



China

China's Political System

YIN ZHONGQING

TRANSLATED BY WANG PINGXING

CHINA
INTERCONTINENTAL
PRESS

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Foreword

Through its reform and opening to the outside world, China has worked an economic miracle and boosted its comprehensive strength, enhancing its standing in the international community. As more and more people around the world are eager to know and understand China, we have compiled the China Series, aiming to provide a shortcut for readers to get the basic facts about this country.

The 12 titles in this series cover China's geography, history, politics, economy, culture, law, diplomacy, national defense, and society, as well as its science, technology and education; its environment; and its ethnic groups and religions. These writings will help readers acquire a basic knowledge of China.

It is our hope that this series will enable readers to get a general idea about China:

Chinese history, culture and civilization, which is the oldest continuous major civilization in the world;

China's basic conditions—the world's largest developing country with a huge population, a country that is developing unevenly on a poor economic base; in light of these conditions, China is following its own path to sustainable development while learning from other civilizations; and

China's future—led by the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese people are focusing their efforts on economic development and carrying on reform and opening-up; they are building a harmonious society in their own country and working for a harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity.

We expect that through these books our readers will begin a new journey of discovery—understanding China.

January 2010

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Preface

The political system covers many fields, and the political systems of different countries vary greatly. The political system of contemporary China includes the form of state structure, the electoral system, the system of people's congresses, the system of the state presidency, the system of administration, the judiciary system, the military system, the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation, and the system of grass-roots democracy.

Historically China was for the most part, in terms of space and time, under a system of unitary government. Since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, China has constantly improved its system of regional autonomy for ethnic minorities; as China resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macao, a system of special administrative region have been established in the two regions. Now China has evolved into a unitary state with some composite elements.

All power in the People's Republic of China belongs to the people. The people administer state affairs and manage economic, cultural and social affairs through various channels and in various ways in accordance with the provisions of law. Grass-roots democracy in China comprises self-governance of villagers in rural areas, self-governance of residents in urban areas, and democratic management of enterprises. Under China's electoral system, all citizens of China who have reached the age of 18 have the right to vote and stand for election, regardless of nationality, race, sex, occupation, family background, religious belief, education, property status, or length of residence, except persons deprived of

political rights according to law.

The state power of China is based on the system of people's congresses. The National People's Congress and local people's congresses at various levels are organs of state power; the President of the People's Republic of China is its head of state. The State Council and local people's governments at various levels are organs of state administration. The Supreme People's Court, local people's courts at various levels and special people's courts are the judicial organs of the state. The Supreme People's Procuratorate, local people's procuratorates at various levels and special people's procuratorates are the procuratorial organs of the state. The Central Military Commission directs the armed forces of the country. The National People's Congress and local people's congresses at various levels constitute respectively the core of state power at the national and local levels. All administrative, judicial and procuratorial organs of the state are created by the people's congresses to which they are responsible and under whose supervision they operate.

Led by the Communist Party of China, the Chinese people founded the People's Republic of China. Since the founding of New China the Communist Party of China has been the ruling party, playing the role of core leadership in state affairs through cooperation and political consultation with other democratic parties.

The Structure of the State

The People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. As a unitary nation of multiple ethnic groups, the People's Republic is a unitary sovereign state consisting of a number of administrative divisions, and has instituted the system of regional autonomy for ethnic minorities and the system of special administrative region in some parts of the country. The present structure of the state is stipulated in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, the Law on Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities, the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region.



The Administrative Division and Local Governments

In accordance with the Constitution, the administrative division of China is as follows:

