

Conclusion: Intransigence and Change— The Chinese Battle to Secure Sovereignty in a Changing World

Sovereignty, and the extent to which it creates impermeable walls between any given state and other actors in the international system, lies at the core of contemporary China's evolving relationship with the rest of the world. The system-wide interpretations of the main components of sovereignty moved in the direction of boundary transgression starting in the 1970s, and at the time Beijing's stance on the norm was clearly out of step with such developments. However, China's position on sovereignty changed over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. While China's leaders were quite successful at promoting their interests in both integrating and unifying in the 1980s through enacting relatively congruous policies *vis-à-vis* each component of sovereignty, during the post-Tiananmen period Chinese words and actions on separate aspects of the norm diverged.

This final chapter addresses two issues raised by this trend (and the causes underlying it). First, it reconsiders the evolution of China's increasingly divergent approach to sovereignty with reference to the main points of contention within the "new sovereignty" debate. Second, it examines how Beijing's partial compromises on certain components of sovereignty, and refusal to make any concessions on other facets, have created new, mounting difficulties for those who govern China. Although most of these challenges lack the weight to fundamentally alter the dual approach of integrating while unifying, the ongoing, and escalating, conflict across the Taiwan Strait increasingly has the potential to upset such a balancing act.

The Chinese Approach to Sovereignty and the “New Sovereignty” Debate

Although contributors to the “new sovereignty” debate now generally agree that sovereignty’s role in the international system is more variable than it was once conventionally understood to be, they remain divided over two significant facets of the issue of sovereign change. First, they continue to differ over how extensive current change within contemporary international politics may be (Hall 1999; Krasner 2001a, 2001b; Lake 2003; Steven Smith 2001). Second, they do not agree on why states shift or do not shift their position on sovereignty over time (Keohane 1995; Krasner 1999; Wendt 1999). Chapter 2 laid out the reasons why China is a crucial case for this literature; in this section I outline the implications of the recent development of the Chinese approach to sovereignty for both of these points of contention within the “new sovereignty” debate, and in so doing substantiate the claim made in the introduction of this book that China’s stance is now quite consistent with broader trends in international politics.

Limited Sovereign Change

Beijing’s insistence on maintaining sovereignty’s role as an anchor of China’s foreign relations reveals the inaccuracy of the prediction about the incipient demise of the norm that many students of international politics made over the course of the 1990s. Indeed, the Chinese case shows that sovereignty’s role within the international arena remained quite robust during this period. However, the ongoing rearticulation of the Chinese stance on sovereignty during the reform era also belies the argument that the norm’s role in international politics is static. In addition, it contradicts the conventional wisdom in the work of Chinese foreign policy specialists that China’s position is fixed and unyielding. On the contrary, the Chinese approach to sovereignty during the reform era was quite malleable, and the changes that occurred generally contributed to the strengthening of the systemic trends in regard to each of the specific components of the norm outlined in Chapter 1.

During this period the general role of territorial sovereignty within the international system was relatively consistent as the vast majority of states continued to be delimited by clearly defined, demarcated, and defended boundaries, and differences between many neighboring states over the specific location of their shared boundaries remained a persistent source of tension within international politics. However, alongside such continuities, there was a systemic turn away from the use of military force to secure contested territory and a concomitant rise in the use of international legal and political forums to mediate disputes.

During the 1980s and 1990s the Chinese approach to territorial sovereignty clearly paralleled this general shift in the broader international arena. Chapter 3 showed that Beijing's stance remained steadfastly boundary-reinforcing, but the way China's leaders went about attempting to achieve this goal changed considerably. In the 1990s the Chinese relinquished the majority of the expansive territorial claims they had previously made against their main continental neighbors, and, as a result, they were able to successfully conclude talks on the location of virtually all of China's contested land borders. In the one significant case where agreement proved to be elusive, Chinese diplomats worked with their Indian counterparts to greatly reduce tensions in the border region. At sea, the Chinese stance was less flexible, as Beijing worked to strengthen its claim to the South China Sea and escalated its political and military efforts to secure Chinese rights over this region. Yet, since the mid-1990s China's behavior has somewhat softened. Thus, although the Chinese approach to border relations through the late 1970s appeared unusually aggressive, subsequent behavior quickly converged with the more moderate stance on territory taking root within the rest of the international system.

The scope of change in system-wide interpretations of jurisdictional sovereignty during this period was quite limited as the right of sovereign states to maintain the unity of the people who resided within their territorial boundaries remained one of the core organizing tenets of international politics. However, the increasingly close pairing of this facet of sovereignty with the principle of self-determination during the post-World War II era subtly modified its meaning. Moreover, when this coupling extended beyond the colonial context and self-determination gained new prominence through the breakup of several sovereign states—most notably, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia—following the end of the Cold War, even more fundamental questions were raised regarding the sanctity of existing jurisdictional boundaries between states.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s China's leaders and foreign policy analysts were acutely aware of these developments in international politics. Chapter 4 demonstrated that they unrelentingly worked to insure the preeminence of jurisdictional sovereignty within the system by forcefully arguing that self-determination was a right that should only be applied to the unified peoples within already-sovereign states, and, more substantively, in their policies on Tibet, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. During the 1980s, Beijing championed the extension of the right of self-determination for colonized peoples around the world, and domestically experimented with relatively moderate policies. At the end of the 1980s and through the 1990s, the Chinese played a leading role in vocally opposing a liberal application of self-determination norms within international politics. At the same time, China's leaders took decisive steps to clamp

down on dissent in Tibet, orchestrated the handover of sovereignty over Hong Kong (from the British), and took a more combative stance against Taiwan.

Such a resolutely boundary-reinforcing interpretation of jurisdictional sovereignty, combined with a determination to maintain authority over peoples and regions within the state's domain and an unwavering dedication to regaining rights over a place and population considered to lie within the scope of a state's legitimate jurisdictional rights, is relatively commonplace in international politics. The collective weight of such commitments has insured that the jurisdictional facet of sovereignty retains a relatively sacrosanct place within the system.

Thus, while the virulence with which the Chinese have maintained their right to rule over Tibet, Taiwan, and Hong Kong has been at times characterized as "antiquarian" and "Victorian," one is hard pressed to find more than a handful of states that have relinquished their jurisdictional rights when faced with similar challenges. Nonetheless, the depth of resistance to Beijing's rule, and the extensive resources at the disposal of opposition groups in all three regions (but especially, Taiwan), coupled with the crucial importance of all three areas to the central government's basic national security and economic development goals, do set China apart from most other international actors. They make China's jurisdictional struggles, particularly the conflict over Taiwan, among the most prominent and potentially destabilizing in the international system.

