

**To What Extent Was British Colonial Policy in Hong Kong explicitly  
Anti-Communist during the Cold War?**

An investigation of different historian viewpoints regarding the nature of British Colonial  
Policy from 1950-75

**May 2018**

**Word Count: 3997**

**Personal Code: gbk981**

## List of Abbreviations

CCP	Chinese Communist Party
GMD	Guo Ming Dang - Chinese Nationalist Party
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KPA	Korean People's Army
NSC	National Security Council
PRC	People's Republic of China
R&R	Rest and Recreation services
SCMP	South China Morning Post
TAC	Transport Advisory Committee
UN	United Nations
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union)
WW2	The Second World War

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## Introduction

The history and politics of Hong Kong's policies have been heavily influenced by both British and Chinese policy ever since it was ceded to Britain in the First Opium War 1840-42<sup>1</sup>. Hong Kong's early colonial history would suggest that the colony retained a strictly anti-communist political stance: the signing of the Second Convention in Peking on June 1898 turned the British extension of Hong Kong into a 99-year lease<sup>2</sup>. During the fall of the Qing in 1911, the city served mainly as a trading port between China, UK and USA<sup>3</sup> until WW2. However, many in Hong Kong still have sentiments from the events in the Cold War conflict in the 1950s, especially the Korean War and the Vietnam War, which significantly affect socio-political attitudes in modern Hong Kong. While most policies implemented then only lasted until the complete establishment of Sino-British Relations in 1972<sup>4</sup>, the political implications of these policies served as a backbone for Hong Kong's government system after the 1997 Hong Kong Handover. Thus, in order to fully understand Hong Kong's political stance amongst the government and the people today, it is imperative to investigate the degree in which Hong Kong policy was anti-communist during the Cold War.

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Yui-Sang Tsang, *A modern history of Hong Kong* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Chi-Kwan Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War: Anglo-American relations 1949-1957* (Oxford: Clarendon 2004), 127.

## Background

Hong Kong was constantly in the proximity of neighbouring unrest ever since the early twentieth century, but it was only during the Second World War when Hong Kong's strategic importance increased. The fall of Hong Kong to Japan in 1941<sup>5</sup> was humiliating for Britain; it was considered a sign of imperial decline, a sign of vulnerability. Despite the reservations of GMD leader Chiang Kai-shek and US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill declared: "Hong Kong will be eliminated from the British Empire only over my dead body!"<sup>6</sup>. Britain also wished to retain their superpower status in the postcolonial world, despite the dominance of the USA and the USSR and Britain's poor post-WW2 financial status<sup>7</sup>: in an address to the Cabinet in January 1948, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin spoke of organizing a "Western Europe system" where British influence would be "equal [to] that of the USA and the USSR".<sup>8</sup> In this light, Hong Kong's survival as a crown colony was consistent, if not important, to preserving Britain's world power status.

Historian Chi-Kwan Mark argued that Britain also perceived Hong Kong as "too economically valuable to abandon"<sup>9</sup>. He noted the many benefits Hong Kong allowed Britain to enjoy throughout the 1950s: such as a much-needed healthy balance of trade

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<sup>5</sup> Chi Ming Fung, *Reluctant heroes: rickshaw pullers in Hong Kong and Canton, 1874–1954*. (Hong Kong University Press 2005), 130.

<sup>6</sup> Lanxin Xiang, *Recasting the Imperial Far East: Britain and America in China, 1945-1950*. (China: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Judith Brown. *The Twentieth Century, The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume IV*. (Oxford University Press, 1998), 331.

<sup>8</sup> Colonial Policy (48)6, Cabinet 129/23, Public Records Office, January 4, 1948.

<sup>9</sup> Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War*, 21.

