Introduction

This is the third volume of the Brill series, titled China in the World: A Survey of Chinese Perspectives on International Politics and Economics. The title of the first volume was Balance, Imbalance, and Rebalance and the second volume was titled The World in 2020 According to China. For the current volume, we have chosen the title: China under Xi Jinping: Its Economic Challenges and Foreign Policy Initiatives.

This volume was completed immediately after the closing of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee and the passing of The Decision on Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Advancing the Rule of Law (《关于全面推进依法治国若干重大问题的决定》). In the past year, we have seen a decrease in friction between China and its neighboring countries. China's ruling party has instead focused on improving issues within its own borders. One area worth noting is China's current position on fighting corruption that has resulted in the discharge and prosecution of several high-ranking officials. However, China's current position against corruption seems to be transitioning from individual prosecutions to structural restraints. After several debates on the idea of constitutionalism, the Communist Party is attempting to move towards a law-governed society with socialistic characteristics and to govern the country under the rules of law and a constitution. The country will continue to use Marxism as its guiding ideology; however, it will place greater emphasis on China's historical and cultural traditions. As Xi Jinping's leadership position becomes increasingly prominent, the natural question to ask is: How will China develop under Xi Jinping's rule? Will China resolve its lingering “illnesses” and move towards a new era of continued rise?

The first piece we have chosen for this volume is Zheng Bijian's (郑必坚) article titled “China's Path of Peaceful Development in the Second Decade of the Twenty-first Century.” Zheng Bijian is currently one of the most important theorists of the Communist Party. He served as the political secretary to CPC Secretary General Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦) and was responsible for drafting several key proposals on economic reform and development since the 1990s. In the summer of 2004, I had the pleasure of interviewing Mr. Zheng as a CCTV anchorwoman. He informed me that Deng Xiaoping once appointed him head of the editing staff for Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (《邓小平文选》) thanks to his solid grasp of Deng's ideologies. Zheng Bijian pioneered the idea of China's “Peaceful Development.” In June 2005, on a visit to the U.S., he informed American politicians that China's leadership was aware of
possible issues associated with China’s peaceful development, because China is currently facing both a “golden era of development” (黄金发展期) and an “era of obvious conflicts” (矛盾凸显期). One major characteristic of China’s road to peaceful development is that China must rely on its own powers to resolve issues. China’s peaceful development is solely a “China Dream.” For instance, regarding resource consumption, we cannot afford the “American Dream;” regarding population mobility, we are incapable of the “European Dream;” regarding the increase of comprehensive national strength, we do not want to pursue the “Soviet Union Dream.”

From the background introductions, perhaps we can clearly see the position of China’s leadership and society in general. On the one hand, China wants to be able to establish itself using its own strength, real conditions, and within its own range of possibilities; on the other hand, China also wants to look for a “convergence point of interest” between itself and other countries around the world, including the U.S., to mutually benefit all countries. The article in this volume was written by Zheng Bijian in 2013 following Xi Jinping’s rise to leadership. The article expresses his expectations of the new leadership, focusing on his belief that China should gradually build a “convergence point of interest” and establish a “union of interest” with the rest of the world. He emphasizes that his idea is in line with China’s development trend as well as that of the world. His ideas are supported in China by those who are in favor of reform.

Wu Jinglian (吴敬琏) is one of the most widely-respected economists in China. For over thirty years of reforms in China, he has remained one of the biggest promoters of market economy reforms. As China’s economic reforms continue to face an increasing amount of resistance and difficulty, his article “How to Reboot China’s Reform” will help readers to understand the advice given by mainstream Chinese reform scholars for the direction of China’s future development that includes more comprehensive and thorough reform, especially political reform. Wu believes China is currently facing tremendous economic and social challenges and only market-oriented economic reforms and legalized, democratic political reforms can solve these issues. There must be a top-down organizational structure with a strong and impartial high-level authority at the top supported by the public below, cooperating in the supervision of the reform plan’s execution.

Cai Fang (蔡昉), a renowned demographer and economist, established himself as one of the leading scholars of China’s economic development as early as 1999 with the book The China Miracle: Development Strategy and Economic Reform (《中国的奇迹：发展战略与经济改革》) (co-authored with Justin Lin and Li Zhou). In his article, “Understanding the Past, Present, and Future of China’s Economic Development: Based on a Unified Framework of Growth