Allen Carlson
Associate Professor, Government Department, Cornell University
Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission
"Chinese Views of Sovereignty and Methods of Access Control" [1]
February 27, 2008

Introduction

Sovereignty is one of the most foundational ordering principles in international politics. It is constituted by four interlocking norms relating to the division of territory, people, governing authority, and economic activity between states. The meanings of these divides are continually in the process of being negotiated and re-defined by both states and other actors within the international arena. In other words, sovereignty's role in international politics, while widely acknowledged as forming the bedrock of the contemporary international system, is also constantly being contested and challenged.

For the purposes of this hearing it is more directly relevant that Beijing has repeatedly emphasized that sovereignty forms the cornerstone of China's relationship with the rest of the world. The Chinese stance on sovereignty is then most commonly understood as being particularly strident and inflexible in comparison with the stance other states have taken on this norm. Such a description was once accurate. However, over the past thirty years, China's approach to sovereignty has changed in unexpected ways. In short, the Chinese position is not what it used to be.

Through the mid-1970s, China's position on sovereignty was absolutist and unyielding. Since then both subtle and substantive changes in the Chinese approach have occurred. Initially, during the 1980s, Chinese policies continued to be relatively constant and boundary-reinforcing, but placed a greater emphasis on cooperation and compromise than had been the case during the first three decades of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In contrast, since the early 1990s the Chinese position shifted, became more varied and flexible in some regards, and in the process also became the subject of intense debates within foreign policy and national security circles in China.[2] During this latter period, the Chinese preserved a static interpretation of territorial sovereignty (with reference to China's borders), promoted an increasingly unyielding stance on jurisdictional

[1] Please note that this testimony draws extensively on my earlier writings on the Chinese approach to sovereignty. More specifically, I make direct use of material that appeared in the introduction and conclusion of my 2005 book, Unifying China, Integrating with the World: The Chinese Approach to Sovereignty During the Reform Era (Stanford University Press).

[2] In this document I do not explore these debates at length. However, one can easily identify such differences via reference to the notably contrasting arguments about sovereignty that have appeared in the published works of Wang Yizhou, a leading international relations scholar in Beijing, and Liu Wenzong, a senior student of international law who works from the Foreign Affairs University. See in particular Wang's *Dangdai Guoji Zhengzhi Xilun* [An Analysis of Contemporary International Politics] (Shanghai: *Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe*, 1995). Also see Liu's "*Lun guojifa zhong de zhuquan yu renquan*" [A Discussion of Sovereignty and Human Rights in International Law], Waijiao Xueyuan Xuebao, 1999, #3.

sovereignty (in regards to Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong), and permitted the transgression of the lines created by the authority and economic components of sovereignty (through involvement in the international human rights system and multilateral economic organizations). In short, the Chinese approach to sovereignty since the late 1970s has been defined more by a divergence in positioning than by the consolidation of a single unified stance.

These changes are the product of the evolving relationship in China between relatively persistent and historically-conditioned normative sensitivities to any perceived infringement against Chinese sovereignty, domestic political developments that re-framed the manner in which China's leaders calculated their interests, and international pressure for change. The diversity in Chinese sovereignty-related behavior during the 1990s was then a result of the uneven weight of such influences across each of the four facets of the norm.

Although the specifics of this evolution of the Chinese position are unique, the dilemma of participating in an increasingly interdependent and densely layered international system while maintaining independence and individuality in such a community is not. On the contrary, foreign policy and national security elites in most states are intimately familiar with the difficulties inherent in grappling with this dilemma. In this sense, the development of the Chinese stance on sovereignty since the late 1970s is not all that unusual. It is embedded in the historical evolution of China's relationship with the rest of the international system, and parallels the struggles of other new states that won admission to the system over the course of the last century. Nonetheless, sovereignty is also an increasingly controversial issue in China's relationship with the rest of the world. Indeed, today questions of sovereignty (most particularly vis-à-vis Taiwan) have the potential to place Beijing in direct conflict with other powerful members of the international system (especially the United States).