While jurisdictional sovereignty was the subject of intense contestation but ultimately limited change in both China and the international system during the 1980s and 1990s, during this period the face of sovereign authority underwent a substantial shift. In international politics, this development began in the late 1960s with the strengthening of the UN's Charter- and treaty-based human rights instruments, and the establishment of a growing number of INGOs dedicated to monitoring human rights conditions around the globe. It gathered momentum over the course of the 1980s and 1990s via a system-wide wave of participation in the system. For example, in 1979, only four main human rights treaties had come into effect, with 267 state ratifications of them. In contrast, in the late 1980s there were 533 parties to the then six major human rights documents. This trend accelerated in the 1990s. A report to the 2003 inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies found that over 80 percent of states had ratified at least four of the main human rights agreements (for a total of 975 of the potential 1,358 possible ratifications) (Methods 2003, also see Bayefsky 2001). As noted in Chapter 1, these developments did not result in system-wide agreement on the specific content of human rights, or the best manner to assure their protection. Moreover, it is also clear that the participation of any given state in the international human

rights system should not be assumed to correlate with improvements in its human rights record. However, such caveats aside, the rise of such a regime has led to a system-wide weakening of the principle of non-interference, the central tenet of the authority component of sovereignty.

At the end of the 1970s, China, perhaps more than any other state, had expressed firm opposition to the early stages of this development. During the subsequent reform era, Chapter 5 argued, China's leaders continued to express skepticism about human rights, but also became deeply involved in the international human rights system. The first steps in this direction took place when China began to participate in the UN CHR and its subcommission, and acceded to a number of the main international human rights treaties. The official Chinese rejection of the international condemnation of Beijing's handling of the 1989 protest movement temporarily derailed this trend. However, it then expanded over the course of the 1990s with the signing of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a series of official endorsements of the system, and the emergence of increasingly direct endorsements of human rights norms within unofficial Chinese analysis. Although this record of participation has not resulted to date in a marked improvement in human rights conditions within China, it still amounts to a remarkable (if incomplete) opening of China's political system to international review, and as such it has modified the Chinese position on the inviolability of China's sovereign authority.

This record again falls well short of placing China on the margins of the international system. Indeed, the story of China's reluctant compromises on human rights and carefully orchestrated rearticulation of its position on sovereign authority could easily be retold with reference to the behavior of many other states. What sets China apart is the degree to which its behavior has been the subject of prolonged international criticism (both from other states and from human rights INGOs), and the ability that Chinese officials have shown to counter (both domestically and internationally) the charges leveled against China. In other words, while Beijing's stance on both human rights and the broader principle of sovereign authority changed during the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese also showed they had the ability to directly influence the content of the international human rights system (especially in regard to promoting the issue of economic rights and preserving the role of the principle of non-interference within international politics). In short, as Ann Kent (1999: 244) has remarked, in the human rights arena China has been a "taker, shaper and breaker of norms."

Such influence was much less palpable in China's stance on the economic

component of sovereignty. In this case, it is first evident that since the late 1960s economic sovereignty's role in international politics has been eroded by the rising prominence of the GATT, IMF, and World Bank. This trend first gathered momentum in the 1970s with the expansion of all three institutions' authority to intervene in their member states' economic affairs, and was sustained during the 1980s through their frequent utilization of this right. Membership in these organizations then became nearly universal in the 1990s (Boughton 2001; Das 2002; "IMF at a Glance"; "World Bank"). Moreover, as participation in these institutions rose, globalization and economic integration norms grew in acceptance. As a result, the lines that had previously been drawn between each sovereign state's economic affairs were in practice supplanted by an increasingly dense web of transnational economic ties and regulatory agencies.

As was the case in regard to sovereign authority, in the late 1970s the Chinese position on economic sovereignty was adamantly opposed to such trends, but here Chapter 6 illustrated that the subsequent shift in Chinese words and actions occurred at a faster rate and was more extensive. In the early 1980s Beijing quickly moved to become a member of both the IMF and World Bank. While it showed more caution in joining the GATT, by the end of the decade Beijing had also made a concerted effort to begin negotiations with this key international economic organization. In addition, throughout the 1990s when talks with GATT, then the WTO, stalled, Beijing reacted by pledging to speed China's transition toward a market-oriented economy, and explicitly promised specific changes in Chinese law in order to bring it more into line with the rules and principles of the trade organization. Against this backdrop, unofficial Chinese analysis repeatedly highlighted the speed with which economic globalization was occurring and frequently observed that this trend had already begun to undermine sovereignty's established role in the international system.

The shift in the Chinese stance on economic sovereignty in the direction of boundary transgression was very much in line with the behavior of other states. As mentioned above, during this period almost all states moved to join the three main international economic institutions. Moreover, in their bid to participate in such organizations and hasten integrating with the international economic system, most states appear to have taken on similar obligations and ceded a comparable degree of authority over economic affairs within their own boundaries.

In sum, China is much less of an outlier on sovereignty than it was portrayed to be during the late 1990s by those warning of the dangers of a "rising China." In fact, it is usual for political leaders worldwide to compromise on certain facets of sovereignty, even as they reinforce its other facets. For example, in Asia, Tokyo continues to cede significant portions of Japanese territory for use by the U.S. military but has consistently maintained its rights to relatively insignificant

offshore islands claimed by China and Russia, even though this position significantly complicates relations with these countries. Moreover, even as Jakarta reluctantly ceded Indonesia's claims to East Timor, it has gone to great lengths to insure and more deeply inscribe Indonesia's jurisdictional sovereignty over Aceh and Papua. In many parts of Africa, states that have effectively ceased to rule over much of their sovereign territory endeavor to maintain the location of boundaries created by colonial magistrates. In Europe, Moscow has arguably ceded much of Russia's economic sovereignty to international economic organizations (in return for loans and restructuring programs designed to bolster the country's faltering economy), but has resolutely refused to yield on the issue of Chechnya (and bristled at all international criticism of its handling of the breakaway region). In South America, Peru and Ecuador have repeatedly granted international actors extensive rights within their borders, yet until recently were engaged in a prolonged conflict over a relatively small patch of territory they both claimed.

Such patterns of behavior point to a pair of new conceptual considerations for students of international politics. First, the range of sovereignty-related words and actions underscores the value of conceptualizing the norm in terms of distinct bundles of sovereign rights. Disaggregating sovereignty in this way is a necessary first step in coming to terms with the complexity of the evolving Chinese stance on sovereignty. More specifically, mirroring changes in the international arena, Beijing's interpretation of the "functional" or "regulative" rules of all four facets of sovereignty was clearly fluid during the reform era and, in regard to sovereign authority and economic sovereignty, such malleability arguably extended into the realm of the norm's basic, "constitutive" features. If an analyst frames his or her consideration of sovereignty in either narrow (focusing solely on territorial concerns, or just economic issues) or vague (defining the norm as merely a right in international politics) conceptual terms, then such diversity of behavior is impossible to detect.

