China and the International Human Rights Regime

Rana Siu Inboden examines China’s role in the international human rights regime between 1982 and 2017 and, through this lens, explores China’s rising position in the world. Focusing on three major case studies – the drafting and adoption of the Convention against Torture and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, the establishment of the UN Human Rights Council, and the International Labour Organization’s Conference Committee on the Application of Standards – Inboden shows China’s subtle yet persistent efforts to constrain the international human rights regime. Based on a range of documentary and archival research, as well as extensive interview data, Inboden provides fresh insights into the motivations and influences driving China’s conduct and explores China’s rising position as a global power.

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1982–2017

Rana Siu Inboden
For Will
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When I first began to study China in earnest many years ago, China was much less developed economically but there was optimism that the country’s trajectory would include not only economic growth but expanded political reform as well. China’s growing openness to the world also fueled expectations that it would emerge as a responsible power that supported international order. Yet, while China’s skylines and living standards have risen, political liberalization has stalled and under Xi Jinping China has pursued a nationalistic foreign policy and rebuffed human rights ideals. My hope is that this book contributes to our understanding of China and the factors that have thus far impeded its acceptance of human rights norms.

Some people will misconstrue my focus on China and human rights by assuming an anti-China bias. Yet, I was drawn to these issues because I think they are critical to securing a prosperous and stable future for China’s citizenry. In an era where tension between the West and China is mounting, I wanted to avoid feeding into overly broad generalizations about China and its role in the world. Thus, throughout this book I endeavored for accuracy and rigor, including basing my work strongly on empirical evidence.

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It was in the halls of the US State Department where I not only became interested in the issues explored in this book but where I met and fell in love with my husband, Will. I dedicate this book to him, as he has been a source of love, affection, encouragement, companionship, and protection, including accompanying me on numerous research trips. His scholarship, character, leadership, and faith are a constant guide and inspiration to me. He is a reminder to me that “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.”

Soli Deo Gloria.
Abbreviations

ACFTU  All-China Federation of Trade Unions
APT   Association for the Prevention of Torture
CASS  Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CAT   Convention against Torture
CCAS  Conference Committee on the Application of Standards of the International Labour Organization
CCP   Chinese Communist Party
COE   Committee of Experts on the Application of Standards of the International Labour Organization
CRG   Cross Regional Group
ECOSOC Economic and Social Council
GA    General Assembly
GRULAC Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries
IB    institution-building
ICCPR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ILC   International Labour Conference
ILO   International Labour Organization
ISHR  International Service for Human Rights
LMG   Like-Minded Group
MFA   Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NAM   Non-Aligned Movement
NGOs  nongovernmental organizations
OHCHR Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIC   Organization of the Islamic Conference
OPCAT Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture
PRC   People's Republic of China
R2P   responsibility to protect
ROC   Republic of China
SPT   Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UN Commission on Human Rights</td>
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<td>UNHRC</td>
<td>UN Human Rights Council</td>
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<td>UPR</td>
<td>Universal Periodic Review</td>
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<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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