



CEO, China: The Rise of Xi Jinping

Kerry Brown

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China has become the powerhouse of the world economy, its incredible boom overseen by the elite members of the secretive and all-powerful communist party. But since the election of Xi Jinping as General Secretary, life at the top in China has changed. Under the guise of a corruption crackdown, which has seen his rivals imprisoned, Xi Jinping has been quietly building one of the most powerful leaderships modern China has ever seen. In *CEO China*, the noted China expert Kerry Brown reveals the hidden story of the rise of the man dubbed the 'Chinese Godfather'. Brown investigates his relationship with his revolutionary father, who was expelled by Mao during the Cultural Revolution, his business dealings and allegiances in China's regional power struggles and his role in the internal battle raging between the old men of the Deng era and the new super-rich 'princelings'. Xi Jinping's China is powerful, aggressive and single-minded and this book will become a must-read for the Western world.

CEO, China: The Rise of Xi Jinping Details

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From Reader Review CEO, China: The Rise of Xi Jinping for online ebook

Pam Thomas says

Fascinating insight into the Chinese Godfather, one of the most powerful leaders in Modern china, his business dealings, power struggles and is a powerful aggressor and the powerhouse of the world economy. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED A MUST READ BOOK

Paul Saarma says

An excellent, insightful analysis of the man who leads China. Brown's comparison of the Chinese leadership with that of the Vatican was useful and insightful.

Pam Thomas says

Fascinating insight into the Chinese Godfather, one of the most powerful leaders in Modern China, about his power struggles, business dealings and how he is a powerful aggressor and the powerhouse of the world economy.

Timothee says

This is a great first read for me about China's leadership and government structure. I still need to read more on the topic to have a clearer picture but I felt that this book is a good first introduction to the topic with great perspective to understand the CPC.

Adrian says

While the title and cover of the book may mislead some toward the notion that CEO, China may be some kind of sensationalist piece, focused upon how Xi Jinping, as many sources proclaim, is the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao, and therefore, would be heavy on the sensationalism, and low on the academic dimension, nothing could be further from the truth.

CEO, China is a highly academic and thoroughly analytical work that understands and explains the nature and dimensions of power within modern China. So, rather than being purely a biographical work on Mr Xi Jinping, the book also contains analysis of China's political system, and projections upon China's path of development.

Understanding China's political system is a difficult task to say the least. It is opaque and enigmatic, even to those with insider's views. Therefore, any works that claim to have a clear analysis or understanding should be met with skepticism, although Kerry Brown makes no such claims within his work. Rather, he acknowledges the complexity of the task, and makes no grandiose pronouncements.

As well as a decent analysis of China's political system, that would bring those unfamiliar partially up to speed, and perhaps shed some new light for those already well versed (including this reader) Brown also provides a decent background on Xi's father, Xi Zhongxun, revealing him to be a rather moderate and noble figure among the 8 Immortals (Xi Zhongxun's inclusion in this group is disputed).

However, the biography and insight into Mr Xi Jinping himself is just as good as the rest of the book.

Among the questions many will be curious about is, how did Xi Jinping rise to power? It is a question that has baffled many, including this reader, and there are no simple explanations. The clear reason why this invites speculations is that Xi clearly was not the preferred choice of his predecessor, Hu Jintao, who would clearly have preferred his protege from the Youth League Li Keqiang, however, the explanation that Xi Jinping is a "Jiang man" also fails to adequately explain his rise.

Brown makes no grand statements, rather he offers the context of Xi's life and career with the explanation that all the tests in local government, national government, coupled with background and service, could mean that he considered "the right stuff" by a sufficient amount of the party's brokers to inherit the party's scepter and orb.

Kerry Brown also offers insight into Xi's domestic agenda and his foreign policy views, with enough to make possible projections of where the party and China is headed, and the possible pitfalls along the way.

Brown makes no pronouncements of Xi being all powerful, rather he acknowledges the reality that power is a fragile thing, and it can be lost if one makes sufficient enemies, or makes a false step. Similarly, Brown posits a well known, but rarely acknowledged reality, that real danger lies within the party itself in the form of Maoists, and if a Maoist was to rise high enough, and carried sufficient charisma (ala Bo Xilai) Xi (and arguably the country) could be in serious trouble.

