

# China FOCUS



An editorial on China and Hong Kong from the Liberal Democrats Friends of Hong Kong

◆ Empowerment ◆ Justice ◆ Rights

September 2023

## Championing European partnerships LibDems HK at ALDE & European Conferences

In the EU, between war, energy crises, far-right populism and an existential question on enlargement, one policy area has been increasingly discussed: relations with China.

The importance of this discussion is why the first motion debated at the ALDE Congress in May was on China, where sibling parties addressed the the need to balance working with China on global issues like climate change, whilst calling out flagrant human rights breaches, for instance in Hong Kong.

As the UK Intelligence and Security Committee reports on the lack of Chinese policy here at home, the Liberal Democrat's have an opportunity to take control of the political agenda, using ALDE's extensive policy research on Chinese relations, to shape and create strong policy domestically.

**Ulysse Abbate**  
is the LD PPC for  
Eltham &  
Chislehurst



## A hot day but a warm exchange Our HK BNO champions:



### Standing up for the rights of HK BNOs

You wouldn't imagine that the Home Office would be so naïve but to suggest HK dissidents to get passports at the Chinese embassy.

### But that was exactly what happened to Emily!

Fortunately, Emily met up with Baroness Brinton through our local lib dems champions.

Sal helped arranged for a one-on-one meeting with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Migration and Borders (Lords Minister) and we discussed our casework involving human rights & BNOs.

(Story continues on [page 3](#))

## We need your support



- We conduct casework which helps us to draft policies and hold our government to account on promises. See our casework on Emily →
- We hold panel discussions and work across parties to improve the human rights situation in Hong Kong and China.
- We promote liberal democracy values

Please scan the QR code for a membership form.

Enquiries:

[info@friendsofhongkong.org.uk](mailto:info@friendsofhongkong.org.uk) ◆ Working hard for communities

Follow us on social media @LibDemsHK





## Foreign policy isn't about being "posh"

Our party leader, Ed Davey, reminded us all as liberal democrats and progressive liberals, we've got to take the people with us. (The rest is politics 13 September 2022)



Our China Strategy is more than human rights.

*Are goods from forced labour hurting our UK Industrial policy?*

*Is free speech at Universities protected or are academic intimidated?*

*Do we want a brown EV to compete with green Evs? What does it do to job security?*

## Book Review & Recommendation

### The Party and the People by Bruce Dickson



When Bruce Dickson wrote the introduction of his book 'The Party and the People: Chinese Politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', he humbly admitted, "This book was not my idea. I would not have written it were it not for Eric Crahan, then the political science editor at Princeton University Press". Yet I must humbly admit, this is a really good book on explaining how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ran the country, the ideology of the party, and how it interacted with or repressed other stakeholders in the country.

The author clearly said, he wanted to explain one of the core aspects of CCP ideology is being responsive (hence, in his words, responsive to their superior, not accountable to the people), and how they run the country under this principle. As he said, 'much of the research on contemporary Chinese Politics is published in scholarly outlets that are not easily accessible to more general readers'. In this aspect, I think he succeeded. In general, the book is very well balanced in evaluating factionalism and party ideology in the decision-making and personnel appointment processes.

I particularly adore one key idea in chapter 3: the Chinese Communist Party is a fragmented authoritarianism. In his words,

*'The Chinese state is not a unified actor; political authority is fragmented. It is fragmented vertically, in the sense that decisions made at higher levels are not always faithfully implemented at lower levels. Different levels of the political system have different priorities,*

*based on the local context and the interests of local officials.'* (Page 72)  
*'There is little question that policy making is under the control of the CCP, but the CCP is not a unified monolith.'* (Page 97)

It is coincidentally similar to a key point I had been suggesting for some time. In previous articles I argued CCP is a collective of factions. The only difference is, the fragmented authoritarianism suggested by Mr Dickson is something the issue of the institution within China, and the nature of the bureaucratic system; while I would argue the factions within CCP are more about personal interests or the interest of a group of people based on geographical or ideological difference, which reflected their sphere of political influence within CCP.

