

Jean Oi

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Jean C. Oi is the William Haas Professor on Chinese Politics in the department of political science and a Senior Fellow of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University. She is the founding director of the Stanford China Program at the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center. Professor Oi also is the founding Lee Shau Kee Director of the Stanford Center at Peking University.

A PhD in political science from the University of Michigan, Oi first taught at Lehigh University and later in the department of government at Harvard University before joining the Stanford faculty in 1997.

Her work focuses on comparative politics, with special expertise on China's political economy and institutions in the process of reform. Fiscal politics and central-local relations in China are at the center of Oi's research. Recent work delves inside local-level institutions to sheds new light on China's authoritarian resilience by exploring how county governments through adaptive governance have been able to cope as the economy has grown exponentially and demands and needs from an increasingly complex society put more strains on resources and the political system. Most recently, she co-edited a volume that highlights the challenges China now faces after reaping record breaking growth the last 40 years by only tweaking the institutions that it inherited from the Mao period. Current leaders continue to kick the can down the road rather than tackle the most political difficult part of the reform process. Instead, leaders seems to be "going back to the future," relying on a playbook not seen since the Mao period.

Current projects focus on growing local government debt in China and why there is so much when law prohibits localities from borrowing and budget deficits. Moving beyond her earlier work, Oi also has begun a project to empirically assess the impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Oi takes an institutional and micro-level approach to identify the key players and their interests.