China Condemns U.S. and Britain on Hong Kong Democracy

By KEITH BRADSHER
Published: April 27, 2004

HONG KONG, April 27 — China's foreign minister responded angrily today to American and British criticisms of its latest restrictions on democracy here, accusing both countries of holding China to a double standard after ignoring the lack of democracy in Hong Kong during more than a century of British rule.

The strong reaction was the latest sign of a growing assertiveness in China's foreign policy, as Beijing has sought to position itself as a rising diplomatic power in Asia with influence to match its increasing economic might. Historians and politicians here noted that there was some truth to Beijing's complaint of a double standard, with Britain and the United States showing little interest in democracy here except in the 1940's and again in the 1990's.

"Do you think Hong Kong was democratic under British rule?" Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing asked reporters in Shanghai today. "Did the British raise concerns about that? Did the Americans raise concerns? No. Why don't you take a look at this double standard?"

Mr. Li joined other Chinese officials in saying that the running of Hong Kong was an internal concern of China. "Are you clear on that?" he asked. "Hong Kong is China's Hong Kong."

Kong Quan, the spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry, denounced at a news conference in Beijing what he described as foreign interference in China's internal affairs. He pointed out that while London used to appoint governors to rule here, China had allowed a committee of prominent local residents to choose the chief executive, subject to Beijing's approval.

The committee, which has 800 members, is dominated by business executives with large investments on the mainland, and they tend to follow Beijing's wishes. Tung Chee-hwa, the

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