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HONG KONG IN SINO-BRITISH DIPLOMACY, 1949-1984

BY

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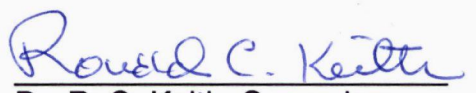
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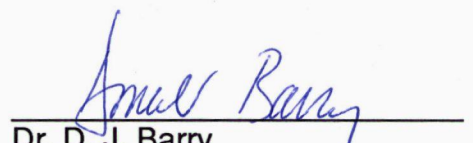
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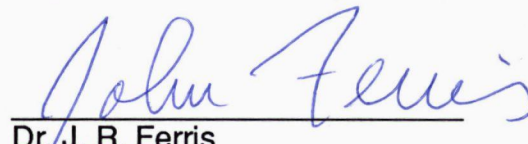
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "Hong Kong in Sino-British Diplomacy, 1949-1984" submitted by Mark M. Baron in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis contends that the peaceful resolution of the Hong Kong issue evolved, not only out of the parties' mutual desire to maintain the colony as an international financial centre, but also out of complementary Anglo-Chinese diplomacies informed by consonant British and Sinified Marxist-Leninist realisms. Indeed, a sensitivity to the latter provides a more comprehensive explication of the issue as a whole than does mere reference to the economic imperative alone. One should not underestimate the parallels between these realisms, particularly because Mao Zedong's epistemology is possessed of an inherent tactical flexibility which permits situation-specific responses consistent with "objective reality" as evinced by the "paper tiger" thesis and the doctrine of "united front." In this way, it is comparable to London's traditional pragmatic approach to international affairs as practised in the context of the balance of power. By focusing on Sino-British diplomacy, this thesis takes issue with those who would reduce Chinese Communism to nothing more than a mere rationalisation for Realpolitik, and with those who argue that the primacy of ideology in Beijing's decisional calculus renders relations between itself and non-communist states necessarily adversarial.

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Unquestionably, I owe the greatest debt to my mother Alice for her unreserved and selfless support. It is to her that this thesis is dedicated.

Please be advised that *pinyin* transliteration is herein considered authoritative except where Wade-Giles is used in relation to Taiwan and to the citation of sources rendered in it. Also, the term Hong Kong refers collectively to Hong Kong island itself, Kowloon, and the New Territories except where noted otherwise.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BR	<i>Beijing Review</i>
CCD	<i>Communist China Digest</i>
CCDC	<i>Contemporary China Documents Collection</i>
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CPUSA	Communist Party of the United States of America
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FEER	<i>Far Eastern Economic Review</i>
FO	Foreign Office
FRUS	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
JMJP	<i>Renmin ribao</i>
JPRS	Joint Publications Research Service
LEGCO	Legislative Council (Hong Kong)
NSC	National Security Council
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PR	<i>Peking Review</i>
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SCMP	<i>Survey of the China Mainland Press</i>

## INTRODUCTION

### "REALISM," DIPLOMACY, AND HONG KONG

On December 19, 1984, the sun set on the last vestige of British colonial administration in Asia as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Premier Zhao Ziyang affixed their signatures to the Sino-British Joint Declaration on Hong Kong.<sup>1</sup> That the debate over the island enclave did not degenerate into armed conflagration between 1949 and 1984, has been attributed to the emergence of a *modus vivendi* rooted in the parties' mutual desire to turn a blind eye to the issue of the colony's legal status<sup>2</sup> in favour of the economic benefits accrued from its continued existence as an international financial centre.<sup>3</sup> Arguments of this kind underscore a debate in the literature between two schools of thought: One which bifurcates the words and deeds of communist states thereby relegating ideology to the role of regime legitimation and, by extension, dismissing it as a primary determinant of foreign policy behaviour in favour of Realpolitik;<sup>4</sup> and the other, which adheres to the counter-argument that the primacy of ideology in the communists' decisional calculus renders relations between themselves and non-communist states necessarily adversarial.<sup>5</sup>

Evidently, there is a great deal of intellectual schizophrenia which is unnecessary in the analysis of Sino-British diplomacy on Hong Kong. The exegesis which follows argues that although Beijing's thought and actions are influenced by its ideology, this does not preclude the irenic resolution of disputes given that Sinified Marxism-Leninism possesses an inherent tactical flexibility consistent with "objective reality" that leads to the manifestation of a Chinese realism as evinced by the strategically oriented "paper tiger" thesis and the doctrine of "united front." Thus, the peaceful resolution of the Hong Kong question evolved out of complementary British and Chinese diplomacies



informed by consonant realisms. The former is ensconced in the greater tradition of Western political realism, while the latter is inherently bound to Sinified Marxism-Leninism. The existence of these parallel realisms created a favourable environment in which to conduct diplomatic discourse.

Essentially, realism posits the existence of an "autonomous political sphere" that is directed by "objective laws" rooted in human nature and validated by historical experience.<sup>6</sup> As E.H. Carr stated:

In the field of thought, it (realism) places its emphasis on the acceptance of facts and on the analysis of their causes and consequences. It tends to depreciate the role of purpose and to maintain, explicitly or implicitly, that the function of thinking is to study a sequence of events which it is powerless to influence or alter. In the field of action, realism tends to emphasise the irresistible strength of existing forces and the inevitable character of existing tendencies, and to insist that the highest wisdom lies in accepting, and adapting oneself to, these forces and these tendencies.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in contradistinction to those who would seek to understand and change the world by "subjective" or ideological thought itself, realists assert that theory can emerge only out of practice and that intellect is useful only insofar as it reveals an historical causality which it is powerless to alter by pure reason alone.<sup>8</sup>

According to realists, history reveals that international relations are inherently conflictual being locked into a cyclical pattern of anarchy and power politics given man's innate propensity towards the realisation of his own self-interest and his inclination to believe that his interests are jeopardised by those whose concerns differ. Thus, under conditions of anarchy and insecurity, political elites guide their states in Darwinian power struggles deemed vital for self-perpetuation and therefore in the national interest. Indeed, this quest for survival is so marked by insecurity that states seek to be satiated with might to the extent that they are more powerful than their counterparts. Since the survival of one's state depends on the recognition of this reality, statesmen are

admonished to refrain from instituting policies based on such subjective factors as morality and ideology as these may constrain their ability to respond to actual conditions. Rather, realism urges statesmen to work within the constraints imposed on them by undertaking the "workmanlike manipulation of the perennial forces that have shaped the past as they will the future."<sup>9</sup>

That the state system survives this intractable security dilemma is attributable to the operational principles embodied in the notion of the balance of power that emerged in the transition from the universalism of the Holy Roman Empire to the modern international framework instituted by Westphalia in 1648. The "basic aim" of the balance is to ensure the survival and independence of the members in the system through the preservation of the system itself.<sup>10</sup> This requires the maintenance of the individual members via a commitment to prevent any one state from achieving a preponderance of power. The incessant fear of hegemonically imposed stability motivates states to enter into countervailing power-enhancing alliances that prevent any member gaining primacy. Thus, an enhancement of capabilities on the part of a particular group of states is reciprocated by those whose threat perception has increased given the modification in the geopolitical landscape as characterised by the alteration in power relations and political alignments.<sup>11</sup> As such, it is believed that a relatively equal distribution of power is conducive to the preservation of the system while an imbalance of power will lead to systemic instability initiated by the stronger party. Thus, the balance of power is often conceived as an equilibrating mechanism operating to preserve international order<sup>12</sup> and for that reason it has been identified with conservatism.<sup>13</sup>

The balance, of course, does not emerge independently, as if by an invisible hand, but by the deliberate machinations of statesmen acting in accordance with "perennial forces." Where policy is one of "adjusting rival

ambitions, or of fortifying national security, by the conciliation of enemies and the acquisition of allies," as in the balance of power system, diplomacy is a necessity.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Edward Vose Gulick argues: "A balance-of-power system depends for operability on the watchfulness of foreign offices over the various important member states."<sup>15</sup> Cognizant of the criticisms levelled at those who have sought to define diplomacy outside of a theoretically rigorous framework that would have a more universal applicability to the analyses of diplomatic activity generally, and in the absence of such a framework,<sup>16</sup> Hedley Bull's interpretation of diplomacy is herein considered authoritative given its comprehensiveness.

Bull defines diplomacy as "The conduct of relations between states and other entities with standing in world politics by official agents and by peaceful means."<sup>17</sup> It is operative where there is both an international system, consisting of interactions between two or more states, and an international society predicated on the common adherence to mutually accepted rules and conventions.<sup>18</sup> Bull's formulation assumes that diplomatic behaviour is possessed of an inherent rationality which he identifies as a "sense of action that is internally consistent and consistent with given goals."<sup>19</sup>

Functionally, diplomacy is directed at the "minimisation of friction" through communication. It encompasses the process of negotiation and "symbolises" the presence of an international society given the systemic allegiance to its norms and practices. This latter function is particularly important in that it is only within the context of a "framework" of common rules and principles that diplomacy is utile. The desire to search for common ground through a foreign policy visualised as "the rational pursuit of interests" that will at some juncture coincide with the interests of others is the operational principle upon which diplomacy functions.<sup>20</sup> It is dysfunctional where a state's foreign policy aspires

to universalism in the promulgation of a "true faith" or where it seeks to satisfy its own self-interest in total disregard of the interests of its counterparts.<sup>21</sup>

Certainly, the foregoing discussion is applicable to the United Kingdom though there are those who question the analytical power of "realist" and "liberal" characterisations of British international relations.<sup>22</sup> Be that as it may, Palmerston's conviction that Great Britain had no "eternal allies" and "no eternal enemies," simply "eternal interests,"<sup>23</sup> is particularly realistic as is Churchill's statement: "We ought to set the life and endurance of the British Empire and the greatness of this island very high in our duty, and not be led astray by illusions about an ideal world...."<sup>24</sup> This realist tendency is especially pronounced when considered in the context of statements relating to the balance of power and its historical role in the conduct of Britain's foreign affairs.

Before proceeding, however, it must be noted that the balance of power concept has been the subject of considerable semantic confusion. Ernst B. Haas, for example, has identified no less than eight distinct usages of the term.<sup>25</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, any discussion of the balance will retain the equilibrist character ascribed to it above since this definition is most appropriate for the analysis of British and, as will be illustrated later, Chinese diplomacy in the context of the Hong Kong issue. In the case of the United Kingdom, note the following statements by Eyre Crowe, Winston Churchill, and Anthony Eden.

In a memorandum on the status of Great Britain's relations with France and Germany dated 1 January 1907, Sir Eyre Crowe asserted that the balance of power had become "almost ... a law of nature" dictating London's international conduct.<sup>26</sup> He related:

History shows that the danger threatening the independence of this or that nation has generally arisen, at least in part, out of the momentary

predominance of a neighbouring State at once militarily powerful, economically efficient, and ambitious to extend its frontiers or spread its influence, the danger being directly proportionate to the degree of its power and efficiency, and to the spontaneity or "inevitableness" of its ambitions. The only check on the abuse of political predominance derived from such a position has always consisted in the opposition of an equally formidable rival, or of a combination of several countries forming leagues of defence. The equilibrium established by such a grouping of forces is technically known as the balance of power, and it has become almost an historical truism to identify England's secular policy with the maintenance of this balance by throwing her weight now in this scale and now in that, but ever on the side opposed to the political dictatorship of the strongest single State or group at a given time.<sup>27</sup>

In a similar but more crusading vein, Winston Churchill, speaking to the Conservative Members Committee on Foreign Affairs in March 1936, stated:

For four hundred years the foreign policy of England has been to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating Power on the Continent ... on all occasions England took the more difficult course ... it would have been easy and must have been very tempting to join with the stronger and share the fruits of conquest ... However, we ... joined with the less strong Powers, made a combination among them, and thus defeated and frustrated the Continental military tyrant whoever he was, whatever nation he led. Thus we preserved the liberties of Europe, protected the growth of its vivacious and varied society, and emerged after four terrible struggles with an ever-growing fame and widening Empire ... Here is the wonderful unconscious tradition of British foreign policy ....<sup>28</sup>

According to Churchill, this traditional opposition to tyranny had nothing to do with ideology. Rather, it was based exclusively on prevailing power relations. He continued:

Observe that the policy of England takes no account of which nation it is that seeks the overlordship of Europe ... It has nothing to do with rulers or nations; it is concerned solely with whoever is the strongest or the potentially dominating tyrant ... It is a law of public policy which we are following, and not a mere expedient dictated by accidental circumstances, or likes and dislikes, or any other sentiment.<sup>29</sup>

These ideas of equilibrium and equality described above find further expression in Anthony Eden's discussion of the United Kingdom's fledgling nuclear programme. In it, he relays that the development of the hydrogen bomb would:

... diminish the advantage of physically larger countries. All became equally vulnerable. I had been acutely conscious in the atomic age of our unenviable position in a small crowded island, but if continents, and not merely small islands, were doomed to destruction, all was equal in the grim reckoning.<sup>30</sup>

The preceding statements reflect what D.C. Watt calls *Interessenpolitik* or the "traditionalist concern with the way in which power relationships and British interests might be conserved...."<sup>31</sup> In this regard, they are also consistent with Bull's criterion that a functional diplomacy seek a coincidence of interests given the interconnectedness between the preservation of Great Britain's national interest and anti-majoritarianism. As Crowe stated:

... danger can in practice only be averted-and history shows that it has been so averted-on condition that the national policy of the insular and naval State is so directed as to harmonize with the general desires and ideals common to all mankind, and more particularly that it is closely identified with the primary and vital interests of a majority, or as many as possible, of the other nations. Now, the first interest of all countries is the preservation of national independence. It follows that England, more than any other non-insular Power, has a direct and positive interest in the maintenance of the independence of nations, and therefore must be the natural enemy of any country threatening the independence of others, and the natural protector of the weaker communities.<sup>32</sup>

An examination of the foregoing statements yields several elements consistent with the realist view of international relations discussed earlier. In the first place, they reveal a perception of the state system as one characterised by an equilibrium brought about through constellations of equal and countervailing power. Secondly, there is an operational component committing the British to act as balancer should instability arise as a result of a unilateral shift of power favouring one side. Coupled with this is the identification of the aggressor as hegemon, not necessarily ideologue, and an affinity with those who seek to retain their independence. Thus, the balance of power is an expression of Britain's national interests and the cornerstone of its foreign policy strategies for realising them. As for the realist epistemological adherence to a

world of cyclical historical forces, note Crowe's reference to the balance as a "law of nature" or in Churchill's words, a "law of public policy" dictating Great Britain's international conduct.

However, it would be mistaken to proceed on the basis that the British were able to conduct their international relations in full accordance with the profile ascribed to them above given the transformation of global relationships in the aftermath of the Second World War. In the period following 1945, London's fall from predominance, combined with the mutation of the classical balance of power into a bipolarised geopolitical configuration of two ideologically antagonistic blocs of states under the leadership of the superpowers,<sup>33</sup> no longer afforded it the freedom of maneuver it once enjoyed. Constrained by their political, economic, and military reliance on the so-called "special relationship" with Washington, the British were compelled to give at least mild support to the latter's policy of "containing" communist expansion.<sup>34</sup>

However, this does not detract from the fact that London, desiring to safeguard its interests on the mainland and its position in Hong Kong, tended to pursue a relatively independent China policy vis-a-vis the United States that reflected the more traditional realist approach described earlier. Indeed, the United Kingdom's waning international influence necessitated flexible policy responses to issues as they arose now that it was no longer setting the global agenda.<sup>35</sup> This approach is reflected in Lord Strang's reassessment of the United Kingdom's post-war diplomacy. He stated:

It was worth considering whether there was now a case for reverting to the style of diplomacy which we had employed up to the 18th century. This method consisted in essence of a weaker power playing stronger powers off against each other in its own interest, and putting its weight where it could see an advantage for itself ... The French were the leading exponents of this form of self-regarding diplomacy conducted purely for national ends. They were ... masters at exploiting their own nuisance value .... we ought to continue to work with the United States but not to be

subservient to them and not to be above some exploitation of events in our own national interest ...<sup>36</sup>

That the discussion thus far has revealed a manifest tradition of realism in the United Kingdom's foreign policy and diplomacy is obvious. But in order for there to be a basis for the comparison of Sino-British diplomacy as this thesis will demonstrate in the context of Hong Kong, there must also be a comparable (similar) realist tendency in Beijing's chosen course of international conduct. However, the preceding theoretical analysis intimates that a "revolutionary power" like the People's Republic of China (PRC) is incapable of conducting a "rational" diplomacy given its commitment to the universal ideology of Marxism-Leninism and its desire to revolutionise irrevocably the very international society that Bull sees as most essential to diplomatic discourse; an international society which is perceived by the Chinese as a structural constraint favouring a status quo based on inequality and exploitation. Indeed, Henry Kissinger, in his classic work on the origins of the European concert, argues that diplomacy, "the art of restraining the exercise of power," is functional only within the context of a world order founded on the basis of a universally accepted legitimacy. It is inoperative where there exists a revolutionary power who perceives the existing international system as contrary to its own national security. Such powers are dedicated to the demise of the prevailing order rather than to modifications in the name of the order itself. As a result, international stability is compromised.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the revolutionary state is "irrational" insofar as it possesses a cost/benefit calculus contrary to that possessed by the so called status quo powers and different from that envisioned by the traditional rational actor model. From this, it can be extrapolated that there would be no common ground on which to conduct peaceable relations between a system-conforming state like the United Kingdom and an anti-status quo power like the PRC.



