

Introduction



The superpower's dilemma: to appease, repress, or transform transnational advocacy networks?

The tale of transnational advocacy networks (TANs), as told by students of international politics, is typically one of non-state actors reshaping world politics through the power of persuasion and principled ideas. In its most familiar telling, global partnerships of activists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), scientists, and technical experts play the foil to unrestrained national interests, developing, diffusing, and monitoring compliance with norms (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Khagram *et al.*, 2002; Price, 2003). It is a classic underdog story, in which state preferences are transformed and conventional notions of power in the international system are upended by those armed with little more than the courage of their convictions. Many versions also include a feel-good component, in which people from many walks of life, bound and driven by common devotion to their beliefs, take on well-armed, sometimes oppressive, and occasionally murderous governments for the protection and betterment of their fellow human beings. What could be more inspirational, more romantic?

This book is about the unromantic and often uncomfortable realities of transnational advocacy in a strong authoritarian state and rising world power. Drawing together case studies that span a range of issues, repertoires, and results of advocacy, it elaborates the constitutive role of the state in contemporary transnational activism. This argument is not only disquieting because it points to the growing influence of Chinese values at odds with those of the US-led post-Cold War global order, but because it is precisely the opposite of what so many activists – and the governments and interstate bodies that sponsor them – set out to achieve when China opened itself to the outside world. Indeed, in the three-and-a-half decades since Deng Xiaoping initiated the policy of reform and opening up, China's global integration has mainly been seen as a way to promote reforms from the outside in. Instead of isolating China, engagement would serve as a means to socialize the country's

communist leadership to the rules and mores of responsible global citizenship, transforming it into an upstanding member of the international community. Activists, working in and through international NGOs, were the tip of the spear, serving as carriers of transnational norms and agents of change. Though it is not always stated explicitly, this view is deeply rooted in the foreign policies of many Western governments. ‘American exceptionalism is missionary’, wrote Henry Kissinger in *On China*. ‘It holds that the United States has an obligation to spread its values to every part of the world.’ According to this ethos, values like democracy and human rights were universally applicable and their acceptance was inevitable. Operating on the front lines of norm diffusion in many of the world’s dictatorships, including China, activists and NGOs were cast as the emissaries of progress.

This book asks what happens to transnational civil society actors as a result of their engagement with China, recognizing China’s power and influence as both real and meaningful. It aims to explain the multiple, divergent pathways or functional forms of advocacy campaigns in China. These forms matter because they affect activists’ ability to have an impact on their targets, and provide important clues about when and why some become politically salient while others do not.

Brimming over with empirical anomalies, or ‘things that shouldn’t be’ (O’Brien, 2004: 38), China presents the perfect opportunity to explore such questions, being at once resiliently authoritarian and capable of resisting the input of external actors, and yet increasingly open and welcoming to forces from beyond its borders. Indeed, growing connections with the outside world since 1978 have generated broader awareness of the issues facing China and the importance of these for the international community. China’s rising presence on the global stage, its status as the world’s fastest-growing economy, the largest producer of carbon emissions, and enduring reputation as a human rights violator all contribute to the growing focus on China by a huge number of activist organizations. However, efforts to sway official policy have been met with mixed reactions from the central government, which responds to transnational advocacy on various issues in quite different ways, picking and choosing what and whom it listens to, and when (Perry, 2002; Zheng and Fewsmith, 2008: 5). The selective acceptance of transnational claims to suit China’s changing needs and development agenda enables us to understand why activist campaigns come in a variety of forms, and why some are better received than others by China’s government.

Approach of the book

The book takes a process-based and interactive approach, using the case of China to disaggregate the processes of transnational issue advocacy. It

is process-based in the sense that the case studies comprising its empirical chapters take on a narrative style, with the aim of unearthing the mechanisms, sequences of events, and critical junctures that produce the range of functional forms evident among transnational advocacy campaigns in China. It is interactive in that it seeks to show how these myriad forms arise from the TAN–state nexus. As such, the book has much in common with other works of political science carried out in the qualitative tradition. However, the small-*n*, comparative historical methodology of the book reflects a sensibility more common in sociology than political science, save for a few classic notables like Theda Skocpol's *States and social revolutions*. Thus, the approach here is more 'tried and true' than brand new, and is a *mélange* of politics, international relations, sociology, and history.

