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## *Tiananmen Square and Objective Possibilities for Hong Kong*

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*City on the Rocks: Hong Kong's Uncertain Future.* By Kevin Rafferty. (New York: Viking, April 1990. Pp. 518. \$21.95 hard.)

*Mouldering Pearl: Hong Kong at the Crossroads.* By Felix Patrikeeff. (United Kingdom: Hodder and Stoughton Paperbacks, 1990. Pp. 249. £4.50 soft.)

*Political Change and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Hong Kong.* By Ian Scott. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989. \$35.00 hard. Pp. 480.)

It is a popular and profitable but perilous time to write books about Hong Kong: popular and profitable because of excitement over the forthcoming 1997 return of the prosperous former British colony to Chinese sovereignty and over the effects of the June 1989 massacre in Beijing's Tiananmen Square; perilous because of the same excitement.

There is room for widely differing views about Hong Kong's prospects; the facts do not speak for themselves when the subject of interest lies in the future (Hong Kong under China) and concerns an experiment with few historical precedents, namely the implementation of China's "one country, two systems" policy which seeks to integrate prosperous capitalist territories (Hong Kong in 1997, Macao in 1999, Taiwan when possible) into China while allowing them to remain capitalist and relatively free. But, despite the absence of scientific certitude about the right answer, one can nonetheless ask whether authors analyze the full range of possibilities, weigh evidence systematically and fairly, answer the arguments of those who disagree with them, offer internally consistent scenarios, and get their facts straight.

The perils of writing under the influence of excitement are suggested by one piece of logic common to most writing on Hong Kong, including the books by Ian Scott (ix) and Felix Patrikeeff (224): the massacre of students in Tiananmen Square demonstrates that the Chinese-British Joint Agreement on Hong Kong is a worthless piece of paper. All three take the logic of this statement to be so self-evident as not to require detailed analysis. But someone else might wonder how the logical structure of such an assertion differs from, for instance: Jack Kennedy's philandering demonstrates that his policy in the Cuban Missile Crisis was erroneous. And not only logical struc-

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ture but historical precedent is a problem: During the Cultural Revolution, China pursued policies that killed millions and deliberately executed at least hundreds of times the numbers killed in Tiananmen Square, but during that same time China carefully protected Hong Kong and was judged by most of the world's most eminent China scholars and diplomats to have an excellent record for honoring international agreements.

One could make a case, then, that China under communism has been quite consistent at three things: brutalizing its dissidents, protecting Hong Kong, and honoring its international agreements. From this it would seem to follow that Tiananmen Square simply demonstrated one aspect of the continuity and reliability of Chinese policy. The burden of proof is on those who believe otherwise. Perhaps this time was different from the past, e.g., because of new leaders, or new policies, or new context, or the particular identity of the victims. But if so the authors should explain how it was different this time. Otherwise, cynical future readers might conclude that it was different this time only in the minds of the authors, or that the deaths of hundreds make a more compelling argument to the authors than the previous deaths of millions only because the hundreds were televised and the millions were not.

Kevin Rafferty's *City on the Rocks* is an excellent in-depth travel guide but fails when it tackles weightier issues. Rafferty breezes through the sights and sounds of Hong Kong, offering in a single chapter views of Hong Kong sport, shopping, the Bottoms Up Bar, religious practices, geomancy, triads, population density, and much else. He then breezes through Hong Kong history and the mandatory sketches of Hong Kong's Horatio Alger stories. There are few misspellings and confusions, but just enough (my tailor, A-Man Hing Cheong, becomes Man Hing Cheong) to remind specialists that this is a foreigner doing once-over-lightly. While the scholar will find these chapters a bit like 20-second sound bytes strung together, the casual reader will be carried along delightfully.

But Rafferty is not up to larger issues. He has no comprehension of financial issues, and since one of Hong Kong's principal roles is to serve as one of the world's great financial centers (a role he documents) this truncates his view of Hong Kong and can seriously mislead the reader. He describes Hong Kong's stock market as having a market capitalization smaller than any in the world except Seoul and Singapore and fewer shares than any other than Milan (253). Actually, Seoul's market cap is much larger than Hong Kong's, and Malaysia, Bangkok, and Jakarta, along with numerous others, are smaller. But his problems go far beyond the factual. He does not understand the importance to Asia, the world's financially most dynamic region, of having a financial capital, the reasons why Hong Kong plays that role, and the difficulty any other country (including Singapore) would have replacing Hong Kong in that role. If he understood the difference between an origination center and a distribution center he would not believe that the rise of Tokyo means the

fall of Hong Kong (253–54), and if he understood financial markets at all he would realize that, regardless of how nationalistic the smaller Asian countries are, they cannot just keep their business to themselves and deprive Hong Kong of a role (255). No doubt Minneapolis would like to keep its business at home, too, but that hasn't killed New York.