However, this is clearly not the case as demonstrated by the diplomatic resolution of the Hong Kong issue. That assumptions of the kind advanced by Bull and Kissinger are limited is obvious to the extent that a revolutionary power need not resort to revolutionary means in order to advance its revolutionary agenda. To the contrary, such states may choose to work within the system according to established practices in order to bring about the eventual realisation of their interests.<sup>38</sup> Where revolutionary means are used, these need not be so different as to be inconsistent with the prevailing modes of international conduct. As J.D. Armstrong argues:

An additional problem arises from the assumption that the "national interest" represents "realism" and "ideology" represents "idealism," where "realism" means an emphasis on limited and short-term goals or on flexible and subtle means of attaining goals, whereas "idealism" denotes long-term, utopian, or revolutionary goals and/or impractical, naive methods of attaining goals. The difficulty in the case of Communist countries stems from the fact that the Leninist component of their official ideology as well as Mao Tse-tung's additions to the "treasury of Marxism-Leninism" are concerned as much with the practical techniques of winning and maintaining power as with ultimate purposes. Moreover, their emphasis is consistently on the necessity of employing "realistic" means in the sense discussed here.<sup>39</sup>

From an analysis of Mao Zedong's epistemology, It is evident that there is a degree of comparability between Chinese Marxism and British realpolitik. As in realism, the historical process plays a part in the Sinified-Marxist Leninist determination of "objective reality." The Chinese adhere to a "teleological history"<sup>40</sup> governed by objective laws of development though, while they are not cyclical as in realism, are nevertheless valid to the extent that they have revealed themselves through practice. Speaking of Marxism, Mao stated:

The Marxist philosophy of dialectical materialism has two outstanding characteristics. One is its class nature: it openly avows that dialectical materialism is in the service of the proletariat. The other is its practicality: it emphasizes the dependence of theory on practice, emphasizes that theory is based on practice and in turn serves practice. The truth of any

knowledge or theory is determined not by subjective feelings, but by objective results in social practice.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, due to his belief in the inseparability of theory and praxis, Mao would have rejected the utopian/realist dichotomy drawn by Carr. Indeed, he stated: "We are not utopians and cannot divorce ourselves from the actual conditions confronting us."<sup>42</sup> In fact, he contended: "New-democratic culture is scientific. Opposed as it is to all feudal and superstitious ideas, it stands for seeking truth from facts, for objective truth and for the unity of theory and practice."<sup>43</sup>

This Marxist practicality lends itself well to the conduct of international relations given its inherent flexibility at the level of "objective reality." Just as Mao drew a dialectical unity between thought and practice, so too did he perceive a duality in strategy and tactics as manifest in the "paper tiger" thesis. This has been described by Peter Van Ness as "... probably the best known version of... (Chinese) power realities."<sup>44</sup> It is exemplified by Mao's 1 December 1958 speech entitled, "On the Question of Whether Imperialism and All Reactionaries Are Real Tigers," in which he stated:

... imperialism and all reactionaries, looked at in essence, from a long-term point of view, from a strategic point of view, must be seen for what they are - paper tigers. On this we should build our strategic thinking. But they are also living tigers, iron tigers, real tigers, they can devour people. On this we should build our tactical thinking.<sup>45</sup>

According to Mao, the imperialists were dangerous in the short-term but, in accordance with the laws of historical development, they would become progressively weaker in the course of protracted conflict. Strategically then, one should dare to struggle against imperialism through its villification in propaganda while concurrently adopting tactics appropriate to the "objective reality" reflected in prevailing circumstances. This would enable Beijing to respond in a situation-specific way to circumstances as they arose thereby

advancing the greater cause of revolution. It is at this tactical level that Chinese realism is most discernable.

Of the tactics used in the course of struggle, united front is certainly the most prominent. Described by Mao as a major motive force or "wheel of history", not a mere "temporary makeshift," that would "propel the Chinese revolution forward to a completely new stage,"<sup>46</sup> the doctrine of united front is a byproduct of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) revolutionary experience that addresses adversarial relationships characterised by imbalanced power relations. Both the Civil and anti-Japanese wars taught the Chinese Communists that, in order to compensate for their weaknesses in relation to their opponents, they would have to "lean to one side."<sup>47</sup> Such a policy, it was argued, was consistent with Marxism-Leninism and "diametrically opposed" to "closed door tactics," the latter being an "infantile disorder." As Mao stated: "The former requires the recruiting of large forces for the purpose of surrounding and annihilating the enemy. The latter means fighting single-handed in desperate combat against a formidable enemy."<sup>48</sup> These sentiments were reiterated by Lin Biao in his discussion of people's war, in which he related:

History shows that when confronted by ruthless imperialist aggression, a Communist Party must hold aloft the national banner and, using the weapons of united action, rally around itself the masses and the patriotic and anti-imperialist people who form more than 90 per cent of a country's population.... If we abandon the national banner, adopt a line of "closed-doorism" and thus isolate ourselves, it is out of the question to exercise leadership and develop the people's revolutionary cause, and this in reality amounts to helping the enemy and bringing defeat on ourselves.<sup>49</sup>

Operationally then, the united front seeks to amass the greatest number of forces across a broad political spectrum who, though they may be mutually antagonistic, are united in their aversion to a common stronger enemy. This enables the CCP to rectify the original "balance of forces" thereby transforming weakness into strength. Since no relationship remains static, it is necessary to

modify the united front accordingly. Alterations in power relations, Mao argued: "... urge us to revise our tactics and change our ways of disposing our forces and carrying on the struggle to suit the situation."<sup>50</sup>

The process whereby enemies are differentiated from friends is a dialectical one involving the use of contradictions to isolate the existing political relationships of the moment and to set priorities through the identification of antagonistic and non-antagonistic forces, the former being the primary contradiction. As Mao observed:

...if in any process there are a number of contradictions, one of them must be the principal contradiction playing the leading and decisive role, while the rest occupy a secondary and subordinate position. Therefore, in studying any complex process in which there are two or more contradictions, we must devote every effort to finding its principal contradiction. Once this principal contradiction is grasped, all problems can be readily solved.<sup>51</sup>

Accordingly, progressive, middle, and die-hard forces are isolated, with the former two aligning against the latter. Whatever outstanding differences there are between those within the united front, these are deferred until such time as the current threat no longer exists. This means that communist abilities are not over-extended against a plethora of adversaries simultaneously with deleterious effect on the strategic objective of revolution.<sup>52</sup> Thus, Mao stated:

In the struggle against the anti-Communist diehards, our policy is to make use of contradictions, win over the many, oppose the few and crush our enemies one by one, and to wage struggles on just grounds, to our advantage, and with restraint.<sup>53</sup>

These tactics are of equal operability when transpositioned to the global level. Indeed, imperialism is dealt with according to the same techniques applied to class struggle and is divided into a similar triplicity of forces.<sup>54</sup> Through contradictions, the Chinese distinguish between international imperialisms. Given the law of uneven economic and political development and

the nature of monopoly capital to struggle within itself for hegemony, it can be expected that the imperialist powers will be pitted against each other in their quest for colonial possessions.<sup>55</sup> Distinctions can thus be drawn between those who are most antagonistic toward China at present and those who are not. In making this distinction, Beijing is able to single out those middle forces with whom they may form a countervailing united front. Speaking in relation to the anti-Japanese war, Mao argued:

The contradiction between China and imperialism in general has given way to the particularly salient and sharp contradiction between China and Japanese imperialism. Japanese imperialism is carrying out a policy of total conquest of China. Consequently, the contradictions between China and certain other imperialist powers have been relegated to a secondary position, while the rift between these powers and Japan has been widened... This means that China should not only unite with the Soviet Union, which has been the consistently good friend of the Chinese people, but as far as possible should work for joint opposition to Japanese imperialism with those imperialist countries which, at the present time, are willing to maintain peace and are against new wars of aggression. The aim of our united front must be resistance to Japan, and not simultaneous opposition to all the imperialist powers.<sup>56</sup>

The middle forces have since been classified as the "intermediate zone" and the "second world" in accordance with Beijing's evolving assessment of the international environment. The former classification, though not a part of the communist lexicon until 1958, was used by a "retrospective" Mao to illuminate the global situation as he saw it in 1946-7. It applied to those countries situated between the United States and the socialist world with whom the PRC could align in its struggle against American imperialism.<sup>57</sup> The latter entered Chinese parlance as part of the "Three World" theory which was employed to describe the "balance of forces" prevailing in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. It pertained particularly to the Western industrialised democracies which could be coopted by the "Third World" (Asia including China, Africa, and Latin America) in its struggle against the

hegemonic aspirations of the superpowers, or "First World" (American imperialism and Soviet "social imperialism").<sup>58</sup>

Of cardinal importance within both the domestic and international united fronts is the maintenance of "independence and initiative." It is important to note, however, that for the sake of tactical expediency, independence is "relative and not absolute" otherwise unity will be sacrificed. Thus, in the name of resistance, united front tactics permit the adjustment of differing class interests.<sup>59</sup> As Mao stated:

It is an established principle that in the War of Resistance everything must be subordinated to the interests of resistance. Therefore, the interests of the class struggle must be subordinated to, and must not conflict with, the interests of the War of Resistance. But classes and the class struggle are facts, and those people who deny the fact of class struggle are wrong ... We do not deny the class struggle, we adjust it.<sup>60</sup>

This raises a question with respect to the mechanism employed in the reconciliation of differing interests within the united front. Just as the "balance of power" requires diplomacy to modify imbalanced power relations between states, so too is it required to establish and adjust the united front in such a manner as to transform an unfavourable "balance of forces" to the Chinese Communist's advantage. Diplomatic discourse is, therefore, a tactical expedient in the service of greater strategic objectives that operationalises the united front in accordance with international realities.

To Beijing, diplomacy is interminably intertwined with struggle. Zhou Enlai contended that states were invariably faced with the prospect of two varieties of war: that of swords and that of words. Diplomacy fell into the category of the latter. Though the state would not be continuously engaged in armed conflict, it would perpetually be involved in verbal warfare. Thus, it was expected that the diplomatist would carry this lexical struggle to its successful conclusion.<sup>61</sup>

However, this commitment to struggle did not preclude the peaceful resolution of disputes or the establishment of amicable relations. This was facilitated by Beijing's proclivity to see the capitalist world not as a monolithic bloc but as a group of forces susceptible to differentiation according to the law of contradictions. Adhering to Lenin's policy of peaceful coexistence,<sup>62</sup> the Chinese would pursue negotiations with those imperialist countries not devoted to aggression insofar as this would create a quiescent international environment for "socialist construction."<sup>63</sup> Mao argued: "The capitalist and socialist countries will yet reach compromises on a number of international matters, because compromise will be advantageous."<sup>64</sup> By compromise, Mao meant "reaching an agreement through peaceful negotiation" over "several years, or more than ten years, or even longer" on "some issues, including certain important ones."<sup>65</sup> However, concessions would only be made provided they were "positive" and seen "as part of our whole revolutionary policy, as an indispensable link in the general revolutionary line, as one turn in a zigzag course."<sup>66</sup> Thus, citing a government spokesman, *Peking Review* stated: "Negotiation is one form of struggle against imperialism. Necessary compromises can be made in negotiations, so long as the principle of upholding the fundamental interests of the people is observed."<sup>67</sup> It is on the basis of China's willingness to conclude tactical compromises that renders its view of diplomacy compatible with the definition offered by Bull.

What is immediately obvious from the foregoing discussion is that there is a degree of similarity between British realism and Sinified Marxism-Leninism given the latter's tactical flexibility at the level of objective reality. Parallels can be drawn between the "balance of power" and the "balance of forces," between the "alliance" and the "united front," and between British and Chinese diplomacy. This is not to suggest, however, that there is an absolute correlation

between the two. Indeed, Beijing emphasises class, not the state, as the primary actor in international relations. By extension, the balance of power is seen as nothing more than an ideological smoke-screen erected by the dominant class to justify the preservation of the status quo.<sup>68</sup> The Chinese also reject the bourgeois notion of amoral power politics and their corollary in the self-interested pursuit of hegemony, seeking instead a unity between power and principle.<sup>69</sup> As stated above, compromises will be made only insofar as they do not undermine China's duty to uphold the interests of the progressive forces. Furthermore, given Beijing's stress on "independence" and "self-reliance," the united front is more accurately characterised as a process of alignment distinct from the more formal and restrictive arrangement connoted by the term alliance. Also, Mao's belief that human nature was malleable since it was nothing more than a reflection of existing social relations<sup>70</sup> and Beijing's adherence to the deterministic unfolding of events according to the laws of historical materialism are distinguishable from realism's conviction that man is innately aggressive and that international politics are locked into a cyclical pattern of power relations revealed by history.

While remaining mindful of these differences, this thesis will proceed to systematically apply the theoretical constructs discussed above with a view to highlighting their similarities since it is on the basis of their compatibility that an environment conducive to the peaceful conduct of diplomatic discourse emerged. Thus, Chapter Two is dedicated to an analysis of the British approach to the Hong Kong problem with particular reference to the underlying influence of realism inherent in London's China diplomacy. Similarly, Chapter Three discusses Beijing's Hong Kong diplomacy emphasising the role of the "paper tiger" thesis and the doctrine of united front in its application. Both discussions are arranged chronologically covering the period from the CCP's



accession to power on 1 October 1949, to the successful conclusion of the Sino-British negotiations on the status of the colony on 19 December 1984.

## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1] See *A Draft Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Future of Hong Kong, 26 September 1984*, (Hong Kong: Government Printer):11. For the purposes of cross-analysis, refer to the Chinese version rendered in pinyin as follows: *Dabuliedian ji beiaierlan lianhe wangguo zhengfu he zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhengfu guanyu xianggang chiantudi xieyi caoan, 1984.9.26*, (Xianggang: zhengfu yanwuju yan). Sections (1) and (2) of the Joint Declaration read as follows:

"1. The Government of the People's Republic of China declares that to recover the Hong Kong area (including Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories, hereinafter referred to as Hong Kong) is the common aspiration of the entire Chinese people, and that it has decided to resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong with effect from 1 July 1997.

2. The Government of the United Kingdom declares that it will restore Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China with effect from 1 July 1997."

[2] The source of the legal dispute originates with the treaties ceding Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories to Great Britain; treaties which the Chinese Communists view as being "unequal" and "invalid" under international law, they having been exacted under the duress of "gunboat diplomacy." Hong Kong Island and Kowloon were ceded to the British "in perpetuity" by the Treaties of Nanking (1842) and Peking (1860) respectively. The New Territories were leased to London for a period of 99 years.

Section III of the Treaty of Nanking, signed 29 August 1842, reads:

"III. It being obviously necessary and desirable that British subjects should have some port whereat they may careen and refit their ships when required, and keep stores for that purpose, His Majesty the Emperor of China cedes to Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, &c., the Island of Hong-Kong, to be possessed in perpetuity by Her Britannic Majesty, her heirs and successors, and to be governed by such laws and regulations as Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, &c., shall see fit to direct." Cited in Clive Parry, ed., *Consolidated Treaty Series*, Vol.93, (New York: Oceana Publications, 1969):467;

Similarly, Section VI of the Treaty of Peking with regard to Kowloon, signed 24 October 1860, stipulates:

"VI. With a view to the maintenance of law and order in and about the harbour of Hong Kong, His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of China agrees to cede to Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, and to her heirs and successors, to have and to hold as a dependency of Her Britannic Majesty's colony of Hong Kong, that portion of the township of Cowloon, in the province of Kwang-tung, of which a lease was granted in

perpetuity to Harry Smith Parkes, Esquire, Companion of the Bath, a member of the Allied Commission at Canton, on behalf of Her Britannic Majesty's Government, by Lan Tsung Kwang, Governor-General of the Two Kwang...." Cited in *Ibid.*, Vol.123, p.73;

With respect to the New Territories, the Convention between China and Great Britain respecting an Extension of Hong Kong Territory, signed 9 June 1898, maintains:

"Whereas it has for many years past been recognized that an extension of Hong Kong territory is necessary for the proper defence and protection of the Colony, it has now been agreed between the Governments of Great Britain and China that the limits of British territory shall be enlarged under lease to the extent indicated generally on the annexed map. The exact boundaries shall be hereafter fixed when proper surveys have been made by officials appointed by the two Governments. The term of this lease shall be ninety-nine years." Cited in *Ibid.*, Vol.186, p.310.

[3] T.O. Lloyd, *Empire To Welfare State: English History, 1906-1985*, 3rd. Ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986):492.

[4] This point has been made by Hannes Adomeit and Robert Boardman about communist states in general. See "The Comparative Study of Communist Foreign Policy," in Adomeit and Boardman, eds., *Foreign Policy Making in Communist Countries*, (Westmead: Saxon House, 1979):1-2. The role of any and all ideologies has been downplayed by Werner Levi, "Ideology, Interests, and Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.14, No.1, (March 1970):1-7. For similar assessments on China in particular refer to Kevin P. Lane, *Sovereignty And The Status Quo: The Historical Roots of China's Hong Kong Policy*, (Boulder, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1990):3, 7, and 69; Richard H. Solomon, *Chinese Political Negotiating Behavior: A Briefing Analysis*, (The Rand Corporation, R-3295, December 1985):1, 3, and 13; and Louis J. Samelson, *Soviet and Chinese Negotiating Behavior: The Western View*, (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1976):26 and 39; George L. Hicks, "Hong Kong on the Eve of Communist Rule," Chapter 2, in Hungdah Chiu, Y.C. Jao, and Yuan-li Wu, eds., *The Future of Hong Kong: Toward 1997 and Beyond*, (New York, Westport, and London: Quorum Books, 1987):43.

[5] This view is represented with regard to the communists generally by Henry A. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy*, (New York: Harper, 1957):337; and Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy*, 3rd. ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1963):244-45. For similar analyses on China see Arthur Lall, *How Communist China Negotiates*, (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968):16-37; Kenneth T. Young, *Negotiating with the Chinese Communists: The United States Experience, 1953-1967*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968):374-76; and Julian Weiss, "The Negotiating Style Of The People's Republic Of China: The Future Of Hong Kong and Macao,"

*Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, Vol.13, No.2, (1988):179, 183, 191, and 193.

[6] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 4th. Ed., (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967):13 and 4 respectively.

[7] E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939*, 2nd. ed., (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press LTD., 1946 edition reprinted in 1984):10.

[8] Ibid., p.63. For the "utopian"/"realist" distinction between Marxism and realism, see M.S. Daoudi and M.S. Dajani, "Contending Theories in International Relations: Marxism and Realism in World Perspectives," *The Indian Political Science Review*, Vol.XIX, Nos.1and 2, (January-December 1985):90.

[9] Morgenthau, 1967:9.

[10] Edward Vose Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1955):30-33.

[11] Harvey Starr and Randolph M. Siverson, "Alliances and Geopolitics," *Political Geography Quarterly*, Vol.9, No.3, (July 1990):239; Greg Russell, "Balance of Power in Perspective," *International Review of History and Political Science*, Vol.21, No.4, (1984):5-6.

[12] A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980):14-16.

[13] Ian Clark, *Reform & Resistance in the International Order*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980):73.

[14] Harold Nicolson, *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method*, (London: Constable & Co. LTD., 1954):24.

[15] Gulick, op. cit., p.16.

[16] James Der Derian, "Mediating Estrangement: A Theory for Diplomacy," *Review of International Studies*, 13, (1987):91-2; David Hackett Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1970):xxi; Paul Gordon Lauren, "Diplomacy: History, Theory, and Policy," in Paul Gordon Lauren ed., *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, (New York: The Free Press):4-7 and 14.

[17] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press LTD., 1977):162.

[18] Ibid., p.168.