The chief advantage of this approach is that it facilitates the side-by-side comparison of divergent cases that together produce some surprising conclusions. The empirical core of the book is built around a selective but representative sample of six transnational advocacy campaigns spanning a range of issues in mainland China. These include the campaigns to cap China's greenhouse gas emissions, strengthen its intellectual property rights (IPR) laws, improve and expand HIV/AIDS treatment programmes, abolish capital punishment, obtain justice for the Falun Gong religious movement, and achieve Tibetan independence.

These were chosen deliberately, and with several criteria in mind. First, these campaigns reflect the full range of transnational advocacy in China. Their results, conceived in terms of effectively influencing the adoption of national policy, vary widely, from the failure of Falun Gong advocates to undo the official ban on the group and bring Jiang Zemin to justice, to the relative success of global warming activists in helping to ratchet down China's carbon outputs. Similarly, the campaigns elaborated here capture an assortment of functional forms or mobilization sequences and the role of the state in each, showing the benefits and drawbacks of different campaign strategies in different contexts, and raising new questions about the nature of TAN 'effectiveness' and causality itself. No less important is the methodological rationale underpinning the selection of diverse cases. Accounting for the varied outcomes and processes of TAN campaigns by exploring a breadth of campaign types not only limits selection bias, but normative bias as well, a mostly unacknowledged but nevertheless palpable characteristic of much research on TANs within international relations, which has tended to focus on progressive political and social causes. A key advantage of the interactive approach of this book is that it calls attention to the divergent and often contradictory points of view surrounding an issue, raising the question 'progressive for whom?'

Second, these campaigns were chosen specifically for their national importance and for their significance to China as a whole, since issues deemed

unimportant by the central state would presumably not factor into national-level policy considerations one way or the other. Issues of strictly regional or local concern are more likely to be dealt with by provincial, county, or village governments, the inner workings and priorities of which have been discussed at length elsewhere (e.g. O'Brien and Li, 1999; Tsai, 2007; Yang, 1997), and lie beyond the empirical focus of this study. Third, capturing the attention of the central government presupposes the formation of a campaign as a logically and analytically prior condition for its effectiveness. Just as not all campaigns effectively influence states, not all issues become campaigns (Carpenter, 2007). As measuring the impact of non-issues makes little sense, this study takes campaign existence for granted, and consists only of those that pressed their concerns to the target state. A fourth criterion was ease of measurement – a not insignificant consideration when studying activism in a place like China, and on issues of political, social, or economic sensitivity. The combination of these four criteria – that cases be diverse, seek national level impacts, exist as campaigns, and are measurable – significantly narrowed the number of TANs available for study, but left behind a set of six ‘most different’ ones.

The precise basis for their comparison is elaborated in greater detail in the next chapter. For now, the campaign cases are each presented as ‘analytic narratives’, a technique similar to process-tracing but distinguished from historiography by the presentation of data so as to serve the greater tasks of testing and building theory (Bates *et al.*, 1998). This design allows for elaboration of the mechanisms and sequences of events that connect possible causes to observed outcomes, a key benefit of process-tracing (George and Bennett, 2005), as well as comparison across cases. A ‘pattern-matching’ technique (Mahoney, 2000, 2003; Sewell, 1996) is then applied to discern from the cases any causal regularities, recurring sequences, or lessons of value from the experiences of transnational advocacy in China.

Empirically, the cases are constructed from a blend of documentary and interview data collected between 2009 and 2015. Interviews took the form of semi-structured conversations with NGOs, government officials and spokespersons, trade associations and other civil society organizations in mainland China, as well as in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Hong Kong. University ethics protocols – and a genuine concern for participants in some TANs that address highly sensitive political issues in China – preclude the identification of individuals by name, and in many cases, by their organizations. Instead, I refer to participants simply by their location and organizational type, and where possible, their job title (e.g. former press officer of a Shanghai-based environmental NGO).

