chapters, it beautifully operationalizes why “culture” is “political.” Most certainly, the “public-ness” of culture as a “shared” component of human life inevitably makes it a concern of governance.

The other important theme that could have been developed in this compilation is that of social capital. If individuals or societal groups can possess social capital via “networks,” then the idea can be extended into the realm of culture or popular culture as a source of social capital of nation-states. Alas, this perhaps is easier said than observed or measured. Thought-provoking political concepts are often fraught with methodological ambiguity. If the problem associated with “ideology” is “how to change the world,” it may be stated that the problem associated with culture or popular culture as framed in the concept of state power is “how to wield it.”

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On May 29, 2012, the Global Times, an English-language Chinese newspaper published under the auspices of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)–owned People’s Daily, ran an editorial that, while acknowledging the pervasiveness of corruption in Chinese society, stressed both the critical importance of “containing it to a level acceptable to the public” and the need to recognize and understand “the objective fact and reality that China has no way of entirely suppressing corruption without sending the whole country into pain and confusion” (Minter, 2012). The publication of Andrew Wedeman’s Double Paradox is a timely complement to the Global Times’ editorial. Beyond elucidating the reality of intensifying corruption in China, its rather more intriguing and important contribution lies in the author’s efforts to clarify “the double paradox of corruption and growth” (p. 4), namely, the sustainability of rapid growth amid worsening and increasingly predatory corruption.

The key proposition of the book depicts the “double paradox” as the result of a “dynamic interaction between economic reform and corruption” (p. 13). The early chapters of the book serve as a conceptual foundation and contextual grounding of the debate about the relationship between corruption and growth. Differentiating between “developmental” and “degenerative” corruption is the focus of Chapters 2 and 3. Using South Korea and Taiwan (Chapter 2) and Equatorial Guinea, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the Central African Republic (Chapter 3) as illustrative case studies, Wedeman demonstrates that case-specific situational realities and long-term objectives of the political leadership ultimately provide fertile ground for one or the other form of corruption to flourish.

Chapters 4–6 explore the sequencing of economic reform and corruption, the gradual evolution of the very nature of corruption, and the range of anticorruption measures undertaken by the political leadership, respectively. Wedeman
argues that renewed economic reform and restructuring efforts presented an
environment highly conducive to a dramatic uptake in high-level corruption
in the aftermath of Deng Xiaoping’s 1992 Southern Tour (南巡). Controlling
for and explaining the full extent of corruption, however, is made all the more
challenging by the likelihood of “artificially low levels of enforcement” (p. 94)
and data representing the “revealed rate” as opposed to the “actual rate” of
corruption. In squarely acknowledging and addressing this empirical complexity
and complication, the study serves as a useful reminder of the reductionist fallacy
of relying on available data without attempting to strive for contextualized focus.
Wedeman circumvents this challenge in a very convincing and conceptually solid
manner, and in the process, adds new insights to and interpretations of China’s
crisis of corruption.

In Chapter 5, the author contends that an aggressive asset transfer from state to
market, beginning in the mid-1990s, contributed to a “qualitative change in the
form of corruption” (p. 111) and “new opportunities for high-stakes corruption”
(p. 113). Wedeman describes this qualitative change of corruption—evolving
from graft prior to the onset of economic reforms, to bribery in the early 1990s,
and eventually profit-seeking corruption by the mid-1990s—as a “transitional
process,” with opportunities for continued corruption declining in response to a
gradual and seemingly inevitable reduction of the gap between state and market
valuation. In this respect, he offers a credible alternative to arguments articulated
in prior scholarly research, including the notion of the “progressive worsening”
argument or the CCP’s political monopoly serving as a key explanatory factor for
the growing corruption crisis.

Meanwhile, the CCP’s willingness to battle corruption has seemingly played
a critical role in ensuring that corruption did not spiral out of control. Thus, the
author argues that while China’s anticorruption efforts were insufficient to
induce a significant reduction in the breadth and depth of corruption, they have
“been more minimally successful in the sense that they kept corruption under
control” (p. 175). Consequently, the efforts undertaken by the CCP have mitigated
against the potential for any large-scale debilitating effect on economic growth
and stability.

In addition to summarizing the overall arguments of the book, most of Chapter
7 demonstrates that corruption in China shares fundamental similarities with
the disorganized nature of corruption—centered on localized machine politics—
that was characteristic of the Gilded Age in the United States. As a conclusion,
however, this chapter would arguably also have benefited from a general reflection
on the potential future evolution of corruption in China. In particular, given
the gradual rise to prominence of the private sector, as reflected in former Presi-
dent Jiang Zemin’s “Three Represents” (三代表) theory, a discussion about
the dynamic changes in China’s political economy, specifically the seemingly
more substantive interactions between the Party and the private sector, and their
potential consequences for the scope, breadth, and depth of corruption, would
have been a more valuable and welcome addition rather than simply noting that
there is “no evidence that national economic policy is predicated on the CCP’s
dependence on the business sector” (p. 191).

The book does not offer a definitive, irrefutable account of the nature and scope
of corruption in China. This would arguably be a too presumptuous proposition
and neither does the author pretend to be so ambitious. Rather, and much to his credit, he crafts an original extension of existing theories, assumptions, and explanations, all the while carefully outlining general concerns about the accuracy and representative nature of available data and measurement indices of corruption that complicate the study of corruption in China on methodological and empirical grounds. In doing so, he has succeeded in providing a refreshing and cautionary note about the analytical constraints of reductionist and deterministic theorizing, and in turn advances a set of detailed, contextualized arguments yielding critical and insightful explanations.

The combination of a novel argumentation and the careful grounding thereof in the broader situational realities of contemporary China underline the originality and analytical value of *Double Paradox* and will undoubtedly prove instrumental in paving the way for further research on the future of China’s crisis of corruption.

**Reference**


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There has been much debate about the nature of China’s economic and political rise, China’s long-term ambitions, and the means by which it would want to realize the same. There are those who contend that the country will (continue to) undertake a peaceful rise, and they emphasize the benefits and opportunities that the world can derive from the world’s second largest economy (pp. 4, 11). China’s closer integration with the world means that any abrupt change in the international economy would affect the country, thus making the stability of the global economic system a common interest also shared by China (p. 2). On the other hand, there are those who posit that China’s rise constitutes a threat to the existing regional, if not world, order (p. 14). As a late player in big power politics, a field in which the rules were already set by the West at a time when China was relatively weak and inward-looking, China’s resurgence may stimulate Chinese authorities to challenge these norms and take a more active role in world affairs at the expense of traditional powers, such as Europe and the United States, whose политико-economic power base continues to decline relative to that of China (pp. 66, 88).

Given the often polarized nature of this discussion, Sutter’s work makes an important contribution by providing a more nuanced analysis of the middle