Regime Consolidation, Bureaucratic Compliance, and Political Control in Modern China

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Jingyuan Qian

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Dissertation Committee:

Yoshiko M. Herrera, Professor, Political Science
Andrew H. Kydd, Professor, Political Science
Scott Gehlbach, Professor, Political Science (University of Chicago)
Scott Straus, Professor, Political Science (University of California, Berkeley)
Yuhua Wang, Professor, Government (Harvard University)

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Abstract

In the first three decades of the People's Republic of China, Chairman Mao Zedong launched a series of mass-scale political campaigns to eradicate power contenders and transform China's socioeconomic structure. However, local officials sometimes lacked enthusiasm and were reluctant to fully comply with Mao's demands to meet campaign targets. How did the Chinese regime under Mao motivate subordinate bureaucrats and improve their compliance and responsiveness to Beijing's political agenda?

My dissertation addresses this question by examining three significant campaigns during Maoist China: the Land Reform (1949-1954), the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957-1959), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Through my research, I elaborate on three mechanisms used by the Chinese regime to foster loyalty and compliance among subordinates. First, the regime leveraged the incentives of less trusted outgroup factions to signal loyalty and dispel suspicion surrounding their backgrounds. Officials from these factions, driven by the desire to demonstrate their trustworthiness to the leader, would exhibit greater enthusiasm in carrying out coercive tasks during the campaigns. Second, the regime strategically appointed officials from rival backgrounds to the same locality, deliberately creating factional tensions and divisions within the local authority. The mutual distrust and competition among local elites provided an incentive for them to diligently execute their assigned tasks in order to secure their positions. Lastly, the regime bolstered bureaucratic compliance by selectively mobilizing the masses. By allowing citizens to engage in collective actions against local bureaucrats, Beijing could mitigate the problem of information asymmetry and exert greater oversight and pressure on the local authorities. Overall, my dissertation sheds light on how Mao leveraged inter-group tensions and conflicts among subordinates to achieve bureaucratic compliance and maintain political control.

Contents

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Although this dissertation is primarily a piece of empirical research, its question is driven by my deep care and concern for the future trajectory of my homeland, China. As the old saying goes, "Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it." If one cannot deeply understand and reflect on the social upheaval, life losses, and human suffering in 20th-century China, how can we prevent the recurrence of tragedies in

the future? In this sense, this dissertation is dedicated to China, my cherished homeland, and her resilient people, who have endured so much.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 The Unsolved Puzzles of a Late Chinese Historian

In April 2007, Gao Hua, a prominent historian renowned for his in-depth analysis of Chinese politics during Chairman Mao Zedong's rule (1949-1976), learned that he was diagnosed with late-stage liver cancer. Gao's seminal work, *How the Red Sun Rose*, provides a systematic analysis of the personal strategies and structural factors that contributed to Mao's rise to power within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the 1940s. Now, faced with the omen that his time might be limited, Gao desperately compiled and edited his unpublished manuscripts, hoping that his students could complete his work someday. In his manuscripts, Gao highlighted two major puzzles which he had studied throughout his life but never fully understood. The first puzzle concerns the nature of Mao's mass-mobilized political campaigns. Were the political campaigns launched by the CCP between 1949 and 1976, Gao asked, a *rational strategy* that aimed to fulfill certain political agendas, or merely the result of irrational paranoia or ideological fervor of an aging absolutist ruler? If Mao's political campaigns were intended to achieve rational, strategic objectives, such as eliminating political opponents and securing the regime's rule, why did those campaigns often far exceeded its planned scope and prosecuted so many individuals who posed little or no threat to the regime? Throughout his lifetime, Gao was dedicated to understanding the seemingly erratic nature of political campaigns during the Mao era.

> *From the Land Reform onward, everyone was no longer in control of their own destiny. One after another, they were slowly drawn into an endless sequence of campaigns. The whirlpool spun faster and faster, and more and more people were drawn in, until they fell into the abyss of the Cultural*

> *Revolution. Millions of people did not survive. What's even more tragic is that even survivors were still confused: they did not understand what it was all about.* (Lin 2012)

The second puzzle that Gao highlighted in his manuscripts was Mao's distinct preference for *mass mobilization*. Despite having a strong, centralized bureaucracy at his disposal to achieve political and policy objectives, Mao actively encouraged and even mandated the participation of large numbers of ordinary citizens and rank-and-file bureaucrats in his political campaigns. In his works, Gao contrasted Mao's approach with the repression and social transformation practices in the USSR. The Soviet regime, Gao argued, primarily achieved its policy objectives through a centralized bureaucracy, in which Party officials followed a strict hierarchical chain of command:

> *"During the Stalin era, the Soviet Union mostly relied on specialized agencies to carry out repression and dealt with dissident forces through deadly violence, massive incarceration, and exile. It had at least some formal rules and laws, rather than resorted to mass campaigns."*(Gao 2007)

On the contrary, Gao noted that Mao's China lacked both a centralized chain of command to lead the campaigns and a specialized bureaucratic agency to implement them. Instead, those campaigns relied on the mobilization of the "masses" — ordinary citizens and grassroots-level bureaucrats without prior administrative or coercive skills — to contribute to their objectives:

> *"China, under the leadership of the Party-state, established ad hoc agencies to lead the campaigns, made temporary orders and regulations, used the Party organizations to mobilize the masses on a large scale through organization and propaganda, created an intense atmosphere in the society, and combined mass movements with public security organs to strike, shock, and suppress the enemy, in order to achieve the goals set forth by the campaign."* (Ibid)

For Gao, the paradox was evident: why did Mao prefer to use mass mobilization, rather than exploiting the already established bureaucratic apparatus, to eliminate power contenders and implement his socioeconomic transformation agenda? Was his obsession with "the masses" solely driven by his populist ideology that socialism must be achieve through a "People's War," where the Party must "pool the wisdom of the common people" (Loubere, Sorace, and Franceschini 2019)? Or was mass mobilization part of Mao's conscious tactics to serve specific political purposes? Sadly, after a long battle with cancer, Gao passed away in November 2011 and was never able to provide a definite answer to those questions he raised. Nevertheless,

his inquiry continued to inspire a new generation of scholars to delve deeper into the power dynamics and ruling tactics in Mao's China.

My dissertation is an ambitious, yet preliminary attempt to continue the unfinished work of the late Gao Hua. As I will detail in the following chapters, my research demonstrates that mass-mobilized political campaigns were instrumental in the CCP's state-building and regime consolidation during the Mao era. These campaigns incentivized local bureaucrats to comply with the regime's directives, allowed the regime to test and induce loyalty from subordinate officials, and improved its overall capacity to manage and control its cadre force. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the significance of studying Mao's mass-mobilized campaigns, how they revealed the power dynamics and ruling tactics in Mao's China, and the broader insights they offer into the study of political violence and bureaucratic control in authoritarian regimes.

1.2 Significance of Mao's Mass-Mobilized Campaigns

The Mao era was one of the most disruptive and violent historical episode in 20th-century China and the world (Courtois et al. 1999). Under Mao's leadership, the Chinese regime launched a series of political campaigns that resulted in significant loss of life and casualties, as well as immense social and economic costs for Chinese society. For example, the Land Reform Campaign from 1949 to 1953, which aimed to eradicate the rural landlord and gentry classes and ensure the Party's control of the countryside, resulted in a death toll of 200,000 to 800,000 and the incarceration of up to six million "class enemies" (Stavis 1978; Valentino 2005). The Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957, which targeted critics of Mao's radical socioeconomic policies, led to the prosecution of 550,000 intellectuals and bureaucrats in cities (Zeming Chen 2007). The Cultural Revolution, which dragged China into enormous chaos and anarchy, led to another 1.6 million deaths due to political violence (Walder 2019). Those political campaigns not only incurred enormous human costs and disrupted China's economic development, but also caused long-term consequences to the political behaviors and attitudes of Chinese citizens (Y. Wang 2021).

For a long time, many scholars of China displayed a lack of interest in studying the political events during the Mao era from an *institutional* perspective, dismissing them as irrelevant to contemporary Chinese politics. In particular, the political norms and institutions developed during the Mao era were often viewed by scholars in a simplified and stereotypical manner, who characterize the regime as "a brittle sys-

tem" where "power was hyper-centralized, with all actors below the supreme leader fearful and jealous" (Nathan 2012). The Mao-era bureaucracy was similarly considered as a totalitarian hierarchy with little internal tension or contestation, where "every bureaucrat was a slave facing upward and a dictator facing downward" (J. Yang 2012). According to this narrative, Mao's violent political campaigns reflected nothing but the personal whim or paranoia of an aging ruler, which played little *functional* role of shaping the norm and structure of the CCP regime. Furthermore, many scholars assumed that these campaigns had little long-term impact on China's subsequent political development in the Reform Era. For example, Ezra Vogel, the prominent China scholar, asserted that Deng Xiaoping "remade" China from the ruins of the Cultural Revolution (Vogel 2013). According to this view, the political system in Reform-era China — an adaptive and resilient authoritarian regime supported by a large, semi-professional bureaucracy — primarily emerged from Deng's grand reforms in the 1980s and had little to do with the political events that occurred during Mao's reign.

Yet, an in-depth study of Mao's mass-mobilization campaigns is still significant and necessary for several reasons. These campaigns defied conventional logic of authoritarian governance and have raised numerous unresolved questions regarding their scope, intensity, and pattern of implementation. Thus, addressing those puzzles is essential to better understand the mechanisms of political control not only in China but also in autocracies worldwide.

1.2.1 Puzzle One: Lack of Perceived Anti-Regime Threat

Conventional literature considers repression as a means to eliminate the autocrats' political enemies and deter power contenders from challenging the regime (Davenport 2007b). According to a widely adopted definition, repression is "action taken by the government to neutralize, to suppress, or to eliminate perceived threat to the security of the government, the regime, or the state itself"(Taylor and Jodice 1983). Autocrats tend to engage in more intensive repression when they face a higher level of threat to their rule, and localities with stronger dissent and more salient anti-regime insurgency are more likely to experience more severe crackdown (Davenport 1995; Stanley 1996; Davenport 2007a; Carey 2010; Blaydes 2020).

However, the series of repressive campaigns under Mao occurred at a time when the CCP enjoyed strong popular support and Mao's grip on power appeared to be secure. In the decade prior to the founding of the PRC, the CCP had developed strong popular support among citizens due to its solid efforts to fight against the Japanese invaders and its decisive victory over the corrupt Kuomintang regime (U.S. De-

partment of State 2016; Taylor 1951). China's involvement in the Korean War (1950-52), where the Chinese troops displayed unwavering bravery and morality, provided the CCP with a "reservoir of popular support that would be a major political resource for years" (Rawnsley 2009). Domestically, Mao's personal authority and prestige also reached unprecedented heights in the early 1950s, who not only successfully consolidated power within the Party but also cultivated a cult of personality among the general populace (Sullivan 1986). During this period, both the Party and Mao himself faced minimal threats or challenges, making it puzzling why the regime would initiate large-scale repressive campaigns in a time of relative stability and security.

What made Mao's repressive campaigns more baffling was that that the geospatial variation of violence did not appear to be related to the strength of local anti-regime threats. Previous studies show that, during various mass campaigns under Mao, neighboring provinces with similar geographic and demographic conditions, duration of CCP rule, and state capacity often experienced vastly different levels of violence. (Y. Chen 2009; Tan 2017; Walder 2019; Y. Wang 2021). The "threat model" of state repression, which views repression as a response to perceived threat, apparently cannot explain this perplexing pattern.

1.2.2 Puzzle Two: Excessive and Disproportionate Use of Violence

Existing theories also fail to explain why Mao's mass-mobilized campaigns resulted in excessive, indiscriminate violence that far exceeded its intended scope. When faced with potential power challengers, most autocrats tend to avoid excessive and overarching violence, but pursue a subtle strategy that combines selective repression with cooptation (Gerschewski 2013; Bove and Rivera 2015; Xu 2021). By creating an incentive structure that rewards those who switch allegiance to the regime while targets those who insisted on defying it, the autocrat can minimize the costs of repression and divide and demobilize the opposition forces (March 2009; Reuter and Robertson 2015). Excessive and indiscriminate use of violence and coercion, on the contrary, not only incurs high costs but can also bring a number of negative consequences. Mass violence perpetrated by the regime could lead to widespread grievance, invite greater anti-regime sentiment, and strengthen the solidarity of the existing opposition forces (Dell and Querubin 2018; Zeira 2019). Furthermore, mass violence could prompt citizens to hide or falsify their political attitudes and increase the regime's difficulty of obtaining accurate information on public opinion (Kuran 1997; Y. Wang 2021; Rozenas and Zhukov 2019).

Contrary to this prevailing view, Mao's mass campaigns were characterized by large-scale, indiscrim-

inate violence that affected a far broader population than the intended targets of repression. For example, during the Land Reform and the Campaign against Counterrevolutionaries in the early 1950s, although Mao established a quota for the percentage of landlords and "reactionaries" to be prosecuted across the country, most provinces arrested and executed a far greater fraction of alleged political enemies during actual campaign implementation (K. Yang 2008; Dikötter 2013). In fact, a vast majority of individuals prosecuted during Mao's repressive campaigns were innocent and posed no threat to the regime. For instance, among over 550,000 individuals that were denounced as "rightists" during the Anti-Rightist Campaign, all but 96 individuals were absolved from all wrongdoings after Mao's death (Y. Zhang 2009).

The excessive and indiscriminate violence committed during Mao's mass-mobilized campaigns was even more perplexing, given that non-violent alternative approaches to achieving the objectives of those campaigns were clearly available. During the late stages of Sino-Japanese War in the early 1940s, the CCP experimented small-scale land reforms in the territories emancipated from Japanese occupation. During this period, the Party redistributed land to peasants in a moderate and gradual manner and even offered modest compensation to landlords, without resorting to mass prosecutions and violence against the entire rural gentry class (Moïse 2017). Similarly, the Kuomintang regime's land reform campaign in 1950s Taiwan, which had the similar goal of redistributing rural farmland, was also implemented in a peaceful and moderate manner. It was characterized by government purchase of land from landowners, gradual transfer of land to peasants, and the cooptation of the rural elites into the state apparatus (N.-T. Wu 1988; Strauss 2019; Luo 2022). Whether the excessive and indiscriminate violence during Mao's campaigns was a rational strategy to achieve certain goals or an unfortunate consequence of the regime's power dynamics and incentive structure deserves further investigation.

1.2.3 Puzzle Three: Necessity of Mass Mobilization

According to classical authoritarian regime literature, autocrats prefer citizens to be politically apathetic and discourage them from civic discourse and political participation. As Juan Linz famously remarked: "Rather than enthusiasm or support, the regime often expects…passive acceptance" (Linz 1970). Autocrats are often hesitant to mobilize their supporters, because even pro-regime political expression could potentially pose a threat to their own stability and survival. In the absence of complete information about citizens' true political attitudes, pro-regime mobilization could quickly spiral out of control and be turned against the ruler (Kuran 1997; Weiss 2013; Hellmeier and Weidmann 2020).

What was even more puzzling was Mao's strong inclination to arouse the political awareness of subordinate agents during repressive campaigns. Classical thinkers, such as Hannah Arendt, argue that "thoughtless" bureaucrats who are "disengaged from the reality of [their] evil acts" are the ideal agents to perpetrate violence in an autocracy (Arendt 1964). Autocrats preferred to recruit apolitical, career-oriented bureaucrats who "never realized what he was doing" because of their "inability…to think from the standpoint of somebody else" in order to ensure compliance with the regime's directives (Ibid). Recent studies of repressive agents in the former Soviet Union, Chile, and Argentina reveal that security agents filling the regime's security agencies tended to be mediocre, dispassionate individuals with low political awareness or moral standards (Gregory, Schröder, and Sonin 2011). On the contrary, Mao's repressive campaigns valued participants' political consciousness instead of seeking their passive compliance. Mao himself emphasized the importance of "pooling the wisdom of the masses" in order to build a complete socialist order (Loubere, Sorace, and Franceschini 2019, 122–23). Participants were encouraged to voluntarily formulate the belief that it was in their best interests to help defeat the Party's enemies and transform society (Tsai 1999). Why the Chinese regime under Mao actively foster mass participation in campaigns, rather than pursuing the passive compliance of the cadre force, was not fully understood.

1.3 Roadmap of this Dissertation

1.3.1 Summary of Theoretical Framework

In my dissertation, I propose a new theoretical framework to understand the role of mass-mobilized campaigns in Mao's China. Rather than seeing them solely as a means of eliminating political opponents or achieving certain socioeconomic objectives, I investigate how these campaigns were used by the regime to shape the behavior of both subordinate bureaucrats and participating citizens. Essentially, my dissertation argues that these campaigns were a critical part of *statebuilding* project in Mao's China, allowing the CCP to ensure compliance and responsiveness from local bureaucracy, test and foster loyalty among lower-level officials, and increase surveillance and penetration of territories formerly beyond its control.

My theoretical framework challenges the assumption that internal contentions and factional disputes within a bureaucracy *always* weaken the regime's capacity to exert political control. Through an in-depth study of Mao's political campaigns, I show that Mao intentionally fostered cleavages and tensions between different groups of officials, as well as between officials and regular citizens, to induce their compliance

and responsiveness to the central leadership. Amid a highly politicized and tense environment where the criteria for evaluating one's loyalty and performance were ambiguous, campaign participants had an incentive to implement the central leadership's directives *enthusiastically* to display their compliance and out-compete their peers. In particular, the mass-mobilized campaigns had a radicalizing effect on those officials with questionable personal history or belonging to outgroup factions less trusted by Mao. For these officials, Mao's campaigns presented an opportunity to affirm their allegiance to the leader, erase suspicion and distrust stemming from their personal backgrounds, and overcome potential career obstacles. In general, I contend that the factional tensions and divisions created during Mao's campaigns actually bolstered the central regime's authority and fostered the subordinate agents' compliance and responsiveness to the regime leadership.

In my dissertation, I also theorize that a bureaucrat's participation in Mao's repressive campaigns could increase an agent's reliance on the ruler personally in the longer term. Committing repression and violence, metaphorically, is akin to "burning one's own bridges." By implementing repressive campaigns for the leader, a bureaucrat risks damaging their reputation, drawing resentment and hostility from targeted victims of the campaign, and increasing the likelihood of future retaliation. Consequently, the bureaucrat's political career could become more dependent on the ruler's patronage, because their involvement in repressive campaigns limited their alternative career options. This may explain why Mao preferred to involve a large number of ordinary bureaucrats to participate in mass campaigns, rather than relying on a small group of coercive specialized agents to achieve certain political goals.

1.3.2 Case Selection

In this dissertation, I examine my theoretical framework by focusing on three mass-mobilized campaigns in Mao's China: the Land Reform (1949-54), the Anti-Rightist Movement (1957-59), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). I choose the three campaigns because they exemplify the three different mechanisms that Mao's regime used to induce loyalty and compliance from bureaucrats. First, the regime assigned repressive tasks to officials from less trustworthy outgroup factions or with questionable backgrounds to test and strengthen their loyalty and allegiance to the regime. Secondly, the regime strategically assigned officials with rival backgrounds to the same locality, thereby creating factional tensions and cleavages within the local authority. This rivalry among local elites created an incentive for them to diligently execute their assigned tasks to secure their positions. Third, the regime selectively mobilized the masses to express their

attitudes towards local officials to mitigate the information asymmetry problem and impose more oversight and pressure on the authorities. Overall, my dissertation highlights how Mao exploited inter-group tensions and conflicts among subordinates to achieve bureaucratic compliance and political control.

Chapter Three: The Land Reform Campaign (1949-54)

My first empirical chapter seeks to explore how Mao's campaigns motivated local officials to enhance their adherence to Beijing's policy agenda by leveraging *factional divisions* and *power struggles* at the subnational level. I analyze the Land Reform Campaign (1949-54), a mass-mobilized movement that aimed to eliminate the landlord class in rural areas and redistribute their property to peasants. Using an original county-level dataset from four provinces in Southern China, I show that factional cleavages and competition within the local bureaucracy could lead to more radical implementation of the campaign. In counties where the regime's control and penetration of local communities were weak, the higher authorities were more likely to appoint a locally embedded official and an outside official to fill the two top leadership positions (Party secretary and governor), thereby creating a factional divide within the local bureaucracy. This division generated intense competition between the two leaders and incentivized them to perform their assigned tasks fervently to secure their positions. Amid the tense political climate during Mao's political campaigns, factional divisions and tensions compelled local officials to compete with their peers for power and behave radically to gain favor from the higher authorities. Overall, inter-group conflicts within the local authorities paradoxically led to greater compliance and efficacy in policy implementation.

Chapter Four: The Anti-Rightist Campaign (1957-58)

The second empirical chapter aims to understand how repressive campaigns enable an autocrat to induce the compliance of "outgroup" bureaucrats who were considered as less loyal and trustworthy by the leadership. This chapter focuses on the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957, a mass purge launched by Mao against alleged "right-wingers" who opposed his radical policy agenda. I find strong evidence that the intensity of campaign implementation in a province was strongly associated with the career trajectory of the provincial leadership. Historical accounts show that provincial leaders who were *former Red Army combatants*, who enjoyed closer relations with Mao and were considered by the ruler as more loyal, only displayed lukewarm attitudes towards the campaign and even tacitly resisted Mao's push for prosecuting more "rightists" in their provinces. In contrast, former undercover agents, an outgroup faction considered

less loyal and trustworthy by Mao, displayed great fervency towards Mao's purge, and some were even worried that their compliance with the leader's prosecution demands was not strong and visible enough.

Based on an original, multi-layered dataset from archival sources, I find a systematic pattern that provinces and prefecture-level cities governed by former undercover agents were more likely to prosecute a larger number of individuals as "rightists". Furthermore, based on a declassified database of high-profile "rightists," I find that those individuals who were prosecuted in jurisdictions governed by former undercover cadres were more likely to receive harsher penalties such as forced labor and imprisonment. Through this case study, I demonstrate how Mao used repression strategically to test, motivate, and control certain subordinates, especially those with doubtful loyalty.

Chapter Five: The Cultural Revolution

In the third empirical chapter, I analyze data drawn from the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) to understand the role of mass mobilization in Mao's political campaigns. I argue that mass mobilization during the Cultural Revolution served two functions: *top-down diversion* and *bottom-up accountability*. On the one hand, it could divert the public grievance arising from the regime's past policy failures toward local authorities and allow the central leadership to avoid direct blame for the citizens' grievances. On the other hand, it could weaken and constrain the excessive power of local political elites. Using individual-level data on contentious incidents against local authorities during the Cultural Revolution, I show that the masses were more likely to engage in collective actions against local authorities in areas (1) where the Great Famine from 1959-61 had a more severe impact on mortality rates and (2) where local leaders had served extensive periods of time. Overall, this chapter sheds light on the dynamics of mass mobilization and its effects on both diverting grievances and holding local authorities accountable.

Chapter 2

Theory

"A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained and magnanimous. A revolution is an act of violence by which one class overthrows another."

