

The Conversion of Hong Kong from a British Colony to a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China: A Selected Bibliography

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As the world watched, at midnight on July 1, 1997 Hong Kong became the first Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Ceded and leased to Britain by the Manchurian government of the Qing Dynasty in the mid-19th century, Hong Kong remained a British colony for 156 years.¹ During its colonial era, the city grew from a fishing village to a world financial center, and though not politically democratic, it was free and capitalist under British rule, with a standard of living relatively higher than that of China. The Chinese motherland, during the same time period, was plagued by wars and revolutions as it was transformed from an empire to a republic, and ultimately a communist country.² With the Communist takeover of China in 1949, Hong Kong and the mainland became two different worlds.

The negotiation between the British and Chinese governments on the future of Hong Kong began in 1982. From the beginning the Chinese government made it clear that its sole interest was in regaining sovereignty over Hong Kong, with the goal of maintaining the city's existing stability and prosperity. To achieve this, the then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping conceived the "one country, two systems" principle. In the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, Beijing promised Hong Kong fifty years of autonomy, allowing the city to maintain its freedoms, its social and economic systems, and its capitalist life-style. The Basic Law of the Hong Kong SAR was enacted and adopted by the Chinese Congress in 1990.

Even after the Basic Law was adopted, there was skepticism among Hong Kong residents about the Chinese government's desire to comply with its promises. Other countries observed with interest, wondering how the new framework (which embeds a capitalist city within a socialist country) would affect Hong Kong and China both politically and economically.

It has been three years since the handover. During this period, there has been much debate on the issue of the right of abode for the mainland-born children of Hong Kong parents. It was particularly controversial when the Beijing government interfered with the decisions made by Hong Kong courts. Political pressure groups continued to criticize China on human rights issues and to push for more democracy in Hong Kong. Simultaneous with but unrelated to the change of ownership, Hong Kong suffered a major economic blow during the Asian financial crisis in the fall of 1997. For two years, the city remained in recession.

This bibliography includes materials published between 1983, when the Sino-British negotiation began, and February 2000, two years after the conversion. Although limited to works in English, it is comprehensive in scope, including materials in various formats and works that represent a range of different political views. World Wide Web resources, though abundant in number, have been intentionally excluded owing to the volatile nature of most Web sites. It would be advisable to use Web search engines for identifying current and updated versions of Web materials.

The bibliography is organized by type of material, and in most cases further subcategorized by date of publication. Citation style follows the sixth edition of Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*.

NOTES

1. Hong Kong Island was ceded to Britain after the first Opium War (1839–1842), which was the beginning of a series of trading wars between China and foreign powers. After the second Opium War (1856–1860), Britain obtained the sovereignty of Kowloon Peninsula south as well. In 1898, taking advantage of a China weakened as a result of her loss in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, Britain further forced the Manchurian government to lease the New Territories (comprising 92 percent of the total land area of modern Hong Kong) for 99 years from July 1, 1898.
2. The Qing Dynasty was overthrown in 1911; the Chinese republic lasted until 1949 when the Communists defeated the Nationalist government during a civil war. China is since then the People's Republic of China. The Nationalist leaders fled to Taiwan and maintain there an independent Republic of China.

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