- [19] Ibid., pp.169-70.
- [20] Ibid., pp.170 and 172.
- [21] Ibid., p.172.
- [22] John Robert Ferris, *Men, Money, and Diplomacy: The Evolution of British Strategic Policy, 1919-1926*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989):45-6.
- [23] Palmerston's speech to the House of Commons, 1 March 1848, cited in D.C. Watt, "Ideology in British Foreign Policy," *Jerusalem Journal of International Affairs*, (March 1982):88.
- [24] Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948):209.
- [25] Ernst B. Haas, "The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept, or Propaganda," *World Politics*, Vol.5, No.4, (July 1953):442-77. See also Inis L. Claude, Jr., *Power and International Relations*, (New York: Random House, 1962):22.
- [26] Eyre Crowe, "Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany," in G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley Eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, Vol.III, (London:HMSO, 1928):402.
- [27] Ibid., pp.402-03.
- [28] Churchill, op. cit., pp.207-08.
- [29] Ibid.
- [30] Anthony Eden, *Full Circle*, (London: Cassell and Company, LTD., 1960):368.
- [31] Watt, op. cit., p.95.
- [32] Crowe, op. cit., pp.402-03.
- [33] Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus*, Vol.93, No.2, (Spring 1964):887; David P. Rapkin, William R. Thompson, and Jon A. Christopherson, "Bipolarity and Bipolarization in the Cold War Era," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol.23, No.2, (June 1979):272.
- [34] Charles Gati, "Mr. X Reassessed: The Meaning of Containment," in Charles Gati ed., *Caging the Bear: Containment and the Cold War*, (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1974):46-51;

John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982):4.

[35] E. Stuart Kirby, "Hong Kong and the British Position in China," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol.227, (September 1951):194.

[36] Lord Strang cited by Anthony Adamthwaite, "Suez Revisited," Chapter 10, pp.225-45 in Michael Dockrill and John W. Young, eds., *British Foreign Policy, 1945-56*, (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press LTD., 1989): See note #45, p.245.

[37] Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957):2-3.

[38] Sasson Sofer has argued this point quite conclusively with regard to the Soviet Union and Third World states. See her article "Debate Revisted: Practice Over Theory?" in Clifford C. Olson, ed., *The Theory and Practice of International Relations*, 8th Ed., (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991). For similar views on the PRC, refer to Samuel S. Kim, "Behavioural Dimensions of Chinese Multilateral Diplomacy," *China Quarterly*, 72, (December 1977):713-42; and Michael Yahuda, *Towards the End of Isolationism: China's Foreign Policy After Mao*, (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press LTD., 1983):101 who argues that Mao and his colleagues "accepted the basic ground rules of the system" discussed in Bull, 1977, op. cit.

[39] J.D. Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy: Chinese Foreign Policy and the United Front Doctrine*, (Berkely, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977):5.

[40] As characterised in Ralph Croizier, "World History in the People's Republic of China," *Journal of World History*, Vol.1, No.2, (Fall 1990):157.

[41] Mao Zedong, "On Practice," *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, {cited hereafter as *Selected Works*, followed by volume and page reference}, I, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1964):296-97.

[42] Mao Zedong, "On New Democracy," *Selected Works*, II, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965):358.

[43] Ibid., p.381.

[44] Peter Van Ness, *Revolution and Chinese Foreign Policy*, (Berkely, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1970):39.

[45] *Peking Review*, Nos.37-38, 13 September 1977:7-8; "Talk with American Correspondent Anna Louise Strong," in Anne Freemantle, ed., *Mao Tse-tung: An Anthology of His Writings*, (New York: The American Library, 1962):176-77.

[46] Mao Zedong, "Urgent Tasks Following the Establishment of Kuomintang-Communist Co-operation," *Selected Works*, II:38.

[47] Mao Zedong, "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship," *Selected Works*, IV, (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1961):415.

[48] Mao Zedong, "On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism," *Selected Works*, I:163.

[49] *Peking Review*, No.36, 1965:14 cited in Van Ness, op. cit., p.56.

[50] See note 43, p.163.

[51] Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," *Selected Works*, I:332.

[52] Mao Zedong, "On Protracted War," *Selected Works*, II:135 and 139 respectively.

[53] Mao Zedong, "On Policy," *Selected Works*, II:442.

[54] Ibid., p.443.

[55] Shih Chun, "On Studying Some History About Imperialism," *Chinese Studies in History*, VI, 3, (Spring 1973):7-9.

[56] Mao Zedong, "The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan," *Selected Works*, I:263-4.

[57] John Gittings, *The World and China, 1922-1972*, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974):144 and 232-33.

[58] Herbert S. Yee, "The Three World Theory and Post-Mao China's Global Strategy," *International Affairs*, Vol.59, No.2, (Spring 1983):239-40.

[59] Mao Zedong, "Unity to the Very End," *Selected Works*, II:439.

[60] Mao Zedong, "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War," *Selected Works*, II:200-01.

[61] Percy Jucheng Fang and Lucy Guinong J. Fang, *Zhou Enlai: A Profile*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1986):100; See also Ronald C. Keith, *The Diplomacy of Zhou Enlai*, (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989):5.

[62] To Lenin, peaceful coexistence represented a tactical maneuver designed to gain a respite for the Bolsheviks at a time when they were most vulnerable. It served as a justification for the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk treaty with Imperial Germany in 1917. See "Theses on the Question of a

Separate and Annexationist Peace," in V.I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol.II, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976):480-87.

[63] *Peking Review*, No.25, 21 June 1963:6-22 in Griffith, 1964:276. See also Fang and Fang, 1986:100-01.

[64] Mao Zedong, "On the Chungking Negotiations," *Selected Works*, IV:59. For a similar assessment, see "Several Important Problems Concerning the Current International Situation," in J. Chester Cheng, ed., *The Politics of the Chinese Red Army*, (Stanford: The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, 1966):482.

[65] Mao Zedong, "Some Points in Appraisal of the Present International Situation," *Selected Works*, IV:87.

[66] Mao Zedong, "The Question of Independence and Initiative Within the United Front," *Selected Works*, II:214.

[67] *Peking Review*, No.36, 6 September 1963:7-16 in William E. Griffith, *The Sino-Soviet Rift*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1964):386.

[68] Paul Seabury, "Balance of Power," in C.D. Kernig, ed., *Marxism, Communism and Western Society*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), Vol.I:241.

[69] Shen Shouyuan and Huang Zhongqing, "The People's Republic of China: An Independent Foreign Policy of Peace," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol.XXV, Nos.1-2, (January-April 1990):75-76; Joachim Glaubitz, "Anti-Hegemony Formulas in Chinese Foreign Policy," *Asian Survey*, Vol.16, No.3, (March 1976):205-06.

[70] See Donald J. Munro, "The Malleability of Man in Chinese Marxism," *China Quarterly*, 48, (October/December 1971):609-40; V. Kubalkova and A.A. Cruickshank, *Marxism and International Relations*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985):113.



## CHAPTER TWO

### HONG KONG IN BRITISH DIPLOMACY

London's Hong Kong diplomacy after October 1, 1949, was informed by economic and international imperatives. Financially, the colony was of considerable commercial value making its preservation a "prime British consideration."<sup>1</sup> Strategically, it was a "Berlin of the East"<sup>2</sup> whose importance "as a centre of stability"<sup>3</sup> and whose function as the "right wing bastion of the Southeast Asian front" meant that it "must not go."<sup>4</sup> Though the Chinese had never expressed any intention to invest it,<sup>5</sup> His Majesty's Government was resolved to undertake "all practicable measures for the defence of the Colony"<sup>6</sup> even though past experience bespoke of its indefensibility.<sup>7</sup>

However, the British were relatively confident that Beijing would not commit itself to a "frontal attack on the status of Hong Kong in the immediate future" and that "some sort of *modus vivendi*" could "be worked out."<sup>8</sup> In pursuit of securing the colony's future, and in spite of the constraints imposed by the "special relationship" with the United States, London emphasised an independent diplomacy of "firmness without provocation"<sup>9</sup> designed to "keep a foot in the door."<sup>10</sup> This required full diplomatic recognition of the PRC, British support for Chinese representation in the United Nations, and maintenance of Hong Kong's "tradition of neutrality and noninterference in the politics of China."<sup>11</sup> It was an approach that was very much a byproduct of the attitudinal predilections of British policy-makers regarding the nature and future role of Chinese communism in the post-war world.

The decision to extend full diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic on January 6, 1950, was in accordance with established British practices. As Kenneth Younger stated:

It has long been the practice of the United Kingdom to recognise, broadly speaking, any Government which is in effective control of the territory of a country and which can command the obedience of the bulk of the population. This act of recognition is based upon legal and practical considerations and implies neither approval nor disapproval of the acts of the Government recognised.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, recognition was, as Harold MacMillan remarked: "...based upon more pragmatic considerations. The purpose of a diplomatic mission was solely to do the Queen's business and protect and advance the interests of her subjects."<sup>13</sup> Consequently, Prime Minister Atlee argued: "We (the British) have taken the realist view. When it became clear that the present rulers of China were in effective occupation of that country, we gave them our recognition."<sup>14</sup>

However, the real motive impelling London to act in this regard was its desire to "keep an eye on Hong Kong" and its commercial interests on the mainland.<sup>15</sup> It was the Labour Government's contention that communication and conciliation would hold Chinese hostility in abeyance thereby compelling Beijing to address the colonial issue through diplomatic channels. Indeed, Atlee contended that British China policy should be directed toward the realisation of an understanding whereby Beijing could accept the continuation of the administrative status quo in Hong Kong.<sup>16</sup> It was a view arising out of the interaction between two competing perspectives: one which placed Chinese communism in the context of the Cold War in Europe; and the other which correlated the rise of the Central People's Government with the general trend of nationalism in Asia. In the former, the PRC was an active player in the much larger Soviet strategy of aggression and expansion; in the latter, it was a flexible actor with malleable policies whose conduct in international affairs was susceptible to Western influence.<sup>17</sup>

The perception prevailing in London in 1950, coincided with the second perspective within the general framework of containment implicit in the first.

Because China's leaders were "Chinese first and Communist second," they would not permit their country to become a "servile satellite of the USSR." Mao was cast as another Tito who would not subjugate China's national interest to that of Moscow. Thus, the British questioned the efficacy of American pressure tactics in the form of non-recognition and export controls on the basis that such displays of strength could not be translated into the desired political consequences. It was doubtful that Western hostility would result in a favourable modification of Chinese attitudes.<sup>18</sup> Rejection of the idea of monolithic international communism, comparable to the Chinese differentiation between imperialisms, led London to believe that keeping "a foot in the door" was a preferable containment strategy in Asia as it would prevent the "permanent alienation of China from the West" by averting its passage into the Soviet bloc.<sup>19</sup> It must be noted, however, that in the interests of the *Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance* (1950), Mao did sacrifice a degree of "independence and initiative" for the sake of unity within the united front by way of the abandonment of his own "Sinification of Marxism." In so doing, he avoided a confrontation with Stalin over the latter's theories of international socialism.

While recognition was not to be misconstrued as a weakening of Britain's resolve to obstruct the communist infiltration of Southeast Asia, the British hoped that Hong Kong would become less vulnerable in the process.<sup>20</sup> Government officials opined that severing the already tenuous Sino-British link would serve only to place the colony at Beijing's complete mercy.<sup>21</sup> In approaching China's leaders, London would seek to gain assurances that the PRC would abide by the Kowloon lease. The question of Hong Kong itself would not be broached, however, as it was ceded by treaty.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the British would upgrade their military commitment to the colony thereby indicating that they

would not be bluffed into its premature rendition. A well-defended Hong Kong might even induce the Chinese to negotiate a comprehensive political and economic settlement rather than engage in a protracted and costly armed struggle.<sup>23</sup> Should China prove belligerent, however, London would refuse to discuss the colony's future status.<sup>24</sup> What the British were really banking on was the emergence of a "Communist opportunist policy" in which Beijing would acquiesce to London's continued presence in Hong Kong given the "extent and essential nature" of its economic interests there.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the United Kingdom was seeking to move the Chinese to subordinate their irridentist desires to the self-interested policy of maintaining an entrepot that was profitable to them.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, the United Kingdom's weak position in Hong Kong provided it with a "real motive for wanting to see the People's Government inside the United Nations."<sup>27</sup> The British were inclined to believe that the Chinese would attach considerable importance to their status as the one permanent Asian member of the Security Council. Thus, the substitution of the Nationalist delegate by a representative of the People's Government would prevent China from being "added to the forces of Soviet expansionism" by ensuring that it had appropriate international status and some means of communication with the West other than through Moscow.<sup>28</sup> As such, Beijing would be less inclined to allow itself to be used as a pawn in any Soviet strategy that included a direct attack on the colony for fear of endangering its position in the UN. Suggestions had been made that the Soviets would induce the Chinese to publicly demand the return of Dairen and Port Arthur to which they would immediately comply. This would set the pretext for similar demands to be made of the British regarding Hong Kong. London considered it unlikely, however, that the CPSU would encourage Beijing to abrogate any treaties given their desire to retain their leaseholds in Manchuria. But, the West could launch a propaganda

campaign in this regard should it prove necessary to do so. In any case, the representation issue could be used as a bargaining chip to induce the Chinese to adopt a friendlier attitude toward British interests in China. It could be brought to Beijing's attention that if these interests were extinguished, London would no longer have any incentive to act on its behalf in the UN or in attempting to alter Washington's hostile attitude toward it.<sup>29</sup>

While seeking to constrain China via recognition and representation, the United Kingdom sought to maintain Hong Kong's neutrality in all matters that might provoke hostile Chinese retaliation against it. London stated that it would not permit the island enclave to be used as a "base for activities against the Chinese Government."<sup>30</sup> On the contrary, Hong Kong was "to maintain the friendliest possible relations with whatever may be the Government of China."<sup>31</sup> However, given that Her Majesty's Government was disinclined to alienate Washington and thereby sacrifice the much needed political, economic and military support provided by the so-called "special relationship," London did compromise a degree of maneuverability in order to accommodate American interests regarding the China blockade. But, as the following analysis reveals, this accommodation was highly circumscribed.

In an attempt to prevent the colony's participation in any overt activity aimed at containing Chinese communism, Hong Kong was involved in the implementation of export controls against the mainland but, in accordance with Younger's instructions, in an "unobtrusive" manner so as not to elicit Chinese retaliation. Furthermore, the embargo was to be applied against the mainland and Taiwan with equal severity in order to avoid the emergence of a Chinese perception of favouritism that might compell Beijing to take action against the colony. It must be noted that this policy was influenced by London's belief that Taiwan would eventually fall to the communists anyway. Consequently, it did

not wish to render any material support to the Nationalist regime that could be used later by the mainland for the occupation of Hong Kong itself. In fact, the United Kingdom urged the repatriation of the Republic of China believing their position in the colony would be more secure if Beijing was of the view that the British were actively attempting to work on their behalf in this regard.<sup>32</sup>

Taiwan aside, London acted to ensure that Hong Kong did not take part in the American blockade of the Chinese mainland to the extent of denying consumer goods and foodstuffs to the People's Government throughout the Korean War and in the years preceding it. The British argued that such participation would probably precipitate an attack on the colony that would eventuate in the "loss of an important centre of free speech and western ideas." Furthermore, it would do nothing to influence the course of events in the conflict.<sup>33</sup> London also acted to prevent the United States from extending the war to the PRC itself arguing that it would increase the risks of global conflagration, divert American military resources from Europe, and make the situation in Hong Kong more tenuous.<sup>34</sup> In fact, "Korea was not in itself of any strategic importance to the democracies" and for this reason "must not be allowed to draw (American) military resources away from Europe and the Middle East."<sup>35</sup>

Similar fears of retaliation muted London's desire to involve itself or the colony in the offshore islands crisis and the war in Indochina. Consequently, it pursued a relatively independent China policy vis-a-vis the United States. Though it was possible that Beijing was "bluffing" about Quemoy and Matsu in much the same fashion as its contemporaneous propaganda outburst against Hong Kong could be construed as "mere talk," the United Kingdom would lend Washington moral support only while at the same time making it clear that it had not been asked for military assistance. However, mindful of Hong Kong's

tenuous position, "even this must not be pressed too hard."<sup>36</sup> In any case, London was wary of undertaking any action that might assume the appearance of support for Chiang Kai-shek as this could precipitate a deleterious response from Beijing with respect to the colony.<sup>37</sup>

The British were also "strongly opposed to any course of action in South-East Asia which would be likely to result in a war with China." Though it was prudent to examine "all possible means of deterring China...any provocation must at all costs be avoided." Consequently, the British resisted any involvement in the American blockade of the Chinese coast fearing the possibility that it would "lead to total war." In any event, it would increase their own "difficulties and dangers in Asia, especially in Hong Kong and Malaya."<sup>38</sup> This general policy was to persist throughout the 1960s.

As before, the British remained resolute in their intention to retain control of Hong Kong barring a global or regional conflict of such cost as to render the proposition impossible. Though unable to resist a concerted military effort from the mainland to overtake the colony, it was hoped that the Chinese would be deterred from engaging the local garrison for fear of precipitating a wider conflict. Apprehensive of retaliation, the United Kingdom was hesitant to act in such a way as to "jeopardize the careful fiction of the Colony's neutrality with regard to Communist China."<sup>39</sup> In spite of this, the British had taken a number of limited actions in defiance of Chinese protests. These included the deportation of communist leaders deemed undesirable, the refusal to grant the PRC permission to establish a Hong Kong consulate, and allowances for limited activity on the part of unofficial agents of the ROC in compliance with the colony's policy of neutrality. Given that Hong Kong's position remained precarious, London continued to favour the status quo. However, a period of

heightened tension coinciding with the Chinese Cultural Revolution threatened to upset business as usual.

In 1967, the revolutionary fervor consuming the PRC spilled over into the local affairs of the colony. A period of violence ensued from mid May to September exacerbating the already strained Anglo-Chinese relationship.<sup>40</sup> An interrelated series of incidents were touched off when a labour dispute at a Chinese-owned plastics manufacturer led to the arrest of twenty-one strikers. This incident served to inflame local communists who began to organise against the colony's British administration.<sup>41</sup> From May 11 to May 13 a series of violent confrontations between the police and angry demonstrators prodded Beijing to act on behalf of its compatriots. On May 15, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a series of demands "in all seriousness" to British Charge d'affaires Sir Donald Hopson which Parliament was to accept "unconditionally." British authorities in the colony were to:

Immediately accept all the just demands put forward by Chinese workers and residents in Hong Kong; Immediately stop all fascist measures; Immediately set free all arrested persons (including workers, journalists and cameramen); Punish the culprits responsible for these sanguinary atrocities, offer apologies to the victims and compensate for all their losses; and Guarantee against the occurrence of similar incidents.<sup>42</sup>

London would have to bear the responsibility for "all the grave consequences" arising from a failure to comply with these "solemn and just demands."