This is not just a book about China, but also one that uses China as a case study to generate some insights about the nature of transnational advocacy and the cohesion of activist networks. It is not, and cannot be, an exhaustive account of contentious politics in China, Chinese civil society, or the domestic lobbying industry. Nor is it meant to facilitate a detailed dissection of the Chinese state that furnishes a more fine-grained understanding of how (and how well) its many layers function together. Rather, the book offers insight into when and why some activist issues gain currency in China domestically while others do not, giving a sense of the factors that determine the position of an issue on the central government's priority list, as well as the spectrum of campaign pathways that emerge from interaction with a powerful central state.

Of course, the limits of the China case are worth remembering too, as are the constraints imposed by dependent variable selection. The results and pathways probed here are only a small part of the still-emerging picture of TAN behaviours more generally, and domestic policy change is only one measure of TAN effectiveness, though it is probably the one that appears most commonly in the scholarship. Besides pressuring states for specific policy concessions, advocacy networks also seek to shape the nature and terms of the debate itself by raising consciousness, setting agendas, and developing the capacities of domestic NGOs and other non-state advocacy groups. All of these may serve as useful indicators of successful or 'effective' campaigns in their own right, or they may be key ingredients in a larger attempt to eventually transform the practices of states or international organizations. Here, however, TAN 'effectiveness' is gauged by its role in observable changes in central government policy.

Bridging (sub-)fields

Different academic disciplines employ differing understandings of transnationalism. In anthropology, sociology, and history, for example, the term is often applied in studies of diaspora communities living in different countries, separated from each other geographically but linked to a homeland and each other through shared memories or myths. Here, however, it refers to groups of activists living in different countries who wage cross-border campaigns to change state policies in a given issue area. Common devotion to an idea or principle, rather than national or cultural affiliation, supplies the motivation for collective action. Understood in this way, there is no categorical requirement that individuals or organizations in TANs have any active, physical presence in the state they target, though they may and often do. In their

landmark work on TANs, Keck and Sikkink famously described the ‘boom-rang pattern’ in which grassroots activists form linkages with allies in other countries and apply the resources of transnational space to their struggles at home, resulting in domestic-level policy changes (1998: 12–13).

Because transnational networks are significant globally and domestically, this book speaks to students of comparative and international politics, bridging what is treated here as a superficial divide between the sub-fields. True, the two developed as distinct disciplines, each with their own assumptions, methods, approaches, and analytical blind spots. Over time, however, this differentiation has faded and been replaced with a greater degree of topical and theoretical convergence (Haynes, 2005: 4–5; Milner, 1998).

One key point of convergence concerns explanatory frameworks in the field of transnational advocacy. Scholars from both sub-fields have borrowed extensively from various schools of social movement theory to describe the conditions under which TANs succeed or fail, adapting them to suit the transnational milieu in which TANs operate. Resource mobilization theory, typically centred on movement structures and their interaction with the external environment (McCarthy and Zald, 1977), has been redeployed in terms of network characteristics to capture the internal organizational features and processes that bear on advocacy campaigns. The concept of political opportunity structures, which encompasses a broad array of context-based institutional and historical factors (Meyer and Minkoff, 2004), has been adapted to include exogenous environmental characteristics, both within the target state and internationally, that can enhance or limit the chances for TANs to achieve their goals. Finally, the characteristics of specific issues promoted by TANs have a strong affinity to cultural or ideational theories emphasizing the symbolic component of collective identity (e.g. Melucci, 1989).

Transnational activist networks and state preferences

All social networks are inherently ‘network[s] of meanings’ (White, 1992: 67). In the case of TANs, these meanings take the form of moral sentiments or beliefs about the rights and obligations of certain actors in relation to others. Those that concern us here are ideational constructs, ‘distinguishable largely by the centrality of principled ideas or values motivating their formation’ (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 3). At the same time, TANs are also rational, communicative structures that make use of voluntary, reciprocal information exchange to coordinate their activities among a wide variety of member organizations. These may include international and domestic NGOs, academics and scientific experts, charitable foundations, media outlets, religious

communities, trade unions and consumer groups, as well as fragments of intergovernmental and national government bodies.

