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**HONG KONG AND SINGAPORE AS TESTING GROUNDS
FOR A POST-BREXIT UK FOREIGN POLICY**

Bachelor's thesis


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I hereby declare that I have compiled the thesis independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors have been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at investigating significant adjustments to the foreign policy of the United Kingdom (UK) after the Brexit, exemplifying the process by the data on the UK-Hong Kong and UK-Singapore interactions. In the context of the UK ‘returning’ to the Asia-Pacific region, since it has evidently entered a ‘competition’ with the post-Brexit EU over there, it is worth detecting the country’s foreign policy-associated directions in the aforementioned region of global significance. Predictably, this issue is of interest for media, practitioners and theoreticians who are active in the multi-faceted field of international relations. The claim of the research is as follows: former colonies are primarily used by Britain to test its post-Brexit foreign policy.

Considering this argument, there is a need to address the questions on the actual geo-strategic directions that the UK has adopted to re-design its stance in the Asia-Pacific, and the actual changes that the UK has made in regards of Hong Kong and Singapore after the Brexit? The discussion-bound critical analysis revealed that the Brexit allowed the UK to exercise a range of competitive advantages in a familiar geo-strategic area. At the same time, there is still a remaining question on how effective and beneficial for the UK its diplomatic ‘reincarnation’ is going to be in the long run – the Asia-Pacific of the XXI century is a substantially more nuanced area than it was back in 1973.

Keywords: Brexit, foreign policy, the EU, Hong Kong, Singapore, international relations, legal framework, protests, sanctions, cooperation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDSSU - British Defense Singapore Support Unit

BNO - British national overseas

CBBC - China Britain Business Council

CFSP - Common Foreign and Security Policy

CPC - Communist Party of China

EC - European Communities

EEA - European Economic Area

EEC - European Economic Community

EU - European Union

FPDA - Five Power Defense Arrangements

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

PRC - People's Republic of China

RCEP - Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

UK - The United Kingdom of Great Britain and the Northern Ireland

INTRODUCTION

Britain joined the EU's predecessor, European Economic Community (EEC), in 1973 and was the entity's active Member State until the 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum or the so-called Brexit. Noticeably, since 2014, when an exponentially growing instability in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and nearly all African countries caused the biggest migration crisis since the end of the World War II (WWII). Dimitris Avramopoulos, the European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, claimed that the European Commission "does not care about the political cost of its handling of the migration crisis"¹. Nigel Farage, leader of the British anti-EU United Kingdom Independence Party and co-leader of the Eurosceptic Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group, blamed the EU (in general) and Germany (in particular) for giving "huge incentives for people to come to the European Union by whatever means". There have been claims that the UK is "waking up to what the EU is".² In Britain, the situation pushed for a serious 're-discovery' of the inborn anti-EU sentiments (approximately 69% of the British public supported a limiting immigration³), and the EU-originated common approach – be it in foreign policy or trade – became a major driving factor of British politics, which started being featured by ubiquitous populism, realignment of political parties, destabilisation of the country's territorial integrity, and plenty of questions on the future of the UK's foreign policy.⁴ However, after the Brexit, the UK had to embark on a road of yet another re-discovery, this time it was of the world, searching for familiar 'faces' and trying to make new-old friends.

Leaving aside the multi-disciplinary debate on why 52% of the referendum's participants pushed the UK towards leaving the EU, this paper is to concentrate on the post-Brexit UK's foreign policy, exemplified by the country's inter-relations with Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (Hong Kong) and the Republic of Singapore (Singapore). The context of this research is represented by Britain attempting to

¹ Barigazzi, J. (2015). EU migration chief: Forget the 'political cost'. Retrieved 7 April 2021, from <https://www.politico.eu/article/migration-news-political-europe-cost/>

² UKIP referendum campaign to reach 'real people'. (2015). Retrieved 7 April 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-34155586>

³ Thinking Behind the Numbers: Understanding Public Opinion on Immigration in Britain - Migration Observatory. (2011). Retrieved 1 May 2021, from <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/reports/thinking-behind-the-numbers-understanding-public-opinion-on-immigration-in-britain/>

⁴ Bulmer, S., & Quaglia, L. (2018). The politics and economics of Brexit. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13501763.2018.1467957>

‘return’ to the Asia-Pacific region as a no-longer-EU-Member-State and anticipating some sort of geo-strategic competition with the post-Brexit EU in the same region, let alone contests with China and the United States. Objectively for the practical side of the foreign policy making, there is a legitimate argument to be tested on whether or not a range of previously reliable former colonies are to become/becoming Britain’s prime ‘destinations’ in the context of redesigning the country’s foreign policy of the post-Brexit era.

Indeed, the UK “has been historically relying on its sovereignty as a national idea, and there was the European Union Act in 2011 that locked further transfer of power or competence from the UK to the EU, but also to reaffirm in statute that the sovereignty of British Parliament was kept during membership in the EU”.⁵ Another part of history is associated with the UK’s special ‘attachment’ to the former colonial lands. For example, both Hong Kong and Singapore, which used to be integral parts of the British colonial empire, are currently playing significant roles in the global political economy. ‘Now’ and ‘then’ are empirically fertile platforms for having a comparative observation on the UK’s foreign policy-making process. Central to this analysis are the post-colonial geo-strategic sentiments as a factor, which can be ‘employed’ to achieve a better pay-off when one is now acting alone, without any assistance from the EU.