On July 19, the situation was further complicated by the arrest of several individuals affiliated with the Hong Kong branch of the New China News Agency. This culminated in the meting out of a two-year prison sentence to one of them. The Chinese retaliated in kind placing Reuters' Beijing correspondent Anthony Grey under house arrest for an identical period.<sup>43</sup> However, British authorities communicated to the Central People's Government that they would not be deterred from their efforts to maintain law and order in Hong Kong.<sup>44</sup>



The administration continued its crackdown on destabilising elements closing down three communist newspapers and arresting members of their staffs. With this, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued an ultimatum on August 20, demanding that the British cancel press restrictions and release those involved within forty-eight hours or "be held responsible for all the consequences."<sup>45</sup> Replying in the negative on the grounds that the demands were offensive and threatening, the United Kingdom braced for the repercussions that were to befall its diplomatic staff and property on the mainland.<sup>46</sup>

To this point London's Charge d'affaires in Beijing had been the target of anti-British demonstrations provoked by events inside the colony. On two occasions his office had been vandalised and his staff assaulted. William Rodgers, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, responded to these events in the following way:

I protested very strongly to the Acting Chinese Charge d'Affaires in London, deploring the failure of the Chinese authorities to restrain the demonstrators or to give proper protection to the Office of our own Charge d'Affaires, contrary to the accepted principles of relations between sovereign states. I also reserved our right to demand full compensation.<sup>47</sup>

Rodgers stated further that these practices were "totally out of keeping with the normal traditions of diplomatic relations" but, while protesting strongly, the government must make "the most out of a difficult situation if we (the British) believe that it is in our long-term interests to do so." To date, London had not yet received "satisfactory replies" from the Chinese.<sup>48</sup>

Nor would the Foreign Office be the recipient of the desired response, for on the evening of August 22, two hours after the expiration of the ultimatum, the Foreign Ministry in Beijing, having been the target of an unauthorised power seizure by radical elements, decided to up the ante allowing mobs to raze the British mission and physically and verbally abuse its personnel. In response,

Minister of State, Mr. George Thomson, informed China's Charge d'affaires, Shen Ping, of the following retaliatory measures: henceforth, Chinese diplomatic and official representatives would require special exit visas to leave the United Kingdom; Chinese officials were restricted to travel within a five mile radius of Marble Arch except where two days' notice was given; and the Chinese mission would not be permitted the use of its diplomatic wireless until communications between London and the British Office in Beijing were restored. Meanwhile, the trial of pro-communist journalists continued in Hong Kong.<sup>49</sup>

As London moved to enforce the Order in Council, members of the Chinese mission instigated a confrontation with police on August 29.<sup>50</sup> Beijing promptly claimed that their officials had been provoked by "policemen and ruffians" acting on the instruction of the British government. Furthermore, Britain was accused of taking "illegal measures" against the Chinese Charge d'affaires in London by imposing the restrictions mentioned above on August 22. Obviously engaging in a tit-for-tat strategy, China's Foreign Ministry placed similar circumscriptions on British diplomats in Beijing.<sup>51</sup>

Coincidentally occurring border incidents threatening Chinese military intervention in Hong Kong heightened fears of escalation. On July 8, the village of Shataukok was the focus of armed confrontation when hundreds of protestors, including elements of the People's Militia, breached the frontier in an effort to engage the local police detachment. Automatic weapons fire was exchanged across the border between British security forces and unidentified persons on the mainland side when the former undertook to disperse the demonstrators. This resulted in five dead and eleven wounded. The clash was brought to an immediate end, however, when the Chinese ceased hostilities upon the intervention of Gurkha troops. Herbert Bowden, Secretary of State for

Commonwealth Affairs, informed the Commons of London's reaction to these events stating:

Her Majesty's Charge d'Affaires in Peking has strongly protested to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs about this incident, and has made it clear that the Hong Kong authorities, with the full support of Her Majesty's Government will take all necessary measures to maintain the peace and security of Hong Kong.<sup>52</sup>

Further incidents such as demonstrations, the disruption of rail service at Lowu, the kidnapping of British policemen, and the seizure of oyster fishermen by communist authorities within the Hong Kong boundary of Deep Bay, contributed to border tensions. Canton rallies favouring the liberation of the colony from "fascist oppression" increased the perception of threat.<sup>53</sup>

Owing to self-interest, the United Kingdom's diplomacy throughout the entire episode was decidedly cautious but firm; retaliation was conditioned by restraint in the hopes that patience would yield benefits once order was restored on the mainland. The British were of the opinion that the prevailing situation in China was an anomaly which would correct itself through time. Rodgers stated that "We must remember that China today is a unique case where none of the normal rules appear to apply."<sup>54</sup> The regular authority patterns between Beijing and local administrators were thought to have been disrupted such that it would have been folly to hold the centre responsible for activities that were beyond its control.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, London was careful not to lay blame for the disturbances in Hong Kong on the Central People's Government even though Chinese "propaganda" had been "extremely inflammatory for a very long time" in its support of local demonstrators.<sup>56</sup> According to Judith Hart, the Minister of State for Commonwealth Affairs, "All of our indicators are that the origins (of the labour disputes)...were among the local communists in Hong Kong" who probably took their cue from the May 11

demonstrations in Beijing, Shanghai and Macao.<sup>57</sup> Thus, "events inside Hong Kong, although always a reflection of events on the mainland of China" were "not necessarily bound up with them."<sup>58</sup>

Concomitantly, Her Majesty's Government was not favourably disposed to "attitudes" which "would yield no results."<sup>59</sup> Though London regretted the recent course of action taken by the Chinese government, it had no desire to complicate relations further. In fact, the British expressed their willingness "at any time to discuss with the Chinese Government, on a rational and business like basis, the mutual relaxation" of all current restrictions and their desire to "return to conditions between them and the Chinese Government conducive to the proper conduct of international affairs."<sup>60</sup>

Accordingly, Her Majesty's Government committed itself to limited retaliatory measures in response to Chinese provocations against its diplomatic personnel in Beijing. Though China's actions were "in clear contravention of international diplomatic practices,"<sup>61</sup> the United Kingdom "did not retaliate in kind against the Chinese in Portland Place."<sup>62</sup> It did not seek to sever its relations with the PRC but rather invited it to engage in the process of reconciliation. By acting in this manner, it was the Chinese who were cast as the villains.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the British persisted in their efforts to seat the PRC in the United Nations believing that China's continuing exclusion from the international community was responsible for its hostility to the outside world. In a speech to the UN General Assembly, the Foreign Secretary, George Brown, argued that the maintenance of the status quo in this regard would "benefit neither the people we represent here nor, for that matter, the Chinese people themselves."<sup>64</sup>

Similarly, British reaction to the arrest of its nationals was also muted. Though publicly lodging protests in the "strongest possible terms" for the

release of Anthony Grey,<sup>65</sup> London pursued a cautious policy emphasising persistent communications with a minimum of publicity. The Foreign Office, fearing that public indignation would "do more harm than good" for the state of British nationals detained in China, continually advised against retaliation.<sup>66</sup>

By 1969, this strategy proved to be the correct one. Changes in China's domestic political environment restored a modicum of normalcy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing. This coincided with the gradual lifting of restrictions imposed on diplomatic personnel in both countries and the release of those incarcerated in Hong Kong prisons during the upheavals of 1967. In response to the latter, the Chinese informed Grey that "since the Hongkong British authorities had already released all the patriotic Chinese journalists," he was no longer a detainee.<sup>67</sup>

The deescalation of tensions in late 1969 set the stage for even greater cooperation throughout the seventies. This was underscored by strategic reassessments on the part of the PRC and the United States that led to the Sino-American rapprochement in 1972 and a modified international environment affording the United Kingdom a greater degree of freedom in its China policy. On March 13, 1972, Sino-British diplomatic links were upgraded and formalised in an agreement signed in Beijing. The communique established that:

both confirming the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and equality and mutual benefit, the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the United Kingdom have decided to raise the level of their respective diplomatic representatives in each other's capitals from charge d'affaires to ambassador as from 13 March 1972.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, Her Majesty's Government, recognising that Beijing possessed sole legal authority over the PRC, withdrew its officials from Taiwan. As Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas-Home stated: "We held the view both at Cairo and

at Potsdam that Taiwan should be restored to China. We think that the Taiwan question is China's internal affair to be settled by the Chinese people themselves."<sup>69</sup> The status of Hong Kong does not appear to have figured prominently in the negotiations preceding the communique.

This improvement in Anglo-Chinese relations was not lost on the island entrepot, however. A plethora of government statements indicated that Beijing had made no representations whatsoever regarding the colony's status. As stated by Evan Luard, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs: "The Chinese Government are very well aware of our views about the position of Hong Kong. They have indicated no anxiety radically to change the existing situation in the immediate future...."<sup>70</sup> But, London made it clear that it was "satisfied" with the leasing arrangements associated with the New Territories and that it had no plans to grant leases beyond 1997.<sup>71</sup> However, on March 10, 1972, Huang Hua did reaffirm China's position that Hong Kong and Macao fell "within China's sovereign right" and should, therefore, be removed from the United Nations' list of colonial and dependent territories. The British responded that the statement did not "affect Her Majesty's Government's well-known view of the status of Hong Kong."<sup>72</sup> The United Kingdom continued to leave "no doubt that Her Majesty's Government's commitments to Hong Kong will remain" and that there was "no suggestion at all" that the British presence there "should be withdrawn."<sup>73</sup> The purpose of British forces in the colony continued to be the preservation of its territorial integrity and internal security.<sup>74</sup>

However, London's sensitivity to the Hong Kong problem persisted. Though the Chinese had not officially broached the issue of the colony's local administration, the United Kingdom refused to set it on the road to self-government so as not to provoke an incident. The Minister of State for Foreign

and Commonwealth Affairs (Ennals) made it clear that the "circumstances of Hong Kong" were "very special" so as to make "difficult any constitutional progress on the path followed by Dependent Territories." The colony's "geographical and constitutional position" created "problems" that were "almost unique" thereby prohibiting the realisation of independence.<sup>75</sup> There were, however, some district level electoral reforms in response to administrative defects deemed responsible for the social unrest that erupted in 1967. Furthermore, London increasingly veered away from any reference to Hong Kong as a colony out of respect for the Chinese view that it was a part of China under foreign occupation.<sup>76</sup>

In 1979, it appeared as if the status quo would be maintained into the next decade. Commenting on her meeting with Hua Guofeng, Prime Minister Thatcher stated:

There was no discussion of the New Territories lease as such, but the subject of Hong Kong's future was touched upon. Both sides agreed that we shared an interest in maintaining the stability and prosperity of the territory. We agreed to keep in contact on the subject.<sup>77</sup>

She also confirmed that the sovereignty issue was not discussed. The Secretary of State for Defence indicated further that there was no longer a "question of an external threat to Hong Kong, in a military sense, which our garrison there would meet. Such a threat does not exist." The only purpose of the garrison now was to alleviate the stresses stemming from illegal immigration into the colony.<sup>78</sup> The government continued to state that its policy remained much the same as that outlined to the UN in 1972; there were no plans to alter Hong Kong's status.<sup>79</sup> London continued to view the colony as a "dependent territory administered as part of Her Majesty's Dominions under the Hong Kong Letters Patent 1917 to 1976, and the Hong Kong Royal Instructions 1917 to 1977."<sup>80</sup>

However, the new decade marked an alteration in the relative indifference that had attended the Hong Kong issue throughout the 1970s. In an interesting turn of events, it was the British, not the Chinese, who were expressing a sense of urgency regarding the colony's status. With the termination date of the lease on the New Territories fast approaching and the inability of the local administration to extend existing land leases or grant new ones beyond June 30, 1997, the governments of the United Kingdom and Hong Kong were concerned that uncertainty over the enclave's future would undermine confidence and deter foreign investment. Indeed, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines and Taiwan had specific policies designed to attract Hong Kong entrepreneurs through the promise of more attractive investment opportunities.<sup>81</sup> So dependent was the colonial government on the sale of leases for public revenues that the loss of the New Territories would have rendered Hong Kong and Kowloon economically unviable.<sup>82</sup> This combined with "significant indications of Chinese policy" regarding rendition as communicated to Humphrey Atkins, Lord Privy Seal, on his visit to Beijing in January 1982, moved London to seek a negotiated settlement with the mainland government in order to maintain the "prosperity and stability" of Hong Kong.<sup>83</sup>

Of further significance was the alteration in the existing Anglo-Chinese relationship. The fears and suspicions that had hitherto obstructed the establishment of amicable relations between the two countries no longer existed. This was accompanied by a coincidence in world view. As enunciated by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Rifkind):

Relations between the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China have developed substantially during the last few years. They are now cordial and constructive. Our social and political systems are quite



different, but we share the same fundamental outlook on a number of international issues.<sup>84</sup>

This outlook entailed a mutual belief that a "fundamental principle of international relations should be non-interference in the affairs of other states." Concomitantly, both governments shared "similar views" on the "Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia."<sup>85</sup>

Given this atmosphere, the British could no longer justify their reticence to discuss the Hong Kong issue on the basis that an unfriendly regime resided in Beijing. This was made all the more clear by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Blaker) when he refuted the existence of any similarity in the situations prevailing in Hong Kong and the Falkland Islands based on the fact that "We (the British) have very close relations with the People's Republic of China."<sup>86</sup> Thus, existing relations and the desire to develop them further strengthened London's resolve to proceed with negotiations.<sup>87</sup>

On the basis of these factors, the British government concluded that Mrs. Thatcher's scheduled visit to Beijing in September 1982, afforded the appropriate opportunity to open discussions with the Chinese. Furthermore, it could be used to deepen Sino-British cooperation in order to build the added confidence necessary to proceed with future talks.<sup>88</sup> The Central People's Government proved amenable to these ideas and dialogue began in earnest. After their meeting on September 24, 1982, the Prime Minister and Deng Xiaoping issued the following joint statement:

Today the leaders of both countries held far-reaching talks in a friendly atmosphere on the future of Hong Kong. Both leaders made clear their respective positions on the subject. They agreed to enter talks through diplomatic channels following the visit with the common aim of maintaining the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong.<sup>89</sup>

Although the details of the negotiations remain confidential, it is evident that the United Kingdom did not concede sovereignty over the colony at the

outset. Besides the fact that the phrase "resumption of sovereignty" appeared in the Chinese version of the joint communique but not in that above,<sup>90</sup> was British insistence on a "role and link" beyond 1997. London sought China's acquiescence to the continuation of the status quo by drawing a link between Hong Kong's prosperity and British administration; the implication being that the former could not exist without the latter. London emphasised the contribution made by the colony to the Chinese economy in terms of markets and foreign exchange. Indeed, the economic benefits accruing from the PRC's relationship with the colony were said to significantly outweigh those enjoyed by the United Kingdom. The British pressed home that the Chinese had on several occasions acknowledged the importance of Hong Kong to their realisation of the "four modernisations."<sup>91</sup>

A further dimension of Britain's negotiating position rested on Hong Kong's legal status. Prior to his meeting with the Prime Minister, Deng had informed a gathering of the colony's business leaders that Beijing fully intended to reassert its sovereignty over the island enclave in 1997 in a manner conducive to the preservation of its "stability and prosperity." Furthermore, the Chinese had always maintained that the treaties, having been wrenched from China through gunboat diplomacy, were "unequal" and "invalid."<sup>92</sup> This contention was at variance with London's view.

The British were of the opinion that even though the forceful imposition of a treaty on one state by another had been condemned since the enshrining of the Covenant of the League of Nations, such actions did not undermine the validity of past treaties. In fact, most international agreements arose out of difficult bargaining and embodied features unpalatable to the parties involved.<sup>93</sup> Thus, the treaties defining the current status of Hong Kong continued to carry the full force of international law despite the circumstances under which they were

reached. Consequently, the Prime Minister warned that "if countries try to abrogate treaties...then it is very serious indeed, because if a country will not stand by one treaty, it will not stand by another treaty, and that's why you enter into talks..."<sup>94</sup>

No doubt the British wanted to use the sovereignty issue as a bargaining chip throughout the course of the negotiations. In a statement to the press, Thatcher related: "There are treaties in existence. We stick by our treaties unless we decide on something else. At the moment we stick by our treaties."<sup>95</sup> Obviously, London was propounding that the terms of international agreements be observed only insofar as it was in the parties' interests to do so. As such, the United Kingdom was in reality giving only half-hearted support to the sanctity of treaties by not tying itself to the retention of full sovereignty over the colony outside of the New Territories. The nature of the British link was on the negotiating table.<sup>96</sup>

Operating in conjunction with the economic, administrative, and legal aspects of the British approach was London's appeal to its "moral responsibility and duty to the people of Hong Kong."<sup>97</sup> To this end, the views of the colony's citizens would "be taken fully into account at all stages" and any agreement would require not only the support of Her Majesty's and Central People's Governments, but the support of the Hong Kong people as well.<sup>98</sup> The Chinese took umbrage with this position claiming that their interests extended beyond mere material benefits to the welfare of the colony's inhabitants. Since Beijing was the victim of Western imperialism, only it was empowered to assume a moral responsibility on behalf of Hong Kong.<sup>99</sup>

Furthermore, the Chinese also took issue with British demands for Hong Kong representation at the bargaining table. The United Kingdom sought China's compliance to the participation of Governor Youde as the colony's

representative. Beijing contended that the negotiations were bilateral in character between two sovereign governments. Since the people of Hong Kong were compatriots, China would safeguard their interests. Youde was eventually invited to join the negotiations but the Chinese considered him strictly as a member of the British delegation.<sup>100</sup>

The international implications of a peaceful settlement could not have been lost on British negotiators either. There must have been some concern in London over allowing a resolution that would set an international precedent to which the Spanish could appeal in the case of Gibraltar. It too had been ceded by treaty (Peace of Utrecht 1713) and subject to demands for rendition. Of a more pressing nature was the strategic situation in the south Atlantic where the United Kingdom had quashed by force of arms any hopes for the retrocession of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) to Argentina for the immediate future. Modern British imperial history mitigated against the return of colonial possessions to other powers except where self-determination demanded it under the United Nations' Charter, and yet this was being challenged by Madrid and Buenos Aires. Thus, recognition of the broader international implications for British colonial possessions elsewhere must have influenced London's position on the issue of sovereignty in the case of Hong Kong.<sup>101</sup>

It became clear, however, that the Chinese would not accede on the sovereignty issue. Continued British administration was antithetical to the expressed desire to redress all unequal treaties.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, it would not be tolerated beyond 1997. In April 1983, Beijing made clear its future intentions for the colony advancing the formulae of "one country, two systems" and "sovereignty with prosperity." If sovereignty and prosperity proved incompatible, however, the former would still be actualised.<sup>103</sup> This was followed in the fall

by a Chinese ultimatum requiring an acceptable agreement by September 30, 1984.