As strategic yet fundamentally principled actors, TANs seek to export the belief systems they embody. Relying on persuasion and framing instead of disruption or violence, they develop, disseminate, and enforce shared normative standards, acting out of conscience to change behaviours they deem morally objectionable. This is frequently (though not exclusively) achieved by waging campaigns to optimize leverage over actors more materially powerful than themselves. Sometimes it involves 'naming and shaming' those politicians or countries concerned about their international reputation. In other instances, it means mobilizing reliable information or recognized expertise on a given issue in ways conducive to placing it on the global agenda, or otherwise influencing policy coordination and discussion (Haas, 1992: 3; Price, 2003: 586–588). TAN activity has been documented on a huge and diverse set of issues including weapons control (Price, 1998; Price and Tannenwald, 1996; Rutherford, 2000), gender equality (Berkovitch, 1999; Clark *et al.*, 1998), environmental protection (Gough and Shackley, 2001; Wapner, 2002), human rights (Burgerman, 2001; Clark, 2001), and democratization (Riker, 2002; Schmitz, 2006), to name only a few.

The salience of TANs is conventionally linked to their ability to alter the policies and practices of states. When and where these campaigns are effective – and they are not always effective – advocacy networks are seen as remodelling world order by troubling conventional notions of state power in international politics (Boli and Thomas, 1999; Risse and Sikkink, 1999). Thus, their role in global politics is most often posed as a rebuttal to the state-centric structural realist paradigm in international relations (Katzenstein *et al.*, 1998; Keohane, 1989; Krasner, 1985; Waltz, 1979). The cornerstone of this understanding of TANs is the belief that transnational activists socialize states to new standards of behaviour, not the other way around. Indeed, transnational civil society was imagined to be a space beyond the reach of nation-states, outside their sphere of influence. The problem is that this common framing limits our impression of the scope of activist–state relationships and over-determines our sense of the process by which advocacy campaigns unfold. Posing the question as one of activists affecting states forecloses the possibility that the reverse may also be true: states influence advocacy networks just as advocates may influence those states.

I argue that state preferences are central to understanding how advocacy campaigns unfold because they affect the choices activists make and hence the pathways their campaigns take. More specifically, I analyse the phenomenon of multiple, differentiated causal pathways produced by the interaction of target interests and individual network attributes and incentives – a

perspective that accounts for the simultaneously principled and strategic nature of transnational activist organizations. Accordingly, a core contention of this book is that the degree of conviction held by activists matters as much as the principles themselves. It is not simply a matter of what activists believe, but how committed they are to those values that shape the form an advocacy campaign takes. The intent is not to pass judgement on which TANs show purity of heart and which do not, but rather to shine a light on the principles–rationality nexus that exists within every TAN. Doing so allows us to glimpse those factors that tell us how far activists are willing to go to achieve their goals, what they may be willing to sacrifice along the way, and when they choose to dig in their heels when confronted with immutable or non-negotiable target state preferences.

As a factor affecting transnational civil society, state preferences or ‘national interests’ are underappreciated. I argue that national interests as expressed through soft power influence the courses charted by TAN campaigns. Here, soft power refers to the practice of ‘catching more flies with honey’ than with vinegar. A vehicle for the advancement of one’s own interests by non-coercive means, it relies upon the magnetism and seductiveness of the user to shape the preferences of others by making certain options appear more or less attractive (Nye, 2004). Though indisputably backed by enormous coercive capability, soft power persuasion for the advancement of its interests is nevertheless an announced priority of China’s central government. It was a favoured tool of the fourth generation of leadership of Hu Jintao, which saw soft power as a means to trumpet Chinese culture and development to the world and promote a harmonious socialist society (*shehui zhuyi hexie shehui*) at home by balancing economic gains with the redistribution of wealth, and more responsive, effective, and corruption-free governance. These goals have largely carried over into the fifth-generation presidency of Xi Jinping, though perhaps with a stronger inclination to resort to repressive tactics, and a more personalistic style of rule.

