Hong Kong and British Culture, 1945–97

Mark Hampton

永遠懷念我的岳丈 ─ 羅勝先生 (1932–2015)

In loving memory of my father-in-law, Low Shing (1932–2015)

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
(2014)

This book originates in personal motivations as well as scholarly ones; as it happens, it also originates about a mile away from the Manchester University Press editorial office. As an American post-graduate student in 1996, researching what became an article about the *Manchester Guardian*'s coverage of the South African War of 1899–1902, I met a young woman from Hong Kong who was pursuing a master's degree at the University of Manchester. My knowledge of Hong Kong was strikingly limited; it is embarrassing to recall that I was surprised to discover that she considered herself Chinese rather than British. It was, of course, a lively period in Sino-British relations, less than a year before the change of sovereignty. My new-found awareness of Hong Kong fortuitously coincided with the colony's growing prominence in the news. I became increasingly interested in the history of Hong Kong, and my interest was only piqued as my new friend followed me to the United States and, eventually, agreed to marry me.

Still, I put this interest on hold. The pressures of teaching, and publishing material relating to my Ph.D. thesis, occupied my time, and beyond that, the idea of writing a book on Hong Kong seemed daunting, not least because I had never been to Asia, nor did I have a clear idea how, from my position at a small teaching-oriented college in Georgia, I would fund the necessary research trips.

Through a stroke of fortune (and David Pomfret's grantsmanship), during a 2005–06 sabbatical I had the opportunity to spend a term as a visiting faculty member at the University of Hong Kong. My first introduction to Hong Kong only reinforced my interest in studying its history. I immediately fell in love with the city, and within five days of arriving as a visitor had applied for the position I have now held for eight years, at Lingnan University. And in 2007 I began researching this book.

In writing this book, I have benefited greatly from the generous research support provided by Lingnan University's Research Committee, which made it possible for me to visit archives in the United States, Britain, and Australia. The logistics of managing research funding were entirely straightforward thanks to the efficient professionalism of Connie Lam in Lingnan's Office of Research Support. The book has benefited as well from research assistance by Timothy Wales in London, and Penelope Ching-yee Pang, Zou Yizheng, Ceci Tam, Peter Law, and James Fellows in Hong Kong. Simon Case helped with formatting and with preparing the index.

I am very fortunate to have been helped enormously by knowledgeable and generous colleagues at Lingnan University. Mette Hjort and Paisley Livingston have been invaluable mentors. Grace Ai-Ling Chou and Poon Shuk-wah have shared their knowledge of Hong Kong and Chinese history. Richard Davis, Niccolò Pianciola, and James Fichter provided crucial non-specialist perspectives on my interpretations. Law Wing Sang and Hui Po-keung shared their theoretical expertise and deep knowledge of Hong Kong culture. Vincy Au and Ann Wong run the Lingnan History Department office with a tremendous

efficiency that makes it possible for me to find time to write, and with a cheerfulness that makes it a pleasure for me to come to work each day.

In moving into a new research field, I have benefited from a multi-continental network of colleagues both old and new. Simon Potter and Adrian Bingham, both of whom I met through my earlier interest in journalism history, gave me valuable advice, respectively, on the histories of empire and sexuality. Chi-kwan Mark and Ray Yep answered my naive queries. David Clayton shared his encyclopedic knowledge of Hong Kong-related archives and challenged me to keep my ideas of 'culture' firmly grounded (I doubt I succeeded); he also generously shared his unpublished research and helpfully critiqued my earliest writings on Hong Kong history. Barry Crosbie and Stuart Ward helped me place Hong Kong within a wider imperial context, both through conversations and through comments on specific chapters. Patrick Hase lent his expertise both as an historian and as a former colonial official. Christine Loh, during an interview at her office, very kindly answered my questions about her political activities and motivations in the late colonial period. John Carroll read the entire manuscript, answered dozens of my very specific queries, and more than anyone else convinced me that I could write this book.

I am very grateful to the archivists and librarians at some three dozen institutions whose holdings are cited in this book, and to the editorial and production team at Manchester University Press. I am also grateful to audiences at conferences and seminars at the University of Hong Kong, the University of Copenhagen, Hong Kong Baptist University, the University of York, the International Convention of Asian Scholars, the Crossroads Cultural Studies conference, the Empire State of Mind conference, the International Association for Media and History, and my post-graduate reading group in the spring 2014 term. A shorter version of Chapter 2 appears in Barry Crosbie and Mark Hampton (eds), *The Cultural Construction of the British World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); I am grateful to the publisher for permission to reprint it.

Researching a book requires not only the cooperation of specialist scholars in sharing their knowledge, but also supportive friends and colleagues to help with various logistical matters and moral support during overseas research trips. Rohan McWilliam and Kelly Boyd have, since 1995, made me feel at home in London, and seeing them is always the high point of my trip. Peter Mandler introduced me to High Table at Cambridge, and also kindly shared research material. Tom O'Malley hosted me in Aberystwyth. Simon Potter hosted me in both Oxford and Bristol.

I dedicated my first book to Ring Mei-Han Low. Although she inspired me to write this one, I am sure she will forgive me for dedicating it instead to her father, Low Shing. As a child in Guangdong at the end of the Second World War, he escaped particularly fraught circumstances to make his way quasi-legally into Hong Kong. Despite limited education, and often having to work in the colony's shadow economy, he managed to support his daughter's earning three degrees on three continents, in Hong Kong, Manchester, and Buffalo. When colonial officials said that, in addition to the British genius of administration, it was the tremendous energies of their Chinese subjects that transformed Hong Kong from a barren rock into one of the world's great cities, they were talking about him.

PREFACE TO THE 2024 EDITION

The reissuing of *Hong Kong and British Culture, 1945–97* provides me with a welcome opportunity to reflect, nearly ten years after its completion, on my purpose in writing it, and how, like all creative endeavours it is a product of its author's contexts.

This book resulted from the merger of my scholarly interests in British cultural history, in particular, domestic Britain; personal interests growing out of my marriage to a Hong Kong–born British National (Overseas) passport-holder (subsequently a naturalised US citizen); and my own personal circumstances in having relocated from the United States to Hong Kong in 2007, following a visiting appointment while on sabbatical in spring 2006. As a newcomer to the territory, I read widely about contemporary Hong Kong and its recent history, in order to understand my new home. Initially, I did this chiefly in whatever spare time I could find, as my main research field remained British journalism history. Gradually, however, I was taken by the relative paucity of scholarship on Hong Kong that was well-integrated into British imperial history frameworks, let alone British cultural history. (There were, of course, exceptions, as I noted.) To be sure, a rich literature on Hong Kong's development engaged with colonial rule, but narratives of British history seemed scarcely touched by the country's last major colonial possession, one that since at least the late 1960s had been its most important one by a wide margin. More broadly, it appeared, Britain's cultural experience of 'losing' an empire, and its significance in making contemporary Britain, had only recently gained scholarly traction. I wrote this book, in the first instance, as a cultural history of Britain's engagement with Hong Kong during the era of global decolonisation. That is, the book treats Hong Kong as an entry point into Britain's own history. This is both the book's strength and the source of some of its gaps or omissions. For example, the 'Chinese Britishness' chapter could have benefited from being more securely grounded within Hong Kong's connection to Guangdong, as well as the Hong Kong diaspora. Another relative omission is the monarchy, which makes only the slightest appearance in this book, though I have subsequently tried to rectify this in a separate publication.[1]

It quickly became clear to me that Hong Kong's relative absence from British cultural historiography stemmed, at least in part, from its poor fit with most of the prevailing narratives. By the 1970s, when colonial Hong Kong's own most intensive period of reform and state building took place, the 'age of empire' had ended. Accounts of domestic British history, accordingly, tended to treat decolonisation as a mopping-up exercise, with the focus on welfare state consensus, affluence and declinism, and youth culture and the permissive society largely sidestepping any of these themes' relationships to an empire that had now passed.[2] Perhaps this is not surprising, given (as has now been remarked frequently) that postwar Britons often exhibited an 'collective wilful amnesia'

about colonialism, going so far as to deny a relationship between empire and post-1945 immigration from former colonies.[3] As a result, although scholars frequently argued that empire and domestic culture, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, 'mutually constituted' each other, far fewer noted the same thing about the period of decolonisation or (in Jordanna Bailkin's term) the 'afterlife of empire'.[4]

Moreover, if accounts of domestic Britain tended to ignore decolonisation, accounts of decolonisation treated Hong Kong as an anachronism, as did contemporary popular writers. Beyond Hong Kong, Marxist critics might speak of dependency theory or neo-colonialism; meanwhile Britain still maintained direct control over Hong Kong and, until the early 1980s, held out hope for negotiating continued rule beyond 1997, the date at which the 1898 New Territories lease would expire. To be sure, such scholars as John Darwin and A. G. Hopkins distinguished between 'flag independence' and more substantive imperial control.[5] In general, though, mainstream narratives had little place for Hong Kong, save as a legacy.