These factors combined appear to have forced London's hand. Richard Luce, Secretary of State for Hong Kong, related to the House of Commons that "We acknowledge the facts that surround 1997 and we acknowledge the sovereignty position."<sup>104</sup> This was elaborated further by Sir Geoffrey Howe who stated that the "reality" of Hong Kong's situation and the exchanges between the government and the Chinese, led London to conclude that "it would not be realistic to think of an agreement that provided for continued British administration in Hong Kong after 1997." Thus, Her Majesty's Government would "concentrate on other ways of securing the assurances necessary for continuity of Hong Kong's stability, prosperity and way of life."<sup>105</sup>

In the absence of a British "role and link," London sought to commit the PRC to a "binding international agreement" of sufficient "clarity and detail" that would preserve the administrative character of the colony and permit a high degree of autonomy once rendition became a reality. This was "essential to give confidence to all those affected by the agreement, in Hong Kong and elsewhere." Though an agreement could not be absolutely guaranteed, the government believed that both nations would abide by a settlement since it was in their mutual interests to do so. Furthermore, the friendly relations between the two states and the coincidence of their international outlooks would underwrite an acceptable solution. Of particular import, however, was the international prestige associated with a formal settlement. The British were of the view that China valued its international reputation to such an extent, that it would abide by an agreement lest it face world recrimination for failing to do so. The formalisation of the Chinese commitment to the concept of "one country, two systems" would make possible "a situation in which Hong Kong would, as

part of China, enjoy a high degree of autonomy which would last for at least fifty years from 1997.”<sup>106</sup>

That Her Majesty's Government concluded that a formal agreement based on the Chinese position was better than no agreement at all indicates that it was compelled to reinstate a more realistic policy. This reveals that Thatcher's initial negotiating bid represented a deviation from the realism embodied in her predecessors' China policy given its unrealistic accounting of the consistent stand proffered by the Chinese since 1949 with regard to Hong Kong, not to mention the fact that it forced China's leaders into an inflexible bargaining position from the outset. Why the Prime Minister assumed this position is, of course, debatable. Suffice it to say that it is possible that she was so "overcome" with the Falklands victory that she misread the circumstances surrounding Hong Kong, particularly the determination of her Chinese counterparts.<sup>107</sup> Another possibility is that Thatcher acted counter to the advice of her diplomats given that they had lost their credibility as a result of the conflict in the South Atlantic.<sup>108</sup> What is clear, however, is that London returned to the well-worn tradition of British realism once it came to the realisation that its options were limited. As the introduction to the Draft Agreement states:

The Choice is ... between reversion of Hong Kong to China under agreed, legally binding international arrangements or reversion to China without such arrangements. That is not a choice which Her Majesty's Government have sought to impose on the people of Hong Kong. It is a choice imposed by the facts of Hong Kong's history.<sup>109</sup>

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

- [1] *Foreign Relations of the United States*, VIII, 4 August 1949:471 (cited hereafter as *FRUS* followed by volume, date and page number{s}).
- [2] *FRUS*, VII Part 2, 4 April 1949:1139.
- [3] *House of Commons Debates*, Vol.459, 10 December 1948: col.788.
- [4] *FRUS*, VII Part 2, 16 September 1949:1205; *FRUS*, VII Part 1, 28 September 1949:84.
- [5] *House of Commons Debates*, Vol.467, 27 July 1949: col.2467.
- [6] *House of Commons Debates*, Vol.460, 2 February 1949: col.230.
- [7] Harold MacMillan, *Tides of Fortune, 1945-1955*, (London: Macmillan and Co., LTD., 1969):553.
- [8] *State Department*, "Current British Policy Toward Communist China," 15 November 1949:3.
- [9] *National Security Council (NSC 5717)*, "US Policy on Hong Kong," 24 June 1959:2.
- [10] *FRUS*, IX, 10 January 1949:822.
- [11] *House of Commons Debates*, Vol.464, 5 May 1949: col.1250.
- [12] *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 3 May 1951:560 (cited hereafter as *FEER* followed by date and page number{s}); See also Humphrey Trevelyan, *Worlds Apart*, (London: Macmillan, 1971):16.
- [13] Harold MacMillan, *Riding the Storm, 1956-1959*, (London: Macmillan and Co., LTD., 1971):541.
- [14] *FEER*, 3 May 1951:558.
- [15] *FRUS*, IX, 13 September 1949:82; Brian Porter, *Britain and the Rise of Communist China: A Study of British Attitudes, 1945-1954*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967):36.
- [16] Ritchie Ovendale, "Britain and the Cold War in Asia," in Ritchie Ovendale, ed., *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Governments, 1945-1951*, (Leicester University Press, 1984):130.

[17] Robert Boardman, "Conflict in Western Perceptions of Change: Two Profiles of China," *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.1, no.2 (April 1971):193;204-05.

[18] *FRUS*, IX, 12 September 1949:876-77; on power and fungibility see David A. Baldwin, "Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies," *World Politics*, 31 (January 1979):161-94.

[19] Boardman, 1971:196; *FRUS*, VI Part 1, 25 September 1951:94; *State Department, Foreign Service Despatch*, "British Diplomatic Mission to Peiping," 18 November 1952:2; *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, Series II, Vol.II, 20 April 1950:68 (cited hereafter as *Documents* followed by date and page number{s}); Brian White, "Britain and the Rise of Detente," in Richard Crockatt and Steve Smith eds., *The Cold War: Past and Present*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987):94.

[20] *FRUS*, IX, 8 November 1949:187.

[21] *State Department, Foreign Service Despatch*, "British Diplomatic Mission in Peiping," 18 November 1952:2.

[22] *FRUS*, IX, 15 October 1949:130; *FRUS*, IX, 1 November 1949:150.

[23] *CIA Report*, "Factors Affecting the Status of Hong Kong (To September 1950)," 4 October 1949: pp.5 and 8.

[24] *FRUS*, IX, 13 September 1949:83-4.

[25] *FRUS*, IX, 10 January 1949:818.

[26] See note 23, p.8.

[27] *Documents*, 11 May 1950:321.

[28] *FEER*, 3 May 1951:559; *Documents*, 20 April 1950:68-9.

[29] *Documents*, 24 April 1950:89; *FRUS*, VIII, 3 November 1949:578.

[30] *House of Commons Debates*, Vol.458, 24 November 1948: col.1229 and Vol.572, 3 July 1957: cols.1094-95.

[31] *House of Commons Debates*, Vol.466, 22 June 1949: col.208.

[32] *FRUS*, VI, 4 July 1950:644; 18 July 1950:651; 14 November 1950:561.

[33] *FRUS*, VII Part 1, 10 May 1951:429; *FO 371/99582/438* cited by Peter Lowe, "The Settlement of the Korean War," in John W. Young ed., *The*



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### CHAPTER THREE

#### HONG KONG IN CHINESE DIPLOMACY

Like its British counterpart, Beijing's Hong Kong (Xianggang) diplomacy after October 1, 1949, was informed by economic and international imperatives. Financially, the colony provided a market for Chinese goods and was a source of foreign exchange which made it valuable to a country in the throes of modernisation. Strategically, it served as a base for intelligence gathering on Taiwan and elsewhere and as a medium for communication with China's compatriots overseas and with the outside world.<sup>1</sup> Also of importance, however, was the position assigned Hong Kong in Beijing's reunification timetable. Sources indicate that the policy laid down by Mao Zedong and the one followed by successive leaders was that the repatriation of Taiwan should precede the resolution of other outstanding territorial disputes.<sup>2</sup> At present, there is no evidence to suggest that the Hong Kong question was subjected to significant bureaucratic politics.

On the basis of these factors, the Chinese were willing to accept a continuation of the *status quo* even though it was anathema to their principled stand that the treaties on which it was established were "unequal" and "invalid" provided that Hong Kong was not permitted to pursue a course inimical to China's interests. As a consequence, Beijing's diplomacy emphasised that the colonial question would be settled "appropriately" by "peaceful means" when "conditions were ripe."<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the Chinese refused to renounce the use of force as a viable option in the resolution of the Taiwan problem given that this was considered to be a purely domestic matter unlike Hong Kong which was an international dispute involving the question of sovereignty.<sup>4</sup> This position represented a tacit recognition of the "objective reality" surrounding the British

administration of Hong Kong at the tactical or policy level, underlined by the United Kingdom's designation after the Suez crisis as one of the middle forces comprising the "intermediate zone" to be won over in the greater struggle against American imperialism. With the deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations and the PRC's subsequent realignment with the west, the British would retain their standing as a middle force, only this time as a component of the "second world," in China's effort to combat superpower hegemonism. At the strategic level, however, Beijing reviled London in its propaganda commensurate with the maxim of "strategically despising the enemy."

On the surface, Hong Kong's position in 1949 was tenuous at best especially in light of Marshal Li Jishen's characterisation of the colony as a case of "old fashioned imperialism"<sup>5</sup> and Huang Hua's statement that an avowed aim of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was to eradicate the remaining vestiges of British imperialism in China.<sup>6</sup> This, coupled with the PLA's rapid drive southward and the military untenability of the British position in the region, only exacerbated the existing anxieties of those responsible for Hong Kong's defence. However, with the occupation of Canton on October 15, the Chinese forces halted their advance to within twenty-five miles of the frontier. Communist units took up positions at the established border posts causing no difficulties except for a disruption in communications between the colony and Canton.<sup>7</sup> By November, however, steamship service between the two cities had been reestablished and trade with the mainland was flourishing in spite of the Nationalist blockade due to the protection provided by the PLA.<sup>8</sup> In fact, as alluded to in the previous chapter, the British did have a basis for believing that a *modus vivendi* could be reached with the Central People's Government that would preserve the status quo for the immediate future.

Through their intermediary in Hong Kong, Chiao Mu, Beijing had informed the colonial government that it "greatly appreciated" London's policy of neutrality throughout the civil war and that it assumed that Great Britain's commitment not to permit the colony to be used as a base for hostile operations against the Chinese government would continue once the communists acceded to power. He stated further that Sino-British relations could be "perfectly normal" and gave assurances that Beijing would neither press for Hong Kong's rendition nor take it by force.<sup>9</sup> However, Chiao indicated that the colonial question could only be resolved at the uppermost echelons and that it would be considered as an "integral factor" in Sino-British relations.<sup>10</sup>

That the Chinese were willing to tolerate the continued British presence in the colony over an extended period of time is evidenced by Chiao's statements to the effect that domestic administrative matters of the utmost priority would demand the leaders' attention for years thus relegating the diplomatic settlement of the Hong Kong question to some "impliedly" distant point in the future.<sup>11</sup> This was underlined by the departure of high-profile communists from the colony to Guangdong for the purposes of assuming administrative positions there<sup>12</sup> as well as by the decision of the CCP subcommittees to adhere to those treaties concluded prior to the advent of the Guomindang.<sup>13</sup> Of further significance were official public pronouncements extolling Beijing's desire to promote trading relations and its contacts with the west.<sup>14</sup> This policy was given further explication in 1963, when Beijing made clear that its approach to outstanding treaty disputes had, from the beginning, entailed their peaceful resolution through negotiation in accordance with the differentiation between imperialisms. Until such time as these issues were ameliorated, the *status quo* was to be preserved.



This did not mean, however, that 1949 was without incident, for on April 19, the HMS Amethyst came under communist fire while on its way to Nanjing via the Yangtze River. The Central People's Government, having been conspicuously silent with respect to Hong Kong's status to this point, launched a vitriolic verbal attack against both the British and the colonial administration over a period of four weeks.<sup>15</sup> Besides demanding an apology for what it claimed was aggression instigated on the part of His Majesty's Ship, Beijing further insisted that London agree to discuss the Hong Kong question in addition to paying an indemnity, removing its forces from Chinese territory, and guaranteeing that such an incident would not be repeated in future.<sup>16</sup> However, it is apparent that the Chinese did not wish to make anything further out of the Hong Kong question given their silence on the issue following the Amethyst's escape to Shanghai on July 30.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the 1950s, Beijing continued to exercise restraint despite a number of jurisdictional grievances between itself and the colonial administration and the emergence of potentially destabilising incidents, namely the riots of 1952 and 1956, the Korean War and the Taiwan Straits crisis. Though more vociferous during periods of tension, China's propaganda organs at no time suggested any Chinese intention to assert immediate and direct control over the territory despite the PLA's overwhelming ability to do so.<sup>18</sup> As argued by Harold Hinton, the intensification of verbal pressure in the context of crisis had a deterrent quality contrived "as a means of reminding the British of their vulnerability and the necessity for good behaviour."<sup>19</sup> However, Beijing did continue to remind London of its sovereign claims to Hong Kong and of the latter's obligation to preserve the colony's neutrality. Curiously, the sovereignty claim appeared to be undermined by Chinese requests for representation in the territory.

That Beijing did not consider Hong Kong an extraterritorial entity is borne out by its response to London's decision to reclassify mainland Chinese as foreign nationals thereby restricting their access to the colony. On May 8, 1950, Vice-Foreign Minister Zhang Hanfu registered the following protest:

For more than 100 years, Chinese nationals entering or leaving Hong Kong have never been treated as foreign immigrants; nor have the British authorities in Hong Kong any justification whatsoever to treat Chinese nationals as other foreign immigrants. Hence, with regard to the regulations controlling Chinese nationals entering or leaving Hong Kong as have been promulgated recently by the British authorities in Hong Kong, the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China cannot but regard them as an unreasonable and unfriendly act towards the People's Republic of China and her people, and hereby protest to the British Government.<sup>20</sup>

Zhang further expressed his government's expectation that the United Kingdom would undertake to "remove immediately all restrictions upon Chinese nationals entering or leaving Hong Kong."

Further protests of a jurisdictional nature were lodged with the British particularly over the issue of territorial waters. In the summer of 1950, Chinese forces had occupied islands to the south and southwest of the colonial territory. Soon thereafter ships of the Royal Navy had been fired upon as they passed within close proximity of the PLA garrisons on the islands in question. On August 24th, the Governor of Guangdong province, General Ye Jianying, contended that the British vessels had intruded into Chinese territorial waters on August 17th but prior to their having incurred a military response, they had been "immediately warned." Ye asserted that London had engaged in "provocative acts ... inseparable from the foreign policy of imperialism" and that its administration in Hong Kong would be held fully responsible for these "obviously planned encroachments of our country's sovereignty."<sup>21</sup>

As the conflict in Korea escalated, so too did China's verbal assaults on the colonial government. On behalf of his compatriots in the colony, Zhou Enlai stated: "Britain's extremely unjustifiable and unfriendly attitude towards Chinese residents in Hong Kong and other places cannot fail to draw the serious attention of the Central People's Government."<sup>22</sup> This was followed on April 5, 1951, by General Ye's condemnation of British complicity in the seizure of five Chinese fishing vessels by American and Nationalist authorities as "unlawful and outrageous."<sup>23</sup> In March 1952, in response to riots in Kowloon, the Chinese media accused London of allowing the colony to be used as a staging point for the invasion of the mainland by "Chiang Kai-shek's gangsters."<sup>24</sup>

However, with the termination of hostilities in Korea and in the Bandung spirit, Chinese verbal pressure on Hong Kong decreased. In fact, Beijing emphasised its desire to cooperate with the colonial authorities as evidenced by Tao Zhu's suggestion that Guangdong and the colony act in concert to purposefully ease international tensions.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the Chinese rejected any action taken by their compatriots in Hong Kong that would result in the destabilisation of the local regime. This was consistent with the general policy on "Overseas Chinese" formalised by the *Dual Nationality Treaty* (April 1955) between the PRC and Indonesia. In the name of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect for sovereignty, Beijing was anxious to show its neighbours that it was disinterested in fomenting insurrection among the various pockets of ethnic Chinese residing abroad, or of taking actions that could be misconstrued as meddling in the domestic affairs of other states lest the Asian countries of the Pacific be deterred from normalising relations with China.<sup>26</sup> Thus, speaking to those Chinese with other than mainland citizenship, Hong Kong's pro-PRC newspaper *Ta Kung Pao* stated: "while maintaining their own legitimate rights

and interests they must not take part in the political strife of the countries of their domicile, but must respect the local customs and laws."<sup>27</sup>

This did not mean that Beijing had deemphasised its security concerns for it continued to press London to remain mindful of the commitment made to maintain the colony's neutrality in Chinese affairs. This is exemplified by the protests lodged in response to the United Kingdom's provision of refuge to Nationalist pilots engaged in "hostile" incursions of Chinese airspace in Hong Kong. In reference to one such incident that occurred in January 1956, the Central People's Government claimed:

The principles of international law stipulate that the government of a country has the obligation not to allow the area under its administration to be turned into a base to conduct hostile activities against the government of a foreign country with which it is at peace. Similarly, in the case of civil strife in a country when a state of belligerency has not been recognized, the government of any third country should refrain from taking any action to prevent the legitimate government of that country from making efforts to restore its internal unity and order and should not provide any assistance to the rebels. International law is very clear on this point.<sup>28</sup>

Referring to noted international legal scholar Professor Oppenheim, the Chinese further argued: "According to international law, the action of the British authorities in Hong Kong constitutes an international delinquency...." for which they should "assume full responsibility."<sup>29</sup>

With the onset of the Kowloon riots of 1956, however, Sino-British relations took another downturn. A series of violent clashes within the colony, instigated by the removal of a Nationalist flag in compliance with regulations prohibiting the display of political symbols, led the Central People's Government to assume the role of guardian on behalf of its compatriots there.<sup>30</sup> London was again accused of connivance in the Taiwan-inspired civil unrest that had been "detrimental to peaceful Chinese inhabitants and hostile to the People's Republic of China." Beijing expressed its concern for the "security of Chinese in

Hong Kong and Kowloon" and its unwillingness to allow the Guomindong to use the colony as a centre for "subversive activities against the Chinese mainland."<sup>31</sup>

These sentiments were given further expression when the colonial authorities announced their intention to relocate local inhabitants from land designated for the construction of a resettlement project. The Chinese claimed that the inhabitants had been moved against their free will and had been inadequately compensated. In response to British protests of interference in their internal affairs, Beijing charged that it had "legitimate rights to protect from infringement the legitimate interests of the Chinese residents in Hong Kong and Kowloon" in accordance with the "general principles of international law." The British government's failure to discontinue the forcible expulsion of the residents would result in their having "to bear responsibility for all consequences."<sup>32</sup>

In addition, Beijing resuscitated the 1956 aircraft incident characterising it as "another very unfriendly act by the British government and the Hong Kong British authorities toward the Chinese government and people." This time, however, the Central People's Government discarded the international legal argument in favour of accusations that the British colonial administration was again engaged in "connivance in the use of Hong Kong by the Chiang Kai-shek clique to threaten China's security."<sup>33</sup> As on other occasions, the protest stressed London's responsibility for the consequences arising from their actions.