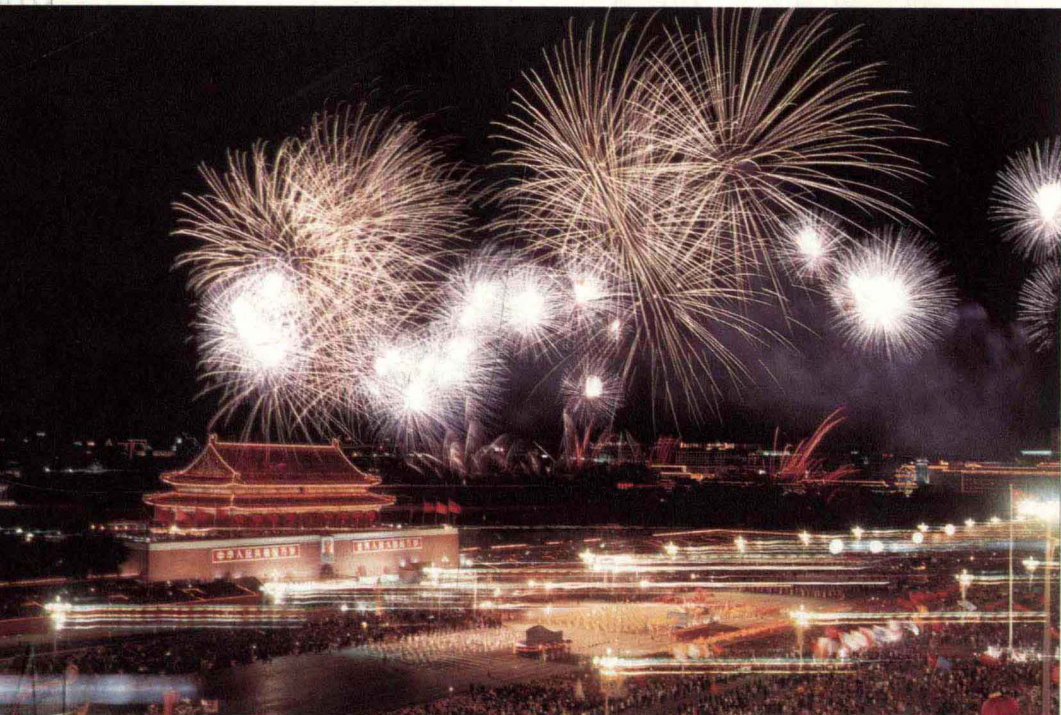
(1) The country is divided into provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government;

(2) Provinces and autonomous regions are divided into autonomous prefectures, counties, autonomous counties, and cities;

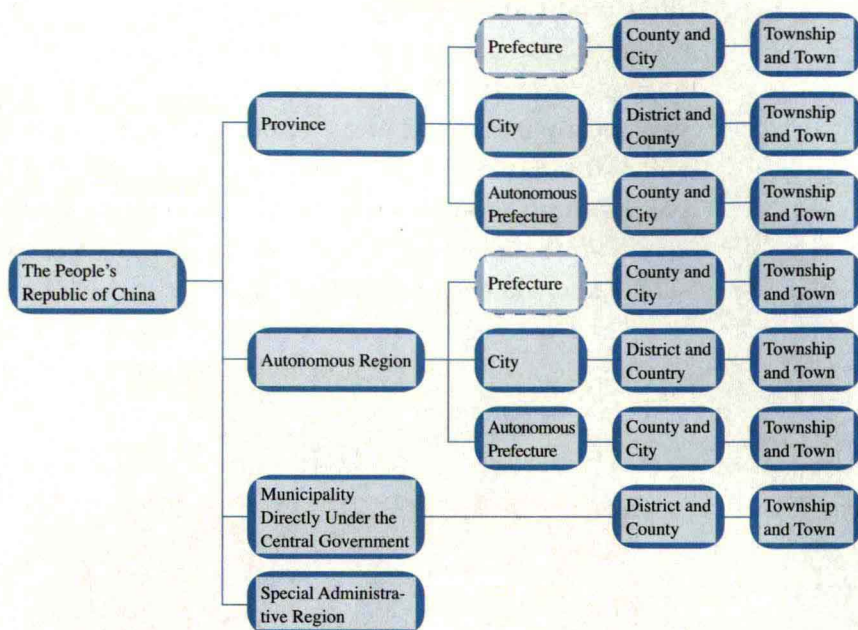
(3) Counties and autonomous counties are divided into townships, ethnic minority townships and towns.

Municipalities directly under the Central Government and other large cities are divided into districts and counties.

A night scene of Tiananmen Square in Beijing on the National Day.



Administrative Divisions of the People's Republic of China



Autonomous prefectures are divided into counties, autonomous counties, and cities.

All autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties are ethnic autonomous areas.

In present-day China, there are four levels of local government: the provincial, prefecture, county, and township governments. The current provincial administrative divisions include 23 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, 4 municipalities directly under the Central Government, and 2 special administrative regions.

Since China began the reform and opening to the outside world in 1978, there has been a new administrative division, namely the sub-provincial division between the province and the prefecture. Currently the sub-provincial divisions include the four special economic zones of Shenzhen,

Zhuhai, Shantou and Xiamen, as well as some other large cities approved by the State Council.

China has a land area of 9.6 million square km and a population of about 1,328 million. Its administrative divisions vary greatly in terms of area and population. For instance, among the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region covers an area of 1.6 million square km, while Shanghai Municipality, only 6,200 square km. The most populous province of Henan has 99.18 million people, while Tibet Autonomous Region's population is merely 2.87 million. The localities had been different in

The national flag
of the People's
Republic of China.



The national
emblem of
the People's
Republic of
China.