This was my reading of the scholarly field as I began researching Britain's cultural engagement with Hong Kong between 1945 and 1997. A decade after delivering the manuscript – and more than a decade and a half since beginning my research – the field has changed substantially. Important monographs have detailed the cultural and global history of the 'end of Britain', the continuing presence and influence of empire within Britain's domestic culture, and the direct line between extractive empire, post-imperial immigration restrictions, and contemporary Britain's wealth.[6] Arguments over the merits of empire have become a staple of Britain's culture wars.[7] British political and popular culture may misrepresent or misunderstand the Empire; it is far more difficult to say that it has an 'amnesia' toward it.

Hong Kong studies, as a field, has grown substantially in the intervening years. While this book was in press, in 2015, the University of Bristol pioneered a Hong Kong History Research Centre, which by now has produced several PhDs including some whose theses have been published as monographs, along with regular seminars, Hong Kong–related archives, and speakers' series. The Society for Hong Kong Studies, based in Hong Kong, launched in 2017, as did the University of British Columbia's Hong Kong Studies Initiative, and the journal, *Hong Kong Studies*, followed a year later. In 2021, the University of California introduced a system-wide cooperative Global Hong Kong Studies venture. This institutional expansion reflects a long-developing growth of Hong Kong studies, including Hong Kong history, that was well under way before I began my research; it also, though, underscores that the field is now far deeper.

The recent scholarship includes several books and articles that either challenge or deepen the arguments of *Hong Kong and British Culture, 1945–97*. My book includes a chapter on 'Chinese Britishness' that argues both that making their Hong Kong Chinese subjects culturally British was not a particular goal of the colonial government, nor was an *affective* Britishness very widespread. The former argument was well-grounded in primary sources, including some I discussed in separate articles; the second was rather more tentative. In place of

an affective Britishness, I argued for an *instrumental* Britishness that was less about an identification with British culture than about securing rights, above all the right to live in Britain (even if only as a back-up plan). Chi-kwan Mark has shown, convincingly and in more detail than my account, that among Chinese elites in Hong Kong, the threatened loss of Britishness was more than a threat to rights, but also a deeply felt matter of identity.[8] Vivian Kong, writing about an earlier period, goes much further than I do in delineating the different types of multiracial Britishness that manifested in Hong Kong, and making the case that Britishness was never the sole province of the metropole, but was a contested concept that, even for the white British residents of Hong Kong, was never coterminous with ethnicity.[9] If I were writing my book after hers, my discussion of Britishness would have benefited from Kong's conceptual sophistication.

Another chapter, on the trope of 'good governance', argues that in the aftermath of the 1967 disturbances, the colonial government attempted to fashion a non-democratic accountability, in order to display that they represented the people even while not implementing constitutional reform (which, in Steve Tsang's wording, had been 'shelved' as a realistic possibility when Alexander Grantham replaced Mark Young as governor in 1947).[10] To this end, the MacLehose government implemented substantial social reforms, including in housing, education, and anti-corruption, even while engaging in various forms of public relations in order to display its accountability. The MacLehose reforms and, importantly, the local and British parliamentary influences that he had to negotiate, receive detailed treatment by Ray Yep.[11] At the same time, Florence Mok's pioneering study of the Hong Kong government's 'covert colonialism' shows the mechanics of surveillance and influence through which the government navigated between the substantive demands of good governance and public opinion and maintaining legitimacy even when it pursued either colonial or UK government interests over those of their subjects.[12] Along with 'good governance', British commentators credited the colonial government with bringing modernity to the territory, whether through establishing order in the urban areas or building infrastructure projects and planning. Some of these aspects of 'modernity' have seen substantial new work since the publication of this book, including studies of commercial aviation and water infrastructure, the former in a book-length study by John Wong.[13] Meanwhile, Peter Hamilton's marvellous book has shown that while Britain appointed the governor and the colonial government ran the colony, Hong Kong's Chinese business elites were becoming increasingly tied to the United States, thereby facilitating China's integration with the global economy.[14] *Hong Kong and British Culture, 1945–97* is largely about the story British commentators told about what Britain was accomplishing in Hong Kong; new scholarship has provided a nuance to this story that, in some cases, subverts the story those commentators told.

Not only has the scholarly field changed, but so have real-world circumstances. The seven years in which I researched and wrote this book were bookended by the final preparations for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and the Global Financial Crisis in which China's aggressive response helped stabilise

the global economy as well as Hong Kong's own economy, on the one end, and Hong Kong's civil disturbances in 2014, centring on Hong Kong's relationship with China, on the other. I am not consciously aware of ways that contemporary events may have shaped my book's arguments, which, other than those in a brief epilogue, focused on the years before 1997. Yet they may well have, particularly with respect to Chapter 7, which addresses the 'narratives of 1997', as expressed during the last couple of decades of British rule. In those decades, both predictions and literary representations ran the gamut from cautiously optimistic to apocalyptic, with some arguing that Hong Kong had already been effectively integrated into China – in other words, 'flag independence' was less important than commonly believed – and others holding out hope that Hong Kong was too important to China for the latter to risk 'killing the goose that laid the golden eggs'. Critics responded that if push came to shove, China valued sovereignty more than economics, and that Hong Kong people could not afford complacency. Christopher Patten – the final governor and the first to have been a professional politician rather than a diplomat or colonial official – argued both that Britain had secured Hong Kong's future through negotiating the Joint Declaration and the resulting 'One Country, Two Systems' model, and that the best security of Hong Kong's freedoms was the spirit of its people. Much of the British commentary, whether explicitly or implicitly, presented this happy result as the culmination of Britain's entire imperial project, in Hong Kong as elsewhere. Whether the optimists or pessimists appeared more prescient fluctuated between 2007 and 2014 along with both political and economic indicators. Conflicting pre-1997 predictions became even more relevant with the 2019 unrest and 2020 National Security Law. From the perspective of many commentators in both Britain and the United States, the pessimists appeared vindicated, even as Chinese and Hong Kong officials accused both countries of political interference. This book is concerned with pre-1997 'Handover' narratives, but it is clear that the narratives are ongoing more than a quarter-century later.[15]

A chapter on Hong Kong as the site for 'unbridled capitalism' contrasts those British critics who excoriated Hong Kong's sweatshop economy and, in their view, its dystopian fetishisation of the market, with those, including Margaret Thatcher and her mentor Keith Joseph, who argued that the colony manifested British virtues that, ironically, had been lost in Britain itself during the postwar era of the welfare state consensus. To the latter commentators, Hong Kong was a model of how these lost virtues could be restored. Although this theme rested uneasily with the celebration of state-led modernisation projects, it is striking that the 'Thatcher Revolution' adopted neo-liberal measures such as privatising public housing and numerous previously nationalised industries even as Hong Kong expanded its own public housing stock (along with other social reforms). Although the latter slowed down subsequently, Britain itself has, since the Global Financial Crisis, pursued austerity measures and further privatisations that – especially in conjunction with post-pandemic dislocations, Britain's exit from the European Union, and the inflationary effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine – have made Britain's contemporary economy rival the cruelty of Hong Kong's economy of the early 1950s.[16]

The epilogue considers 'postcolonial hangovers', including manifestations of British culture in Hong Kong and the territory's global connections, again, from the perspective of late 2014. Ten years later, institutional legacies are abundant, ranging from the University Grants Committee that governs my own industry, to the administrative structure of the government, to the legislation and police practices that the government employed to control the 2019 unrest. Arguably many of the manifestations of British popular culture say less about lingering affection for Britain than they do about Britain's own successful contribution to the global cultural smorgasbord: in Hong Kong, they sit alongside omnipresent Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and American products, among others. The widespread show of respect and mourning in Hong Kong at the time of Queen Elizabeth's passing in September 2022 could appear to reveal Hong Kong people's lingering attachment to their former sovereign, but it could just as easily be interpreted as nostalgia or even local participation in a global phenomenon: mourners showed up not only at the British Consulate in Hong Kong, but also at the one in Austin, Texas (for example). Some commentators suggested that mourning Queen Elizabeth was a subtle way of protesting the Hong Kong government, though it is difficult to believe that this was most people's motivation. At the same time, it is notable that in the first two decades after 1997, the direct protests that occurred tended increasingly to include evocations of the colonial period, displays of the colonial flag, and appeals to the British government to intervene.[17]

In 2019 as in the early 1980s when Thatcher negotiated Britain's future role in Hong Kong, Britain's options were limited. Yet in response to the introduction of the National Security Law, Boris Johnson's government announced in 2020 – nearly four decades after classifying its then Hong Kong subjects as British Nationals (Overseas) with no right to live in Britain – that those holding BN(O) status could settle in Britain with a path to citizenship. Decried by the Hong Kong and Chinese governments as a blatant intervention in China's sovereign affairs, this would seem, at one level, to have belatedly reversed the rejection of Hong Kong Britons. Future historians will weigh in what measure this decision reflected British acceptance of moral responsibility for its former subjects; Boris Johnson's manifestation of a particular vision of BREXIT in which Britain rejected its narrow European connections in favour of projecting itself globally;[18] a post-BREXIT attempt to attract Hong Kong financial resources into Britain; or geopolitical posturing. In any case, it shows that Britain's engagement with Hong Kong has not ended.