Tensions persisted as hostilities erupted over the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu. Between April and September 1958, the Chinese undertook a verbal campaign directed against the British authorities in the colony. On April 9, the Foreign Ministry again registered a "strong protest" regarding British complicity in allowing a Nationalist aircraft engaged in hostile

actions against the mainland to return to Taiwan. This action, "contrary to the British Government's avowal that it has no intention of permitting Hong Kong to be used as a base for hostile activities against anyone," would "certainly adversely affect Sino-British relations."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, London was accused of advocating a "two Chinas" policy by its deportation of the principal of Chung Hua Middle School on the basis that he permitted "books of a political nature" to be added to the holdings of the school library. This was a hypocritical act given that the British tolerated the use of textbooks published in Taiwan that were hostile to the mainland government to be used throughout the colony's educational system. Again, London would be held accountable for its connivance with the forces of Chiang Kai-shek and other provocations, namely the persecution of Chinese journalists, committed against the new China.<sup>35</sup>

On August 28, two days after the bombardment of Quemoy began, a *People's Daily* editorial drew a specific linkage between the offshore crisis and Hong Kong's domestic affairs. It stated:

Of late, in coordination with the efforts of the U.S. and its Chiang Kai-shek hirelings to create tension in the Far East and Taiwan Straits, Britain has not only allowed U.S. troops to land at Singapore but has turned Hong Kong into a haunt for them. It has even sent its military aircraft stationed in Hong Kong to intrude over our territorial air, for reconnaissance and harassment. It was in these very serious circumstances that the Hong Kong British authorities set their armed police on to brutally attack teachers, students and newspapermen ... Up to this moment, the Chinese people have shown the greatest tolerance over the whole series of hostile actions of the British Government and the Hong Kong British authorities. However, the tolerance of the Chinese people cannot be limitless.<sup>36</sup>

This was followed on September 4, by Beijing's announcement that it would extend its territorial limit to 12 miles thereby widening its jurisdiction to include not only the offshore islands but Hong Kong as well. The resultant effect was to exacerbate already complicated fisheries issues; a factor which, in concert with

the potential disruption of access to the colony, motivated London to reject the validity of this claim under international law.<sup>37</sup>

Interestingly, it appears that Beijing was undermining its sovereignty position by requesting British approval for the presence, in Hong Kong, of what London identified as a diplomatically accredited office of "Commissioner of Foreign Affairs." Zhou Enlai was said to have stated publicly in February 1956, that this was an impediment to the establishment of formal Sino-British relations.<sup>38</sup> In Beijing, however, Zhou informed Harold Wilson that he had put forward a proposal in a meeting with Sir Grantham and British Charge d'Affaires, Humphrey Trevelyan, that involved the appointment of a "Chinese government representative" to Hong Kong. Justifying this request, Zhou stated:

China has state enterprises, banks and other properties in Hongkong, with nearly 1,000 employees, let alone the fact that over 90 percent of the Hongkong population is Chinese. We have many business matters on which contacts have to be made with the Hongkong authorities. It is reasonable that there should be a Chinese Government representative there. There are only 1,000 Americans in Hongkong, and the United States has a consulate with a staff of more than 100. Yet we are only represented by reporters of the Hsinhua News Agency. Isn't this ridiculous?

Zhou buttressed this position further by contrasting the favourable conditions offered the British on the mainland with London's failure to provide a reciprocal accommodation of Chinese interests in the colony. He argued:

Britain has a factory, a number of shops and several scores of British nationals in Shanghai, and with our approval there is a representative of the Office of the British Charge d'Affaires there. China has so many enterprises in Hongkong with the number of employees alone running up to 1,000 and yet we have no representative there. We have sent diplomatic documents on this matter to the British Government, but no reply has been received in the past two years and more. This is something unusual in the history of British diplomacy.<sup>39</sup>

Zhou concluded: "We wish to improve relations with Hongkong. But under the pressure of the United States, the Hongkong authorities and the British Government have not agreed to do so."<sup>40</sup>

However, the deintensification of the offshore islands dispute led to a tempering of the PRC's verbal attacks on the British and the colonial administration. In fact, as the new decade began, it appeared that Beijing was seeking to downplay those points of contention that had hitherto marred its relations with London.<sup>41</sup> But, with the advent of the Sino-Soviet dispute, the Chinese also made their most explicit statement to date regarding their policy on Hong Kong and other territorial issues.

In 1962, Moscow-Beijing polemics over Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy led the PRC to accuse the Soviets of "adventurism" and "capitulationism" in their handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis. This motivated Khrushchev and the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) to question the tolerance shown by China towards those parts of its territory under foreign occupation. The Soviet premier declared: "The aroma coming from these places is not a bit better than the smell from colonialism in Goa," but also that "It would be wrong to prod China to actions it considers untimely."<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the CPUSA took issue with the PRC's "wrong position on peaceful coexistence" and queried why it was adopting a "double-standard approach" when it was in fact following a correct policy of restraint with respect to Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.<sup>43</sup>

The Chinese rejected these charges claiming instead an adherence to the single standard of "Marxism-Leninism, proletarian internationalism, the interests of the Chinese people and of the people of the world, the interests of world peace and the revolutionary cause of the people of all countries" in all issues.<sup>44</sup> Regarding the question of "unequal treaties," the CCP responded:



At the time the People's Republic of China was inaugurated, our Government declared that it would examine the treaties concluded by previous Chinese governments with foreign governments, treaties that had been left over by history, and would recognize, abrogate, revise or renegotiate them according to their respective contents. In this respect, our policy towards the socialist countries is fundamentally different from our policy towards the imperialist countries. When we deal with various imperialist countries, we take differing circumstances into consideration and make distinctions in our policy ... With regard to the outstanding issues, which are a legacy from the past, we have always held that, they should be settled peacefully through negotiations and that, pending a settlement, the status quo should be maintained. Within this category are the questions of Hongkong, Kowloon and Macao and the questions of all those boundaries which have not been formally delimited by the parties concerned in each case.<sup>45</sup>

This response reflected a statement of policy that would remain consistent throughout the course of Chinese diplomacy on Hong Kong. It was based on a tactical flexibility permitting compromise that was consistent with the "objective reality" of British administration in the colony and the united front practice of differentiating between imperialisms according to their current threat potential. It was clear from Chinese analyses of the Suez crisis that the imperialist world was divided. In this regard, Mao stated:

In the Middle East, there was that Suez Canal incident. A man called Nasser nationalized the canal, another called Eden sent in an invading army, and close on his heels came a third called Eisenhower who decided to drive the British out and have the place all to himself. The British bourgeoisie, past masters of machination and manoeuvre, are a class which knows best when to compromise. But this time they bungled and let the Middle East fall into the hands of the Americans. What a colossal mistake! Can one find many such mistakes in the history of the British bourgeoisie? How come that this time they lost their heads and made such a mistake? Because the pressure exerted by the United States was too much and they lost control of themselves in their anxiety to regain the Middle East and block the United States. Did Britain direct the spearhead chiefly at Egypt? No. Britain's moves were against the United States, much as the moves of the United States were against Britain.<sup>46</sup>

Mao concluded that imperialism was contending against itself for control of the world's regions under the guise of opposing communism. Suez revealed that there were dual contradictions: those between imperialisms, that is, between the

United States and Britain and between the United States and France; and those between imperialism and the oppressed. The Americans had superceded all others as the primary imperialist power, while both Britain and France had declined to the rank of second-rate imperialists. Thus, the United Kingdom fell within those forces of the "intermediate zone" which could be coopted in the struggle against Washington.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the amicable relations between the colony and the mainland,<sup>48</sup> Beijing continued to express its strategic concerns vis-a-vis Hong Kong particularly as the United States intensified its military commitment to South Vietnam.<sup>49</sup> In reference to this issue, Vice-Premier Chen Yi stated:

The fact that Britain and the Hongkong authorities allow the United States to use Hongkong as a base for aggression against Viet Nam has caused the anxiety of the local inhabitants. The Chinese Government considers the question not only one of using Hongkong as a base for aggression against Viet Nam but also of preparing to use it in future as a base for aggression against China. The Chinese Government is opposed to this. This action of the British Government is most stupid. We hope that it will choose a wiser course in its own interests. Otherwise, China will take measures when necessary.<sup>50</sup>

Chen elaborated further that Washington and London shared no "fundamental difference" on the "question of consolidating the world colonial system." In the case of the United Kingdom, this was evidenced by its presence in Malaysia and its strategy east of Suez. There was no reason to believe that should the United States extend its prosecution of the conflict to China itself, that the British would not follow suit and restore their colonial influence in the region. Such was the integrated "global strategy" of American imperialism.<sup>51</sup> Thus, in an effort to explicate the situation from Beijing's vantage point, Chen stated:

China sees not just the question of Taiwan, the question of Hongkong and the question of Macao, each on its own; what we see is the global strategy

of U.S. imperialism. One must be prepared to wage a world-wide struggle before U.S. imperialism can be defeated.<sup>52</sup>

However, the PRC extended its strategic interests to include the welfare of its Hong Kong compatriots as Chinese foreign affairs became increasingly embroiled in the internecine political conflicts of the Cultural Revolution. As discussed earlier, this involvement was most intense from May to September 1967, throughout which time the colony's domestic affairs became intertwined with those on the mainland. Recall that this period of Sino-British tension was sparked by labour unrest and concomitant civil disturbances within the colony from May 11 to May 13 and that the Foreign Ministry had proffered a five-point list of "just demands" on behalf of its fellows that London was to accept unconditionally. The note also accused the British authorities of "fascist atrocities" and complicity in the use of the colony in the aggression against Vietnam and determined that both were "the result of long premeditation" and a "component part of the British Government's scheme of collusion with U.S. imperialism against China."<sup>53</sup> A May 18 rally, attended by Zhou Enlai among others, echoed these sentiments as the Beijing Revolutionary Committee gave its fullest support to this statement claiming further the right of their compatriots to study and propagate the thought of Chairman Mao and the United Kingdom's obligation to make restitution for the "blood debts" owed their countrymen. The British were also implicated in the Soviet-American plot to encircle China.<sup>54</sup>

The Central People's Government, dissatisfied with London's refusal to comply with its demands and incensed by Foreign Secretary Brown's "extremely arrogant, unreasonable and rude attitude and ... shameful imperialist language" in connection with the incident in his May 19 discussions with Chinese Charge d'Affaires Shen Ping, summoned D.C. Hopson to the Foreign Ministry on May 22 to lodge a "most vehement protest." Hopson was informed

by Vice-Minister Lo that, because his government had assumed a "hostile attitude" not only toward the Chinese people but also toward the Hong Kong compatriots due to the "sanguinary atrocities" committed against them by the local authorities, the 1954 agreement permitting the posting of a British Charge d'affaires to Shanghai had "entirely lost its meaning." Thus, the Chinese demanded that P.M. Hewitt leave the city within forty-eight hours and again reiterated that London comply with the statement of May 15.<sup>55</sup> On May 27, Vice-Premier Chen Yi further warned that the PRC could not "stand idly by" while the Hong Kong authorities continued their campaign of oppression.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, however, a *Renmin ribao* article of May 29, stated: "Our patriotic compatriots in Hongkong and Kowloon guided by Mao Tse-tung's thought, must completely settle accounts for the heinous crimes you (the British) have committed in Hongkong."<sup>57</sup>

On June 5, the radical Chi Benyu of the Cultural Revolution Group threatened that should the British fail to cease their acts of provocation and not own up to their guilt, "...we will let you have a taste of the Chinese people's iron fist." He went on to harangue London's "gunboat policy" as evidence of the United Kingdom's "paper tiger" character and warned that China would not tolerate any further provocations in the colony.<sup>58</sup> A Foreign Ministry statement took this somewhat further when it claimed that the Chinese people would "at all times support the patriotic compatriots in Hongkong with actual deeds until total victory is won in the struggle." Quoting Mao Zedong, the note went on to state: "We will not attack unless we are attacked; if we are attacked we will certainly counter-attack." Since London had failed to end its campaign of terror, the Chinese and their compatriots in the colony were totally justified in counter-attacking by way of retaliating with twice the force used against them.<sup>59</sup> Again, however, a *Renmin ribao* article of June 3 argued that, although the people of

Hong Kong had the support of 700 million Chinese, they themselves must carry the fight to the British. In a statement reminiscent of united front tactics, the article instructed:

This struggle should mainly rely on Hongkong's working class, which is the main force of revolution. The vast number of young students must also be fully mobilized so that their movement is integrated with the workers' movement. With Hongkong's working class as the core, patriotic compatriots from the broad strata there should be mobilized and the spearhead of the struggle should be concentrated against U.S. and British imperialism which directly rules Hongkong.<sup>60</sup>

On June 24, Zhou Enlai reminded London of his country's sovereignty over the colony. He stated: "Hongkong and Kowloon have always been Chinese territory. All the legitimate rights of our patriotic countrymen ... particularly their sacred right to study and propagate Mao Tse-tung's thought, brook no encroachment whatsoever from anyone." Furthermore, he stressed that the fate of Hong Kong was a Chinese matter and that "The Chinese people are determined to give, in accordance with the needs of the situation, every support to their patriotic countrymen in Hongkong till final victory." Already, various strata within the colony were becoming increasingly "united" and "organized" in their efforts to combat imperialism. Zhou expressed his hope that the British would become "more sober-minded" otherwise they would "receive even heavier punishment" for which they would have to bear sole responsibility.<sup>61</sup>

Again on June 26, the Foreign Ministry warned Her Majesty's Government to heed the demands lodged on May 15 as "The situation in Hongkong has developed to a grave stage now." Vice-Minister Lo lodged a further "serious and vehement protest" with D.C. Hopson excoriating the British for their continued "provocations and fascist atrocities" against China's compatriots, especially the force used to quell demonstrations in Hong Kong and Shataukok,

Kowloon on June 23 and 24. The official note, giving the Chinese view of events since May, stated:

In disregard of the repeated warnings from the Chinese Government and people, the British authorities in Hongkong have again and again resorted to sanguinary suppression of our patriotic countrymen in Hongkong since last May. To date, seven of our patriotic countrymen have been barbarously murdered by the troops and police of the British authorities in Hongkong and more than 1,400 have been unwarrantedly arrested or sentenced, among whom many were most savagely tortured by the police of the British authorities in Hongkong. Even now, the British Government and the British authorities in Hong Kong are still clamouring for a further expansion of their fascist suppression of our patriotic countrymen.<sup>62</sup>

London was again encouraged to repay its blood debts or face even greater retribution.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the situation was complicated by border incidents, the most serious of which was the Shataukok incident of July 8. Needless to say, the Chinese account was much different than that proffered by the British. On July 9, Vice-Minister Lo again summoned D.C. Hopson to the Foreign Ministry in order to lodge "the most urgent and strongest protest ... against the serious armed provocation committed against the Chinese people by the British authorities in Hongkong on July 8." The Beijing version stipulated that upon their return from a rally on the mainland side of the border, residents of the New Territories were accosted by armed riot police. In an effort to end the hostilities, Chinese border guards fired "warning shots." However, they did so to no avail since the Hong Kong authorities continued their aggression by firing at the crowd, killing one demonstrator and wounding eight. At this time, the Chinese returned fire. Thus, it was the British who had "gone further to create tension along the border" thereby "increasingly aggravating the Hongkong situation." As such, Beijing demanded that Her Majesty's Government apologise for the incident, punish those responsible, make restitution to those

affected, release all those incarcerated in the area since June 24, and guarantee against the occurrence of such incidents in future, otherwise it would have to accept responsibility for the consequences.<sup>63</sup>

Relations continued to deteriorate as the British persisted in their attempts to maintain order in the colony particularly after July 19 with the subsequent detention of Reuters correspondent Anthony Grey in retaliation for the arrest of NCNA correspondents in Hong Kong. To this point, however, Beijing had resorted to limited diplomatic means of pressuring London. Though the Foreign Ministry was obliged to express itself in language consistent with the tenor of the ideological line promulgated by the radical left, it gave moral support only to the events in Hong Kong and stressed adherence to united front and self-reliance in the struggle against British imperialism. In no way did it commit the PRC to the liberation of the colony.

Nor is it likely that those responsible for foreign affairs had incited the unrest that began on May 6. The time differential between the initiation of the riots and the protest of May 15 suggests that the disturbances were domestic in origin. Evidence further indicates that the fire-fight at Shataukok had been instigated by the radical left in Guangdong without sanction from the centre and the local PLA commander.<sup>64</sup> The military had actually acted to restrain Red Guard elements from instigating further border incidents.<sup>65</sup> However, the Foreign Ministry must have felt compelled to provide limited support given pressure from more extreme elements.

In fact, local communist leaders had expressed some dissatisfaction with the support rendered by Beijing.<sup>66</sup> But, as the domestic political situation on the mainland continued to deteriorate, so did the restraint exercised by the Foreign Ministry. Thus, the way was open for the sacking of the British mission on the evening of August 22. It must be stressed that at the time of this incident,

the Foreign Ministry had been the subject of an unauthorised power seizure by more radical elements.<sup>67</sup> This goes a long way in explaining why there had been such a deviation from the more cautious policy implemented by Zhou Enlai and Chen Yi. The action was particularly out of keeping with previous Chinese diplomatic practice regarding the protection of foreign officials abroad<sup>68</sup> and no doubt represented an attempt by extremist forces to placate their counterparts in Hong Kong with a greater show of support that would not at the same time involve serious risk.<sup>69</sup>

However, the razing of the British mission had the resultant effect of discrediting radical forces. Mao personally criticised those responsible, particularly Yao Dengshan, a former Charge d'affaires to Indonesia, who was dismissed from the Foreign Ministry as a result. Zhou Enlai also entered the fray scolding those who had acted inappropriately with regard to Hong Kong. As far as the colonial issue was concerned, emphasis would now be placed on the colony's liberation through "prolonged struggle."<sup>70</sup> The PRC was thus on its way to the restoration of central control and political normalcy. This was illustrated by Jiang Qing who, in reference to the events of August 22, stated:

In Peking a strange thing has happened. Some people went to the foreign embassies to make troubles and the office of the British Charge d'Affaires was burned down. We, of course, are determined to hit the American imperialists and reactionaries. But we must not make trouble at foreign embassies, and we must not go aboard foreign ships. It would be childish for good people to do so; and when bad people do this, they want to ruin the reputation of the country.<sup>71</sup>

Strategically, Beijing sought to draw attention away from the struggle in Hong Kong by underscoring the importance of the Vietnam conflict. Feng Piao stated: "To be sure, the struggle in Hong Kong must be seen with the whole situation taken into consideration. In Southeast Asia, the principal target is Vietnam, and not Hong Kong."<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, though the Chinese continued



to hold British oppression in the colony as the primary impediment to the establishment of more normal bilateral relations<sup>73</sup> and persisted to flog the Grey issue as an attempt by London to get Beijing to alter its "just stand,"<sup>74</sup> they moved to deescalate tensions by instructing their Hong Kong compatriots to tone down their anti-government activities.<sup>75</sup> The settlement of the Grey issue was an additional step in the direction toward reestablishing more amicable relations.

