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As the People’s Republic of China approached the midpoint of its seventh decade, its economy continued to thrive and the country was unequivocally accepted as one of the world’s preeminent powers. At the same time, major problems loomed with the potential to undermine these successes. Domestically, communism was moribund as an ideology, and the Chinese Communist Party had lost its legitimacy in the eyes of many of the PRC’s citizens. Corruption was endemic in the economic and political systems. Rapid economic growth had been accompanied by a widening of income inequality and increasing social instability. Pollution filled the air of many urban areas and poisoned the waterways. Although most people appeared content to enjoy the benefits of increasing prosperity, vocal minorities of farmers, workers, and ethnic minorities voiced their dissatisfaction with the status quo. Harsh punishments were meted out to dissidents, not infrequently in trials that seemed to violate the provisions of the country’s constitution. Better laws were passed but not always enforced. A party, which had come to power on behalf of the rights of the workers and the peasants seemed to have turned its back on them. Although the slogan “serve the people” remained, party and government leaders seemed now to fear the people.

Externally, foreign nations worried that their economies might be swallowed by the Chinese juggernaut, and complained that Beijing was manipulating the country’s currency to create trade imbalances in China’s favor. They also voiced concern about the motives behind rapidly rising defense budgets when the PRC faced no external threat and protested cyberspying that was shown to have originated in China. Foreign analysts began to question their initial assumption that economic pluralism would lead inexorably to political pluralism and an evolution toward liberal democracy. In some areas, the Chinese system had become more rather than less oppressive. Moreover, the state also reinforced its role in the economy to some degree.

Whether the genuine achievements of the past sixty-plus years can be continued is a question much debated by scholars of China both domestic and foreign. The present problems could represent no more than the growing pains of a greater and more powerful state. At the other extreme, they could portend the collapse of the current system. Or the country could be caught in a middle-income trap.

The genesis of the first edition of *China’s Political System* grew out of my own efforts to understand how the communist government of China, having only recently, in the long sweep of Chinese history, come to power, could transform an impressive, ancient civilization into an industrialized, socialist state.

My aim has been to describe and analyze China’s political system, taking as *leitmotif* the efforts of successive leaderships to harmonize elements of the country’s unique indigenous culture with formulas for industrialization and
modernization that originally evolved in the West. The nineteenth-century paradigm “Chinese learning for the essence; Western learning for practical use” resonates with Mao Zedong’s injunction to “walk on two legs”—the modern and the traditional—as does Deng Xiaoping’s search for “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” Over the past half century, other and related themes have become prominent in Chinese politics. As the leadership of the People’s Republic shifted emphasis from revolutionary ideals to the more mundane but perhaps even more challenging business of governing, and from a socialist, planned economy to a market-based system, the question of how much of its communist heritage it should retain has had to be addressed as well. Elements of retraditionalization coexist with trends toward modernization and globalization.

The intended audience for China’s Political System is upper-level undergraduates specializing in political science and history or simply interested persons who want to learn more about China. The author hopes that this will be an enjoyable experience: Academic jargon has been minimized.

New to This Edition

The ninth edition has been updated to include:

- significant political developments through early 2014;
- policy changes since the Eighteenth Party Congress and the Twelfth National People’s Congress;
- expanded coverage of changing relationships among central, provincial, and local governments;
- the impact of enhanced citizen participation in the political process;
- effects of the decelerating economic growth rate.

Features

A summary of the different ways in which Chinese politics and history have been analyzed is followed by brief overviews of the traditional Chinese system, its breakdown, and the rise of communism, followed by a more detailed treatment of the characteristics and major events of the communist era. Because politics has permeated virtually every sphere of Chinese society since 1949, an analysis of how politics has impinged on these different spheres forms the major building blocks of the text—economics; the legal system; the military; literature, art, and journalism; and so forth. Although the list of topics that might be considered is long, the academic semester is limited, and hence the number of chapters has been set at fifteen—approximately one for each week of the average semester. Resisting the urge to be encyclopedic has meant not providing separate chapters for topics that some might prefer, such as ideology, human rights, and the role of women, which are treated as subthemes in other chapters. A concluding chapter integrates these different areas, assesses the successes and
failures of the Chinese communist system, and sketches out possible scenarios for the future. Suggestions for additional reading—limited to five titles, on the advice of my editor—appear at the end of each chapter.

This text is available in a variety of formats—digital and print. To learn more about Pearson programs, pricing, and customization options, visit www.pearsonhighered.com.

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June Teufel Dreyer is professor of political science at the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, a past commissioner of the congressionally established U.S.–China Economic and Security Review Commission, and a fellow of the Foreign Policy Research Institute. She is the author of *China’s Forty Millions: Minority Nationalities and National Integration in the People’s Republic of China* (Harvard University Press), editor of *Chinese Defense and Foreign Policy* (Paragon House) and *Asian-Pacific Regional Defense* (Paragon House), and co-editor of *U.S.–China Relations in the 21st Century* (Lexington) and *Contemporary Tibet: Politics, Development, and Society in a Disputed Region* (M.E. Sharpe).
POLITICAL MAP OF CHINA. Marked cities are independently attached, i.e. under the direct control of the federal government.