

Reviews

Li Ling. *Governance of a Party-State: Corruption, Law, and the Modus Operandi of the Chinese Communist Party*. Cambridge University Press; 2025.

'This comprehensive and impressive work represents the culmination of two decades of research on China's courts, corruption, and the Chinese Communist Party's disciplinary apparatus. The author's unparalleled command of the sources yields a portrait of corruption in the courts that is Boschian in its detail, and her account of the disciplinary system is the most thorough to date.'

Donald C. Clarke - George Washington University Law School

'This book will be welcomed by all those interested in comparative law and government. With the perspective of an 'insider', Ling Li analyzes the history, achievements, flaws and challenges, as well as implications of the Chinese Communist Party's 75-year efforts to govern China as a Party-state. Based on two decades of deep research and sharp observation, it offers a stimulating view of both the evolving theory and expansive practice of the country's transformative but secretive political-legal process.'

Jerome A. Cohen - New York University

'Dr. Ling Li's exceptional comprehension of China's political and legal institutions offers readers an insightful exploration of the intricate workings of law and political power, both in the public eye and behind closed doors. With her penetrating analysis of the governing rules that dictate political disciplines and corruption, she presents a persuasive and thought-provoking perspective on the power dynamics within the political and legal sphere. Dr. Li's argument considers the significance of both symbolic and legitimizing values of legal rules, as well as the practical functioning of political prerogatives and imperatives, providing a nuanced understanding of the subject matter.'

Hualing Fu - Hong Kong University Faculty of Law

'Ling Li's book is an impressive and penetrative study of the evolution of China's party-state through the lens of corruption and anti-corruption. Theoretically informed, the book offers a rare and important contribution to our understanding of the rules and institutions that stabilize single-party rule and shape decision-making. It is essential reading for those who wish to deepen or reassess their understanding of the formal and informal structures and mechanisms through which the Chinese Communist Party governs itself and China.'

Ben Hillman - Director of Australian Centre on China in the World

'This is an extremely important contribution to the study of the Chinese Party-state, the relationship of the Party-state to the legal system, and how these relationships have evolved and changed over time. Likewise, anyone seeking to understand the dynamics between

corruption, anti-corruption and power struggles in China under Xi Jinping will find this to be an extremely valuable book.'

Benjamin L. Liebman - Columbia Law School

'A valuable work by one of the leading scholars of corruption in China. Dr. Li expertly details the day-to-day experience of corruption within the Chinese state, as well as the grand historical evolution of the Party's disciplinary apparatus aimed at checking such practices, and tying both to core institutional choices made by China's leaders from Mao to Xi.'

Carl Minzer - Fordham Law School

'This meticulously-researched study of the opaque nature of China's party-state relationship provides us with a vivid X-ray of not only its veiled structure, but also how subject it is to manipulation, corruption, power struggles, and influence-seeking. As we seek to divine the enigma of Xi's new China, Ling Li's roadmap is like being given a set of night vision goggles that help us see what otherwise remains obscure.'

Orville Schell - Center on US-China Relations, New York

'By focusing on the legal system and the problem of judicial corruption, Ling Li incisively penetrates the 'black box' of the China's 'party-state,' disaggregates the formal rules and concrete practices that structure how it functions, and thus deepens our understanding of how the party governs China.'

Andrew Wedeman - Georgia State University