Pinda Wang

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EDUCATION

Johns Hopkins University — Baltimore, MD, United States
PhD in Economics — 2027 (expected)

London School of Economics — London, United Kingdom
MSc in Economics — 2021

Peking University — Beijing, China
Bachelor of Economics (minor in law) — 2020

FIELDS OF RESEARCH

Political Economy, Development Economics, Applied Microeconomics, China

WORKING PAPERS

Accountability without rule of law: judicial centralization and administrative justice in China

Abstract: This paper investigates the effect of centralizing control of local courts on judicial and governance outcomes in China. Exploiting a phased reform that transferred the control of local courts from the hands of local governments to provincial governments, I use difference-in-differences to show that it made local governments 2.8\% more likely to lose in administrative lawsuits. However, the effect depends on the degree to which the interests of local and provincial governments diverge: for cases with high political sensitivity where their interests align, the reform had negligible effect. Judicial centralization may also backfire through the response of local governments. When the litigated action in question is a revenue-raising action, local governments double down on that action to make up for the lost revenue from a stricter judiciary. This is the case with land requisition: the reform made courts more likely to rule against forced demolitions, but local governments requisitioned more land as a response. These results illustrate the limits of top-down accountability without the rule of law.

The long-term chilling effect of mass political violence: evidence from China's Cultural Revolution

Abstract: This paper investigates the effect of early-life experience of mass political violence on political participation and attitudes in China. Using geographical and cohort variation of exposure to political violence during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), we find that exposure to violence reduced political participation several decades later in the 2010s: it made people less likely to vote in local elections, pursue political action in response to government mistreatment, or join the Chinese Communist Party. The adverse effect is stronger when the political action in question entails a greater degree of political participation, and is weaker in places with high social capital. We also show that experiencing political violence heightened oppositional attitudes towards the Communist regime. Together, these results document a "chilling effect" of political violence: whereas experiencing mass political violence makes people more skeptical of the Chinese government, it discourages engagement in political action.

Can mass purges root out corruption?

with Stephane Wolton and Johannes Lützenrath

Abstract: We study the properties of mass anti-corruption campaigns. To do so, we use a formal model of top-down accountability in which an autocrat faces a mass of agents who can be honest or corrupt and loyal or disloyal (two-dimensional type). Agents can embezzle funds for private gains and exert effort on individual projects. The autocrat values good performance and loses from agents' embezzlement. We show that when the autocrat can easily detect corrupt activities, so that no agent ever embezzles during the campaign, a mass purge always increases the proportion of corrupt agents within the system. Indeed, we highlight how an anti-corruption campaign spills over into an ideological mass purge. We discuss how our findings help to re-interpret anti-corruption efforts in autocracies, including Xi Jinping's recent purge of the Chinese Communist Party.

How anti-corruption purges could backfire: evidence from China

Abstract: Corruption often happens in the form of collusion within government. Stronger enforcement, however, could increase collusion within government, making anti-corruption purges backfire. This paper presents a game-theoretic model in which higher punishment in an anti-corruption purge results in a counterintuitive increase in collusion. This is because higher punishment during a purge raises the "stakes of the game", resulting in more collusion to curry favors and build connections that are helpful for survival. We provide empirical evidence for this in a case study of China's anti-corruption campaign since 2012, where most governmental collusion happens alongside alcohol banquets. We find an increase in alcohol consumption of Chinese public sector employees, relative to private sector ones, after the start of the anti-corruption campaign. We present evidence that the political mechanism from the model is behind the increase in drinking: the increase is almost

entirely driven by *baijiu*, the most politically important drink in China. The effect on drinking is also more pronounced among junior, male, and urban employees.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- Overwhelmed by choice: high school curriculum liberalization and China's educational arms race

TEACHING

Microeconomic Theory, Teaching Assistant to Sohani Fatehin, Johns Hopkins University, Fall 2025

Market Design, Teaching Assistant to Maria Betto, Johns Hopkins University, Spring 2025

Elements of Microeconomics, Teaching Assistant to Muhammad Husain, Johns Hopkins University, Fall 2024

Development Economics, Teaching Assistant to Jingyi Ye, Peking University, Fall 2019

PRESENTATIONS

DCPEC Research Workshop (Nov 2025, Washington D.C.)

DMV PhD Conference on Political Economy & Development (Oct 2025, Washington D.C.)

International Conference on Empirical Economics (Aug 2025, Pittsburgh)

AWARDS

Eugenio and Patricia Castillo Award, Johns Hopkins University, 2024

Silvio and Wilfred Prewo Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, 2023

ICBC Star Scholarship, Peking University, 2019

Leo Koguan Scholarship, Peking University, 2019

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Jiemian News, Economics & Policy Analyst, 2021-2022

LANGUAGES

Chinese (native); English (fluent); French (professional proficiency); Spanish (intermediate)

REFERENCES

Filipe Campante (main advisor)
Bloomberg Distinguished Professor
School of Advanced International Studies
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