On the following pages I lend substance to these opening observations by first briefly discussing the manner in which China approached and defined it stance on sovereignty in relationship to four specific issue areas (border policy, control over outlying regions, involvement in the international human rights system, and membership in GATT/WTO) prior to the late 1970s. In the second section of this testimony I discuss how such a position evolved over the course of the last thirty years. The third section considers the implications of such policies for Chinese politics. The conclusion discusses the significance of these developments for America's approach to China.

I. China's Earlier Stance on Sovereignty (From 1949 to 1978)

Through the late 1970s, China's approach to sovereignty was relatively consistent over time and across the main issue areas through which Beijing articulated its position on the norm. Beijing insisted that sovereignty was an absolute right which cemented its territorial boundaries, de-legitimized any attempt to divide the people residing under its jurisdiction, and granted China immunity from external interference in its internal affairs. Such a stance led to the enactment of policies that were unified in their intention of

shoring up all aspects of China's sovereign boundaries, and aggressively countered any perceived encroachment across such lines.

To begin with Beijing actively defended its territorial boundaries with other states. This position was then defined by recurring tensions, armed skirmishes, and threats of even more extensive confrontation. The earliest of these flare-ups occurred in 1962 when China and India engaged in a short but violent war over the location of each of the three sections of their shared border. Seven years after the Sino-Indian border war, the Sino-Soviet boundary was the site of conflict when Zhenbao Island, in the Wusuli (Ussuri) River segment of the border, became the focal point of military clashes between the two powers. Although the conflict was quickly contained, during the 1970s additional high-profile incidents of military incursions by both the Chinese and Soviets took place in both the western and eastern sectors of this border. In addition to these conflicts, the Sino-Vietnamese border was the site of military engagement in 1979, while differences between Beijing and Hanoi over the location of the maritime boundary between the two neighbors were also quite pronounced.

Beijing's approach to jurisdictional sovereignty, the relationship between the state and the "peoples" residing within its territorial boundaries, was also defined by a militant stance. China's leaders insisted that all regions identified as lying within the PRC's territorial reach were inalienable parts of China. In short, for China there was no question that Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong all belonged to the PRC and the people residing in each area were subjects of Chinese jurisdictional sovereignty. While Beijing then employed distinct policies to secure these regions, in each case the anchor for Chinese positioning was the use of force--or at least the threat of force--paired with bellicose rhetoric (augmented by very limited attempts to negotiate with Beijing's perceived opponents).

The lines between states internal affairs and those of the international system constitute the main aspects of the authority component of sovereignty. The international human rights system poses more of a challenge to this division than any other trend in international politics. Moreover, the PRC's approach to this regime remained consistent throughout its first thirty years. Beijing sharply challenged the legitimacy of international human rights standards and rejected the manner in which such norms appeared to be used to justify interfering in sovereign states' internal affairs. In other words, through the end of the 1970s, there was little question in China about the permeability of the boundary between China and the international community; the Chinese state had absolute sovereign authority; and there was no room for international oversight over any aspect of its internal affairs. Although the human rights system at this time did not have the broad acceptance it now enjoys, the virulence with which the Chinese attacked the system, and studiously avoided making any commitments to the extant multilateral human rights treaties, did set China apart from most other states.

Economic sovereignty is the state's right to regulate economic activity within the boundaries specified by the territorial component of the norm. Although the lines created by such a principle have always been less distinct than those drawn by each of the other

components of sovereignty, over the past fifty years, but especially since the early 1970s, these borders have become increasingly blurred by the strengthening of multilateral economic organizations and the increasing prominence of globalization norms. On the institutional side, the GATT/WTO played the leading role in this development, while ideas about the necessity of economic integration and opening markets have been the most prominent ideational features of this turn. In contrast, historically, the central tenet of Beijing's handling of foreign economic relations was ensuring China's economic independence. Despite important shifts in the direction and level of foreign trade and investment during the first three decades of the PRC, this approach to dealing with China's foreign economic relations remained relatively unchanged. Throughout this period, but especially after the break with the Soviet Union in the early 1960s, Mao Zedong consistently emphasized the need for economic self-reliance, and attempted to limit China's dependence on external sources of capital and technology. Although his policies never fully cut the Chinese economy off from the outside world, by the late 1960s they had created a high degree of insularity and had firmly established central government control and authority over all of China's foreign economic relations.

