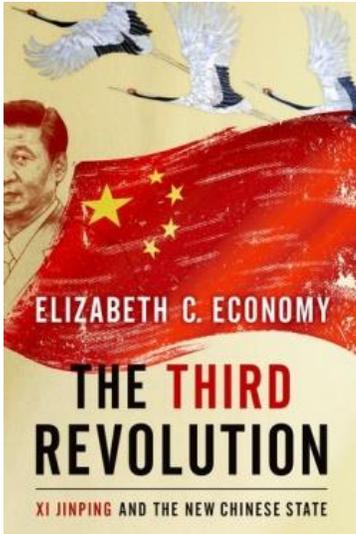


# COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

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## Teaching Notes

*The Third Revolution: Xi Jinping and the New Chinese State*

By **Elizabeth C. Economy**

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## Summary

In *The Third Revolution*, China scholar Elizabeth C. Economy provides an incisive look at the transformations underway in China today. Chinese leader Xi Jinping has unleashed a powerful set of political and economic reforms: the centralization of power under Xi; the expansion of the Communist Party's role in Chinese political, social, and economic life; and the construction of a virtual wall of regulations to more closely control the exchange of ideas and capital between China and the outside world. Beyond its borders, Beijing has recast itself as a great power, seeking to reclaim its past glory and to create a system of international norms that better serves its more ambitious geostrategic objectives. In so doing, Chinese leadership is reversing the trend toward greater political and economic opening, as well as the low-profile foreign policy, put in motion by Deng Xiaoping's "Second Revolution" thirty years earlier.

Economy provides a wide-ranging exploration of Xi Jinping's political, economic and foreign policy priorities—fighting corruption, managing the internet, reforming the state-owned enterprise sector, improving the country's innovation capacity, enhancing air quality, and elevating China's presence on the global stage. She identifies the tensions, shortcomings, and successes of Xi's reform efforts over the course of his first five years as chairman of the Chinese Communist Party and president of the

Chinese state, and assesses their implications for the world. Finally, she provides recommendations for how the United States and others should relate to this vast nation in the coming years.

[Read an excerpt from \*The Third Revolution\*.](#)

This book is suitable for the following types of undergraduate and graduate courses:

- International Relations
- U.S.–China Relations
- Global Governance
- Contemporary Chinese Studies/Chinese Politics
- Chinese Foreign Policy
- East Asian Politics

## **Discussion and Essay Questions**

### **Courses on International Relations**

1. As China's power continues to rise, how might Asian countries seek to counterbalance its influence?
2. What effect does China's increasing involvement in the developing world through projects like the Belt and Road Initiative have on shaping the existing international order?
3. Use IR theory to describe the rise of China under Xi Jinping. Does China fit into existing models and theories? If so, which one(s)? If not, why?
4. What are the implications of China's growing impact on regional and global order?
5. Are China and the United States destined for war?

### **Courses on U.S.–China Relations**

1. Is the era of U.S. primacy over? Is China willing and able to become a world superpower?
2. How have U.S.–China relations evolved in the era of Xi Jinping and Donald Trump? Is President Trump making China great again?
3. Are there areas in which U.S.–China cooperation is possible? How might growing U.S. abdication of international responsibilities impede or help this cooperation?
4. Based on what you have learned in *The Third Revolution*, what does the future of U.S.–China relations hold?
5. Does China pose a serious strategic challenge to the United States and the global system? Why or why not?
6. How does Beijing regard Washington's grand strategy toward China and vice versa?
7. What is the United States' current China strategy? What are its strengths and weaknesses in navigating an increasingly complex relationship with China?
8. Are China and the United States destined for war? Why or why not?

## **Courses on Global Governance**

1. How does Xi Jinping's approach to global governance differ from that of his two most recent predecessors?
2. In what areas is China supporting existing international regimes? Where is it defying them? And where is it attempting to create its own set of global rules and norms?
3. How is Xi's Belt and Road Initiative contributing to or detracting from China's push to be a global governance leader?
4. Xi Jinping has declared China a defender of globalization, particularly of free trade and investment and capital flows. To what extent is China's rhetorical championing of free trade and other engines of globalization matched by its actions at home and abroad?
5. What hurdles does China face in assuming global leadership? Will China convince other states that it can be a leading actor in global issues?

## **Courses on Contemporary Chinese Studies/Chinese Politics**

1. How does Chinese policy under Xi Jinping mark a departure from previous Chinese leaders?
2. Xi Jinping seeks to realize the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." How are his policies informed by Chinese history?
3. How is the Xi government centralizing power and growing the presence of the Communist Party in Chinese social and political life? To what effect?
4. In what ways might China's domestic political or economic environment constrain Xi's ambitions for China to play a greater role on the global stage?
5. Are Xi's attempts to assert more power abroad without opening up at home sustainable? How do variables like the internet, environment, and technologic innovation factor into whether he succeeds or fails?

## **Courses on Chinese Foreign Policy**

1. How does Xi Jinping's rule mark a departure from previous Chinese leaders in terms of his foreign policy vision?
2. Discuss China's use of hard and soft power in its foreign policy. How is it changing? Is it effective in terms of achieving its goals?
3. What effect does China's increasing involvement in the developing world through projects like the Belt and Road Initiative have on shaping the existing international order?
4. How are economic drivers informing foreign policy decisions in China, and vice versa?
5. What is Xi's ultimate foreign policy goal?

## **Courses on East Asian Politics**

1. How should other Asian countries develop strategies for addressing China's rise under Xi Jinping, especially if the United States is less involved in the region?

2. How is Xi's Belt and Road Initiative contributing to (or detracting from) China's push to be a leader in Asia?
3. What do China's actions in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the South China Sea, tell us about Xi's aims, and why?
4. As China's power continues to rise, what challenges and opportunities might other Asian states encounter?
5. Is China attempting to become a regional hegemon? Is it already? What resistance is Beijing facing?

## Further Projects

### Analytical Essay

Write a 1,500 word essay on one of the following subjects:

- As a U.S. policy maker, what would be your policy recommendations for navigating the increasingly complex and important relationship with China?
- Is the internet eroding or increasing Xi Jinping's control over Chinese society?

### Speech/Memorandum Writing

Pick a Southeast Asian state in which you are a policy maker. Chinese officials recently approached your government offering to build a high-speed railway and a new port as part of their Belt and Road Initiative. Your country is in dire need of these infrastructure upgrades, but you are also aware of the issues Chinese involvement has brought about in neighboring states. What do you do? Write a speech or memo to your country's leader stating and defending your position.

### Debate

Are Xi Jinping's moves to clamp down on civil society and the internet and exert more control over Chinese political, economic, and social life making China stronger or weaker? Divide into two teams, with each team arguing different sides.

### Supplementary Materials

Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

Bruce Dickson, *The Dictator's Dilemma: The Chinese Communist Party's Strategy for Regime Survival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Elizabeth Economy and Michael Levi, *By All Means Necessary: How China's Resource Quest is Changing the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

David Lampton, *Following the Leader: Ruling China, from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

Tom Miller, *China's Asian Dream: Empire Building Along the New Silk Road* (London: Zed Books: 2017).

Carl Minzner, *End of an Era: How China's Authoritarian Revival is Undermining its Rise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Minxin Pei, *China's Crony Capitalism: The Dynamics of Regime Decay* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 2016).

Jennifer Rudolph and Michael Szonyi, *The China Questions: Critical Insights into a Rising Power* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

Orville Schell, *Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Random House, 2013).

David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).  
David Shambaugh, *China's Future* (Malden: Polity, 2016).

Xi Jinping, *Governance of China Parts I and II* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2014 and 2017).