In writing this book, I incurred numerous debts, which are detailed in the original (2016 edition) preface and acknowledgements. For this reprinted edition (and the Chinese translation to follow), I am grateful to John Carroll, who was with this book from the beginning, for his support in securing Hong Kong University Press's commitment, and to Michael Duckworth for seeing the project through. Vivian Kong is mentioned obliquely in the original acknowledgements – as an MPhil student at the University of Hong Kong, she participated in my Lingnan post-graduate reading group – but she should have been mentioned directly. I have learned a lot from her work, and her feedback on my ideas both in 2014 and since have been immensely valuable. My thoughts on

the connection between 'post-colonial hangovers' and the various protests in post-Handover Hong Kong were refined through a writing collaboration with Florence Mok. At Lingnan I am grateful to new colleagues for their encouragement and support, above all Catherine Chan, Du Chunmei, and Vincent Leung. In addition, over the past two years I have been privileged to supervise two post-graduate students working on recent Hong Kong history, Fu Yuwei and John Chan Yiu-wah, who have both helped me think about this topic in new ways.

During the period since delivering the original manuscript of this book, I have been fortunate to get better acquainted with my cousin Michael Tong, a member of the Hong Kong diaspora, and to get to know my cousins Ka Sik Tong and Janice Tse, who (among other things) have shared their views on Hong Kong Britishness. As ever, Ring Mei Han Low remains my inspiration.

Notes

1 Mark Hampton, 'The Uses of Monarchy in Late-Colonial Hong Kong, 1967–97', in Robert Aldrich and Cindy McCreery (eds), *Monarchies and Decolonisation in Asia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 225–42.
2 The literature on these themes is vast. For a concise and superb recent overview of postwar British history, see Adrian Bingham, *United Kingdom* (London: Polity, 2022).
3 Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
4 Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
5 John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Darwin, 'Hong Kong in British Decolonisation', in Judith Brown and Rosemary Foot (eds), *Hong Kong's Transitions, 1842–1997* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 16–32; A. G. Hopkins, 'Rethinking Decolonization', *Past and Present* 200, no. 1 (2008): 211–47. The idea of Britain's 'decolonisation' of Hong Kong, in particular, having a different chronology than the change of flag has been further developed in Chi-kwan Mark, *Decolonisation in the Age of Globalisation: Britain, China, and Hong Kong, 1979–89* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023); Mark, 'Lack of Means or Loss of Will? The United Kingdom and the Decolonization of Hong Kong, 1957–1967', *International History Review* 31 (March 2009): 45–71; James Fellows, 'Britain, European Economic Community Enlargement, and "Decolonisation" in Hong Kong, 1967–1973', *The International History Review* 41, no. 4 (2019): 753–74.
6 Stuart Ward, *Untied Kingdom: A Global History of the End of Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023); Charlotte Lydia Riley, *Imperial Island: A History of Empire in Modern Britain* (London: Bodley Head, 2023); Stuart Ward and Christian Pedersen (eds), *The Break-up of Greater Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021); Nadine El-Enany, *(B)ordering Britain Law, Race and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020); Kojo Koram, *Uncommon Wealth: Britain and the Aftermath of Empire* (London: John Murray, 2022); Sathnam Sanghera, *Empireworld: How British Imperialism Shaped the Globe* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2024).
7 Alan Lester, *Deny & Disavow: Distancing the Imperial Past in the Culture Wars* (London: Sunrise Publishing, 2022); Robert Gildea, *Empires of the Mind: The Colonial Past and the Politics of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Alan Lester (ed.), *The Truth About Empire: Real Histories of British Colonialism* (London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2024).

8 Chi-kwan Mark, *Decolonisation in the Age of Globalization*. This is only one of the points he makes in a broader account of the negotiations over Britain's exit from Hong Kong. See also Mark, 'Decolonising Britishness? The 1981 British Nationality Act and the Identity Crisis of Hong Kong Elites', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 48, no. 3 (2020): 565–90.

9 Vivian Kong, *Multiracial Britishness: Global Networks in Hong Kong, 1910–45* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023). Although Britishness is not a theme that he develops at length, Kwong Chi Man's fine book *Hongkongers in the British Armed Forces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022) has implications for understanding it, particularly in his discussion of World War II veterans' struggle for recognition. On Hong Kong people's identity more broadly, see Catherine S. Chan, 'Culture and Identity', in Man-Kong Wong and Kwong Chi Man (eds), *Hong Kong History: Themes in Global Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2022), pp. 157–80; Iam-Chong Ip, *Hong Kong's New Identity Politics: Longing for the Local in the Shadow of China* (London: Routledge, 2019).

10 Steve Tsang, *Democracy Shelved: Great Britain, China, and Attempts at Constitutional Reform in Hong Kong, 1945–1952* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

11 Ray Yep, *Man in a Hurry: Murray MacLehose and Colonial Autonomy in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2024).

12 Florence Mok, *Covert colonialism: Governance, Surveillance and Political Culture in British Hong Kong, c. 1966–97* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023).

13 John Wong, *Hong Kong Takes Flight: Commercial Aviation and the Making of a Global Hub, 1930s–1998* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022); David Clayton and Florence Mok, 'Bad Weather and State Building: Household Water Conservancy in Colonial Hong Kong during a Drought, 1963 to 1964', *Environment and History* (forthcoming 2024); Jack Greatrex and Florence Mok, 'Catchwater Colonialism: Reshaping Hong Kong's Hydrology, Infrastructure, Metabolism and Landscape, 1937 to 1983', *Urban History* (forthcoming 2024).

14 Peter Hamilton, *Made in Hong Kong: Transpacific Networks and a New History of Globalization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

15 For a wider, longer-range contextualisation of the political challenges of these years, see John M. Carroll, *The Hong Kong–China Nexus: A Brief History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

16 For example, Dan Evans, *A Nation of Shopkeepers: The Unstoppable Rise of the Petite Bourgeoisie* (London: Repeater Books, 2023); Angela Eagle and Imran Ahmed, *The New Serfdom: The Triumph of Conservative Ideas and How to Defeat Them* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2018); James Meek, *Private Island: Why Britain Now Belongs to Someone Else* (London: Verso, 2014); Polly Toynbee and David Walker, *Cameron's Coup: How the Tories took Britain to the Brink* (London: Guardian Faber Publishing, 2015).

17 Mark Hampton and Florence Mok, 'Remembering British Rule: The Uses of Colonial Memory in Hong Kong Protest Movements, 1997–2019', in Matthew Roberts (ed.), *Memory and Modern British Politics: Commemoration, Tradition, Legacy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2024).

18 On the less than straightforward links between supporting Britain's exit from the European Union and an attempt to re-assert a global role, see Robert Saunders, 'Brexit and Empire: "Global Britain" and the Myth of Imperial Nostalgia', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 48 (2020): 1140–74.

Introduction: Britishness, empire, and Hong Kong

Every Guy Fawkes Day, five bonfire societies in Lewes, Sussex, lead processions of men dressed in Cavalier costumes, accompanied by bands and bonfires, to celebrate the discovery of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot. During the Grand United Procession, four of the five societies join together, along with visiting societies from other nearby towns, marching from one end of the town to the other. According to Jim Etherington, writing in 1993, with 'over two thousand society members, accompanied by fifteen to twenty bands and being a mile or more in length, the procession can take over thirty minutes to pass one point'. Afterwards, the various societies split into their own Grand Processions, marching, followed by crowds, to separate venues at the edge of town, where members dressed in clerical garb rail against unpopular politicians and enemies of Britain, as well as opponents of the bonfire itself.[1] Following the denunciations, effigies of these enemies, along with effigies of Guy Fawkes, are ignited.

