliament

Opposition and Conservative backbench opinion on Hong Kong had to be carefully managed. FCO diplomats feared that some opinions could, potentially, have an adverse effect on the work of FCO negotiators: or risk irritating PRC officials, or causing panic in Hong Kong. The FCO wrote in a letter to the Prime Minister’s Office in April 1983 that Francis Pym, the Foreign Secretary before Howe, would like to brief the Opposition on Privy Councillor terms ‘on all issues, including that of sovereignty’ fairly soon.^{xxxv}

His aims would be on the one hand to discourage them, and their backbenchers, from raising points in the House or outside which could damage confidence in Hong Kong; and on the other to try to build up a responsible attitude among the Opposition against the time when the question of Hong Kong comes before the House.^{xxxvi}

Pym’s desire was likely based on the importance Thatcher and the FCO diplomats placed on the Parliament in the bilateral exchanges. The emphasis on the role of Parliament was echoed by Thatcher’s letter in March 1983, which was deliberately leaked by the Chinese officials as part of their United Front propaganda campaign. Therefore, Pym wrote, ‘it was important that leading members of the Opposition should know this [condition of Parliamentary approval]’.^{xxxvii}

Briefing sessions for Conservative backbenchers and the Opposition began in 1983. The briefings stressed the importance of confidentiality and discouraged open discussions of the future of Hong Kong. In July 1983, before briefing the Opposition, FCO Minister Richard Luce replied to a written question submitted by Labour MP Robert Parry. The goal ‘to reach

an agreement on the future of Hong Kong acceptable to all parties concerned’, Luce explained, was ‘more likely to be achieved if the details of the talks [with Chinese government] remain confidential’, even to backbenchers.^{xxxviii} The FCO believed it was ‘preferable if public and parliamentary interest [was] kept to [a] minimum’.^{xxxix} In the FCO briefing for opposition leaders, officials stressed above all the confidentiality of the talks. Parliamentarians were instructed that it was ‘[i]mportant nothing [is] said to affect Hong Kong confidence and/or complicate [the] negotiators’ task’.^{xl} The briefing of a selected group of Conservative backbenchers with special interests or connections with Hong Kong was along the same lines.^{xli} In another briefing for the cross-party House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, the FCO civil servants hoped parliamentarians would understand the delicacy of the problem and fragility of the confidence in Hong Kong;^{xlii} the FCO reiterated the importance of avoiding public statements that might affect confidence in Hong Kong or complicate the negotiations.^{xliii} The relative silence on the issue of the future of Hong Kong from parliamentarians during the negotiation period was no accident. MPs across the political spectrum largely followed the wishes of the FCO.

The parliamentary briefings emphasised that FCO negotiators had achieved the best possible outcome. FCO officials made the case to the Opposition that the British negotiation team conceded nothing: FCO negotiators ‘[s]tressed [the] need for arrangements after 1997, [to be] acceptable to Parliament, China and Hong Kong. Only then could recommendations on sovereignty be put to Parliament’.^{xliv} The FCO briefings emphasised that the PRC government was ‘tough on substance’ and demanded sovereignty over the whole of Hong Kong: the PRC insisted on their Special Administrative Region (SAR) plan for Hong Kong during the negotiations.^{xlv} However, the FCO briefing noted, the details of the PRC’s plan was incomplete and Hongkongers were sceptical. Then, in October 1983, per Cradock’s

advice, Thatcher proposed, ‘without prejudice to discuss measures to ensure stability/prosperity on [the] basis of Chinese proposals’. Thatcher’s proposal was well-received by Chinese leaders, according to the briefings.^{xlvi} The British negotiators then moved to discuss the content of the agreement so that British sovereignty of Hong Kong might be exchanged for a satisfactory agreement.

After the FCO briefed the opposition leaders, Labour MP Andrew Faulds asked a House of Commons Library specialist about the role, if any, of Parliament in the transfer of Hong Kong to the PRC. The Commons Library researcher indicated that the condition of parliamentary approval with regard to the Hong Kong agreement was not a legal or constitutional requirement, but a political one. In Britain, international treaties do not require ratification by Parliament. Parliamentary debate was simply a practical means by which parliamentarians would be able to express their views on an international agreement if they wished.^{xlvii}

Parliament does not hold a legal veto over the international dealings and agreements of [Her Majesty’s Government (HMG)]. The Government is restrained by the domestic political need to retain the confidence of the House of Commons. On the other hand, Britain’s power to control the future of Hong Kong is strictly limited by the physical facts of the case. So while the Government would no doubt seek the approval of the House for any agreement reached with the Chinese, they would be in a very strong position to put it to the House that this was the best that could be achieved and that even if the agreement was less than satisfactory it would be irresponsible for the House to charge the Government to withdraw from it.^{xlviii}

The Parliament in fact had limited power over matters concerning Britain’s foreign affairs and the parliamentarians would likely have to accept the agreement if the outcome was presented as the best that could be achieved by Thatcher’s Conservative government. The ‘only real parliamentary barrier is the basic difficulty for [Thatcher’s Conservative government] in doing something the House [was] seriously determined shall not happen’.^{xlix}

The condition of British parliamentary approval of the outcome of Anglo-Chinese negotiations over Hong Kong, set by Thatcher and conveyed to the Chinese officials, upon the advice of the FCO civil servants, was perhaps only a political one. It hinged on the Chinese officials' lack of understanding of the British democratic system and was an attempt to gain some leverage for the Hong Kong agreement. Thatcher and the FCO negotiators implied through this requirement that they did not have full control over the outcome of the negotiations because the final agreement would be subject to Parliament's approval. In reality, Parliament had limited power over British foreign affairs. Parliamentarians did not have constitutional power to veto the agreement, and disapproval would have been difficult to justify. The Government restricted open debate by the opposition and Conservative backbenchers through the many briefing sessions and the portrayal of the agreement as the best that could be achieved.