<sup>10</sup>, strong support for Britain's currency<sup>11</sup> and contribution to the dollar resource<sup>12</sup>. The financial cost for Britain to hold Hong Kong was also very minimal - in the 1940s, Britain did not have to financially assist Hong Kong aside from a £3million loan for an airport<sup>13</sup>. Britain itself harboured anti-communist policies in the 1940s, evidenced by their 1948 battle against communist insurgency in Malaya<sup>14</sup>. To maintain sovereignty over the valuable entrepôt, British colonial policy should ideally be consistent with Britain's political stance, which would suggest Hong Kong remained anti-communist throughout the Cold War.

It is easy to see why many assume as such, especially when considering the 1946-49 Chinese Civil War. Immediately after WW2, Under-Secretary Thomas Lloyd and opposite number Esler Dening wrote a joint paper, promoting the idea of retroceding the whole city, "but for a new treaty to be signed by which Britain would lease Hong Kong... for a period of 30 years."<sup>15</sup> However, it was never submitted to the cabinet, as the GMD's position deteriorated during the Civil War and put Hong Kong on a low priority<sup>16</sup>. It was during CCP victory in October 1949 when Britain became acutely aware of Hong Kong's vulnerability to China's external attack and internal subversion, which strengthened anti-communism in the Colonial Office. Hong Kong's strategic importance

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Davenport-Hines and Geoffrey Jones (eds.), *British Business in Asia since 1860* (Cambridge, 1989), 215–16.

<sup>11</sup> Catherine R. Schenk, *Britain and the Sterling Area: From Devaluation to Convertibility in the 1950s* (London, 1994), 108.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>13</sup> CO Minute, Colonial Office, July 6th 1961.

<sup>14</sup> Anne Deighton (ed.), *Britain and the First Cold War* (London, 1990), 201–19.

<sup>15</sup> FO 371/53635, 'The Future of Hong Kong', Foreign Office, July 18th 1946.

<sup>16</sup> FO 371/63388, Dening's minutes, *ibid.*, May 10th 1947.

changed from a moderately “capitalist”<sup>17</sup> trade port to being explicitly anti-communist: such as being a listening post on China, controlling communications in the China seas and being geopolitically vital in the containment of communism in Asia<sup>18</sup>. Colonial policy also reinforced Hong Kong garrisons, issued identity cards to residents over age 12, and extended police search powers due to “intolerance of communist activity”<sup>19</sup>.

However, there is evidence to challenge the supposed consistent anti-communist British colonial stance in Hong Kong. Throughout the Cold War, USA made efforts to remain anti-colonialist in principle and avoided identifying too closely with colonial powers<sup>20</sup>. In considering whether the UN should be involved in Hong Kong’s situation in 1949, the US State Department believed that it would be an opportunity for the Communists to gain “wide popular appeal, and would prove embarrassing to this Government...”<sup>21</sup>. Considering the possible clash in ideology and politics with USA, Britain could not rely on US support for Hong Kong’s survival as a crown colony in the early Cold War and would have found it unfavourable to continue explicit anti-communist colonial policy after 1949. In the 1940s, Britain entertained a conciliatory approach in future Sino-British meetings for the sake of preserving their economic interests in Hong Kong: the Sino–Japanese War in 1937 resulted in large British business firms such as

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<sup>17</sup> Tsang, *Modern history of Hong Kong*, 159.

<sup>18</sup> Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Luo Ya, *Zhengzhibu Huiyilu [Memories of the Special Branch]* (Hong Kong, 1996), 94.

<sup>20</sup> David Goldsworthy, ‘Britain and the International Critics of British Colonialism, 1951–56’, *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 29/1 (Mar. 1991), 16.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum from Sprouse to Butterworth, the National Archives, August 8th, 1949.

Butterfield & Swire and Jardine Matheson to relocate to Hong Kong<sup>22</sup>. This implies that Britain's economy is reliant on Hong Kong's future, which meant that Britain itself could suffer from the PRC's protracted appropriation and discriminatory measures -- if Sino-British relations were to remain poor.