Second, the research findings speak directly to the tendency within much of the "new sovereignty" literature to weight analysis in the direction of discovering and proving that sovereignty's role in international politics is changing. Admittedly, the framework for analyzing sovereignty forwarded in this book is embedded within such a tendency, and the evidence presented here is consistent with the growing list of scholarship that argues sovereignty is not a constant in the contemporary international system. Yet, it is also clear that stasis has been as much an aspect of the Chinese position as has change. Much of what Chinese leaders have done to define sovereignty during the reform era has consisted of repeating existing claims and trying to maintain an unchanging interpretation of China's sovereign rights. In other words, sovereignty as something

static, which stands as an assumption within Waltz's work, and is so frequently challenged in the "new sovereignty" literature, has never achieved a "taken-for-granted" status in Chinese foreign relations. Keeping things the same took as much, and sometimes more, work than allowing them to change.

The Causes of Change

The pattern of Chinese behavior can only be explained with reference to the shifting point of intersection within China between "old" sensitivities to any perceived infringement on Chinese sovereignty, domestic political developments that reframed how China's leaders approached sovereignty-related issues, and international pressures (both material forces and normative influences) for change. Moreover, the weight of international influences was uneven across the four facets of sovereignty. This argument is consistent with the constructivist turn in international relations (in emphasizing the power of old and new ideas in international relations), but it is an integrative variant of this general approach in that its analytical scope includes a consideration of the relationship between power, interests, and ideas.

I argued in Chapter 3 that the Chinese position on territorial sovereignty during the 1980s and 1990s was grounded by all three of these variables. Throughout this period, China's leaders and policy analysts, versed in the nationalist narratives of the establishment of the PRC, shared a collective vision of the vast stretch of territory China had historically "lost" and maintained a common rhetorical commitment to overcome this "disgrace" by restoring what they viewed as the legitimate location of each of their states' contested boundaries. Nonetheless, they also tended to view border relations with reference to the existing regional balance of power that during the 1980s was not especially promising in terms of providing China with an opportunity to actually realize its claims. Moreover, following the ascendancy of Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening policy in the early 1980s, China placed a relatively high premium on maximizing regional stability (as a necessary condition for realizing such a policy line). This interest, although insufficient to erase the underlying normative drive to realize China's basic territorial aspirations, was strong enough to bring about a marked decline in hostilities within each of China's contested border regions over the course of the decade.

China's extensive territorial compromises during the 1990s were the product of a shift in the balance between these factors. Over the course of this period, the story of China's "lost" territory proved to be quite durable (with reference to both continental and maritime boundaries), and continued to frame Chinese considerations of each of China's contested border relations. However, the weight of such an ideational construct was increasingly offset by the para-

mount importance placed on building a more stable regional security dynamic. This interest caused Beijing to act cautiously in the early 1990s when the collapse of the Soviet Union placed China in a position to press extensive, pre-existing territorial claims along its northern border. Over the course of the decade, it also prompted Beijing to partially demilitarize the Sino-Indian border. Yet, here, the relative continuity in the military balance within the border region and the strategic importance to both sides of crucial segments of the disputed land precluded a similar resolution of outstanding differences. In the South China Sea, this interest in regional stability also had a moderating effect on Chinese policy, but the strategic and economic importance of the contested territory made China's leaders even less willing to compromise and more inclined to use military force in support of Beijing's territorial claims in the region. Nonetheless, in the second half of the decade, despite an increase in the capabilities of the Chinese navy to project power in the South China Sea, concerns with preserving regional stability proved strong enough to partially efface previous Chinese reservations about allowing the dispute over this territory to be discussed in regional multilateral forums.

Chapter 4 contended that an underlying nationalist commitment to sustain (in the case of Tibet), and complete (with regard to Hong Kong and Taiwan), the project of unification, anchored China's stance on jurisdictional sovereignty. However, whereas during the early 1980s this drive was partially balanced by the new interests and strategic considerations created by Deng's reform and opening line, by the end of the decade the historically conditioned Chinese intractability on jurisdictional issues was bolstered by a convergence of a range of factors. First, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, local material challenges to Chinese jurisdictional claims in both Tibet and Taiwan intensified. In both cases, this trend directly threatened the jurisdictional status quo, and stands out as the main catalyst for the subsequent shift in Chinese behavior. Yet, it alone does not account for the sustained hardening of Beijing's stance. To fully explain this trend it is necessary to include a consideration of the impact that the end of the Cold War had on China's leaders. Simply put, Beijing viewed this event as undermining much of the strategic rationale for the United States (China's most significant bilateral partner) accepting Beijing's contested jurisdictional claims, and as such directly challenged China's right to both regions. In addition, Beijing also perceived it as spurring the development in international politics of a more permissive interpretation of the balance between states' sovereign rights and groups' rights to self-determination.

The more extensive changes in the Chinese position on the authority component of sovereignty that occurred during the 1990s grew out of a distinctly different configuration of causal factors. This being said, Chapter 5 posited that

during the 1980s the development of China's stance on the sovereign authority / human rights dynamic was largely the result of new interests overcoming preexisting normative biases against the human rights system within the Chinese leadership, and the abiding awareness within Beijing of the utility of non-interference claims for the Chinese state. When Beijing was later challenged by both domestic and international critics for its human rights record (especially in regard to the suppression of the 1989 student movement), such criticism had the short-term effect of simply reinvestigating historically based animosity toward the system and pushing Chinese behavior in the direction of rejecting human rights (with particular reference to the preeminence of the principle of non-interference).

Yet, over the course of the 1990s, external forces played a more constructive role in reshaping the Chinese position on human rights. During this period sustained international attention to human rights conditions in China (especially, although not consistently, from the United States) increased the instrumental value of concessions for the Chinese, and led to policy moves designed to placate Beijing's critics. In addition, the increasing salience in Beijing of concerns over projecting a responsible, mature image in international politics (to offset charges that China's rise posed a threat to the system) fostered an environment that made such moves more appealing to the Chinese leadership. Finally, and more fundamentally, prolonged participation in the human rights system markedly increased the extent to which China's leaders and foreign policy analysts viewed international human rights norms as legitimate. As such, it eroded historically grounded reservations about human rights. It also reduced entrenched reticence to any international monitoring of human rights conditions in China, and consolidated the belief that the protection of human rights (at least in theory) was a basic responsibility of the Chinese state. In short, it altered the foundations of Chinese thinking about human rights issues.