Another feature I liked about this book is that the author tried to use Western political science terminology to analyse CCP policies and attitudes towards other stakeholders in the country, such as Civil society (the CSI and CSII used in chapter 4) and Religion (chapter 5), but will take into account of the circumstances and historical factors facing China and made a few adjustments to his observations.

This book also covered a very important aspect which could be ignored by other political pundits in the Western world, **how the difference between provinces and cities affected its approach towards civil society**. For example, the provincial governments recognised the role of NGOs: according to Chapter 4, the author compares provinces like Beijing and Yunnan would be more supportive of NGOs for various reasons. Beijing is the capital, and investment from International NGOs would promote China's development; which, in turn, supports the CCP's agenda. Yunnan is economically backwards with few resources 'to meet the unfunded mandates on education, health care and other social welfare policies'. In contrast, regions like Shanghai would be more conservative in its approach to civil society and NGOs since the city relied more on state enterprises and state-led developments. (Page 112)

\*\*We are currently awaiting Fleet upgrade to launch our website, meanwhile, do follow us at various social media: [@LibDemsHK](https://twitter.com/LibDemsHK)



LIBERAL DEMOCRATS  
FRIENDS OF HONG KONG

POLITICAL DEBATE: WHY FOREIGN  
POLICIES MATTER TO US IN LOCAL  
POLITICS?



Nicholas  
Chan

MEDWAY  
LIB DEMS



Ulysse  
Abbate

GREENWICH  
LIB DEMS

27 October 2023

6:30 p.m.

The Lounge, National Liberal Club,  
1 Whitehall Pl, London SW1A 2HE

RSVP here  
(essential)



Larry is a directly elected member of the [FIRC](#) and  
Chair of the Liberal Democrats Friends of Hong Kong

Born in Hong Kong, Larry studied History (Bachelor and Master Degrees) in Chinese University of Hong Kong, and moved to the UK in 2004. He worked in the financial sector since then and specialised in insurance markets in APAC region.

Larry joined the party in 2019 after the Brexit referendum, and have been candidates in the 2018 and 2022 local elections. He is also a frequent contributor to Interlib, the magazine for Liberal International British Group, and published several articles and book reviews on China and Hong Kong affairs.

He has been elected to be FIRC member on 2023, and was elected to be Vice chair of the China subcommittee.





## A Meeting with the Government Minister

Emily, Asylum seekers and the British National (Overseas) visa policy

**Emily and her family just escaped Hong Kong. A Hong Kong protester was just dragged into the Chinese Consulate in Manchester and attacked by consular staff. She had just given birth to her newborn son. She called up the Home Office for a visa; but to her astonishment, she was asked to get a passport from the Chinese Embassy.**

Luckily for Emily, she came into contact with the Liberal Democrats Friends of HK. Working alongside our parliamentary team, **we successfully ratified Home Office guidelines.** Of course, Emily shouldn't have to risk her life attending the Chinese embassy.

As liberals, our goal is to seek positive, liberal consensus. I am glad on policies involving Hong Kong, we can conduct non-partisan productive talks.

Baroness Brinton also secured a one-on-one meeting with Lord Murray which I attended. We submitted a brief, highlighting Immigration Rules changes which can make the system fairer for HongKongers. We also spoke at length about asylum policies for Hong Kong youth, many of who stood at the frontlines of democracy v autocracy. **We were able to do this because our team of legal and policy experts conduct specialised casework every day.**

**The minister and I had a very respectful meeting.** Every party across the benches care passionately for the people of Hong Kong. This was a lesson from Paddy Ashdown. As progressives, we must work across benches to champion human rights and the dignity of every citizen. **The minister also promised to write back on some of the issues which require further investigation.**

Of course, there are also other deep concerns in our immigration system. The conditions at so-called 'Immigration Removal Centres' are appalling and an outright breach of herpes corpus. Asylum seekers are not lawbreakers. They come to our shores to seek safe haven. Yet, far too many are detained without knowing their future, and human rights advocates may not even know they are seeking legal counsel.