The extent of Thatcher's sympathy towards Hongkongers

Thatcher felt Britain had a special responsibility towards her imperial subjects. She expressed this view internally to those working for her and externally to her Chinese counterparts. When Foreign Secretary Pym wrote to Thatcher that '[British ministers and negotiators] must not allow our consideration for the "wishes of the [Hong Kong] people" to develop into acceptance of the paramountcy of the will of the population'.ⁱ Thatcher was outraged: 'It is *not* a question of *new* acceptance of responsibility. WE HAVE IT ALREADY BY VIRTUE OF THE TREATIES'.ⁱⁱ She said to Zhao in Peking that '[t]he British Government also had a principle [...] about duty to those who for 140 years had put their faith, their future, and their investment in Hong Kong under British administration'.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, in reply to Deng's accusation at their meeting that Britain was being imperialist in relation to Hong Kong, Thatcher said that '[h]er duty, which she felt deeply, was to reach a

result acceptable to the people of Hong Kong. Britain was not a colonialist country: we had moved beyond that. Britain simply wanted to carry out her moral duty to Hong Kong'.^{liii} Thatcher consulted the Hong Kong Unofficial members of the Executive and Legislative Councils (UMELCO) before every round of negotiations, committing to the wishes of Hongkongers for the preservation of British administration in Hong Kong until the talks finally threatened to break down in October 1983.^{liv}

As Hongkongers relied on Britain for their protection, the British negotiation strategy had to be carefully crafted so that the UK could at least 'be seen as to have negotiated against Chinese interference'.^{lv} The implication of a unilateral withdrawal by Britain from the talks was more sinister. The PRC would, after such a British withdrawal, impose its plans on incorporating Hong Kong into its territory. Subsequently, Hongkongers would likely demand entry into the UK.^{lvi} It was not a political risk that Thatcher and her ministers were prepared to take.^{lvii} The FCO conceded that British withdrawal 'could be acceptable only as a last resort, if all other attempts to reach an accommodation with the PRC had failed'.^{lviii} Besides, 'unless the new constitutional arrangements for the territory were acceptable to the majority of the inhabitants and there was reasonable protection for British investment', the FCO wrote, the UK 'would be seen as having mishandled the situation and failed to protect the interests of the territory'.^{lix} 'No deal' was not a feasible option due to possible domestic and diplomatic ramifications.

Despite Thatcher's strong rhetoric of responsibility and duty towards Hongkongers, the extent of her sympathies towards them stopped short of allowing British-Hongkongers to emigrate to the UK if such was their wish— Thatcher would not risk potentially irritating her anti-immigration voter base. The *Immigration Act 1971* excluded the majority of Citizens of

United Kingdom and Colonies from settling in the UK on the basis of one's 'patriality', the principle of which British citizenship was then defined in the *British Nationality Act of 1981*. As the PRC only accepts ethnic-Chinese Hongkongers as Chinese Nationals, the potential statelessness of a small number of non-Chinese ethnic minorities who had lived in Hong Kong for generations was the only pressing immigration concern arising from the negotiations. Apart from the hundreds of thousands of ethnic-Chinese Hongkongers that emigrated abroad before 1997 through their own means, British-Hongkongers were handed over to the PRC along with British Hong Kong territory.

Thatcher's uncompromising stance in the early stages of the Anglo-Chinese negotiations must also be understood in the wider political context. In the early half of 1982, Britain entered an armed conflict to defend the self-determination of a small group of British dependent territories' citizens in the Falkland Islands. Thatcher's explicit commitment to the Falkland Islanders' wish to self-govern made it difficult for Britain to surrender Hongkongers without at least appearing to consult them. After the British victory in the Falklands war in the summer of 1982 and Thatcher's success in the summer 1983 snap general election that resulted in a Conservative landslide majority of 114 seats, agreeing to surrender the permanent British territories of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula at the very beginning of the negotiation process would most likely have been seen as a major diplomatic and political failure, going against Thatcher's 'Iron Lady' image.

The British Government tested the acceptability of the draft agreement in Hong Kong with a mixture of passive and active measures, through an outdated public consultation and a series of meetings with Hong Kong representatives. The objectives of the tests were two-fold: first, to seek confirmation that the draft agreement was acceptable to Hongkongers; and

second, to provide ministers and Parliament with an analysis of opinion in Hong Kong. On this basis, decisions could be taken on whether the agreement should be signed.^{lx}

The invitation to comment on the draft joint agreement was couched in general terms because Thatcher's cabinet ministers agreed with FCO advice that inviting answers to specific questions 'would have severe disadvantages'. It would 'lend itself to the statistical analysis of "yes" votes as against "no" votes', and would thus give the impression to the Chinese officials that the process amounted to a referendum, which the PRC explicitly opposed.^{lxi} A referendum was ruled out, according to the FCO, as a result of the PRC's objections as well as 'the difficulty of educating the population as a whole in the complexities of the issue': '[w]ithout a clear understanding of the issues a referendum would be an uncertain and contentious instrument'.^{lxii} Just as the FCO diplomats claimed they had to educate Chinese officials on the importance of British administration for business confidence in Hong Kong during the negotiation process,^{lxiii} so they also conjectured that Hongkongers equally had to be educated on the issues concerning their future. This led the British to take a flawed approach in their efforts to assess the views of Hongkongers on the draft Anglo-Chinese agreement, instead of resorting to an anonymous referendum or reaching out to existing representative bodies including the Executive Council, the Legislative Council, and the Urban Councils.^{lxiv} Based on these actions, one could argue the FCO was less than sincere in their desire to consult Hongkongers.