In November 1997, a little more than four months after Britain's exit from Hong Kong and the latter's establishment as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), as well as just over two months after Princess Diana's death, Hong Kong featured in the Lewes Bonfire celebrations. While one of the Bonfire Societies played 'Candle in the Wind' in memory of Princess Diana, two of them commemorated Hong Kong's Handover, with one of these, that of Commercial Square, depicting Governor Christopher Patten's crushing by a Chinese tank.[2] According to the local *Sussex Express*, the Patten 'tableau had forcefully delivered the society's message: anger that the last major colony was no more'.[3]

The *Express* did not explain the precise reason for the Commercial Square Bonfire Society's anger. Was it in recognition that Britain's imperial retreat was finally complete and its 'decline' fully accomplished, a quarter of a century after what John Darwin terms the end of

the 'British World-System'?[4] Was it dismay at the handing-over of six million imperial subjects to a Communist regime, barely eight years after the Tiananmen Square incident? Was it a protest against what many regarded as a humiliating retreat following Margaret Thatcher's failed negotiations in the early 1980s, symbolised by the public spill the Prime Minister took at one of the meetings?[5] Certainly these themes had featured in the coverage in the national press a few months earlier, at the time of the Handover itself. To *Daily Mail* journalist Ann Leslie, 30 June was the date when 'at the stroke of midnight this wild, hot, steamy and neurotically glittering enclave of 6.3 million free, feisty and precarious people is thrust, willy-nilly, into the hands of the murderous and corrupt regime of communist China'.[6] Fellow *Daily Mail* writer Paul Eastman focused less on the Communist Party itself than on the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which 'owns nightclubs, pig farms, ice cream parlours and brothels. They are the most corrupt force on earth … and tonight they get their hands on Hong Kong.'[7] Reporting on the Handover ceremony, Leslie expressed hurt feelings on Britain's behalf, criticising Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Secretary Jiang Zemin's speech for omitting any mention of Britain's role in 'helping to make this once "barren rock" in the South China Sea one of the most vibrant and free-living, free thinking economies in the world'.[8] To Alan Massie, Prince Charles's 'glum' look at the ceremonies reflected the 'diminished state of the monarchy itself'.[9]

While the *Daily Mail* nursed a hurt pride, the *Sun* and the *Mirror* both emphasised British accomplishments. To the *Sun*, what stood out among Britain's achievements were a 'fair and respected legal system', the conquest of corruption, the establishment of a true free market, and the sheer scale of development.[10] Far from expressing sorrow, the paper combined its characteristic flippancy (including numerous headline puns) with goodwill, concluding 'the people of Hong Kong mostly welcome new management … So long, Hong Kong. It's been good to know you.' It even devoted its trademark topless 'page 3 girl' to the occasion, featuring a British-born Chinese whose parents had come from Hong Kong. Under the picture, the caption read: 'Here's a little Hong Kong phewy to mark today's transfer of the colony to Beijing rule – 23-year-old Ivy Yeung, whose parents are Chinese. Of course, our new Page 3 girl, who lives in the Lake District, would be worth Peking at ANY day. Just look what she has her handover [i.e., her breasts].'[11] The *Mirror*, while noting the sadness of the occasion, emphasised the success of British imperialism and its ending: 'none of us who watched that final ceremony could fail to be proud to be British … Hong Kong symbolised how this nation was able to help other countries achieve so much for themselves'.[12]

A person judging only from the popular press coverage surrounding the Handover could be excused for thinking that the small Chinese colony was central to Britain's national identity. Conversely, a regular newspaper reader who happened to miss those few days of coverage in late June and early July 1997 would be forgiven for assuming that Hong Kong was almost entirely absent from the British consciousness. As Roger Buckley pointed out that year, Hong Kong often lacked salience within British society. He noted, for example, that an April 1963 Commons debate concerning Hong Kong began with only a dozen MPs in attendance, a figure that rose only to twenty-three by the debate's end. More broadly,

> Rarely was interest much above the level of interest that led the Hong Kong government to report that 'less dog was eaten nowadays' or junior minister John Profumo's reply in March 1957 that 'modern ideas are gradually doing away with concubinage and I think that may prove the best way to deal with it'.[13]

Former Governor Alexander Grantham, similarly, told an interviewer in 1968 that one of the reasons the Colonial Office (CO) was willing (on Grantham's advice) to retreat from plans to introduce democratising constitutional reform was that the British electorate 'didn't care a brass fa[r]thing about Hong Kong'.[14]

If Hong Kong often eluded public interest, it also has been largely absent in historical studies of British culture; still less has it featured in the scholarship on Britishness. This is not surprising. During the late Victorian zenith of imperial consciousness, when empire arguably had its most pronounced effect on British national identity, Hong Kong was a quite minor colony. During the interwar period, when Britain's Empire reached its greatest geographical extent, Hong Kong became, as Robert Bickers argues, a 'backwater'. Hong Kong's importance was rarely as a thing-in-itself; it was as an access point to China, and in this regard it was, by the interwar years, a poor second to Shanghai.[15] After the Communist victory in 1949, as David Clayton points out, Hong Kong became 'the most attractive base for economic contact with China', and the retention of the colony was regarded in the early 1950s as a vital economic interest, one that shaped British policy toward China.[16] Yet Hong Kong's postwar importance ran counter to more prevailing narratives, especially after 1956, of decolonisation, affluence, and the welfare state consensus. Indeed, Hong Kong's relative unimportance within the 'imperial mind' has been echoed in the relative neglect of Hong Kong within the historiography of the British Empire, in which India, Africa, the West Indies, and the Dominions have predominated.[17]

If Hong Kong plays a negligible part in the scholarship on British culture and Britishness in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because of its relative neglect even within imperial scholarship, its absence from studies of the late twentieth century stems from a different cause: decolonisation. Richard Weight argues that even as early as 1940, empire lost whatever significance it had previously held within British national identity; he cites, for example, the declining use of empire in advertisements after 1930, as well as the demise of Empire Day.[18] Catherine Hall, in a different context, notes that 'in white England, amnesia about empire' was widespread during the era of decolonisation.[19]

The ways in which metropole and empire were 'mutually constitutive' has become something of a truism in studies of the nineteenth century; indeed, the point has been sufficiently well established to have prompted its own revisionism.[20] By contrast, historiography of the era of decolonisation has been slower in coming to terms with the interactions between domestic and imperial cultures. Certainly the gap has narrowed since Stuart Ward wrote in 2002 that, in contrast to the Victorian and interwar periods,

> As far as the post-1945 era is concerned, the rigid conceptual barriers between metropole and periphery are still very much intact. There remains a firmly entrenched assumption that the broad cultural impact of decolonisation was confined to the colonial periphery, with little relevance to post-war British culture and society. No attempt has been made to examine the cultural manifestations of the demise of imperialism as a social and political ideology in post-war Britain. Indeed, as far as empire and metropolitan culture are concerned, it is as though the end of empire has signalled the end of the subject.[21]

Indeed, recent books by Bill Schwarz, Wendy Webster, and James Chapman and Nicholas Cull have illuminated the cultural impact of empire in the post-1945 period, with particular attention to the question of national identity.[22] Yet Hong Kong – the most obvious counter-trend to the story of decolonisation for several decades after the war – has not factored into British cultural historiography in any significant way. This point is amply illustrated by Jordanna Bailkin's important book, *The Afterlife of Empire*. Bailkin offers an innovative and broadly convincing argument that the Welfare State and decolonisation were intertwined in the 1950s and 1960s, so that the post-colonial was an important component of the postwar. Her argument steers clear of Hong Kong, which throughout the 1970s remained both a solidly British colony (if only by Chinese acquiescence) and a self-conscious exemplar of pre-Welfare State Britishness.[23]

One possibility, of course, is that Hong Kong has been largely absent from postwar British cultural *historiography* for good reason: its relative insignificance in British cultural *history*. There is a prima facie case for this view. Aside from the famous inability of large numbers of Britons to name a single colony in a survey taken in 1947, Hong Kong itself arguably lacked resonance to the British public.[24] Harold Ingrams, writing in 1952, told the story of a postal worker who challenged a customer's claim that Hong Kong was part of the British Empire; upon verifying that the customer was correct, the worker insisted that it must have been a recent development.[25] The Hong Kong Association, a London-based organisation created in 1961 to promote Hong Kong industry and trade, was deemed necessary because of 'widespread ignorance about the Colony and much hostility towards it. It was largely considered to be a place of sweated labour, dope and vice, and complaints of unfair competition were rife.'[26] A 1969 memo by the Association noted that little about Hong Kong was reported in the British press 'save complaints about toys or accusations from Lancashire of the dumping of textiles'.[27] Nigel Cameron justified his 1978 history of Hong Kong by citing a widespread ignorance of the colony that co-existed with a collage of fleeting images, such as the drug trade, corrupt policemen, 'super-luxury', and Suzie Wongs.[28] A 1981 *Far Eastern Economic Review* (*FEER*) correspondent noted that stories about Hong Kong rarely appeared in the British press, but those that did appear portrayed it 'as a sweatshop colony in the grip of corrupt policemen and a prime breeding ground for triads operating in London's Chinatown'.[29]

The potential loss of such a colony could not be expected to trouble Britons unduly, particularly in the context of a general indifference toward empire. Not only, in the words of Wm. Roger Louis, did the 1960s' 'dismantling of the Empire' in Aden, Sarawak, and North Borneo occur 'with hardly a flicker of attention from the British public'.[30] A July 1967 assessment by the American Central Intelligence Agency, made during the height of the riots, or 'disturbances', concluded as well that the loss of Hong Kong to mainland China would not constitute a 'serious psychological blow to Britain or to the Labor government', but would be accepted 'philosophically as an inevitable part of the winding up of Empire to which all political parties have been at least resigned'.[31] The perception of British indifference to Hong Kong was so strong that, in advocating in the late 1960s that the adjective 'Royal' be added to the Hong Kong Police Force's title, one of the arguments put forward was that such a move would 'remind the people of Hong Kong, in their remote and isolated position, that Her Majesty and Her Majesty's Government continue to take a deep interest in the

well-being of the Colony and its inhabitants'.[32] A person seeking to argue how little Hong Kong mattered to British culture would, then, have little difficulty finding supporting quotations.