Keeping in mind the claim to be tested, there is a necessity to address the following set of research questions on the actual directions that Britain has adopted to become more visible, in geo-strategic terms, in the Asia-Pacific region, and those foreign policy-associated changes that the UK has made regarding its interactions with Hong Kong and Singapore in the post-Brexit environment. The paper’s discussion is to reveal that the UK’s ‘walk-away’ from the EU allowed the country to enjoy a range of competitive advantages in a very familiar area of the globe. Case studies, foreign policy agenda setting, legal discourse analysis were used in the methodology of this research as they provide the most accurate information, related to topic of this research, compared to other methods. The structure of the thesis is going to be as follows: in the first part, changes in the UK – Hong Kong and UK – Singapore relations after Brexit will be studied. Past, present, and future relations of the UK and Hong Kong, Singapore were examined. The research shows that there are visible shifts happening in the UK – China relations on the Hong Kong matters and that the cooperation with Singapore increased as the

⁵ Michael Gordon (2016) The UK's Sovereignty Situation: Brexit, Bewilderment and Beyond ... , King's Law Journal, 27:3, 333-343, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09615768.2016.1250465>

UK is looking for new partners outside of the EU. Directions of the new, post-Brexit foreign policies will be looked at while comparing to the pre-Brexit foreign relations. The aims of the foreign policies set by the new government in 2019 will be studied. It will also be researched what steps are already done in order to achieve them. Discussion on the possible strategies of the foreign policies will be held and based on the information gathered during research it will be advised to the UK with what strategies in their foreign policies to proceed and support a credible role of a major international power.

During the compilation of this study numerous problems were faced. One of them was the fact that Brexit happened quite recently and therefore there is limited amount of the academic works that can be referred to regarding the topic of the research. Another one is inability to process and use all the materials available in the research paper as it would overcomplicate the structure of the study and depart from the original topic.

1 CHANGES IN THE UK-HONG KONG AND UK-SINGAPORE RELATIONS AFTER BREXIT

1.1 Past state of the relations during pre-Brexit times (1973-2016)

1.1.1 Past relations with Hong Kong

As Hong Kong was part of the British empire until 1997, the UK left an impressive legacy: “Hong Kong had the rule of law and was using the British common law system, the civil service, economic freedom, and democratization”.⁶ It later returned to China as a Special Administrative District, there are no direct relations between the UK and Hong Kong, but what can be evaluated instead is PRC – UK relations on Hong Kong matters. It is safe to say that relations with China became much more important for the UK since Hong Kong rejoined PRC. At the same time, it became much more challenged due to the state of human rights and freedoms there. Even though PRC has its constitution, it seems like its points are not implemented into the lives of Chinese people. He Weifang referred to the document as a “sleeping beauty”, because it is promising much but delivers little. It is used as a facade, to prove, that there is rule of law and social and political freedoms in China.⁷ Before the transfer, the question of Hong Kong was always appearing in the UK – PRC relations, and thus, when it happened, the UK had high hopes that it will bring ease to the relations between those two states. The month after the return, Robin Cook, the state secretary announced that “the foreign relations of the UK will be focusing on human rights”⁸, that can be considered as a message to China regarding the situation with it there. It also matches the foreign policies of the European Union, which was making the emphasis on the same topic.

Even though the UK would not agree with China on those matters, economic cooperation was very beneficial for it, and for that reason, there was even a concern in the House of Commons in 2000, whether economic gains are influencing the actions of the state regarding human rights critiques. It is also fair to mention, that the UK – PRC relations can be divided into two levels according to the liberal International Relations theory. Those are state players level and non-

⁶ Chan, M. (1997). The Legacy of the British Administration of Hong Kong: A View from Hong Kong. *The China Quarterly*, (151), p 567-582.

⁷ Chiu, J. (2013). China's Constitutional Crisis.

⁸ Breslin, S. (2004). Beyond diplomacy? UK relations with China since 1997. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 6(3), 409-425. <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/people/breslin/research/beyond.pdf>

state players such as NGOs, businesses, people, etc. An example of it can be the China Britain Business Council (CBBC), a platform that is used to help British businesses to enter into the Chinese market and make the process of trading and investing in China easier. It is described as s “a business-led partnership between government and industry”.⁹

And while the non-state level of the relations between states was prospering over the years, the state one has had some major events happening. When the Joint Declaration was signed, it was agreed that Hong Kong will continue to have its legal system and borders, and rights such as freedom of assembly, free speech, and freedom of the press will be protected. At the same time, since 2003, China has been making numerous attempts to violate that agreement and have more control over Hong Kong. For example, those propositions to implement Article 23 in the Basic Law in 2003, “Moral and National Education” course being imposed on all the schools in the city in 2012; Beijing disagreeing to implement universal suffrage that resulted in the Umbrella Movement in 2014, implementation of the extradition law in 2019. The last case is the most serious one, as it would allow the extradition of suspects from Hong Kong to China. The problem is that there is no trust in the Chinese judicial system as there is no rule of law, meaning that some people might be imprisoned just because they're opposed to the communist party of China. The actions of the UK were the following: it says, “... Joint Declaration is under threat because the territory has passed a new law that gives China sweeping new controls over the people of Hong Kong”¹⁰, “constitute(s) not just an erosion but a fundamental breach... [it] threaten(s) the judiciary of Hong Kong”¹¹ – was said by one of the members of the parliament. It was also mentioned about the fact that sanctions can be imposed on China because of those matters. This whole situation made the UK Government concerned about what is happening in Hong Kong nowadays.¹²

At the same time, even though Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region of China, it has its constitution – Basic Law and Article 82 states: "The power of final adjudication of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be vested in the Court of Final Appeal of the Region, which may as required invite judges from other common law jurisdictions to sit on the Court of Final Appeal”, as well as Article 92: “ Judges and other members of the judiciary of the

⁹ Who we are | CBBC. Retrieved 14 April 2021, from <https://www.cbcc.org/who-we-are>

¹⁰ Giles, C. (2020). Why are UK and China relations getting worse?. Retrieved 12 April 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48868140>

¹¹ Goodman, H. (2019). Hong Kong - Monday 10 June 2019 - Hansard - UK Parliament. Retrieved 18 April 2021, from <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-06-10/debates/2C515D59-45D4-40A4-8C25-E449609AA909/HongKong#contribution-A2ED4B66-BE60-4982-A2E9-ECB42E6EC571>