FCO diplomats hoped the agreement would be approved by the members of the Hong Kong Executive Council through a period of close consultation as the content of the agreement developed. Hong Kong Governor Edward Youde suggested using indirect

consultation as the main method of gleaning the opinions of Hongkongers. He justified that the UMELCO was a reliable source of information in writing:

[t]he first and most readily accessible source is to be found in the [UMELCO]. They cover a wide range of social, political and commercial/industrial interests. They can therefore represent, collectively and responsibly, an equally wide range of Hong Kong opinion. This source can be supplemented by the regular contact which takes place between senior officials in the Government and influential members of the community.^{lxv}

Far from listening to Hongkongers' views during the meetings as Thatcher initially hoped and imagined, FCO officials believed further persuasion through meetings with the Executive Council in London was necessary to secure their endorsement of the draft Sino-British Joint Declaration. Such endorsement from UMELCO was expected to increase the chance of securing a generally favourable reception in Hong Kong.^{lxvi}

However, if members of the Hong Kong Executive and Legislative Councils did not approve the agreement, the FCO's back up strategy was to delegitimise their points of view. Regarding potential debates in the Legislative Council on the draft agreement, the FCO commented, 'it might be necessary to indicate that the assessment itself and not [the Legislative Council's] views on it represent the authoritative view of the Hong Kong community'.^{lxvii} Foreign Secretary Howe eventually resorted to this strategy in May 1984. Howe dismissed the opinion of UMELCO when these Hongkongers lobbied political actors outside the British Government by issuing a public statement to all British MPs and the British media. The statement concerns the shortcomings of the negotiations and requested British reassurance on the rights of British nationals in Hong Kong. Howe postulated that the Hong Kong representatives were not elected and therefore were not representative of the opinion of Hongkongers.^{lxviii} Howe's comments were ironic. The fear that the Chinese leadership would become irritated with Britain was the reason why there were limited

democratic developments in Hong Kong before the 1980s; then, it had become an excuse to undermine freely expressed opinions about the future of Hong Kong during the negotiations..

The consultation valued the opinions of ‘communities’ and ‘groups’ over those of individuals. The Assessment Office, especially appointed by Foreign Secretary Howe to gather opinions in Hong Kong, commented on the consultation method. ‘Whilst letters from individuals are of importance, especially in their expression of personal anxiety and detailed comments’, the Assessment Office claimed, ‘there can be no doubt that the response from representative bodies, organisations and groups of all kinds carry greater weight’.^{lxxix} A number of individual written submissions were disregarded because they were counted as not having a clear stance on whether they accepted the agreement or not.^{lxxx} Submissions from groups were given equal weighting despite the differences in the number of members and overlapping membership. The assessment made use of direct and indirect sources. Direct sources included submissions from individuals, representative bodies, organisations, professional, pressure and community service groups, and survey findings. Indirect sources included daily newspapers, magazines, and periodicals, public affairs programmes on radio and television, and survey findings as reported in the media.^{lxxxi} As several Peking-backed United Front media and community groups operated in Hong Kong to sway public opinion in favour of handing over British sovereignty of Hong Kong to the PRC, the consultation was bound to find approval.

In the end, only around one out of every three thousand people in Hong Kong submitted their views on the draft agreement to the Assessment Office,^{lxxxii} far fewer people than turn out to vote at elections in democratic societies. Various factors contributed to the low level of submissions. The draft Joint Declaration could not be altered; thus, the individual

or group submissions would have no effect on the content of the agreement. It was said, although without definite guarantees, that submissions would contribute to the negotiations in the transition period from 1984 to 1997. The alternative to the agreement was no agreement at all, which meant a unilateral declaration by the PRC of their plans on Hong Kong without any guarantee of the provisions outlined in the draft agreement. As it was not made explicit in the call for submissions that the report of the Assessment Office would provide a numerical summary of the people who supported or disapproved of the draft agreement, Hongkongers did not find it necessary to write to the Assessment Office if their views had already been reflected in the media or by the organisations or groups to which they had access.^{lxxiii} Some feared political repercussion by the PRC in the future as the assessment required the personal details of those who submitted their views. The reassurance of the Assessment Office that individual submissions would be destroyed after the consultations came at a later stage, and copies of group submissions are still kept in the Hong Kong Public Records Office.^{lxxiv} British officials deliberately or naively overlooked the political situation of millions of Hongkongers who had escaped from Communist PRC to build a new life in Hong Kong, and their very real fears of retaliation once British Hong Kong was handed over to Chinese rule in 1997. Under these circumstances, Hongkongers may be said to have been forced to accept the Joint Declaration. The fact that an independent Monitoring Team was set up appeared to be the FCO's attempt to give the appearance of soliciting the uncensored views of Hongkongers, again, to ensure Parliament's acceptance of the agreement.

In the absence of meaningful democratic elections and representative politics, public consultations to sound out public opinion of Hong Kong Government policies has been a feature of policy making in colonial Hong Kong.^{lxxv} The existence of such a tradition in the colonial context does not make it less astonishing that a consultation method normally applied

to local planning permissions in the UK formed the basis of a colony's future, especially after the 'winds of change' for decolonisation in which a people's right to self-determination in other British colonies were honoured.

Yet the inadequacy of the consultation on the future of Hong Kong does have precedents in colonial history. Future historians of the handover of Hong Kong need to look beyond the more convenient comparisons used by contemporaries in the 1980s: Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands.^{lxxvi} Beyond the British Empire, the tripartite relationship between the declining Dutch empire, West Papuans, and Indonesia could shed more light on the dynamics of imperial decline.^{lxxvii} West Papuan nationalism emerged in the context of the Dutch-Indonesian struggle for the sovereignty of West Papua. Papuan opinion was ignored when Indonesia annexed the territory in 1962-63.^{lxxviii} The *New York Agreement* between Indonesia and the Netherlands made the transfer of West Papua conditional on an act of free choice by the inhabitants. In the end, the consultation was not conducted through secret ballot, but rather based on traditional village assembly. The justification for the method was similar to that in Hong Kong: as Hongkongers were perceived to be incapable of informing themselves about how to vote, so were the Papuans considered too primitive to vote.^{lxxix} Other comparisons may be found. For public international lawyers Thomas Franck and Paul Hoffman, inconsistencies may be found in the application of self-determination principles in disputed colonial territories including Goa, Western Sahara, Belize, Walvis Bay, and East Timor.^{lxxx}

