



# CHINA'S ROAD OF GREEN DEVELOPMENT

XIE ZHENHUA PAN JIAHUA

CHINESE WISDOM AND SOLUTIONS  
UNDERSTANDING CHINA



China International  
Publishing Group  
中国国际出版集团



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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Where have we come from, and where are we going? In this day and age for China, I am always reminding myself to maintain this sense of history.

– Xi Jinping

From Xi's speech when meeting with foreign attendees of the Second Understanding China Conference in Beijing, *People's Daily*, January 5, 2016

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## PREFACE TO THE “UNDERSTANDING CHINA” SERIES

Zheng Bijian

This series of books covers the topic: Understanding China.

But why is “Understanding China” an important question?

At present, the world around us is going through unprecedented changes and nowhere more so is that the case than in China.

Since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in the mid-20th century, and particularly over the past 40 years, a poor and backward country in East Asia with a population of over 1.3 billion has achieved incredible growth to become the world’s second largest economy.

It is therefore natural that people should ask: What exactly is going on in China, and what is the secret behind such rapid development?

It is also entirely natural for people to wonder: How can a rising China get along with the rest of the world?

As a result, misgivings about the country abound. All kinds of theories such as the “China threat”, the “Collapsing of China”, the “Thucydides’s Trap” and the “middle income trap” have been directed toward China.

There is no doubt that China should unflinchingly follow its own path and deal with its own matters well. That in itself means that in order to respond to people’s concerns, questions and misgivings, one thing must be done – Understand China.

It was precisely for this reason that the China Institute for Innovation & Development Strategy (CIIDS), which I co-founded, joined together with the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA) and the world-renowned 21st Century Council think tank to hold two Understanding China conferences in 2013 and 2015.

These two important international meetings received the close attention and support of the General Secretary of the CPC and President of China, Xi Jinping, who personally attended and held informal discussions with distinguished overseas participants; and Premier of the State Council Li Keqiang and Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli, who gave the opening speeches at the first and second conferences respectively. Top leaders of departments in the Central Committee of the CPC and State Council also participated alongside senior political figures, experts and scholars from all over the world to undertake face-to-face meetings and answer questions.

The main lesson from the conferences was that confronting questions head-on, being sincere, seeking the truth from facts, and telling the stories of China, the CPC and China's relations with the world, in lively and detailed ways, greatly helps those who care about China to gain new knowledge, and gradually allays the misgivings of those who are uncertain about China.

To achieve this goal we are moving the "Understanding China" international conference to books, videos and online, in order to respond to people's concerns, questions and misgivings on a bigger scale and in more lively forms.

This series has not only received the enthusiastic support of relevant government departments, China International Publishing Group and the Foreign Languages Press, but also the full backing of experienced practitioners, experts and scholars, as well as government leaders.

This is the first set of books in the series. Whilst these are concerned

mainly with the works of Chinese writers, future books will also feature writers from other countries.

This is also not simply a collection of books – it will be accompanied by television specials and online videos for people to enjoy.

In our opinion, “Understanding China”, including “Understanding the CPC” and “Understanding China’s Relations with the World” are all grand undertakings.

Let us passionately follow and participate in these undertakings together.

March 2018

## **Foreword**

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Over the past 40 years of reform and opening up, China has successfully realized the great historical change from a weak economy to an economic power, and its economic strength and comprehensive national strength have been significantly enhanced, completely changing the situation of poverty and weakness since the Opium Wars in the mid-19th century. The national economy has maintained sustained and rapid growth, creating a miracle in world economic history and opening a new chapter of China's modernization. Since the adoption of reform and opening up in 1978, China's rapid economic growth has brought its total economic output to surpass that of Germany in 2008, ranking third in the world; to surpass Japan in 2010, ranking second in the world; in 2015, China's per capita national income was close to US\$8,000, joining the ranks of middle-income countries. China has also established a modern industrial system over a complete range, with high international competitiveness as a world manufacturing base, and its manufacturing output value ranks first in the world. Agricultural production in China has increased year by year, to solve the food problem of nearly 20 percent of the world's population on just 7 percent of the world's arable land. Our scientific and technological innovation capability in manned spaceflight, large-scale computers, high-speed rail, equipment manufacturing, communications equipment, etc., has reached world-leading level, as China strides forward

as a country of innovation

Although China has made remarkable achievements in its economic and social development, we must be soberly aware that the problems of unbalanced, uncoordinated, unsustainable development are still prominent, the cost of the resources and environment in economic growth is too large, and the situation of inefficient resource use, serious environmental pollution, and ecological degradation constrains seriously our sustainable economic and social development. China is still a developing country, at a crucial stage of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects by means of accelerated industrialization, urbanization and agricultural modernization; we have tens of millions of poor people, which implies an arduous task in economic development, environment protection, and improving the people's livelihood. The limited resources, environment and ecological problems that have emerged and gradually been solved in the process of industrialization over the past one or two hundred years by developed countries have been concentrated in China's rapid development of the past 30 years and have increased the difficulty and complexity of China's proper handling of the relationship between economic development, social progress and energy resources, ecological environment and climate change. This is a common challenge facing every country in the world, and also, for China, a major issue related to the overall situation of her economic and social development and the well-being of her people.

From the historical background of human development, industrialized countries have also experienced a stage of very acute conflicts between development and resources, environment and ecological system. The industrial revolution, which began in the mid-18th century, brought human society into industrial civilization. While bringing great material wealth to mankind, industrialization came with heavy resource and environmental costs. The famous "eight environmental pollution incidents"

began to attract the attention of various governments. Another factor was the increasing prominence of constraints on energy under the traditional growth model of high consumption. The first oil crisis in 1973 caused crude oil prices to skyrocket and more than double; the three-year-long oil crisis reduced US industrial production by 14 percent, and industrial production in Japan fell by more than 20 percent. The economic growth of all industrialized countries slowed down significantly, indicating the vulnerability and unsustainability of a modern economy extensively dependent on fossil fuels. Across the world, ever-increasing crises in freshwater, heavy metal pollution in the soil, the sharp drop in biodiversity, and climate change have led to reflection on the traditional development model and on the drawbacks of industrial civilization.