Yet such assessments considerably understate Hong Kong's place within postwar British culture and national identity. Indeed, Hong Kong, as a colony whose spectacular development under British auspices contrasted sharply with the contemporary retreat elsewhere, offered just as pointed an opportunity for reflecting on Britishness as did the 'betrayal' of the 'white man's world' so richly detailed by Bill Schwarz. But whereas the British surrender of Kenya and Rhodesia chiefly afforded an occasion for contrasting the 'real' whiteness of settlers abroad (and ordinary Britons confronting immigrants at home) with feckless politicians and bureaucrats, Britain's continuing management of Hong Kong, decisively challenged only in the early 1980s, offered a site in which supposed British virtues could be more positively showcased. Preparation for the 1997 Handover lacked the same acrimony as the retreat from Kenya or Rhodesia, at least among white Britons. Virtually no commentators entertained the fantasy of resisting the Chinese takeover, and the signing of the Joint Declaration in December 1984 gave Britons more than a dozen years to resign themselves to reality; the ongoing 'localisation' of the civil service from the early 1970s meant that, unlike in 1930s Shanghai, few Britons stood to face real loss from the end of British Hong Kong.[33] The Handover, rather, provided an occasion to reflect upon British accomplishment in establishing markets; rule of law; and effective, corruption-free government: properties that could be extended rhetorically to the entire British Empire.

Hong Kong was, of course, most important among the British who lived and worked there, and their voice will be the most prominent in this story. The number of British expatriates and settlers varied over time, and in some years official statistics lumped Britons and Commonwealth citizens together. In 1969, more than 5,000 Britons served in the Hong Kong Police Force alone, representing some 5 per cent of the force.[34] In 1975, the number of British in Hong Kong, excluding the Armed Forces, stood at 18,994; by 1982 it had risen to an estimated 21,900, but by the end of 1985, following the Sino-British Joint Declaration, that number was down to 14,900 (by which point the number of British civilians had been surpassed by Americans, up from only about 1,800 in 1975).[35] At its peak, therefore, Hong Kong's British civilian population was equal to that of a modest provincial town – Tyldesley, for example. Moreover, because Hong Kong's British population was often transient, the number of Britons who spent significant time in Hong Kong vastly exceeded the number who lived there at any given moment.

Although Hong Kong figured most prominently in the experience of settlers and expatriates, it was far from absent from the metropolitan consciousness. In national contexts, Hong Kong became discursively prominent at certain atypical moments: when a visiting MP railed against its working conditions; when a crisis of rule confronted the Colonial Government, as in the 'Disturbances' of 1967; during negotiations in the early 1980s concerning the end of British rule; and above all during the Handover itself. The BBC, for example, featured a dozen news stories on Hong Kong on one day in May 1967 – having featured only a couple of dozen in all of 1959.[36]

These exceptional events were not, of course, the only time that Hong Kong appeared in metropolitan discourse. In local contexts, Hong Kong became relevant when a regional military regiment began its two-year assignment in Hong Kong and local crowds saw them off at the train station from which they would travel to the docks of Liverpool; or when (for example) a 1960 London church's Missionary Pageant, entitled 'Hong Kong Epiphany', comprised an 'Exhibition of pictures and articles of interest on life in Hong Kong'; or when a 1965 Surrey tea event featured a 'Talk by Miss Kiddle on Her Holiday to Hong Kong' (accompanied by a cancer fundraiser and a 'Competition – My Prettiest Cup and Saucer').[37] In addition, periodically, Hong Kong was the setting of popular novels, such police-themed television series as the BBC's *Hong Kong Beat* and ITV's *Yellowthread Street*, or the topic of a BBC programme such as *Woman's Hour*. During the 1980s and 1990s, the University of Wales awarded a significant number of postgraduate degrees for theses comparing Wales and Hong Kong. Nor did students have to wait for university to be introduced to the colony. One forty-two-page 'Upper Intermediate' children's storybook from 1991, *Adventure in Hong Kong*, featured young Jack and Anna, in a stopover with their parents during their return from Australia, helping the police to thwart a terrorist group's attempt to blow up their plane. Despite its brevity, the book managed to feature a Lion Dance and a pick-pocket, visits to the Night Market and the Peak, and to convey that Hong Kong was an electronics emporium and that it was crowded with Chinese people.[38] Postwar children were often acquainted with Hong Kong through the labels on their toys, even if not always directly; David Cannadine has written of his childhood toys identified as ' "Empire Made" – an explicit acknowledgement that the empire still existed, but a euphemism for the fact that such goods invariably originated in Hong Kong'.[39] Yet if the labels were sometimes euphemistic, readers of William Marsden's *Living in Hong Kong*, a short 1991 children's picture-book, were confronted with pictures of Batman toys accompanied by the caption: 'These toys were made in Kowloon.

Figure 1 The departure of a local regiment could remind a town of Hong Kong's existence. Crowds at South Wigston Station to see the 1st Battalion depart for Hong Kong, 11 May 1949.

People in Britain buy many goods which are made in Hong Kong.'[40] According to Nigel Whitely, writing in 1989 in the *New Statesman & Society*, plastic's public-relations problem following the Second World War stemmed from the 'rash of cheap-and-nasty plastic toys and trinkets' from Hong Kong, so that 'in the post-war age, "plastic", "Hong Kong", and "inferiority" congealed in the public's collective unconscious'.[41] Not that plasticity was the worst feature attributed to Hong Kong toys; the BBC in 1965 and 1966 reported on their toxicity, including rumours that children 'all over the world [were] suffering poisoning by sucking some of the Hong-Kong-made toys'.[42]

   This book examines depictions of Hong Kong within domestic British discourse, and a range of commentary by British people in Hong Kong, moving fluidly between the two sites as convenience requires. Covering the period between the fall of two imperial regimes, Japanese and British, this book is not intended as a comprehensive history of British Hong Kong even during this short half-century. Rather, it

examines the place of Hong Kong within the British imagination from the time the British reclaimed Hong Kong from the Japanese to the time they relinquished it to the PRC. Although the book considers culture in the broadest sense, it focuses above all on the relationship between Hong Kong and Britishness, drawing on a catholic range of primary sources, including British and Colonial Government documents, private correspondence, novels, memoirs, news media, and contemporary journalistic and academic accounts, just to name the most important types. Some of the stories have not been previously told, while others, such as the war on corruption, are familiar to Hong Kong specialists but are considered here within a new context. It is worth emphasising, moreover, that my focus is on the stories that the British told about themselves and what they were trying to accomplish.

Two other points about the sources deserve emphasis. First, although most of their authors can fairly unproblematically be called 'British', I also draw on relevant sources whose authors belonged to the broader 'British world', including Australia, Canada, and Rhodesia, as well as Americans.[43] Of these, Australia is, not surprisingly, the most important. Stuart Ward has shown that until the early 1960s, Australian national identity was largely constructed through an engagement with Britishness, shifting to a more exclusivist Australian nationalism in response to Britain's closer ties to Europe. Similarly, John Darwin has underscored that the Dominion ideal was central to postwar attempts to fashion a 'fourth British empire'.[44] In the discourse that explained Hong Kong to British readers, not only did such Australian writers as James Clavell and Richard Hughes feature prominently, but Clavell – before eventually becoming a naturalised US citizen – provided some of the most pronounced iterations of overt Britishness. Other, much less famous, examples surface in archives, whether the 1950s Australian tourist who visited Hong Kong en route to London, and whose complaints of loneliness prompted earnest correspondence between the Australian Government Trade Commissioner and Assistant Secretary, Department of Commerce and Agriculture, or the Australian expatriate whose very politicised (and pro-Patten) 1995 Christmas circular found its way into Martin Booth's archive.[45] Yet if Australians are the most frequent 'British world' figures to intrude into this book, others feature as well, including the Rhodesia-born novelist John Gordon Davis, and the Canadian-born self-proclaimed sex guru Roger Boschman.

The United States is a different case. My occasional quotations from American interlocutors do not reflect a Churchillian fantasy of their belonging to an Anglo-Saxon imagined community, but rather the fact that they shared a discursive (and physical) space with the Britons who

are my main subjects. For the postwar United States, Hong Kong was a key cold war location: the site of the largest US Consulate, where 'China-watchers' could be based, and a notorious leave destination for American soldiers during the Vietnam War. It was also a place in which the American missionary engagement with China, more than a century old, could concentrate now that the mainland had been closed, as well as a crucial location for Sinophiles. Yet although the American engagement with Hong Kong had a very different provenance than the British one did, it necessarily informed the British understanding of Hong Kong. In part this reflected the strong American presence in Hong Kong, and the prominent American role in creating discourse about Hong Kong; even the British Council's Representatives felt constrained to see their mission in Hong Kong through comparison to the United States Information Services.[46] More broadly, of course, it stemmed from the increasing American cultural presence in Britain itself, as in so many other countries. Yet while American sources (like Australian ones) come into this story from time to time, the focus remains on the British cultural engagement with Hong Kong.

