

*Law and Order: The Political Power and Constraints of Labor Governance in China's Platform Economy**

Hong Yu Liu

Abstract

While the platform economy in China has received increasing scholarly attention, most studies focus on platform work in the context of algorithmic control, overlooking the legal and political context in which digital labor operates. To address this knowledge gap, this article analyzes the labor regulatory framework that governs China's platform economy. It argues that there is a deficiency in China's labor laws, which can explain the lack of protection for platform workers. However, this legal loophole is essential to the survival of platform businesses as it makes platform labor profitable for both the platform and workers. In response, the state has developed a strategy to pressure platform companies to improve working conditions, consistent with the increasing control and discipline exerted by state actors in China's economy today.

Dr. Hong Yu Liu is Lecturer at the Department of Management, University of Sussex Business School. Correspondence should be sent to hl606@sussex.ac.uk.

* The legal aspect of this article is contributed by some throughout discussions with a solicitor currently practicing commercial law in China, who would prefer to keep his identity confidential. The author appreciates his time and effort in explaining the legal technicalities and sharing his valuable insight. He also thanks the two anonymous reviewers and people who provided feedback on the earlier version of this article. The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.