Mao Zedong, *Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan*, 1927

2.1 Conceptualizing Mao's Mass-Mobilized Campaigns

To better understand the distinctive characters of *mass-mobilized political campaigns* in Mao's era, it is crucial to first conceptualize the term "campaign" within the context of Mao's China. According to the official Party narrative, a campaign is an "organized mobilization of collective action aimed at transforming thought patterns, class/power relationships and/or economic institutions and productivity" (Madsen 1981). However, the exact criteria for what constitutes a "campaign," as well as which political events during the Mao era should be considered as such, are still debated among scholars of China. In a widely accepted definition suggested by sociologist Wen-hui Tsai, a mass campaign is "a movement, often conceived at the top of the power structure, which encourages and promotes active participation of the masses in collective action, for the purpose of supporting a particular leader, policy, or program" (Tsai 1999). Meanwhile, scholars of social movement emphasize *transformative* impact of Mao's campaigns on China's social structure and individual identity. As noted by G. Yang (2000), Mao's campaigns were intended to "change the identity of participants, break the bounds of existing structures, and bring about change" by mobilizing the masses to engage in collective action in support of fundamental socioeconomic changes. Drawing upon

the current scholarly discourses, I identify four defining features that capture the major characteristics of mass-mobilized campaigns in Mao's China:

Dimension One: Initiation and Intervention by the Regime

Mass-mobilized campaigns in China differed from a bottom-up grassroots social movement in that it was initiated and centrally controlled by the Party leadership, with the aim of achieving certain political objectives determined by the regime. The state apparatus was deeply involved in the campaigns at both macro- and micro levels. On a grand scale, the regime set the agenda of the campaigns, launched large-scale propaganda efforts, and provided financial and personnel resources to support them (Tsai 1999; Chan 2001). Meanwhile, Beijing also engaged in extensive, targeted micro-management if certain local authorities were perceived to be inadequate in their compliance or deviated from the Center's expectations. In every mass campaign, the central leadership sent down "work teams" to localities to guide and monitor campaign progress, and directed local officials to ensure that campaign implementation aligned with the Center's scope and goals (Chan, Madsen, and Unger 1984; Y.-l. Chung 2011; Perry 2021). Despite the seemingly decentralized nature of these campaigns, the regime was able to maintain effective control and surveillance over them at a national level through its network of party agents (Dikötter 2016, 139). Sociologist Zhou Xueguang famously coined the term "institutionalized collective action" to characterize mass campaigns in Mao's China, because a necessary condition for those movements to begin and sustain was the initiation and intervention of the state apparatus. (X. Zhou 1993).

Dimension Two: Agency of the Mobilized Masses

Mao-era campaigns were also distinct from top-down bureaucratic operations in their strong emphasis on mass participation in producing social and political change. During those campaigns, a large number of ordinary citizens were mobilized to participate in the accomplishment of certain policy goals set forth by the regime. During the Land Reform campaign, landless peasants were organized by Party cadres to collectively express their grievances in public meetings, accuse their landlords of exploitation, and redistribute the rural farmlands on their own terms (DuBois and Li 2016; Strauss 2019). Similarly, ordinary citizens and rank-and-file bureaucrats were periodically called upon to denounce the "counter-revolutionaries" and "rightists," report the misbehaviors of local leaders, and engage in large-scale industrial production (Cell 1983; Perry 2002). In Mao's own words, the "force of the masses" should be agitated to "disrupt the

bureaucratic routine" (Heilmann and Perry 2011).

Historical accounts have revealed that mass mobilization during Mao's campaigns went beyond mere formality or a facade of popular support. Rather, rank-and-file bureaucrats and ordinary citizens played a substantive role in shaping the scope and intensity of campaign implementation in their respective localities. As X. Zhou (1993) points out, "Participating in state-initiated campaigns provides an opportunity for individuals and groups to pursue their own agendas and exploit new opportunities. State-initiated political campaign provide opportunities for unorganized groups and individuals to act together." It was common for ordinary participants of Mao's campaigns to experience a sense of empowerment and agency. O'Brien and Li (1999) note in their interview that political campaigns "are remembered as a means for ordinary peasants to help rein in the high and mighty, as well as a form of control that provided instant and gratifying results." Similarly, K. Yang (2008) finds that the intensity of violence during Mao's repressive campaigns in the 1950s was not solely determined by higher authorities' directives. Instead, it was largely influenced by "lawlessness of CCP officials at the grassroots level, individuals' private agendas of revenge, and the irrationality of an agitated crowd."

Dimension Three: Suspension of Bureaucratic Norms and Rules

Another major feature of Mao's mass campaigns is that they were designed to bypass established bureaucratic rules and norms to achieve certain political objectives expediently. Using the words of Masha Gessen, these campaigns were "states of exception" in which the "accepted order of things" was abolished and replaced by "extraordinary rules" (Gessen 2021). During the campaigns, the usual bureaucratic procedures were suspended or ignored, the chain of command was broken, and new radical approaches were employed to achieve the campaign's goals. For example, during the Great Leap Forward, Mao ignored the usual rules of bureaucratic appointment and "parachuted" a large number of loyalists into provincial leadership positions through a series of fast-track promotions, in order to ensure local compliance with his radical agenda (Yang, Xu, and Tao 2014). Beijing also frequently dispatched "work teams" to localities with insufficient campaign implementation, which had the power to override the authority of local leadership (Perry 2011). As Strauss (2019) points out, "the collective fury unleashed in this very public fusion of state power and popular support…was the very reverse of a bureaucratic modality of implementation based on the principles of hierarchy, precedent, procedure, and process." (231).

Furthermore, during Mao-era campaigns, local officials were not assigned specific, clear-cut goals and

mandates as they were during normal times. Instead, the expected targets and outcomes of the campaign were intentionally left *ambiguous* by the central leadership. Since local officials did not have specific guidelines on how to meet Beijing's requirements, they had to resort to extreme ways to demonstrate their compliance with the Center's agenda (Y. Wu 2013; Walder 1991). For example, during the "Campaign to Counterrevolutionaries" between 1950 and 1953, local Party officials were given overly vague and general directives on the measures against alleged "counterrevolutionaries," which prompted them to engage in large-scale arresting and killings to avoid the blame of disobedience (K. Yang 2008). The uncertain political atmosphere and the absence of clear bureaucratic guidelines led to large geospatial variation in the scope and intensity of campaign implementation (K. Yang 2008; Kung and Chen 2011).

Dimension Four: Veneration of Violence and Struggle to Achieve Utopian Goals

Lastly, Mao-era political campaigns between 1949 and 1976 were all designed with a revolutionary and transformative purpose. Regardless of their specific goals, these campaigns all aimed to bring about significant changes to the existing status quo in Chinese society, such as the elimination of the bourgeois and landlord classes, the restructuring of the economic system, or the transformation of the "thought patterns" of cadres and intellectuals (Tsai 1999). In essence, these campaigns were intended to bring about a fundamental transformation of China's socioeconomic structure and to fulfill the Party's grandiose policy ideals. As G. Yang (2000) argues, Mao's campaigns were motivated by a "coupling of socialist patriotism and a utopian vision of the future."

What Mao's mass campaigns differ from other statebuilding projects in other countries, however, was the regime's glorification of violence as a necessary means to achieve those noble ends. In Mao's own words, "A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; a revolution is an act of violence by which one class overthrows another" (Z. Mao 1965). Driven by the belief that "class struggle is the violent midwife of history," the Chinese regime under Mao tolerated and even encouraged the use of violent struggles to eliminate political enemies and achieve social transformation projects (Courtois et al. 1999). Based on the four defining criteria elaborated above, Table 2.1 summarizes major mass-mobilized campaigns in Mao's China.

Table 2.1: Major Mass Campaigns in Mao's China, 1949-1976

Name	Official Purpose	Duration
Land Reform	Eliminate landlords, kulaks, and "feudal establishment" in the countryside and redistribute farmland to peasants.	1949-54
Three Anti's Movement	Reduce corruption, waste, and bureaucratization of cadres	1951
Five Anti's Movement	Penalize the behaviors of bribery, tax evasion, cheating, and corruption of urban bourgeoisie	1951-52
Agricultural Collectivization	Establish the public ownership of land and a collective form of agricultural production	1954-57
Anti-Rightist Campaign	Identify and purge anti-regime individuals among urban intellectuals and bureaucrats	1957-59
Great Leap Forward	Increase industrial and agricultural productivity through mass-mobilized production drives	1958-60
Socialist Education Campaign	Identify and purge corrupt and misbehaved cadres in rural areas	1963-65
Cultural Revolution	Expel Liu Shaoqi and so-called "capitalist roaders" from the Party; purify the Party and state apparatus	1966-76

2.2 Existing Theories of Mao's Mass Campaigns

2.2.1 Leadership-centered Explanations: Ideology, Emotion, and Psychology

A traditional view of mass-mobilized campaigns in Mao's China is that they were driven by strong ideological preferences of the regime leadership. Totalitarian regimes often propagated a radical ideological agenda to re-make society, which justified and even encouraged the use of violence (Arendt 1970; Courtois et al. 1999; Fitzpatrick 1999). During those mass campaigns, the regime promoted a "revolutionary mentality" which "glorified struggle and insisted on the infallibility of the Vanguard Party" (Dikötter 2013; Smith 2014; Dikötter 2016). The notion of violence as a *necessary evil* to achieve lofty revolutionary ideals minimized the psychological burden of committing large-scale violence to eliminate perceived enemies. According to this view, mass violence was an inevitable outcome of the radical ideology embraced by Mao and the CCP under his watch (Courtois et al. 1999; Valentino 2005). However, the argument solely based on ideology is an oversimplification of reality, because it fails to consider the ideological diversity and intricate power dynamics within the Chinese regime. Furthermore, this framework is unable to explain

the significant regional variations in the intensity of violence during Mao's mass campaigns.

Some scholars take a psychological approach and argue that Mao's mass campaigns were intended to cultivate a collective mindset or transform the identities of participants to align with the regime's socioeconomic ideals. Gustave Le Bon famously stated that "in a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest" (Le Bon 1903). In an in-depth study of the Red Guard Movement, G. Yang (2000) found that involvement in Mao's mass campaigns had a lasting impact on participants' identities and views on various social issues. Elizabeth Perry, similarly, contends that Mao's mass mobilizations were an intentional effort to manipulate people's mentality, which she calls "psychological engineering" (Perry 2002). According to Perry, the CCP has a long tradition of conducting "emotional work" to strengthen the revolutionary determination of participants and unite the masses around the Party's objectives (ibid).

A minority of scholars also contend that Mao's campaign was driven by his strong paranoia and insecurity. Mao's personal doctor and psychiatrist, Li Zhisui, depicted him as a ruthless and paranoid ruler with a strong fear for his life (Z. Li 1996). However, his memoir was criticized for its exaggerations and lack of credibility. Sheng (2001) similarly analyzes Mao's psychological patterns and contends that his fear of political enemies within and outside the Party was a key motivator behind his periodic campaigns to eliminate perceived threats to his regime. However, attributing the origins of Mao's campaigns solely to psychological reasons is inadequate, because it assumes that the leader was irrational and overlooks the possibility that these campaigns may have served practical objectives, such as consolidating power or maintaining social control.

2.2.2 Agent-centered Explanations: Individual Capacities and Private Agenda

Another strand of literature examines the role of ordinary bureaucrats and participants in shaping the scale and magnitude of Mao's mass campaigns. According to this perspective, once a campaign was initiated by the leader, it could take on a life of its own that deviated from the leader's initial scope and expectations. As Kalyvas (2003) points out, violence during repressive campaigns "was not always imposed from above, but sprang spontaneously from the lowest level of the political system." Similarly, Julia Strauss contends that a large number of killings during repressive campaigns in 1950s China were not "deliberately planned in advance", but resulted from "ill-conceived bureaucratic policies implemented by ill-educated cadres" (Strauss 2002, 2019).

Various scholars argue that the private agendas of repressive agents at the local level also contributed to escalated violence and tension during Mao's campaigns. Historian Yang Kuisong's study of the Land Reform Campaign shows that the "lawlessness of CCP officials at the grassroots level, individuals' private agendas of revenge, and the irrationality of an agitated crowd" all contributed to the excessive violence and radicalism during China's Land Reform Campaign (K. Yang 2008). Private revenge, in particular, was a significant cause of excessive violence at the grassroots level, and local officials often seized the opportunity of repression to retaliate against their personal enemies (Su 2011; Tan 2017; Gao 2018). As these studies have shown, individual agent behavior played an essential role in determining the intensity and outcome of campaigns.

Recently, a burgeoning literature explores how individual bureaucrats' career concerns and incentives impact their enthusiasm and compliance in campaign implementation. Kung and Chen (2011)'s study on China's Great Famine (1959-61) shows that provincial leaders with stronger promotion incentives were more likely to pursue radical policies such as excessive grain procurement, which resulted in a higher number of famine deaths in their provinces. Similarly, Bai and Zhou (2019) shows that officials who have lower education level and less work experience tended to behave more radically during Mao's campaigns, because they had less leverage to protect their career and political status in the Party. However, this strand of literature falls short in clarifying the specific mechanisms through which Mao's mass campaigns shaped the behavior and incentives of subordinate agents. This gap is what my dissertation aims to address.

2.2.3 Consequence and Legacies of Mao-era Political Campaigns

A large literature focus on the intended and unintended consequences of Mao's mass-mobilized campaigns in the short and long run. In the short term, these campaigns had the effect of suppressing dissent within the Party, hindering the regime's ability to adapt to policy changes, and impeding the ability of Party elites to correct Mao's policy failures (Teiwes 1993; Bernstein 2006; J. Yang 2010). Mao's series of campaigns, which were intended to subvert bureaucratic norms and routines, undermined the CCP's internal institutions of personnel management (*nomenklatura*) and disrupted the delicate balance of power within different elite factions (Pecotich and Shultz 2006; Yang, Xu, and Tao 2014). Economically, most scholars agree that Mao's campaigns significantly disrupted China's economic growth and productivity, particularly in agricultural and heavy industry sectors (Chen and Lan 2017; H. Mao 2019).

The long-term impact of Mao's campaigns is more complicated among scholars. On the one hand,

scholar argue that the experience of mass mobilization increase the citizens' long-term willingness for political participation and advocacy (Loubere, Sorace, and Franceschini 2019; Xu, Jiang, and Meng 2023). Involvement in Mao's mass-mobilized campaigns, scholars argue, fostered in citizens a sense of empowerment and collective pride which became a main source of nostalgia in the Reform Era (O'Brien and Li 1999; Ding and Javed 2017). During Mao's campaigns, the forced migration between cities and countryside as well as cross different regions also increased the inter-regional knowledge flows and technical transfers, and led to an increase of the human capital in the rural areas (Chen et al. 2020).

On the other hand, the severe violence, repression, and economic grievance during Mao's mass campaigns also had long-lasting negative consequences. Regions where a higher level of repression occurred during Mao's campaigns experienced significantly slower growth and lower education attainment of local citizens (Zeng and Eisenman 2018). Memories and experiences of Maoist violence that has been passed down inter-generationally have deterred political participation, weakened the citizens' public approval for the regime, and undermined social trust in contemporary China (J. Yang 2012; Tan 2017; Y. Wang 2021). The legacies of Mao's campaigns remain relevant today and continue to shape China's political landscape.

2.3 Authoritarian Campaigns from a Comparative Perspective

While Mao's mass-mobilized campaigns are often viewed as a unique historical phenomenon, similar tactics and strategies have been employed by various regimes across the world throughout the 20th century. In fact, many authoritarian regimes have used mass mobilization to involve ordinary citizens in state-initiated projects, suspended bureaucratic norms and routines, and relied on violence and repression to maintain political control. Studying Mao's campaigns therefore, can provide valuable insights into the underlying logic of regime consolidation and political control beyond the Chinese context.

2.3.1 Pro-Regime Mobilizations

Various regimes in the 20th century employed mass mobilization as a means of rallying ordinary citizens towards achieving specific political objectives or promoting their socioeconomic agendas. Argentina under Juan Peron, for example, put strong emphasis on coordinating collective actions among ordinary citizens in support of the state's transformative project to build an egalitarian and fair society (James 1988). Ordinary citizens from different socioeconomic backgrounds were called to "unite in streets" to demand fair

labor conditions from employers, protest the unequal distribution wealth, and support Peronist parties in electoral campaigns (Onuch 2014). The mass mobilization efforts under Peron, scholars argue, was a clear attempt to "influence people's perceptions and beliefs through propaganda" and foster a collective identity where "Argentina first; the movement second; and individuals the third"(Perón 1985; James 1988).

Mass mobilization in authoritarian regimes has also been used to support specific, short-term policy goals. In North Korea, the Kim regime launched the *Chollima Movement* in 1956-58 to improve agricultural productivity, and the *Arduous March* in 1993 to overcome mass famine and boost economic growth (Kim and Oh 2004; Kim and Lee 2016). Similarly, the Iranian regime has also organized frequent mass protests against the United States and the West, which serve the goal of fostering strong nationalist sentiment and shifting the blame of Iran's economic failures to Western sanctions (Samii 2004). More recent studies in Putin's Russia also show that the regime engaged in pro-regime rallies shortly before election to display its strength and deter political opponents (Hellmeier and Weidmann 2020). However, the role of ordinary participants in those campaigns deserve more scrutiny. Whether they were passive individuals fulfilling the regime's demands for participation, or whether they could leverage the campaigns to pursue their own agendas and exploit new opportunities, requires further investigation.

2.3.2 Suspension and Bypassing of Bureaucratic Routines

It was also not common for authoritarian regimes in the 20th century to bypass routine bureaucratic rules and norms to facilitate the killing and prosecution of victims. The Nazi regime, for example, disrupted the existing German bureaucratic apparatus by creating new bureaucratic agencies with duplicating and overlapping roles with old ones. The ambiguous division of duties and responsibilities led to fierce competition among different bureaucratic agencies for power, with each agency taking increasingly radical steps to gain Hitler's favor (Zimmermann 2014). This "cumulative radicalization," as argued by historian Hans Mommsen, was the driving force behind excessive violence and brutality of the Nazi bureaucracy (Mommsen 1997).

Another strategy employed by authoritarian regimes to overcome the obstruction and resistance of routine bureaucracy, similar to the practices in Mao's mass campaigns, was the creation of *ad hoc* agencies with extraordinary or extrajudicial powers during repression. In Nazi Germany, for example, People's Courts (*Volksgerichtshof*) were established to circumvent the traditional judiciary and expedite the prosecution of political criminals (Welch 2007; Ortner 2018). Similarly, during Stalin's Great Purges, the regime

established *troikas* (special agencies made up of three officials) at all local levels and endowed them with omnipotent powers to issue rapid and severe punishments for political criminals without a public and fair trial (Gregory 2009a). Most recently, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022-23 also employed similar tactics: the Putin regime heavily relied on the Wagner Group, a state-sponsored mercenary group that was not an official branch of the Russian armed forces, to bypass the cumbersome chain of command in the Russian army and evade its responsibility for war crimes and international law violations (Marten 2019; Parens 2023).

2.3.3 Fetishization of Violence

Many authoritarian regimes in the 20th century not only glorified violence as necessary or desirable, but also employed violence as a means to test and motivate subordinate bureaucrats. Leninist regimes, driven by an ideology that venerates violence as the "midwife of historical change," were particularly inclined to use violence to fulfill the regime's radical agenda of socioeconomic transformation (Arendt 1970). The series of violent campaigns under Stalin between the 1920s and 1940s, which involved the repression of landlords, kulaks, ethnic minorities, Party cadres, and military officers, resulted in the deaths of over six million Soviet citizens in total (Pernal and Colwill 2001; Snyder 2010; Naimark 2010). Other Leninist regimes, such as North Korea under the Kim regime and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, also experienced mass atrocities (French 2014) and Cambodia ruled by Khmer Rouge (Dunlop 2005). However, these purges differ from Mao's mass campaigns in one significant way: the mass violence was primarily perpetrated by coercive agents controlled by the state, rather than by ordinary peasants, citizens, or lower-level bureaucrats in the Chinese context.

The use of violence to test and motivate the loyalty and compliance of subordinate agents to regime leadership can also be seen across different authoritarian regimes. For example, archival studies of Soviet security agents under Stalin show that they were eager to demonstrate their loyalty in front of their superiors and used violence as a means to gain favor and secure their position in the system (Gregory 2009b; Radzinsky 2011). Similar practices also occurred in non-Leninist autocracies. Research on the military dictatorship in Argentina show that officers who were mediocre in skills behaved most cruelly in carrying out repression, who used excessive display of loyalty as a means to compensate for their lack of competence (Scharpf and Gläßel 2020). These examples show that mass-mobilized campaigns were not unique to China, but rather reveal the *general* mechanisms of regime consolidation and control in autocracies. □

Chapter 3

Factional Cleavages and Cumulative Radicalization during the Land Reform

"We have factions within the party. It has always been this way, and it is a normal phenomenon. As some people said, 'it is tyrannical to allow no other party other than one party; and it is strange to allow no factions within the party.' Our Communist Party is also like this. You say there are no factions within the party? Well, there are, for example, there are two factions when it comes to mass movements, but it's just a matter of whether one faction happens to be more dominant than the other."

Mao Zedong, *Speech during the 11th Plenary Session of the 8th CCP Central Committee*, 1966

3.1 Question: Does Factionalism *Always* Harm Regime Capacity?

3.1.1 The Problem of Bureaucratic Oversight and Control

Scholars have long argued that the survival of authoritarian regimes depends on their ability to oversee and control subordinate bureaucrats (Svolik 2012, 9–18). In particular, *newly established* autocracies heavily rely on a loyal and responsive bureaucracy to enforce social stability and eliminate power contenders through the use intense violence and coercion (George 2007; Göbel 2011; Treisman 2018). However, when the regime's policy agenda conflicts with the personal preference or interests of subordinate officials, the latter will be unwilling to fully comply with the higher authorities' directives. Thus, a long-standing chal-

lenge facing autocrats is to overcome the *principal-agent problem*: how to ensure that subordinate bureaucrats implement unpopular or undesirable tasks that misalign with their preferences or may impose high personal harm or social costs on them?

A large strand of literature in political science and economics explores the cause of bureaucratic noncompliance and the principal's strategies to mitigate the problem. Studies have shown that subordinate agents will have a motivation to defy the ruler's demands if they perceive the principal to be weak and unable to retain power over the long term (Egorov and Sonin 2011; Gehlbach, Sonin, and Svolik 2016). More competent bureaucrats tend to be less loyal to the incumbent ruler compared to mediocre ones, because they have more alternative career options and are less dependent on any single ruler (Zakharov 2016; Scharpf and Gläßel 2020). Additionally, subordinate agents could be hesitant to carry out coercive tasks for the ruler if the cost of enforcement is too high (Mattingly 2020), or if they could face retaliation from the ruler's rival in the future (Tyson 2018). Lastly, the information asymmetry between the principal and the agent could also affect the latter's incentive to comply. Apparently, if the regime is incapable of monitoring and overseeing the behaviors and performance of subordinate agents, the latter could lack the motivation to faithfully carry out the ruler's agenda (Banks and Weingast 1992; Y. Huang 2002; Gailmard and Patty 2012; Tutumlu and Rustemov 2021).

How do autocrats enforce their loyalty and compliance of subordinate bureaucrats? The conventional wisdom from previous literature is that the autocrat needs to establish a *strong, hierarchical power structure* with a *clear system of accountability* where the subordinate is strictly subject to the oversight of higher authorities. As many studies have shown, a dictator must credibly demonstrate their strength and prospect to stay in power in order to retain the loyalty of their subordinates (Rozenas 2012; Guriev and Treisman 2015; Gehlbach and Simpser 2015). Furthermore, to ensure the compliance of subordinate officials, the regime leadership needs to overcome the information problem and effectively monitor their behaviors (Lorentzen 2013; Chen and Xu 2017), develop a clear and measurable rubric to evaluate their performance (Manion 1985; Whiting 2004; Heberer and Trappel 2013), and link their career prospects explicitly with the outcome of policy implementation (Li and Zhou 2005; L.-A. Zhou 2007). Studies also indicate that during the Reform Era, a key motivation for local officials to adhere to Beijing's economic development agenda is the presence of a clear system of rewards and punishments based on their ability to meet growth targets. (L.-A. Zhou 2007; Yao and Zhang 2015; Li et al. 2019). Overall, scholars agree that an *institutionalized* bureaucracy — characterized by a clear hierarchy, a streamlined chain of command, and strong surveillance

capacity — is more likely to promote compliance and responsiveness among bureaucrats.