A second point bears emphasising: this book is based entirely on English-language sources. In large part this is the simple result of my own linguistic deficiencies, but in turn it follows naturally from this study's focus on British culture (and my own primary interest in modern British history). I have no doubt that there are extant Chinese sources that would enrich this story, particularly with respect to Chapter 6, but, *faute de mieux*, I will leave it to other scholars to decide whether they are worth pursuing.

At the heart of this book is the interplay among three somewhat contradictory themes: Hong Kong as the site of an unbridled capitalism, in happy contrast to the increasingly 'managed' post-1945 metropole; as the recipient of modernisation projects, often initiated by the Government; and as the focus of good governance, in which legitimacy was made compatible with non-democratic rule. Although in practice these three motifs often overlapped, they will for analytical purposes be discussed in separate chapters (2, 4, and 5). All three themes featured in the recurring trope, common in the postwar era, of Hong Kong as a 'barren island' upon which Britons had imposed order and modernity. Trea Wiltshire's 1971 coffee-table book, for example, subtitled 'An Impossible Journey through History,' begins with a section entitled 'Barren Island,' and proceeds to chronicle all of the factors, including recurring bad luck and a lack of natural resources, that conspired against Hong Kong's triumph. Noting Lord Palmerston's displeasure at Captain Elliot's taking Hong Kong, 'a barren island with hardly a house upon it', as a poor spoil of the Opium War, she avers simply,

'He was wrong.' Her point is not to criticise Palmerston's lack of foresight, but to highlight it as a reasonable assessment of Hong Kong's prospects: 'one can almost sympathize with Palmerston's pessimism, for failure would have been easier to explain than success'.[47] Wiltshire is not alone. Palmerston's quotation – often with 'barren rock' substituted for 'barren island' – repeatedly features as the foil against which those celebrating British rule in Hong Kong rate its impressiveness.[48]

Hong Kong was not, of course, only a site for serious British accomplishments; it was also a place of masculine leisure, including sport, clubs, and sexuality – the subject of Chapter 3. After Hong Kong's place within the British imagination has been established, Chapter 6 considers the phenomenon – limited though it was – of Chinese Britishness, focusing both on the extent to which British commentators envisioned its possibility and on the extent to which Chinese subjects embraced it. Finally, Chapter 7 examines the discourse surrounding the Handover in 1997, a discourse that wavered between celebration of Britain's achievement and remorse or even bitterness over its potential destruction. First, however, Chapter 1 considers Hong Kong and Britishness within the contexts of postwar decolonisation, the cold war, demographic explosion, and economic miracle – a period in which Hong Kong went from being a quite minor colony to being far and away Britain's most important remaining colony, in fact its last major colony.

Notes

 1 Jim Etherington, *Lewes Bonfire Night* (Seaford: S. B. Publications, 1993), p. 9.
 2 'Wet, Wet, Wet, but It Was Still Superb', *Sussex Express* (7 November 1997), p. 23.
 3 'Tableau Marks Retreat from Hong Kong', *Sussex Express* (7 November 1997), p. 25.
 4 John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
 5 See Mark Roberti, *The Fall of Hong Kong: Britain's Betrayal and China's Triumph* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), Chapter 4; John Flowerdew, *The Final Years of British Hong Kong: The Discourse of Colonial Withdrawal* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), Chapter 3; David Bonavia, *Hong Kong 1997: The Final Settlement* (Hong Kong: *FEER*, 1985), p. 99.
 6 Special Report from Ann Leslie in Hong Kong, *Daily Mail* (28 June 1997), p. 10.
 7 Paul Eastman, 'Howe Breaks Ranks over Colony Party', *Daily Mail* (30 June 1997), p. 21.
 8 Ann Leslie, 'A Tearful Salute to the Last Jewel in the Crown', *Daily Mail* (1 July 1997), p. 1.
 9 Allan Massie, 'The Flag Comes Down but We Can Hold Our Heads High', *Daily Mail* (1 July 1997), p. 8.
10 Robin Bowman, 'Why I'm Staying on in Hong Kong', *Sun* (30 June 1997), p. 6.
11 'The Tasty Chinese Takeaway/So Long, Hong Kong', *Sun* (30 June 1997), pp. 7–8. Oddly, the page 3 girl appeared on page 7, displaced by news that Mike Tyson had bitten off a piece of Evander Holyfield's ear.
12 'Look Back with Pride', *Mirror* (1 July 1997), p. 6. See also Mark Dowdney's pictorial, 'How We Turned Hong Kong … from This to This', *Mirror* (28 June 1997), pp. 22–3.

13 Roger Buckley, *Hong Kong: The Road to 1997* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 76, 79. David Bonavia notes that in the House of Commons December 1984 debate on the Sino-British Joint Declaration, only 8 per cent of MPs bothered to attend. Bonavia, *Hong Kong 1997*, p. 144. According to Bernard Porter, Hong Kong was not unique in this regard; in the 1930s, imperial debates in general failed to attract the presence of very many MPs. Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 269–72.

14 Rhodes College, Oxford, MS Brit. Emp. Si 288, Alexander Grantham, interview by D. J. Crozier, 21 August 1968, p. 12.

15 Robert Bickers, 'The Colony's Shifting Position in the British Informal Empire in China', in Judith M. Brown and Rosemary Foot (eds), *Hong Kong's Transitions, 1842–1997* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp. 33–61 (pp. 39–40). See also Jan Morris, *Hong Kong: Epilogue to an Empire* (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 182 (future references are to the 1997 edition unless stated otherwise); Bonavia, *Hong Kong 1997*, p. 69. Lawrence Kadoorie said of interwar Hong Kong, 'If Shanghai was London then Hong Kong was Hastings.' Quoted in Kevin Rafferty, *City on the Rocks: Hong Kong's Uncertain Future* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 136.

16 David Clayton, *Imperialism Revisited: Political and Economic Relations between Britain and China, 1950–54* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 99.

17 There are, of course, distinguished exceptions, including work by Philippa Levine, Susan Pedersen, Wm. Roger Louis, John Carroll, David Clayton, and Chi-kwan Mark. In a collection of essays published in 1997, the year of the Handover, John Darwin argued that Hong Kong does not fit into the conventional decolonisation narrative, not least because Hong Kong did not achieve independence; John Darwin, 'Hong Kong in British Decolonisation', in Brown and Foot, *Hong Kong's Transitions*, pp. 16–32. Hong Kong is, of course, the subject of an increasingly sophisticated scholarship focusing on the development of its political and civic institutions, its relationship with mainland China, or its emergence as a global city; this scholarship, which has been highly formative in my own understanding of Hong Kong history, is scarcely noticed by historians of Britain and the British Empire.

18 Richard Weight, *Patriots: National Identity in Britain, 1940–2000* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002), pp. 286–7.

19 Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 5.

20 On the interplay between imperial and domestic cultures, see especially John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); John MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture*; Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow: Longman, 2005); Hall, *Civilising Subjects*; Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Catherine Hall and Sonya M. Rose (eds), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For an argument that the influence of empire on metropolitan life has been significantly overstated, see Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*. See also Richard Price, 'One Big Thing: Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture', *Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006): 602–27.

21 Stuart Ward, 'Introduction', in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 1–2.

22 Bill Schwarz, *The White Man's World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939–1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); James Chapman and Nicholas J. Cull, *Projecting Empire: Imperialism and Popular Cinema* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

23 Jordanna Bailkin, *The Afterlife of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

24 Weight, *Patriots*, p. 286.

25 Harold Ingrams, *Hong Kong* (London: HMSO, 1952), p. 43.

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26 CHAS, SI 17, 'Draft Letter to Mrs S. Yuen, Hong Kong', n.d. (1968?). According to the Colonial Secretary, C. B. Burgess, speaking in August 1962, this hostility to Hong Kong was a new development in the late 1950s, after a sympathetic world opinion at the time of the Shek Kip Mei fire in 1953. C. B. Burgess, *Hong Kong's Image: An Address Given to the Rotary Club of Hong Kong by the Colonial Secretary the Honourable C. B. Burgess, C.M.G., O.B.E. on Tuesday, 28th August, 1962* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1962), pp. 7–8.

