

Ralph A. Thaxton, Jr.

Politics 175b

Summer School Session 1, 2023

Department of Politics

The Clash of Empires: The United States and China in the Struggle for Global Supremacy in the 21st Century

The United States and China are now the two most powerful nations in the world. Their relationship is extremely important, complex, and potentially explosive. This relationship is not only bi-lateral but also international, involving key nations in the global political economy (Japan, the two Koreas, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar, Taiwan, India, Australia, Cuba and Brazil, Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy and Greece, Russia, and much of Africa). How the United States and the People's Republic of China manage this relationship will impact a) who rules the world—authoritarian China or democratic America and its allies and b) whether the intensifying competition and conflict between these two superpowers explodes into war. This course will focus on how these two superpowers attempt to manage their relationship in the global arena.

We begin the course with a historical analysis of U.S. China relations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, coming up to the end of WWII. We then focus on the Cold War and how it shaped critical aspects of the U.S.-China relationship itself and with key nations, including Japan, Korea, Vietnam in Asia and England, France and Germany in Europe, and with the Soviet Union. We will pay special attention to the new American relationship with Japan, the war in Korea, and the Vietnam conflict. We next turn to U.S recognition of the PRC and rapprochement and “normalization” in the 1970s and 1980s, and to the post-Tiananmen relationship in the 1990s. We then focus on the present, taking up economic issues like competition over intellectual property rights and, importantly, control of technology innovation. We will pay considerable attention to the U.S.-PRC struggle over new internet ecosystems. We will explore the intensifying competition to control and dominate smart phone technologies and new generation 5-G technology, Blockchain (the technology of tomorrow), information systems used to survey and track online dissidents, and critical national defense and strategic military technologies. The low-profile war over technology is especially intense, and so we will spend considerable time on this subject. Finally, we will attempt to understand whether China is a fragile rather than an unbreakable superpower, and investigate how the insecurity of the Communist party ruling group influences China's relationships with U.S. aligned democracies, particularly Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, and Taiwan. We are especially interested in whether the current hyper-nationalism and xenophobia promoted by Xi Jinping and the Communist party might increase the prospects for a hot war over Taiwan or the South China Sea, both of which are seen as critical to China's national security.

In the final week, we will reflect on why and how other established empires have been challenged by rising powers (Germany Challenging the evolving British Empire—WWI; Japan Challenging the evolving U.S. Empire—WWII), and we will attempt to draw lessons from these episodes to better judge whether the U.S. and China are headed for war.

There are two mid-terms. One is take home, the other is in-class. The mid-term grades are not combined. Instead, the highest of the two mid-term exam performances will be the mid-term grade. The mid-term is 40 per cent of your grade. Class participation, which will involve a) participation in a group discussion of a book and b) either using the internet to write a short paper about how China's economic expansion into other countries has engendered environmental damage and enraged local people (see section X) or using the internet to write a short paper about U.S.-China desires and actions to control and dominate new internet ecosystems (see section XI), will count for 20 per cent of your grade. A five to ten page term paper on a topic to be determined will constitute the other 40 per cent of your grade. The term paper is due in early July.

Key Readings:

- 1) Chen Jian, China's Road to the Korean War *Required*
- 2) Howard French, Everything Under the Heavens: How the Past Helps Shape China's Push for Global Power *Required*
Martin Jacques, When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of A New Global Order *Recommended*
- 3) Daniel Lynch, Rising China and Asian Democratization *Recommended (Key Sections Only. See section VIII below, and conclusion)*
- 4) Susan Shirk, China: Fragile Super Power *Required Conclusion only*
- 5) Graham Allison, Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap? *Required*
- 6) Hal Brands and Michael Beckley, Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict with China *Required*

- I. Introduction: The Deep Past in U.S.-China Relations, Cohen, America's Response to China, Chapters 1-2, 4-6.
- II. WWII: China's Relations with the Soviet Union, the United States, and Japan at the end of World War II
- III. Off to a Tragic Start—The Integration of Japan into the U.S. Empire and the Shock and Anger in Beijing, and the Origins of the Korean War

Rational Political Choice or Great Political Betrayal: The U.S. Revives Japan, 1945-1948, Lecture

Steven Goldstein, "Sino-American Relations, 1948-1950: Lost Chance or No Chance?" in Harry Harding and Yuan Ming, Sino-American Relations, 1944-1955: A Joint Reassessment of a Critical Decade, chapter 6.

Chen Jian, China's Road to the Korean War, all

CLASS DISCUSSION

Film: Our Time in Hell

IV. The Geneva Conference, the Taiwan Crisis, and the Vietnam War

Zhai Qiang, "China and the Geneva Conference of 1954," The China Quarterly, No. 129, March, 1992, 103-122.

Thomas Christensen, Worse than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy, Chapters 3 and 6.

V. Rapprochement and Realignment: Towards Normalization

Harry Harding, A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China since 1972, 1-5.

Film: *Power in the Pacific*, Four Part Series

Discussion

VI. Tiananmen and Temporary Rupture

Listen to the song "Shanghai Breezes" by John Denver.