This section has not only established Hong Kong's strategic importance in the 1940s, but has also introduced the USA and the PRC as parties significantly involved in shaping British colonial policy. Because of such events in the 1940s, historians such as Richard Deacon, Daniel Kwan, A.N. Khokhlov and Carl Smith are driven to question the explicitness of colonial policy's anti-communist stance and reassess the subsidiary role Hong Kong was later forced to play in the Cold War. These historians pinpoint the Korean and the Vietnam conflicts as the most significant Cold War events that could have changed Hong Kong, as it was then when British colonial rule was considered to face the most challenge.

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<sup>22</sup> Feng Bangyan, *Xianggang Yingzi Caituan [The British Business Groups in Hong Kong]* (Hong Kong, 1996), 136–44.



## Hong Kong in the Korean War

On the 25th June 1950, the Korean People's Army crossed the 38th parallel that was separating North Korea from the South<sup>23</sup>. The subsequent conflict between North and South forces in the Ongjin peninsula led to a superpower confrontation: the Korean War. This surprised many Western and Commonwealth powers, but the response was quick: on the 27th, Truman dispatched the Seventh Fleet to protect the Taiwan Strait, and the US engaged with the KPA in the Battle of Osan only eight days later<sup>24</sup>. The conflict proved to USA and USSR that the Cold War had escalated from being a Western-power state of geopolitical tension to a global one, especially in East Asia.

Anti-communist historian Richard Deacon argues that colonial policy in Hong Kong did have anti-communist elements during the Korean War. In *The Chinese Secret Service*, Deacon refers to the research of William Roger Louis and George Endacott as both rely on government documents and hence can provide a candid insight into the government's inner-workings. Louis notes that colonial policy limited the export of strategic goods from Hong Kong to North Korea as part of USA's economic containment plan in 1950<sup>25</sup>, which prevented military goods flowing to North Korea, the PRC and USSR. The government also placed an oil shipment embargo on China and detained aircraft in Hong Kong in form of the May 1950 Order-In-Council, to which Endacott

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<sup>23</sup> James L Stokesbury, *A short history of the Korean War*. (New York: Quill, 1990), 14.

<sup>24</sup> Andrei A Gromyko, "On American Intervention in Korea, 1950". *Modern History Sourcebook*. (New York: Fordham University. 4 July 1950):

<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1950-gromyko-korea.html>

<sup>25</sup> William Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (eds.), *The 'Special Relationship': Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (Oxford, 1968), 311.

claimed the Chinese made strong protests against<sup>26</sup>. Considering this information, Deacon argued that Britain retained an “unwavering anti-communist side”<sup>27</sup> during the Korean War by taking a structuralist point of view: Britain’s aspired not to succumb to the potential rise of leftism after the Berlin Blockade 1948-49, and hence relied on strong USA support<sup>28</sup>. Thus, it would be unrealistic for Britain to stand aside in the Korean War: not only would it expose a divide in the Anglo-American war front, but it would not guarantee USA aid in defending Hong Kong. In order to protect their sovereignty and power in Hong Kong, Britain seemingly had little choice but to implement anti-communist policies.

However, it is questionable as to whether these policies were explicitly anti-communist. The Order-In-Council did not make China break off negotiations with Britain nor issue long-lasting anti-British propaganda<sup>29</sup>. Sino-British diplomatic relations were only fully established in 1972<sup>30</sup>, as the Korean War resulted in mutual suspicion of each other and inefficient diplomatic meetings. Suspicious but not willing to risk encouraging China annexation of Hong Kong, it is understandable that Britain would be hesitant in enforcing explicitly anti-communist policies. The lack of such consideration in Deacon’s arguments suggests certain limitations in the historians he consults: Deacon refers to Endacott’s *Hong Kong Eclipse* in his work: a book that embraced the colonial school of

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<sup>26</sup> George Beer Endacott, *Hong Kong Eclipse*, (Oxford University Press: 1978), 130.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Deacon, *The Chinese Secret Service* (London, 1989), 344.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 50.

<sup>29</sup> Qiang Zhai, *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949-1958* (Kent State University Press, 1994), 105-7.