3.1.2 Radicalization through Factional Cleavage

In this chapter, I challenge this conventional view and demonstrate an alternative strategy employed by autocrats to compel the compliance of subordinate officials. I contend that the ruler can motivate subordinate officials to implement costly or undesirable tasks by leveraging the *factional divisions* and *power struggles* within the bureaucracy. In a *poorly institutionalized bureaucracy* where the promotion criteria are unclear and the division of labor among bureaucrats is not well-defined, competition among officials of the same rank from various backgrounds and factions can drive them to complete their assigned tasks *more fervently* in order to gain the principal's favor and outperform their peers. Anticipating that factional divisions can enhance compliance, the autocrat can strategically assign officials from rivaling backgrounds to the same locality to reinforce the adherence of subordinate officials and facilitate policy implementation at the local level.

I apply this theoretical framework the the Land Reform Campaign (1949-54), a mass-mobilized campaign launched by Mao Zedong aimed at eliminating the landlord class and redistributing their lands and properties to peasants in rural China. The Land Reform was a crucial part of the CCP's statebuilding agenda in the 1950s, which sought to dismantle the traditional gentry's dominance over rural governance and resources and establish the Party's control in the Chinese countryside. However, as I will elaborate later in this chapter, the leadership faced two major challenges during the implementation of the campaign. The primary challenge was the insufficient capacity of the nascent regime to oversee the campaign implementation at the grassroots level. In the newly annexed territories in Southern China, the Central leadership transferred a large number of cadres from elsewhere to strengthen control, but the local authorities remained understaffed and struggled with a chronic shortage of competent public servants (Dai 2019; Z. He 2021). The issue of insufficient state capacity was further complicated by the local bureaucrats' lack of motivation to meet the campaign targets. On the one hand, native-born bureaucrats who were connected to the local community, despite their familiarity with local conditions, were reluctant to prosecute the landlords and redistribute the rural land due to their personal ties with the landed gentry. On the other hand, non-local cadres who were dispatched by the upper-level authorities, despite their stronger willingness to adhere to the Center's objectives, faced difficulties accomplishing their assigned tasks due to a lack of local knowledge and information (Mo 2010; Luo 2022).

Anecdotal evidence from archival materials suggests that the central leadership attempted to increase the compliance of local officials by *leveraging factional tensions and cleavages* within the local bureaucracy. In areas where central control was weak or resistance to the campaign was high, the higher authorities appointed two officials from different factional backgrounds to fill the two top leadership positions — the Party Secretary and the county governor, thereby creating a cleavage within the local bureaucracy. The "pairing" of officials from different backgrounds generated intense competition between them and incentivized them to perform their assigned tasks diligently to secure and advance their positions. Facing both the strong political pressure from their superiors and the close scrutiny from their hostile peers, local officials were compelled to implement the land redistribution measures *radically* to demonstrate their loyalty and dispel any suspicion of sympathizing with the landlords targeted by the campaign.

I compile an original, county-level dataset that captures the biographical backgrounds of local leaders and the outcome of land reform in four coastal provinces: Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong. From this dataset, I find two systematic patterns that provide support for my theoretical framework. First, counties where the CCP had a shorter duration of control were more likely to be governed under *factionalized* leadership — that is, the two top leaders belonged to different factions. Second, I show that counties with factionalized leadership tended to display greater intensity and radicalism during the campaign, indicated by longer campaign duration, greater amount of land redistributed to peasants, and greater level of violence and coercion.

The empirical findings in this chapter challenge the assumption that factional tensions and disputes within a bureaucracy *always* weaken the regime's political control. As shown by both historical anecdotes and systematic data, inter-factional conflicts within local authorities can create a strong incentive for bureaucrats to implement the central leadership's directives more faithfully. By doing so, they can avoid the allegation of disloyalty and incompetence from their peer competitors and increase their chances of survival. The mutual distrust and sabotage among local leaders, paradoxically, can lead to greater compliance and responsiveness of the local bureaucracy in policy implementation.

My theoretical framework also engages with the well-known concept of "cumulative radicalization," which is initially proposed by historian Hans Mommsen to explain the cause of genocide and mass crimes under the Nazi regime. Mommsen holds that, due to the existence of multiple agencies with overlapping functions and roles, each bureaucracy under the Nazi regime was pressured to take increasingly radical measures to gain favor with Hitler (Mommsen 1997). The competition among *homogeneous* bureaucratic

actors led to an escalating spiral of cruelty and violence aimed to meet the Fuhrer's expectations. This theory essentially takes a *functionalist* view and considers mass violence as a result of the inherent deficiencies in a totalitarian political system where power was poorly institutionalized and inter-departmental division of labor was misdefined. My study of the Land Reform challenges the notion that the "cumulative radicalization" of subordinate agents is a pathology of authoritarian systems. Instead, I show that such radicalization could be a deliberate strategy purposefully employed by the autocrat to facilitate a planned policy agenda. Thus, my chapter offers a novel, agent-based perspective on the underlying causes of authoritarian political violence.

3.2 Background of China's Land Reform

3.2.1 Origins of the CCP's Land Policy

One of the most significant challenges faced by the Chinese state in the 20th century was expanding and solidifying its control over the vast rural areas of the country. Although the Chinese Revolution of 1911 formally abolished the monarchy and established a modern republic, the socioeconomic structure and power dynamics in rural China remained largely unchanged throughout the first half of the century. For nearly two millennia, a small fraction of the landowning elite had dominated the rural society in China. Statistics show that at the founding of the PRC in 1949, the top seven percent of large landowners controlled over half of the farmlands in China, while the bottom 57 percent of poorest peasants only possessed 14 percent of land (CCP Central Committee Party History Office 2011, 91). The traditional economic model in rural China has been often described by scholars as a "rentier economy", where a large number of landless peasants worked as tenants for the landlords, receiving only a portion of the crop in return (Moore 1976, 178–180; Skocpol 1979, 178–180). Landlessness not only trapped a significant portion of peasants in poverty and debt, but also made them personally dependent on the landlords for basic livelihood (Strauss 2019, 178). This highly exploitative structure reinforced the existing social and economic hierarchy and perpetuated the power of the landowning elite in the countryside.

Under the traditional rural structure, the landed gentry not only held significant control over rural lands and resources, but also monopolized political power in the countryside. In traditional Chinese bureaucracy, the county government was the lowest administrative unit, and the state bureaucracy had little presence in the vast rural areas beyond each county seat. Scholars often used the phrase "the emperor's

power does not reach below the county level" (*huangquan bu xiaxian*) to highlight the state power vacuum in rural areas (J. H. Chung 2016, 69). Instead, the traditional Chinese state delegated rural governance to the landed gentry, who performed essential state functions such as tax collection, infrastructure development, and public security maintenance.[1] As noted by Duara (1991), the landowning elites acted as *power brokers* between the local state bureaucracy and rural society. Facing downward, the landed gentry served as a proxy of the local governments and exercised political authority on behalf of the state. Facing upward, they acted as advocates for rural interests and communicated the grievances of the local communities to the bureaucracy (42–57). The role of the traditional landed gentry as power intermediaries granted them significant leverage to shape both the local government policies and the daily lives of ordinary peasants.

Given the existing power structure in rural China, it is not surprising that the CCP saw the land reform as a crucial step in establishing legitimacy and consolidating control over the countryside. For the Party leadership, a comprehensive campaign to eliminate the landowning class and redistribute farmland had both ideological and practical significance. Symbolically, the campaign displayed the CCP's commitment as a Marxist-Leninist party to eliminate the property-owning class and build a socialist society. The land redistribution also echoed the vision of the late revolutionary leader Sun Yat-Sen, who advocated for "land to the tiller" (*gengzhe youqitian*) and made "equalizing land rights" (*pingjun diquan*) as one of the four pillars of the Chinese revolution (Wells 2001, 128; Strauss 2019, 173). Thus, the Land Reform campaign could also justify the CCP's position as the legitimate heir to China's *homegrown* revolutionary tradition. More importantly, as the CCP sought to establish unitary control over rural society, the landed gentry represented an alternative source of authority that posed a significant obstacle to the power consolidation of the Party-state in the countryside. Thus, dismantling the socioeconomic dominance of the landed gentry through land reform was a crucial step to facilitate the regime's penetration and control over the countryside (Y. Liu 2006; Hongguang He 2015; J. Deng 2017). Furthermore, land redistribution was also viewed as a means to bolster popular support among poor peasants and mobilize them to support the Party's socioeconomic agenda (F. Li 2012b; Noellert 2020). The political significance of the Land Reform was well elaborated in the 1950 *Land Reform Law*, which clearly stated the objective of the reform as "abolishing the feudal land ownership system of the landlord class, freeing up productivity, …and laying the foundation for industrialization in New China." (Central People's Government of the PRC 1950)

1. In the first half of the 20th century, Chinese sociologists and historians conducted a series of in-depth field research in rural China to explore the role of the landed gentry as proxies of the state power. Notable works available in English include Fei (1953) and Hsiao (1960).

3.2.2 Evolution of the CCP's Land Policy before 1949

Although rural land redistribution has been a long-standing project in the CCP's political agenda since its founding in 1921, the Party's leadership has consistently adapted its approach to land reform in response to evolving political objectives. Previous scholars, such as P. C. Huang (1995) and Hinton (1998), have traditionally categorized the Party's land reform project into three distinct phases, differed by the varying levels of radicalism, treatment of the landowning class, and intended goals.

a. The Radical Phase (1927-37)

In October 1927, the CCP split with the ruling Kuomintang and initiated a series of armed rebellions in Southern China. During the decade before the Sino-Japanese War (1927-1937), the CCP undertook radical measures to reshape the land ownership structure in areas controlled by the Red Army. During that period, the land reform efforts of the CCP were primarily driven by revolutionary fervor rather than practical state-building goals. As highlighted by P. C. Huang (1978), the land revolution of the 1920s was predominantly driven by "urban intellectuals" who ventured into rural areas with limited understanding of the local power dynamics. Consequently, some CCP-controlled regions implemented excessively radical policies, such as declaring all rural lands as government property, prohibiting land sales among peasants, and implementing strictly egalitarian redistribution of farmland without considering the peasants' family circumstances (Hodes 1995; H.-B. Huang 2010; Guo 2022). Moreover, the prosecution of rural "class enemies" went beyond what was necessary for regime consolidation. In revolutionary enclaves like Hunan, Jiangxi, and Fujian, the local Party authorities not only targeted landlords but also engaged in radical "class struggles" against wealthy and middle-class peasants who had previously supported the CCP's revolutionary cause (Womack 1982; M. Wang 2010).

The land reform agenda in the CCP-ruled enclaves during the 1920s and early 1930s was generally considered problematic, which fell short of its intended goals and failed to gain wide support from its intended beneficiaries. The Party's radical land reform policies encountered strong opposition from both dispossessed landlords and resentful peasants who criticized the regime's inconsistent regulation of land use and circulation (M. Wang 2010). In certain counties, local Party officials with community ties quietly resisted the land redistribution policies and disregarded the higher authority's directions that could harm local interests (Averill 1987, 2006). In response to the resistance from below, the Red Army authorities

frequently resorted to violent purges targeting alleged "counterrevolutionaries," which further alienated a significant fraction of the rural community (Gao 2018, 46–65). The CCP's series of military defeats in 1933-34, which resulted in the loss of a majority of revolutionary bases in Southern China, marked the conclusion of the initial wave of land reform campaigns.

b. The Moderate Phase (1937-45)

Following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the CCP and the Kuomintang entered into a truce to form a united front against Japanese aggression. During this period, the CCP-led forces[2] actively engaged in guerrilla warfare in Japanese-occupied territories and gained control over a number of enclaves in northern and central China. Drawing from past experiences, the Party leadership adopted a more measured and gradual approach to land reform, which focused on alleviating the economic burdens of peasants rather than altering the existing land ownership structure. A key measure of CCP's land reform during the Sino-Japanese War was the "dual reduction," which required landlords to reduce land rent to 37.5 percent and annual interest of all loans to below 10 percent (Kataoka 1974, 124; P. C. Huang 1995). Additionally, the CCP shifted its rhetoric away from radical revolutionary ideals and instead emphasized inclusiveness and patriotism. Landlords were considered part of the "united front" against Japan and were no longer subject to prosecution. Their properties were protected as long as they complied with the rent reduction policy and demonstrated their commitment to the anti-Japanese cause (Goodman 2013; L. Li 2015).

The CCP's pragmatic land reform during the Sino-Japanese War, referred to by Kataoka (1974) as a "revolution by installments," achieved a moderate reduction in land inequality without resorting to violence (132). While coercive redistribution of land did not occur, the high taxes and reduced rents placed pressure on landlords and led them to sell excess land to empowered peasants who benefited from the rent relief (P. C. Huang 1995). Several village-level field studies conducted in northern China highlight a substantial transfer of land from landlords to peasants during that period (Friedman et al. 1993; P. C. Huang 1995; Crook and Crook 2002). However, as noted by Y.-F. Chen (1996), the moderate land policies adopted by the CCP during the Sino-Japanese War were a temporary, pragmatic strategy in response to heightened Japanese military threat and popular demands for domestic unity, rather than a shift in political principles.

2. According to the pact of Anti-Japanese United Front between the KMT and the CCP, the Red Army was reorganized into the Eighth Route Army (*balu jun*) and the New Fourth Army (*xin sijun*) of the National Revolutionary Army, nominally under the command of the Kuomintang Government. However, the two armies were *de facto* controlled by the CCP, and the Red Army structure within those troops was largely unchanged.

Mao and the Party leadership remained committed to their radical agenda of eliminating the landlord class and transforming the rural socioeconomic structure through class struggle.

c. Land Policy during Civil War Mobilization (1945-49)

After Japan's surrender in 1945, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang regime resumed their civil war. In the CCP-controlled territories, the land policy took an increasingly radical and coercive turn. In 1946, the Central Committee issued a directive that abolished the previous moderate approach of reducing rents and interest, replacing it with a policy of mandatory confiscation and redistribution of land owned by landlords (Price 1981). In 1947, the Party enacted the *Outline of Chinese Land Law (Zhongguo tudifa dagang)*, which further escalated the radical practices of land reform. This law expanded the scope of land confiscation to include "wealthy" and "middle" peasants who possessed excess land (F. Li 2012b; Moïse 2017; Xiaozhe Yang 2018). Furthermore, it mandated the equal redistribution of all rural lands among households solely based on the size of their families (DeMare 2019; Noellert 2020).

More notably, the *Outline Land Law* approved, and even glorified, the mass mobilization and spontaneous violence of peasants against rural landowning elites. It explicitly declared that "all rural power belonged to the peasants' associations" and authorized impoverished peasants to collectively prosecute landlords "how they saw fit" (Hazard 1981; Xiaozhe Yang 2018). After the law came into effect, the Party dispatched work groups to each village to arbitrarily classify residents into social classes based on their land ownership (X. Zhang 2004; Kung, Wu, and Wu 2012). Individuals categorized as members of "reactionary" classes, such as landlords and wealthy peasants, were subject to severe physical punishments during public "struggle sessions," including public humiliation, beatings, torture, and, in some cases, execution without trial (Hinton 1998; F. Li 2012a; DeMare 2019).

The norms and practices of land reform that emerged during the Civil War period (1946-49) laid the foundation for the nationwide Land Reform Campaign after the founding of the PRC. As previous scholars have pointed out, the CCP's land policy during this period was primarily driven by the Party's practical wartime needs to penetrate and control rural areas to mobilize personnel and resources more effectively. By eliminating the landed elites as intermediaries between the regime and the masses, the Party could directly control the peasants and streamline tax collection (L. Li 2015; Noellert 2020). Furthermore, the redistribution of land to impoverished peasants not only bolstered the CCP's popular support, but also increased the peasants' economic dependence on the Party, creating a loyal base of supporters who actively

assisted with the communists' rural agenda (Hinton 1998; Moïse 2017). By February 1949, the land reform had involved over 150 million rural inhabitants in CCP-controlled territories, with more than 25 million hectares of rural land redistributed to peasants (Noellert 2020, 13). The orange area shown in **Figure 4.1** represents territories that had undergone the Land Reform before 1949.

3.3 Bureaucratic Slack and Regime Strategies during the Land Reform Campaign, 1949-54

After the CCP achieved victory in the Civil War and established the People's Republic in late 1949, one of the Party's primary objectives was to expand the Land Reform campaign to the newly controlled provinces in Southern China. However, the Party's land reform plans in the new territories encountered numerous challenges. As elaborated in Luo (2022), local bureaucrats failed to achieve the targets of land redistribution and the repression of landlords for various reasons. *Centrally-dispatched* officials were incapable of implementing the campaign due to their limited knowledge of local conditions, while *locally-embedded officials* were hesitant to fulfill their assigned responsibilities due to their close social ties with the local community. Consequently, the campaign encountered substantial delays in Southern China, and in certain areas, the process of land redistribution came to a halt and failed to proceed as planned.

In this section, I use anecdotal evidence from archival materials to demonstrate how factional divisions among officials within the same local authority could generate increased motivation and pressure to comply with the targets set by higher authorities. Factional competitions not only create a stronger drive for career advancement, but also establish a system of *mutual scrutiny* that compels officials to avoid being accused of deviating from the Party's directives. As suggested by the anecdotal evidence from Guangdong, both the central leadership and provincial Party authorities consciously leveraged inter-group competition within local authorities as a means to incentivize greater compliance among officials, through balancing factional representation within local governments and offering credible promotion opportunities to all factions based on their performance. Overall, historical accounts indicate that factional conflicts at the sub-provincial level were not just a concern for higher authorities, but could serve as an *incentive mechanism* to induce the policy implementation by local bureaucrats.

3.3.1 Bureaucratic Slack at the Beginning of the Campaign

To better understand the reasons behind bureaucratic insubordination during the Land Reform Campaign, it is crucial to examine the background and composition of the CCP's local cadre force at the founding of the PRC. Previous studies have traditionally classified the local bureaucrats in the new territories into two distinct types. The first category consists of the *southbound cadres (nanxia ganbu)*, who were officials previously based in the CCP-controlled revolutionary enclaves in North and Central China before 1949. These cadres were dispatched by the central leadership to the new territories to address the personnel shortage for bureaucratic roles (Lee 1991, 50–51; Zhang et al. 2021). Between 1948 and 1950, approximately 90,000 cadres were relocated to southern China to assume leadership positions at the prefecture and county levels in the South (Z. He 2019). The second type, known as *locally-embedded cadres (bendi ganbu)*, refers to cadres who were natives of the localities they were assigned to. Prior to the Communist troops' occupation of these regions, these officials had either served as guerrilla fighters or operated as undercover agents behind enemy lines (Lee 1991, 50–51; Zhang et al. 2021).

Archival evidence demonstrates that during the Land Reform Campaign, the efforts of both types of cadres to implement the Land Reform were hindered by different socioeconomic factors. For the southbound cadres, the primary obstacle was the lack of familiarity with the social conditions of their assigned localities. Some cadres were unfamiliar with the locations of the townships and villages under their jurisdiction, which led to difficulties in monitoring the progress of land redistribution. Language barriers were another major obstacle for non-local cadres. Many of them could not understand the local dialect and could not effectively communicate with native-born officials and residents (Dai 2019; C. Zhou 2019). Furthermore, many localities faced a shortage of competent bilingual interpreters to assist non-local officials, particularly during their visits to the villages (Lu 2015; C. Zhou 2019). Internal Party records and individual memoirs reveal that many southbound cadres expressed strong pessimism regarding the prospect of achieving the campaign targets, due to the harsh work environment, limited local knowledge, and their inability to engage with the local community. A number of cadres requested their superiors to be relocated to their places of origin, and instances of desertion were not uncommon (Zhao and Zhao 2017).

Meanwhile, locally-embedded cadres faced a different set of challenges that hindered their motivation during the Land Reform Campaign. Historical accounts show that many local officials had familial and ancestral ties to the landed gentry. In the coastal southern provinces of Fujian, Guangdong and Guangxi,

where traditional clans held significant influence, they could face strong pressure from their embedded community to treat the landlords leniently. In other instances, locally embedded officials had previously served as undercover agents or guerrilla fighters during the Sino-Japanese War and received material support and shelter from local patriotic landlords to support their operation. Thus, the prosecution of their former patrons and confiscation of their lands were viewed as acts of betrayal and ingratitude (K. Yang 2014). Furthermore, the reluctance of certain native-born cadres could also stem from their deeper understanding of the local socioeconomic structure. For example, certain counties in Guangdong and Fujian heavily relied on remittances from the overseas diaspora, the majority of whom were relatives and clan members of local landlords. During the campaign, native-born officials hesitated to employ excessive violence against landlords, because they knew such actions could cut off an essential source of local income (W. Zhu 2009; Peng 2014). Undoubtedly, one of the key priorities for the Central leadership was to find effective ways to motivate both types of bureaucrats in order to achieve the campaign targets.[3]

3.3.2 The Rise of Factional Cleavages between Local and Southbound Cadres

Archival records in the early 1950s document numerous instances of conflicts and tensions between southbound and locally-embedded officials within the same local authority. As highlighted by previous researchers, the most important factor contributing to the factional tensions between the two groups was their power disparity. The central leadership regarded the southbound cadres as more reliable and referred to them as the "cornerstones" of Party authority in the new territories. In a series of instructions issued to provincial leaders in Southern provinces, Mao and other central leaders repeatedly emphasized that southbound cadres should "assume leadership roles" and "take primary responsibility in decision-making" during the Land Reform Campaign, because they were politically more loyal, had participated in the previous waves of land reforms in northern China, and thus had a better understanding of the expectations of the Party leadership (Dai 2017; K. Li 2019).

On the contrary, the locally embedded cadres were instructed to play a secondary role and support the decisions made by the southbound cadres dispatched to their locality. The Center's distrust of locally-embedded officials was primarily due to their socioeconomic profiles and past experience. In comparison to the southbound cadres, locally-embedded officials were typically from higher socioeconomic classes,

3. For a detailed qualitative analysis on the incentives of different types of local bureaucrats during the Land Reform, please refer to Kevin Luo (2022).

born into wealthier families, and possessed better education. As a result, their stance and commitment to the Party's agenda were often viewed with suspicion, and they were considered less suitable for assuming major political responsibilities like the Land Reform (Bao 2020). Moreover, as locally-embedded cadres were formerly guerrilla fighters and undercover agents, they maintained a large degree of autonomy during wartime and were not under direct command by the Party leadership. Thus, their willingness to adhere to the directives of the Central leadership had yet to be put to the test (Dai 2019). As Deng Xiaoping, then a Politburo Standing Member, remarked in 1950: "Without a group of dedicated revolutionary cadres from outside, it is impossible for the local cadres to grow, and the revolution cannot take root (in the new territories)" (X. Deng 1950).

According to previous scholars, locally-embedded cadres faced significant challenges in their career advancement and were less favored in promotions and appointments during the early 1950s. In the newly incorporated Southern provinces, although both types of cadres were represented in county-level Party committees, the predominant majority of county Party secretaries, the highest-ranking office in a county, were chosen from the ranks of southbound cadres. In contrast, locally-embedded officials were typically assigned to secondary or deputy roles under their southbound counterparts, such as county governors, vice-governors, or heads of the organization department (Tahara 2003; K. Yang 2009).