- A) Tiananmen Square: What Happened in the Protests of 1989? BBC News December. Internet December 23, 2021
- B) How China is Covering Up the 30th Anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre, DW News. Internet. 6/3/2019
- C) China: 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests, January 5, 2022
- D) What about Human Rights? Why did the U.S. Help Bring China back into the World after Tiananmen? Lecture

VII. Reform and Rising China, and Great Ambitions

Read: Martin Jacques, When China Rules the World, all

Or Howard French, Everything Under the Heavens, all CLASS DISCUSSION

VIII. A "Problem" for China's Global Rise

Daniel Lynch, Rising China and Asian Democratization, Chapters 1,3, 4-5, and 6 comparing Thailand and Taiwan.

IX. National Obstacles to China's Rise to Major Power Status—Japan, India, and Australia

- A) Brahma Chellaney, Asian Juggernaut: The Rise of China, India, and Japan, Chapter 1.
- B) Edward Friedman, "Preventing War Between China and Japan," In Edward Friedman

and Barrett L. McCormick, What if China Doesn't Democratize? Implications for War and Peace, 99-124

C) Akio Watanabe, "The PRC-Japan Relationship: Heading for a Collision?", 64-77 in Friedman and McCormick, eds. (above), 64-77.

D) Yinan He, "The Past and Present of Sino-Japanese Relations: Revisiting the Role of the U.S. Factor and the Legacy of History," in The United States Between China and Japan, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

X. How China's Economic Expansion into Other Countries Has Engendered Environmental Damage and Imperiled Basic Social Rights

China's Export of Its Model of Development: Damage to the Environment and Basic Social Rights--Some Key Cases:

- A) Dam Development in Southeast Asia, especially the Mekong/Consequences for Downstream Village Communities in Cambodia and Vietnam
- B) Maritime and Military Expansion into the South China Sea and the Impact on oceanic Ecosystems and Native Fishing Rights
- C) The Export of Coal Fire Plants to Africa and the Consequences for the Environment

XI. The US-China High Tech War

Winston Ma, The Digital War: How China's Tech Power Shapes the Future of AI, Blockchain, and Cyberspace, Chapters 1-5

Gordon G. Chang, The Great U.S.-China Tech War, select chapters on Communist party ownership and control of Huawei and Chinese advances in cutting-edge technology

Nina Xiang, US-China Tech War: What Chinese Tech History Reveals about Future Technology Rivalry, Chapters 1-2 on the semi-conductor industry.

XII. Special Section on Australia: What we can learn about PRC's authoritarian political reach into a developed democracy, and why and how the U.S. and Australia have joined with India and Japan to form the Quad Alliance to thwart China's ideological and military challenge to the democratic status quo in the Indo-Pacific area. And what has coal got to do with Covid-19?!

A) "Checking China: What Is the Quad?" Economic Times, May 24, 2022

B) Donald Rothwell, "Australia Drifts towards a China Conflict at Sea," August 28, 2022

C) "Australia's Debate about China is Becoming Hot, Angry, and Shril" Economics, May 8, 2021

D) Kirsty Needham, "Australian Prime Minister Warns of "lose-lose" in any China Coal Shift," Reuters, December 16, 2020

XIII. The United States and China Today and Tomorrow: Towards Peace of War

Yinan He, "Domestic Troubles, National Identity Discourse, and China's Attitude toward the West, 2003-2012", in Nations and Nationalism, 2018

Susan Shirk, China: Fragile Superpower, *Conclusion only*

Daniel Lynch, Rising China and Asian Democratization, conclusion

John J. Mearsheimer, "China's Unpeaceful Rise," *Current History*, Vol. 105, No 690, April 2006, 160-162

John J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, Introduction, Chapters 1-3, and 9 (The Causes of Great Power War)

Edward Friedman, "Immanuel Kant's Relevance to an Enduring Asia-Pacific Peace, in Friedman and McCormick, ed., What if China Doesn't Democratize? 224-253

Peter Birgbauer, "China and Taiwan: The Geopolitical Crisis Hiding in Plain Sight," The Diplomat, October 21, 2022. On-line.

Graham Allison, Destined for War, all. CLASS DISCUSSION

Hal Brands and Michael Beckley. Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict with China, CLASS DISCUSSION

SPECIAL NOTE FROM PROFESSOR THAXTON:

Course Learning Goals and Other Course Information

This courses has four learning goals:

- 1) To introduce you to critical thinking about politics.
- 2) To help you learn to reason clearly and effectively when constructing arguments and counter-arguments.
- 3) To help you grasp the importance of grounded research and local as well as global knowledge and the value of case study.
- 4) To introduce you to important concepts and frameworks in political science and social science, and to understand why these are or are not useful in understanding the course subject.

Exam Feedback: I will offer written comments on your exams and if necessary I will discuss your exam performance via e-mail exchange.

Class Learning: Group Reports and Materials and Group Discussions of Books and Films and Internet Assignments.

Hand Outs of Information on Academic Journals and Digital Data Base Materials for Writing Term Papers. Also, I will hand out a Guide to Researching and Writing Term Papers.

All Materials on Reserve in Goldfarb Library.

IF YOU ARE A STUDENT WITH A DOCUMENTED DISABILITY ON RECORD AT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY AND WISH TO HAVE AN ACCOMODATION MADE FOR YOU IN THIS CLASS, PLEASE CONTACT ME IN THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASS.

I USE TWO E-MAIL ADDRESSES: USE THE FIRST ONE:

ralph.thaxton@comcast.net

and

thaxton@brandeis.edu