<sup>30</sup> Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War*, 127.

thought and thus is biased towards Britain. Deacon's own historical research depended on an informal network of oral informants, and he himself has been sued for falsely accusing people of being Russian spies<sup>31</sup>, which may lead one to question the reliability of his work and potentially invalidate his argument.

It is also important to note that Deacon's argument relies heavily on the assumption that Britain could rely on USA to defend Hong Kong if necessary. However, Mark notes that Anglo-American relationships were weak during the 1950s, largely because of disagreements on how to approach Hong Kong or the PRC. The US military was traditionally a strong advocate of assertive measures towards the PRC, and the January 1951 Fall of Seoul caused growing demands from US military and public for stronger containment<sup>32</sup>, which US President Truman responded by attempting to condemn Beijing and recognise Taiwan as "legitimate" China in the UN. British Prime Minister Clement Attlee opposed this resolution, saying that it would encourage the adoption of embargos or naval blockades against the PRC, which would cause "serious consequences for Hong Kong's economy"<sup>33</sup>. USA was upset over Britain's inclination to appease the PRC over Taiwan for Hong Kong's sake<sup>34</sup>, which resulted in Anglo-American tensions in 1950. With no guarantee that the US would protect Hong Kong in a potential communist attack, Britain colonial policy adapted more communist

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<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Hayek: *A Collaborative Biography Part III, Fraud, Fascism and Free Market Religion*, (Palgrave Macmillan 2015), 10.

<sup>32</sup> Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War*, 105.

<sup>33</sup> Attlee to Truman, Harry S. Truman Library & Museum, January 8, 1951.

[https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/achesonmemos/view.php?documentVersion=both&documentYear=1951&documentid=68-3\\_26](https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/achesonmemos/view.php?documentVersion=both&documentYear=1951&documentid=68-3_26).

<sup>34</sup> Formosa was the name of Taiwan until the late 20th century.

elements to ensure Hong Kong's safety as a crown colony. In this light, Deacon's argument regarding an anti-communist Colonial policy falls short.

Marxist historian Daniel Kwan claimed that colonial policy did not have anti-communist elements. Kwan believed that the strategic importance of Hong Kong made Britain "prioritise Sino-British relations above all"<sup>35</sup>. Britain was concerned that granting facilities in Hong Kong would be regarded by the PRC "as a hostile act"<sup>36</sup>. The wellbeing of Hong Kong was important enough for Britain to adopt a neutral stance in dealing with the PRC: Britain tried to administer Hong Kong territory in the interests of the Chinese immigrants and to prevent it being used "as a base for hostile activities against China"<sup>37</sup>. The British also refrained from directly addressing the issue of Hong Kong's status during the Korean War: in a top secret letter, Hong Kong Governor Black commented on how "official or authorised pronouncement on Hong Kong's future"<sup>38</sup> could impede on Hong Kong's survival as a Crown Colony and a capitalist city, as avoiding the sensitive topic gave the PRC no reason to feel concerned about the city. The confidentiality surrounding this letter made it a reliable source for understanding the government's mindset in the 1950s. It was clear while Britain did not wish to sacrifice Anglo-American relations for Sino-British ones in the Cold War, Hong Kong was not to become a hindrance to the PRC. Thus, Britain was reluctant to implement more anti-communist policies favoured by the US.

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<sup>35</sup> Daniel Y. K. Kwan, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Chinese Labor Movement: A Study of Deng Zhongxia*, (Jackson School Publications in International Studies, 1997), 295.

<sup>36</sup> HK to CO, The National Archives, July 24, 1950.

<sup>37</sup> COS(58)68, Cabinet 131/19, Public Records Office, March 10, 1958.

<sup>38</sup> CO 1030/1300, Governor Black to Hilton Poynton, top secret and personal letter, 30 October 1962.

