

■ Recognizing and Understanding China Series

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Road of Rejuvenation of the Eastern Power

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## Preface Experience of China's Governance

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After the drastic changes of Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, there was a popular saying in China—“to reform is to seek death, but it is waiting to die if we do not reform” — implicated that China could not avoid the ending like that of the Soviet Union anyway. However, after 26 years, the voice of “China’s rise” or “China’s rejuvenation” seems to be louder and louder.

The Russian Revolution in 1917 greatly influenced the intellectual elites who were exploring way out for China. Indeed, China has dramatically changed over the past 100 years. By saving the national from subjugation and ensuring its survival, unifying the political power, developing economy and realizing modernization of national governance, China has been exploring the road of modernization and striving to fulfill the task of building a modern country. From the perspective of long-term development, China has completed the basic construction part needed by a modern country to a certain extent, such as the unity of sovereignty, the government’s functional construction, the institutionalization of political power, industrial system construction of economic life, renovation of economic organizations as

enterprises and urbanization of social life. However, it must be admitted that, along with the bright and impressive achievements made for economic scale, per capita income, infrastructure, public services and people's livelihood, China is also facing many problems such as uneven regional development, huge gap between urban and rural areas, widening income gap, extreme high cost of resources and pollution caused by economic development, severe corruption, safety accidents now and then and frequent social protest events organized by the masses. The existence of these real problems shows that there is still a long way to go in institutionalization, rule of law, democratization, marketization and socialization of national life.

The Chinese leaders have put forward the Chinese Dream of great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and its "Two Centenary Goals", which can be specifically expressed as follows: by 2021, when the Communist Party of China (CPC) celebrates its centenary, China aims to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects; by 2049, when the People's Republic of China marks its centennial, the country aims to be a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious. At present, China's modernization is still on the road and China needs to continue to comprehensively deepen reform. On the third plenary session of the 18th CPC Central Committee in 2013, the CPC proposed to promote national governance modernization through comprehensively deepening the reform. In 2014, China's President Xi Jinping further specified "Four Comprehensives": to succeed in completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, we must comprehensively deepen reform, governing the country according to the rule of law, and enforce strict Party discipline. The leadership of the CPC proposed again in 2015 that China should

adhere to five development concepts of innovation, coordination, greening, opening up and inclusiveness. Afterwards, the Chinese government formulated the policy of “targeted poverty alleviation” with the plan of making Chinese rural poor residents get rid of poverty under the current standard by 2020<sup>①</sup>. Now, there are only a few years left before the promised time of achieving the first goal of the “Two Centenary Goals” and 30 years left before that of achieving the second goal, how will China realize the dream of great rejuvenation?

## I. Multi-dimensional Chinese Images

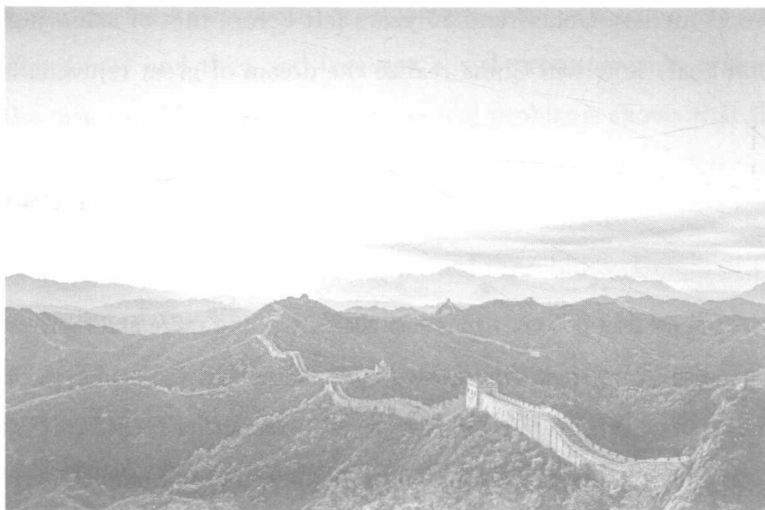
As an eastern power, China has been attracting more and more attention because of its traditional great power status and the achievements of economic development over the past years. Among the people paid attention to China, there are political and business elites from all over the world, ordinary citizens and scholars engaging in professional research. Different images of China have been formed from different perspectives.