Such a review demonstrates that through the late 1970s the PRC was clearly attached to a consistently boundary-reinforcing stance on sovereignty. This position then generates a fascinating puzzle: how would China's integration in, and interdependence with, the increasingly densely layered international political and economic system during the subsequent thirty years affect such a stance?

II. China's Approach to Sovereignty Since the Late 1970s

When we look to more recent Chinese positioning on sovereignty it is first clear that Beijing's insistence on maintaining this principle as an anchor of China's foreign relations stands as a rebuke to those who over the course of the 1990s predicted the norm's incipient demise in world politics. Sovereignty's role in the international system remains robust today, and China continues to be a staunch supporter of reinforcing such a position. However, it is also readily apparent that the Chinese stance on sovereignty has changed during this period. Such a development contradicts the conventional wisdom in the work of 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 diverse.

During this period the general role of territorial sovereignty within the international system was relatively consistent. 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. 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 retained 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 which was 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 rule over 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, and 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. During the earlier decade, Beijing championed the extension of the right of self-determination *only* 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 and Xinjiang, 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. Indeed, while the virulence with which the Chinese have maintained their right to rule over Tibet, Taiwan, Xinjiang 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 of these regions (but especially, Taiwan), coupled with the crucial importance of all four 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.[3] This being the case, 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 system 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 period, 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 Human Rights Commission 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 ICESCR and 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

[3] For specific numbers see Anne Bayefsky, The UN Human Rights Treaty System: Universality at a Crossroads (Ardsley, N. Y.: Transnational Publishers, 2001); also see "Methods of Work Relating to the State Reporting Process," Second International Committee Meeting of the Human Rights Bodies, April 3, 2003.

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 directly influenced 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 has remarked, in the human rights arena China has been a "taker, shaper and breaker of norms."[4]

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. 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 the subsequent shift in Chinese policy 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 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, 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. In sum, such words and actions replaced Beijing's earlier calls for economic self-reliance and erased many of the economic boundaries between China and the rest of the world.

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

[4] Ann Kent, China, The United Nations, and Human Rights (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, p 244).

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 is often portrayed to be 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 New Guinea. 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, in the 1990s Moscow 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, states like Peru and Ecuador that have repeatedly granted international actors extensive rights within their borders, yet until recently were engaged in a prolonged conflict over a relatively small territory they both claimed.

III. Implications of These Changes for China

During the 1980s and 1990s, China's leaders were particularly adept at controlling the pace and scope of change in the Chinese position on sovereignty (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. 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 since the late 1970s, 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, it is also possible to argue that over the course of the last ten years such policies have begun to trigger a series of 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.

On the surface, the carefully orchestrated compromises China's leaders made on territorial sovereignty during the 1990s cost them little, and the benefits they garnered have arguably grown over time. However, such gains have also been partially offset by the emergence of new difficulties. In short, 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, 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. 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.

Beijing's limited, but expanding, participation in the international human rights system (and by extension acceptance of a partial erosion of the boundaries 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 last ten year, 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. To date, such slippage has been most evident in the international arena, where China's human rights critics have increasingly denigrated its concessions on human rights as "hollow" and "superficial." Today human rights INGOs are highly skeptical of even Beijing's most extensive commitments to participate in the human rights system. These organizations, and the international media, instead concentrate their attention on the extensive human rights violations still occurring in China. Such accusations are less prominent in each of Beijing's main bilateral relations (particularly since 2001), 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 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 material gains. 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, then the WTO, 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 of these 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, such advances 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.

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 created a host of new challenges for the Chinese leadership. First among these has been the widening economic divide between China's coastal regions and interior. 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.

Despite such ills, the current leadership has staked its right to rule on the promise of ongoing growth and integration. Thus, a radical inward shift of Chinese 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.