The preferential treatment and better career prospects of southbound cadres created significant tension and resentment between the two groups. According to archival records, a number of southbound cadres viewed the locally-embedded officials as disgruntled "regionalists" who were not fully committed to enforcing the Party's policies and were unwilling to respect their authority as the representatives of the central leadership. Some even suspected that the locals intended to undermine their careers and challenge their more senior standing in the bureaucratic hierarchy (Dai 2017; K. Li 2018; Bao 2020). On the other hand, locally-embedded cadres viewed the southbound cadres as condescending outsiders who disregarded local conditions and imposed arbitrary decisions incompatible with the local reality (M. Li 2020). Some locally-embedded cadres privately complained that their career advancement required greater efforts due to their backgrounds, and considered it unfair that their actions would be subject to meticulous scrutiny by both their superiors and southbound peers. The memoir of Zhu Houze, a native-born official in Guizhou, described the hostile atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion between the two groups of officials in the provincial leadership in the early 1950s:

> *Within the provincial committee, only (Provincial Governor) Zhou Lin and a few others were natives of Guizhou, while all the other deputy secretaries and deputy governors are either from the Shandong-Henan Revolutionary Base or the PLA. The cadres at the prefecture and county levels are also either from the military or from Shandong or Henan. There were indeed some conflicts between natives and outsiders...We helped the troops take over the province, but in the end, they wouldn't let us be the party secretaries or governors. Whenever native cadres from Guizhou made a slight mistake, everyone would immediately push the blame onto them.* (H. Zhu, n.d.)

Guizhou was not the only example of factional struggles between southbound and native cadres. Similar tensions arose in Guangdong and Zhejiang, where open conflicts emerged between southbound cadres sent from the North and former undercover and guerrilla members who had operated locally during the Civil War. In Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, local guerrilla officials protested the provincial authority's directive to deploy southbound army officers govern the region, forcing the provincial leadership to reverse the decision and appoint a majority of local cadres to leadership positions at the prefecture and county levels (M. Li 2020). Similarly, internal meeting records in the Guangdong Provincial Party committee documented multiple instances of intense verbal exchanges between southbound and local officials. The local officials called southbound officials as "rank-pulling...bastards," while the southbound officials referred to the local officials as "local bandits" lacking discipline or self-control (Xinxin Yang 2014).

3.3.3 Leveraging Factionalism as a Tool of Bureaucratic Control

In the early 1950s, historical evidence indicates that Mao and the central leadership viewed factionalism not solely as a potential obstacle but as an incentive mechanism to encourage compliance from both sides towards central directives. From Beijing's perspective, maintaining a balance between centrally-dispatched and localized cadres could promote mutual surveillance and prevent one group from dominating local politics without accountability and oversight. Furthermore, factional conflicts could bolster Beijing's role as the ultimate arbiter of power and incentivize officials from both factions to align themselves with the Center's directives in order to secure favorable standing in local politics.

Conventional literature suggests that during the Land Reform, Beijing and the provincial leaderships consistently favored non-local, southbound cadres over local officials and always endorsed their dominant role in local leadership appointments (Zhang, Liu, and Shih 2013; Zhang and Liu 2013, 2020; Zhang et

al. 2021). However, archival materials reveal a more nuanced perspective. During the Land Reform, Beijing emphasized that an official's career prospects would depend on their effectiveness in implementing the central directives, rather than their factional affiliation. Southbound officials who were reluctant to enforce the land reform would not be exempt from punishment, while local officials were offered the chance for promotion to reward their adherence to the Party line regardless of their background. As a result, both types of officials were pressured to behave fervently during the Land Reform in order to outcompete their peers from opposing factions and gain an advantage in the local political struggles.

The Central Leadership's Policy towards Local Factionalism

As early as mid-1940, when the CCP was contemplating the local leadership appointment after seizing national power, Mao and the Party leadership repeatedly emphasized the importance of maintaining a factional balance between centrally-dispatched and native officials in local authorities. During a speech at the 7th Party Congress, Mao commented:

> *It is necessary to take into consideration the different factions. To put it more precisely, we should acknowledge the existence of factions, and take care of each faction's interests. By recognizing and taking care of the specific interests of different factions…we can gradually unite all factions into the cohesive entity of the Party* (Z. Mao 1945).

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Mao and other central leaders issued a series of directives to provincial leaders emphasizing the need for a balanced composition of locally-embedded and outside cadres in local Party committees (S. Liu 1945; CCP Central Organization Department 1957; F. Chen 2003, 148). A Central Committee resolution warned that, if one faction wields excessive power in local leadership, they would "hastily promote cadres who only knew blind obedience to sectarian interests" and "cause a disconnection between the upper and lower levels" (CCP Central Committee 1945). In Mao's thinking, by intentionally maintaining factional divisions among local authorities, individual officials could fully devote their allegiance to the central Party leadership rather than the dominant faction of the local authority.

Factional Manipulation and Radicalization during the Land Reform: the Case of Guangdong

During the Land Reform, the Central leadership strategically leveraged factional division and competition among local authorities to promote adherence to the Center's policies. The centrally-dispatched south-

bound cadres were frequently warned by Beijing that their dominant position should not be assumed or guaranteed unless they remained committed to the Party line during their local tenure. On the other hand, locally-embedded officials were reassured by the central leadership that they could advance in their careers if they could credibly overcome their "regionalism" and showed *genuine* dedication to Beijing's policy agenda throughout the campaign.

Beijing's strategy of capitalizing on inter-factional competition among local leadership during the campaign was clearly observed in Guangdong, the southernmost province. Tao Zhu, the Provincial Party Secretary parachuted by Mao to oversee land reform in Guangdong, saw the long-term rivalry between two factions as an opportunity to transform local Party authorities into "the Party truly subordinate to the Center" (Tao 1953). On one side, Tao cautioned the southbound cadres against complacency and reminded them not to assume the Party's trust without diligent efforts during the campaign. During a provincial Party committee meeting, he warned:

> *Non-local officials should avoid having an inflated sense of superiority or displaying an arrogant attitude...The cause of the current problem lies not in the resistance of local officials towards outsiders, but rather in the inadequate care shown by the non-local officials. As long as local officials have fulfilled their responsibilities in firmly supporting Chairman Mao's directives, the majority of responsibilities in achieving campaign outcomes should be shouldered by non-local officials.* (K. Li 2018, 95)

Simultaneously, Tao consistently assured local officials that if they showed a strong commitment to the central directives, corrected their "regionalist" mindset that prioritized local interests over national priorities, and diligently fulfilled their assigned responsibilities, they would have a credible chance for promotion regardless of their less trustworthy backgrounds. Tao even hinted that the dominance of southbound cadres in local leadership positions was *temporary* and could be eventually supplanted by local officials:

> *It is not beneficial for [local officials] to hold a grudge against the leadership of non-local officials; instead, they should focus on effectively performing their duties, quickly improving themselves, and working together to advance the work in Guangdong so they can reclaim the leadership position* sooner. (95)

Anecdotal evidence showed that Tao's tactic to bolster inter-factional competition indeed led to an

increasingly radical approach to land redistribution and landlord prosecution by local officials. An in-depth case study of the Land Reform in Hainan Island [4] shows that both local and southbound cadres employed drastic measures to achieve the land redistribution targets set by the Center, driven by career aspirations and the anxiety to avoid being labeled as "regionalists" by their peers (K. Li 2016).

3.4 Research Design

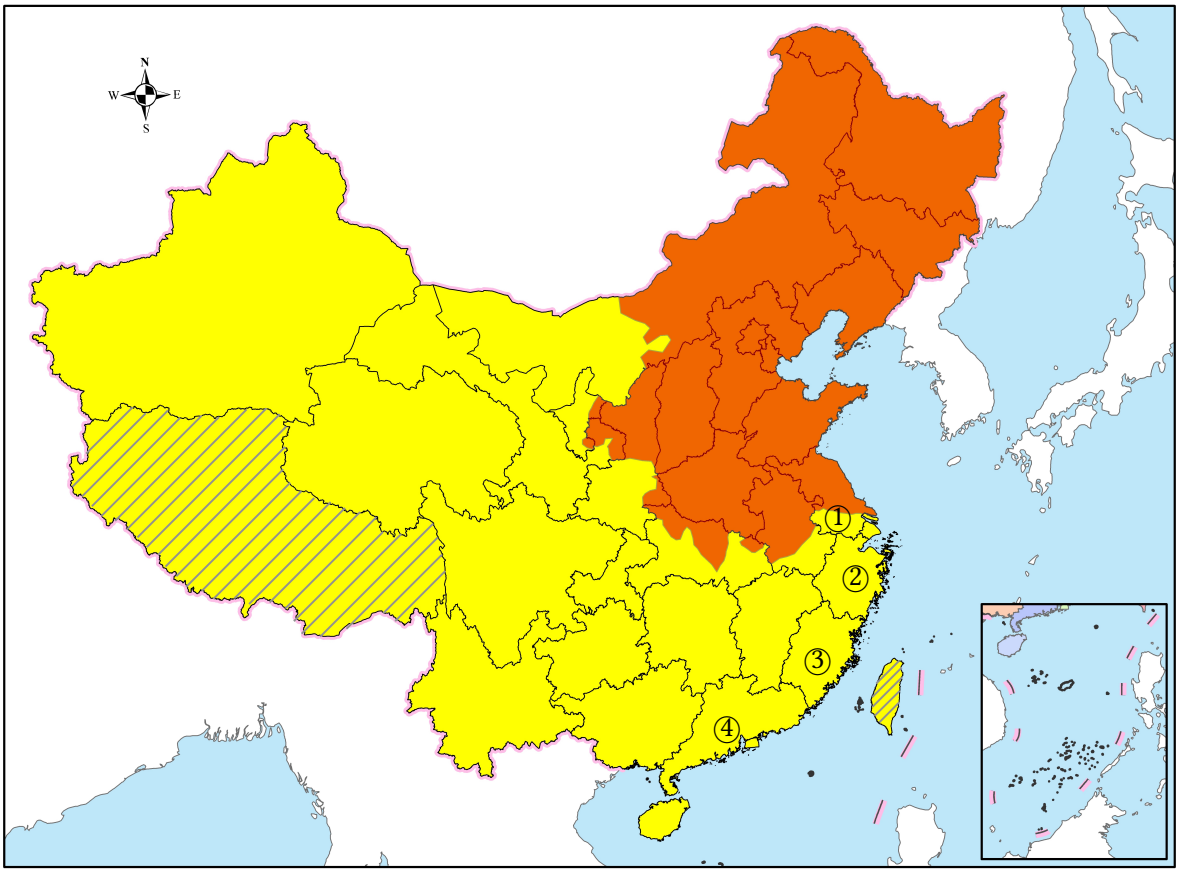

Figure 3.1: Yellow: "New Areas" subject to the post-1949 Land Reform Campaign. Orange: "Old Liberated Areas" where Land Reform had *already* been implemented prior to 1949. Provinces numbered ①-④ were the four sample provinces analyzed in my empirical research: Jiangsu (southern part), Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong. The map is drawn with ArcGIS based on an archival map, *Current Situation Map of China's Liberated Areas*, published by the PLA General Office in February 1949.

Historical accounts suggest that factional divisions within the local bureaucracy created a tense en-

4. Hainan was a part of Guangdong Province during the Land Reform but became a separate province in 1988. In the subsequent empirical analysis, I count Hainan as a part of Guangdong rather instead as a separate administrative unit.

vironment of mutual scrutiny and competition among officials, which compelled them to comply with the tasks assigned by higher authorities to avoid being perceived as disloyal by their peers. Additionally, archival accounts of the Land Reform period suggest that the central leadership deliberately encouraged inter-group competition at the local level to enhance subordinates' adherence to Beijing's policy agenda. In this section, I perform a series of quantitative analyses using an original dataset at the county level to examine the two related questions: (1) whether factionalized local leadership could lead to more radical behavior during the campaign; (2) whether the regime strategically created factional cleavages in the appointment of local leadership to facilitate campaign implementation.

3.4.1 Data Scope and Empirical Strategies

To explore the relationship between factional divisions and bureaucratic compliance, I constructed a comprehensive, county-level database encompassing four coastal provinces in Southeast China: Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong. The four provinces shared several similar patterns. First, they were newly incorporated into CCP control during the later stages of the Chinese Civil War between 1948 and 1950. Due to the relatively brief period of the Party's rule, the problems of local resistance and insufficient personnel were particularly salient in these provinces. Secondly, there existed noteworthy variations within the provinces regarding the regime's level of penetration and control over local society. Some counties were Kuomintang strongholds where the Party had limited access to local knowledge and social network, while other counties witnessed intense Communist insurgency between the 1920s and 1940s, which were infiltrated by the CCP's undercover agents and guerilla fighters. These variations provide a valuable opportunity to understand the diverse strategies employed by the regime in controlling different types of territories. Previous studies, including those by Luo (2022) and Strauss (2019), have conducted extensive qualitative or ethnographic studies on the Land Reform patterns in one or more of these provinces. An overview of key political and socioeconomic conditions in the four provinces can be found in **Table B1** of the appendix.

My dataset includes a total of 216 counties from the four provinces involved in the Land Reform Campaign after 1949. This sample includes 51 counties in Zhejiang, 61 counties in Fujian, and 87 counties in Guangdong (including Hainan), as well as the 17 counties of Jiangsu province located south of the Yangtze River (collectively known as *Sunan*).[5] I exclude all urban districts in the provinces where the Land Re-

5. Following the precedent of Strauss (2019), I exclude the northern part of Jiangsu (*Subei*) from the analysis, because the

form was not implemented, focusing only on counties that have a substantial proportion of farmland and agricultural population in my sample.

Dependent Variable: Radicalism in Campaign Implementation

The main measure I constructed to estimate the level of Land Reform intensity was the per capita land redistributed to peasants, calculated by dividing the total land appropriated from the prosecuted landowners by the number of local peasants eligible for receiving land, that is:

$$\frac{\text{Total amount of farmland confiscated from landowners}}{\text{Total number of peasants eligible for redistributed land}} \tag{3.1}$$

From my archival research, a majority of county-level gazetteers reported this measure to indicate the campaign intensity during the Land Reform. Apparently, a higher level of radicalism is associated with more extensive confiscation of the landowners' assets, resulting in a larger numerator in the formula above. Simultaneously, if local officials behaved more fervently during the campaign, a larger proportion of the rural population would be denounced as "class enemies," leading to a decrease in the number of eligible beneficiaries for land redistribution. Therefore, this measure effectively captures the variation in campaign implementation across different localities.

Key Independent Variable: Factional Dynamics within Local Leadership

The main independent variable is the internal factional cleavage within the political leadership of a county during the Land Reform Campaign. To measure this variable, I gathered information on the two highest-ranking officials in each locality during the campaign period: the first Party secretary and the governor. I then identify whether these officials were *centrally-dispatched* or *locally-embedded*. A cadre is classified as "centrally-dispatched" if they were transferred from another locality by the higher authority shortly before the campaign, and as "locally-embedded" if they had been operating in the locality during the Chinese Civil War either as an undercover agent, a guerrilla fighter, or a Party liaison. If multiple officials served in the same leadership position of a county during the campaign period, the one who served the longer time will be considered.

region had already been a CCP-controlled enclave since the early 1940s and had completed the Land Reform years before the establishment of the PRC. As a result, the socioeconomic conditions and the regime's capacity in that territory were not comparable to the neighboring regions in the south.

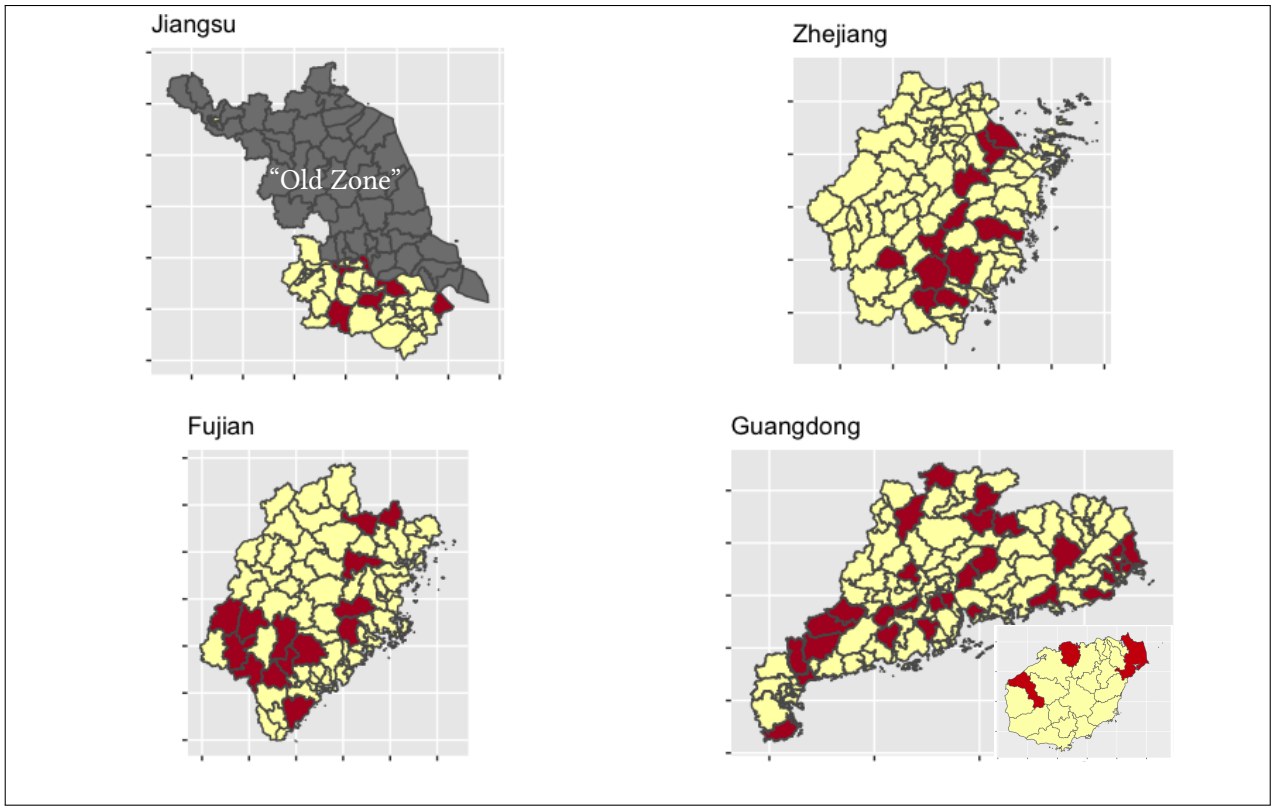

Figure 3.2: County-level leadership dynamics during the Land Reform Campaign. Red: Counties with *factionalized* leadership, where the Party Secretary and the governor belonged to different factions, i.e. centrally-dispatched vs. locally-embedded. Yellow: counties with a unified leadership, where the two top positions belonged to officials sharing the same background.

I then categorize a county's power dynamics based on the two leaders' factional backgrounds. A local authority is considered as *unitary* if the two leaders belonged to the same faction, and *factionalized* if they hailed from different backgrounds. In subsequent robustness checks, I will further break down this dichotomy into four pairings (i.e. local secretary–local governor; nonlocal secretary–nonlocal governor; local secretary–nonlocal governor; nonlocal secretary–nonlocal governor) to examine whether specific pairing patterns could shape bureaucratic compliance during the campaign.

Control Variables

In addition to my main explanatory variable, I incorporate several confounders into my analysis to control for the impact of *land availability* and *regime capacity* on the outcome of land reform in a county, shown in **Table 4.1**. To address the former, I collect data on the land area and population in 1949, because more densely populated localities were correlated with a smaller amount of land available to be redistributed.

Table 3.1: Covariates included in the Empirical Analysis

Variable Name	Rationale for Inclusion	Type
1. Indicators of Pre-existing Regime Capacity and Support		
Num. of CCP members by 1949	As Koss (2018) suggests, the density of CCP members before a county's "liberation" was correlated with the regime's local capacity.	numeric
Years of CCP presence	The duration of CCP operations in a county prior to the Land Reform Campaign could impact its strength and penetration of the locality and affect its popular support.	numeric
Old Revolutionary Zone	Whether a county had been part of the CCP-ruled "old revolutionary zone" anytime between 1927-35 could affect the regime's pre-existing level of control and capacity in a region.	dummy
Anti-Japanese guerrilla area	Whether there were CCP-led guerrilla activities during the Sino-Japanese War between 1937 and 1945 could affect the regime's pre-existing local knowledge and popular support.	dummy
2. Indicators of Pre-existing Socioeconomic Conditions:		
Population	As Fearon and Laitin (2003) suggests, population size could impact the regime's governance capacity in a region.	numeric
Land area	As Fearon and Laitin (2003) suggests, landmass and terrain could impact the regime's governance capacity in a region.	numeric
Provincial & prefecture affiliation	In subsequent analyses, I variably include fixed effects for the *province* or *prefecture* responsible for governing the county to control for unobservable socioeconomic characteristics. Additionally, since the county leaders were *nominated* by the prefecture and *formally appointed* by the provincial leadership, these fixed effects could also help capture the specific patterns of bureaucratic selection within a locality.	dummy
Campaign start month	I also add fixed effects for *the time at which the campaign started* in each county. There are two reasons for this: (1) certain socioeconomic conditions may have varied over time, which could influence the outcome of the campaign, and (2) the central policy and agenda evolved over time, so counties that launched the campaign at different times may have been subject to different implementation criteria.	dummy

Regarding the latter, I include a range of indicators that capture the CCP's pre-existing power infrastructure and capacity in each county before 1949. These measures include (1) the duration of the Party's operation in the locality; (2) the number of Party members in 1949; (3) whether the county had ever been part of a "revolutionary base" controlled by the Party from 1927 to 1935, and whether the county experienced CCP-led guerrilla warfare during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-45). Additionally, I control for the county's affiliation with a particular prefecture in the analysis, because prefectures had immediate authority over

counties under its administration and could influence the scope and extent of campaign implementation. Lastly, given that the Land Reform was initiated at different times in different counties, and the central leadership often adjusted its targets and directions over the course of the campaign, I include the campaign start date for each county to account for the impact of Beijing's policy changes throughout the period.

3.4.2 Main Hypotheses

Using the dataset obtained from my archival research, I will first examine the impact of factionalized leadership on the Land Reform outcome. My main theoretical prediction is that if the Party Secretary and the governor belonged to different factions, the mutual competition and the pressure to display compliance would incentivize both leaders to exert greater efforts in implementing the campaign. Thus, holding other variables constant, the per capita amount of land redistributed from denounced landowners to peasants would be higher.

Hypothesis 1. *When the Party secretary and governor of a county belonged to different factions, the average amount of farmland redistributed from prosecuted landowners to peasants would be greater.*

Next, I will explore whether the patterns of county leadership appointments indicate *strategic considerations* by the higher authority to enhance campaign compliance. Was the higher authority more likely to appoint two leaders from rival factions to the same locality where policy implementation was expected to be more difficult? It is important to note that directly "tracing" the strategic thinking of central and provincial leaders in appointing county leadership is not feasible, and I do not aim to assert that the central leadership adopted a definite policy of creating factional divisions to enhance campaign implementation. Rather, my objective is to explore whether leaders from rival factions were *more likely* to be jointly appointed to counties where the Party's capacity and local connections were weaker and the implementation of the campaign was more challenging. As suggested by anecdotal evidence from archival materials, this correlation could *plausibly* driven by strategic considerations of the higher authorities.