In 1972, the United Nations convened a worldwide conference on human environment to comprehensively review the socio-economic origins of environmental problems, and adopted the Declaration of the Conference on the Human Environment, which quoted Chairman Mao Zedong's words: "Man has constantly to sum up experience and go on discovering, inventing, creating and advancing." The 1992 Conference on Environment and Development of the United Nations adopted the programmatic documents of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, presenting a sustainable development strategy that launched the process of jointly exploring sustainable development by the people of the world, and the historic United Nations summit of September 2015 unanimously adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which was launched on January 1, 2017. This decision, one of epoch-making significance, reflects that sustainable development is the theme of the times and the future trend, and signaled the latest strategic consensus of human society on the concept and the ideal goal of development. The Agenda, based on the intrinsic relations between development, society and environment, advocates a comprehensive, inclusive, shared and green concept of de-

velopment that covers 169 sustainable development goals in 17 areas, one of which is climate change. It puts forward initiatives concerning financing, institutional and policy reforms supporting these goals, creating a roadmap to end global poverty, to build a dignified life for all people, and to ensure that no one is left behind.

The problem of how to balance resources, environment, ecology and development is a particularly acute one for China since the resource and environment situation here is more complex and grave than in the developed countries. It is necessary to cope with climate change in the framework of sustainable development. It is necessary to explore a more intelligent, more efficient, more environmentally friendly and resource-saving path for innovation in our growth and development path, under the precondition of promoting continuous improvement of income, in particular pushing the realization of goals to eliminate absolute poverty, ensure food security, strengthen infrastructure, improve medical and educational establishment for developing countries. This road is China's "road of green development."

"Green development" in the wide sense covers cultural and institutional norms of conservation, low-carbon, recycling, ecological and environmental protection, harmony between man and nature; in the narrow sense, "green" is focused on ecological and environmental protection, mainly preventing and controlling pollution, protecting and restoring ecological conditions, and enhancing the production capacity of ecological products, so that the people can enjoy life and engage in production in an environment of blue sky, green land and clean water.

China's green development path has been advancing through exploration. China's development strategy is highly consistent with the world current of sustainable development and green low-carbon transition. In the concept of green development, we have gone through a learning process, starting from opposition to a "win-win" relationship between

the environment and the economy to a process of enhancing the relationship of harmony and coordination between man and nature. In our cognition of green development, we have deepened our understanding of sustainable development, and are trying to create a development path with Chinese characteristics – “advanced production, affluent life and good ecology.” In the practice of green development, we have seen shifts of focus: initially on pollution prevention and control, then equal stress on pollution prevention and ecological protection, and now to a combination of prevention, repair, and reconstruction.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in November 2012, China has strengthened ecological progress, established and implemented the development concept of innovation, coordination, green, open, sharing, adhering to green development, recycling, and low-carbon development as a basic path. We insist that economic and social development must be based on the efficient recycling of resources and strictly protected ecological environment; we must form the spatial pattern, industrial structure, production modes commensurate with conservation of resources and protection of environment in coordination with ecological progress. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out in the report to the 19th CPC National Congress that “taking a driving seat in international cooperation to respond to climate change [in the last five years], China has become an important participant, contributor, and torchbearer in the global endeavor for ecological civilization.” He put forward that China should promote green development, promote a sound economic structure that facilitates green, low-carbon, and circular development, build an energy sector that is clean and low-carbon, fulfill our commitments on emissions reduction, cooperate with all countries to tackle climate change, and protect our planet for the sake of human survival.

China has clearly mapped out its track and blueprint of green development through energetic promotion of ecological civilization, which

are based on reflection, transformation and upgrading of industrial civilization, as a development paradigm and social civilization form that are fundamentally distinct from industrial civilization. In ethical outlook, eco-civilization respects, accommodates itself to, and protects nature. In terms of social relations, eco-civilization advocates mutual benefit and win-win, harmonious symbiosis; in terms of development goals, eco-civilization pursues ecological prosperity of sustainable development; in terms of production mode, eco-civilization adopts recycling and low-carbon production; in terms of consumption mode, eco-civilization pushes for green, low-carbon, healthy, and quality of life.

China's green development path is the road of sustainable development with harmonious coexistence and benign interaction between human society and nature. By passing on Oriental philosophy and wisdom in vigorously promoting ecological progress, China's practice of green development will constitute a great contribution and effective lead in global green transformation and sustainable development.

This book has been written by several young scholars from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) under the design and guidance of Xie Zhenhua and Pan Jiahua. Yu Xiang from the Institute of Urban Development and Environment of the CASS wrote chapters 1, 6 and 11 and coordinated the overall book, and his colleague Wu Zhanyun wrote chapters 4 and 5, while Xie Laihui of the Asia-Pacific and Global Strategy Research Institute of the CASS wrote chapters 2, 7 and 10, and his colleague Zhou Yamin wrote chapters 3, 8 and 9. During the two-year process of research, communication, writing and revision that resulted in the final draft, Xie Zhenhua and Pan Jiahua worked together, systematically analyzing, assessing and selecting materials, and reviewing each draft. The team met a dozen times, as well as having regular group discussions. They devoted a lot of effort and wisdom to this book, and

made several overhauls. Zheng Bijian also provided guidance. Thanks also go to the editors, proofreaders and translators for their hard work for the publishing of this book.

Xie Zhenhua