How to image China? From perspective of geography, China is a territory power; from the perspective of population, China is a multi-ethnic country with a large population; from the perspective of history, China is an ancient country with 5,000 years history; from the perspective of economy, China is a developing country; from per-

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① How many poor people are there in China? As shown by the data released by China's Ministry of Civil Affairs, by December 2015, there were 17.011 million urban residents entitled to basic living allowances and 49.036 million rural residents entitled to basic living allowances in China. Coupled with the amount of urban unemployed people and low-income people, there were nearly 70 million poor people according to the current poverty threshold of China; there were nearly 0.2 billion poor people in China according to the current poverty standard of the World Bank.

spective of culture, China is a modern country with respecting its traditions; from the perspective of politics, China is a communist country. China has received different evaluations from the international society from the theory of “yellow peril” to the theory of “China threat”, and from the theory of “Chinese opportunity” to the theory of “salvation”<sup>①</sup>, all carry a certain extent of misrepresentation.



#### **China is a country with vast territory and a long historical standing**

The purpose of this book is to try the best to restore a real China for the scholars and friends who pay attention to and care about China by sorting and counting China's historical heritage, summarizing China's development achievements and analyzing realistic problems from the perspective of China's governance.

Being objective, multi-dimensional and comprehensive are also the principle adhered by the writing of this book. By sorting out the historical experience of China's governance, analyzing the current

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<sup>①</sup> After the international financial crisis in 2008, the world economy was caught into the general depression state, but China's economy still maintained strong growth momentum. Therefore, there is a saying that China is the hope of saving the world economy.

situation and problems of China's governance, discussing the solutions and interpreting the policies of the Chinese authorities, we try to objectively show the course of China's journey on the road of national governance. In the course, there is both the glorious history which is the pride of China and a series of governance challenges brought by rapid rising of China; both the outstanding achievements in governance since the reform and opening up and the hardship faced by national governance in the new period and new situation. In short, the Book is to show that China, which faces problems and challenges, dares to overcome difficulties by carrying out comprehensive reform.

In China, there is a phrase of "blind men touching an elephant" which tells that blind men can recognize the elephant with their hands but the man who touches the teeth of the elephant says that the elephant looks like a carrot; the man who touches its ear says that it looks like a cattail leaf fan; the man who touches its leg says that it looks like a pillar. What said by them are not wrong, but are not the complete appearance of the elephant. It is only the correct way to know the elephant by piecing their recognition together. It is the same with understanding the China's governance: if we want to understand China's governance, we need to analyze it from different angles, or at least know several key "parts" of it, so that we can have an overall understanding rather than just have a limited point of view. In the opinion of the writer, the following elements can be considered as the key parts of this "elephant":

China has a long history of national governance. China is the only country in the world where civilization has never been interrupted according to historical records. The Xia Dynasty (c. 2070 – 1600 BCE) initially established the management system running from the central government to the local governments. Prime minister and mis-



ters were set up in the central government and marquises and earls were set up in the local governments to act in cooperation with each other to jointly manage state issues. The system of enfeoffment and the patriarchal clan system maintained by the blood relations of the Western Zhou Dynasty enabled Zhou Dynasty to exist for nearly 800 years in China's history. Qin Dynasty promoted the central mandarin system centered on the imperial power after unifying the entire country around 221BCE, and matched it with the system of local prefectures and counties to establish a set of complete and highly efficient management system running from the central government to the local governments. The system had existed for more than 2,000 years in China's history and is still playing an important role in China today. The prefecture and county system is still an indispensable form of governance in China. You can easily find that, among nearly 3,000 county-level administrative units, the names of many counties can be traced back to hundreds and thousands of years ago in ancient China. The system of "three departments and six ministries" of Tang Dynasty basically finalized the central mandarin system of ancient China. the system of administrative provinces of Yuan Dynasty provided valuable experience in the governance of vast territory for Chinese empire; the "cabinet system" of Ming Dynasty and the establishment of the Grand Council of Qing Dynasty made the national management system more centralized and unified. This set of management system appears to be continuous from the vertical point of view and incredibly rich and comprehensive from the horizontal point of view. It not only includes the central and local administrative management systems, but also the official selection systems such as the recommendation system, the system of recommending candidates for feudal officials of nine grades and the imperial examination system, as well as the eco-