For understanding the forms and fates of advocacy campaigns, the salient detail is that by virtue of the disposition of their interests and negotiation posture, Beijing can make some courses of action appear more attractive to transnational activist groups than others. Commonly described as ‘nascent’, ‘state-led’, and ‘corporatist’, China’s civil society remains characterized by heavy top-down supervision and control, a fact that has a tendency to incentivize NGO cooperation with authorities, resulting in the tailoring of their missions and messages to match what is feasible or advisable within the interstices of the state (Hildebrandt, 2013; Spires, 2011; Teets, 2014). Under these conditions, the costs of principled behaviour, or ‘sticking to one’s guns’, may become unacceptably high. In the Chinese context,

it frequently pays to advocate an issue and frame one's arguments about it in ways the state welcomes, or at least finds palatable, since the central government is rarely if ever persuaded to follow a course of action it does not already favour. Occasions where foreigners succeed in that endeavour are rarer still.

The second crucial aspect determining campaign forms is the way activists respond when confronted with the soft power of the state. For some, altering their core mission in return for access to key state partners is a tradeoff worth making. Others may view these costs as unacceptable. Laying the burden of how best to respond at the feet of individual networks means that each one takes responsibility for the way its campaign transpires. Activists may not be able to control how the Chinese state behaves, but they can decide how to react when faced with less than ideal circumstances. Theoretically, this means paying attention to the complex interrelationships between principles, strategies and tactics of TANs, as several scholars have begun to do in recent years (e.g. *Avant et al.*, 2010; Schmitz and Mitchell, 2014) as well as how internal features of TANs like issue profiles, network structures, resources, and governance – all of which may in turn be shaped by exogenous factors – shape decisions about whether or how a campaign is to continue (Wong, 2014). Such a view can also shed light on the subtle but important ways in which TANs can serve their own aims by operating within the bounds of existing state preferences, even when they do not play a role in setting those preferences. Of course, such circumstances are special and limited in China, as one might expect. From a practical standpoint, operating in China usually means recognizing the limits of what is possible, and calibrating one's expectations accordingly.

When and where it happens, electing to compromise and play by the state's rules is rarely seen as 'selling out'. Activists tend to view this as making the most out of a tough situation, and a necessary step toward a more desirable if less than perfect result in China, rather than an abandonment of their principles. Most acknowledge the importance of facing honestly the realities of lobbying a government like China's, even if it means dialing back the rhetoric on issues of central and defining importance. This is not necessarily a bad thing, since in many cases small gains are preferable to none at all, and the world needs doers just as much as it needs martyrs – maybe more so.

Advocacy drift

In certain cases, the right combination of state preferences and network incentives produce a slippage of core principles. I call this occurrence 'advocacy

drift'. The term bears some resemblance to 'mission creep', which generally refers to the gradual expansion or broadening of a project or campaign beyond its original goals. Oftentimes mission creep is linked to institutional dysfunction. The World Bank, for example, has been accused of adding tasks to its mandate to the point that the organization has become unwieldy, and unable to manage its affairs as it would otherwise be able (Einhorn, 2001). Advocacy drift, by contrast, is not about the growth of activists' agendas or goals. In fact, it can mean just the opposite – a reversal or abandonment of guiding ideologies, beliefs, or principles such that a TAN may lose the sense of identity that gives structure, meaning, and purpose to a campaign. These circumstances would be extreme, but they are not the only form advocacy drift may take. As I use it here, the term refers to any renegotiation of TAN principles resulting from interaction with the target state.

Sometimes advocacy drift results from the co-optation of activists and their de facto incorporation into the state through partnerships with Chinese agencies at various levels, something that is likely to happen only where there is already significant demand for new policies or programmes connected to TAN agendas. For other TANs, a shift in core principles comes about because of the incommensurability of the campaign's stated goal with Chinese interests. Incorporation into the state is simply not an option in such cases. Rather, the change in values is a strategic calculation made upon the realization that the campaign's agenda is certain to fail and compliance with Beijing's wishes is the best of all possible worlds.