Data Link

National Flag and National Emblem of the People's Republic of China

The national flag of the People's Republic of China is a red flag with five stars. The red color is the symbol of revolution, while the five stars and their relations signify the great unity of the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. The yellow color of the five stars represents brightness in the red field, and a tip of each of the four small stars pointing to the central point of the big star symbolizes the unity around a center.

The national emblem of the People's Republic of China is Tian'anmen in the center illuminated by five stars and encircled by ears of grain and a cogwheel. It is the symbolism of the new democratic revolution of the Chinese people since the May 4th Movement of 1919 and the founding of New China, a people's republic under the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants, in 1949.

their political, economic and cultural development, and so they still remain. In accordance with the Constitution and relevant laws, there is an appropriate division of functions and powers between the Central and local governments, which aims to bring into full play the initiatives of local governments under the unified leadership of the Central authorities. Under the centralized leadership of the state, local governments enjoy the powers to run regional affairs within their jurisdiction. In areas where the ethnic minorities live in compact communities, ethnic autonomous areas are established for the ethnic minorities to practice regional autonomy, exercising the right of autonomy by setting up organs of self-government. In accordance with the concept of "one country, two systems," the two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao implement social, political and economic systems that are different from those in other parts of the country, and exercise much greater and higher power of autonomy than ethnic autonomous areas.

Ethnic Autonomous Areas

China has long been a multiethnic nation. The country's ethnic composition is determined after the identification of ethnic groups in the 1950s and the surveys of social and historical backgrounds of the ethnic groups in the 1960s. The country has 56 ethnic groups, with the Han being the largest. According to the census conducted in November 2005, the population of the Han ethnic group accounted for 1,183 million or 90.56% of China's total population, and that of the ethnic minorities, 123 million or 9.44% of the national total; the figures included the populations of 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities as well as the military, but not those of Taiwan Province and the two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao. As the Hans constitute the vast majority of the population, the other 55 ethnic groups are referred to as ethnic minorities.

In accordance with the Constitution, all ethnic groups in China are equal. The state protects the lawful rights and

A national flag-raising ceremony in the square in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, capital of Tibet Autonomous Region.





interests of the ethnic minorities and upholds and develops the relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all ethnic groups. Regional autonomy is practiced in areas where people of ethnic minorities live in compact communities; in these areas organs of self-government are established for the exercise of the right of autonomy. All the ethnic autonomous areas are inalienable parts of the People's Republic of China. Discrimination against and oppression of any ethnic group are prohibited; any acts that undermine the unity of the ethnic groups or instigate their secession are prohibited.

University students
of ethnic minorities
on a campus.

I. Types of Ethnic Autonomous Areas

The ethnic autonomous areas in China can be divided into three categories according to the density of ethnic minority population.

(1) Ethnic autonomous areas established on the basis of compact communities of one ethnic minority. Among such areas are Tibet Autonomous Region and Ningxia Hui

Autonomous Region at the provincial level, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture at the prefectural level in Jilin Province, and Zhangjiachuan Hui Autonomous County at the county level in Gansu Province.

(2) Ethnic autonomous areas established on the basis of compact communities of a larger ethnic minority, which also include compact communities of one or more other ethnic minorities that are smaller in population. For instance, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region also includes five autonomous prefectures and six autonomous counties of ethnic minorities other than the Uygur, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region also has 10 autonomous counties of ethnic minorities other than the Zhuang, and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region includes three autonomous banners of the Daur, Oroqen and Ewenki ethnic groups.

(3) Ethnic autonomous areas established jointly on the compact communities of two or more ethnic minorities. For instance, Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture in Hunan Province, and Haixi Mongolian, Tibetan and Kazak Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province. Ethnic autonomous areas also have a considerable Han population, which in many cases is even greater than that of ethnic minorities, therefore ethnic autonomous areas also include some Han communities.

The administrative division of an ethnic autonomous area is decided in principle by the size of its geographical area and population. In accordance with the Constitution, ethnic autonomous areas fall into three categories: autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties, corresponding to provinces, prefectures and counties respectively. Ethnic minority townships and ethnic minority towns do not exercise the right of autonomy since they are not ethnic autonomous areas, but the special needs of their ethnic minority residents are also given due consideration.

II. Composition of Organs of Self-government for Ethnic Autonomy

The organs of self-government in ethnic autonomous areas include the people's congresses and governments of the autonomous region, autonomous prefecture and autonomous county. As organs of state power in ethnic autonomous areas, the organs of self-government are different from organs of state power in ordinary localities in the following:

(1) The chairman of an autonomous region, the prefect of an autonomous prefecture or the head of an autonomous county shall be citizen of the minority ethnic group that exercises regional autonomy; among the chairman and



Deputies of ethnic minorities to the National People's Congress in Beijing.