The Chinese stance on jurisdictional sovereignty has not only remained resolutely boundary-reinforcing over the course of the last thirty years, but has become even less flexible. During this period, Beijing retained control over Tibet and Xinjiaing, 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 such 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. It is in Tibet and Taiwan where such policies are proving to be most volatile (although the situation in Xinjiang also remains tenuous).

In Tibet the Chinese position has required the long term deployment of military security force to contain and prevent pro-independence protests, and led to a series of costly economic development projects. In recent years, such expenses have grown. For example, China has repeatedly attempted to spur the development of the Tibetan economy through large construction projects (such as the recently completed Qinghai-Tibet railroad) and massive subsidies.
Beijing has also waged a costly international campaign against the Dalai Lama. These efforts notwithstanding, the Tibetan leader's stature in the international community has actually grown over the last ten years. 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 cultural icon who enjoys approval ratings that rival those of even the most beloved public

figures. In other words, Beijing has quite clearly been loosing 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.

Nonetheless, China's leaders will likely continue to be willing to bear the weight of international criticism on Tibet while they work to bolster Chinese jurisdictional rights over the region through continuing the policy 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 the Dalai Lama. In other words, while talk of 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 Tibet policy.

Cross-strait relations have long lacked even the slightest prospect for dialogue, and this status quo has had major costs for Beijing. Sustaining China's claim to Taiwan has led to the maintenance 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).

Interestingly, by the mid-1990s (if not before), Taiwan also came to occupy a central position in Chinese foreign policy analysts' thinking about sovereignty. In interviews I conducted in the late 1990s, it was the only issue whose inclusion made a significant difference in interviewees' interpretation of the norm. 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. In contrast, interviewees who did not dwell on Taiwan (sixty-five) 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.

Recent developments on both sides of the strait suggest that the possibility of outright military conflict, while somewhat less pronounced than in 2004, is far from remote.

Although previous Chinese behavior suggests that they will go to great lengths to avoid sacrificing the economic benefits gained from integration in order to accomplish the goal of unification, 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.

Before taking such a step, China's leaders will likely first continue to follow their current approach to Chen Shuibian's Taiwan. In other words, 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, or his successors, crosses any of the red lines laid out in the 2000 Taiwan white paper, Beijing will act to defend China's jurisdictional sovereignty. In the meantime, the Chinese will await the results of the upcoming March 2004 presidential election on the island.

Conclusion

What are the implications of the pattern of China's divergent practices for the way we think of China's evolving relationship with the international system? Most importantly, this pattern highlights the superficiality of coding China as simply either a "friend" or a "foe" of the United States. We are all quite familiar with such contrasting assessments of Beijing's emerging stance in international politics. Those concerned about an impending "threat" have tended to portray China as a revisionist state with fairly static interests that are only weakly constrained by the web of economic ties and institutional links that have emerged since the late 1970s. 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. On the opposite side those who have painted a less worrisome picture of China's rising profile have contended that the plethora of economic and political commitments which China has made to the rest of the world over the course of the last thirty years have begun to have a transformative effect on the Chinese polity. They have rearticulated Chinese security interests, embedded China within the status quo in Asia, and may even lead to the emergence of new forces in China that will eventually make the PRC more democratic.

It is misleading, however, to place China within either of these categories. The pattern of behavior analyzed in this testimony (and in my previous publications) 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 grounded. For example, China's leaders remain deeply attached to the project of completing China's national unity and have adamantly resisted any moves that 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. However, at the very same time, Chinese practices have been powerfully shaped by 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.

The former behavior reveals a China that is still very much defining itself in relation to 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. The latter set suggests a significant movement away from a sharp distinction between China and the rest of the world. Those envisioning the dangers posed by a rising China fixate on the intransigent side of Chinese words and actions and argue that they demonstrate that China poses a threat to regional and world security and thus requires the application of even more vigilance and surveillance to guard against even more aggressive Chinese actions. In contrast, advocates of a less troublesome interpretation of these trends tend to emphasize the cooperative aspects of Chinese behavior and argue that it reveals just how successful the integrating of China has been. Yet, it is precisely the juxtaposition of both behaviors, the ability to both change and stay the same, to accept and reject external pressure, that constitute the main story of Chinese foreign relations over the last two decades.