The retrenchment of central authority on the mainland and the subsequent deradicalisation of the Foreign Ministry ushered in a new era of Sino-British relations characterised by reconciliation and normalisation. Not only did Beijing apologise for the damage done to the office of London's Charge d'affaires and make reparation payments for its reconstruction,<sup>76</sup> but it further agreed to the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the two countries at the ambassadorial level. Gone was the harsh rhetoric used to describe the actions and intentions of the United Kingdom particularly in the case of Hong Kong. In fact, it appeared that Beijing would be willing to accept a continuation of the *status quo* in this regard for the immediate future.

This did not mean that the Central People's Government had relinquished its claim to the colony. On the contrary, the Chinese reasserted their view that Hong Kong was an inalienable part of the mainland whose future position fell entirely within China's sovereign right to decide. Furthermore, Beijing had, for the first time, explicitly included the colony by name in legislation (February 1972) thereby raising the possibility that Hong Kong's inclusion may have been a deliberate indication of China's sovereign claims to the territory.<sup>77</sup> However, having assessed the current international environment according to Mao's theory of the "three worlds," the subordination of the Hong Kong issue to more amicable relations with London meant that the Chinese were reasserting the

united front tactics applied to the British after Suez thereby re-designating them as one of the middle forces of the "second world" to be coopted in the struggle against the primary contradiction of superpower hegemonism. This preoccupation with national security, coupled with the ever-present problem of economic modernisation and the priority assigned Taiwan in Beijing's reunification calculus, implied that the process of territorial repatriation would be a protracted one given that conditions were not yet ripe.

On March 10, 1972, Huang Hua reaffirmed his government's principled position on the colonial issue to the UN General Assembly's Special Committee on Colonialism stating:

Hong Kong and Macao are part of Chinese territory occupied by the British and Portugese authorities. The settlement of the questions of Hong Kong and Macao is entirely within China's sovereign right and does not at all fall under the ordinary category of colonial territories.

Huang also reiterated the policy professed in response to Khrushchev's tauntings in 1963 with respect to China's disposal of the colonial question thereby indicating Beijing's willingness to maintain the tactical compromise reached earlier. He asserted:

With regard to the questions of Hong Kong and Macao, the Chinese government has consistently held that they should be settled in an appropriate way when conditions are ripe. The United Nations has no right to discuss these questions.<sup>78</sup>

Of particular import, however, is the following statement by Chang Cheng of the China Products Company in an interview with the *South China Morning Post* in which he gave greater definition to the rather vague phrase "when conditions are ripe." Chang is reported to have said:

Hong Kong is a problem left over from history and we are not eager to tackle it. It requires a long period of time to deal with the problem. It is still too early to say how long this will take but it will depend on the situation in Southeast Asia and in the rest of the world. As it stands, Hong Kong is of interest to both China and Britain and both sides need a long period of

consideration to decide what is to be done about it. Both sides are concerned that neither Soviet revisionism nor Chiang Kai-shek's clique can come and destroy conditions in Hong Kong.<sup>79</sup>

From these statements it is implicitly clear that the resolution of the Hong Kong issue was not a matter of urgency; other matters took precedence. Economically, the Chinese were embarking on a process of modernisation in which the colony was to play a considerable part. In Lisbon, a vice foreign minister confirmed that the economic relations between Hong Kong and the mainland were intrinsically linked with the development of China as a whole. As such, the PRC would continue to lend its support through the provision of water and other essentials.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, Chi Feng, the NCNA's number two man in Hong Kong, stated that: "The present policy of the Communist Party is not, as it used to be, to brag about the superiority of socialism while entirely denigrating the achievements of capitalist societies."<sup>81</sup> Though possessed of both positive and negative points, Hong Kong's considerable financial success warranted consideration. This latter sentiment was echoed by Premier Hua Guofeng in an interview with British correspondent Felix Greene in which he stated:

I think Xianggang (Hong Kong) can do a lot because it has a number of favourable conditions . . . Xianggang is a major free port in Asia that has developed its own industries and technology in recent years. Currently, China has good relations with the United Kingdom and the authorities in Xianggang. I think that with mutual efforts, there are great potentialities for developing economic co-operation between Xianggang and the mainland. This will be to our mutual benefit.<sup>82</sup>

Strategically, Beijing's assessment of the international situation prevailing in the aftermath of the American withdrawal from Southeast Asia and the intensification of the Sino-Soviet dispute dampened any desires that may have existed for the immediate reunification of Hong Kong and the mainland. Moscow's invasion of Czechoslovakia under the guise of the "Brezhnev

Doctrine" led the Chinese to conclude that the USSR was nothing more than a social imperialist power on the ascendant. Conversely, the failure of Washington's military effort in Vietnam and its subsequent reorientation in favour of detente revealed that the United States as a hegemonically driven imperialist state was very much on the decline. This gave Soviet social imperialism an advantage by way of the Asia-Pacific region to fill the power vacuum left in the wake of America's illustrious submission to Ho Chi Minh. These sentiments are reflected in a collection of instructional materials distributed by the Propaganda Division of the Political Department of the Kunming Military Region known as the "Kunming Documents." They speak to the existing international situation as of March 1973, and to the rationale underlining China's rapprochement with the United States. "Lesson Two" reveals:

U.S. imperialism's counterrevolutionary global strategy has met with repeated setbacks; its aggressive power has been weakened; and hence, it has had to make some retraction and adjustment of its strategy. Soviet revisionism, on the other hand, is stretching its arms in all directions and is expanding desperately. It is more crazy, adventurist, and deceptive. That is why Soviet revisionism has become our country's most dangerous and most important enemy.<sup>83</sup>

This alteration in the international arena necessitated a tactical reorientation designed to compensate for the rise in Soviet fortunes. Exploiting the contradictions inherent in the current set of global relations, the Chinese would align themselves with the West thereby acting as a counterpoise to Moscow's new-found might. "Lesson Three" of the Kunming Documents indicated: "We act in the light of changes in situations, tipping the scale diversely at different times."<sup>84</sup> This did not imply an alliance but rather a tactical maneuver designed to prevent the emergence of a situation in which the PRC would be forced to contend with its two arch rivals simultaneously while

possessed of the same power. Similarly, Zhou Enlai, in his speech to the Tenth National Congress, highlighted the dangers of Soviet social imperialism and the need to distinguish between the "necessary compromises" made by revolutionary forces in their relations with imperialist countries and the "concrete conditions" surrounding them and the "collusion and compromise between Soviet revisionism and U.S. imperialism." In this vein, Lenin's acceptance of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty represented a necessary compromise with German imperialism presumably in much the same way as China's rapprochement with the United States was necessary under the concrete circumstances prevailing at the moment. Thus, where the compromises made by the USSR in the name of peaceful coexistence in the pursuit of a detente with the United States were construed as "capitulationism," the Chinese conception of peaceful coexistence as exemplified by the Shanghai Communique was done for the purposes of revolution.<sup>85</sup>

This did not mean, however, that the United States had withdrawn from superpower contention with the USSR for hegemony. On the contrary, both countries continued to engage in a struggle for supremacy through strategic bipolarity. But, the international situation had been drastically altered in favour of the progressive forces. According to Deng Xiaoping in a speech to a special session of the UN General Assembly on April 10, 1974:

In this situation of "great disorder under heaven," all the political forces in the world have undergone drastic division and realignment through prolonged trials of strength and struggle. A large number of Asian, African and Latin American countries have achieved independence one after another and they are playing an ever greater role in international affairs. As a result of the emergence of social-imperialism, the socialist camp which existed for a time after World War II is no longer in existence. Owing to the law of uneven development of capitalism, the Western imperialist bloc, too, is disintegrating. Judging from the changes in international relations, the world today actually consists of three parts, or three worlds, that are both interconnected and in contradiction to one another. The

United States and the Soviet Union make up the First World. The developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and other regions make up the Third World. The developed countries between the two make up the Second world.<sup>86</sup>

This classificatory scheme was favourable to the continuation of British rule in Hong Kong given the fraternity that existed between the PRC as a developing country and the United Kingdom as a developed state in their efforts to restore multipolarity and independence by struggling against superpower domination. A spate of official statements lauded British participation in the European Community and NATO as a step in the proper direction towards combatting both American imperialism and Soviet social imperialism.<sup>87</sup> In the context of their global strategy, the repatriation of Hong Kong was secondary to this anti-hegemony struggle against the United States and the Soviet Union in particular. Any attempt to forcefully reincorporate Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao would serve only to deepen the contradictions between China and those countries engaged in the struggle against Soviet social imperialism. As such, conditions were not yet ripe to discuss the colonial issue and any move in that direction would adversely affect the PRC's diplomatic, political and economic standing.<sup>88</sup>

In addition to these economic and strategic constraints, it is also apparent that the settlement of the Hong Kong question was assigned a lower priority in relation to the Taiwan issue. The presence of the Chiang regime in Taipei had consistently been a thorn in Beijing's side given its contention that it was the sole legitimate government of China in exile. This, combined with the Guomindong's occupancy of the China seat in the United Nations and the imposition of the U.S. Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait on the Nationalist's behalf, undermined the Chinese Communist's desire for international recognition. According to a Hong Kong citizen who had just returned from a

recent visit to the mainland, Beijing's propaganda was emphasising that the situation was even more problematic in the aftermath of the Sino-American rapprochement and Beijing's subsequent admission to the UN as China's sole representative given that Taipei might now be impelled to accept the idea of "two Chinas" presumably in an effort to preserve its international status.<sup>89</sup>

In any case, the Central People's Government had indicated that its primary goal of the moment was the "liberation of Taiwan" but that its resolution would logically be followed by the repatriation of Hong Kong. However, since "Taiwan would not be liberated in a day," there was no need for the colony to "be made a target to fight for now nor an immediate goal."<sup>90</sup> In the meantime, Hong Kong need not fear for its safety in the process of reunification between Taiwan and the mainland.

On the basis of these factors, the Hong Kong communist newspaper *Cheng-Ming* concluded that the colonial question would only be addressed after the conclusion of the antihegemony struggle and the fulfillment of the process of national modernisation. The former was expected to reach a "major turning point" within ten years, while the latter would be realised "only after more than twenty years of arduous effort."<sup>91</sup> *Cheng-Ming* postulated further that the "appropriate way" to settle the dispute remained much the same as that forwarded in 1963 in the PRC's response to the CPUSA: that British control of Hong Kong would be terminated politically through a process of peaceful negotiations. In fact, the status quo would be maintained so long as the colonial authorities adhered to a policy of "stopping Soviet infiltration and restraining the Chiang Gang's activities." Such a policy would ensure that British administration in Hong Kong would be "maintained with relative stability for a fairly long period of time." This was underlined by a "political understanding"

that the maintenance of the colony's status rested on a respect for "Chinese intentions and interests" there.<sup>92</sup>

In the meantime, Beijing sought to allay any fears regarding its intentions toward Hong Kong in a statement by Huang Hua in a press conference in London on November 2, 1979, in which he stated:

The lease for the new territories is due to expire in 1997 and there is still time ahead. China's basic approach is that when the time comes for solving the problem, it will give due consideration to and will not hurt the interests of the investors there. The subject was brought up in the talks between China and the United Kingdom yesterday and both sides agreed to maintain their contacts on the matter.<sup>93</sup>

This commitment was underlined by increased Chinese investment in the colony and by an increasing desire to remain mute on the subject of rendition despite repeated British proddings to the contrary.<sup>94</sup>

However, the new Conservative government in London was unwilling to allow Beijing to continue with this low-key approach to the expiration of the New Territories lease. On his visit to the mainland in April 1981, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, raised the Hong Kong question in an attempt to gauge Chinese intentions on the issue while at the same time expressing the United Kingdom's intention to honour the existing lease.<sup>95</sup> This was followed by Lord Privy Seal Atkins official visit in January 1982, at which time it was leaked that Beijing was "now seriously considering the future of Hong Kong" and that proposals for its rendition would be made "in plenty of time" prior to the expiration of the lease in 1997.<sup>96</sup> According to an unidentified Chinese official, Zhao Ziyang informed Atkins that China did not recognise a sovereign presence in the colony other than its own and that the PRC attached importance to the colony's position as a free port and centre of international trade and finance. With regard to Hong Kong's future status, Zhao indicated that his government would adopt a "fair and reasonable attitude" in the discussions that were to take



place in the near future and he expressed the hope that neither side would do anything that would undermine the colony's prosperity before the conclusion of "formal arrangements."<sup>97</sup> The way was thus set for an official statement of intent upon the conclusion of Mrs. Thatcher's trip to Beijing in September of the same year.

The British position on the Hong Kong issue has been elaborated elsewhere thus there is no need to restate it here suffice it to say that their formal-legal stand on the validity of the existing treaties offended Chinese sensibilities. Prior to Thatcher's injudicious statements, Premier Zhao stated:

True, there are problems left over from history that need to be solved through consultations. However, I believe that problems of this kind are not difficult to solve so long as both sides approach and develop Sino-British relations in a long-term strategic perspective and take the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as the basis in dealing with problems existing between us.<sup>98</sup>

The Central People's Government made clear its willingness to enter into talks through diplomatic channels for the purposes of maintaining the colony's "prosperity and stability" and reiterated its position that the "recovery of the sovereignty of the whole region of Xianggang is unequivocal and known to all."<sup>99</sup>

However, Thatcher's opening bid forced the Chinese into an intransigent negotiating position from the outset and was categorically rejected. A Foreign Ministry spokesman stated:

Xianggang is part of Chinese territory. The treaties concerning the Xianggang area signed between the British Government and the government of the Qing Dynasty of China in the past are unequal treaties which have never been accepted by the Chinese people. The consistent position of the Government of the People's Republic of China has been that China is not bound by these unequal treaties and that the whole Xianggang area will be recovered when conditions are ripe.<sup>100</sup>

Xinhua further warned London that "whoever today tries to cling to these unequal treaties will arouse the memories of the British imperialist invasion of China in the minds of the people in China, Britain and the whole world."<sup>101</sup>

In fact, the Chinese appealed to a wide body of western international law which pointed to the invalidity of treaties concluded under duress. This was characterised by Jin Fu as a "basic principle" of international jurisprudence which had been enshrined in the United Nations' Charter and the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.<sup>102</sup> However, it appears that the Chinese were being somewhat selective in their interpretations given that the principles embodied in these international legal agreements have moral as opposed to legal force.<sup>103</sup> But, the spin put on Beijing's analysis does point to a fundamental difference between traditional global legal practise and communist legal theory which complicated the negotiations from the outset.

By extension, Beijing also rejected the British proposal for a "role and link" beyond 1997 claiming that "exchanging sovereignty for administration" was, like unequal treaties, untenable under international law and practise. The Chinese did not accept that they had surrendered their sovereignty over Hong Kong as a result of the existing treaty arrangements. In other words, they believed: "Since the sovereignty over the occupied territory belongs in the first place to the injured party and not the occupationist, the question of the occupationist exchanging sovereignty for administration simply does not arise."<sup>104</sup> The recovery of "occupied territory," then, naturally led to the resumption of administrative control over it. Thus sovereignty and administration were indivisible and any attempt to bifurcate the two represented a western tactic employed for the purposes of territorial exploitation.

Furthermore, to attribute Hong Kong's prosperity to its British administration was nothing but a ruse to prevent China's rightful reclamation of

its territory. In fact, the colony's prosperity was due to the "wisdom and meticulous management of the more than 5 million Xianggang residents, of whom over 98 per cent are Chinese compatriots" and to the "long years of vigorous support given by the Chinese mainland in various fields." Therefore, the United Kingdom's argument was "untenable" as it ran "counter to the facts both of history and the present."<sup>105</sup>

Consequently, neither London's "moral responsibility" to the colony's populace nor its attempt to secure Governor Youde's participation as Hong Kong's representative in the negotiations were acceptable to Beijing. According to a *Xinhua* commentator:

We maintain that Xianggang is an issue involving the state sovereignty and national interests of the 1,000 million Chinese people including the Chinese residents in Xianggang. The Government of the People's Republic of China alone is in a position to state that, as the government of a sovereign country, it has a responsibility and duty to the Chinese residents in Xianggang.<sup>106</sup>

Accordingly, London's only "moral obligation" was to ensure, through its cooperation with the Chinese, that Hong Kong be returned to the mainland as expeditiously as possible. Rather than focusing on their own narrow objectives, the British were challenged to assume a more "farsighted" position in accordance with the "changing times" that would enable them to act in "good faith."<sup>107</sup> It was to this end that London should resign itself. Reference to "popular desire" was nothing more than a recourse to an illegal "old tactic imperialist powers resorted to when they wanted to dismember a country."<sup>108</sup>

Similarly, since Beijing was solely responsible for its compatriots in the colony, only it would act on their behalf in the negotiations. In response to Youde's contention of July 7, 1983, that he would act as Hong Kong's representative, the Foreign Ministry stated:

The Sino-British talks on the Xianggang issue are bilateral, between the Government of China and the Government of Britain. Mr. Youde will take part in the talks as a member of the British Government Delegation. Therefore, he can only represent the British Government in the talks.<sup>109</sup>

That the PRC was unwilling to maintain the status quo was underscored by Deng Xiaoping's statement that, "If I agree to prolong the lease, I will become the second Li Hongzhang."<sup>110</sup> Deng's disinclination to be equated with the Qing administrator responsible for the New Territories lease undoubtedly had its origins in his desire to deflect inner-party criticism that would erode his authority and thereby undermine his programme for domestic reform. Thatcher's visit to Beijing came at a most inopportune moment given the criticisms that had been levelled at him by opponents at the Twelfth Party Congress of September 1-11, 1982, particularly over his handling of the Taiwan issue with the United States. Though Hong Kong was not a major factor in the intra-party disputes, it nevertheless represented a "national prestige issue" that, if handled incorrectly, could cause difficulties for the reform-minded leader.<sup>111</sup>

Thus, General Secretary Hu Yaobang unequivocally stated:

We consider the so-called three Hong Kong treaties to be unequal. But it is a fact that the treaties exist. Moreover, it is clearly written that the expiry date is June 30, 1997. Therefore, we do not intend to bring forward or postpone this date. We will recover Hong Kong on July 1, 1997. As far as China is concerned, our attitude is one of respect for history.<sup>112</sup>

Furthermore, Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian expressed his hope that London would be "sensible, because the question of sovereignty (over Xianggang) is not negotiable."<sup>113</sup>

At this juncture of the negotiations, it is evident that the parties were at an impasse. Beijing effectively shifted the onus for the stalemate onto the British and, in an obvious effort to exert pressure on London to accept the Chinese position, set a deadline for the negotiations after which time it would unilaterally announce its blueprint for the colony if no settlement was reached.<sup>114</sup> To this

point, the Chinese had yet to offer a concrete set of proposals that would formalise the assurances they had previously made to Hong Kong's populace and investors. It was even questionable that such a formula existed given Wu's statement that "China will work out a specific policy in accordance with Xianggang's special conditions" on October 6, 1983.<sup>115</sup> However, by January of the following year, Beijing offered the Taiwan solution of "one country, two systems" thereby providing the British with an out whereby they could accept Chinese sovereignty in exchange for an international agreement preserving Hong Kong's social, economic and administrative system beyond 1997.