conomic system of “encouraging agriculture rather than trade” and the cultural rule system represented by Confucianism.

China is large country with vast territory and large population. Based on the investigation of the world's history and realities, it is not difficult to find out that there are different methods of governance for small city-states, medium-sized nation-states and large multi-ethnic countries. Therefore, some people think that the scale of the organization determines the method of governance. China is a large country, “large” can be interpreted in at least two aspects: First, it is referred to large volume. Simon Kuznets called a country with the population of more than 10 million a large country and that of more than 50 million a real power<sup>①</sup>. Each category in accordance with this standard only has the population equivalent to that of a Chinese province. For thousands of years, China has bred different regional cultures, formed 56 different ethnic groups, as well as Buddhism, Taoism, Islam and many other religions. China has also huge economic volume. According to the report of the World Bank, at the end of 2016, China ranked second to the United States with its total GDP of 11 trillion US dollars, which was equivalent to the sum of GDP of Japan, Germany, Britain and France. On the annual “two sessions”<sup>②</sup> of China, when a provincial governor talks about governance, it always gives the impression that they are talking about the governance of a

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① KUZNETS S. *Economic growth of countries*. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1985: 145.

② The “two sessions” referred to the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which are important democratic decision-making and democratic consultation system in China's current political system. The “two sessions” are held in March each year to discuss national major affairs and deliver the government reports. Therefore, the “two sessions” are the important “window” for observing the China's political trends.

European country. In fact, some Chinese provinces, such as Guangdong, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, are indeed equivalent to some European countries in terms of population, economy and jurisdiction area. Second, China embodies large difference. For example, there is large regional difference in China. Its altitude decreases progressively from the west to the east, but its economic development is in reverse. Moreover, different regions have many differences over management and educational levels, religious beliefs and food culture. There is also income difference, which is mainly manifested as large difference between the poor and the rich; since China started to promote the socialist market economy nationwide, the uneven distribution of income has become increasingly apparent and attracted more and more attentions. It may not only become the potential obstacle for further social development, but is also a “time bomb” endangered social stability. In addition, urban and rural difference is also a factor that has to be considered. Due to the different locations and industrialization levels of economic development, the development opportunities for China's urban and rural areas vary a lot, lead to the urban and rural “dual structure”. There is huge gap between urban and rural areas in the income, education, medical service, and welfare system.

China's current system provides a space to national governance with which can be enriched, expanded and flexibly used. China's reform and opening up, made remarkable achievements. In terms of economy contribution, China has maintained an average annual GDP growth of more than 9% for more than 30 years, which is rare in the whole history of human civilization. China's economic aggregate has been ranking second in the world for two consecutive years and its foreign exchange reserves rank first in the world. According to the data of Ministry of Commerce, as the world economy decreased in re-

cent years, China's import and export amount has continued to rank first in the world and it maintained the total volume of 3.95 trillion US dollars in 2015. Its per capita GDP increased from 149 US dollars in 1980 to 8,000 US dollars in 2015 by more than 50 times. In terms of national standard of living, the national life expectancy had significantly improved from 67.7 years old in 1982 to 74.9 years old in 2010, increased by 7.2 years old. The education background of the Chinese people has been significantly improved. China has basically eliminated illiteracy and achieved full coverage of nine-year compulsory education. According to the Statistical Communique on National Education Development in 2016, the gross enrollment rate of pre-school education reached 77.4%, China's consolidation rate of nine-year compulsory education was 93.4%, the gross enrollment rate in senior high schools was 87.5%, and the gross enrollment rate of higher education reached 42.7% (4 out of 10 young people aged from 18 to 22 can receive higher education)<sup>①</sup>. China's rapid growth has been recognized by the world, even some scholars believed that the historical significance of China's development in nearly 40 years can be compared with the British Industrial Revolutions, because China has realized dramatic changes in its national economy, society, culture and other areas, significantly improved national image and enhanced the living standard of Chinese people in this period. Despite the doubts and criticisms of foreign politicians or scholars towards various problems in the development of China over the years, even the