Hypothesis 2. *During the Land Reform, counties that had never been part of the "revolutionary base" controlled by the CCP prior to 1949 were more likely to have a divided leadership structure, where the Party secretary and governor belonged to different factions.*

3.5 Regression Estimates

3.5.1 Baseline Results

I conduct three sets of within-group regression analyses to test the impact of local factional cleavages on campaign implementation, as shown in **Table 4.1**. In Models 1 and 2, I include prefecture fixed effects to estimate how much variation among counties *within the same prefecture* could be attributed to factional cleavages of local leaders. In Models 3 and 4, I use *campaign start month* as a fixed effect to examine whether counties that launched the land reform *around the same time* showed variations in outcomes due to local leadership factionalization. Finally, in Models 5 and 6, I include both *prefecture* and *campaign start month* as fixed effects to examine whether leadership factional cleavages contribute to variations in land reform outcomes among counties under the same prefecture that started the campaign simultaneously. In all model specifications, I incorporate various control variables to account for the impact of land availability, population size, and pre-existing regime capacity on the outcomes of the land reform in each county.

Table 3.2: Baseline Analysis: Faction-driven Radicalization

	Dependent variable:					
	Per capita confiscated land (in *mu*)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Locality fixed effect		Time fixed effect		Locality + Time	
(Baseline group: unitary leadership)						
Factionalized leadership	0.475*	0.522*	0.499	0.461**	0.549*	0.585**
Area & population controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regime capacity controls		✓		✓		✓
Fixed effect: Prefecture	✓	✓			✓	✓
Fixed effect: Starting time			✓	✓	✓	✓
Group-clustered SE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Num. of counties	216	216	216	216	216	216
R^2	0.528	0.530	0.146	0.168	0.534	0.535
Adjusted R^2	0.432	0.415	0.117	0.118	0.428	0.409
Residual Std. Error	1.676	1.707	2.089	2.095	1.683	1.715

Notes: For a complete list of control variables and the full regression results, see **Appendix B3** in the appendix. Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

The coefficient estimates presented in Table 4.1 provide evidence in support of my main hypothesis

that factional cleavages contribute to stronger implementation during the Land Reform Campaign. Among counties under the same prefecture or with similar launch dates, those governed under divided leadership tended to confiscate and redistribute over 10 percent more land from the landowning class to each eligible peasant, compared to counties governed under unitary leadership.

3.5.2 Mechanism Analysis

The baseline results indicate a clear correlation between local factional cleavage and the intensity of Land Reform implementation. However, this effect could be caused by factors other than inter-group competition. One alternative explanation is that the effect could be solely driven by the presence of locally-embedded officials in the leadership. Among all counties under unitary leadership in this sample, the majority (91 out of 144 such counties) were governed by two centrally-dispatched external leaders. Therefore, it is plausible that the higher rate of land redistribution could be attributed to the stronger efforts or higher efficiency of locally-embedded officials in the leadership. As discussed in Chapter Three, local officials could facilitate campaign implementation due to their familiarity with local communities or stronger incentive to demonstrate loyalty. Another competing explanation is that the observed effect of factionalized leadership could be driven by *a specific pairing pattern*, such as one involving a centrally-dispatched secretary and a locally-embedded governor. Given the dominant status of southbound cadres in the local power dynamic in the 1950s, it is possible that a local mayor working under a centrally-dispatched Party secretary might be compelled to make greater efforts to meet campaign targets, while the reverse scenario may not necessarily lead to increased compliance in the county.

To address these concerns, I conducted additional regressions to analyze the underlying mechanism behind the impact of factionalized leadership on campaign intensity. The results of these regressions are presented in **Table 4.2**. In Models 1 and 2, I evaluate the effects of each leader's factional background *separately* to test whether the variation in campaign intensity can be *independently* attributed to the factional background of any particular leader. In Model 3, I include an interaction term to explore whether the observed variation can only be explained by *specific pairings* of the two leaders. Lastly, in Model 4, I further dissect the local leadership structure into four distinct pairs and evaluate their effects as dummy variables in the regression. This approach allows me to examine whether the variation in campaign intensity is specifically driven by certain combinations of leadership roles and factional backgrounds.

The results presented in Table 4.2 provide additional evidence supporting the influence of inter-group

Table 3.3: Mechanism Analysis: Faction-Driven Radicalization

	DV: Per capita confiscated land (in mu)			
	Interaction between leadership backgrounds			Pairwise combination
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Interaction of secretary/governor factions:				
(Baseline: either official is local)				
Non-local Secretary	0.409		0.855*	–
	(0.411)		(0.438)	
Non-local Governor		0.199	1.090*	–
		(0.409)	(0.567)	
Non-local Secretary × Non-local Governor			−1.322**	–
			(0.636)	
Dummies for each pairing pattern:				
(Baseline: Both officials were local)				
Both officials were non-local	–	–	–	0.622
				(0.548)
Local secretary + non-local governor	–	–	–	1.090*
				(0.567)
Non-local secretary + local governor	–	–	–	0.855*
				(0.438)
Area & population controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regime capacity controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fixed effect: Prefecture	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fixed effect: Starting time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Group-clustered SE	✓	✓	✓	✓
No. of counties	216	216	216	216
R^2	0.529	0.525	0.540	0.540
Adjusted R^2	0.401	0.396	0.407	0.407
Residual Std. Error	1.727	1.734	1.717	1.717

Notes: For a complete list of control variables and the full regression results, see **Appendix B4** in the appendix. Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

dynamics between leaders of rivaling backgrounds in the local authority on campaign intensity. Specifically, Columns 1 to 3 indicate that the factional backgrounds of either the Party secretary or governor *alone* did not have a statistically significant impact on a county's campaign outcomes. Rather, a higher land distribution amount is only observed when the two leaders from different factions were *paired*. Furthermore, Column 4 reveals that greater land distribution intensity could occur in counties with both

a locally-embedded secretary and a centrally-dispatched governor, as well as in those with a centrally-dispatched secretary and a locally-embedded governor. This finding suggests that the variation in campaign intensity is driven by the *existence* of factional cleavage, rather than specific patterns of local power structure.

3.5.3 Leadership Appointment Patterns and Pre-existing Political Control

In Hypothesis 4, I conjecture that Beijing and provincial authorities could strategically utilize factional cleavages within the local leadership to incentivize greater compliance during the Land Reform campaign. If this hypothesis holds true, it implies that the central and provincial leadership would have the motive to appoint officials from rival backgrounds to jointly govern counties with *limited regime control.* The intense scrutiny and pressure resulting from factional competition could lead to strong incentives to accomplish the objectives and expectations set by the higher authorities in order to preserve and advance their careers. From the regime's perspective, this dynamic could facilitate easier and more efficient implementation of policies in challenging localities.

To examine whether the level of prior political control could impact a locality's subsequent leadership appointment pattern after 1949, I perform a series of regressions to examine whether pre-existing level of regime control could impact the probability of a county being governed by a factionalized leadership. The key indicator of historical CCP control is whether a county had been an "old revolutionary zone" (*geming laoqu*), which were enclaves controlled and governed by the CCP during the Communist insurgency from 1927 to 1936. Those areas experienced early state-building attempts by the CCP, during which the party established initial state institutions and governance structures, and developed a network of local agents and loyal activists. In addition, I also incorporate several indicators that reflect the regime's knowledge and familiarity with a locality, including the number of CCP members by 1949, years of CCP activities before 1949, and whether the county experienced any CCP guerrilla activities during the Sino-Japanese War. Lastly, given that both prefecture and provincial authorities had influence in the appointment of county leadership[6], I incorporate province or prefecture fixed effects in various model specifications, which helps account for the variations in leadership appointment patterns across different provinces and prefectures.

Table 4.4 presents the main regression results. Across all model specifications, counties that had never

6. According to the *nomenklatura* rule in the early 1950s China, the appointment of county Party secretaries and governors should first be nominated by the prefecture Party committee and then approved by the provincial Party committee.

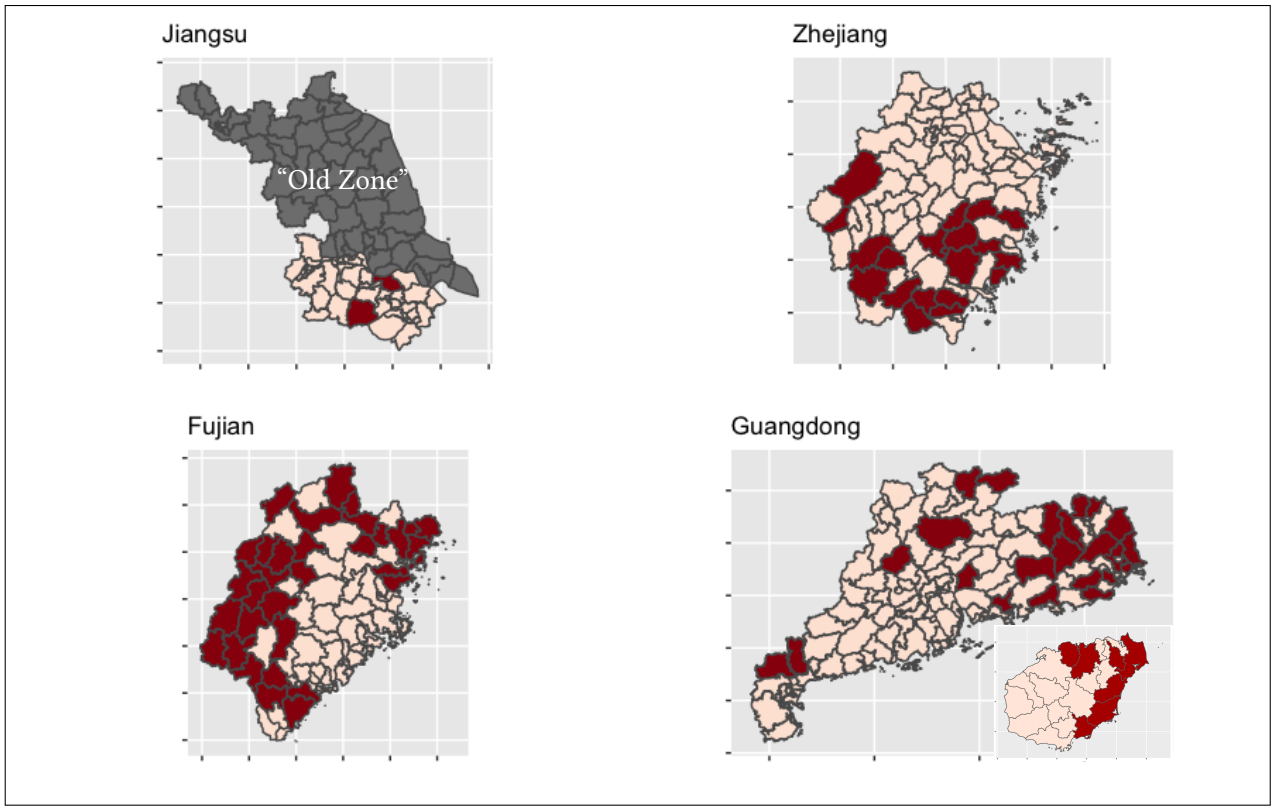

Figure 3.3: County-level leadership dynamics during the Land Reform Campaign. Red: Counties that were under the governance of CCP-led revolutionary regimes, either fully or partially, for at least one month at any time between 1927 and 1936. Source: county-level gazetteers.

been under CCP control during its insurgency against the Kuomintang before 1949 were more likely to have factionalized leadership during the Land Reform between 1949 and 1954. On the other hand, indicators that only reflected the CCP's *historical presence* in the region but not *actual control* (such as the number of Party members, years of Party activities, and anti-Japanese guerrilla operations) did not have a significant impact on the pattern of leadership appointment during the Land Reform. This finding bolsters my conjecture that the regime may strategically exploit inter-factional cleavages to incentivize policy implementation in regions where it had weaker prior control.

Once again, I want to clarify that my study does not aim to make a *definitive claim* that the regime actively pursued a consistent strategy of pairing officials from rival factions to bolster bureaucratic compliance during the Land Reform. It is not possible to restore the exact strategic thinking of the central leaders at the time of the campaign, or obtain internal records and classified documents that would reveal the precise decision-making process within the central leadership. Therefore, it is not feasible to establish

Table 3.4: Pre-1949 Determinants of Factionalized Leadership Appointments

	Dependent variable:			
	Factionalized leadership			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Old revolutionary zone	−0.165*	−0.174*	−0.182*	−0.057**
	(0.083)	(0.096)	(0.099)	(0.018)
Other political capacity controls:				
Num. of CCP members by '49 (log)		0.003	−0.020	0.001
		(0.047)	(0.063)	(0.043)
Years of CCP presence before '49		−0.002	−0.005	−0.005
		(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.007)
Anti-Japanese guerrilla area		0.057	0.051	−0.076
		(0.090)	(0.089)	(0.066)
Socioeconomic controls:				
Population by 1949 (log)			0.112	0.112
			(0.097)	(0.079)
Land area (log)			−0.037	0.029
			(0.086)	(0.139)
Fixed effect	Prefecture	Prefecture	Prefecture	Province
Clustered s.e.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	216	216	216	216
R^2	0.206	0.204	0.211	0.052
Adjusted R^2	0.078	0.053	0.048	0.007
Residual Std. Error	0.447	0.454	0.454	0.464

Notes: : For a series of pairwise regressions to examine the impact of each pre-1949 factor on factionalized leadership appointment during the Land Reform Campaign, see **Appendix B5** in the appendix. Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

a causal relationship that "proves" the observed correlation between leadership appointment patterns and pre-existing political control as a result of deliberate political maneuvering from above. Instead, the objective of my quantitative analysis is to present evidence that higher-level political intervention could be a *plausible explanation* for the observed correlation, and to explore the possibility that the leadership could exploit inter-group cleavage as a tool of bureaucratic control.

3.6 Discussion

Rethinking "Cumulative Radicalization" in Functional-Intentional Debate

The question of whether the impetus for mass repression in autocracies originates from the leadership or the ranks of bureaucracy has long been a subject of scholarly debate. This debate can be traced back to discussions on the origins of the Holocaust, where scholars have diverged on whether large-scale political violence was the result of *intentional, top-down planning* or the *inherent pathologies of authoritarian bureaucratic structure*. The "intentionalist" school argues that repressive campaigns were well-coordinated efforts devised by the leadership in advance, with the explicit goal of eradicating well-defined targets. In this view, subordinate bureaucrats primarily executed the repressive tasks without significant sway over the leader's master plan. On the other hand, the "functionalist" school argues that mass-scale political violence does not necessarily stem from the deliberate planning of the autocrat, but rather emerges from within the ranks of the bureaucracy. Subordinate officials, driven by the desire to advance their careers and outperform their peers, engaged in excessive violence to curry favor with the leaders, resulting in immense human suffering and loss.

The concept of *cumulative radicalization*, which aligned with the functionalist tradition, provides an intuitive explanation for mass political violence. According to this theory, the authoritarian bureaucracy is often characterized by redundant agencies with overlapping roles and functions. During repressive campaigns, bureaucrats who are assigned similar tasks often engage in intense competition with each other and resort to increasingly radical measures to execute the leaders' orders and secure their career prospects in the regime. This mutually reinforcing cycle of escalating radicalism results in extreme cruelty and violence which went beyond what is initially deemed necessary by the regime.

My study of the Land Reform provides valuable insights into the theory of cumulative radicalization, which aims to reconcile the functionalist and intentionalist perspectives in repression research. The findings of my study suggest that, while subordinate bureaucrats had a significant influence on the extent of repression in their respective jurisdictions, the higher authorities were able to *manipulate the local incentive structure* (such as factional cleavages) to ensure sufficient compliance from local bureaucrats in certain areas. In other words, although the degree of commitment and radicalism in a repressive campaign was largely determined by the individual bureaucrats, the autocrat could shape their level of commitment by

engineering the incentive structure to align with their political objectives. In this sense, the interplay between the intentions of the leadership and the structural patterns of the bureaucracy shapes the eventual outcome of repression. □

Chapter 4

Loyalty Signaling and Agent Compliance during the Anti-Rightist Campaign

Disclosure: This chapter is adapted from a co-authored working paper, titled "The Zeal of the Outgroup: Loyalty Signaling, Bureaucratic Compliance, and Variation of State Repression in Authoritarian Regimes," with Steve Bai from Yale University. My co-author has been informed about the use of this working paper as a dissertation chapter. For the original co-authored working paper, please see Qian and Bai (2021).

4.1 Question: How to Induce the Loyalty of the Outgroup Members of the Bureaucracy?

Local agents often play an important role in shaping the intensity of selectiveness of state repression as they are directly responsible for identifying and prosecuting targets of repression (Walder 2015; K. Yang 2008; Hassan 2020). What factors influence local bureaucrats' compliance when assigned repressive tasks? A commonly accepted explanation suggests that bureaucrats who are considered part of the autocrat's "in-group" due to their backgrounds or identities are more likely to be loyal and willing to carry out repression on behalf of the regime. For instance, studies have shown that in Kenya, bureaucrats who share the same ethnic group as the president are more compliant in repressing dissidents in their locality, while those from different ethnic backgrounds tend to exhibit greater tolerance and leniency towards anti-regime behaviors (Hassan 2020). Similarly, in Ba'athist Iraq and Syria under Saddam Hussein and Bashar al-Assad,

bureaucrats belonging to the ruler's clan, tribe, or religious community were primarily responsible for mass atrocities against dissidents or ethnic minorities (Sassoon 2012; Mazur 2021). In Uganda, street-level policemen are less likely to repress individuals who share the same ethnic identities, thereby defying the repressive tasks assigned by the autocrat (Curtice and Behlendorf 2021). Similarly, scholars also found that dictators tend to "ethnically stack" the coercive institutions with loyal ingroup bureaucrats to prevent defections (McLauchlin 2010; Albrecht 2015; Nassif 2020).

However, does ingroup status *always* lead to greater bureaucratic compliance in the context of repressive campaigns? Anecdotal evidence from recent ethnographic research seem to contradict this conventional wisdom. Various reports show that police officers and security agents from ethnic minority backgrounds, paradoxically, displayed greater brutality and less hesitancy to use deadly force when ordered to repress their co-ethnics during ethnic protests (L. Wang 1998; Zenz and Leibold 2020). Hence, the effect of group status on compliance warrants further investigation.

In this chapter, I propose a trust-based theory to explore how an agent's affinity to the ruler would impact their enthusiasm during repressive campaigns. In any regime, a leader trusts certain types of subordinates more than others. Since an agent's inherent loyalty and preference cannot be directly observed, the leader needs to draw inferences about an agent's *trustworthiness* based on certain personal traits. As previous studies have shown, an individual's ethnic group, religious background, or personal history could all be employed by the ruler as indicators of one's trustworthiness (Greitens 2016). Therefore, If the leader's criteria of judging one's trustworthiness are publicly known, agents who realize that they are perceived as untrustworthy due to certain personal traits might face a dilemma: to survive politically, they need to choose a side between the autocrat and their own communities. However, under a consolidated autocracy where the ruler acquires absolute power and faces no viable threats from rivals within the ruling coalition, outgroup bureaucrats do not really have a choice as their political fate will primarily depend on the ruler's personal whim (Svolik 2012). Under such circumstances, alignment with the autocrat seems to be the only option for political survival and advancement. Compared to their more trusted peers, outgroup agents not only face greater obstacles in promotion, but also are more likely to be prosecuted in future political struggles. Thus, they have greater incentives to *credibly* prove their loyalty to improve the perceived trustworthiness in the eyes of the leader.

One way for untrustworthy outgroup bureaucrats to credibly signal their loyalty, I argue, is engaging in *unpopular*, *costly* tasks on behalf of the ruler. In this sense, repressive campaigns provide a *window of*

opportunity for officials with untrustworthy traits to update the ruler's belief on their loyalty. For one reason, repression could incur remarkable social and political costs for the agent and make them subject to retaliation by victims and rival elites. By displaying their willingness to suffer the cost of losing former allies and creating enemies for themselves, an agent could credibly signal their exclusive allegiance and devotion to the ruler. For another reason, repressive tasks are highly *visible* to their superiors. The outcomes of repressive campaigns, such as the number of prosecutions, are *quantifiable* rubrics that can be easily observed by the principal. Hence, my framework predicts that in *highly politicized repressive campaigns* where a bureaucrat's behavior is linked to perceived loyalty, agents who are deemed less trustworthy by the ruler due to certain outgroup traits would be incentivized to display greater fervency and harshness in performing coercive tasks to affirm their loyalty.

I illustrate our theory by studying the Anti-Rightist Campaign (ARC), an important yet understudied political event in China which lasted from 1957 to 1959. Concerned that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) faced attack from within, Chairman Mao Zedong ordered provincial leaders and ministers to identify and prosecute the "rightists" in their jurisdictions who allegedly committed "anti-Party wrongdoings." The targets of this campaign were intellectuals, state officials, and ordinary citizens who purportedly opposed the CCP's leadership or policies in either speech or action. Among all violent political campaigns in Mao's China, the ARC was unprecedented for both its excessive scale and regional unevenness. By the end of the campaign, over 550,000 individuals were wrongfully labeled as "rightists" and received varying penalties, ranging from job demotion to years of forced labor.

The severely uneven pattern of repression during the ARC provides me with a unique opportunity to test the theory I propose. In 1950s China, a major cleavage among the political elite was one's *revolutionary history before 1949.* At the founding of the People's Republic, political power was shared between two groups: *former Red Army combatants*, who enjoyed closer relations with Mao and were considered by the ruler as more loyal; and *former undercover partisans* in Nationalist-controlled areas, who were considered as an untrustworthy outgroup by Mao due to their obscure personal history and relatively minor contribution to the CCP's victory. By the mid-1950s, Mao had successfully consolidated his power, subjugated potential challengers to his rule, and established himself as the indisputable supreme leader of the Party and the state.

Based on a variety of primary sources including memoirs and autobiographies of retired provincial officials, I find ample evidence that subnational officials who were former undercover partisans displayed

greater enthusiasm in carrying out prosecutions than those who were ex-Red Army officials during ARC. Historical accounts show that several former Red Army combatants expressed lukewarm attitudes towards the campaign and even tacitly resisted Mao's push for prosecuting more "rightists" in their provinces. In contrast, former undercover agents displayed great fervency towards Mao's purge, and some were even worried that their compliance with the leader's prosecution demands was not strong and visible enough. A plausible factor that impacted the two groups' divergent attitudes during ARC, as suggested by qualitative evidence, was their affinity with the targeted victims of prosecution. The "rightists" targeted by the campaign were urban-based intellectuals, professionals, and bureaucrats who had similar backgrounds and stronger ties with former undercover partisans. Hence, local officials from undercover backgrounds tended to see the campaign as a loyalty test and faced stronger pressure to prosecute their "own type" as credible proof of their commitment to Mao's agenda.

To further validate my theory, I compile an original, multi-layered dataset on the Anti-Rightist Campaign from archival sources. I find a systematic pattern that provinces and prefecture-level cities governed by former undercover agents were more likely to prosecute a larger number of individuals as "rightists". Furthermore, based on a dataset of high-profile "rightists," I also find that those individuals who were prosecuted in jurisdictions governed by former undercover cadres were more likely to receive harsher penalties such as forced labor and imprisonment. I then test various mechanisms that could explain this correlation, and find that the cross-regional variation in prosecution severity is unlikely to be driven by any other factor than Mao's differential trust of local leaders based on their revolutionary history.

The remaining part of this chapter is structured as follows. First, I present anecdotal evidence from personal memoirs and archival accounts to support my theoretical framework. Through comparative studies of several representative provinces, I provide substantial evidence that officials who were former underground agents, fearing that their careers would be jeopardized by their obscure revolutionary history, had an incentive to behave more radically during the ARC. Next, I will conduct a series of quantitative analyses based on my original dataset from the campaign. I will systematically show that localities governed by former underground agents were more inclined to prosecute a larger proportion of citizens, and those labeled as "rightists" and prosecuted in jurisdictions governed by former undercover officials tended to receive more severe punishments compared to those governed by former Red Army combatants. Finally, I will discuss the implications of my study and its contribution to the existing literature.