Despite this, Kwan's arguments are not completely valid. His argument is based on Governor Black's confidential letters - which only reveals the personal thoughts of both officials, not the full picture about colonial policy's political stance. At the time the letter was written, Hong Kong's economy was crumbling under the influx of many Chinese refugees<sup>39</sup>, and a stressed Black may have overestimated the potential threat of China, which would make the letter an inaccurate representation of what the Colonial Office thought about the PRC. In his argument, Kwan also failed to note that Anglo-American differences narrowed due to the Korean war front stabilization in late 1951, evidenced by Churchill's comment on how British and US policy in the East "will be marked by increasing harmony." in 1952.<sup>40</sup> In March 1954, French position began weakening in Indochina, which made USA realise their need for ally support. Though USA was relatively uninterested in Hong Kong, US President Eisenhower was even willing to offer assurances over Hong Kong in order to persuade Churchill to support naval and air intervention<sup>41</sup>. This would have given Britain little reason not to adopt anti-communist colonial policies in Hong Kong.

Even so, Britain's paranoia over Hong Kong suggests the Colonial Office would not dare adopt an anti-communist approach. It is highly likely that Churchill hesitated to support any retaliation against the PRC and continued to recognize Beijing as China's legitimate

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<sup>39</sup> Alan Arthur Walters, James A. Dorn, Steve H. Hanke, Vaclav Klaus. *The Revolution in Development Economics*, (Cato Institute Publishing, 1998), 57.

<sup>40</sup> Churchill's Address to Congress, Section 222, January 17, 1952.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President, Vol. 2: 1952-1969* (London, 1984), 181-2.

government against USA's favour<sup>42</sup> to avoid Hong Kong from being a subject of anti-British hostility in China. This contradicts Churchill's 1952 address to Congress, which suggests that the speech served to convey an image of false confidence to USA and the public, and was not an accurate reflection of what Britain thought about the Hong Kong question. Whatever their assessments of the PRC's intentions, it was clear that Britain wanted to subtly avoid exacerbating difficulties in Sino-British relations, which was done by avoiding the discussion of Hong Kong in diplomatic meetings. The strength of Britain in Hong Kong depended immensely upon their actions in political issues, and it was the safest for both to retain strict impartiality in any Cold War-related issues.

Upon consideration of such perspectives, one can see that British colonial policy on Hong Kong was relatively neutral during the Korean War. Though they were aware of Britain's need for good Anglo-American relations, the Colonial Office was more concerned over Hong Kong. Because the British believed the city's well-being represented the health of the commonwealth and colonial system, the Hong Kong factor dictated Britain's policy and affected Britain's relationship with the PRC and the US. For the sake of her interests and security, Britain wanted to defend Hong Kong without directly going against the PRC, and thus did not undertake an explicitly anti-communist political stance.

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<sup>42</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Never Despair: Winston S. Churchill 1945–1965* (London: Minerva, 1990), 705–6.

## Hong Kong in the Vietnam War

The Vietnam War began in 1955, but it was during 1961 when USA first became directly involved by sending 700 US advisory forces to Vietnam<sup>43</sup> and faced off once again with the Chinese. The severity of war and eventual failure of containment in Vietnam in 1975<sup>44</sup> made the US administration unpopular, causing an international Anti-American movement. Simultaneously, the dire living standards in the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution caused many Chinese to suffer<sup>45</sup>. Many fled from the Vietnam War and the Cultural revolution to Hong Kong, which resulted in the city's population increasing sevenfold<sup>46</sup>.

Scholar Peter Evan Hamilton claims that British Colonial Policy was explicitly anti-communist in the 1960s, mostly due to Hong Kong's increasingly significant role in the US war effort as a "rest and recreation"<sup>47</sup> place. Hamilton refers to newspaper articles in his research: *China Mail* reports US Navy visits in Hong Kong on February 1963, resulting in 200,000 US servicemen visiting annually throughout the late 1960s, which allowed the city to earn USD\$300-400 million per year<sup>48</sup>. Zai Suntang from *SCMP* reports of simulated retail, tailoring, taxis, hotel sectors and transformed employment and districts like Wan Chai and Tsim Sha Tsui as a result of these visits<sup>49</sup>. Such sources

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<sup>43</sup> Patrick Hayes. "Vietnam War Statistics and Facts 1." Vietnam War Statistics and Facts. December 9, 2007. Accessed September 1, 2017. <http://25thaviation.org/facts/id430.htm> .

