

HERTOG 2020 POLITICAL STUDIES PROGRAM

CHINESE GRAND STRATEGY

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This course is a seminar in Chinese grand strategy and foreign policy. We will explore major continuities and discontinuities in China's approach to the modern world from the height of the Qing Empire through today (a period roughly equivalent to the existence of the United States). And we will examine how current Chinese strategy seeks to shape its future.

As the People's Republic of China rises to preeminence in world affairs, it is critical that U.S. strategists have a deeper understanding of how China's strategy and statecraft has developed over its history. What makes Chinese strategy unique is the fact that China is both a civilization and a nation-state—or "a civilization pretending to be a nation-state" as sinologist Lucian Pye has described it. It has a strong sense of how the world should be ordered. It is also the only country in the world that still rules most of its imperial territories.

Throughout China's strategic history, it has faced critical turning points. Given our time constraints, we will begin with an overview of China today under Xi Jinping's leadership. We will then turn to the late Qing China, when the Middle Kingdom was at the height of its power and had organized its foreign relations into what is now commonly referred to as the "Chinese world order." We will then look at the attempts of the new Chinese nation-state to "reunify" the Qing borders and to contend with a succession of tectonic shifts in world affairs (1911 to 1949). Next, we will study the period of "Maoism," during which China pursued a revolutionary, Communist foreign policy (1949 to Mao's death). Finally, we will consider the period of "reform and opening," from 1978 to the present, and discuss whether China's grand strategy faces a new turning point as the post-WWII global order is undergoing severe strain.

The main objective of this course is to develop an analytical framework to assess the merits of the current debates about China's strategy. We will answer some of the following questions:

- 1) What does China see as its place in world affairs, particularly in Asia? What is China's vision of an alternative Chinese-led world order? How is such an order similar/different from Imperial China at the height of its power?
- 2) What strategies is China implementing to advance its ends?
- 3) What are some of the constraints China faces given its embrace of significant parts of the global order and the current balance of power?
- 4) How should the U.S. respond?

Discussants: Discussants are assigned to specific questions below and should be ready to offer a reflective response to their assigned question during the seminar. Discussants do not need to prepare a formal written response, but they are encouraged to work from personal notes.

Sessions: Our course will take place on Zoom. All times are Eastern Standard; please adjust for your own time zone.

Monday, July 13, 2020

10 a.m. to Noon ET

Xi Jinping & the China Dream

Readings:

- Dan Blumenthal, “Introduction” and “Big Ambitions,” *The China Nightmare* (forthcoming)
- Excerpt from “Xi Jinping’s Report at the 19th CPC National Congress,” Xinhua, November 3, 2017
- Peter Mattis, “The Party Congress Test: A Minimum Standard for Beijing’s Intentions,” *War on the Rocks*, January 8, 2019
- Willy Wo-Lap Lam, “The Agenda of Xi Jinping: Is the Chinese Communist Party Capable of Thorough Reforms?” *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Communist Party*
- Christopher Ford, “Realpolitik with Chinese Characteristics: Chinese Strategic Culture and the Modern Communist Party-State,” *Strategic Asia 2016–17: Understanding Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific*

Discussion Questions:

1. The “China dream”: What does it mean? What is the CCP’s grand strategic objective? **[Discussant: James Beckwith]**
2. Does the “China dream” represent a break with past Chinese grand strategy or a continuation of it? **[Discussant: Zane Zovak]**
3. How does Xi Jinping envision China achieving its strategic objectives?
4. How has Xi’s strengthening of the CCP impacted his strategy?

Wednesday, July 15, 2020

10 a.m. to Noon ET

Why Global Centrality?: The Historical Legacy

Readings:

- Dan Blumenthal, “China: The Imperial Legacy,” *Rise of the Revisionists: Russia, China, and Iran*, ed. Gary Schmitt
- Odd Arne Westad, “Chapter 2: Imperialisms,” *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750*, p. 53–86
- William C. Kirby, “The Internationalization of China: Foreign Relations at Home and Abroad in the Republican Era,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 150 (June 1997), p. 433–58
- Chen Jian, “Introduction,” *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, p. 1–16
- Henry Kissinger, “Chapter 4: Mao’s Continuous Revolution,” *On China*, p. 91–112
- Margaret MacMillan, “Chapter 9: The Polar Bear,” *Nixon and Mao: The Week that Changed the World*, p. 124–45

Discussion Questions:

1. How did China under the Qing understand itself in relation to its various neighbors—the Mongols, East Eurasians, Vietnam, and Korea? What policies did it pursue toward those neighbors? What was “Sinification”?
2. What would it mean to “reunify” the Qing Dynasty empire? How successful has China been in reconstituting its historical holdings?

3. Is China's imperial mindset compatible with the Westphalian system of international relations based on "sovereign equals"?
4. How did Mao understand China's strategic situation post-WWII? How did he respond to that situation? What were his strategic objectives? How did he use alliances to achieve his objectives?
5. In what ways has China become a modern nation-state? In what ways is it still a premodern civilization/empire?