¹² Brooke-Holland, L. (2019). The UK’s reaction to protests in Hong Kong. Retrieved 14 April 2021, from <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/the-uks-reaction-to-protests-in-hong-kong/>

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be chosen on the basis of their judicial and professional qualities and may be recruited from other common law jurisdictions”.¹³ This allows Hong Kong to invite judges from the UK to work in the Court of Final Appeal, which is practiced quite regularly. Articles 99, 100 and 101 of the Basic Law allow the hiring of British citizens for the civil service posts except for policy-decision making posts. The UK is also regular semi-annual reports on Hong Kong to the UK parliament. Both, the UK and Hong Kong SAR are represented with special bodies in each country to continue cooperation. The facts stated above show that the UK and Hong Kong still keep close connections with each other, and they continue to collaborate.

Hong Kong is also an important trading partner for the UK. It is taking 11th place in terms of volume of the trade that is equal to \$10.6 billion or 2.6% of the whole export.¹⁴

1.1.2 Past relations with Singapore

When it comes to Singapore, another ex-part of the British colonial empire, the relations are different here because it is a sovereign state and that it has chosen a democratic way of development almost since the time that it gained its independence.

Both states are connected in terms of trade, investment, culture, language, history, and people-to-people links. They’ve been cooperating in terms of security through Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA). “What originally started as air defense of Malaysian peninsular and Singapore in 1971 turned into an organization that is occupied with asymmetric threats, maritime security issues, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief.”¹⁵ The UK has a defense attaché in Singapore and a logistics supply depot - the British Defense Singapore Support Unit (BDSSU). When it comes to trade – Singapore is the biggest trading partner in Southeast Asia. Approximately two-thirds of UK exports to this region are coming to Singapore. At the same time, the UK is the 4th biggest investor in Singapore.¹⁶ It makes both states important economic partners. There were also numerous state representative visits, such as the visit of the President of Singapore to the UK. Tony Tan, now ex-president, was hosted by the Queen of the UK,

¹³ Basic Law - Basic Law - Chapter IV (EN). Retrieved 12 April 2021, from <https://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/basiclaw/chapter4.html>

¹⁴ Workman, D. United Kingdom’s Top Trading Partners. Retrieved 12 April 2021, from <https://www.worldstopexports.com/united-kingdoms-top-import-partners/>

¹⁵ Thayer, C. (2007). The Five Power Defence Arrangements: The Quiet Achiever. *Security Challenges*, 3(1), 79-96. Retrieved April 10, 2021, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26458852>

¹⁶ Country Profile: Singapore. (2011). Retrieved 12 April 2021, from <https://web.archive.org/web/20120309013152/http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/asia-oceania/singapore/?profile=tradeInvestment>

Elizabeth II. Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that it was a "showcase our long-standing relations with the UK".¹⁷ It was the first official visit of the head of Singapore to the UK. Besides, there were also other, no less important visits from both sides, such as National Security Advisor, BIS Permanent Secretary, FCO Special Representative for Climate Change, and Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office visiting Singapore.

Singapore has a high commission in London, as well as the United Kingdom, which has a high commission representing it in Singapore.

1.2 Current relations (2016-nowadays)

Most of the time, since the UK and the EU signed The Withdrawal Agreement on 1 February 2020, the UK has spent in the transition period, which means that they were not able to change their foreign relations vector much compared to the pre-Brexit times. However, they did not prolong it, and it ended on 31st December 2020. That means that they've already been able to adjust it to meet new realities after Brexit happened. Another thing that happened in 2020 was the Covid-19 outbreak that created new challenges that the international community had to react to. That also led to changes in foreign policies for the UK, the EU, and other international partners. It both affected relations in ways of communication as most meetings transferred from offline to the online format and raised new questions of cooperation to overcome this challenge. When it comes to Hong Kong, there were quite some changes implemented since February 2020. One of them is the introduction of new visa law¹⁸, that would "allow 5.4 million Hong Kong residents, which represents approximately 70% of the population, to receive visas for 5 years to have a right to move and stay in the UK. This would also allow having a right to receive UK citizenship in the future".¹⁹ "As of February 18, already nearly 5,000 Hong Kong citizens have applied to live, work and study in the United Kingdom under a new visa scheme to fleeing China's crackdown in the former colony".²⁰ Boris Johnson said "I am immensely proud that we have brought in this new route for Hong Kong BNOs to live, work and make

¹⁷ YONG, C. (2014). President Tony Tan goes to London ahead of historic state visit to the UK. Retrieved 12 April 2021, from <https://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/president-tony-tan-goes-to-london-ahead-of-historic-state-visit-to-the-uk>

¹⁸ Hong Kong BN(O) visa: UK government launch digital process. (2021). Retrieved 13 April 2021, from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hong-kong-bnovisa-uk-government-launch-digital-process>

¹⁹ Bristow, M. (2021). The Hong Kong migrants fleeing to start new lives in the UK. Retrieved 14 April 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55357495>

²⁰ Nearly 5,000 Hong Kong citizens sign up for new UK visa: The Times. (2021). Retrieved 10 April 2021, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-security-britain-passports-idUSKBN2A10YV>

their home in our country. ... In doing so we have honored our profound ties of history and friendship with the people of Hong Kong, and we have stood up for freedom and autonomy – values both the UK and Hong Kong hold dear.” As a response to that, China said that it will no longer recognize British national overseas (BNO) citizens. “From 31 January, China will no longer recognize the so-called BNO passport as a travel document and ID document, and reserves the right to take further actions,” the foreign ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, told reporters. “The problem is that not all Hongkongers have Chinese passports, even though people with historic familial ties to the mainland are considered Chinese citizens by Beijing. It means that people without Chinese passports would have problems when traveling and when identifying themselves.”²¹ As for now, “the UK expects 300,000 applications for such visas”.²² The Chinese government has accused the UK of "brutal meddling" in its domestic affairs. A spokesman for the Chinese embassy in London said the passports offer meant the UK was breaking its promises, as well as international laws. "The UK government keeps making irresponsible remarks on Hong Kong affairs," ambassador Liu Xiaoming said. "We want to be your friend. We want to be your partner. But if you want to make China a hostile country, you will have to bear the consequences."²³