In comparison with other British colonies that preferred British colonial rule over their incorporation into a geographically proximate state, Hong Kong's transition was absurd and anachronistic because it lacked a genuine measure of the consent of the population being

transferred. In Gibraltar and Falkland Islands, the opinions of the local population were taken far more seriously. The Falkland crisis in 1982 established that it was the self-determination of a people to be under British rule if this was their wish.^{lxxxix} The measurement of public opinion in Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands were both conducted by referendum. Furthermore, public and parliamentary opinion in Britain would not tolerate Gibraltar's involuntary transfer to Spanish sovereignty.^{lxxxix} In the 1960s, pressure in Parliament transformed the condition under which the Falkland Islands' sovereignty could be transferred to Argentina from one based on the judgement of the Labour Government to one predicated on the requirement that the islanders' consent would first be sought.^{lxxxix} British governments could not resist the Falkland Islanders' well-organised parliamentary pressure, Harrison notes, and the relevant ministers failed to whip up sufficient concessions to Argentina from prime minister, the cabinet, or the public.^{lxxxix} Compared with the Falkland Islanders, Hongkongers exerted limited pressure on the British Parliament or public regarding their future. In their interactions with the 'official mind', Hongkongers expressed their grievances through available official channels with ministers and FCO officials and failed to organise meaningful lobbying efforts to ally with sympathetic parliamentarians.

British views on the role of the wishes of Hongkongers differed depending on the stage of the negotiations. The priorities of the FCO, under different ministers, consistently diverged from Thatcher's. After the British negotiators dropped their previous insistence on British administration in Hong Kong, differences emerged between the FCO diplomats and Hong Kong officials as to what constituted the best way forward for Hong Kong. Thatcher was driven by her sympathies with Hongkongers and her convictions of anti-authoritarianism and anti-Communism. However, Thatcher's feelings never extended to any actual measures, such as a small change in the British immigration system to safeguard the future of individual

Hongkongers. A potential influx of 3 million ethnic Chinese British National (Overseas) citizens from Hong Kong into the UK was not yet a dominant issue at Cabinet meetings during the bilateral negotiations. British thinking at the time was that the value of Hong Kong lay in international confidence in Hong Kong's economic and judiciary system. Since that was, in the British perspective, safeguarded by the *Joint Declaration* at least until 2047, it followed that Hong Kong-British would prefer to stay in Hong Kong than to emigrate. The offer of UK settlement rights to a limited elite group of Hongkongers did materialise in 1990, in response to heightened anxiety in Hong Kong after the Tiananmen Massacre, when 50,000 Hong Kong families were offered settlement rights in the UK. In 2020, UK settlement rights was extended to all British-Hongkongers and their dependents via a new British National (Overseas) visa scheme, in response to the PRC's blatant breach of the *Sino-British Joint Declaration*. The *realpolitik* of UK-PRC dynamics at the negotiations forced Thatcher to become more pragmatic.^{lxxxv} Since the summer of 1983, Thatcher took a less prominent role in the negotiations, allowing Howe to become the British government's face of negotiations. After the joint agreement was drafted, the opinions of Hongkongers were collected through the flawed consultation process, thereby allowing the draft agreement to be pushed through in Parliament.

Imagining the future of Hong Kong

Parliamentarians accepted that Britain had some responsibilities towards Hongkongers, although Hongkongers were not wholly British in their opinion. The perceived British responsibilities depended on the political parties' understanding of the degree to which Hongkongers would continue to enjoy their rights under the PRC and whether the parliamentarians believed that the ethnic origin of Hongkongers was a more significant determinant of the views of Hongkongers than individual allegiance and

motives. Walter Easey's briefing for the Labour Party's Asia Sub-committee asserted that Hongkongers' allegiance to British rule was as a result of practical considerations rather than a genuine feeling of Britishness. 'The allegiance of the [Hong Kong] Chinese population to British rule is highly problematic', Easey wrote, because it was 'more based on anti-communism than positive like or respect for the colonial government'.²²⁶ Labour MP Stan Newens commented that there were not too many parallels between Hong Kong and the Falkland Islands as '[e]thnic origins had to be taken into account, Hong Kong was a city of China'.²²⁷ Another Labour MP, Ernie Roberts, concurred with Newens at the meeting that 'Hong Kong was not British'.²²⁸ Similarly, it emerged at this time that Thatcher and FCO civil servants were prepared to recognise the interests of Hongkongers on the condition that they were not British. In a convenient evaluation of Britain's negotiation strategy, the FCO concluded that Hongkongers did not have strong emotional ties to the UK. Thatcher underlined on the FCO briefing to show her understanding:

The majority are either fairly recent immigrants from China or their children. They are likely to see themselves as still primarily Chinese, although they do not wish to live under the Communist system. Thus the British connection is mainly of value to them in providing an umbrella under which they can carry on their profitable economic activity in Hong Kong. They are less likely to feel an emotional attachment to the UK. But they would need to be fully assured that British administration would continue with sufficient guarantees to safeguard their freedom and livelihood.²²⁹

British politicians, such as Thatcher, who thought Hongkongers were a separate people from the inhabitants of PRC, perhaps saw Britain as a protector of the rights of Hongkongers, instead of solely the protector of British nationals in Hong Kong.

The House of Commons debate over the government's intention to approve the Hong Kong Agreement took place on 5 December 1984. The parliamentary motion to approve the government's intention to sign the Joint Declaration was passed without dissent: a consensus between the government and opposition frontbenchers was reached, so a vote was not required. Not only was there an overwhelming consensus to approve the bilateral agreement,

the Parliament also remained optimistic on the likelihood of PRC fulfilling its obligations in the Joint Declaration until 2047.