The "hostile environment" contributed to contractors who run these detention centres, such as Brook House, a blatant disregard for rights and liberty. I have easier access to clients at prisons who are found guilty by the jury than pro-bono casework at Brook House. Some staff ignored medication and communication needs of detainees. I had a client who was notified of his substantive interview by phone but the only problem is there was no phone signal in his room. He is in detention, the interview was to be conducted at Brook House and it would have been logical for the Home Office to make a direct personal invitation to my client for an interview. Bizarrely, he was deemed to have missed his asylum interview. Of course, there is a legal recourse to rectify this administrative judgement. But it comes at a great bureaucracy and expense to the tax payer, not least unfairness to our legal system.

**I am proud the UK offered sanctuary to the people of Hong Kong. But we cannot pick and choose those who are forced to flee war and persecution.**

We must offer safe, legal routes to sanctuary. Humanitarian visas must be established allowing asylum seekers to travel to the UK safely to proceed with their claims. The broken asylum system should be fixed by establishing a new, dedicated unit to make decisions quickly and fairly.

**It is not only a matter of social justice, but safe, legal routes empower citizens.** More than 160,000 have arrived on the BN(O) visa scheme. 50,000 families came in the 1990s through another scheme secured by our late party leader Paddy Ashdown.

My family gained the UK right of abode in the 1990 scheme. Like many fellow HongKongers, we campaigned in each of our unique ways for human rights in Hong Kong and China.

**We do face hostilities from Chinese intelligence services like the Ministry of State Security or the United Front Work Department.** The CCP intelligence apparatus carries out clandestine spying to Gestapo-like surveillance, building and maintaining support of the CCP through constructed narratives of pseudo-cultures and abductions. **They go beyond the norms practised by other 'spy agencies'.**

Nevertheless, as liberals, we are firm on personal convictions. I believe this is held true in God's own words "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). With his guidance, He provided the light to truth, the wisdom to work with fellow political campaigners regardless of their beliefs or party affiliation and the guidance to fairness.

[Follow Nicholas Chan on Twitter](#) 



**Liberal Democrats Friends of Hong Kong...** @Libdems... · 9h \*\*\*  
LD Friends of HK thank Emily for her sharing.

We're glad with the support & assistance from the Liberal Democrats, Emily is reassured #hongkongers safety is a priority.

◆ Working for you!  
@SalBrinton, @LaylaMoran, FIRC @chalmersdavidn, @nicholas\_yhchan

libdemvoice.org  
Emily's story – why Lib Dems must protect ...  
I could only have ever joined the Liberal Democrats when I came to the UK from ...

**Liberal Democrats work hard every day scrutinising government policies because we believe in a fair deal for everyone – Prosperity and Dignity in Migration.**

(Continued from Page 2)

In the final chapter, the author attempted to answer a significant question raised by academia and political pundits since the 1990s, **Will China become a democracy?** He analysed the hypothesis in political science and concluded that it is very unlikely China will become a democracy since the recipe for making it happen is just not available. The recipe raised refers to accountable governance to people, civil society and freedom of worship. Hence, this is not to say that there cannot be democracy in China, but, I would like to add is that the current system of government is not capable of bringing democracy to the Chinese people.

Like most of the literature on China affairs, unfortunately, this book suffered from a few shortcomings. For example, when he analysed the case of Three Gorges Dam, he ignored the fact that the project was promoted by Li Peng, the former premier who propelled the whole idea and hastened the negotiations. I would propose that it was achieved through personal/factional influence within CCP, not negotiation and compromises among departments and provincial governments.

One key aspect missing from this book is that the author did not analyse the role of Chinese History sufficiently. For example, while he used Chinese 19<sup>th</sup>-century history to explain the nationalist sentiment in China,

he may not realise the whole issue is more deeply rooted than just 19th century history. The role of the Republic of China has been overlooked since the modern nationalist sentiment was first to be shaped in the 1920s and 1930s: the Nationalist Party first formulated and implemented the nationalist sentiment within its Chinese History education curriculum. The CCP just inherited the system and implemented it even further.