4.2 Empirical Case: The Anti-Rightist Campaign, 1957-1959

4.2.1 Mao's War against "Fellow Travellers"

The main case I use to illustrate this mechanism is the Anti-Rightist Campaign (ARC), a coercive campaign launched by Mao to crack down on alleged dissidents in the cadre rank and among ordinary citizens. In 1956, in an attempt to promote limited pluralism within society, Mao openly encouraged cadres and citizens to offer "constructive suggestions" for the Party (Meisner 1999). Mao's posture to liberalize society, however, unexpectedly unleashed a wave of sharp criticism against the Party and the leader himself. A large number of intellectuals, Party cadres, and ordinary citizens seized the momentum to challenge Mao's radical policies such as the Agricultural Collectivization, criticized the arbitrary governing style of officials, and some even demanded greater political freedom. Facing the mounting challenges toward himself and his policy agenda, Mao was convinced that his New China faced existential threats from within. In June 1957, Mao angrily declared his detractors as "rightists" and vowed to "strike back against [their] rampant attack" (Ibid). On the central level, Mao instructed his General Secretary, Deng Xiaoping, to coordinate the overall campaign implementation nationwide (Y.-l. Chung 2011). On the local level, Mao summoned provincial First Party Secretaries (FPSs) to the northern city of Qingdao and asked them to identify and purge the "hidden rightists" in their respective provinces.

The ARC was unique among Mao's political campaigns in the 1950s that it primarily targeted *internal dissidents* within the PRC's political establishment. The "rightists" denounced during the campaign, in Mao's own terms, were "former fellow travellers:" although they supported and contributed to the Party's aims and causes during the revolutionary years, they turned skeptical and criticized Mao's policy agenda as the complacent Chairman escalated his radical plans to transform Chinese society through mass purges and rapid collectivization. The scale of the ARC was immense. According to official statistics, 552,877 individuals were denounced as "rightists" during the ARC and received varying degrees of sanctions ranging from job demotion to imprisonment (Henry He 2000). Following Mao's death, the ARC was viewed by the subsequent authorities as largely a witch hunt which treated one's good-faith critique of state policies as a political crime.[1] Among the half million "rightists" prosecuted during the campaign, all but 96 individuals

1. A resolution passed by the Eleventh CCP Central Committee reads that: "the scope of this campaign was made far too broad … and a number of intellectuals, patriotic citizens, and Party cadres were unjustifiably labelled 'rightists' with unfortunate consequences." For full text, see CCP Central Committee, *Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party since the Founding of the People's Republic of China*, June 1981.

were absolved from all wrongdoings in the 1980s.

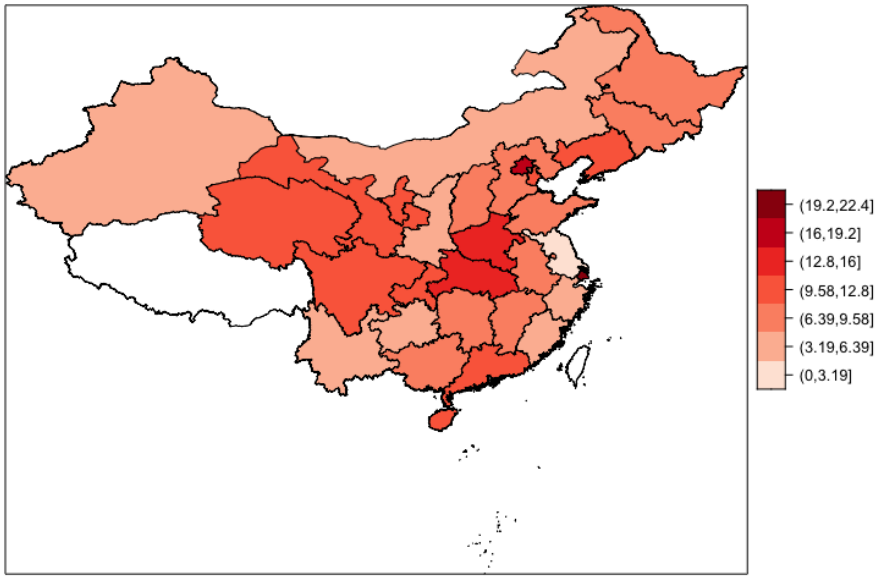

Figure 4.1: Number of denounced rightists per 10,000 citizens by province (Provincial Gazetteers)

A puzzling feature of the ARC was the huge variation of local officials in their response to Mao's demand, as shown in **Figure 3.1.** Adjacent regions that shared similar geographic conditions, cultural roots, and economic structure displayed remarkable difference in campaign intensity. For example, while Shanghai prosecuted the largest number of rightists in the country, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, two neighboring provinces that had close cultural ties with Shanghai, showed much greater leniency toward Mao's critics during the campaign. In northwest China, although Shaanxi, Shanxi, and Gansu provinces had similar geographical conditions and levels of economic development, Shaanxi notably prosecuted much fewer rightists than the two neighboring provinces during the ARC.

4.2.2 Divergent Career Paths and Perceived Trustworthiness of Early PRC Officials

To understand the variation in local officials' responsiveness during the ARC, I turn to an official's revolutionary experience before 1949 as a potential explanatory variable. In 1927, the ruling Kuomintang regime outlawed the CCP and launched violent repression against Communists nationwide. Facing the brutal crackdown, the CCP leadership decided that its members needed to "fight on two fronts" (Z. Mao 1939). On the "open" front, the Party formed the Red Army and launched an armed rebellion against the

Kuomintang in several Southern provinces starting in May 1928. As one of the co-founders of the Red Army, Mao gradually gained prominence for his command skills, rose in the Party ranks with his excellent battlefield record, and finally seized the leadership of the entire Party in the late 1930s. On the "underground" front, the CCP installed secret branches in Kuomintang-controlled regions (especially large cities) to infiltrate and undermine the enemy from within. Those undercover operatives – known as "white-area partisans" (*baiqu dang*) – disguised their true identities and engaged in a number of clandestine activities, such as collecting intelligence, disseminating propaganda, and coordinating anti-regime protests among college and high school students (Brazil 2013). Those urban-based undercover saboteurs were commanded by Liu Shaoqi, a veteran labor activist who would later become the Party's vice-chairman after 1949.

Historical accounts suggest that Mao's level of trust in subordinate officials was associated with their divergent revolutionary paths during the Communist Revolution. As the co-founder and highest commander of the CCP's military wing, Mao often viewed Red Army officers as more trustworthy and reliable, and maintained long-term personal friendship with many high-ranking generals (Gao 2006). In his own writings, Mao praised Red Army cadres for "having endured the hardship" of the battlefield and having their loyalty "tested by the torment of revolution" (Z. Mao 1935). Red Army experience was also a major privilege for political selection in the Mao era. In August 1955, during a special meeting in preparation for the upcoming 8th Party Congress, Mao even insisted that "old cadres from the Red Army era" should be given priority for candidacy in the next Central Committee (Zhihua Shen 2008).

In contrast, Mao expressed strong suspicion towards former undercover agents who worked in Kuomintang-controlled areas. Historical accounts show that Mao's distrust of those clandestine workers was driven by two factors. First, Mao never directly commanded the undercover corps and had little personal connection with those cadres before 1949. The Chairman reportedly admitted in 1944 that "I have always worked as a military combatant in the Red area, so I know nothing about clandestine work in the White area" (Fu 2000). On several occasions, Mao dismissed the undercover agents' contribution to the CCP's victory and insisted that their role in the revolution was trivial compared to battlefield fighters (Pei 2014). More importantly, due to the secretive nature of their work, the records of former undercover cadres during the revolution were often obscure and incomplete, and they had difficulty proving their loyalty and performance. Under the highly repressive environment, undercover agents were commanded on a one-on-one basis (*danxian lianxi*). Thus, if one's direct superior was dead or missing, no one would be able to provide details about their Party membership and work history. Still worse, many undercover agents were arrested and interro-

gated by the Kuomintang authorities, and were later rescued by their comrades or freed in prisoner swaps. Later in their careers, those agents often had great difficulty proving that they did not betray the Party while in custody (Ibid).

Mao's distrust of undercover partisans became publicly known in 1943, when he launched a "cadre screening" (*shen gan*) campaign that specifically targeted Party officials in Yen'an who previously served as undercover agents. A Central Committee guidance in June 1943 accused without evidence that "our party organizations in Kuomintang-ruled areas were filled with traitors, and in some regions they even became a branch of Kuomintang" (Fu 2000). As a result, former undercover partisans faced extensive background checks and interrogations under the presumption of guilt after they arrived in Communist-controlled areas. Many cadres, including high-ranking ones, were tortured and beaten by the interrogators in order to force them to confess their alleged collusion with the Kuomintang. Zeng Zhi, a senior undercover agent and the wife of future politburo member Tao Zhu, recalled later in her memoir that

> *If any of my answers did not satisfy [the interrogators], they would knock my head with their hand, push me back and forth like a ball, and even pull my hair and kick my leg. They believed that I became a Kuomintang spy during my undercover work in Northwest Hubei. They claimed that a business card from a military depot commander of the 33th Group Army (of the Kuomintang) was my "spy identity card". They also became skeptical when I told them I was briefly detained and then released by Kuomintang plainclothes in Xiangfan… Just because I didn't want to fabricate stories that did not exist, those comrades became really frustrated, yelled at me, and told me that my past history smells worse than a dog's feces…* (Zeng 1998, 336).

After the founding of the PRC, Mao managed to consolidate his personal power and largely subjugated the undercover faction at the central level through a series of purges and political maneuvers. In Milan Svolik's words, in the 1950s Mao had obtained an "immense amount of power" who "exemplifies the upper limits on the power that a single individual can acquire". (Svolik 2012, 30) However, Mao's suspicion of former undercover cadres in the Party never faded, and officials from undercover backgrounds faced clear disadvantage in their political careers compared to former Red Army officers due to their suspected disloyalty. As early as May 1949, Mao sent a secret cable on the job assignment and promotion of former undercover agents in the new government, instructing that "[clandestine cadres] should be assigned to lower-ranked jobs, their roles should be restricted, they should be constrained to serve in local regions,

and should be gradually replaced" (Pei 2014). In the 1950s, a large number of local undercover cadres who could not credibly prove their personal history before 1949 were purged (J. Huang 2007). For example, Shanghai's Vice Mayor Pan Hannian, a prominent spymaster who founded the CCP's earliest intelligence agency in the 1930s, was groundlessly accused of being a "turncoat" and was sentenced for 15 years in 1955 without substantial evidence(Xiao-Planes 2010).

To show supplemental evidence that an official's revolutionary history indeed affected the leader's trust and their subsequent political fates, I analyze the biographical data of all officials who had served in either of the two main leadership positions (First Party Secretary or governor) in all 27 Chinese provinces between 1950 and 1966, shown in **Table A10-11** of the appendix.[2] I find strong evidence for Mao's differential treatment of cadres based on their backgrounds — Red Army veterans were more likely to be appointed as the First Party Secretary, the *de facto* highest office in a province, while undercover agents were more likely to fill the provincial governor, a role subservient to the FPS. I also find clear divergence in the political fates of Red Army veterans and undercover agents after 1949. Red Army veterans had a greater chance of being promoted[3] in the cadre rank during Mao's 26-year rule, while had a lower risk of death by torture during the Culture Revolution (1966–76).

4.2.3 Trust and Agent Radicalism during the Anti-Rightist Campaign: A Tale of Two Provinces

During the Anti-Rightist Campaign, anecdotal evidence suggests that officials from undercover partisan backgrounds engaged in more intensive repression in their jurisdictions driven by a stronger incentive to display their loyalty to Mao. I present a comparative case study on the behaviors of the Party Secretaries of Jiangsu and Shanghai — two adjacent and culturally similar provinces in eastern China. The Party chief of Jiangsu, a long-term Red Army subordinate of Mao, showed a lukewarm attitude and tacitly resisted Mao's push to carry out prosecutions. The leader of Shanghai, fearing that a lack of enthusiasm in the campaign would be interpreted by Mao as sympathetic to rightists and revive suspicion of his "stained" undercover history, behaved radically to visibly display his compliance.

2. I use 1966 as the endpoint of my analysis because it was the first year of the Cultural Revolution in which most Party and government agencies were paralyzed by Red Guard violence.

3. Following Kung and Chen (2011), I measure promotion in terms of one's political status in the CCP Central Committee. I consider an official received a promotion if their status changed (1) from non-member to alternate member; (2) from alternate member to full member, or ; (3) from full member to politburo member *at least once* from 1949 to 1966.

Jiangsu: High Trust Allowed for Greater Flexibility in Campaign Implementation

During the ARC, one provincial leader that notably resisted Mao's directions was Jiang Weiqing, the First Party Secretary of Jiangsu. Jiang was an old friend and long-time subordinate of Mao whose connection with the Chairman started in the 1920s. He joined Mao's Autumn Harvest Uprising in September 1927 and spent the following decade serving as a military commander in the First Group Army led by Mao (Gao 1998). When the witch hunt for "rightists" started in 1957, Jiang was reluctant to follow Mao's order because he did not believe that good-faith critique of the Party should be a punishable offense. When Mao visited Jiangsu in July 1957, Jiang confronted Mao directly when the leader pointed out his lack of enthusiasm. Jiang recalled later:

> *Mao asked: "Is there any rightist among the cadres in Jiangsu's Provincial Party Committee? Why did you not do anything about them?" I replied: "Alas, Chairman! Is there anyone who never said wrong things in the past? In your own words, if someone said nine right sentences out of ten, he should still get 90 points…" Mao did not expect I replied to him this way and became upset. He slammed the table next to his sofa and asked: "will you punish the rightists or not?!" I said frankly: "it is fine to punish the rightists in Jiangsu, but you should let me step aside and appoint someone else, because I am the First Secretary, the boss of Jiangsu's rightists." After hearing this, Mao's anger vanished. He replied: "Okay! Then you don't have to do it too hard if you don't want to!" Then he said to me humorously: "Oh Weiqing! Are you not afraid of death by a thousand cuts for obstructing me?" I answered: "No, Chairman, I am not afraid of death for trying to save you!"* (Jiang 1996)

Later in his memoir, Jiang suggested that he had the courage to tacitly resist Mao's command during the ARC because he was confident that Mao would interpret his lack of enthusiasm simply as a difference over specific policy views, rather than an explicit gesture of insubordination. Due to his long-time acquaintance with Mao in wartime, Jiang was reassured that the leader would not easily question his loyalty and reliability even when he responded to Mao's demands passively. Throughout the campaign, Jiangsu only labelled 13,349 individuals as "rightists", the lowest percentage among all provinces (413–414). Jiang's subsequent political career was not affected by his lukewarm attitude. He continued to serve as the First Secretary of several provinces until Mao's death in 1976.

Shanghai: Cannibalism as Loyalty Signaling for Untrusted Officials

According to historical accounts, one reason that makes the prosecution of "rightists" particularly costly for local leaders from undercover backgrounds was their *personal affinity* with the targets of repression. During the campaign, the Center considered bureaucrats with undercover experience to be potential rightists and demanded local leaders to carefully scrutinize their "past speech and behaviors" to find grounds for prosecution (Gao 2007). Additionally, a major social group targeted in the campaign were urban-based professionals sympathetic to the CCP before 1949, many of whom were allies and collaborators of the clandestine partisans in the cities (Gao 2007; Pei 2014). From the perspective of former undercover agents, since the potential victims of repression belonged to their "own type," their willingness to antagonize their *own* power base would credibly demonstrate their loyalty to Mao.

The behaviors of Ke Qingshi, First Party Secretary of Shanghai, was illustrative of the undercover officials' anxiety to pass the loyalty test during the campaign. Ke was a long-time undercover operative based in Shanghai with a controversial personal history. In the 1940s, Ke was accused of serving as a double agent and secretly spying for the Kuomintang. His wife Zeng Danru, unable to bear the shame of being associated with an alleged traitor, committed suicide to prove her innocence. Although Ke was later absolved of all wrongdoings, his tainted record cast a long shadow on his future career path (X. Gu 2014). According to the memoirs of his former colleagues, Ke's private attitudes towards the campaign contrasted starkly with his dramatic behavior in public. In private conversations, he was fully aware of the personal and social costs of prosecuting his old acquaintances and alienating his popular base. He reportedly complained to a close colleague that "it does no good to prosecute so too many rightists…those people could be used [by us] in the future" (W. Deng 2003). Ke's posture in public, however, was completely the opposite. During Mao's trip to Shanghai, Ke fervently praised the Chairman's decision to launch the campaign and called for "unconditional and unreserved…submission to [Mao's] guidance" (X. Gu 2014). To court Mao's favor, Ke denounced a large number of high-profile writers and artists in Shanghai as "rightists," including several of his old acquaintances he had known for decades (Guan 1986). During the campaign, Shanghai prosecuted a larger fraction of citizens (22.36 per 1,000 individuals) than any other province in China.

4.3 Empirical Strategies

4.3.1 Main Hypotheses

Historical narratives strongly suggest that a local official's enthusiasm during the ARC was associated with their perceived trustworthiness within the Party, which was then shaped by their personal history during the Communist Revolution. In particular, former undercover agents, knowing that they faced strong distrust from the leader due to their obscure and unfamiliar revolutionary past, would have a stronger incentive to comply enthusiastically with Mao's directions in order to signal their loyalty and preserve their careers. I test my theory using a two-tiered approach: on the *aggregate* level, I will explore whether the intensity of anti-rightist repression in a locality is linked to the revolutionary background of the local leader. Specifically, I will analyze the variation of prosecution frequency at provincial and prefecture-city levels to understand how much the variation can be explained by the Party chiefs' backgrounds. On the *individual level*, I examine whether subnational leaders who were former undercover agents tended to assign harsher penalties on victims during the ARC. Formally, I derive the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3. *(Regional Variation of Anti-Rightist Repression): Compared to localities governed by ex-military officers, localities governed by former undercover agents tended to have a larger fraction of population labelled and prosecuted as "rightists" during the ARC.*

Hypothesis 4. *(Individual Variation of Repression Severity): "Rightists" who were prosecuted in the jurisdictions of former undercover agents were more likely to receive more severe punishments compared to those prosecuted under ex-military officers.*

4.3.2 Controls for Confounding Variables

Aside from one's need to signal loyalty, a number of other factors could affect an official's motivation and/or ability to implement the campaign. On the personal level, I control for an official's age, ethnic minority status, level of education, local status, and length of their CCP membership.[4] In addition, as Kung and Chen (2011) has suggested, an official's *preexisting political rank* in the Party might impact their career incentives and ultimately their enthusiasm in policy implementation. Thus, I also include a set of

4. During the ARC, all provincial and prefecture-level leaders were invariably male, so I do not control for gender.

dummies indicating whether an official had been a full member or alternate member of the CCP Central Committee by the beginning of the campaign.

Inherent geographical and political conditions in a locality could also impact the local regime's capacity and resources to carry out repression. Previous research shows that the density of rank-and-file CCP members largely determines the strength of local regime capacity in China (Koss 2018). Accordingly, I control for *the number of CCP members per 1,000 citizens* in a given locality. Canonical literature also suggests that regime control over a locality can be inversely associated with its *distance to the administrative center* (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Hence, for provincial-level analysis, I control for the linear ("as-the-crow-flies") distance from a province's capital to Beijing. For city-level analysis, I further include the city's linear distance to the provincial capital, as well as a dummy variable indicating whether the city *was* the provincial capital at the time of the campaign.

Another regional variation that is difficult to measure was the level of latent anti-regime dissent among citizens in a given locality. Apparently, a greater number of citizens would be denounced as "rightists" in regions where anti-regime sentiments were high. Although citizens' political attitudes were not directly observable, strong qualitative evidence in 1950s China suggests that anti-regime sentiment was highly correlated with the presence of local CCP regimes *before* the founding of the PRC. The Party enjoyed stronger popular support in so-called "old revolutionary bases" *(geming laoqu)* where the Communist rule had been established for a long time, while faced greater resistance in newly conquered territories from the Chinese Civil War (1946–49). Therefore, I use the *percentage of counties in a province that had been controlled by the CCP anytime between 1927 and 1947* as an imperfect measure for latent popular sentiment towards the regime in a given province. In **Table 3.1**, I offer a precise explanation of all control variables that will be used in my subsequent analyses.

4.3.3 Aggregate-level Variations

Provincial-level Variation

I start with a small-*N* analysis based on the 27 provinces in China. The outcome variable is the total number of "rightists" denounced by the authorities per 1,000 citizens throughout the campaign, using official data from provincial-level gazetteers. The key independent variable is the revolutionary experience of provincial First Party Secretaries (FPSs) between 1927 and 1949, coded as a binary variable as either "combatant"

Table 4.1: Selected Potential Pre-1957 Covariates
(Abbreviation: P: provincial-level analysis; C: city-level analysis; I: Individual-level analysis.)

Variable Name	Rationale for Inclusion	Included in
1. Leader's Personal Characteristics		
Ethnic minority	Ethnic status may impact an official's compliance to the Han-dominated CCP regime.	P, C, I
Age by 1957	Younger officials may have stronger career prospects and incentives.	P, C, I
Born locally	Localized officials may have stronger knowledge & resources to carry out repression, but can be more reluctant to execute locally undesirable policies.	P, C, I
Higher education dummy	Whether an official received any postsecondary education could impact their ideological attitudes.	P, C, I
Years of CCP membership	Seniority in the Party indicates higher status, greater security, and less need to signal loyalty.	P, C, I
Political rank by 1957	One's political rank may be correlated with both one's prior revolutionary history and one's incentive to implement repression.	P, I
2. Locality-level covariates		
Number of CCP members/1,000	According to Koss (2018), the number of rank-and-file Party members indicates local regime strength and could impact policy implementation outcomes.	P, C, I
Locality's distance to Beijing	According to Fearon and Laitin (2003), a locality's distance to the national capital can impact the regime's territorial outreach.	P, C, I
Locality's distance to provincial seat	Same as above, used in the analysis of prefecture-level cities only.	C
Provincial seat dummy	As administrative centers, provincial capitals usually had stronger state capacity.	C
Density of pre-1947 CCP enclaves	I measure the percentage of counties in a province that are officially categorized as an "old revolutionary base" *(geming laoqu)*, where at least 50% of townships in each of those counties had been controlled by the CCP anytime between 1927 and 1947. This variable indicates the level of pre-existing penetration of CCP in a province.	P, I
Fraction of urban residents	Percentage of citizens in a province who were urban residents. A majority of prosecutions occurred in cities, so more urbanized province could prosecute a greater number of citizens.	P

or "underground agent." An official was classified as a "combatant" if they served primarily as a military personnel fighting during the Communist Revolution, and as an "undercover agent" if they spent *at least one year* performing clandestine tasks for the Party under a pseudonym inside Kuomintang-controlled areas.[5] During the ARC, I find a total of 15 provinces that were governed by Red Army combatants, while 12 provinces were governed by former undercover agents.

I first perform a series of difference-of-means tests to explore whether the revolutionary history of a provincial leader is correlated with the prosecution intensity of their assigned province during the ARC. I present the results graphically on the left-side panel of **Figure 3.2.** On average, provinces governed by former undercover cadres prosecuted more rightists (1.180 per 1,000 citizens) compared to provinces governed by Red Army veterans (0.737 per 1,000 citizens). In **Table A5** of the appendix, I also explore whether former Red Army officers and undercover cadres had significant differences in their personal backgrounds, and whether provinces governed by the two groups displayed any divergent patterns. As the results have shown, FPSs from combatant and undercover backgrounds were similar in most personal characteristics (age, ethnicity, education, length of Party membership, and political rank) other than their revolutionary backgrounds. Likewise, provinces governed by Red Army and undercover cadres displayed no substantive difference in the number of CCP members, the density of preexisting CCP political establishment, or their locations relative to Beijing.