The debate was coloured by hope and optimism. Parliamentarians in both Conservative and Labour parties were confident that areas of uncertainty in the Joint Declaration, such as whether the PRC would abide by the terms of the agreement, could be overcome. Most MPs on both sides of the House who spoke that evening were confident that the PRC government would stick to the agreement, because they believed that maintaining the prosperity of Hong Kong was in the PRC's economic self-interest. MPs were convinced that the smooth transfer of Hong Kong to the PRC would aid the reunification agenda of the PRC government, which included Macau and Taiwan, so it was logical that the PRC would stick to the agreement.^{lxxxvi} Although there was no 'absolute certainty in relations between sovereign states', Foreign Secretary Howe claimed, parliamentarians could 'have confidence that the agreement will be observed'.^{lxxxvii} Howe's comment assumed that the PRC would be a rational actor in the international arena and that the wellbeing and freedom enjoyed by Hongkongers were in the self-interest of the PRC. For example, that the PRC 'do not want to lose any brownie points over the next 12 years',^{lxxxviii} and that 'if [the PRC] were to intervene in the day-to-day affairs of Hong Kong after 1997 it would risk the collapse of a structure which brings benefits not only to the people of Hong Kong but to the people of China'.^{lxxxix} These positive remarks in the Commons chamber are in stark contrast with the realist remarks behind the closed doors of the FCO earlier, when Howe and Cradock acknowledged that they were dealing with a nationalist PRC who was determined to take Hong Kong even if it was empty of its inhabitants.^{xc}

The optimism regarding the new Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership under Deng in the PRC explained the Opposition's statements that the PRC would honour the agreement on the future of Hong Kong. The confidence exhibited was based on a linear projection of the economy of the PRC and the belief that economic modernisation of the PRC would, eventually, lead to political liberalisation. At this point in history, this was a popular view globally; works by political scientists Seymour Martin Lipset and Samuel Huntington exemplify the global optimism about free trade and liberalisation of the time. Inspired by Max Weber's idea that economic modernisation triggers cultural and value change, Lipset's political theory on democratisation suggests that economic development generates a set of social and political changes in the society that produces democracy.^{xcv} Statements such as that by Conservative MP Peter Blaker, reflected this line of thinking: 'I cannot say that that trend [of economic growth] is irreversible, but it is much more likely that the tendency towards liberalisation will continue rather than be reversed. I think that [the PRC] is likely to be successful'.^{xcvii}

The Maoist era was seen merely as an episode of the CCP's fanaticism, and most politicians were optimistic that Deng would put the PRC back on a rational path of development. In a briefing paper on the PRC, Michael Foot, the leader of the Labour party, expressed his view that '[the CCP] plenum of June 1981 acknowledged Mao's early achievements but dismissed his post-1955 ideas as "erroneous Left theses" and "tragic errors"'.^{xcviii} The CCP Party Congress in 1982 was 'more consistent in its rejection of Maoism', Foot wrote that the CCP portrayed itself as 'emerging from the chaos of Mao's later years and leading China on a pragmatic path'.^{xcix} Only a few politicians, such as Thatcher, were sceptical of the trustworthiness of Communist leadership.^{xcv}

Such rosy views about Hong Kong's future as a Special Administrative Region of the PRC were facilitated by the FCO's demand that nothing which could undermine confidence in Hong Kong should be said, and the wishful thinking on the part of political parties and individuals. Although FCO chief negotiator Cradock and Foreign Secretary Howe were in agreement that the issue of Hong Kong was a nationalistic one for the PRC, Howe presented it as an economic issue in the House of Commons.

Conclusion

Conditionality was a strategy throughout the negotiation process for both British negotiators and Chinese officials. Previous literature focused on the conditionality posed by the PRC and overlooked the implicit British condition.^{xvii} British negotiators used parliamentary acceptance as a precondition for any bilateral agreement, whereas Chinese officials made the acceptance of Chinese sovereignty and the absence of any lingering British influence in Hong Kong a precondition for starting talks. The effect of the British conditionality of 'parliamentary approval' of the *Joint Declaration* as a negotiation strategy is beyond the scope of this paper; the extent to which the Chinese responded to this condition warrants detailed research when papers at the Chinese leadership level become available. The significance of the British conditionality lies in a modern liberal democracy actively censoring its elected representatives and stopping them discussing the future of one of its few remaining colonies, in the unusual circumstance by which the colony is handed over to another sovereignty instead of gaining independence by the guiding principle of self-determination.

More generally, this paper calls into question the Eurocentric categorisation of the second half of the twentieth century as a post-imperialism epoch. Although former European colonies gained independence during this period, the Chinese Communist Party consolidated

its control over peripheral regions informed by the *tianxia* imperial principle. Whilst the handover of Hong Kong signals the end of British imperial connection there, it is not the end of Hong Kong under imperialism.

Not only did FCO diplomats play a central role in the Anglo-Chinese negotiations, domestically, they went so far as to discourage open discussion of the issue. The FCO requested parliamentarians keep British public interest in the negotiations to a minimum and discouraged any discussions that might affect the confidence of Hongkongers about their possible fate under the rule of the PRC. By discouraging discussion of the negotiations and the future of Hong Kong, FCO diplomats succeeded in avoiding public scrutiny; for a colony that was perceived to have peripheral value to the British Empire in the second half of the twentieth century, this active dissuasion successfully kept the issue of the future of Hong Kong from the attention of British politicians and general public. Compared with the Falklands crisis, the future of Hong Kong did not become an issue that was decisive enough to enter the arena of British party politics.