Chapter 6 showed that the shift in China's stance on economic sovereignty also stands at the intersection between new interest articulation and "old" normative structures. The policies of the early reform era that allowed for a limited loss of authority over China's foreign economic relations were products of the ascendancy of Deng's pragmatic call to strengthen China through the selective use of foreign technology and investment. Moreover, in the post-Tiananmen period, growth (and, by extension, continuing the process of integration) became an even higher priority for Chinese leaders as they attempted to stabilize the shaky legitimacy of their rule through the dual strategy of cultivating nationalism and building the economy. With such priorities, interest in the potential rewards of GATT membership grew, and policy makers sacrificed much of what they had previously contended was within the scope of China's economic sovereignty.

In the mid-1990s, this impulse for change was augmented by new instrumental and normative factors. First, GATT's contracting members repeatedly imposed increasing demands on China during the negotiations and via the publication of various "road maps" for Chinese accession. Second, the trade organization itself became more powerful and intrusive with the establishment of the WTO in 1995. Third, starting in the late 1980s, but especially in the mid-1990s, concepts of economic globalization and integration made increasing inroads in Chinese leadership circles. This process was never complete, as many Chinese analysts vehemently rejected globalization as a pretext for the expansion of U.S. hegemony. However, despite such objections, as part of their acceptance of this trend as an inevitable one within the international system, a majority of influential policy analysts reevaluated the ability and wisdom of preserving a narrow interpretation of China's sovereign economic rights. At the same time, the bid to create a responsible international image led Beijing to use pledges to participate in the trade organization as evidence of its benign international role.

Thus, in the 1980s it was primarily Deng's pragmatism that provided the underlying motive for limited changes in the Chinese stance on each aspect of sovereignty (by overcoming the reticence to change created by historical and ideological causes). Yet, over the course of the 1990s, external factors (both material forces and new normative influences) pushed newly emerging interpretations of sovereignty from the international arena into China. This calls into question basic facets of both rationalist and ideationalist explanations of sovereign change that have been forwarded within the "new sovereignty" debate.

Rationalists cannot account for the pervasive role of ideational factors in influencing the development of the Chinese stance on sovereignty. The underlying continuities in Beijing's position can only be partially explained with reference to rational calculations. On the contrary, reticence to change was to no small extent a product of entrenched, normative trends within China in regard to the necessity of overcoming the "humiliation" caused by past violations of China's sovereign rights. As such, China's leaders and policy analysts tended to view sovereignty as a principle of intrinsic value. Thus, sovereign boundaries were to be reinforced, not because of what China could gain from such moves, but rather because failing to do so would constitute a betrayal of those who had fought to protect China. This impulse made the Chinese more reticent about relinquishing sovereign rights than cost-benefit analysis alone can account for. However, despite such a pronounced proclivity, we have seen that Beijing did allow for a significant transgression of limited aspects of China's sovereign boundaries over the course of the 1990s. In these cases, the influence of external normative factors on the Chinese approach to sovereignty also extends well beyond the limited role they have been given within rationalist explanations of sovereign change.

The factors that underlay Chinese sovereignty-related behavior also expose underlying shortcomings in existing ideationalist explanations of sovereign change. First, defending sovereignty's established role in international politics had a greater utilitarian value for Beijing than is commonly acknowledged in the ideationalist strand of the "new sovereignty" debate. In short, boundary-reinforcing sovereignty-related words and actions constituted one of the most powerful tools in Beijing's foreign policy kit at times when China was under attack from external critics and internal forces bent on either regime change or radically challenging the jurisdictional claims of the PRC. Second, most of the early compromises that Chinese leaders made on sovereignty grew out of transparent calculations of the relative costs and benefits of allowing any given transgression of China's sovereign boundaries. Finally, the process of "norms diffusion" in China (which eventually played a central role in bringing about more extensive changes in the Chinese position on sovereignty) was more complex than has been accounted for in this literature. The Chinese came to terms with the meaning of international normative changes always within the framework created by preexisting domestic normative structures. As such, external norms only gained prominence through a process of active selection and reinterpretation on the part of Chinese leaders and scholars. Even as these actors began to integrate new ideas into their own consideration of sovereignty-related issues, they projected their own positions on sovereignty in international politics (and as such helped shape normative change in this arena).

The arguments made in this book are broadly compatible with recent eclectic analysis in security studies (Alagappa 2003; Suh, Katzenstein, and Carlson 2004). They also resonate with the claims made in Risse and Sikink's (1999) "spiral model" of norms diffusion in that here too an emphasis is placed on the explanatory value of identifying separate phases, or stages, in the development of any given state's foreign relations and national security making. However, at a more fundamental level the book may be read as an attempt to show the value of combining the rationalist and ideationalist strands of the "new sovereignty" debate within an integrative constructivist framework. As such, the analytical claim about sovereign change advanced in this book is that leaders of individual states may initially become more willing to negotiate new interpretations of the norm in order to gain short-term economic or political benefits. However, such calculations normally take place within the context of preexisting concepts about the legitimate scope of the state's sovereign rights that tend to tilt behavior in the direction of boundary reinforcement. Out of incremental, self-interested changes in the direction of boundary transgression, more extensive shifts can unfold due to the inadvertent creation of new sensitivities to external pressures for change, extended involvement in new institutional structures, and the production of new normative concepts about sovereignty.

Looking Ahead: Looming Challenges to China's Approach to Sovereignty

Beyond speaking to these broad issues of analyzing changes in sovereignty's role in international politics, the book also sheds light on the increasingly complex nature of China's relationship with the rest of the international system over the course of the 1980s and 1990s by focusing on the evolution of the Chinese stance on the norm. During this period, China's leaders were particularly adept at controlling the pace and scope of change in the Chinese position (and thus the boundaries that separated China from the rest of the world). In short, words and actions on each component of the norm were quite discrete, with little spillover from one facet of sovereignty to the other. The final question to address then is how long Beijing will be able to keep moving practices in the divergent directions that began to take shape in the 1990s. In other words, at the start of a new century, how robust is the dual project of integrating China with a changing international arena while completing the project of unifying a multinational state built upon the remains of the Qing empire?

To date, this stance has been quite durable. In fact, such an incongruent approach to sovereignty is one of the defining characteristics of China's foreign relations during the reform era, and the main contours of such a position are largely consistent with the changes that have taken place in the international arena. As such, divergence in behavior is not inherently unstable. However, over the course of the last decade the partial concessions the Chinese made on territorial sovereignty, sovereign authority, and economic sovereignty have triggered still relatively inchoate developments (at home and abroad) that may reorient the current direction of change with regard to each of these aspects of the norm. I treat these issues in order of the degree to which they challenge China's leaders, although it is unlikely any of them will destabilize the dual project of integrating while unifying. In contrast, the increasing volatility of China's most intractable jurisdictional challenge—namely, Beijing's commitment to reunifying Taiwan with the mainland—is a much more explosive issue.