Advocacy drift is remarkable not only as the conceptual inverse of the standard activists-leveraging-states model of transnational civil society, but because it touches a chord close to the very constitution of advocacy networks. At their most elemental, TANs are idea-based. They exist in people's heads and are, to borrow Benedict Anderson's famous phrase, 'imagined communities', sociologically constituted by the shared ethical standards of individuals and groups otherwise separated by enormous geographic, cultural, and experiential divides. Fidelity of purpose rooted in shared values is the presumptive building block of all TANs, operating as a frame that gives meaning and structure to transnational activity and galvanizing a sense of common identity without which campaigns cannot possibly endure let alone effect state behaviour. In this sense, TANs not only promote, monitor, and disseminate norms – they *are* norms. With little more than ideas to link diverse groups of actors at the global level, activists risk losing a sense of identity and purpose.

From this standpoint, the moral commitments of TANs are expected to be highly static and resistant to change. Al Gore, former US vice-president and perhaps the world's most recognizable climate activist, exemplifies precisely

this kind of unwavering devotion to principle. If members of the public are able to recall one detail of his life after public office, it is probably his commitment to the environment. He may or may not succeed in persuading lawmakers to curb carbon emissions, but either way his convictions are clear and he is unlikely to retreat from them. In the same way, the abortion issue has no grey area in the minds of most right-to-life advocates. Israel supporters who consider West Bank settlement a matter of holy moral obligation are unlikely to barter that position away. Nelson Mandela did not remain leader and figurehead of the anti-apartheid movement through a twenty-seven-year prison term by being wishy-washy.

The point is that activists are typically defined by their commitment to an idea, and in many cases compromising that idea is unthinkable. Concessions to structuralism are necessary, of course, and successful mobilization always requires the shrewd management of resources. But even the most pragmatic activists typically have a line they refuse to cross, and that serves to remind them of who they are and what they stand for. Advocacy drift therefore cuts to the heart of a pivotal problem in transnational collective action – the flexibility of moral constitution in response to exogenous shocks.

State-led transnational civil society?

The objective of this book is not to criticize the sincerity of activists' beliefs, but to reassess the agency of non-state actors in a transnational age, and to highlight the practical limits of what can reasonably be accomplished through issue-based activism given the profile of certain players on the international scene. For many if not most students of globalization, the end of the Cold War heralded the emergence of a borderless world in which states were increasingly irrelevant and optimism about the universality of global values reigned supreme. Frequently this image of the impotent state came packaged with a view of an ascendant transnational civil society and a focus on how TANs and other non-state actors shaped the global environment, rather than how that environment changed them. The following chapters cast doubt on the triumphalist tone of so much work on transnational civil society, serving as a reminder that the soft power preferences of states are not to be discounted or trifled with – soft power which in China's case is sufficiently strong to get global warming activists to back away from the emissions cap they sought for so long, and the Dalai Lama to cease talk of Tibetan independence.

Considering China's growing influence in the world – politically, economically, and culturally – there is a need to shift the conversation back to the way it shapes the rules and mores of global civil society. What does China's rise portend for the future of international human rights or climate dialogue?

Contrary to the expectations of many who set out to engage China in the hope of promoting its swift reform, China's integration in the world community only strengthens its hand in the rule-making process, placing it in a position to set the terms of global discourse without necessarily compelling it to abide by the rules of others. While the thought of a new superpower untethered from the same logic of appropriateness that guides current global interactions may be disconcerting to some, it is a scenario that deserves careful study. Likewise, the resilience of authoritarianism in China and its patterns of accommodation, co-optation, incorporation, and repression when dealing with civil society may hold lessons for activists' elsewhere, as authoritarian regimes appear likely to remain a feature of the global political landscape and because China's own model of politics is increasingly being emulated by a growing number of China's partners abroad.

For supporters of activists and lobby groups in foreign governments and elsewhere, the central question is no longer whether to engage China, but how to manage expectations. I offer an introductory guide to that end, providing some sense of the tradeoffs and ethical ambiguities that can arise when foreign activists engage China. Considering the difficulties of merely breaking into the domestic policy world as an outsider – to say nothing of getting Beijing to change its mind – would-be foreign partners should approach China with caution and be prepared to make a few strategic concessions. Activists and their allies around the world need to know who they are dealing with, understand what's possible, and make a clear-eyed assessment of the risks.

