



Lingnan 嶺南大學
University 香港 Hong Kong

Lingnan University
Institute for Advanced Study

LUIAS Distinguished Lecture

Understanding Political Trust in China

Speaker

Professor Lianjiang Li

Professor of the Department of Politics and Public Administration
The University of Hong Kong

Senior Lingnan Scholar
Lingnan University Institute for Advanced Study

Date: 10 September 2026 Time: 2:15 PM - 3:15 PM

Venue: LYH201/2, 2/F, Lau Lee Yuen Haan Amenities Building
Lingnan University

Mode: Face-to-face



Abstract

A longstanding puzzle is that national surveys over the last 30 years consistently show that over 80 per cent of Chinese people trust the central government. Drawing on interviews, local surveys, and national surveys, the speaker argues that the survey findings are valid and reliable. What makes the survey data seemingly implausible is a misunderstanding. He argues that the target of political trust in China is the Party Centre or the Centre, not the central government per se. The Centre is a highly personalised institution. Trust in the Centre has a dimension of trust in commitment and a distinct dimension of trust in competence. The observation that over eighty per cent of Chinese people trust the central government reflects trust in the Centre's commitment to working in the public interest. Trust in the Centre's competence to serve the public interest is reflected in trust in local government, which is significantly lower than trust in the central government. The speaker will present the methodological toolkit that he has assembled to solve the longstanding puzzle.

Biography

Prof Lianjiang Li obtained a BA in philosophy from Nankai University in 1982 and a Ph.D. in political science from Ohio State University in 1996. He is the author of Political Trust in China (University of Michigan Press, in press) and Rightful Resistance in Rural China (with Kevin O'Brien) (Cambridge University Press, 2006). His research articles appear in Asian Survey, China Information, China: An International Journal, China Journal, China Quarterly, China Review, Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Journal of Contemporary China, Modern China, Political Behaviour, Political Science, and Political Studies.

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