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From Click to Boom: The Political Economy of E-Commerce in China

In merely two decades, China transformed from a digital newcomer to the world's largest e-commerce market, with 800 million users and nearly 50% of global retail sales. In *From Click to Boom*, Lizhi Liu unveils the surprising forces behind this extraordinary growth, tackling a key question in political economy: How can states build essential market institutions when formal institutions are lacking? Contrary to conventional wisdom, Liu argues, China's e-commerce market boom occurred partly because of weak government institutions, not despite them. Gaps in government institutions compelled e-commerce platforms to build powerful private institutions for contract enforcement, fraud detection, and dispute resolution. For a surprisingly long period, the authoritarian government acquiesced, endorsed, and even partnered with this private institutional building — a phenomenon Liu calls "institutional outsourcing." Drawing on extensive interviews, original surveys, tens of millions of proprietary data, and a field experiment across three Chinese provinces, Liu shows that the resulting e-commerce boom had far-reaching effects on China, offering fresh insights with implications for emerging markets worldwide.

Lizhi Liu is an Assistant Professor in the McDonough School of Business and a faculty affiliate of the Department of Government at Georgetown University. Her research specializes in political economy and emerging markets. Her work has been published by *American Economic Review: Insights*, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *Minnesota Law Review*, Oxford University Press, and Princeton University Press. Liu's research has received funding from institutions such as the Gates Foundation and has earned multiple accolades, including recognition from the China-Britain Business Council as one of the "Best Books on China from 2024" and the 2020 Ronald Coase Award for Best Dissertation in Institutional and Organizational Economics. In 2021, she was named one of Poets & Quants' Top 50 Undergraduate Business Professors.

DATE: Thursday, March 20, 2025

TIME: 16:45-18:30

LOCATION: **SIN 1**, at the Department of East Asian Studies/Chinese Studies,
Altes AKH, Campus, Spitalgasse 2, Yard 2, Entrance 2.3

