

This book draws on a PhD completed by [Kevin Rudd](#) in 2022. Rudd was Prime Minister of Australia from 2007 to 2010, and again in 2013. In 2023, he became Australian Ambassador to the United States. Rudd is an eminent China specialist and fluent Mandarin speaker. The book provides an in-depth analysis of Xi Jinping's leadership and ideological framework, primarily centered Xi's development and application of "Marxist Nationalism". This summary was partly generated by ChatGPT 4o from my highlights of the Kindle version of the book. Key points include:

1. **Ideological Shift:** Xi Jinping has redefined China's political, economic, and foreign policies by integrating Marxist-Leninist principles with nationalism. This marks a departure from the pragmatic policies of his predecessors, focusing instead on reinforcing state control, addressing inequality, and asserting China's global leadership. Accordingly, the "'principal contradiction' faced by Chinese society in this new era [is]: 'the contradiction between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life'" (Rudd, p 99).
2. **Marxist Nationalism:** Xi's approach blends Marxist economics with nationalist foreign policy. Domestically, it prioritizes state control, planning, and income equality over market forces. Internationally, it adopts a more assertive stance, emphasizing China's rise and challenging Western dominance.
3. Specifically, Rudd notes that Xi draws on [historical materialism](#), Karl Marx's theory of history. Marx located historical change in the rise of class societies and the way humans labor together to make their livelihoods.
4. Similarly, according to Rudd, Xi accepts that history is driven by [dialectical materialism](#), which, from a Marxist perspective, emphasizes the importance of real-world conditions and the presence of functional contradictions within and among social relations, which derive from, but are not limited to, the contradictions that occur in social class, labour economics, and socioeconomic interactions. Within Marxism, a contradiction is a relationship in which two forces oppose each other, leading to mutual development.
5. **Centralization of Power:** Under Xi, the Communist Party has strengthened its control over all aspects of society, including the economy, the military, and cyberspace. Xi's leadership style centralizes authority, abolishing term limits and consolidating his role as the "core" leader.
6. **Foreign Policy and Global Influence:** Xi's policies aim to reshape the global order, promoting an alternative to Western liberal democracy, as the internal contradictions of western capitalism lead to its downfall. The [Belt and Road Initiative](#) and assertive diplomacy reflect this vision. More generally, Xi views China as leading the world in a "'community of common destiny for all humankind' (CCD) [taking] China's new, self-confident culture of nationalist assertiveness into the realm of global governance" (Rudd, p 245).
7. **Critique of the West:** Xi frequently critiques Western systems, portraying them as flawed and emphasizing China's model as superior. He calls for ideological struggle to defend China's system and resist Western influence.
8. **Struggle** has also returned to the vocabulary of Chinese politics. Apart from referring to Marx and Engel's class struggle, the idea of *struggle* also reprises the Maoist notion of struggle being used to combat class enemies. So-called "[struggle sessions](#)" were particularly violent events during the [Cultural Revolution](#), which Mao launched in 1966 to reassert his power after the failure of the Great Leap Forward. The most intense phase of the Cultural Revolution lasted until 1969, but it continued until Mao's death in 1976. A [depiction of such a struggle session](#) can be found in the Netflix series "[3 Body Problem](#)".
9. **Integration of Classical Chinese and Marxist Thought:** Xi integrates traditional Chinese philosophies with Marxist ideology to craft a unique ideological narrative that supports his policy goals and enhances party legitimacy.
10. **Climate and Population Strategies:** Xi's strategies include addressing climate change and leveraging demographic shifts globally, focusing on relationships with developing nations.

The text underscores the significance of ideology in Xi Jinping's policies, warning that his worldview profoundly impacts both China and the global order.

For more information listen to *Racham Review* podcast, "[The Ideology behind Xi Jinping's China: How Marxist-Leninist Theory Still Shapes Policy in Beijing](#)", *The Financial Times*, November 14, 2024

See also *The Economist* profile on "[Who is Xi Jinping?](#)", 28 September 2022.