

The Irony of Thatcher's Political Miscalculation: A Critical Discourse Historiographical
Analysis of British Nationality Classes in Hong Kong

Mr. Ka Hang Wong

PhD Candidate

University of Technology Sydney

Email: kahang.a.wong@student.uts.edu.au

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Paper Abstract

This study conducts a critical discourse analysis of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's political speeches on the future of Hong Kong, tracing the origins of the tiers of British nationality established in the territory. It contrasts Thatcher's rhetoric with the narratives of Prime Minister Boris Johnson to examine shifts in British discourse over time. The analysis highlights racial demarcation and elitist discourses during the Thatcher era, compared to the Johnson administration's focus on shared values. The paper argues that the current British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) scheme represents a significant reversal of historical policy missteps and recommends that the British government revisit the British Nationality Selection Scheme to extend citizenship to individuals who have fought for Hong Kong's freedoms against a totalitarian state's encroachment but remain ineligible for the BN(O) scheme. This is a timely study that addresses a pressing issue, particularly in light of the recent political jailing of forty-five Hong Kong politicians who participated in primaries ahead of the 2020 Legislative Council election.

Keywords: Hong Kong, British National (Overseas), British Nationality Selection Scheme, critical discourse analysis, historiography