This calls into question the assertion made in the literature that the British public and parliamentarians did not care about the future of Hong Kong.^{xcvii} The lack of public and parliamentary discussions was not as a result of, as Mark Roberti claimed, a lack of information.^{xcviii} Parliamentarians were in fact briefed in Privy Councillor terms by the FCO. Rather, what we have is a case of John Dickie's analysis on the declining influence of Parliament in foreign affairs as applied to the role of Westminster parliamentarians during the Anglo-Chinese negotiations.^{xcix} The side-lining of elected politicians in decision-making regarding foreign affairs was even more prominent during the Anglo-Chinese negotiations in

1982-84 compared with the post-war period of decolonisation, when senior politicians had a more salient role.^c

In the absence of informed dissent, parliamentary opinion on the future of Hong Kong was more unified than it would have been without the explicit censorship that the ‘official mind’ imposed on MPs. It was logical for the parliamentarians to remain silent when the negotiations were on-going until September 1984. Although it was impossible to tell the extent to which FCO briefings influenced politicians’ sympathies with the negotiators, the overwhelmingly positive remarks on the future of Hong Kong at the Commons debate to approve the government’s intention to sign the joint agreement suggest, to a certain extent, that the FCO’s strategy succeeded.

Britain was not entirely negotiating with the interests of Hongkongers in mind. Otherwise, the public statement published by Hong Kong UMELCO in May 1984 concerning the shortcomings of the negotiations and requesting reassurance on the rights of Hong Kong British Dependent Territories Citizens would not have been dismissed by Foreign Secretary Howe. The flawed methods used to assess the views of Hongkongers on the draft Joint Declaration did not follow either. This essay approaches Britain’s relative ignorance of the opinions of Hongkongers from the perspective of parliamentary opinion and the role of the FCO. If R.F. Holland is right in pointing out the importance of British middle-class opinion concerning colonial affairs, why, then, had public opinion in Britain favoured the transfer of Hong Kong to the PRC? Hongkongers exerted limited pressure on the British Parliament or public regarding its future. Hong Kong representatives utilised their access to Thatcher, Howe, and FCO civil servants, and did not use the public channels in Britain until it became apparent that the British ministers and negotiators had a drastically different plan for Hong

Kong in mind than theirs in May 1984. The official mind of post-imperialism on the future of Hong Kong appeared at first glance to be one of consensus between ministers, diplomats, and parliamentarians. Under the surface, this consensus was manufactured through the government's deliberate discouragement of open discussions, and ill-fated and inexperienced political lobbying efforts from Hong Kong that began months, if not years, too late.

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ⁱ Unofficial members of the Executive and Legislative Councils (UMELCO) is an acronym coined in the 1960s, when an office was opened to allow the unofficial members of the Executive and Legislative Councils to meet the public. UMELCO were appointed by the Governor to represent the most important sectors of the community. Suzanne Pepper, *Keeping democracy at bay*, (Lanham, MD.; Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), p.192.

ⁱⁱ Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), p.222.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, (Oxford: New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1993), p.11-2.

^{iv} The Foreign Office and Colonial Office merged in 1968 into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

^v Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, pp.11-2.

^{vi} John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); R.F. Holland, *European Decolonisation, 1918-1981*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 208-10.

^{vii} Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, pp.11-2.

^{viii} Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The official mind of imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1963).

^{ix} Robinson, Gallagher, Denny, *African and the Victorians*.

^x Dickie's book outlines the ways in which elected ministers relied on FCO civil servants to provide not information but also judgment, and often take up the judgements made by FCO civil servants. Meyer, a former diplomat, provides a different perspective, seeing the influence of the FCO declining as a result of the expanding influence of the Prime Minister's Office. See John Dickie, *The new mandarins*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Christopher Meyer, *Getting our way, 500 years of adventure and intrigue*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009).

^{xi} Throughout most of the Middle Ages and all of the modern period, foreign affairs were decided by the king in council. Cabinet government of the modern type slowly evolved, as the monarch gradually retired behind ministers. F.W. Maitland, *The Constitutional History of England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), especially pp. 380-7, 394-400. This was accompanied by reforms to the civil service and foundation of colonial and foreign offices. For this, see Norman Chester, *The English Administrative System 1780-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), especially pp. 237-43. For

imperial context, see C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830* (London; New York: Longman: 1989); Robinson, Gallagher, Denny, *African and the Victorians*.

^{xii} This phrase is inspired by Robinson and Gallagher's concept of the official mind of imperialism. See Robinson, Gallagher, Denny, *African and the Victorians*.

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^{xv} Mark Hampton, *Hong Kong and British Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015).

^{xvi} Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, p.x; John Carroll, *Edge of empires: Chinese elites and British colonials in Hong Kong*, (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2005), p.6.

^{xvii} Robin Winks, 'Future of Imperial History', *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V: Historiography*, Robin Winks (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.654.

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^{xx} Cradock, *Experiences of China*, pp.183, 188.

^{xxi} Robert Cottrell, *The end of Hong Kong: the secret diplomacy of imperial retreat*, (London: John Murray, 1993), p.71; Cradock, *Experiences of China*, p.191.

^{xxii} Coles to Thatcher, 29 June 1983, NA, PREM19/1055, f.13. MTF, [<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/139096>, accessed 20 February 2018].

^{xxiii} Wesley-Smith pointed out that constitutionally, no distinction was made between conquered, ceded, or leased colonial territories. The whole British Hong Kong was presumed to be ceded. Therefore, the Queen's inherent powers of governments, are limited only by restrictions imposed by Acts of Parliament. See Peter Wesley-Smith, 'Legal Limitations upon the Legislative Competence of the Hong Kong Legislature', *Hong Kong Law Journal*, 11, 1 (1981), p.4. The Orders in Council that incorporated Kowloon, and later the New Territories into British Hong Kong, are available in Albert P. Blaustein and Eric B. Blaustein (eds.), *Constitutions of Dependencies and Special Sovereignities*, vol. ii (New York: Oceana, 1976). FCO to Thatcher, September 1982, NA, PREM19/792, f.119. MTF.