We can notice rather tense relations between UK and China now, while for the previous 20-30 years the tendencies were towards closer engagement and cooperation. 2015-2017 relations are referred to as the "golden era" as the conservative government was in power. But since the new extradition law was imposed – it changed a lot. It is also connected to the Huawei case and Muslim Uighur human rights violations followed by sanctions on those matters.²⁴

As for now, the UK “considers suspending its extradition treaty with Hong Kong as it is concerned by the new extradition law imposed there in 2019 and they are afraid suspects might end up in China”.²⁵

There were also changes implemented on the 11th of March 2021, by the National People’s Congress to the Hong Kong’s Electoral System. It is going to be the following: the election

²¹ Hale, E. (2021). Hong Kong: China will no longer recognise British national overseas citizens. Retrieved 9 April 2021, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/29/britain-launches-visa-scheme-for-hong-kong-citizens>

²² Bristow, M. (2021). The Hong Kong migrants fleeing to start new lives in the UK. Retrieved 12 April 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-55357495>

²³ Giles, C. (2020). Why are UK and China relations getting worse?. Retrieved 16 April 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48868140>

²⁴ Curtis, J., Lunn, J., & Ward, M. (2020). The UK-China relationship. Retrieved 15 April 2021, from <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9004/>

²⁵ Giles, C. (2020). Why are UK and China relations getting worse?. Retrieved 16 April 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48868140>

committee that votes on Hong Kong's top official, the chief executive, will be expanded from 1,200 to 1,500 members. Candidates for chief executive must be nominated by at least 15 members of each sector in the committee, which will effectively restrict even nominations to pro-Beijing candidates. The election committee will also be given the new task of voting on an unspecified number of legislators. "Hong Kong's Legislative Council will be expanded from 70 to 90 members; the breakdown between members elected by the election committee, those directly elected through geographic constituencies, and those elected by functional constituencies remains unsettled. A new "candidate qualification review committee" will be set up to vet candidates for chief executive, LegCo seats, and the election committee itself – presumably to ensure they have verified "patriots," given the emphasis on that in the discussion of the changes."²⁶

The Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab made comments on that matter: "Beijing's decision to impose radical changes to restrict participation in Hong Kong's electoral system constitutes a further clear breach of the legally binding Sino-British Joint Declaration". "This is part of a pattern designed to harass and stifle all voices critical of China's policies and is the third breach of the Joint Declaration in less than nine months". "The Chinese authorities' continued action means I must now report that the UK considers Beijing to be in a state of ongoing non-compliance with the Joint Declaration - a demonstration of the growing gulf between Beijing's promises and its actions". "The UK will continue to stand up for the people of Hong Kong. China must act in accordance with its legal obligations and respect fundamental rights and freedoms in Hong Kong."²⁷

The UK has made it clear, that even though UK – China relations are not at the best point now, they are not interested in the complete breakdown, but a re-set, as it is the second-largest economy in the world and an important partner in terms of trade, investment, innovation, and nuclear energy. "We want a modern and mature relationship with China based on mutual respect where we can speak frankly when we disagree, but also work side-by-side on the issues where our interests converge." – said the Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport, Oliver Dowden. The Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, spoke to Chinese State Councilor and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, reiterating that the UK will work to maintain positive,

²⁶ Tiezzi, S. (2021). China Remakes Hong Kong's Electoral System. Retrieved 17 April 2021, from <https://thediplomat.com/2021/03/china-remakes-hong-kongs-electoral-system/>

²⁷ The UK Foreign Affairs. (2021). Radical changes to Hong Kong's electoral system: Foreign Secretary's statement. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-radical-changes-to-hong-kongs-electoral-system>

constructive engagement with the Chinese Government and that both he and the Prime Minister were committed to co-operating with Beijing on shared and urgent challenges. He stressed the importance of China rebuilding trust with the international community by living up to its international responsibilities. The Foreign Secretary said that “the UK would be watching the Hong Kong Legislative Council elections in September closely, and urged China to uphold its international human rights obligations in Xinjiang in the face of credible evidence of egregious human rights violations against Uyghur Muslims. The Foreign Ministers agreed that there are wide-ranging opportunities, from increasing trade to tackling climate change where the two countries can work productively and constructively together.”²⁸

When it comes to Singapore, there was an agreement signed on the 4th of March 2021 between the UK and Singapore to help economic recovery from the Covid-19 outbreak, that happened in 2020. It was done to state one more time that “Singapore and the United Kingdom are like-minded, innovative, and forward-looking partners. They restated their commitment, under the “SG-UK Partnership for the Future”, to expand their cooperation for the benefit of mutual prosperity and security. They noted shared determination to work together to secure a clean, resilient, and inclusive recovery at home and internationally from COVID-19 and future global crises. The agreement is focusing on the economy and trade, climate and sustainability, technology, knowledge and education, security and resilience.”²⁹

The UK also signed a free trade agreement with Singapore in December 2020.³⁰ It is on trade in goods - including provisions on preferential tariffs, rules of origin, and sanitary and phytosanitary measures, trade in services, intellectual property, including geographical indications, and government procurement. The reason for it was to sign it separately from the EU, which did it in 2018, so the free trade agreement will continue to stay in force after the Brexit happened.

1.3 Future relations

²⁸ Curtis, J., Lunn, J., & Ward, M. (2020). The UK-China relationship. Retrieved 15 April 2021, from <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9004/>

²⁹ The UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. (2021). Singapore-UK joint statement 2021: a partnership for the future.