No less important, however, is the reflexive need to understand one's own bargaining position, and, crucially, the point at which strategic behaviour undermines principle. Grasping this latter point is especially significant because failing to do so can end up posing a conflict of interest for TANs, in some cases even inducing a crisis of collective identity by undermining the very purpose for an organization's existence. Of course, decisions about where the line is to be drawn or when it has been crossed belong to the individuals and actors within each issue campaign. Among those considered here, no two have faced exactly the same circumstances or incentives, and thus none holds an absolute monopoly on the 'right way' to conduct issue advocacy in China. Indeed, a key lesson of this book is that because the choices of some activists may not be interesting or available to all, there are many paths an advocacy campaign can follow. The book cannot and should not be the final word on the subject, but my hope is that it will open a new line of dialogue on the nature of transnational advocacy, one in which states are taken seriously as makers and not merely takers of norms, and in which China's role in setting the terms of global debate is accorded due respect.

Plan of the book

The following chapter first introduces a theoretical framework for investigating TANs in China through a stylised exposition of three hypotheses drawn from three discrete paradigmatic traditions. Taking its inspiration from realist/statist theory, the first of these posits that the reason some states are more open than others to TAN campaigns is because it is in the interests of some states to be open to them. Put another way, state preferences and their ability to execute these preferences shape activists' prospects. The second hypothesis derives from liberal international relations theory and argues that domestic social preferences compel state actors to adopt policy positions compliant with popular sentiment. Although this scenario is indeed typical of democracies where elites are presumably concerned with their own electability, I argue that domestic social preferences can and do exercise influence in authoritarian regimes as well, including China. The third and final hypothesis is drawn from social constructivist theory and argues that TAN campaigns become influential politically when states are moved to act as a result of the diffusion of norms and social pressure which encourage their adoption. On this account, states may be socialized to norms of acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, which serve as signifiers of belonging to a community of norm-compliant actors.

The second half of chapter one then distils from each of these paradigmatic traditions a set of variables which are operationalized throughout the rest of the book. The realist family covers explanatory factors related to stateness and state capacity, including international-level considerations such as linkage to allied foreign governments and interstate bodies, as well as domestic institutional characteristics overlapping with what social movement theorists refer to as political opportunity structures. Such factors include a state's degree of decentralization, openness to new social actors and the availability of allies in state offices, and the capacity of a government to repress collective mobilizations. Regime type, held constant within this study by virtue of the empirical focus on China, is part and parcel of the second family of variables, which belong to the liberal or social-preferences based family of variables. Also included in this category are the internal characteristics of TANs themselves, or what have traditionally been the foremost considerations of 'resource mobilization' theorists. These include the size of a TAN and the number of organizations within it, as well as the relative flatness or stratification of internal hierarchies, leadership styles, and professional qualities or skills which enable a TAN to take advantage of the resources at its disposal, whether these are found within or outside of the target state. Variables fitting within the constructivist or norm-based family of factors include such ideological considerations as the relevance of different issue profiles, a campaign's

degree of ‘fit’ with a target’s cultural context, and the ease with which an issue might be grafted onto a pre-existing and well-subscribed set of moral standards.

This set of explanatory variables provides a structural framework for the analytic narratives that comprise chapters two, three, and four. Chapter two explores a pair of what I call ‘natural cases’ – the campaigns around justice for Falun Gong and the strengthening of IPRs in China. I call them ‘natural’ cases because despite the stark differences in the reaction to each from Beijing – or, more properly, the lack of a reaction in the instance of Falun Gong – both exhibit an approximately similar functional form, and are models of ‘critical causality’. One was welcomed by the Chinese authorities and one was not, but neither case displays evidence of altering its core mission or message, or of sustained collaboration with the Chinese authorities to solve a common problem. The IPR campaign did of course share an objective with Chinese central state, but to date has not become a partner in the development of new or innovative solutions in the manner that other campaign actors explored in the book have.