On the whole, CEO, China is both immensely readable, and insightful. It is a truly penetrating analysis of the nature of power in modern China, and gives a thoroughly balanced and insightful perspective on China's current, Paramount Leader.

Liam says

"Today, even in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the CCP remains close to its idealistic, utopian roots. It believes, in ways that most Western leaders of recent years do not, in scientific development, and in procedures, rules and a body of truths that will lead to a better world, one slowly approaching perfection. For Marxism, the Party maintains its convictions about historical progress: through thesis and antithesis to synthesis." (48)

"Xi's new mission, it has increasingly become clear, is to wage war against its becoming the ultimate corporation, a money-making Midas machine that turns all it touches to wealth, at least for its top members. His tactics have therefore been to restore the Party to its idealistic roots, to cleanse its elite leaders in order that they can perform their functions as leaders, rather than wealth dispensers, and to do this through a mixture of managed crisis and fear. This, in essence, is his political programme. And it is why Mao is still of immense importance for him." (105)

"Corruption attacks two sets of assets: the material and the economic, and the reputational. It erodes not only the financial capital of the CCP, but also its moral capital. It is the latter that Xi has been keener to address." (172)

"The net result of this 'assertiveness,' as some described it, was that China was lonely and bereft of real friends. Its soft-power efforts have achieved less allegiance diplomatically than hoped. Chinese foreign outward investment and the Confucius Institute (a non-profit organization abed in universities throughout the

world that aims to promote Chinese language and culture), along with the other paraphernalia of soft diplomacy and its attendant symbolism, have not gained China international trust and respect. This has been the cause of deep frustration..." (191)

"For Xi Jinping, the great irony is that just as he is trying to wean Chinese people off addiction to pure money and money-making, and to encourage them to think about more complex and nuanced social outcomes to strive for, the rest of the world seems to have fallen deeply in love with Chinese money." (203)

Trish says

The Chinese economy has always fascinated me, the Chinese political and judicial systems less so. The economy is so rich and hopeful and life-giving because it is run by an irrepressibly entrepreneurial populace who can find their way, like water, around any obstacle. Marginal gains, in the past, were enough. People weren't so much out to make a killing ("the nail that sticks up is beaten down") as to feast well occasionally. Food was important. Not many of those simple goals remain; severe imbalances have appeared since market reforms were introduced in 1978. Xi Jinping took over in 2012 and is currently General Secretary of the Communist Party of China, President of the People's Republic of China, and Chairman of the Central Military Commission.

This look at Xi Jinping could be a college course with plenty of room for more side research on aspects of Xi's background, political comrades, and challenges. This work culminates finally in a truly interesting and too-short discussion of democracy, the judicial system, taxation, corruption, cyberspace, population movements, and the leadership of the Party. Reference to these issues are quickly sketched, addressing complexities it has not space to detail. It is understandable for an interested beginner, and may raise important questions that experienced China-watchers would like to pursue.

The first part of the book details the background of Xi Jinping, not adding terribly more than the information found in Evan Osnos' 2015 article "Born Red" in *The New Yorker*. Biographical information about Xi is available because the government allows it to be found. Outside of his personal life, however, there are plenty of things about his governance that can be discovered and discussed, including how he has structured leadership of the government, the Party, the judiciary, the military, and how closely he follows (or not) exhortations of Mao, Deng, and other revolutionaries.

There are parallels one could make between the way Xi interacts with "the masses" of China and America's new President Trump. This book was written and published before Trump was elected, but makes observations about Xi using the internet for direct access to people without interference from the propaganda department, which sometimes could be difficult to control precisely.

"For Xi, having this ability to go through social media to speak directly to as wide a public as possible is also a golden opportunity. This weakens the meddlesome interference of propaganda intermediaries who can often get things badly wrong,...Xi is probably the first leader of the country who has had to have a clear, serious digital strategy...The Party must keep close to the people, Xi has said many times."

Xi does not try to diminish Mao's legacy but uses Mao's appeal to emotion, to loyalty, to ideology. "Ideology...underpins and underlines the fundamental claims of the Party." The Party is central to how everything is organized in China. "Xi...has had one great intuitive insight that has given him the edge over his peers...Moral, symbolic, and idealistic appeals really control allegiance. This is the main territory that he

has sought to secure. So while he is not Maoist in his ideology, he is very Maoist in his understanding of the need to locate durable power and gain traction on it.”