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Harding, Harry. *China's Second Revolution: Reform after Mao*. (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1987), 56.

<sup>46</sup> He Hui Feng, "Forgotten Stories of the Great Escape to Hong Kong," *South China Morning Post*, January 13, 2013. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1126786/forgotten-stories-huge-escape-hong-kong>.

<sup>47</sup> Peter E. Hamilton, "A Haven for Tortured Souls': Hong Kong in the Vietnam War", *International History Review* 37 (3) (September 2015): 1.

<sup>48</sup> "U.S. carrier's HK visit off." *China Mail*, July 28, 1967, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Zai Suntang, "Shipping in Port," *South China Morning Post*, March 15, 1966.

are valuable to this investigation as they provide not only a record of events, but also reveals a pro-American attitude in Hong Kong during the early 1960s. Through this, Hamilton argues that Hong Kong was able to maintain the morale of US troops, a major issue concerning US military strategists after US President Johnson ordered the escalation of the Vietnam conflict in 1965<sup>50</sup>, a decision unpopular with the public due to prevalent anti-Americanism at the time. Due to Hong Kong's support for the PRC's enemy in the Vietnam War, British colonial policy can be considered anti-communist.

However, in 1966, the PRC reluctantly allowed the visits on condition that no more than 8000 US servicemen can visit Hong Kong at any one time<sup>51</sup>. This not only suggests at the very least, a non-explicit anti-communist stance, if not a neutral stance, but also leads one to question the true significance of the R&R visits to the US war effort as well as the reliability of Hamilton's argument. The newspapers Hamilton uses have political agendas and as such cannot give a balanced view of anti-communism: *China Mail* was anti-communist<sup>52</sup> and may exaggerate some details regarding Hong Kong's contribution to the US war effort. Suntang writes from the eyes of a citizen and considers very little of the complex Sino-British relationship during the Korean and early Vietnam War in her work, hence her article contributes little to the political perspective and is thus of little value to this investigation. Hamilton's failure to consider sources from a pro-Chinese

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<sup>50</sup> "U.S. Involvement in the Vietnam War: the Gulf of Tonkin and Escalation, 1964." Office of the Historian. November 10, 2013. Accessed September 1, 2017.

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/gulf-of-tonkin>.

<sup>51</sup> "Distortion." *China Mail*, September 3, 1965, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Li Gucheng, *Xiānggǎng bào yè bǎinián cāngsāng* [*Hong Kong Newspaper Vicissitudes of the Century*], (Hong Kong: Ming Pao Publications Ltd, 2000), 10.



perspective resulted in an imbalanced evaluation of Hong Kong's contribution to the Vietnam War, thus we cannot say for certain that colonial policy was explicitly anti-communist in the 1960s just by considering Hamilton's research.

Despite this, many historians accept Hamilton's argument when taking into account the Sino-British diplomatic fallout during 1965-68 as a result of the R&R. The PRC formally protested the US naval visits four times between 1965 to 1968, accusing Britain of using Hong Kong as a "base of US aggression"<sup>53</sup> against China and North Vietnam. When the US C-130 Hercules crashed near Kwun Tong in 1965, killing 58 people<sup>54</sup>, China's Foreign Ministry delivered a note a week after to the British chargé, condemning Britain for "endanger[ing]" the safety of Hong Kong residents and the security of China<sup>55</sup>. Britain allowed R&R visits to continue, even in the face of repeated and formal Chinese protests, upon deducing that the protests were merely propaganda stunts designed to counter Khrushchev's denunciation of Mao for tolerating colonialism in Hong Kong and using Hong Kong as a "loophole" in discussions with capitalist powers<sup>56</sup>. This was an indication of Britain's commitment to good Anglo-American relations and the diplomatic fallout between China and Britain. Regardless of Britain's intentions of allowing R&R, the PRC perceived the R&R as anti-communist policy, which gives a degree of validation to Hamilton's argument.