Similarly, his comments about political risk to investments in Hong Kong “under the sway of a communist regime” (257) are flip rather than analytical. This issue is at the heart of his whole thesis of a “city on the rocks,” and it is an immensely complex one, but he announces his opinions in a few lines with no effort at either substantiation or complexity.

Overarching the travel guide, the jog through history, and the misguided analysis of Hong Kong's role is Rafferty's overall view, which begins and ends with Tiananmen Square. Physically, Rafferty's book begins and ends with commentary on the Tiananmen Square massacre, and Rafferty's whole view of Hong Kong is perceived through that lens. He begins by telling us that, “According to Western sources, 7,000 people were killed,” although he quickly mentions Amnesty International's August 1989 estimate of 1,300. He may be unaware that the most systematic “Western source” eventually concluded that 300 was the most accurate estimate, but the citation of the 7,000 figure as an authoritative diplomatic estimate leaves a bad taste in the scholarly mouth.

Whatever the correct figure, and there are still some debates going on even if those debates never come near 7,000, it is inappropriate to view Hong Kong entirely through this lens. Tiananmen Square was certainly bloody, and it certainly was important to Hong Kong, politicizing the colony and increasing the emigration rate. But, as suggested above, far worse things have happened in China, and Hong Kong has gone on to prosper. As this is written, the Hong Kong stock market has been one of the world's best performers in 1990. Things change, and in Hong Kong things change very fast.

Patrikeeff also writes as a journalist in *Mouldering Pearl*, but his book is very different: part journalism, part personal memoir, and occasional flashes of scholarly insight. Patrikeeff writes well, but disdains the 20-second sound byte approach to writing. He knows a great deal more about Hong Kong than Rafferty; in particular, he has a feel for the struggles of different groups, the reasons for economic success, and the emergence of Hong Kong popular culture. He understands the complexities of PRC-Hong Kong business relationships, portrays them as complex, and has handy anecdotes that cut at the joint (e.g., see p. 190). As a long-time student of Hong Kong, I learned a great deal from reading Patrikeeff, but nothing from Rafferty's much longer book. Patrikeeff has an inquiring mind that repeatedly asks questions and comes up with answers that would never occur to the other authors reviewed here. For instance, he doubts that Hong Kong would prosper under democracy. He sees advantages in the close relationship of government and business and in the continuity of colonial government that would be lost under

democracy (inter alia p. 88). One may agree or disagree, but Patrikeeff provokes thought.

Patrikeeff's book is an exercise in nostalgia. Because of his personal experience, he writes deeply about Hong Kong's past and the groups that have contributed to Hong Kong. His material is fascinating for someone with a basic knowledge of Hong Kong; whereas Rafferty may be more engaging for the tourist. Patrikeeff has a very strong point of view, but unlike the other two authors reviewed here has the ability and the courage to give a very clear statement of contrary opinions (cf. p. 113). Nonetheless he writes from a very personal perspective. He says that in January 1984, when Britain conceded sovereignty over Hong Kong and ruled out a post-1997 administrative presence, "The news came as a profound shock" (8). That has to be the heart speaking, not the head; decolonization has been going on for awhile now.

Patrikeeff provides insight, anecdote, and memoir. He does not provide analysis. He is too emotionally engaged. The sense of British betrayal of Hong Kong overwhelms knowledge of the tides of history. He records every negative thing happening in Hong Kong, including triads, educational dilemmas, and Vietnamese boat people, and virtually nothing positive. The difference between Patrikeeff's excellent mood journalism and analysis can be summed up in one episode. He tells (234) the story of thousands upon thousands of people lining up to apply for Singaporean certificates that conveyed the right to live in Singapore but allowed the applicant to remain in Hong Kong for up to five years before moving to Singapore. That is good and accurate mood journalism. But an analyst predicting Hong Kong's demise would want to know whether people just want an insurance policy or whether they are actually moving to Singapore. An analyst would have noted that this was just the latest move in a long Singaporean campaign to attract Hong Kong talent and that, according to Lee Kwan Yew's 1989 National Day speech, in four years the campaign had only enticed 35 people to move from Hong Kong to Singapore.

Ian Scott is a professor, and his *Political Change and the Crisis of Legitimacy in Hong Kong* has the order and scholarly apparatus one would expect. His historical account of the structural development of the Hong Kong government in response to an increasingly complex society is careful and illuminating. His account of the Sino-British negotiations and their political aftermath is as thorough as can be gleaned from the press and scholarly record. His extensive documentation of these accounts will be useful to scholars for many years.

There is a caveat regarding the account of the negotiations. Scott is of the school of disappointed British expatriates who feel that London betrayed Hong Kong. He is more detailed in his arguments about betrayal than most, and he lists specific things he feels the negotiators should have pushed harder. But he has no clear or persuasive view about what the limits of the

possible were. And, although he lives in Hong Kong and could have interviewed key participants, he appears not to have done so. This is a pity, because the combination of thorough scholarship and detailed interviews would have been extremely valuable. As it is, the combination of vagueness about what was objectively possible, lack of information about what actually was tried, and unreflective expatriate bitterness makes the reader uneasy.