**Another notable aspect missing in this book, to my surprise, is the lack of mention of the CCP's United Front Work Department.** It was only inadequately mentioned in Chapter 6 towards analysis of CCP policies on religious organisations. For most political pundits following China affairs, we would know the significance of the **United Front Work Department, particularly how they infiltrated protest groups during the 2014 and 2019 Hong Kong protests, how it supported the developments of pro-establishment parties in Hong Kong before and after 1997 reunification, and its interaction with Nationalist Party in Taiwan.**

Yet, even with these shortcomings, this book can still provide a good overview of how the CCP runs China, and how the CCP responded to different stakeholders in the country with a Top to Down Approach. Therefore I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in China Affairs.



## Arthur Wu, your young international champion



In June, I went to Bogota to attend the IFLRY (youth wing of Liberal International) General Meeting.

Democracy in Hong Kong was an important topic. Our Swedish sister party Centre Party Youth proposed a resolution on Hong Kong democracy, and I proposed an amendment which was adopted. The original motion focuses on the Hong Kong government's latest electoral reform to reduce the directly elected seats. It is undeniable that this reform illustrates the democratic recession in the territory. Even the 'directly elected seats' are appointed candidates in any case. However, my amendment also highlights the major threat that Hong Kong activists faced. HongKongers from all walks of life have been arrested for simply expressing their disapproval of the government. The legislation also prohibits "non-patriots" from

standing as candidates in both local and legislative elections. My amendment acknowledges the necessity to repeal the National Security Law since it is the major obstacle to my fellow compatriots to fight for democracy.

This resolution was passed unanimously by the General Assembly, which shows that we, Liberals throughout the world, share the same commitment to fight for true democracy in Hong Kong. I am also grateful that Young Liberals gave me this opportunity to work with our sister parties around the world to find a common strategy to combat China's repression of my Hong Kong compatriots.

*Arthur Wu is Membership Secretary to the LD Friends of HK. He is also an elected member in the Young Liberals International Committee*



## Strengthening Liberal Democracy

Published and promoted by Nicholas Chan, The Liberal Democrats Friends of Hong Kong (Liberal Democrats) all at Liberal Democrats, 1 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PN. Printed by Solo Press, 9 Stock Rd, Southend-on-Sea SS2 5QF

### Would you support our advocacy on human rights?

We seek to empower citizens both in the UK and abroad. In the past 5 months since the birth of our new Affiliated Organisation (AO), we have held debates on *A China Strategy*, helped in the Local Elections and worked on amendments to the illiberal "Illegal Migration Bill". At every juncture, Liberals enter the arena to empower.

Through asylum casework, we also empower advocates for safe routes! No HK or Ukrainian had ever to travel on small boats. That's because of our liberal, compassionate policies granting safe harbour to all who needed it.

We shall continue our support in justice, promoting a way of life in a liberal democracy.

Last but not least, we support the powerful citizen, not the powerful state. Your contribution means every bit in our work on Empowerment, Justice & Rights.

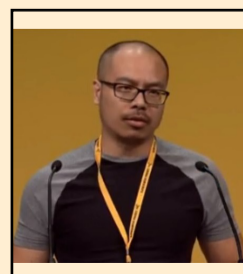
Download our [Membership form \(by clicking\)](#) / scanning the QR code. Thank you for your support!



### The LibDemsHK team is ready to help local parties on HK BNOs



Nicholas Chan  
Twitter: [@nicholas\\_yhchan](#)  
Email: [advocacy@nicholaschan.co.uk](mailto:advocacy@nicholaschan.co.uk)



Larry Ngan  
Twitter: [@LarryNgan1](#)  
Email: [larrynganlibdems@gmail.com](mailto:larrynganlibdems@gmail.com)

Don't hesitate to drop us an email