Territorial Sovereignty: Relinquished Claims, Concerned Neighbors, and Nationalist Sentiment

On the surface, the carefully orchestrated compromises China's leaders made on territorial sovereignty during the 1990s cost them little, and the benefits garnered have arguably grown over time. However, such gains have also been partially offset by the emergence of new difficulties. First among these was the fact that despite the general improvement in the Sino-Russian relationship during the 1990s, relations within the border region itself remained quite strained.

Throughout the decade local differences over the location of the contested section of the eastern sector of boundary (agreed to in principle in the 1991 border treaty) complicated the process of actually demarcating this line and created lingering resentment on both sides of the border. More significantly, while the rise in border trade that followed the normalization of relations stimulated economic growth in the border region (especially the eastern segment), it was accompanied by a surge in illicit cross-border activity (such as smuggling and population flows) that proved to be especially hard to monitor and police. Such illegal activity tended to reinforce negative cross-border perceptions. As a result, while conventional military threats to security have become a thing of the past, managing the border during a period of relative calm has continued to be daunting.

In addition to these problems in Sino-Russian border relations, establishing control over the boundary between China and the Central Asian republics has also proven to be problematic despite the territorial agreements Beijing reached with the leaders of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan since 1991. Such difficulties were compounded by the political instability in each of these states (but especially Tajikistan), and persistent differences in the region over how to contain the rise of Uyghur nationalism. In addition, the compromises that each of the Central Asian republics made on territory (in order to secure even more extensive Chinese concessions) generally were unpopular in Central Asia and strengthened, rather than lessened, concerns about China's increasingly dominant role in the region (particularly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). The recent marked increase in Chinese trade and investment in Central Asia has arguably done little to relieve such worries and may actually reinforce misgivings about Chinese intentions. Thus, even following the formal resolution of each of China's territorial disputes with the Central Asian republics, differences over territorial sovereignty have remained pronounced.

Along China's southern frontier, the 1993 and 1996 confidence-building agreements effectively ended the likelihood of large-scale military conflict with India; however, they also raised expectations in both countries for a relatively quick resolution of the underlying territorial dispute. The failure to reach such an understanding, and India's 1998 nuclear tests, quickly revealed such sentiments to be misplaced and created a new level of frustration on both sides. Moreover, final resolution of the border dispute remains quite remote. Although the persistence of this dispute has not hobbled the overall improvement in relations between Beijing and New Delhi, the inability of both sides to address this issue at a time when the Sino-Indian relationship is stronger than it has been in decades underscores the limited potential for compromise. One can surmise that in the event of a broader break in the bilateral relationship, territory will

quickly reemerge as the subject of open confrontation between the two sides.

The South China Sea continues to be the site of such conflict. Although Beijing's policies there have become more moderate (especially since the mid-1990s), concerns in Southeast Asia about China's intentions in the region remain pronounced. Many in the region have questioned the underlying motive behind such a turn, arguing that it is primarily strategic and instrumental (designed to buy time for Beijing to develop the military capabilities needed to realize relatively static territorial interests in the South China Sea), rather than a fundamental shift toward more cooperative behavior. In order to overcome such doubts, Beijing has made even more concessions (for example, signing the 2002 multilateral code of conduct confidence-building measure). However, since the Chinese leadership can ill afford to give up their claim to the region, it is unlikely they will risk making additional, extensive compromises. As a result, tensions over sovereign ownership of the South China Sea are likely to persist for the foreseeable future.

In sum, while each of China's contested border relations are significantly more stable today than at the start of the 1980s, territorial sovereignty continues to be the subject of controversy, and potentially, limited military confrontation. Moreover, Beijing is arguably in a less favorable position to make further compromises on border issues today than it was in the early 1990s. To begin with, China's outstanding border disputes are appreciably more difficult to solve than the ones that the Chinese have already resolved (in that the territory in question has greater value for each of the involved claimants). Second, as argued in Chapter 3, the concessions China has made on territory had already created some resentment among Chinese foreign policy analysts in the mid-1990s (as related in personal interviews) in regard to Beijing's failure to press for more land at a time when China's neighbors were in a comparatively weak strategic position. While interviewees placed less emphasis on this theme in 2001-2, they were quite insistent on the basic intractability of China's position on the location of the Sino-Indian border and its claim to the South China Sea (and right to the Diaoyu Islands). Thus, it is likely that significant compromises on any of these issues by Beijing would generate even more anger within this community and, more significantly, cut against the grain of popular nationalism within China. Thus, I do not anticipate that Beijing will make any major territorial concessions in the near future. On the contrary, I expect the Chinese will continue to seek to maintain the territorial status quo within each of China's outstanding territorial disputes.

Sovereign Authority: A Partially Opened Door

Beijing's limited, but expanding, participation in the international human rights system (and by extension acceptance of a partial erosion of the bound-

aries created by China's sovereign authority) produced fewer tangible benefits than did its moderation on territorial sovereignty. Nonetheless, during the 1990s Beijing's willingness to engage in human rights dialogue did generate short-term diplomatic gains, positive international media coverage, and arguably enhanced regime legitimacy. However, over the course of the decade, the failure to consistently follow up on progressive human rights rhetoric with measurable improvements in human rights conditions in China also began to make it harder to attain such results. Such slippage was first evident in the mid-1990s in the international arena when China's human rights critics increasingly began to denigrate its concessions on human rights as "hollow" and "superficial." By the end of the decade, human rights INGOs remained skeptical of even Beijing's most extensive commitments to participate in the human rights system. These organizations, and the international media, instead concentrated their attention on the extensive human rights violations still occurring in China. Such voices were less prominent in each of Beijing's main bilateral relations, but here too, pointed criticism of the pace of human rights reform has continued despite persistent Chinese attempts to extinguish it. As a result, human rights today remain a central, contested issue in China's relationship with the rest of the world.

The domestic costs of Chinese hypocrisy on human rights have so far been less pronounced, but could eventually be even more significant. As discussed in Chapter 5, a significant number of Chinese foreign policy analysts have recently published articles suggesting that human rights norms have gained broad acceptance within this community. In addition, a minority of these scholars have publicly called for both a strengthening of China's legal system and improvements in its human rights record. In the near term, the inclusion of a reference to the state's obligation to protect human rights in the revised constitution approved by the NPC in spring 2004 will strengthen these voices. Over a longer time it will arguably make it easier for both intellectuals and activists within China to hold Beijing accountable for future violations of human rights. In other words, it should make the Chinese state more accountable to its own people.