Scott's thesis is that Hong Kong can only be ruled successfully if the government has legitimacy, that it can only have legitimacy if the process of governance incorporates the middle class, and that the middle class can only be incorporated by Western democratic processes. Another way of looking at Scott's thesis is that he believes Hong Kong can only be ruled as if it were a country or a nation, that it cannot be governed as an economic convenience. In his view, "It was an act of presumptive arrogance on the part of the British and Chinese government to assume that they could transfer the people of Hong Kong to communist rule without their consent" (325), and no agreement reached by such a process can be successfully implemented.

Scott's "should" gets in the way of his analysis of what is objectively possible. Hong Kong people would never under any circumstances have voluntarily consented to being turned over to communist rule. But there was no way they were going to avoid Beijing's rule. For an analyst, then, the question becomes, what were the realistic alternatives? Was there any alternative to turning Hong Kong over to China? (Obviously not. The whole world supported China. Not only was Hong Kong militarily indefensible, but also China could destroy it just by turning off the water supply.) Was there any way that Britain could have induced China to negotiate with Hong Kong representatives? (The obvious answer is no, since China held, reasonably enough, that any Hong Kong government was just an expression of British colonial presence, so the burden of proof is on Scott to demonstrate otherwise.) Since the whole world agreed that Hong Kong was part of China, would it have been productive or counterproductive to mobilize the population politically? (The obvious answer is counterproductive, but one can argue the case and one regrets that Scott didn't bother.)

The core of Scott's thesis is that converting Hong Kong to a democracy would have solved the problem. His conviction that it would have done so leads him to outrage: "The emigration of the Hong Kong middle class is the most damning possible indictment of Sino-British policies and of the corporatist strategies of the Hong Kong government" (320). A calmer observer might argue that there was no avoiding the return of Hong Kong to China, and that any such return would have led much of the middle class to seek refuge abroad. Tiananmen Square would have accelerated that process regardless of the degree of democracy in Hong Kong.

That is the essence of the problem with Scott's thesis. But there are layers and layers of further problems. Those who believe in the continuation of the

hitherto successful consultative, corporatist approach point to the disorder that frequently accompanies transitions to democracy and argue that such disorder would doom a transitional Hong Kong under PRC sovereignty. Given South Korea 1960–1961, Thailand 1973–1976, the Philippines 1986–1990, and virtually the whole postcolonial third world, this is not a silly argument, but Scott dismisses this and other arguments as preposterous without seriously engaging them. Scott's building of his own case is systematic and deserving of serious consideration, but he damages himself by dismissing other viewpoints.

Scott has a long passage asserting the necessity of a legislative-led government. This writer finds it difficult to identify a single legislative-led democracy anywhere in the Third World that can be considered an economic success. Without overwhelming economic success, Hong Kong has no *raison d'être* in Chinese eyes and is doomed to be absorbed into a communist system. Perhaps this view of things is wrong, but if so Scott has an obligation to explain why.

Scott asserts that Hong Kong's legitimacy problem has so crippled the government that one must doubt its ability to regulate financial markets and undertake needed infrastructure projects. On the contrary, it has successfully implemented the most far-reaching stock and futures market reforms in its history and has embarked on an infrastructure program centered on the new airport, vastly exceeding any in Hong Kong's previous history.

Scott also has conceptual problems. He builds his whole book around the issue of legitimacy, but he doesn't understand the distinction between legitimacy and effectiveness (or "capacity"). The distinction between the two is fundamental, but both his discussion of legitimacy itself (327) and his definition of a crisis of legitimacy (36–37) show that he muddles the concepts together and doesn't understand why others—some of whom he cites—make a clear distinction. For instance, a crisis of legitimacy occurs under his definition if a government loses its autonomy to another government. This failure of intellectual precision drives his whole conceptual argument and leads to a failure to consider thoroughly the basic issue of whether Hong Kong can be successfully managed as an economic convenience for China and for the world, deriving stability from effective delivery of economic benefits, and from the firm knowledge that the only alternative is instant reversion to communism, in the absence of a widely accepted moral basis—i.e., in the absence of legitimacy as it is generally understood.

There is a good book to be written about what legitimacy means in a colonial context, what it might mean in a subsystem of a larger system, the implications of such analysis for our understanding of the relationships between legitimacy and effectiveness, and other related questions. There is also a good book to be written applying such careful analysis to Hong Kong. Unfortu-

nately Scott hasn't written either of these. Read him for his historical accounts and what can be learned from them (a great deal) of why colonial Hong Kong worked out so well.

What marks the whole post-Tiananmen Square literature on Hong Kong is the substitution of emotion for analysis. Post-1997 Hong Kong may work. It may not. There are good arguments on both sides. But none of these books presents a dispassionate, persuasive, nuanced case, and none gives guidelines that would enable us to tell whether it was working or not.

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