³⁰ The UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. (2021). Free Trade Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Singapore.

As Hong Kong is a part of China now, so there are no UK – Hong Kong relations, but UK – China relations on the matter of Hong Kong. Prime Minister Boris Johnson talks of a “calibrated” China policy that combines toughness in particular areas with continued engagement in others. For that reason, it is expected to see a rise of anti-Beijing activism regarding migration of Hongkongers to the United Kingdom in large numbers. In result, Chinese investments in UK nuclear power are unlikely to proceed as planned and Beijing’s extraterritorial attempts to suppress dissent in the United Kingdom will intensify. Universities and researchers should expect a push for government-mandated reviews of UK-China research and educational partnerships. Also, it is safe to say that “during the process of developing their bilateral partnership, neither China nor the UK will use major infrastructure investments to reconcile the existing political and ideological divisions.”³¹ However, is still beneficial for both parties to continue cooperation, however “Beijing may use their power and target particular firms or economic sectors to ‘punish’ London, but most bilateral trade will continue as it was before.”³² Regarding the Hong Kong itself, “the UK seeks to expand its provision of legal services for Belt and Road (BRI) projects, it will likely use Hong Kong as a key venue for common law commercial dispute litigation. Again, this is both an opportunity and a vulnerability for the UK. In addition to that, Hong Kong remains economically important – the UK currently exports over US \$10 billion worth of goods to Hong Kong every year, 600 UK companies have a presence in Hong Kong, and its position in the Asia-Pacific gives the UK valuable access to Asian markets.”³³

When it comes to Singapore, the UK will continue to work on the relations between two states as it needs alternative partners from the outside of the EU. Some signs are showing that Britain has been increasingly keen to augment its ties with Southeast Asian economies. For example, in May 2018, “Foreign and Commonwealth Office ministers met with ambassadors of ASEAN states, member of which is Singapore, in London to stress the British commitment to Southeast Asia and forge stronger UK-ASEAN relations.”³⁴ Singapore is also becoming more interesting for the UK as it joined RCEP the biggest trading bloc. Proponents touted RCEP as “the world’s largest trade deal, which will account for a third of the global gross domestic product (GDP)

³¹ Yu, J. (2017). After Brexit: risks and opportunities to EU–China relations. *Global Policy*, 8, 109-114.

³² Oxford Analytica. Future of China-UK engagement lies in Beijing’s hands. Emerald Expert Briefings.

³³ Gaston, S., & Mitter, R. (2020). After the Golden Age: Resetting UK-China Engagement. British Foreign Policy Group.

³⁴ Pitakdumrongkit, K. (2019). The Post-Brexit World: Closer UK-ASEAN Economic Ties?.

and involve almost half the world's population.”³⁵ It means that Singapore will have a chance to economically recover from Covid-19 outbreak faster and the partnership will be even more beneficial to both sides. Overall, the UK-Singapore relations are less likely to become tense as there are no signs for it. Both states will probably continue working in the directions that are already working on, such as trading and investments, security aspects, etc. That means they work on Five Power Defense Arrangements, British Defense Singapore Support Unit, and free trade agreement. It might be followed by more initiatives that are aiming to bring two states closer in terms of economic cooperation. One new addition to this list is going to be cooperation in terms of overcoming the results of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, and there are already some steps taken in that direction in the "SG-UK Partnership for the Future" program.

2 DIRECTIONS OF THE FOREIGN POLICIES OF POST-BREXIT UK

2.1 Pre-Brexit foreign policies of the UK

Since the UK joined the EC in 1973, its foreign relations became interconnected with the foreign policies of all other member states. All of them were following the same guidelines and were having quite unified opinions on all matters. In this section, we will take a look at what relations used to be since 1973 and until 1 February 2020, when the Withdrawal agreement was signed, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has officially left the European Union.

Foreign policies were “shaped by domestic factors (such as public opinion), globalizing pressures (such as communications technologies), integrative tendencies (especially within European Union the UK was part of) and transnational forces (such as lobbying from NGOs)”³⁶ back then before Brexit happened.

³⁵ Sarma, N. (2020). Free Trade after RCEP: What Next for India?. ORF Issue Brief, (353).

³⁶ Williams, P. (2004). Who's making UK foreign policy?. *International Affairs*, 80(5), 911-929.

General principles of the EU foreign and security policies are presented on the Figure 1 and are aiming to “preserve peace, to strengthen international security, to promote international cooperation and to develop and consolidate democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights & fundamental freedoms”.³⁷ “Member states conducted all but the most limited foreign policies objectives inside an EU context.”³⁸



Figure 1. General Principles of the EU foreign and security policies

At the same time, as they are also keeping themselves connected with various global and regional major powers, key players, not only in diplomatic but also economic terms, thus we cannot expect the EU's foreign politics to be too hard on them as it might affect the member states of the European Union. It can be said that it makes some kind of self-censorship being applied regarding international partners, in the evaluation of their actions and reaction to them. Anyhow, “the post-Cold War foreign policies of the UK were stable and continuous. No matter what party had the majority in the parliament, it was following the same patterns. The UK was one of the cornerstones of an international order built on a neo-liberal approach to economic globalization. EU membership was considered central to Britain’s influence and prosperity (even if further political integration never had deep support). Security policy was grounded in a stable package of NATO membership, close ties to the US, nuclear deterrence and a willingness to conduct military intervention.