27 CHAS, SI 17, 'Hong Kong's Public Relations in the UK', 18 February 1969.

28 Nigel Cameron, *Hong Kong: The Cultured Pearl* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. ix, xiv.

29 Dinah Lee, 'The London View: What Does Talk of Greater Democracy Mean Here?', *FEER* (13 March 1981): 64–6.

30 Wm. Roger Louis, 'The Dissolution of the British Empire in the Era of Vietnam', in Wm. Roger Louis, *The Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 557–86 (pp. 585–6). He cites Rhodesia as a counterexample to this general picture. See also Ritchie Ovendale, 'The End of Empire', in Richard English and Michael Kenny (eds), *Rethinking British Decline* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 257–78.

31 Quoted in Catherine R. Schenk, 'The Banking and Financial Impact of the 1967 Riots in Hong Kong', in Robert Bickers and Ray Yep, *May Days in Hong Kong: Emergency and Riot in 1967* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), pp. 105–26 (p. 107).

32 TNA, FCO 40/ 226, A. L. Mayall to Michael Adeane, 6 February 1969.

33 See Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism, 1900–1949* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 170–218. Chi-kwan Mark has argued that Hong Kong was effectively 'decolonised' in the decade after 1957, despite continued British administration; see Chi-kwan Mark, 'Lack of Means or Loss of Will? The United Kingdom and the Decolonization of Hong Kong, 1957–1967', *The International History Review* 31 (March 2009): 45–71.

34 Draft notes for supplementaries, n.d. (1969). TNA, FCO 40/ 226.

35 *Report for the Year 1975* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1976), p. 181; *Hong Kong 1983: A Review of 1982* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1983), p. 238; *Hong Kong 1986: A Review of 1985* (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1986), p. 269.

36 See the BBC radio schedule, available at the British Broadcasting Corporation Written Archives Centre (BBC WAC).

37 LMA, N/C/63/095, leaflet for a missionary pageant; Surrey History Centre, 1587/1/347, talk on holiday in Hong Kong.

38 Stella Martin, *Adventure in Hong Kong* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991).

39 David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 186.

40 William Marsden, *Living in Hong Kong* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1991), p. 13.

41 Nigel Whitely, 'The Plastic Years', *New Statesman & Society* 2 (17 November 1989), p. 40.

42 BBC WAC, N1094, Hong Kong Government Office, Part I, [??] May 1965–21 December 1989, 'Story as attached to the script for 19th May 1965'. See also BBC WAC, N1094, Hong Kong Government Office, Part I [??] May 1965–21 December 1989, B. I. Barlow to O. J. Whitley, 24 June 1965; B. I. Barlow to O. J. Whitley, 24 June and 13 August 1965; and Ronald Boxall (Principal Information Officer) to O. J. Whitley (Chief Assistant to the Director-General, BBC) 12 January 1967.

43 On the British world, see, for example, Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007); Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (eds), *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005); Kent Fedorowich and Andrew S. Thompson (eds), *Empire, Migration and Identity in the British World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Barry Crosbie and Mark Hampton (eds), *The Cultural Construction of the British World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

44 Stuart Ward, *Australia and the British Embrace: The Demise of the Imperial Ideal* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001); Darwin, *The Empire Project*. See also A. James Hammerton and Alistair Thompson, *Ten Pound Poms: A Life History of British Postwar Immigration to Australia* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Simon J. Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922–1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); A. G. Hopkins, 'Rethinking Decolonization', *Past & Present* 200 (2008): 211–47.

45 ANA, A609 552/108/1, H. Sullivan to Assistant Secretary, Department of Commerce and Agriculture, 12 February 1953; Martin Booth collection, 1998/67 Box 6, Penny Forster, 'Christmas, Hong Kong, 1995'.

46 See Mark Hampton, 'Projecting Britishness to Hong Kong: The British Council and Hong Kong House, 1950s–1970s', *Historical Research* 85 (2012): 691–709.

47 Trea Wiltshire, *Hong Kong: An Impossible Journey through History. Hong Kong: 1841–1971* (Hong Kong: Serasia, 1971), pp. 15–17. The phrase 'A barren island' also appears at the beginning of the book's inside jacket flap.

48 For example, it appears in the British Central Office of Information's 1976 twelve-page 'Fact Sheet' on Hong Kong. See Central Office of Information, *Hong Kong* (London: HMSO, 1976), p. 4. Other examples include Nora Clarke, *Living in Hong Kong* (Hove: Wayland, 1980), p. 6; James Kirkup, *Cities of the World: Hong Kong and Macao* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1970), p. 14; Morris, *Hong Kong*, p. 18; 'Outguessing the Cassandras', in 'Hong Kong: A Survey by the *Economist*', *The Economist* (19 October 1968), p. iii. For a discussion of the trope of Hong Kong as a formerly 'barren rock', see C. K. Lau, *Hong Kong's Colonial Legacy: A Hong Kong Chinese's View of the British Heritage* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1997), pp. 187–90.

Epilogue: postcolonial hangovers (2014)

In August 2013, while entering the home stretch of writing this book, I took on a twenty-four-year-old post-graduate student named Peter Law. A native of Hong Kong, he was too young to have strong memories of life under British authority; English was not spoken regularly in his home, and he had never travelled to the United Kingdom. His research topic concerned British rule in early-twentieth-century Shanghai; during his undergraduate studies, he had written a senior thesis on the Raj. Nothing about this profile surprised me; I had begun my own post-graduate studies torn between researching British and French history, even though I had travelled to neither country and had no personal connections to either place. What did surprise me was the intensity of Peter's identification with British culture and history – an identification that threatened to make Sir David Tang's famed Anglophilia seem almost detached by comparison. I began to receive emails signed 'God save the Queen', and to notice British photographs and memorabilia decorating his office desk: images of men in kilts, regimental symbolism, and of course the Queen. At an orientation for new undergraduates, he introduced himself as a 'loyal servant of the Queen' – to the bewilderment of the English exchange student sitting next to him.

There is no doubt that Peter is an outlier – and a rather far one, at that. Yet at the time of writing, seventeen years after the resumption of Chinese sovereignty, it was easy to see the lingering British cultural presence, in ways both superficial and substantive. There remained, of course, a sizeable number of British expatriates and long-term residents in Hong Kong, but the 19,000 Britons in Hong Kong in 2009 paled beside the estimated 50,000 Americans, to say nothing of the much larger number of non-Chinese Asians including Filipinos, Indonesians, Thais, and Indians.[1] Certainly in the context of a city of more than seven million people, the vast majority Chinese, the number of Britons was not the main source of continuing British influence. Rather, the combination of

inertia, the association of colonialism with Hong Kong's 1980s 'golden age', and the relatively cautious approach of the SAR to major changes allowed the British cultural presence to endure, more as a legacy than as a manifestation of ongoing transnational engagement.

It is easy to see the lingering British presence if one looks for it. Despite fears of encroaching mainland political influence – which often seemed to elide with complaints about mainland tourists' crude behaviour and the reshaping of entire neighbourhoods to accommodate their shopping needs – Hong Kong's Government in 2014 remained very much the bureaucratic, rules-oriented body that the British established.[2] The press remained free and lively, though critics pointed to creeping self-censorship as well as financial pressure from Beijing to refrain from criticising PRC policies; there was also speculation that occasional physical attacks on Hong Kong journalists could be traced to Beijing's orders.[3] The transition toward universal suffrage had not, by September 2014, kept pace with popular expectations, as evidenced by student strikes and the beginning of the 'Occupy Central' movement in defiance of PRC restrictions on the electoral system. The independent judiciary remained well established, even if many people assumed its continuation was precarious. Yet paradoxically the single most prominent challenge to the independent judiciary during the SAR's first fifteen years, concerning the case of whether Filipina and Indonesian domestic helpers should be entitled to the right of abode, saw Hong Kong public opinion and the Government's position allied in opposing the verdict of the lower court; before the Court of Final Appeal sided with the Government, it was widely suggested that the Government could appeal over the court's heads to Beijing for a reinterpretation of the Basic Law.[4] Beijing's June 2014 publication of a 'White Paper' articulating that Hong Kong enjoyed its relative autonomy only as a gift from the Chinese Government seemed to many to herald the long-anticipated clampdown on Hong Kong's rights, but clearly nothing quite like the apocalyptic scenarios conjured by Leather, Burdett, and Theroux's Handover novels had transpired one-third of the way through the SAR's fifty-year term. Even the annual vigil in remembrance of the Tiananmen Square incident, which Christine Loh and others had expected to be suppressed after 1997, endured – held, one might add, at a site still called Victoria Park and under the watchful eyes of Queen Victoria's statue.*

This is not to say that fears were misplaced. As an increasingly assertive China threw its weight around the region, contributing to

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* The HKSAR government did not permit the annual vigil in 2020 or 2021, citing COVID-19 restrictions, and as of 2023 it had not resumed.