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① According to the Report on China's Higher Education Quality, the enrollment rate of higher education in China keeps rising. In 1949, the enrollment rate of higher education was 0.26%; in 1978, it increased to 1.55%; in 2015, it reached to 40%, increased by more than 150 times than that of 1949. It is expected to be more than 50% in 2019 which can enable China to enter the stage of popularization of higher education.

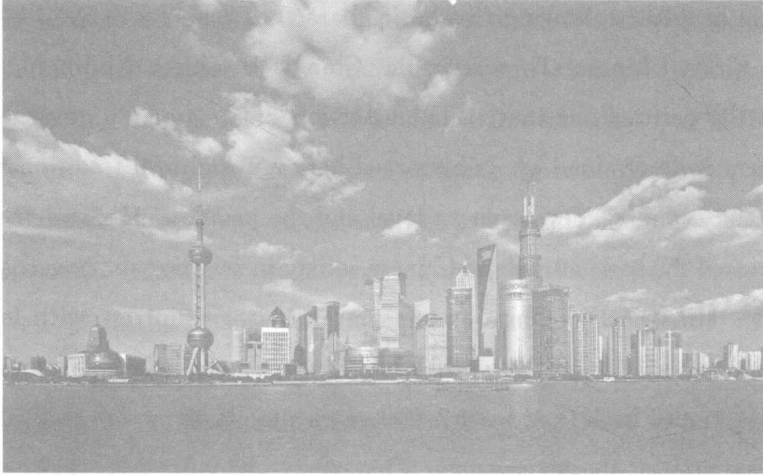
critics have to admit that China has indeed made remarkable achievements. It shall be known that this huge country with ancient history was suffering from the flames of war almost 70 years ago, was in “class struggle” over 50 years ago, was discussing about implementing market-oriented reform 40 years ago and was considering about blending into the world system almost 30 years ago. Many people have been trying to explain the reasons for the rapid development of China. In addition to the scale effect, the accumulation effect and the after effect, the system of the leadership of the CPC may also have to be considered. This set of system, includes the system of people’s congress, the system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC (multiparty cooperation system), the system of community-level self-governance and the system of regional ethnic autonomy, have achieved “translation” on the modern market-oriented operating track and obtained new impetus under the background of the open world system and free competition. It now appears that the name of the system is not that important. What is important is that it has the effectiveness of making this large late-developing country (LDC) develop rapidly. Of course, this set of system is neither perfect nor finalized, and it is still in the process of being constantly reformed and improved along with the adjustment of national development strategy. However, it indeed provides the Chinese people in pursuit of effectiveness with the space which can be enriched, expanded and flexibly used in the principle of “seeking truth from fact”.

By grasping above key elements, we can have an initial impression of China’s governance, or at least will not deviate from actual situation too much. This nature of China’s governance determines that no matter how it develops or what it develops into, it will cer-

tainly have the following two basic characteristics:

First, Chinese characteristics. China's President Xi Jinping repeatedly pointed out that, "The selection of a country's governance system is determined by its historical heritage, cultural tradition, social and economic development level and the people." His statements expressed the basic attitude of Chinese society in selecting the governance mode. Historically, China is one of the oldest countries with long-history civilization in the world. The country's governance experience can be traced back to at least 2,000 years ago. It owns rich and valuable experience in governance. The reason why its experience and practice can continue for such a long time is that they are in line with the actual situation of Chinese society and meet the demand of social adjustment. Despite dramatic changes in modern China's economic foundation and social form, it is impossible for Chinese society and people to abandon traditional culture and work out methods in a short time. Therefore, it is the need of the times and the people to build a new national governance system with Chinese characteristics by digging, absorbing, innovating and developing China's traditional governance modes. From the perspective of real development, the prosperity and development achieved by China over nearly 40 years are the result of the combination of modern development elements and principles with China's actual condition. It is almost a consensus for all Chinese people to uphold the principles of proceeding from the reality and seeking truth from facts. The Chinese people absorb and learn the useful elements from the Western governance systems by being open-minded and making China's own "governance tools" be based on the China's historical heritage with focusing on China's problems.