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- ^{xxx} ‘Most Confidential Record to CC(83) 8th Conclusions, Minute 2’, 10 March 1983, NA, CAB128/77/3; ‘Conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet held at 10 Downing Street on Thursday 10 March 1983’, NA, CAB128/76/8.
- ^{xxxi} Holmes to Coles, 18 April 1983, NA, FCO40/1606, f.249. HKPRO.
- ^{xxxii} Howe to Thatcher, 4 October 1983, NA, PREM19/1058, f286. [<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/139330>, accessed 20 February 2018].
- ^{xxxiii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xxxiv} House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee, ‘Relations between the United Kingdom and China in the period up to and beyond 1997’, Minutes of Evidence (London: 1993).
- ^{xxxv} Holmes to Coles, 18 April 1983, NA, FCO40/1606, f.249. HKPRO.
- ^{xxxvi} *Ibid.*
- ^{xxxvii} *Ibid.*
- ^{xxxviii} Richard Luce, 18 July 1983, House of Commons Debates (HCD), vol.46, cc.43-4.

^{xxxix} Clift to Donald, , 31 March 1983, NA, FCO40/1606, f.197. HKPRO.

^{xl} Clift to Luce, 16 December 1983. NA, FCO40/1606, f.77. HKPRO.

^{xli} Hum to Luce, 31 October 1983, NA, FCO40/1606, f.59. HKPRO.

^{xlii} Ibid.

^{xliii} Ibid.

^{xliv} Clift to Luce, 16 December 1983. NA, FCO40/1606, f.77. HKPRO. Hum to Luce, 31 October 1983, NA, FCO40/1606, f.59. HKPRO.

^{xlv} Ibid.

^{xlvi} Ibid.

^{xlvii} Young to Faulds, 13 April 1984, London, Women's Library archive, London School of Economics, FAULDS/3/3/1/7.

^{xlviii} Ibid.

^{xlix} Ibid.

¹ Pym to Thatcher, 16 February 1983, NA, PERM19/1053. MTF, [<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/138799>, accessed 20 February 2018].

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ 'Record of a Meeting Between the Prime Minister and Premier Zhao Ziyang at the Great Hall of the People on Thursday 23 September 1982 at 0900', Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Baroness Thatcher, THCR1/10/39.

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ 'Record of a Meeting between the Prime Minister and Vice Chairman Deng Xiaoping at the Great Hall of the People on Friday 24 September at 1030am', Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Baroness Thatcher, THCR1/10/39.

^{lv} In Hong Kong, three opinion surveys were commissioned by the Reform Club, Baptist College, and the Hong Kong Observers between March and June 1982. These surveys produced an overwhelming public approval for a post-1997 British protection. Pepper, *Keeping democracy at bay*, p.194. For the consultations with the Hong Kong representatives, see also Chung, *Hong Kong's Journey to Reunification* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2001), pp.43-53, 60-92; Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street years* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), pp.259-62, 491; Cradock, *Experiences of China*, pp.174-82; Geoffrey Howe, *Conflict of loyalty* (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp.367-8; Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, p.222.

^{lv} Clift to Howe, 14 July 1983, NA, FCO40/1602, f.4. HKPRO.

^{lvi} Carrington to Thatcher, 9 March 1982, NA, PREM 19/789. MTF, [<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/138420>, accessed 20 February 2018].

^{lvii} At the time of the Anglo-Chinese negotiations in 1982-84, Hong Kong had the largest population at 5.5 million among all British colonies. Previously, The acceptance of about 50,000 East African refugees of Asian heritage into the UK in the 1970s had caused great political difficulties. Vaughan Robinson, 'The migration of East African Asians to the UK', in *The Cambridge survey of world migration*, Robin Cohen (ed.) (1995), pp. 331-336; Chibuiche Uche, 'The British Government, Di Amin and the Expulsion of British Asians from Uganda', *Interventions*, 19, 6, (2017), pp. 818-836. On the issue of immigration in British politics in general, see Brian Harrison, *The United Kingdom 1970-1990* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010), p.199-205.

^{lviii} FCO to Thatcher, September 1982, NA, PREM19/792, f.119. MTF.

^{lix} Ibid.

^{lx} Cartledge to Thatcher, 26 June 1984, NA, PREM19/1265, f.26. MTF, [<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/139670>, accessed 20 February 2018].

^{lxi} Ibid.

^{lxii} Youde to FCO, 17 August 1982, NA, PREM19/792, f.119. MTF.

^{lxiii} As detailed in the FCO special study, which lay down the British negotiation strategy. See FCO to Thatcher, September 1982, NA, PREM19/792, f.119. MTF.

^{lxiv} At the time of the negotiations, the Urban Council was the only public body whose members were elected in Hong Kong. For the functions and elections of the Urban Council, see Norman Miners, *The government and politics of Hong Kong* (5th edition) (Hong Kong; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

^{lxv} Youde to FCO, 17 August 1982, NA, PREM19/792, f.119. MTF.

^{lxvi} Cartledge to Thatcher, 26 June 1984, NA, PREM19/1265, f.26. MTF.

^{lxvii} *Ibid.*

^{lxviii} In relation to the statement by the unofficial members of the Executive Council, Geoffrey Howe expressed, 'The Unofficial Members of the Executive Council in particular play an important dual role. On the one hand, they are close advisers of the Governor; and, on the other, they, together with their colleagues in the Legislative Council, understandably seek to express their understanding of the wishes and concerns of the people of Hong Kong to a wider public, including, of course, hon. Members. It was in that latter, independent, capacity that they associated themselves with the statement that I understand has been sent to all hon. Members. The House will readily understand—but I wish to place the matter absolutely beyond doubt—that that statement was issued entirely on their own initiative. Its terms were not the subject of any prior consultation with the Government, either in London or in Hong Kong. To put it plainly, they were exercising the right of free speech'. Geoffrey Howe, 16 May 1983, HCD, cc.416-7. For the communications within the FCO and between ministers on strategies to resolve this issue, see esp. Howe to Prime Minister's Office, 9 May 1984, NA, PREM19/1265, f.306. MTF, [<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/139707>, accessed 22 February 2018]. The text of the statement is available in the same file, see, Youde to FCO, 8 May 1984, NA, PREM19/1265, f.306. MTF.