³⁷ Foreign and Security Policy | European Union. Retrieved 8 April 2021, from https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/foreign-security-policy_en

³⁸ Manners, I., & Whitman, R. (Eds.) (2000). The foreign policies of European Union member states. Manchester University Press. <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/catalogue/book.asp?id=1204320>

Both main parties accepted that foreign policy had a commercial dimension. Both were willing to sell arms abroad to regimes with dubious domestic records.”³⁹

“The idea that ethical commitments to distant non-citizens should occupy a position within British foreign policy was an element of Labour's foreign policy during the early part of their 1997–2010 tenure. Rather than undermining traditional national interest concerns, one of the defining themes within Labour's foreign policy was that values and national interests were becoming increasingly merged in a globalized world.”⁴⁰

It was like that until 2016 when the results of the referendum opened doors for the UK’s parties to manifest their thoughts on what the foreign policies should look like in future. Two main parties had different opinions on Brexit, so their promises on future foreign relations differed.

2.2 Future of the foreign policies of the UK

The UK in 2017 had “cloudy economic prospects, with a falling pound, higher inflation, weak productivity, squeezed living standards, further spending cuts, and a high and increasing deficit”⁴¹ as a response to the results of the Brexit referendum. On top of that, it was not clear of how the negotiations will go. Up to now, there are numerous scenarios of how the relations between the UK and EU will be set up. However, there are “3 most probable versions: British accession to the European Economic Area (EEA) like in case of Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland; bilateral trade agreement with the EU like Switzerland has with the EU and ‘hard’ exit with the third-country status”.⁴² The future of foreign policies of the UK and the directions it will take depends on which strategy is going to be applied. If the UK becomes a third country to the EU, it will be forced to look for new partners outside of it. Due to the close relations of the UK and EU – it is unlikely there will be no cooperation at all, but anyhow, the focus might change from Europe to other regions like Asia Africa, Oceania or both Americas.

³⁹ Raines, T. (2019). UK General Election 2019: Britain's New Foreign Policy Divide. Retrieved 8 April 2021, from <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/12/uk-general-election-2019-britains-new-foreign-policy-divide>

⁴⁰ Gilmore, J. (2014). The uncertain merger of values and interests in UK foreign policy. *International Affairs*, 90(3), 541-557.

⁴¹ Gamble, A. (2017). British Politics after Brexit. *Political Insight*, 8(1), 4–6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2041905817702715>

⁴² Lehmann, M., & Zetzsche, D. (2016). Brexit and the consequences for commercial and financial relations between the EU and the UK. *Eur. Bus. L. Rev.*, 27, 999. https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?collection=kluwer&handle=hein.kluwer/eblr0027&id=1021&men_tab=srchresults

Brexit also affected the 2019 general election. The Conservative party won a majority and Boris Johnson, and his party “bucked the tendency for incumbent parties to lose rather than gain support”.⁴³ It happened because Conservative party was the one initiating the referendum and working on signing a withdrawal agreement from the EU. Its views on the foreign politics are the following: “pride in Britain’s historical role in the world, making bolster alliances, expanding influence of the UK, economic and commercially driven foreign policy”.⁴⁴ Therefore, there is a clear connection between the results of Brexit, the results of the 2019 general election and the approach the UK will take in its foreign policies.

To continue implementing the idea of the ‘glorious Britain’ the UK “continued E3 cooperation with France and Germany. They focused on security issues in the Middle East, but some have also addressed a host of other issues, including tensions in the South China Sea, democratic transition in Venezuela, and the March 2018 poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal in Salisbury”.⁴⁵

Malcolm Chalmers claimed in 2017 that “the changes in the foreign policies will be dependent on an economic revival that can provide the resources the UK will need to support a credible role as an independent international power”.⁴⁶

From the other side, the UK should re-establish its relations with European states. “It has already begun to influence the behavior of relevant actors before Brexit has even occurred and will continue doing so during the process of negotiating the UK’s withdrawal and future relationship with the EU.”⁴⁷ For that reason it is important not to cut ties completely but continue cooperation as EU and the UK still have a lot connecting them. Three areas of policy in which the UK and the EU are strongly engaged at the global level and will remain engaged post-Brexit. They are “trade and development policy; transatlantic relations and security; and defense policy. It is clear that security and defense policies will remain a key source of challenges in the post-Brexit relations”.⁴⁸

⁴³ Cutts, D., Goodwin, M., Heath, O. and SurrIDGE, P. (2020), Brexit, the 2019 General Election and the Realignment of British Politics. *The Political Quarterly*, 91: 7-23. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12815>

⁴⁴ Raines, T. (2019). UK General Election 2019: Britain's New Foreign Policy Divide. Retrieved 8 April 2021, from <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/12/uk-general-election-2019-britains-new-foreign-policy-divide>

⁴⁵ Brattberg, E. (2020). The E3, the EU, and the post-Brexit diplomatic landscape. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

⁴⁶ Chalmers, M. (2017). UK foreign and security policy after Brexit. *Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies*.

⁴⁷ De Ville, F., & Siles-Brügge, G. (2019). The impact of Brexit on EU policies. *Politics and Governance*, 7(3), 1-6.

⁴⁸ Smith, M. (2019). The European Union and the global arena: In search of post-Brexit roles. *Politics and Governance*, 7(3), 83-92.

2.3 Comparison analysis of the pre-Brexit and post-Brexit foreign affairs

Table 1. Comparison analysis of the pre-Brexit and post-Brexit foreign affairs

Pre-Brexit foreign policies	Post-Brexit foreign policies
neo-liberal approach to economic globalization	pride in Britain's historical role in the world
EU membership was considered central to Britain's influence	making bolster alliances
commercial dimension of the foreign policies	expanding influence of the UK
ethical commitments to distant non-citizen	economic and commercially driven foreign policy
	'Global Britain'