clashes with Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, even as steady mainland immigration offset Hong Kong's own exceptionally low birthrate, Hong Kong people were understandably nervous about Beijing's intentions to their own territory.[5] Far from exhibiting paranoia about PRC encroachment, one could argue that Hong Kong people's vigilance in asserting their territory's difference had been the very reason for the preservation of Hong Kong's political and economic system after 1997; the back-down by Chief Executive Tung Chee-wah (and implicitly by Beijing) over the proposed 'anti-sedition law' based on Article 23 of the Basic Law, following massive demonstrations on 1 July 2003, was the most important example, but not the only one. While this demonstration centred on political freedoms, the 2012 demonstrations against the adoption of a 'patriotic' school curriculum seemed to be at least as much about Hong Kong people's articulation of cultural difference from mainlanders as it was about the existence of propaganda itself. At the same time, as Leo Goodstadt has argued, such defence of political rights came at the expense of vigorous assertion of social rights; in the absence of a dynamic 'welfare lobby', and with a narrowly elected, executive-led Government beholden to the territory's 'tycoons', no obvious channel existed to address popular discontent concerning spiralling housing costs, the erosion of services, and extreme levels of income inequality. As Goodstadt notes, following budget cuts Chief Executive Donald Tsang complacently denied that Hospital Authority services were inadequate; rather, the elderly exaggerated their medical problems, and long queues at government clinics merely reflected older people's sociability.[6]

Surprisingly, from about 2011 pro-democracy and anti-PRC protests were often accompanied by Hong Kong's colonial-era flag, alongside the contemporary Hong Kong flag that included a bauhinia in the centre of a red field.[7] Yet although this appropriation suggests, if not identification with the former colonial power, at least a nostalgia for a golden age before overcrowding and post-industrial income stagnation, it bears remembering that the Hong Kong people's restricted proposed role in selecting their 2017 Chief Executive would be, by any reasonable standard, far greater than their role in selecting their last Colonial Governor. If Hong Kong people felt betrayed by PRC stall tactics, they could not reasonably say that a British-era democracy had been overturned. If what Stephen Vines called the 'spirit of greater political independence and self-confidence' which the Patten Government facilitated was a British legacy, then so too was the Government's ultimate appointment by a committee outside Hong Kong; nor was Special Branch's spying on dissident political groups at the height of Hong Kong's 'golden age' a compelling reason for democrats to wave the colonial flag.[8] There was more than a little irony, moreover, in

using the colonial flag in support of democracy and 'Hongkongian' identity, especially to the extent that economic grievances blended with political ones; Britain's own democracy had produced, after 2010, an austerity budget featuring social security cutbacks, high university fees, zero-hour contracts, and 'workfare', and had met with major demonstrations in March 2011 with as many 500,000 protestors taking to London's streets.[9] At the same time, while Hong Kong enjoyed some of the world's most modern infrastructure, and its MTR Corporation had even been contracted to run a London overground rail line, British economics journalists would claim, in 2012, that the UK was a mere two years away from having a 'third world economy'.[10]

Other British legacies may be more superficial, but remained part of the local cultural identity. The Hong Kong Sevens rugby tournament was approaching its fortieth anniversary, maintaining the city's links to British sport, as well as an occasion for laddish revelry; the police helpfully warned in 2014 that punters were vulnerable to 'powerfully built women who prey on drinkers'.[11] Eventually, perhaps, colonial-era currency notes would disappear from circulation; as of 2014 it was not uncommon to see notes still bearing the Queen's image. Some of the most important streets in Hong Kong and Kowloon continued to recall the colonial era – Queen's Road, Nathan Road, Hennessy Road, Salisbury Road – though as one western journalist pointed out when Occupy Central began in late September 2014, the centrally located 'Hong Kong barracks of the People's Liberation Army', formerly called the Prince of Wales Building, was 'one colonial-era name that the new rulers did erase after the handover'.[12] The 2007 demolition of the Queen's Ferry Pier, 'a traditional landing point for British Governors and royalty when they arrived on Hong Kong Island during Colonial times', and its replacement by Pier Number Nine, occurred only after protests, hunger strikes, and court challenges.[13] When signing a lease for a flat in 2007, I was surprised that my realtor used a colonial-era boilerplate form with the Queen's name at the top of the page. When buying my first Hong Kong flat in 2009, I had to sign both English and Chinese versions; both said – though I had to trust my wife's reading of one of them – that in the event of any discrepancies between the two versions, the English one would prevail.

Earlier chapters have already suggested that western cultural imports into Hong Kong in the postwar era went well beyond strictly British influences. The founding of CUHK owed at least as much to American influences as British ones, and American television and film imports often crowded out their British counterparts, even during the colonial era. In the second decade of the SAR's existence, even the university system increasingly drew on American or 'international'

standards rather than strictly British ones, most symbolically in the 2012 implementation of a four-year curriculum including a significant core curriculum, replacing the three-year discipline-dominated course of study; at the same time, the British cult of outcomes-based approaches that had overtaken Hong Kong was increasingly prevalent in the United States, at least outside elite private universities.[14] British iconography in Hong Kong was equally swallowed up within wider global forms. Sir David Tang has referred to the Union Flag as Britain's most important symbol; in post-Handover Hong Kong, though, it has become one brand among many. The young girl that I saw on the MTR, with Union Flag toenail polish juxtaposed with shades and a tee-shirt reading 'Black is my colour and my attitude', sat next to a boy whose own tee-shirt advertised the US Army. Nor did western culture have a monopoly on Hong Kong's global engagement. For example, as cultural theorist Meaghan Morris noted in 2006, Hong Kong students were at least as engaged with Korean and Japanese cultures as western ones.[15]

In Britain, Hong Kong remained, as it had for much of the twentieth century, more often on the margins than at the centre of the public mind. The occasional novel, such as John Lanchester's *Fragrant Harbour* (2002) or Jane Gardam's *Old Filth* (2006), reminded at least some readers of Britain's history with Hong Kong. As we have seen, though, much of the British cultural engagement with Hong Kong had long since ceased to be distinctly 'British', well before the Handover. Even if newspapers routinely included the obligatory phrase 'the former British colony' in most stories about Hong Kong, it was not uncommon for commentators to treat the territory less as a British legacy than as a *sui generis* global city. For example, even in 1997, James Dale Davidson and Lord William Rees-Mogg suggested Hong Kong as a 'mental model of the kind of jurisdiction that we expect to see flourish in the Information Age' – a low-tax, non-democratic home in which the post-national 'sovereign individual' could flourish.[16] Davidson and Rees-Mogg referred to the first tier of global elites, but a similar point could be made about the professional and managerial class. One could still see greying (or grey) Britons, colonial hold-overs, frequenting Wanchai's Old China Hand and other pubs, or waxing nostalgic in the Hong Kong Club, but one got the strong sense that the typical short-term British expatriate's connection to Hong Kong was not particularly greater than that of other English-speaking expatriates. As Caroline Knowles and Douglas Harper have written of one type of post-Handover British expatriate, 'Those who see Hong Kong as a high-status job locale do equally well elsewhere. They do not necessarily have a special connection with Hong Kong. Specific places don't matter so much in migrant calculations and connections. The mobile can always, well, move.'[17]

Yet one can argue that Hong Kong's position as a global city is itself an enduring British legacy. Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson have demonstrated that the British Empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries facilitated and grew out of British business, social, and professional networks, migrations, and material cultures that collectively helped to fashion a global culture.[18] Gregory Barton argues that metropolitan cultural forms constituted an informal empire that coopted elites both within Britain's formal Empire and outside it, an 'empire' in which British influence was ultimately superseded by American. The result, Barton argues, is that 'there is one world culture and this one world culture is Western'. He points to the global hegemony of technocratic elites, the widespread ideal of parliamentary government, mixed economies, the colonisation by western images of the 'mental landscape of nearly the entire global village'.[19] Whatever the more specific variations – local dialects and food cultures, for example – it is not a stretch to locate Hong Kong within Barton's model of the 'one world culture'.

John Carroll entitled his book about the relationships between Hong Kong's colonial and Chinese elites in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries *The Edge of Empires*; Hong Kong existed at the intersection between a global British Empire and a dying Qing agrarian empire. Carroll's title could perhaps extend to contemporary Hong Kong. Barton, in his elucidation of the characteristics of the 'one world culture', makes a telling qualification, in asking 'Why, except for a Western and Marxist bureaucracy in China, is parliamentary government the dominant ideal almost everywhere?'.[20] The pressing question is whether Barton's caveat highlights merely a minor variation in China's broader absorption into a global culture, in which a Chinese adoption of markets, the penchant for studying at western universities, and even western forms of romantic relationships are increasingly prominent. In this scenario, China and the United States could struggle over their countries' relative positions within the 'one world culture', much as Britain and the United States did in the mid-twentieth century. An alternative scenario posits the Chinese form of government not as a mere caveat, but as the centrepiece of an alternative empire: one in which China's emergence as the world's most important creditor nation, global projection of 'soft power' as well as hard, infrastructure projects in Africa, and securing of food and mineral supplies around the world raise the prospects of an entirely different model of statist capitalism that can at best peacefully coexist with Barton's 'one world culture'.[21] In this alternative vision, Hong Kong's place at the 'edge of empires' would suggest that political unrest of 2014 will not be the final confrontation.