Friday, July 17, 2020

10 a.m. to Noon ET

Mao, Cont'd | Deng's National Rejuvenation

Readings:

- Ezra F. Vogel, "Chapter 9: The Soviet-Vietnamese Threat, 1978–1979," *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, p. 266–93
- Excerpts from Henry Kissinger, *On China*
 - "Chapter 13: 'Touching the Tiger's Buttocks,'" p. 340–76
 - "Chapter 17: A Roller Coaster Ride Toward Another Reconciliation: The Jiang Zemin Era," p. 447–86
- Yasheng Huang, "How Did China Take Off?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2012)

Discussion Questions:

1. How did Deng Xiaoping understand China's strategic situation? How did he respond to that situation? What were his strategic objectives?
2. What was "reform and opening"? What did Deng hope to achieve with this policy?
3. In what ways has China become a "post-modern," globalized nation? In what ways does it remain a modern nation-state? An empire?
4. Are Deng's changes reversible? Is it possible to de-globalize China?

Tuesday, July 21, 2020

10 a.m. to Noon ET

Deng, Cont'd | The Recentralization of Dictatorship

Readings:

- Joseph Fewsmith, Chs.1 & 2, *China Since Tiananmen: The Politics of Transition* (Cambridge University, 2018)
- Daniel Hartnett, "The 'New Historic Missions': Reflections on Hu Jintao's Military Legacy," *Assessing the People's Liberation Army in the Hu Jintao Era*, Strategic Studies Institute and US Army War College Press, April 2014
- Willy Lam, "The Maoist Revival and the Conservative Turn in Chinese Politics," *China Perspectives*, No. 2 (2012)
- Document 9: A ChinaFile Translation, November 8, 2013
- Derek Scissors, "Deng Undone: The Costs of Halting Market Reform in China," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2009

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did the CCP end its policy of reform and opening?
2. Is there a unique Leninist Party approach to the world? Is the CCP capable of reform which could enable it to tackle the challenges of the 21st century?
3. How do Chinese leaders today understand China's strategic situation? What internal threats do they see? What is their perception of the U.S.?

Thursday, July 23, 2020

10 a.m. to Noon ET

Implications for America

Readings:

- Michael Pillsbury, "The Sixteen Fears: China's Strategic Psychology," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, October–November 2012
- Ashley J. Tellis, "Overview," *Strategic Asia 2019: China's Expanding Strategic Ambitions*, NBR, January 29, 2019
- Dan Blumenthal and Nicholas Eberstadt, "China Unquarantined," *National Review*, June 2020

Discussion Questions:

1. How have Xi and the CCP responded to their strategic environment? What actions have they taken toward internal threats, their neighbors, and the U.S.?
2. What continuities and discontinuities do you see with China's strategy, past and present? In what ways is it still acting as an empire? A nation-state? A globalized economy?
3. What are the strategic implications of China's grand strategy for the U.S. and its allies?

Suggested Background Reading

(Available electronically and in hard copy upon request)

General

- 1) Christopher Ford, "Chapter 3: Confucian Conceptions of Order," *Mind of an Empire: China's History and Modern Foreign Relations*, p. 29–38
- 2) Bruce A. Elleman, *Beijing's Power and China's Borders: Twenty Neighbors in Asia*
- 3) Arthur Waldron, "Chapter 4: Chinese Strategy from the Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries," in Williamson Murray, Alvin Bernstein, MacGregor Knox (eds.), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*
- 4) Ashley J. Tellis and Robert D. Blackwill, *Revising U.S. Grand Strategy Toward China*, Council on Foreign Relations, April 2015

Qing Dynasty

- 1) Peter Perdue, "Chapter 16: Frontier Expansion in the Rise and Fall of the Qing," *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*, p. 547–58
- 2) Odd Arne Westad, "Chapter 4: Republic," *Restless Empire: China and the World since 1750*, p. 123–70
- 3) Margaret MacMillan, "Chapter 24: A Dagger Pointed at the Heart of China," *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World*
- 4) Alain Peyrefitte, "Chapter 86: In Exchange for Tea: Opium," and "Chapter 87: Military Action," *The Immobile Empire*

Mao

- 1) Chen Jian, "Chapter 4: China's Strategies to End the Korean War, 1950–1954," *Mao's China and the Cold War*, p. 85–117
- 2) Chen Jian, "Chapter 8: China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1965–1969," *Mao's China and the Cold War*, p. 205–37

Deng

- 1) Ezra F. Vogel, "Chapter 23: Deng's Finale: The Southern Journey," *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, p. 664–90

China Today

1) Christopher Ford, “Chapter 16: China Imagines Its World...and Its Future,” *Mind of an Empire: China’s History and Modern Foreign Relations*, p. 249–82

2) Henry Kissinger, “Chapter 6: Toward an Asian Order: Confrontation or Partnership?,” *World Order*, p. 212–34

4) Nadege Rolland, “A Vision for China as a Risen Power,” *China’s Eurasian Century? Political and Strategic Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative*, NBR, May 2017

5) Ian Johnson, “Chapter 2: Ritual: The Lost Middle,” *Souls of China*

6) Dan Blumenthal, “China, the United States, and the Geopolitics of Energy,” *Too Much Energy? Asia at 2030*, AEI, February 2015