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978-1-107-04911-6 - Information for Autocrats: Representation in Chinese Local Congresses

Melanie Manion

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Information for Autocrats

This book investigates the new representation unfolding in Chinese local congresses. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork and data analysis from original surveys of 5,130 township, county, and municipal congressmen and women and constituents, Melanie Manion shows that the priorities and problems of ordinary Chinese significantly influence both who gets elected to local congresses and what the congresses do once elected. Candidates nominated by ordinary voters are “good types,” with qualities that signal they will reliably represent the community. By contrast, candidates nominated by the Communist Party are “governing types,” with qualities that reflect officially valued competence and loyalty. However, congressmen and women of both types now largely reject the Maoist-era role of state agent. Instead, they view themselves as “delegates,” responsible for advocating with local government to supply local public goods. Manion argues that representation in Chinese local congresses taps local knowledge for local governance, thereby bolstering the rule of autocrats in Beijing.

Melanie Manion is Professor of Political Science at Duke University. She studied philosophy and political economy at Peking University in the late 1970s, was trained in Far Eastern Studies at McGill University and the University of London, and earned her doctorate in political science at the University of Michigan. She is the recipient of numerous research awards, including awards from the National Science Foundation and Fulbright Foundation. Her publications include work on the Chinese bureaucracy, grassroots elections, and the political economy of corruption and good governance.

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To the memory of Paul Lin, Michel Oksenberg, and Stuart Schram

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