^{lxix} HCPP, *Hong Kong: Arrangements for testing the acceptability in Hong Kong of the draft agreement on the future of the territory, c.9407* (London: 1984), pp.14-5.

^{lxx} *Ibid.*, pp.20-21.

^{lxxi} *Ibid.*, p.10.

^{lxxii} *Ibid.*

^{lxxiii} *Ibid.*, pp.14-5.

^{lxxiv} Assessment Office, 'Submissions on the Sino-British Draft Agreement on the Future of Hong Kong', 28 September 1984 to 14 November 1984, HKPRO, Series HKRS912.

^{lxxv} Anthony B. L. Cheng and Paul C. W. Wong, 'Who advised the Hong Kong Government? The Politics of Absorption before and after 1997', in *Asian Survey* Vol. 44, No. 6 (2004), pp. 874-894; Tai-Lok Lui, Stephen W. K., Ray Yep (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Hong Kong* (Abington, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2019).

^{lxxvi} For example, Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, pp.307-26; Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong*, p.150; Tsang, *Hong Kong*, pp.59, 94-5.

^{lxxvii} There are several names given to West Papua in question. West Papua is the name preferred by nationalists, but it is also referred to as West New Guinea, West Irian and Irian Jaya. Shifts in name paralleled shifts in regime. David Webster, "'Already Sovereign as a People": A Foundational Moment in West Papuan Nationalism', *Pacific Affairs*, 74, 4, (2001), p.507.

^{lxxviii} *Ibid.*, 511-2.

^{lxxix} *Ibid.*, pp.517-8.

^{lxxx} Thomas M. Franck, Paul Hoffman, 'The Right of Self-Determination in Very Small Places', *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics*, 8 (1975), pp. 331-86.

^{lxxxi} 'Dependent Territories, 15 April 1983, House of Commons Debate, vol. 40, cc.1051-103.

^{lxxxii} On Gibraltar, Judith Hart, the Labour Minister for Commonwealth Affairs commented 'decolonisation cannot consist in the transfer of one population, however small, to the rule of another country, without regard to their own opinions and interests'. Statement by J. Hart, 14 June 1967, c.3325, 1967. Quoted in Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, p.309.

^{lxxxiii} *Falkland Islands Review*, c. 8787. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1983), para. 25. MTF, [<https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/109481>, Accessed 14 May 2018]. See also a comment on the comparison between the Falkland Islands and Hong Kong, Roberti, *The fall of Hong Kong*, p.88.

^{lxxxiv} Harrison, *Finding a Role?*, p.41; Ian Gilmour, *Dancing with Dogma* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p.242; Hugo Young, *One of Us* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.260.

^{lxxxv} Howe, *Conflict of loyalty*, p.8.

^{lxxxvi} Cottrell noted that China's reunification policy underwent a silent but momentous change between September and December 1981. Prior to this period, Taiwan was Peking's priority in its reunification policy, and Hong Kong was an issue to be deferred. After this period, from early 1982 onwards, Hong Kong became the priority of Peking's policy. The PRC never discovered the official reasons for its decision for this change, but Cottrell speculated that it was due to the eagerness of the FCO to raise the Hong Kong issue. See Cottrell, *The end of Hong Kong*, p.66.

^{lxxxvii} Geoffrey Howe, 5 December 1984, HCD, cc.396-7.

^{lxxxviii} Eric Deakins, 5 December 1984, HCD, c.412.

^{lxxxix} Peter Blaker, 5 December 1984, HCD, vol.69, c413.

^{xc} Cradock, *Experiences of China*, p.166; Howe to Thatcher, 4 October 1983, London, NA, PREM19/1058, f.286. MTF.

^{xcⁱ} Seymour Martin Lipset, 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy' *American Political Science Review*, 53,1 (1959), pp. 69–105. See also, Samuel P. Huntington, *Political order in changing societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968). On the other hand, the wishful thinking that the Hong Kong might trigger political evolution in the PRC is a persistent argument. For example, see Michael Yahuda, *Hong Kong: China's Challenge* (London: Routledge, 1996).

^{xcⁱⁱ} Peter Blaker, 5 December 1984, HCD, vol.69, c413.

^{xcⁱⁱⁱ} Briefing paper, 'China's course for the 1980s', January 1983, Manchester, UK, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Michael Foot Papers, MF/L23/7.

^{xc^{iv}} *Ibid.*

^{xc^v} Thatcher indicated her agreement that the supposition that capitalism is just a way of economic life, with no difference to the flag it is under, is a fallacy. She agreed to the statement that 'Communism [...] is an antinomy to capitalism' and that 'capitalism under a communist government [is] miles away from the same system under a capitalist society. 'Translation of "Zheng Ming, 97 Special", 58, 8/1982', Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Baroness Thatcher, THCR 1/13/20. See also, Sherman to Thatcher, 4 August 1982, Cambridge, Churchill Archives Centre, The Papers of Baroness Thatcher, THCR 1/13/20.

^{xc^{vi}} Cottrell, *The end of Hong Kong*, pp.81-2, 86.

^{xc^{vii}} Gao, 'Negotiating with China in Power Asymmetry', p.476; Roberti, *The fall of Hong Kong*, p.88.

^{xc^{viii}} Roberti, *The fall of Hong Kong*, p.88.

^{xc^{ix}} Dickie argues that the establishment of the Parliamentary Relations Unit under Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe in 1983 had intensified front-bench ministers' reliance on their FCO civil servants to provide written answers to parliamentary questions. FCO civil servants used the written answers to propagate their rehearsed line on foreign affair issues. Other tools backbench MP might put pressure on foreign policy, such as the roles of Question Time, Select Committees, and the Foreign Affairs

Committees, Dickie argues, had limited effects on decisions they were already made in the FCO.

Dickie, *The new mandarins*.

° Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, pp.11-2.