China's leaders could react to such international and domestic developments by retracting their earlier endorsements of human rights. Yet, this outcome is unlikely. Frustration in Beijing continues to mount and generate resentment against perceived international interference in China's internal affairs in the name of human rights. Such an environment is not conducive to more extensive Chinese human rights concessions, but it will not bring about any major, regressive shift in Chinese human rights behavior (as Beijing has already invested too much in its current involvement in the international human rights system). Internally, blatant violations of human rights through a

crackdown on China's domestic human rights critics. However, there is no need for Beijing to take such a move since domestic proponents of human rights are not powerful enough to strongly promote their position in China, and human rights related issues do not yet constitute a central facet of popular dissatisfaction with Communist Party rule. Thus, over the next decade, we will likely see incremental increases in China's compliance with its international human rights commitments, coupled with limited violations of human rights where such moves are perceived as necessary for defending national security and political stability.

Economic Sovereignty: Integration as a Source of Social Instability?

The initial rearticulation of the Chinese stance on economic sovereignty, most visible in the shift in Beijing's position on the World Bank and IMF, and GATT/WTO, brought China's leaders a long list of benefits. As discussed in Chapter 6, membership in the first two organizations made China eligible for concessionary loans and assistance in the event of balance of payment or currency crises. Beijing's drive for admission to GATT was both an indication of China's overall commitment to economic opening, and a means of opening foreign markets to Chinese goods. In composite, overtures to all three organizations were part of a broader effort to strengthen the economy by making China a more appealing location for foreign capital and investment. The stellar growth of the 1980s and 1990s is ample testimony of the success of China's leaders in achieving these goals.

Nonetheless, gains were only possible as long as Beijing accepted a diminution of the scope and impermeability of China's economic sovereignty. In other words, they came at the expense of China's earlier boundary-reinforcing stance on this facet of the norm. The costs of such concessions will largely be determined by how much the Chinese economy continues to grow now that China has become a member of the WTO. If growth proves to be sustainable, and China continues to consolidate its position as a world economic power, then the sacrifices China's leaders made in the 1980 and 1990s in order to integrate China into the international economy will have relatively few disruptive short-term consequences.

Through the first half of this decade, Beijing successfully steered the Chinese economy in this direction. However, even as it accomplished this goal, questions emerged about the impact of export-led growth, symbolized by the WTO accession agreement, on Chinese society. It is increasingly apparent that although opening has fueled the overall rise of the Chinese economy, it has deepened preexisting regional inequalities in China and cre-

ated a host of new challenges for the Chinese leadership. First among these has been the deepening economic divide between China's coastal regions and interior. The marked surge in incomes in major urban areas has contributed to this gap, while also rapidly widening the already vast disparity between the rising standard of living of city dwellers and the comparably stagnant standard of living of peasants. According to a recent survey conducted by a pair of Chinese journalists, conditions in the Chinese countryside have deteriorated, rather than improved, as the economy has become more open (Chen Guidi and Chun Tao 2004). Problems, however, are not limited to remote rural areas. On the contrary, increased competition in the manufacturing sector has created unprecedented pressures on inefficient state-owned enterprises, and resulted in high levels of unemployment in many cities (especially in the northern industrial belt). At the same time, those who have managed to keep their jobs have often been subjected to dangerous, deteriorating working conditions, or, in many cases, have simply not been paid. To make matters worse, official corruption (at all levels of government) now appears to be endemic in a system that retains features of both a market-oriented and a planned economy.

China's leaders, especially following Hu Jintao's rise, have responded by implementing high-profile policies to placate those who have fallen behind during the later reform era. This, alongside the selective use of force to stifle dissent, has so far stemmed the tide of social unrest created by the economic dislocations caused by opening, and allowed for the continued expansion of Deng's policy line. However, in the event of a major downturn in the global economy, it is far from clear if such stopgap measures will be sufficient to prevent widespread protest. Indeed, a sustained contraction in the world economy would both elevate societal pressures on Beijing and reduce policy makers' ability to address them. Moreover, within such an environment, China's WTO accession protocol, which has been Beijing's greatest concession on economic sovereignty to date, is likely to emerge as a target for elite and popular criticism.

As previously noted, the protocol contradicts deep-seated Chinese sensibilities about the need to maintain and protect each facet of China's sovereign rights. China's leaders, with the help of the vast majority of Chinese policy analysts, overcame such sensitivities over the course of the negotiations by methodically effacing the link between sovereignty and the WTO. As effective as this was, in a period of economic distress, disaffected opposition leaders could quickly undo such efforts by drawing attention to the parallels between the protocol and the unequal treaties that led to the historical establishment of China's treaty port system. Moreover, such views would likely find a ready audience among China's disenfranchised workers and peasants. They would be viewed all

the more sympathetically because before accession there was virtually no open discussion of the potential drawbacks of WTO membership. Thus, it is possible that nationalists and leftists within China could use such arguments to effectively attack the position of the reformers in the party who were instrumental in the negotiations. In such a case, it would not be hard to imagine that the WTO deal could be openly rejected, or at the very least vilified, by a new generation of Chinese leaders.

In any case, the current leadership has staked its right to rule on the promise of ongoing growth and integration. Thus, a radical inward shift of China's economic activity is highly unlikely. Drastic change will only occur if social unrest becomes so threatening that it provokes a violent political clampdown or regime change. Neither is likely in the near future, as China's leaders have repeatedly proven themselves to be expert at maximizing the benefits of economic integration while maintaining an ironclad grip over the state. However, the new pressures outlined above will also make it especially difficult for Beijing to comply with all of its WTO commitments. Moreover, due to the extensive safety and monitoring mechanisms built into China's accession protocol, such behavior is likely to generate a firestorm of international criticism and could quite easily trigger retaliatory actions on the part of China's main trading partners. If targeted in this way, it is quite easy to predict that the Chinese would then respond with their own countermeasures. Such a dynamic would quickly produce a volatile trade war. Nonetheless, even facing such a challenge, it is unlikely that China's leaders would lead their country into a new era of economic isolationism. On the contrary, they are likely to continue economic integration in hopes of sustaining growth.

Jurisdictional Sovereignty: Maintaining Chinese Rule over Tibet and Hong Kong, and the Rising Threat of Conflict across the Taiwan Strait

The Chinese stance on jurisdictional sovereignty has not only remained resolutely boundary-reinforcing over the course of the last two decades, but has become even less flexible. During this period, Beijing retained control over Tibet and took over Hong Kong, but failed to make any progress in its drive to return Taiwan to the mainland. China's leaders have maintained these positions for both strategic and identity-based reasons. Quite simply, they could not afford to make any major concessions on China's claim to any of the three regions. When Beijing's jurisdictional rights over these territories were challenged, this inevitably provoked a harsh Chinese response.