Chinese leaders studied the reasons for the failure of the USSR and believe that Western political interference was key. The dysfunction of the western democratic model, the fractiousness, the corruptibility of the system by massive cash infusions, the time it takes, the possibility of choosing bad candidates—all these are reasons why the Chinese government is not anxious to go in that direction. But because the loosening of controls over economic growth has created relatively massive gains in the wealth held by individuals, it may be necessary to rebalance by means of taxation. Taxation without representation is anathema in China as anywhere, thus pushing on the door of democratic change. The pressure for such changes grows annually.

Another discussion I have not seen elsewhere references China’s relations with North Korea: “‘The country Kim Jong-Il hates most is China,’” North Korean defector Jan Jin-sung wrote in his memoirs. The most important barrier, Jan wrote, was the 'ideological demarcation line' between China and the DPRK, not the 38th parallel between South and North Korea. China’s leaders have long treated North Korea as unstable, parasitical, even contemptible. Xi visited South Korea while showing no interest in going further north for a visit. That Kim Jong-Un’s half brother was murdered while under the protection of the Chinese gives an observer the sense the feelings are reciprocal.

Brown’s scholarship is clear and comprehensive, one long argument surmising Xi Jinping's role, decisions, and direction. At the very end is a section looking to the future. The whole is interesting and useful, definitely worth a look.

Lisa Eisenberg says

Great overview of Xi's upbringing, background and rise to power. Analysis of current inner circle combined with historical perspective provides insight into Xi's mindset, ideology and POV on Chinese future.

Tpinetz says

Xi Jinping and the chinese government are interesting topics, with an impact on todays society. With the alienation of the trump administration with the chinese one it was interesting to me to look at the man and the party in china, especially because I was to china recently.

The book did deliver on this topics. It is incredibly dense with information and it gives a solid understanding not only of the main himself, but also about his history, the parties history and the party itself. I definitely learned a lot by reading this book.

But because of the density of information in this book, it is at times boring to read and feels like a chore to get through.

BlackOxford says

Seek Elsewhere for Insight

It's not possible to read Brown's biography of Xi Jinping without comparing it constantly to Ezra Vogel's *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*. And in the comparison, Kerry Brown looks bad. Brown's text is more a potted history of modern China than an insightful revelation of individual character. There is much about the political structure of the country but little about the real sources of power. Vogel is a qualified Sinologist who uses his diverse sources with finesse. Brown is a tourist in comparison who can only restate official documents. I found the writing flat and often simply beside the point. A disappointment.

Ilana says

The book offers insights about the dynamics of power in nowadays China, as well as Xi Jinping's political steps up to the leadership ladder in a political and cultural system only partially understood outside the Big Wall. The information are detailed, particularly in the case of Xi. You can have an idea about the Big Leap Forward China went through in the last years, in terms of economic expansion and personal welfare of the top leadership. The downside of too much information is to become captive of this information and fail to share any critical point of view.

Disclaimer: Book offered by the publisher in exchange for an honest review

Ethan says

Coming with zero or no context, it at least helps to present one perspective on the history of the CCP and Xi Jinping.

One interesting excerpt: "Liberal-democratic models do not appeal to the Party. Once, there may have been naive faith in a US- or British-style system. But the Chinese elite have watched these closely and seen just how messy they can become. They may sincerely believe that the United States has a great system for itself, but evidently don't see how it can be implemented in China. This is not just about preserving the monopoly in political power of the CCP. Like many, they see the dysfunctionality of the US system, and the fractious nature of its operations, its increasing hunger for patronage and money, and the ways in which it is often unable to confront hard issues and make decisions because of divisions within itself."

Max says

A must-read for anyone interested in China's current affairs.

Try Lee says

Xi Jinping - China Dream: Country of Hope and Prosperity.

Hu Jintao - Harmonious Society and Scientific Development.

Den Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin - Capitalism Economic and Pure Economic Growth.

Doug says

Lots of good information, but put together in a way that feels very disorganized. Jumps around in both time and place.