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<sup>53</sup> Foreign Office to Peking, The National Archives. 16 May 1952.

<sup>54</sup> Bill Lee, Eddie Wu and Michael Hahn, "58 FEARED KILLED, U.S. plane crashes in Kowloon: 13 rescued." *China Mail*, August 24, 1965.

<sup>55</sup> "China Protests to Britain: Warning Over U.S. Forces Using Hongkong, ACTIVITIES MUST STOP," *South China Morning Post*, September 2, 1965, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Bruce Lenman and Trevor Anderson. *Chambers Dictionary of World History*. (London: Chambers, 2004), 769.

However, an increase in Hong Kong political activism in April 1966 suggests that British colonial policy would be more inclined to adopt less anti-communist policies after 1966. In his book *Hong Kong's Watershed*, SCMP news editor Gary Cheung attributes the increasing social unrest to two factors: the first being the city's rapidly growing population as a result of mass migration, in which unemployment, low wages and living standards were prevalent despite Hong Kong's economic boom<sup>57</sup>; the second being the R&R visits. Cheung refers to newspaper articles to show that US servicemen presence lead to an increase in taxi confrontations, fights in brothels and discrimination towards Chinese<sup>58</sup>. *Sing Tao* reports a case of two young servicemen stopping the ferry engine after they realised they had boarded the wrong ferry in November 1966, leaving the ferry adrift dangerously near the pier<sup>59</sup>. Though no casualties were caused, *Zheng Wu Bao* and local residents began to refer to the US navy as "gods of plagues" (瘟神).<sup>60</sup> Both newspapers demanded the British to "stop US sailors' dangerous activities" and "protect the residents and their property."<sup>61</sup> In this light, dissatisfaction over British colonial rule was escalated by the R&R visits in combination with persisting poor living and working conditions. Considering the importance of Hong Kong to both Britain in retaining Britain's economy and prestige, as well as Britain's weak post-war economy, it

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<sup>57</sup> Gary Ka-wai Cheung, *Hong Kong's Watershed: The 1967 Riots*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong U.P., 2010), 10-13.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> "今晨尖沙咀北京道, 英美水兵毆鬥, 十餘名被帶返警署去." *Sing Tao* (星島), December 14, 1966.

<sup>60</sup> "美兵失鬧渡輪事件," *Zheng Wu Bao* (正午報), November 29, 1966.

<sup>61</sup> "美兵失鬧渡輪事件," *Zheng Wu Bao* (正午報), November 29, 1966.

seems that it would be in Britain and Hong Kong's best interest if British colonial policy would not adhere to anti-communist policies after 1965.

Contrary to Cheung's research, Britain did exactly the opposite and strengthened its anti-communist stance. In the mid-1960s, Britain did little to quell the social unrest, which resulted in the 1966 Riots and the arson of several British government buildings. In the face of these riots, Governor Trench demanded that Britain should give "no indication that we contemplate withdrawal"<sup>62</sup> and called the British Army and Hong Kong Police into action on April 6th, 1966. 772 tear gas canisters and 62 carbine rounds were fired on over 600 rioters.<sup>63</sup> In March 1967, 174 pro-communist trade unionists in the city, influenced by the Cultural Revolution, began eight months of violent riots against British rule, but were dealt with by British forces<sup>64</sup>. The riots had little impact on the R&R visits: even after Red Guards surrounded the Beijing British Embassy in August 1967<sup>65</sup> and PRC authorities stopped British diplomats in Beijing to leave China<sup>66</sup>, Britain refused to listen and continued to enforce explicitly anti-communist policies by using riot police and enforcing curfews during pro-communist riots<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> FCO 40/55: "Secretary of State's meeting with Sir David Trench", 2 May 1968.

<sup>63</sup> "不願居民強烈反對，天星加價批准", *Ta Kung Po* (大公報), April 7, 1966, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Christine Loh, *Underground Front: The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong*, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 113.