Such a stance has already cost Beijing significantly in Tibet, where it has required China to maintain a strong military / security force to contain and

prevent pro-independence protests, been the source of frequent international criticism (in both bilateral and multilateral forums), and led to a series of large-scale economic development projects. In recent years, these expenses have grown. While Tibet has not been the site of extensive, open, political protest since the late 1980s, it remains restive and is still the subject of intense surveillance efforts on the part of the Chinese. At the same time, Beijing continues its efforts to spur the development of the Tibetan economy through massive construction projects (such as the still unfinished Qinghai-Tibet railroad) and a wide range of economic subsidies. It has also waged an international campaign against the Dalai Lama, portraying him as a dangerous ideologue, who, before the Chinese liberation of Tibet, cruelly ruled over a backward, isolated land.

These efforts notwithstanding, the Dalai Lama's stature in the international community has actually grown over the last decade. Whereas in the late 1980s he was a religious figure who had a relatively small but devoted group of followers in the West, today he is a pop culture icon who enjoys approval ratings that rival those of even the most beloved public figures. In other words, Beijing has quite clearly been losing its war of words with the Tibetan leader, and as a result the Chinese have increasingly found themselves on the defensive within the international arena over the Tibet issue. Alongside human rights, Beijing's policies in Tibet have emerged as one of biggest liabilities in China's foreign relations. Moreover, it is hard to imagine that China's leaders and policy analysts will reverse this trend. Although the Dalai Lama's popularity outside of China may cool off, his status as a peaceful, engaging, spiritual leader has already gained broad acceptance. As a result, his calls for protecting Tibet's history, culture, and people will continue to have a strong appeal in the international community for the foreseeable future (and Beijing will have to continue to struggle to counter this trend with its own public relations efforts).

In contrast, within Tibet the dual policies of stifling dissent and spurring economic growth that Beijing implemented during the 1990s have proven to be relatively effective. While occasional anti-Chinese attacks have occurred over the past fifteen years, there have been no replays of the large public demonstrations against Chinese rule that rocked Tibet during the late 1980s. In addition, despite the controversy over the selection of the new Panchen Lama, Tibet's monasteries have largely been brought to heel. Moreover, ongoing Han migration into Tibet's cities, and the overall modernization of these urban areas, has arguably begun to erode Tibetan culture and identity in the region, and has increased the gap between Tibetans in Tibet and those living in exile. In short, today Chinese rule may still lack legitimacy within Tibet, but Beijing's control over the region has been consolidated.

As a result of these trends, China's leaders will likely continue to be willing

to bear the weight of international criticism of their Tibet policies while they work to bolster Chinese jurisdictional rights over the region through continuing the initiatives of the 1990s. Therefore, although the recent renewal of contact between Beijing and Dharamsala suggests that the Chinese are once again trying to make a breakthrough on Tibet by entering into serious negotiations with the Dalai Lama, such diplomacy is unlikely to produce dramatic results. On the contrary, Beijing is more adamant now about defending China's claims to Tibet than during the previous high-water mark in relations between Beijing and Dharamsala. At the same time, the Dalai Lama can ill afford (owing to opposition within the exile community) to make additional compromises on Tibet's status. In other words, while talks will probably continue, neither side will be willing to make the type of compromises that would be necessary to bring about a major change in China's approach to securing sovereignty over Tibet.

For most of the 1990s, the prospects in Hong Kong for the type of political unrest seen in Tibet seemed quite remote. However, over the last two years it has also become apparent that Beijing is finding it increasingly difficult to govern within the confines of the Basic Law. Apparent Chinese violations of this document have led to a storm of criticism internationally as well as in Hong Kong (and in Taiwan, where a very close watch is kept on Beijing's application of the "one country, two systems" approach to the harbor city). In response, Beijing has implemented new, flexible economic measures and a flurry of pointed reminders that Hong Kong is a part of China. This approach has, for the time being, dampened political protests in Hong Kong. Thus, over the next few years there should be few major shifts in China's Hong Kong policy. Nonetheless, it is also apparent that Hong Kong-China relations have entered into a new, and possibly more volatile, stage.

Cross-strait relations have long had such an explosive potential, which has had major costs for Beijing. As Chapter 4 discussed, sustaining China's claim to Taiwan has led to the maintenance of a long-term, and growing, military presence across from the island. It has also placed the Taiwan issue at the center of much of China's foreign policy, and made it the main obstacle to developing stable relations within many of China's main bilateral relationships (especially with the United States). In addition, by the mid-1990s (if not before), Taiwan also came to occupy a central position in Chinese foreign policy analysts' thinking about sovereignty.

In the interviews I conducted in 1997-98, Taiwan was the only issue whose inclusion made a significant difference in interviewees' interpretation of the norm. As mentioned in Chapter 2, over half of the nearly 100 individuals I interviewed contended that sovereignty's role in international politics was being

eroded, if not replaced, by new trends within the system. In contrast, only about 30 percent argued that no such change was taking place, and, if it was, this presented a threat to international stability, and should be stopped. Analysts from a wide range of universities and think tanks stood on both sides of this divide. In addition, there was no strong correlation between the age of interviewees and the views they expressed on sovereignty. However, when I coded each of the interviews in regard to whether individuals emphasized Taiwan, it immediately became clear that the vast majority of those who did (twenty-three of thirty-seven interviewees) had “closed” views about sovereignty.¹ In contrast, interviewees who did not dwell on Taiwan (sixty-two) strongly tended (forty-seven) to have “open” views about sovereignty. In short, those who viewed sovereignty through the lens of the “Taiwan issue” rarely expressed any flexibility on the norm and often argued strongly in defense of reinforcing the boundaries it creates within international politics.

Although I have not conducted extensive follow-up interviews to update this information, as shown in Chapter 4, today Taiwan occupies an even more central position in Beijing’s calculations. Moreover, recent developments on both sides of the strait suggest that the possibility of outright military conflict is higher now than at any point since the start of the reform era. Indeed, incumbent Chen Shui-bian’s narrow March 2004 election victory appreciably escalated Chinese concerns about cross-strait relations. On the one hand, Chen garnered only 0.2 percent more votes than his opposition, and both of the proposed referenda he supported failed. This outcome obtained despite the fact that the vote followed a botched assassination attempt against his life on the eve of the election, which many analysts contend helped sway the election in his favor. On the other hand, by retaining the presidency, Chen gained another four years as leader of Taiwan, strengthened the DPP’s dominant role on the island, and dealt a crucial blow to the opposition. On balance, then, Chen’s reelection insured that the issue of Taiwanese independence will remain a lightning rod in cross-strait relations. This point was underscored by the fact that following the election, Chen reiterated his promise to both revisit the referendum issue and consider revising Taiwan’s constitution.