Chapter three traces the campaign around HIV/AIDS treatment, and the effort to abolish capital punishment in China. As with the cases explored in chapter two, these campaigns met with very different results. During the 1990s, the mounting HIV crisis, particularly in southern China, and the state’s implication in major public health scandals led to a growing realization among Chinese policy-makers that it would need to abandon its long-time view that HIV/AIDS sufferers were victims of their own moral depravity and take action against the disease. These factors, coupled with a change in regime leadership and a shift towards policies based on scientific evidence rather than socialist ideology, created an opportunity for medical experts, scientists, and NGOs operating within and among international organs to shape official policy through provision of reliable, in-demand information. Thus, the HIV/AIDS campaign stands as an instance of ‘intervening’ or ‘intercessory’ causality, having learned to work effectively with China’s own government. The inclusion of the campaign to eliminate the death penalty underscores the importance of care in assigning causal attribution to transnational activists when China adopts a new policy seemingly in line with TAN objectives. In this case, the regime undertook a calculated and purposeful reduction in the number of executions. Seeking to balance leniency and severity in criminal punishment, it would apply the death penalty sparingly and less arbitrarily than it had in the past, while retaining the practice for use against society’s worst offenders. This reduction, however, had little to do with transnational human rights advocacy and everything to do with the desires of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders to strengthen legitimacy

by simultaneously enhancing the rule of law and maintaining order through its tough-on-crime stance.

Both of the narratives sketched in chapter four provide evidence of a third, reverse causal process at work in which state preferences influenced the inner working of TANs, not the other way around. In the campaign for Tibetan independence, Chinese intransigence on the matter of national sovereignty for Tibet over several decades produced a split within the TAN, with some factions espousing the use of any means necessary to secure Tibetan independence, while others continued to favour a strategy of passive resistance to what they view as the unlawful Chinese occupation of their homeland. With no hope for the achievement of his long-time objective, the Dalai Lama himself has publicly advocated for greater recognition of Tibetans in a more inclusive, multinational China, rather than self-governance through sovereign statehood. The process of advocacy drift happened another way in the campaign for climate change mitigation, however. In that instance, environmental advocates recognized China's reluctance to accept emissions trading and backed away from the objective, seeing an opportunity to have a positive impact on the country's greenhouse gas emissions via another path. Instead of waging a costly and unwinnable war of ideas against the state, climate scientists, foundations, and NGOs became partners in the state's own green growth strategy, teaming up with government agencies and think tanks to help offset the ecological impacts of China's rapid development.

Chapter five synthesizes the case studies in order to develop a new theory of transnational advocacy. The chapter consists of two parts. Returning to the families of variables introduced in chapter one, the first part explores some potential strategies for activists in China arising from realist or state-based factors (including linkages to other states and inter-state bodies), liberal or society-centred factors such as a network's own mobilizing structures, and ideational or issue characteristics. As expected, an issue's congruence with national interests is the single most important determinant of TAN effectiveness in China. This section develops the argument that TANs can be effective when a legitimacy-seeking state deems the adoption of new policy positions in a given issue area to be critical for the preservation of its own moral authority and power monopoly. The key to working more effectively in China, therefore, is to recognize the source of Party legitimacy and the connectedness of an issue to it. The second portion of the chapter is then given over to elaborating the theory of 'advocacy drift', and includes explanations for its occurrence and non-occurrence. While my analysis is obviously confined to the experience of advocacy campaigns in China, this theory may well be relevant to understandings of TANs more broadly, given the tradeoffs between pragmatism

and principles that all TANs face, and the apparent resurgence of authoritarian governance in a globally interconnected world.

In my conclusion, I suggest that those wishing to approach China recognize and take seriously the Chinese power to shape global issues and campaigns in support of them. This advice applies both to TANs and to the governments that sometimes participate in campaigns, or seek relationships with China of their own. Of course, the fact that TANs are subject to state interests does not mean that they are entirely ineffectual, nor does it mean that the Chinese state is invulnerable or obtuse. Indeed, the book shows how some TANs work within and for the state in order to maximize their effectiveness, and also how the state is especially receptive to external input when its interests are served. Still, China's importance on the world stage is now such that it cannot be ignored by activists. With no choice but to engage this rising world power, activists and those that support them should be mindful of the realities and uncertainties of that engagement, and set their expectations accordingly.