Second, China's governance is keeping pace with the times. Just like the Western world which encountered revolutionary reform in the



**China has made remarkable achievements in economy, society, culture and other aspects over the past 40 years**

early days of modernization, China also experienced the political revolution caused by the reform of the mode of production. As shown by the experiences of many countries, a country would enter a relatively sustainable development period when the major political revolution was finished and a new production mode was generated and promoted. During this period, the state system will be continuously adjusted in accordance with the new problems arising in the society. The “wheel” of social contradictions and problems and the “wheel” of system adjustment reform and would in a state of competition. If the system is inclusive enough to provide the platform or channel for resolving new social contradictions and problems, it will have “toughness” and not encounter “brittle failure”. The process of China’s reform and opening up is actually a process of system adjustment for the expansion of its inclusiveness and enhancement of its “toughness”. Thus, the achievements of China’s reform are actually the result of reform and innovation of systems that keeping pace with the times. In China, there is a saying of “old wine in a new bottle”,

which refers to the change in form without in contents. Judging from the actual condition of China today, the change in contents is more bigger than that in the form. In addition, China has vast territory and large population. China's economy, culture and education of different regions present significant hierarchy, especially there is the "dual structure" in China's economic and social development, and its regional development is quite imbalanced. The degree of realization and performance of the original economic system in industries are not the same, while product economy, simple commodity economy and partial natural economy coexist. The diversity and imbalance determined that the ways of China's governance for urban and rural areas can be quite different. These characteristics require that the China's governance can not be completed in a short term with a unified approach. Instead, China has to select the most urgent and important problems and move ahead step by step, and gradually work out the governance model in line with the actual condition of regions.

When China's President Xi Jinping viewed the exhibition of "the Road of Rejuvenation" in National Museum of China in November 2012, he used a line of poem of "idle boast the strong pass is a wall of iron" to describe the past of the Chinese nation. Indeed, the frustration and sacrifice encountered by Modern China was rare in the history of the world. Since the CPC started to head the administration of China, especially since the reform and opening up, China has made historic achievements in economic, political, social, cultural and other fields. As a rising power, China's governance not only is good fortune to Chinese society and people, it also provides experiences for the development of other countries. In recent years, more and more foreign scholars are questioning: how did China make a series of miracles of development in such a short term? When sketching the out-



line of the China's governance, we want also to summarize and analyze China's experiences in governance. We look forward to having more scholars join the discussion and find a consensus.

## II. Characteristics of China's Governance

China's development of 40 years is an outcome of active governance. China's developmental experiences contain the Chinese characteristics of governance.

The first is to pursue the synergistic effect of the multiple governance mechanism. Politicians have always stressed the importance of "mixed institutions", because mixed institutions provide the multiple governance mechanisms. China's multiple governance mechanisms is specifically manifested as adhering to the unified integration of the leadership of the CPC, letting the people be the masters of the country and governing the country according to the rule of law. The leadership of the CPC is the fundamental guarantee for the construction of socialist democratic politics; the people are the masters of the country is the essential requirement of socialist democratic politics; law-based governance is the basic strategy for the CPC to lead the people to govern the country. Unlike the Western political parties, the CPC is a long-term governing party, which means the CPC has a continuous governing experiences and resources. In the process of China's establishment and development, the CPC has always played the role of core leader. In terms of the China's actual condition, the CPC has the extraordinary capability of organization, mobilization and comprehensive coordination which is unparalleled by any other organization and the leadership positions in state administrative organs, state-owned