After the election, China’s leaders issued a series of strong warnings about the overall state of cross-strait relations. First, despite a number of high-profile U.S. statements supporting the status quo in cross-strait relations (Kelly 2004), the Chinese have repeatedly criticized Washington for failing to comply with its policy commitments to Beijing. Second, although Beijing initially maintained a low profile in the aftermath of the election, it quickly upped the volume of its disapproval of Chen. Thus, just before Chen’s May inauguration, Beijing issued a high-level and blunt rebuttal of his policies. Moreover, although Chen then

delivered a cautiously worded inaugural address, a Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson quickly questioned the sincerity of his words and asserted that Chen in reality continued to advocate Taiwanese independence ("Chen Shui-bian's" 2004).

Since this time the war of words across the strait has escalated, and it is now apparent that today, perhaps more than at any point over the last twenty-five years, China's leaders may be forced to choose between integrating and unifying. Although previous Chinese behavior reveals that they have gone to great lengths to avoid overt conflict over jurisdictional issues in order to attain the economic benefits that came from integration, it also suggests they will use whatever means necessary, including military force, to avoid the perceived costs of a further devolution of China's claim to Taiwan. Prior to taking such a step, they will seek to isolate the Taiwanese president internationally, circumvent his authority on the island by attempting to build ties with opposition leaders, encourage Taiwanese investment on the mainland, and continue the missile buildup near the strait. Moreover, due to the damage that it would do to the broader policy goal of growing the economy, the Chinese will not use military force in a preemptive fashion to return Taiwan to China. Nonetheless, if Chen crosses any of the redlines laid out in the 2000 white paper on Taiwan (see Chapter 5), Beijing will act.

The crux of this matter, then, now lies in Taiwan, where Chen appears to be intent on pressing for international recognition of the island's independent status. Since the spring 2004 election he has exercised caution in pursuing this goal, but the status quo in cross-strait relations nonetheless remains particularly tenuous and could easily be undone by the Taiwanese president, or damaged by an unintentional misunderstanding, or accidental military engagement between the military forces on either side of the strait. In such a context is easy to predict a jump in cross-strait hostilities. If this occurs, it could also lead to a rapid unraveling of Beijing's efforts to both integrate China with the world and unify China's jurisdictional claims. Chinese moves to return Taiwan to what those in Beijing see as its legitimate place as a part of China would disrupt integration, perhaps irreparably, and the likelihood of American involvement in such a conflict would be quite high. The impact of such a crisis would thus not only imperil China's rise in Asia, but also jeopardize the relatively stable security dynamic in the region, and have a profound impact on the broader international political and economic system.

Conclusion

What are the final implications of the pattern of Beijing's divergent sovereignty-related practices for the way we think of China's evolving relationship

with the international system? Most importantly, it highlights the superficiality of the main conceptual frameworks, the containment-engagement debate and the “China threat” argument, that have been deployed in academic and policy-oriented discussions to describe China’s rise in international politics.

Within this debate, China has been characterized in sharply contrasting terms. Those advocating containment have tended to portray China as a revisionist state that is only weakly constrained by the web of economic ties and institutional links with the world that have emerged during the reform era. Thus, once the Chinese are able to consolidate their economic and military power, they will overturn the existing balance of power in the international system. China is a “threat.” In contrast, proponents of engagement have contended that China’s economic and political commitments to the rest of the world have begun to (or will) have a transformative effect on the Chinese polity. They will rearticulate Chinese security interests, wed China to the status quo in the Asian region, and may even lead to the emergence of new forces in China that will eventually make the PRC more democratic. In other words, China is well along the way to being incorporated into the existing world order. While these characterizations may somewhat oversimplify the differences between the two positions, they do capture the main components of the sharply contrasting interpretations that both sides have forwarded about the nature of China’s changing place within international politics.

The pattern of behavior analyzed in this book stretches across both arguments and reveals a China that is at all times both integrating with, and differentiating itself from, the international community in which it is now firmly embedded. For example, China’s leaders remain deeply attached to the project of completing China’s national unity and have adamantly resisted any moves they perceived as interfering with their task. Indeed, Chinese sensitivities on this front were so pronounced that in the early 1990s Beijing decisively repudiated what was largely a nonexistent normative shift in the international arena on the balance between sovereign rights and self-determination norms. Such a stance reveals a China that is still very much defining itself against the rest of the international community and intent on ensuring that the peoples and territories that currently lie within the scope of Beijing’s sovereign rights remain there. However, at the very same time, Chinese words and actions have been powerfully shaped by external material pressures and, perhaps even more importantly, by the diffused reinterpretation in the international arena of the legitimate intersection between states’ rights, individual rights, and multilateral institutions. This development suggests that a significant movement has already begun in the direction of erasing the sharp lines that once divided China and the rest of the world.

Those envisioning the dangers posed by a rising China fixate on the intransigent side of the Chinese stance and argue that it demonstrates that Beijing poses a threat to regional and world security and thus necessitates the application of more vigilance and surveillance to guard against even more aggressive Chinese actions. In contrast, advocates of engagement tend to emphasize the cooperative aspects of Chinese behavior and argue that it reveals just how successful the integration of China has been in terms of bringing Beijing into the international fold. Yet, it is precisely the juxtaposition of both behaviors, the ability to both change and stay the same, that constitutes the main story of Chinese foreign relations over the last two decades.

In sum, Beijing has been unable to ignore systemic trends in the international arena that have subtly transformed sovereignty's role in international politics. As sovereignty's rules have changed, so has the way Chinese foreign policy and national security makers interpret and use the norm. It no longer (if it ever did) provides them with an impenetrable shield (via the invocation of China's sovereign rights) with which to ward off Beijing's domestic and international critics. Instead, it is now understood as a principle that encompasses a wide range of rights and obligations, a concession that represents a striking shift in China's relationship with the rest of the international system. Yet, at the same time Beijing still places a premium on the walls sovereignty can build. In other words, "new" interpretations of sovereignty have not erased "old" ones within China, rather they have been written alongside them. Securing Chinese sovereignty then encompasses both approaches, and as a result it is marked by apparent contradictions and tensions. Balancing the demands of integration and unification has been the defining feature of Chinese foreign relations and national security policies since the early 1980s. Such a task is becoming increasingly precarious, and because of looming challenges, is likely to become even more arduous in the near future.