<sup>65</sup> Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War*, 232.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Yoshiko Nakano, *Where There are Asians, There are Rice Cookers: How "National" went Global via Hong Kong*. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 4.

Cheung's failure to realise Britain's commitment to Anglo-American relations could be attributed to the limitations of the sources he consulted: *Zheng Wu Bao* was a pro-communist Hong Kong newspaper, and had close ties with China's communist newspaper *People's Daily*<sup>68</sup>. *Sing Tao* was reportedly under CCP influence during the 1960s<sup>69</sup>. Given the popularity of both papers in Hong Kong, it is possible that China wanted to use this paper to stir more social unrest in Hong Kong in order to trigger people to riot and challenge the British rule, given the PRC's discontent with British rule over the R&R visits. Thus, the paper is biased against Britain and would not give one any reliable evidence on Britain's economic status and strength of Anglo-American relations. Cheung himself was a former journalist in *Sing Tao*<sup>70</sup>, which - given the CCP controversy - may suggest the oppression of pro-British details in his work and will negatively affect the credibility of his argument.

In consideration of these perspectives, one can conclude that Britain had taken a more explicitly anti-communist approach towards those who challenge their rule, but was otherwise relatively tolerant of communism in Hong Kong. Britain did little to purge pro-communists in the government, as they were needed for a smooth transition of power when Hong Kong was eventually handed over to China<sup>71</sup>. Hong Kong Governor

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<sup>68</sup> Sarah Cook, CIMA., *The Long Shadow of Chinese Censorship: How the Communist Party's Media Restrictions Affect News Outlets Around the World*. (Center for International Media Assistance, 2013), 25.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph M. Chan and Francis LF Lee. "Media and Politics in Hong Kong: A Decade After the Handover" *China Perspectives*, no. 2 (2007): 50.

<sup>70</sup> Hong Kong's Watershed: The 1967 Riots by Gary Ka-wai Cheung. Hkupress.org. October 22, 2013. Accessed October 1, 2017.

<http://www.hkupress.org/Common/Reader/Products/ShowProduct.jsp?Pid=1&Version=0&Cid=16&Charse t=iso-8859-1&page=-1&key=9789622090897>.

<sup>71</sup> Tsang, *Modern history of Hong Kong*, 228.

Trench took the perspective that Britain's objective is to negotiate Hong Kong's future "on the best terms obtainable for its people and for our material interests there"<sup>72</sup>.

Capitalist elements were still present in Hong Kong: such as the positive non-intervention policy, a principle that required the Colonial Office and the government to leave the private sector to develop by itself.<sup>73</sup> However, explicit anti-communist policies had taken a back seat, especially when the events during the Vietnam War encouraged the government to restrict its scope to improving physical, economic and social infrastructures.

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<sup>72</sup> FCO 40/55: "Secretary of State's meeting with Sir David Trench", 2 May 1968.

<sup>73</sup> Fu-Lai Tony Yu. *Adaptive Response: Entrepreneurship and Economic Development in Hong Kong*. (Routledge, 1995), 5.

## Conclusion

British colonial policy in Hong Kong and its political direction has been extensively explored. Contrary to popular belief, the essay has come to a conclusion that while British colonial policy in Hong Kong was not communist from 1945-75, its policies are not explicitly anti-communist. The ever-growing economy in Hong Kong can be attributed to the anti-communist economic policies imposed by the British, which would support the Colonial school view that the British had a beneficial influence on the city. However, this essay has identified greater movements during the Cold War that are partially responsible for preventing Hong Kong from being annexed by China. The increasingly significant role of USA in Hong Kong policy throughout major Cold War conflicts was responsible for retaining the strength of Anti-Communist policies and hence the independence of the city throughout the Cold War. This essay has a limited scope which only covers the Korean and the Vietnam conflict, which raises possibilities of further investigation on Hong Kong in the 1980s, which will allow for deeper exploration of the Sino-British discussions that led to the creation of modern Hong Kong.

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