According to Deng Xiaoping, the concept of "one country, two systems" was adopted after the Third Plenum of the Party's Central Committee in 1978, "with the view of settling the Taiwan and Hong Kong issues."<sup>116</sup> There has been some debate as to whether this statement is entirely accurate with regard to its applicability to the Hong Kong question since it raises queries with respect to the timing of Beijing's decision to settle the colonial question with the British. The evidence to this point indicates that the concept was formulated with the peaceful reunification of Taiwan and the mainland in mind and that it only became practically applicable in 1984 once it was apparent that the settlement of the Hong Kong issue would have to precede the territorial repatriation of the ROC.<sup>117</sup> This is particularly clear since the Chinese did not discuss "one country, two systems" in relation to Hong Kong before it became necessary to break the Sino-British stalemate. Beginning in January 1984, the linkage between the two was made abundantly clear along with official statements that the same linkage could be drawn with Taiwan.

Theoretically, the concept derives from the "correct ideological line" of Mao's "seeking the truth from the facts" adopted at the Third Plenum and the decision to embark on an "open door policy." This dictum necessitates that

problem-solving "proceed from reality." It is consistent with Beijing's conceptions of a "Marxism that is integrated with Chinese conditions" and a "socialism that is tailored to Chinese conditions and with Chinese characteristics." Since China's political line was to emphasise the "four modernisations" and the development of "productive forces,"<sup>118</sup> it was formulated to "suit China's realities" through the "integration of principle with flexibility" particularly as these pertained to uneven economic development.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, a capitalist Hong Kong could be sustained within the dominant socialist system as a "supplement to the development of the socialist economy" given its positive impact on the "growth of the socialist productive forces."<sup>120</sup> As such, the Chinese were "proceeding from reality and taking into full account the past and present circumstances in which Hongkong finds itself."<sup>121</sup>

Furthermore, "one country, two systems" was consistent with the PRC's general foreign policy line. Characterising China's international outlook Deng Xiaoping stated:

We stand firmly for the maintenance of world peace, for the relaxation of international tension and for arms reduction, above all, the reduction of the superpowers' nuclear and other weapons, and we are opposed to all forms of aggression and hegemony. China will remain open to the outside world and is ready to establish and expand diplomatic relations and economic and cultural ties with all countries on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. We stand for the settlement of international disputes through negotiations ....<sup>122</sup>

Consequently, there was a need for an innovative dispute resolution mechanism for: "If opposing sides are locked in stalemate, sooner or later they will come to conflict, or even armed conflict."<sup>123</sup>

The Chinese proposal was designed to fill this gap. As Deng argued:

One country, two systems" is a new concept internationally. We proposed this policy not just because we are faced with the Hongkong question, but also because the general objective of our foreign policy is to safeguard

world peace. New approaches are needed for resolving international disputes in the present-day world.<sup>124</sup>

It was a proposal applicable to domestic issues as well and was fully consistent with the principle of peaceful coexistence.<sup>125</sup>

Thus, on January 12, 1984, Zhao Ziyang stated that Hong Kong would be allowed to retain its social and economic systems for a period of fifty years proceeding the termination of the lease in 1997. This would be put into "concrete terms" that would be guaranteed in law by the National People's Congress.<sup>126</sup> He also made it clear on January 30th that "all policies that we are going to adopt towards Xianggang can also be applied to Taiwan. And Taiwan would receive even more favourable terms."<sup>127</sup> The British were warned that they alone were responsible for the colony's stability to 1997 and should not, therefore, attempt to play the "public opinion card" embodied in their "three-legged stool" approach by succumbing to LEGCO councilor Lobo's motion to permit the colonial administration to debate the proposals emanating from the negotiations. Beijing made it clear that it had already elicited the opinions of its compatriots and that these would be included in the drafting of the basic law for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. The draft law would then be submitted for their "discussion and revision" prior to its enactment by the National People's Congress.<sup>128</sup>

That the British conceded on the sovereignty question is bolstered by Wu's April statement that "This issue was settled during negotiation."<sup>129</sup> Given this, the Chinese then moved to reassure both London and Hong Kong that it would adhere to the proposals offered earlier in the year. On June 22, Deng reiterated his country's pledge to maintain the socio-economic system prevailing in the colony and added: "the Chinese mean what they say."<sup>130</sup> Following this, Foreign Secretary Howe held talks with his counterpart in Beijing from July 27

to 31. Wu described these discussions as a "breakthrough ... mainly due to mutual cooperation and understanding" adding that the parties would be able to formulate a draft agreement by September.<sup>131</sup> As indicated by Howe's statement to the House of Commons in May, the concept of "one country, two systems" and Beijing's commitment to implement it made agreement possible.<sup>132</sup>

Thus, the formula of "one country, two systems" represented a compromise consistent with the "objective" realities in which Hong Kong found itself and the "correct ideological line" of "seeking the truth from the facts." The agreement was hailed as "practical and reasonable" having emerged out of the desire of the parties to advance their "fundamental interests" and "cooperation" above all other matters. The resolution of the Hong Kong problem would, according to Beijing, "heal the wound left over by history," and "usher in a new stage in the relations between the two countries."<sup>133</sup>



## NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

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[123] Deng Xiaoping, "A New Approach Towards Stabilizing the World Situation," in *Ibid.*, p.23.

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[125] Deng Xiaoping, "The Principles of Peaceful Coexistence are Full of Vitality," in *Ibid.*, p.68.

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[130] *BR*, No.27, 2 July 1984:6.

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[132] See Howe's statement cited in Chapter Two, pp.46-47.

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## CONCLUSION

### HONG KONG IN SINO-BRITISH DIPLOMACY

This thesis has asserted that a more comprehensive explication for the peaceful resolution of the Hong Kong issue arises out of a sensitivity to the existence of complementary Anglo-Chinese diplomacies informed by consonant British and Sinified Marxist-Leninist realisms. The utopian/realist dichotomy has been shown to be irrelevant in this case given that Mao Zedong's epistemology is imbued with a flexibility at the tactical (or policy) level that permits situation-specific responses in accordance with "objective reality" as evinced by the "paper tiger" thesis and the doctrine of "united front." Deng Xiaoping's reinstitution of Mao's "seeking the truth from the facts" as the "correct ideological line," establishes a continuity in Beijing's approach to the colonial problem. Consequently, the analysis has taken issue with those who would reduce Chinese Communism to nothing more than a mere rationalisation for Realpolitik, and with those adherents to the notion that communist ideology is inherently adversarial and therefore incompatible with the peaceful amelioration of disputes to which Western diplomacy so aspires.

The thesis has systematically compared British realism and Sinified Marxism-Leninism highlighting those areas where there is both theoretical convergence and divergence. It has shown that, although there is not an absolute correlation between the two, there is sufficient similarity to warrant comparison. These theoretical constructs, having been applied to the case of Hong Kong in both British and Chinese diplomacy, reveal that parallel realisms were indeed informing the diplomatic conduct of the United Kingdom and the PRC from 1949 to 1984.

From the outset, the British government consciously pursued a "realistic" policy with respect to Hong Kong. The application of a conciliatory and accommodative diplomacy was designed specifically to safeguard the colony and the United Kingdom's economic interests on the mainland. From a more strategic perspective, London sought to preserve Hong Kong since it was perceived as a "vital link" in the regional balance of power whose loss would spell disaster for its interests in Southeast Asia, primarily Malaya. Thus, recognition, the maintenance of the colony's relative neutrality in the cold war, and support for China's seating in the United Nations, were, collectively, a situational response directed at "keeping a foot in the door." That the British were somewhat limited in this regard out of the need to preserve the so-called "special relationship" with the United States does not detract from the fact that they actively sought to follow an independent and self-interested policy with respect to the PRC.

This was facilitated, initially at least, by the belief that China's leaders were "Chinese first" and not, therefore, irrevocably committed to alignment with the Soviet bloc. It was assumed that a positive approach within the context of containment would induce Beijing to lean more toward the West thereby contributing to a favourable balance of power in the region conducive to the preservation of the status quo vis-a-vis Hong Kong. This perception of Beijing's attitudinal malleability prevailed in the course of the Cultural Revolution as evidenced by London's desire not to subvert whatever chances existed to secure its "long-term interests" once order returned to the mainland through its disinclination to undertake retaliatory measures based on "attitudes" which "would yield no results."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the British encouraged the Chinese to restore relations to a normal footing and continued to press for the seating of the PRC in

the UN believing that its continued exclusion from the global community was the source of its outward hostility.

This is certainly not to suggest that there was no ideological animus toward Beijing from the British side. However, whatever animosity did exist was suppressed in favour of a more pragmatic approach. Indeed, the Conservatives supported the Labour Government's China policy from its inception. Churchill stated in the House that recognition of the Central People's Government was, according to established British practices, necessitated by the need to "secure a convenience."<sup>2</sup> As such, London's diplomacy was purely self-interested, predicated as it was on the exigency of preserving Hong Kong.

However, the Thatcher government's approach to the issue is an anomaly given its deviation from the more situationally realistic policy of its predecessors. Though the Prime Minister and her cabinet were moved to open discussions with the Chinese by the practical consideration of maintaining investor confidence in the colony and therefore its economic stability, Thatcher consciously opened with a bargaining position that hardened Beijing's negotiating stand from the outset. Her position on the treaties governing the existing status of the colony and her attempt to exchange sovereignty for continued British administration was an affront to the long-held principled stand of the Chinese government that the treaty arrangement was invalid given that it was unequal having resulted under the duress of gunboat diplomacy. Pressed by Beijing to conclude an acceptable agreement or be faced with a *fait accompli* imposed by it, Thatcher's ministers had to openly announce that their bargaining position had hitherto been unrealistic. As such, London had to satisfy itself with an agreement that would bind the Chinese to preserve the existing social and economic character of the colony following China's resumption of sovereignty over it in 1997. That Thatcher had resumed a policy

consistent with the well-worn tradition of British realism is evidenced by her statement: "I haven't given it away ... if we hadn't negotiated, it would have gone away in 1997."<sup>3</sup>

As for Beijing, it is evident that there was a comparable Chinese realism underlining its Hong Kong diplomacy. From the Liberation onward, China's leaders had accepted the "objective reality" posed by the British administration of the colony and, at the tactical level, had decided to tolerate its continuation until such time as conditions proved amenable for its repatriation. However, "tactically respecting the enemy" did not preclude "strategically despising" him through the use of threat and innuendo. Accordingly, the Chinese almost ceaselessly excoriated the British in their propaganda and continued to assert their principled stand that the treaties on which the status of Hong Kong was based were "unequal and invalid."

This is particularly true of the Cultural Revolution. Despite the extent to which the domestic political process was radicalised, it is still possible to isolate the persistence of Chinese realism. What is immediately obvious from the analysis of this period is that China's propaganda organs were working overtime "strategically despising" the British. Yet, aside from the inflamed rhetoric and surly national mood, the PRC at no time deviated from its previous policy of tolerance toward the administrative *status quo* in Hong Kong with the exception of the razing of the British embassy on the order of "leftist" elements who had temporarily and illegitimately seized control of the Foreign Ministry. Official statements at no time suggested that Beijing had any intention of liberating the colony itself. On the contrary, consistent with its own revolutionary experience, the CCP exhorted the compatriots in Hong Kong to exercise a policy of "self-reliance" and to form their own united front. Where there was retaliation, this was restricted to tit-for-tat.

Beijing's assessment of the international environment was conducive to the realisation of a tactical compromise based on the continuation of the administrative status quo in the colony. In the aftermath of the Suez crisis, the prevailing contradictions were such that the British had been relegated to the status of a second-rate imperial power having been superceded in this regard by the United States. As such, Washington had become the primary contradiction and thus the focus of struggle. Furthermore, Suez revealed that imperialism had imploded as a result of the heightened competition for colonial acquisitions. Thus, it became possible to differentiate between imperialisms as in the anti-Japanese war and to form a united front with the middle forces comprising the "intermediate zone." From a strategic perspective then, the Chinese could overlook the Hong Kong issue provided the British kept their word and did not allow the colony to be engaged in any activity inimical to Beijing's interests.

This general policy continued as China's leaders undertook a reevaluation of the strategic environment with the intensification of the Sino-Soviet dispute. Moscow's invasion of Czechoslovakia under the guise of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" led the Chinese to conclude that the Soviet Union was nothing more than a social imperialist power vying with the United States for hegemony. This resulted in a reclassification of the international order according to three worlds: the first world comprising the hegemonic imperialist powers, the second world composed of the middle forces including the advanced industrialised western democracies, and the progressive forces of the third world including China. The primary contradiction thus became hegemony with the qualification that Washington, having been defeated in Vietnam, was now on the decline. Moscow was seen as attempting to take advantage of American impotence

particularly in Asia where the withdrawal of U.S. forces was creating a power vacuum.

This struggle against hegemony put an even greater emphasis on the preservation of independence through multipolarity. By aligning with the west, Beijing sought to act as a counterweight to the Soviet Union thereby rectifying the "balance of forces." Again, the British were coopted into the middle ranks and lauded for their resistance to superpower hegemonism through their participation in both NATO and the European Community. As a result, the Chinese proved willing to postpone the resolution of the Hong Kong issue until such time as the struggle against hegemonism was complete. This is evidenced by their relative inattention to the colonial question throughout the 1970s.

However, by the end of the decade, it was becoming increasingly evident that conditions would soon be ripe to deal with the issue of national reunification. With the accession of Deng Xiaoping to a position of political predominance, Chinese realism became even more pronounced with the renewed emphasis on Mao's "seeking the truth from the facts." This maxim, it will be recalled, represented the "correct ideological line" adopted at the Third Plenum and was developed to "suit China's realities" vis-a-vis the "integration of principle with flexibility." Consequently, it necessitated that problem-solving "proceed from reality."<sup>4</sup>

This reassertion of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" facilitated the development of a number of policies such as the "open door," the "four modernisations," and special economic zones. These were augmented by the seating of the PRC in the United Nations, the normalisation of Sino-American relations, and China's membership in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Furthermore, a complementarity in Chinese and British world

views owing to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and its involvement in Kampuchea established the need to maintain cooperation between the two countries.

It was in this context that the formula of "one country, two systems" was applied to Hong Kong. That this concept was a practical solution to the "objective reality" of the colony's actual conditions and the political stalemate in the negotiations is evinced by Deng's claim that it represented an innovative dispute mechanism with both domestic and international implications. Its acceptability to both parties opened the way for the formal expression of parallel realisms in the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

That the agreement is a classic example of British realism is obvious to the extent that London, faced with the alternative of aggravating relations with the Central People's Government, opted for a complete transfer of sovereignty over the whole of Hong Kong to Beijing. Furthermore, such an agreement was better than no agreement at all. Had the Chinese been permitted to act unilaterally, there was no guarantee that the colony's future would be as favourable as under a binding international settlement. Thus, it was realistic to abandon the idea of "role and link" in order to achieve a more positive result than would have been the case had London remained obstinant.<sup>5</sup>

Chinese realism is also in evidence given that Beijing made a considerable tactical compromise in order to secure a settlement consistent with Hong Kong's realities. Though the Central People's Government succeeded in regaining sovereignty over the colony, it paid a heavy price for having done so. Of the forty-six pages comprising the agreement, more than half spell out the Chinese guarantee to maintain the "prosperity and stability" of Hong Kong after 1 July 1997. The Central People's Government agreed to a considerable devolution of power to the local administration retaining control over foreign and

defence affairs only. But even in the case of foreign policy, Beijing's authority is limited to the extent that "Hong Kong, China" is permitted to conduct its own international economic relations.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, it is evident that the resolution of the Hong Kong issue can be explicated in terms of complementary Anglo-Chinese diplomacies informed by a consonance between British realism and the tactical component of Sinified Marxism-Leninism. The presence of parallel realisms does much to explain how two such culturally and politically diverse states could find a common ground on which to peacefully solve the colonial problem; a solution which appears to be quite unique in the annals of decolonisation given the proclivity of the process in general to degenerate to the use of armed force and the United Kingdom's practice of setting its colonial possessions on the road to independence. This thesis shows that geopolitical and financial concerns acted in concert to influence the parties' respective approaches to the problem and that a sensitivity to them both provides a more comprehensive explanation for the continued British administration of the colony between 1949 and 1984 than does mere reference to the economic imperative alone. Furthermore, in addressing the issue of comparative diplomacy, it has made a contribution to what has been to date a relatively under-analysed area in the secondary literature on the subject.



## NOTES TO CONCLUSION

[1] *House of Commons Debates*, Vol.766, 13 June 1968: col.581; Robert Boardman, *Britain and the People's Republic of China, 1949-74*, (London and Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1976):140.

[2] Churchill's speech to the House of Commons on 17 November 1949 cited in David C. Wolfe, " 'To Secure a Convenience': Britain Recognizes China-1950," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.18, (1983):299.

[3] Thatcher cited in Peter J. Beck, "The Future of the Falkland Islands: A Solution Made in Hong Kong?" *International Affairs*, Vol.61, No.4, (Autumn 1985):650.

[4] Deng Xiaoping, *Build Socialism With Chinese Characteristics*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1985):31, 35-8, and 41; Wang Shuwen in BR, No.42, 15 October 1984:17.

[5] *A Draft Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the People's Republic of China on the Future of Hong Kong, 26 September 1984*, (Hong Kong: Government Printer):7.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp.14-25 and 33-46.

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