As we can see on the table, majority of the key points of the foreign policies changed after Brexit. If before Brexit the UK saw its vector of development by being part of the European Union, right now it is concentrating on joining other alliances and spreading its influence on all the continents to solidify its position of a global major power. Pride in the historical role the UK had in the world has a neo-imperial reasoning in my opinion, which was not present in the UK before. However, what stayed the same is the neo-liberal approach to economic globalization in the foreign policies. It continued to be important in the nowadays Great Britain and it is one of the ideas that are shaping the foreign relations now. Ethical commitments to distant non-citizens are still present that can be seen on the example of issuing long-term visas to Hongkongers, but it also has an economic reasoning behind it. "Some economists predict a boost of £12 billion to the UK economy due to Hongkongers moving to the UK."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Korski, D. (2021). Hongkongers will enrich the UK - and we must make their transition as smooth as possible - CityAM. Retrieved 7 April 2021, from <https://www.cityam.com/1576640-2/>

3 Discussion

The UK is at the time of change. Its new foreign policy is not fully defined yet and the state is making steps in different directions to see what policies will work and how, to be able to create new strategies for their foreign policies. We can notice the experiments that are happening with the UK policies as they are looking for the new direction. For example, the rise of the neo colonialism in the UK that is represented by the ‘Global Britain’ movement. For British people the peak of the economic development of their country is associated with the colonial times. However, since the WW II, the UK “has been searching for the new identity that would not involve imperialism”.⁵⁰ They were part of the EU, which in the end didn’t satisfy the country, so for that reason Brexit happened. Right now, the UK is back to the process of finding new identity that would work, and due to the previous experiences with being a metropole, it seems like there might be attempts to proceed with the neo-imperialism. Neo-imperialist geoeconomic strategies are essentially deployed by regional powers not only as a way to pursue economic objectives but also to create an “informal” empire. In contrast to traditional geopolitical strategies, it is not so much concerned with enlarging its territorial control, as with pursuing various forms of economic control, shaping the regional economic structure in such a way that makes weaker states dependent on the regional power. The means employed are economic, but the goal is geopolitical—creating neo-imperial relations with weaker states and thus substantially limiting their sovereignty in relation to the regional power’s interests. I believe this might be the strategy that will be applied by the nowadays Great Britain due to ruling party’s views on the foreign politics: “pride in Britain’s historical role in the world, making bolster alliances, expanding influence of the UK, economic and commercially driven foreign policy”.⁵¹ Also, because of the ‘Global Britain’ concept that aims to “renewed commitment to the UK as a force for good in the world and an increased determination to seek multilateral solutions” and “shape the international order of the future”.⁵²

I believe such approach is not going to bring results as it seems outdated to me. Firstly, such partners and ex-colonies of the UK as Singapore are not going to ‘play along’ as they are

⁵⁰ O'Brien, P. (1999). Imperialism and the Rise and Decline of the British Economy, 1688-1989. *New Left Review*, 48-80.

⁵¹ Raines, T. (2019). UK General Election 2019: Britain's New Foreign Policy Divide. Retrieved 8 April 2021, from <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/12/uk-general-election-2019-britains-new-foreign-policy-divide>

⁵² HM Government. (2021). Global Britain in a competitive age.

already strong and independent enough compared to previous times. The UK is no longer perceived as a metropole by ex-colonies. Secondly, “neo-imperialist strategy stem from a competitive strategic frame in which foreign relations are treated as a zero-sum game in which one side’s gain is another’s relative loss. This strategy may deploy economic power as aggressive leverage to extract concessions and pressure neighboring countries in a unilateral pursuit of national interest.

Instead, I would suggest going with liberal institutionalist or hegemony strategies. “They are pursued by regional powers with an essentially cooperative strategic frame, in which the role of mutual gains and benefits in interactions with neighboring countries are highlighted. The focus is instead on the commonality of gains and the reciprocal flow of benefits, whereby the regional power may also take upon itself the role of the provider of public goods to solve or circumvent the collective action problems that may plague the efforts of parties seeking to reap joint gains.

Hegemonic strategies are characterized by a higher degree of self-restraint on the part of the regional power and “softer” forms of domination by way of cooperative institutional arrangements. Liberal institutionalist geoeconomic strategies denote an economy-oriented notion of foreign policy built on the belief that extending interdependence and economic integration is a crucial imperative for all levels of security and prosperity.”⁵³

These approaches seem more liberal to me. I believe that achieving goals set by the UK Parliament in 2019 and overcoming negative effects of Brexit will be more realistic if using one of the strategies mentioned above. In case partner states are treated as equals, the cooperation will be more stable in the long term. Therefore, I would suggest for the UK to consider implementing liberal institutionalist or hegemony geoeconomic strategies to support a credible role of a major international power.

When talking about the prospects of the post-Brexit UK foreign policies regarding Hong Kong and Singapore, I believe it will generally move in the following directions.

⁵³ Wigell, M. (2016). Conceptualizing regional powers’ geoeconomic strategies: neo-imperialism, neo-mercantilism, hegemony, and liberal institutionalism. *Asia Europe Journal*, 14(2), 135-151.

In case of UK – Hong Kong and the UK – China relations, I believe the UK will continue to support the people of Hong Kong and the relations with China are going to continue to stay tense in the nearest future. Even though the UK left the EU, it does not change what its government believes in, and it still shares European values on the importance of human rights and freedoms. Thus, it will continue to condemn China for its numerous attempts to violate the Sino-British Joint Declaration and take away the freedoms of assembly, speech, and freedom of the press that were granted upon transfer back in 1997. China continues to violate the terms of the agreement because of the nature of the power in the state. It is not a democracy, where people from the state administration are getting elected to represent people's ideas better, with human rights having an important place in the system. In fact, it is quite opposite, it is a communist state with a dictatorship of one party – the Communist Party of China (CPC) since 1949, when it won over Kuomintang's Nationalist Government, which was pro-Western, and made its escape to Taiwan. There are very few freedoms available to its citizens compared to people of Hong Kong, that are also considered Chinese by China. It is creating an inconvenient situation for the government of China as this is exposing its citizens to how it could be if there would be no limitations imposed by the dictatorship of the CPC. The actions done by it are understandable – special conditions of Hong Kong are destabilizing the situation in the whole country. Thus, I believe that China will continue to do what it is doing now – changing Hong Kong laws and realities to make it more alike to the rest of China, to make it fit into the country – until the dictatorship of CPC is over or until the SAR status finishes, which is due 2047. In my opinion, CPC will not stop what they are doing now and start following what they agreed on in the Sino-British Joint Declaration out of a sudden. As a result, I am sure the UK is not going to stay silent now and will criticize the actions of China freely. It is also possible that it will impose some sanctions against China and will expand the assistance to the Hongkongers that are escaping the country. As a result, we can expect China to impose even more sanctions than there is now as a reply to the actions of the UK. As relations between the United Kingdom and the people of Hong Kong are going to become better, I believe relations with the administration of Hong Kong will follow the lead of relations with China and not be at the best place until the situation changes there. The administration of Hong Kong will most probably be perceived as a satellite of China, which would decrease its role in the eyes of the government of the United Kingdom. Thus, I believe that official state-to-state relations are going to stay at the low point for quite some more time. The challenges are going to be finding the balance between criticizing the Chinese government for its actions and still trying to preserve relations to be able to work together to continue cooperation of crucial projects and areas. If the UK