I then perform an OLS regression to explore the effect of local leaders' revolutionary background on the frequency of anti-rightist repression at the provincial level. I present the coefficients of all covariates on the right-side panel of **Figure 3.2** and include full regression results in **Table A4** of the appendix. Despite the small number of provincial units (N=27), the effect of an official's revolutionary history on the intensity of repression is strong. When an official's personal characteristics (age, ethnicity, education, local embeddedness, seniority in the Party, and political rank) and provincial-level covariates (density of CCP members, geographical remoteness, and preexisting political establishment) are controlled for, provinces governed by undercover agents still prosecuted 40 percent more rightists compared to provinces run by Red Army veterans. This result shows preliminary evidence that a leader's revolutionary path explains a large fraction of variation in campaign intensity across provinces.

5. For officials with both Red Army and undercover experience during different times of the Revolution, I classify them as undercover agents if they spent *more than one year* performing undercover work. Evidence from Yan'an Rectification Campaign shows that *any* undercover experience would be subject to suspicion and scrutiny and would not be offset by one's Red Army experience. Ke Qingshi, for example, served both as a Red Army officer and an undercover agent, but still underwent draconian interrogation for the latter experience in 1942.

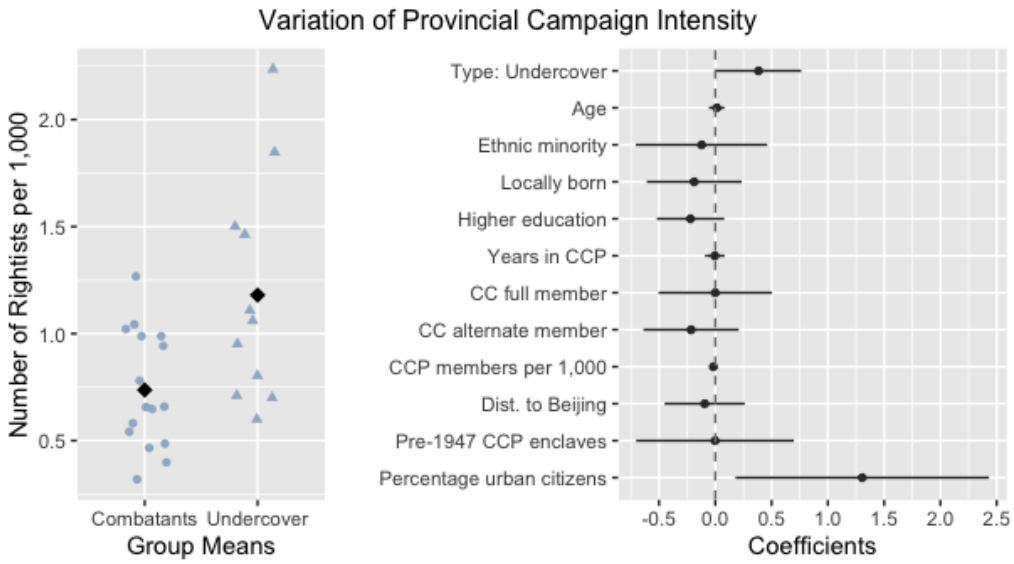

Figure 4.2: Variation and determinants of ARC campaign intensity across provinces. Left: group-mean difference between combatant and undercover provinces. Right: OLS estimates of all variables in the model. For full regression table, see **Table A5** of the appendix. Confidence interval at 95% level.

Prefecture City–Level Variation

Historical accounts show that the ARC was primarily carried out in China's urban areas, and an overwhelming majority of denounced "rightists" were city-dwelling professionals, such as civil servants, school officials, and employees of state-owned enterprises. Although I have controlled for the fraction of urban residents in my provincial-level analysis, the effect of varying urbanization levels on the density of rightists across provinces can still confound my results. Hence, I perform an additional layer of analyses specifically focusing on China's large cities. In 1957, there were a total of 92 prefecture-level cities (*shengxiashi*)[6] in China's administrative hierarchy (Chen and Chen 1999). According to the *nomenklatura* system in the 1950s, Party chiefs of prefecture-level cities were directly appointed by the Central Organization Department in Beijing, rather than the upper-level Party chiefs in their respective provinces (Fewsmith 2021). Hence, the career prospects of city leaders were more dependent on the preferences of the central regime than their immediate provincial superiors. The variation of campaign intensity in those cities, to some extent, can reflect the city leaders' compliance and responsiveness to the Center's policy agenda.

I compile additional biographical data on the Party secretaries of all prefecture-level cities in 1957 to explore how their revolutionary history would impact the campaign intensity in their assigned city. Unlike

6. For a detailed explanation of China's administrative divisions in the 1950s and a justification of my choice of measurement units, see **Section B3** in the appendix.

the provincial-level FPSs who all joined the Communist rebellion against Kuomintang *before* the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, some city leaders joined the CCP *after* 1938 as anti-Japanese combatants with Communist-led guerrilla forces.[7] In contrast to the more senior Red Army veterans, those combatants were referred to as "post-1938 cadres (*sanba shi ganbu*)" to highlight their more junior standing in the revolution. On several occasions, Mao argued that post-1938 cadres who started their careers as anti-Japanese partisans should be treated less favorably in personnel appointment compared to Red Army veterans who joined the Revolution before the Sino-Japanese War (Zhihua Shen 2008, 312–13). Mao believed that the former's contribution to the Revolution was minor, and they joined the Party primarily for a *patriotic* rather than an *ideological* cause at the beginning of their careers.

Based on this distinction, I code my key explanatory variable in two ways. First, I still treat a city leader's revolutionary experience as a dichotomy, either as a *combatant* or an *undercover agent*. Alternatively, I classify one's pre-1949 service into three categories: undercover agent, veteran combatants who joined the Red Army before 1938, and junior combatants who joined an anti-Japanese troop commanded by the CCP after 1938. For the latter, I expect to check whether my main result would remain robust when different methods are used to categorize my independent variable.

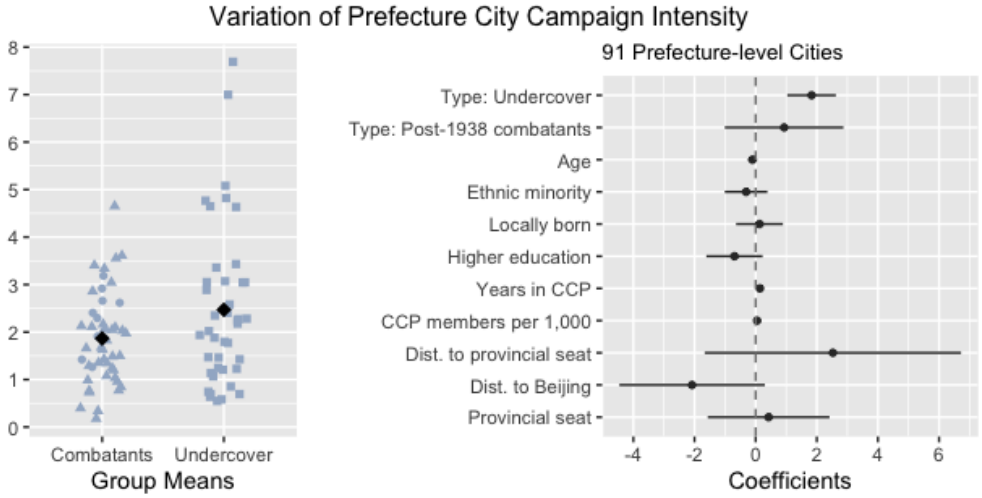

Figure 4.3: Variation of ARC campaign intensity across 91 prefecture level cities. Left: group-mean difference between combatant and undercover-ruled provinces (Round: Red Army combatants; triangle: post-1938 combatants; square: undercover). Right: Multivariate OLS estimates with province fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at city level. Confidence interval at 95% level. For a series of pairwise t-tests, see **Appendix A6**; for full regression outputs, see **C2**.

7. After the CCP and Kuomintang reached a truce in 1938 to fight together against Japan, the Red Army was reorganized into the 8th Route Army (*balujun*) and the New 4th Army (*xinsijun*) of the Chinese Army, while still under CCP's control.

The two graphs in **Figure 3.3** visualizes the main findings of the prefecture-level analysis, which is highly consistent with the provincial-level results. It shows that, when a series of individual controls, city-level covariates, and province fixed effects are controlled for, former undercover agents tended to denounce a greater number of "rightists" in their jurisdictions compared to former undercover agents. As shown in **Table A7** of the appendix, the result remains robust when I recode my key independent variable as a dichotomy (combatant vs. undercover) or change my model specification in various ways.

4.3.4 Individual–Level Variations

Data Source and Collection

In previous sections, I find preliminary evidence that localities ruled by former undercover agents tended to prosecute a larger number of rightists. However, did the revolutionary history of leaders also impact the severity of punishment received by individuals who were condemned as "rightists"? Although an analysis of all individual profiles of over 550,000 rightists during the ARC is neither realistic nor productive, current archival material allows me to perform an in-depth analysis based on a well-structured subsample of *high-profile* rightists. During the campaign, Mao ordered provincial authorities and central ministries to register those rightists who "held key administrative positions or yield significant political influence" (CCP Central Committee 1957). Accordingly, from October 1957 to December 1959 the CCP Central Committee published 11 volumes of individual decision letters (*chuli jielun*) on over 500 influential rightists for internal circulation. This collection includes high-level rightists who were (1) a Party or government official above a certain rank or held key leadership positions in a county-level Party committee or above; (2) a non-CCP politician from one of the nine subordinate "democratic parties" who held the membership in those parties' central committees; and (3) prominent intellectuals, artists, writers, or student activists who purportedly "caused a harmful public influence" due to their critique of the Party. A recent database, the China Anti-Rightist Campaign Database (ARCD), contains the full text of those decision letters.[8] ARCD is by far the most comprehensive source that documents the individual rightists' biographical details, their alleged wrongdoings, and the specific type of penalty they received.

I construct an individual-level dataset of 544 high-profile rightists based on the decision letters collected in ARCD. I classify those individuals into three categories based on who approved the decision to

8. See the online appendix documents for a detailed explanation of my data generation and coding rules.

prosecute them. The first category (*n=316*) includes individuals residing in a province who were declared as "rightists" by their respective provincial Party Committees; the second category (*n=141*) were officials and bureaucrats of Central Government ministries who were denounced as "rightists" by the Party Secretary of their department. The third category (*n=86*) includes prominent intellectuals, artists, and celebrities affiliated with non-government institutions (such as China Writers Association), who were designated as "rightists" by Mao and other central leaders, rather than their bureaucratic supervisors. Because my main objective is to understand bureaucratic compliance to coercive tasks, I mainly focus on the first two categories of rightists in my subsequent analysis.

To control for individual-level variations, I manually code the alleged "anti-Party" wrongdoings of each rightist and classify those accusations into the following four main categories: (1) Attacking the regime or questioning the legitimacy of the single-Party political system; (2) Opposing or questioning specific domestic or foreign policies made by Mao or the Party, such as the agricultural collectivization; (3) Criticizing the work style or specific decisions of one's supervisor or superior Party committees; (4) Criticizing the previous coercive campaigns launched by the regime and demanding remedy or compensation for their grievance. According to a Central Party guidance, the four types of behaviors were official criteria that would warrant the "rightist" status of an individual (CCP Central Committee 1957). It is worth noting that the four categories were not mutually exclusive, and most "rightists" faced more than one allegations which constituted reasons for their prosecution.

Furthermore, I code the specific penalties received by those rightists as a binary outcome variable, based on whether the penalty is *coercive*. I consider a penalty as *non-coercive* if it did not limit one's personal freedom or cause physical harm, such as loss of Party membership, demotion to a lower rank or position, removal from the previous job position, suspension of one's employment, or expulsion from the cadre rank. In contrast, I categorize three types of punishment as *coercive*: "labor under supervision" (*jiandu laodong*), "reeducation through labor" (*laojiao*), and imprisonment. Historical records show that condemned "rightists" who received those penalties were often relocated to remote labor camps or state-owned farms, and could suffer enormous physical pain when in custody. Thus, whether a "rightist" received coercive punishment was a good indicator of the severity of prosecution.

Baseline Analysis

I first employ a series of OLS regression models to evaluate whether the revolutionary history of officials is correlated with the severity of punishment received by "rightists" under their jurisdictions. **Table 3.2** presents the main regression results. **Model 1-4** focus only on the rightists prosecuted by provincial authorities, with various sets of controls (provincial leadership background, provincial state capacity, and individual-level variations) included in the specifications. **Model 5-7** estimate a pooled dataset which includes *both* local rightists denounced by their provincial authorities *and* central government employees prosecuted by their ministry heads. The key explanatory variable is the binary revolutionary backgrounds of provincial or ministry chiefs who dictated a rightist's punishment, and the outcome variable is whether a rightist received coercive penalties. To mitigate within-group error correlation, I cluster all standard errors based on a rightist's affiliated province or ministry.

Across different model specifications shown in the table, I find strong and consistent evidence that those "rightists" prosecuted under former undercover agents were more likely to receive coercive punishment. When the personal covariates of the leader, indicators for local state capacity, and individual-level allegations are controlled for, the undercover experience of the leaders still increases a victim's likelihood of receiving harsh punishment by over 10 percent. This finding provides preliminary evidence that former undercover agents tended to assign harsher penalties to rightists within their jurisdictions during the ARC.

Alternative Measures of Trustworthiness

I offer more evidence for my theoretical mechanism by replacing and supplementing the key independent variable (an official's revolutionary history) with two alternative indicators of political trust. Historical accounts suggest that an official would face greater suspicion and distrust (1) if their family belonged to a "reactionary" social class deemed hostile to the Communist state, such as landlords, kulaks, or the bourgeoisie, and (2) if they had been arrested or trapped by the enemy in their previous work.[9] If, according to my theory, the variation in repression intensity was driven by loyalty signaling, then I should also observe that officials who possessed those untrustworthy traits would engage in harsher repression in a similar manner. Moreover, I should expect those variables to play a moderating role in the correlation between

9. As shown in the example Pan Hannian, one's record of arrest by the Kuomintang before 1949 could lead to a presumption of disloyalty, because their activities in custody could not be traced, and they could not convincingly prove that they did not betray the Party during their engagement with the enemy.

Table 4.2: Baseline OLS estimates

	Dependent Variable: Coercive Penalty Dummy						
	Provinces only				Province & Ministries		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Undercover	0.147**	0.186***	0.207***	0.142**	0.184***	0.175***	0.107***
	(0.063)	(0.059)	(0.072)	(0.065)	(0.043)	(0.040)	(0.037)
Affiliation type: ministry					0.068	0.129***	0.009
					(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.039)
Controls:							
Leader background		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Provincial state capacity			✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rightist background				✓			✓
Clustered SE by prosecutor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	308	308	304	300	441	441	437
R^2	0.040	0.085	0.088	0.221	0.067	0.090	0.253
Adjusted R^2	0.037	0.061	0.053	0.172	0.063	0.074	0.227
Residual Std. Error	0.356	0.352	0.355	0.334	0.381	0.378	0.347

Notes: : For a complete list of control variables and the full regression results, see **Appendix A8** in the appendix. Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

one's revolutionary history and repression fervency — that is, former undercover cadres who *simultaneously* possessed those untrustworthy personal traits would engage in *particularly* severe prosecution compared those who did not.

Table 3.3 presents the main results of my mechanism analysis. *Bad Social Class* is a dummy variable indicating whether one's family belonged to a "reactionary" social category considered disloyal by the regime,[10] and *Arrested* is a binary variable showing whether the official had ever been arrested by the Kuomintang or Japanese forces before 1949. In models 2 and 4, I estimate their independent effects on repression severity. The result shows that, when I replace my key independent variable (*Undercover* dummy) with these two alternative indicators of political trust, the effect on a rightist's linear probability of receiving coercive punishment remains strong and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Those results provide more evidence for the plausibility of my proposed mechanism that undercover cadres repress harder in order to signal their loyalty and compensate for their trust deficits. For if there existed certain omitted variables which made an official more likely to *both* become undercover agents *and* persecute rightists, it is unlikely that the same confounder would also correlate with the two alternative indicators of (un)trustworthiness

10. The "reactionary" categories include the landlord (*dizhu*), the kulak (*funong*), the bourgeoisie (*zichan jieji*), ex-bureaucrats of the old regime (*jiu guanliao*), and convicts of felony *(huai fenzi)*. See Appendix B1 for my coding details.

Table 4.3: OLS Estimates with Interaction Terms

	Dependent Variable: Coercive Penalty Dummy					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Undercover	0.107***		0.047		−0.018	−0.038
	(0.037)		(0.041)		(0.051)	(0.051)
Bad Social Class		0.104**	0.032			0.043
		(0.047)	(0.040)			(0.034)
Undercover × Bad Social Class			0.170**			0.118*
			(0.073)			(0.070)
Arrested				0.141***	0.023	−0.008
				(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.038)
Undercover × Arrested					0.182***	0.168**
					(0.069)	(0.069)
Affiliation: Ministry	0.009	−0.008	−0.041	0.020	0.001	−0.040
	(0.039)	(0.046)	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.039)	(0.042)
Leader Background	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rightist Background	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clustered s.e. by prosecutor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	437	437	437	437	437	437
R^2	0.253	0.250	0.274	0.261	0.273	0.285
Adjusted R^2	0.227	0.223	0.245	0.235	0.243	0.253
Residual Std. Error	0.347	0.348	0.343	0.345	0.343	0.341

Notes: For a complete list of control variables and the full regression results, see **Appendix A9** in the appendix. Standard errors are clustered by one's affiliated province or ministry at time of prosecution. Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

simultaneously.

In Models 3, 5, and 6, I interact these two indicators respectively with the *Undercover* dummy to test whether they have a *moderating* effect on the relationship between undercover experience and repression intensity. In other words, would undercover agents who *simultaneously* had other stains of disloyalty behave *even more* harshly during the ARC? As shown in the results, I find that both interaction terms (*Undercover* × *Bad Social Class* and *Undercover* × *Arrested*) have large and positive effects on punishment severity ($p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, both the value and statistical significance of the coefficient on the *Undercover* dummy have largely declined after the interaction term is added, which implies that undercover agents who belonged to pariah social classes and who had been arrested may drive a significant portion of the resulting variation. This finding strengthens my theory that one's eagerness to signal loyalty could impact their fervency in repression: officials who suffered from two "stains" of disloyalty tended to display greater radicalism than those who had one.

Alternative Explanations

Another potential alternative explanation for my observed correlation is that individuals who had served as undercover agents may be inherently different in a way that makes them more willing to persecute rightists. Did former undercover agents tend to repress more because they desired to signal their loyalty and overcompensate for their tainted history, or because they belonged to a different type that leads to greater cruelty and radicalism in the campaign? Below, I provide some illustrative evidence that the variation in ARC campaign intensity is unlikely to be driven by other personal confounders that could impact an official's motivation or capacity to carry out the campaign.

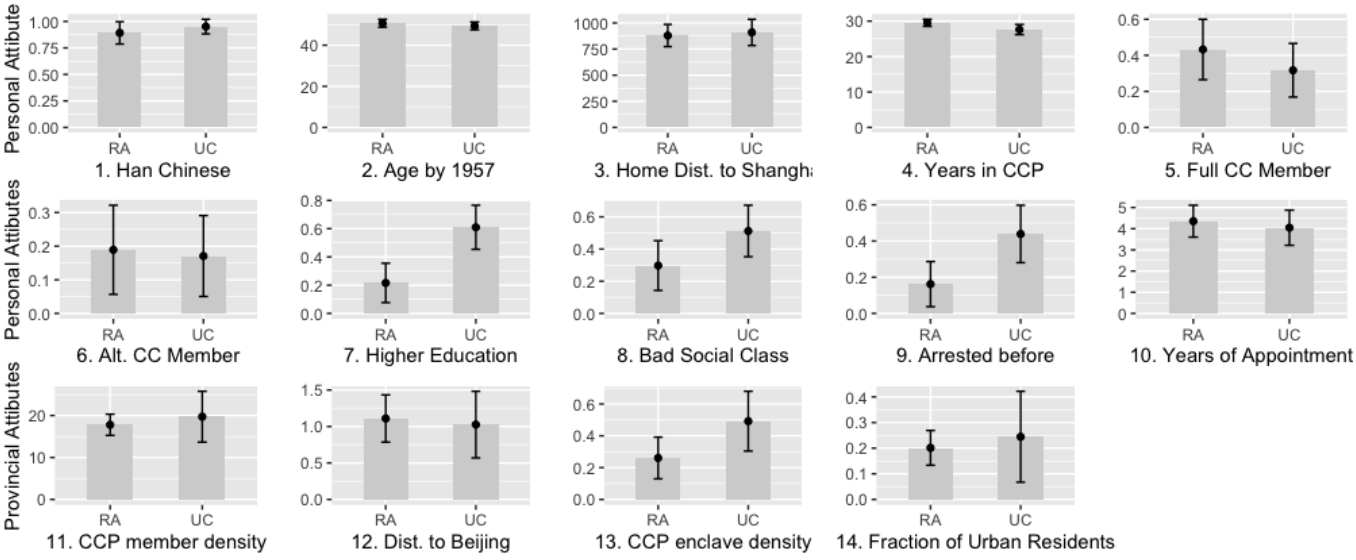

Figure 4.4: Comparison of potential covariates between Red Army and undercover cadres. Graphs 1–9: comparison of *personal attributes* for all provincial and ministry Party chiefs. Graph 10: Comparison of the two types of leaders' length of appointment to their current jurisdiction. Graphs 11–14: Comparison of geopolitical conditions of assigned provinces for two types of Party chiefs.

Figure 3.4 shows a pairwise comparison of all potential factors that could correlate with both an official's revolutionary history and their responsiveness in the repressive campaign. As shown in the figure, Red Army veterans and undercover agents were similar in their ethnic composition, age, and the linear distance between their hometown and Shanghai.[11] The two groups were also roughly equivalent in their political seniority and status, implied by their similar length of Party membership and political rank. The three personal attributes that showed significant differences between the two factions (social class, previ-

11. Shanghai is the east-most city in China, so it is often used as a reference point to measure a locality's geographical remoteness. I hope to see whether the two types of cadres were from different geographical regions.

ous record of arrest, and higher education[12]) were all correlated to their perceived loyalty to Mao's regime. Apparently, undercover cadres were more likely to come from formerly privileged social backgrounds, were more likely to have been arrested during their work, and were usually better educated compared to their Red Army peers. This pattern further suggests that an official's revolutionary path is closely associated with political trust, while unlikely to correlate with character traits that would impact their enthusiasm in repression.

The last four bar charts in the graph focus specifically on provincial Party chiefs and explore whether there is a difference in the local geopolitical conditions of provinces governed by the two factions of officials. It is possible that former undercover agents, due to their toughness and cruelty developed from past clandestine work, were strategically assigned to politically unstable provinces with a greater number of Party critics. In contrast to this alternative explanation, provinces governed by Red Army and undercover cadres showed little difference in various measures of state capacity and control. Although undercover cadres mainly operated in cities before 1949, they were no more likely to be appointed to more urbanized provinces with a potentially larger fraction of rightists. In fact, as shown in bar chart 13, undercover cadres were more frequently assigned to provinces where the CCP had gained a stronger foothold before 1947 — which ran contrary to the alternative explanation that undercover cadres served in provinces with higher political dissent.