government will not be able to do it – it will make post-Brexit times even more complicated as having as a political enemy - the world's second-largest economy is not going to help to finish the transition period smoothly. The UK mentioned many times that it is not aiming to end diplomatic relations with Beijing, and it will do its best to keep relations strong and capable of fulfilling its purpose – assist cooperation.

When it comes to Singapore, as it is considered to be an already developed state, I believe the future of the UK – Singapore foreign affair lays in making economic partnership even stronger. As no conflicting situations are emerging now, I doubt that the relations between states and foreign policies will change drastically any time soon. Both states will probably continue working in the directions that are already working on, such as trading and investments, security aspects, etc. That means they work on Five Power Defense Arrangements, British Defense Singapore Support Unit, and free trade agreement. It might be followed by more initiatives that are aiming to bring two states closer in terms of economic cooperation. One new addition to this list is going to be cooperation in terms of overcoming the results of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, and there are already some steps taken in that direction in the "SG-UK Partnership for the Future" program. In terms of governance cooperation, Singapore is a good example of solidified democratic states with one of the lowest corruption rates (it is 3rd in the world in the Corruption Perception Index)⁵⁴ and high-quality governance practices. So, future cooperation can be done on those matters.

For now, there are no signs of the United Kingdom – Singapore relationships getting worse, there are only trends for making it closer and closer over time. The main challenge, for now, is Covid- 19 pandemic as it is putting many processes on hold or making it harder to cooperate. However, those two countries seem like it is not such a big obstacle for them as they still managed to sign some agreements meanwhile. It might bring quite opposite result – give one more area for countries to cooperate in.

Another challenge can be the RCEP agreement, which was signed on November 15, 2020. “It was signed by 15 Asian countries, with Singapore being one of them, and created a market, that represents approximately 30% of the global market and 30% of the world’s population,

⁵⁴ Corruption Perceptions Index 2020. Retrieved 9 April 2021, from <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/table/sgp>

which will reach 2.2 billion consumers.”⁵⁵ It will be 2 times bigger compared to the US economy. It can be a challenge as it might shift the cooperation priorities of Singapore to the RCEP member states and leave the UK, not in the best place. What is needed from the United Kingdom is to continue working on its attractiveness as a good cooperation partner to keep the interest of Singapore. But what being a member of this trade agreement can do to Singapore is to improve its economic position and make UK – Singapore relations even more beneficial to both parties. I believe that the time will show whether this agreement will become an obstacle in the UK – Singapore relations and further research need to be done on this issue, as for now there is too little data available.

During the times when the United Kingdom was part of the EU, its closest partners were fellow member states. Now, when Brexit happened, EU states and the UK still have good relations with each other, but it is safe to say that "close partners" place became more vacant, thus Singapore can join the list of the 'best friends' of the UK if the actions, discussed previously, are going to be implemented. Another reason for it is that the UK will not have to prioritize fellow member states compared to other states anymore. This, in turn, opens some more space for maneuvers for the United Kingdom and Singapore to become closer.

In the end, I believe in the future of UK – Singapore relations, and that it will help to make both states even stronger than what they are right now. Both states are important strategic partners for each other that share common history and, most importantly, values.

It is interesting to see it as “the UK is in a moment of flux, as it seeks to define its role in the world outside the EU, but also secure its economic future. And engagement with China, the world’s soon-to-be-largest economy, was meant to be a big part of that future”.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ What is the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)? 2020

⁵⁶ Timsit, A. (2021). The Brexification of the UK’s China debate. Retrieved 11 April 2021, from <https://qz.com/1978678/what-to-know-about-uk-china-relations-in-2021/>

CONCLUSION

The aim of the research was to justify changes in the foreign politics of the UK after Brexit on the example of UK-Hong Kong and UK-Singapore relations. During the research it was found that the UK started to use its freedom in deciding on what its foreign policies are going to look like. The past and current relations were analyzed and based on that it was found that the UK-China relations will continue to be tense because of the Hong Kong question and the violations of the Joint Declaration signed by both parties. In case of UK-Singapore relations, there were no threats found and it is expected, that their cooperation will only increase in the future due to the benefits it will give to both parties. When it comes to the general directions of the post-Brexit UK foreign policies, it was found that the UK will concentrate on their partners outside of the EU. The comparison of the pre-Brexit and post-Brexit foreign policies was done to indicate the changes that happened to it. It was advised which geoeconomic strategies could be used to meet the aims set for the future foreign policies of the UK

The novelty of this research is in comparing pre-Brexit and post-Brexit foreign policies of the UK and analyzing what changed in the post-Brexit international relations of the UK regarding Hong Kong and Singapore. This research can be used while creating the plan of what the foreign policies will constitute of in the future to match the needs of the state well.

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