4.4 Discussion

Yang Jisheng, a Chinese historian known for his study of the origins of the Great Leap Forward, laments that "[during the Mao era] every bureaucrat was a *slave* facing upward and a *dictator* facing downward" (J. Yang 2012). Yang's comment reveals the underlying reason behind the "zeal of the outgroup" paradox: in an autocracy where political authority is firmly established and a bureaucrat's career depends on the ruler's whim, outgroup members in the bureaucracy, fearing that their careers would be hampered by their "stained" backgrounds, are compelled to display greater enthusiasm in order to affirm their loyalty and dedication to the regime. In contrast, ingroup bureaucrats, knowing that the ruler would be less likely to question their allegiance due to their solid, trustworthy backgrounds, have less incentive to behave radically in repressive campaigns. Paradoxically and ironically, overcompliance can be driven by an official's

12. Across different model specifications in this study, higher education's effect on repression intensity is largely negative and statistically insignificant, making it less likely to confound my results.

perceived disloyalty, rather than their *actual* degrees of loyalty.

Through this study, I show that repressive campaigns could be used as a means to induce the compliance of outgroup bureaucrats. As previous research has shown, subordinate bureaucrats must credibly display their loyalty and responsiveness to the leader in costly and self-harming ways (Shih 2008). Excessive implementation of repressive tasks, which undermines an official's reputation and alienates them from their colleagues and constituents, can function as a credible signal of *exclusive* allegiance to the ruler. Thus, subordinates with untrustworthy backgrounds tend to seize the opportunity of implementing repression to advance their career prospects. As a result, while the *onset* of repressive campaigns depends on the objective of the ruler, the private agenda and personal preference of subordinates can subsequently shape the *scale* and *magnitude* of coercion. That explains why Mao's mass campaigns, which was intended to target a small fraction of enemies, often went out of control and victimized a massive number of innocent citizens.

Although understudied and undertheorized, the "zeal of the outgroup" is hardly a rare phenomenon in world history. Take Stalin's USSR as an example. Nikolai Yezhov and Lavrentiy Beria, the two infamous security chiefs responsible for the mass violence under Stalin's Great Purge in the 1930s Soviet Union, were both outgroup members of the Bolshevik regime who were concerned about their tainted personal history and were eager to demonstrate their loyalty in front of the leader. Yezhov was a former White Army official who defected to the Bolsheviks just six months before the October Revolution. When explaining Yezhov's extreme cruelty during the Great Terror, Stalin's biographer Edvard Radzinsky pointed out that "[Yezhov's] dubious past made him particularly eager to shine" (Radzinsky 2011). Beria, the successor to Yezhov, similarly had a "murky revolutionary credential" which could call his loyalty and political life into question anytime (Rayfield 2007, 345). An ethnic Georgian himself, Beria had joined multiple anti-Bolshevik and nationalist groups in the Caucasus before the October Revolution, and he was almost executed by the Soviets for espionage when the Red Army came to Azerbaijan. As Soviet Historian Donald Rayfield argues, "the suspicion [around Beria's past] never faded," which might drive him to "fawn on Stalin" and satisfy the leader's every demand to the extreme in order to signal his personal loyalty (346–47). Hence, I believe that my theory is not only valid in the Chinese context, but can also contribute to a general understanding of the mechanism of bureaucratic compliance in authoritarian settings. □

Chapter Appendix: A Formal Model of Repressive Campaigns as a Vehicle of Bureaucratic Control

Model Intuition

I present a stylistic formal model to theorize the role of repressive campaigns in shaping the principal-agent relationship between the ruler and subordinate bureaucrats. My model aims to answer two interrelated questions not sufficiently addressed in previous research. First, how does *participation in repressive campaigns* against alleged power contenders impact a subordinate agent's behaviors and attitudes toward the incumbent autocrat? In other words, if tasked with implementing a repressive campaign, would the subordinate be more inclined to stay with the ruler despite potential incentives to defect? Second, *when* and *why* would a ruler choose to launch a repressive campaign to ensure the loyalty and compliance of their subordinates, and what is the underlying reason for this decision?

For the first question, the intuition offered by my model is that repressive campaigns can decrease a subordinate's incentive for non-compliance by *intentionally creating uncertainty about the level of threat facing the regime and the ruler's vulnerability*. If a political opponent challenges the ruler, the subordinate may interpret this as a clear sign of the adversary's confidence and potential to defeat the ruler. This perception may encourage the subordinate to act opportunistically and refuse to comply with the ruler's orders. However, if the autocrat mobilizes a repressive campaign preemptively *before* such a challenge occurs, the agent may remain uncertain about the adversary's strength and may be more likely to stay with the ruler as a precautionary measure. In other words, preemptive repression forces the agent to choose a side without complete information about the adversary's strength and the level of threat, thus making them less likely to "hedge their bets" on the ruler's defeat.

When would an autocrat choose to launch a repressive campaign to induce the compliance of the subordinate? The second part of my theoretical model suggests that the ruler is more likely to do so when they anticipate their subordinate to be *less loyal*. While a preemptive repressive campaign can improve the ruler's chance of survival by inducing the agent's compliance in the event of a conflict, it can also be costly if the targeted adversary is actually weak and posed no *real* threat to the ruler — in which case a repression would be unnecessary. If the expected loyalty of the subordinate is high, the autocrat would trust them to come to the regime's defense in the face of a real challenge posed by the adversary, rather than launch

a preemptive campaign to boost their compliance in advance. However, if the subordinate is perceived to lack loyalty and more likely to defect, the autocrat would choose to launch a repressive campaign because the expected benefit of increased compliance outweighs the cost of campaign implementation. Below, I present the mathematical details of this model.

Model Setup

Consider an authoritarian regime with an autocrat A, a subordinate S, and a potential adversary R. The adversary can be of two types, strong or weak, denoted by $t \in \{Strong, Weak\}$. During a power struggle with the autocrat, the weak adversary would never be able to overthrow the autocrat and thus pose no threat to the regime, while the strong adversary's chance of defeating the autocrat during conflict depends on the subordinate's response. All players share a common prior that the adversary is strong is δ. At the beginning of the game, the autocrat decides whether to order a repressive campaign against the adversary. If a repressive campaign is launched, the subordinate will choose a visible effort level of either high or low, i.e. $e \in \{e^H, e^L\}$. On the other hand, if the autocrat decides not to repress preemptively, the adversary decides whether to challenge the autocrat. If the adversary chooses not to challenge, the game ends and the autocrat remains in power. If the adversary chooses to challenge, a power struggle ensues, and the subordinate must choose their effort level in aiding the autocrat. In both preemptive and defensive conflicts, the subordinate's action is observable to both the autocrat and the adversary.

The autocrat's chance of survival, as mentioned earlier, is a function of the adversary's strength and the subordinate's effort. If the adversary is weak, the autocrat survives with certainty, regardless of the subordinate's effort levels. However, if the adversary is strong, the autocrat's chances of survival when the subordinate makes high and low efforts are θ_H and θ_L. We assume the subordinate's effort always yield positive effects, implying $\theta_H > \theta_L$. From a real-world perspective, the parameter θ_L can be viewed as the autocrat's *personal strength*, which is the probability that they can resist the adversary's challenge *alone* without their subordinate's compliance. To summarize formally:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Prob}(Survive = 1|\ t = Weak) &= 1 \\ \text{Prob}(Survive = 1|\ t = Strong, e = High) &= \theta_H \\ \text{Prob}(Survive = 1|\ t = Strong, e = Low) &= \theta_L \end{aligned} \tag{4.1}$$

The subordinate's net payoff, $b - c$, which represents their reward minus the cost of executing repression, depends on their observable actions, the autocrat's fate, and their private type. If the autocrat survives, the subordinate will receive a wage of $b_A > 0$ for making high effort and a wage of $b_0 = 0$ for making low effort or if no conflict occurs. However, if the adversary overthrows the autocrat and becomes the new ruler, the subordinate will receive a wage of $b_R > 0$ for making *low* effort and 0 for making high effort. In other words, the subordinate will be rewarded for their disobedience if the adversary comes to power. For simplicity, I treat the subordinate's payoff as an exogenous parameter rather than a choice variable decided by the principal. Because the model focuses on *how* and *when* the autocrat will use preemptive campaigns to incentivize the subordinate's compliance, treating the wage as another choice variable would unnecessarily complicate the story and distract from the main thesis of the model. Lastly, the cost of implementing repression is $c > 0$ if the subordinate makes high effort and 0 otherwise.

The subordinate has a private type, κ, which parameterizes their degree of loyalty to the autocrat. Following the conceptualization in canonical works such as Hirschman (1972), loyalty can be seen as the *cost of exit*: the greater the subordinate's loyalty, the more costly and difficult it would be for them to defect. In this model, we treat κ as the cost that the subordinate would bear if they defect to the adversary and are rewarded for their low effort in repression. In other words, if the subordinate has loyalty level κ, and they make low effort in repression resulting in the adversary overthrowing the autocrat, their net payoff would be $b_R - \kappa$. For simplicity, we assume that the subordinate's loyalty level is a random variable drawn from a uniform distribution with support $[0, \bar{\kappa}]$, where $\bar{\kappa}$ is the upper limit of the subordinate's loyalty. The autocrat knows the distribution, but not the specific value of κ for the subordinate. Thus, the ruler only has imperfect information about the subordinate's loyalty level, knowing only the range within which it falls.

Lastly, assume that staying in power produces a large positive utility $a > 1$ for both the autocrat and the adversary, which creates a strong incentive for them to struggle for power. Also assume that $a > \max\{b_A, b_R\} > 0$, which implies that once in power, their net gain after paying the subordinate is still positive. To sum up, the game proceeds in the following sequence:

1. *The autocrat chooses whether to launch a repressive campaign against the adversary.*

2a. *If a repressive campaign is launched, the subordinate chooses whether to make high or low effort to combat the adversary.*

2b. If a repressive campaign is not launched, the adversary chooses whether to challenge the autocrat.

3i. If the subordinate chooses not to challenge, no conflict will occur and the autocrat stays in power with certainty.

3ii. If the subordinate chooses to challenge, a power struggle ensues, and the subordinate chooses whether to make high or low effort to combat the adversary.

4. The outcome of the autocrat's survival is realized, and the three players get their respective payoffs contingent on the outcome.

The Subordinate's Problem

How does the subordinate determine which effort level e to choose in the event of a confrontation between the autocrat and the adversary? First, suppose the autocrat chooses not to repress the adversary in the first place, and the adversary subsequently decides to challenge the autocrat. In this scenario, the subordinate can deduce that the challenger must be the *Strong* type, as the *Weak* type would not have any chance of winning the struggle and would never initiate a challenge. Hence, the subordinate's expected payoff would be $\theta_H b_A - c$ if they make high effort and $(1-\theta_L)(b_R - \kappa)$ if they make low effort. As a result, they will exert high effort only if $\theta_H b_A - c \geq (1-\theta_L)(b_R - \kappa)$, or:

$$\kappa \geq b_R - \frac{\theta_H b_A - c}{1-\theta_L} \tag{4.2}$$

In other words, in the event of a challenge from the adversary, the subordinate would only have the incentive to make high effort if their private loyalty level κ passes a certain **defensive threshold**, $\kappa_D \equiv b_R - \frac{\theta_H b_A - c}{1-\theta_L}$.

Similarly, under what circumstances would the subordinate choose to exert high effort when the autocrat orders a preemptive repression against the adversary? In contrast to the previous scenario where the adversary can *reveal* its type by choosing whether to challenge, the subordinate has no means to update their belief about the adversary's type in this case. If the subordinate chooses high effort, their expected payoff would be $\theta_H b_A - c$ if facing a strong adversary (with prior belief δ) and $b_A - c$ if facing a weak one. Accordingly, if the subordinate chooses low effort, the expected payoffs when facing strong and weak adversaries are $(1-\theta_L)(b_R - \kappa)$ and 0 respectively. Therefore, the subordinate's task is to solve the inequality $\delta\theta_H b_A + (1-\delta)b_A - c > \delta(1-\theta_L)(b_R - \kappa)$, which can be rearranged in terms of κ as follows:

$$\kappa \geq b_R - \frac{\delta\theta_H b_A + (1-\delta)b_A - c}{\delta(1-\theta_L)} \tag{4.3}$$

The threshold $\kappa_P \equiv b_R - \frac{\delta\theta_H b_A+(1-\delta)b_A-c}{\delta(1-\theta_L)}$, which I refer to as the **preemptive threshold** thereafter, is the minimum loyalty level κ required for the subordinate to exert high effort during preemptive repressive campaigns by the autocrat.

A comparison of the two thresholds, κ_D and κ_P, leads to several interesting observations. First, it is always true that $\kappa_P < \kappa_D$, meaning that the loyalty threshold required for agents to make high effort during preemptive repression is *always lower* than the threshold needed for them to make high effort in defending the autocrat from the adversary's challenge. In other words, less loyal types of agents with a lower κ could be incentivized to make high effort against the adversary during repressive campaigns, even if they would have the incentive to disobey otherwise. The greater compliance of less loyal agents in preemptive repressive campaigns is due to their uncertainty about the adversary's strength (and the autocrat's vulnerability). The adversary's move to challenge the ruler reveals their type as strong and motivates less loyal agents to bet against the autocrat's chance of sustaining power. However, in the case of preemptive repressive campaigns, where the adversary has no chance to reveal its type before conflict, less loyal agents must consider the possibility that *the adversary may be weak and unwinnable*, therefore, more likely to comply with the ruler's directives. The following lemma summarizes the discussion:

Lemma 1. *There exist two thresholds for an agent's loyalty level κ, namely $\kappa_D := b_R - \frac{\theta_H b_A - c}{1-\theta_L}$ and $\kappa_P := b_R - \frac{\delta\theta_H b_A+(1-\delta)b_A-c}{\delta(1-\theta_L)}$, such that:*

1. *In the event that the adversary challenges the autocrat, agents will make high effort if their loyalty level $\kappa \geq \kappa_D$, and will make low effort otherwise.*

2. *In the event that the autocrat launches preemptive repression against the adversary, agents will make high effort if their loyalty level $\kappa \geq \kappa_P$, and will make low effort otherwise.*

With all parameters held equal, it always holds that $\kappa_P < \kappa_D$.

How *effective* is preemptive repression in inducing the subordinate's compliance? This question can be answered by observing the difference between two thresholds κ_D and κ_P. The difference of the two thresholds, $\kappa_D - \kappa_P = \frac{(1-\delta)(b_A-c)}{\delta(1-\theta_L)}$, indicates the degree to which a repressive campaign can motivate less loyal subordinates to comply. Clearly, the width of this gap *decreases* as the probability of the adversary

being strong δ increases, and *increases* with the autocrat's committed salary b_A and strength θ_L. These results make intuitive sense in the real world: repressive campaigns is more effective in inducing the agent's compliance if (1) the adversary is more likely to be weak and non-threatening;[13] (2) the agent's expected reward for compliance is greater; and (3) the ruler's personal strength relative to the adversary is stronger.

The Autocrat's Problem

Before we proceed to a discussion on the autocrat's problem, it is useful to examine the relationship between the two loyalty thresholds, κ_D and κ_P, and the upper limit of the agent's loyalty, $\bar{\kappa}$. As the agent's loyalty level κ is private information, how can the autocrat predict the potential behavior of agents with only knowledge of $\bar{\kappa}$? Apparently, if $\bar{\kappa} < \kappa_P$, the agent's loyalty level is certainly below both thresholds, and they would not make high effort in either scenario. In this case, the autocrat can expect the agent to be *unresponsive* and *unmobilizable* – they have neither the incentive to defend against an adversary challenge nor the motivation to comply with the ruler's order when called upon for a repressive campaign. If $\kappa_P \leq \bar{\kappa} < \kappa_D$, the agent's loyalty level κ is certainly below κ_D, while their value relative to κ_P can be larger or smaller. The subordinate would not make high effort in resisting the challenge from the adversary, but they may *potentially* comply during a repressive campaign if their private loyalty level κ is greater than κ_P. From the autocrat's perspective, such an agent is *unresponsive* but possibly *mobilizable*. Lastly, if $\bar{\kappa} \geq \kappa_D$, it is possible that the agent will make high effort *both* during a challenge by the adversary *and* during preemptive repression launched by the ruler. Accordingly, we refer to such an agent as both *responsive* and *mobilizable*. We illustrate this three-way classification in the following graph:

13. This result helps to explain why large-scale repressive campaigns occurred in the 1950s, when Mao and the CCP faced no substantial threats or challenges. Observing that the *actual* threat facing the regime appeared to be minimal, subordinate agents were more likely to interpret the repressive campaign as a test of their loyalty, rather than a *real* struggle for life and death.

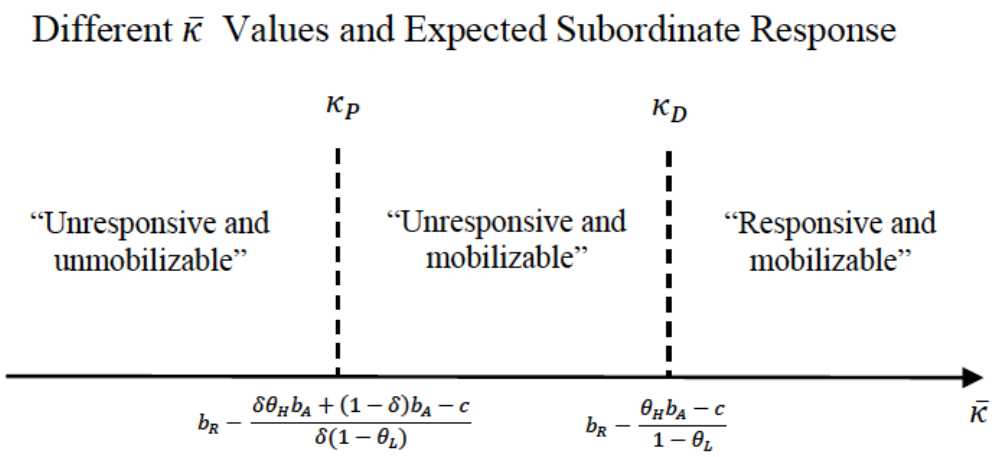

Figure 4.5: The subordinate's possible responses at different levels of $\bar{\kappa}$ from the autocrat's perspective. If $\bar{\kappa} < \kappa_P$, the agent will always make low effort both during an adversary challenge and a repressive campaign. If $\kappa_P \leq \bar{\kappa} < \kappa_D$, the agent will always make low effort during a adversary challenge and possibly make high effort during preemptive repression. If $\bar{\kappa} \geq \kappa_D$, high effort during the adversary's challenge and preemptive repression are both possible.

a. Unresponsive and Unmobilizable Agent

Let us start with the case where $\bar{\kappa} < \kappa_P$. In this scenario, the agent is not expected to exert high effort in response to either an attack from the adversary ("unresponsive") or during preemptive repression ("unmobilizable"). The autocrat's probability of survival, regardless of their decision to repress preemptively or not, is always $\delta\theta_L + (1-\delta)$: the probability of facing a strong adversary and winning the power struggle, plus the probability of facing a weak adversary (which the ruler always wins against). Since the ruler's gain from survival is a, and the payout to a non-compliant subordinate is 0, the expected payoff for both options is $[\delta\theta_L + (1-\delta)]a$. Therefore, in equilibrium, the ruler is indifferent between ordering a repressive campaign and waiting to counter a challenge from the adversary later. The Perfect Bayesian Equilibrium (PBE) in this case is simply:

Lemma 2. *(Equilibrium with unresponsive and unmobilizable agent).*
If the upper limit of the subordinate's loyalty level, $\bar{\kappa}$, is lower than the preemptive threshold κ_P, the autocrat is always indifferent between preemptive repression and waiting, and the subordinate will always choose to make low effort.

Intuitively, if the autocrat knows that the agent is too disloyal and cannot be motivated to combat the adversary in any case, they would have no incentive to launch a preemptive repressive campaign in the

first place.

b. Unresponsive but Mobilizable Agent

We now consider the case where $\kappa_P \leq \bar{\kappa} < \kappa_D$, meaning that the subordinate is expected to make low effort when the autocrat is challenged by the adversary ("unresponsive"), but they could possibly make high effort during a repressive campaign if their private loyalty level κ happens to be greater than κ_P ("mobilizable"). In this case, when would the autocrat use a preemptive repressive campaign to mobilize an otherwise unresponsive subordinate? Given that the subordinate's private type κ is drawn uniformly from the interval $[0, \bar{\kappa}]$, they are expected to make low effort with probability $\frac{\kappa_P}{\bar{\kappa}}$ and high effort with probability $1 - \frac{\kappa_P}{\bar{\kappa}}$ if the autocrat chooses to repress preemptively. Thus, the autocrat's expected payoff from preemptive repression is

$$\frac{\kappa_P}{\bar{\kappa}} \underbrace{[\delta\theta_L + (1-\delta)]a}_{\substack{\text{expected payoff with} \\ \text{a low-effort agent}}} + (1 - \frac{\kappa_P}{\bar{\kappa}}) \underbrace{[\delta\theta_H + (1-\delta)](a - b_A)}_{\substack{\text{expected payoff with} \\ \text{a high-effort agent}}} \tag{4.4}$$

Alternatively, if the autocrat chooses not to repress preemptively, there is a $(1-\delta)$ chance that the adversary will not challenge, and a $\delta\theta_L$ chance that the autocrat will encounter a challenge from the adversary and survive. In this case, the ruler's expected payoff is $[\delta\theta_L + (1-\delta)]a$. Put together, the ruler's problem is to solve the inequality

$$\frac{\kappa_P}{\bar{\kappa}}[\delta\theta_L + (1-\delta)]a + (1 - \frac{\kappa_P}{\bar{\kappa}})[\delta\theta_H + (1-\delta)](a - b_A) > [\delta\theta_L + (1-\delta)]a \tag{4.5}$$

As shown in the algebra, the ruler's decision whether to order a repressive campaign depends on the tradeoff between the expected increase in survival probability due to a highly-motivated subordinate (i.e., the difference between θ_H and θ_L) and the cost of rewarding the subordinate b_A. If the benefit of motivating the subordinate to make high effort exceeds the cost needed to reward them, the ruler would choose to repress preemptively. Solving the inequality with respect to the ruler's personal strength θ_L, we can obtain the condition for the autocrat to launch a preemptive campaign in this scenario:

$$\theta_L < \theta_H - \frac{[\delta\theta_H + (1-\delta)]b_A}{\delta a} \tag{4.6}$$

The inequality (2.6) captures the autocrat's decision-making process in launching a repressive campaign. Specifically, it is easy to see that the value of $\frac{[\delta\theta_H+(1-\delta)]b_A}{\delta a}$ increases with both θ_H and δ, but decreases with b_A. This suggests that when facing an unresponsive but potentially mobilizable subordinate, the autocrat is more likely to choose preemptive repression if (1) the subordinate's high effort significantly increases the ruler's chance of survival, (2) the adversary is more likely to be strong, and (3) the cost of rewarding the subordinate is lower. The following lemma summarizes the equilibrium in this scenario:

Lemma 3. *(Equilibrium with unresponsive but mobilizable agent).*
If the upper limit of the subordinate's loyalty level $\bar{\kappa}$ falls between the preemptive and defensive thresholds, i.e. $\kappa_P \leq \bar{\kappa} < \kappa_D$, the autocrat will choose to launch preemptive repression if and only if $\theta_L < \theta_H - \frac{[\delta\theta_H+(1-\delta)]b_A}{\delta a}$ and will wait otherwise. During a repressive campaign, the subordinate will make high effort only if $\kappa \geq \kappa_P$ and will make low effort otherwise. During a challenge launched by the adversary, the subordinate will always make low effort.

c. Responsive and Mobilizable Agent

Now we turn to the main case in this study: what strategy will the autocrat choose when the agent's highest possible loyalty type $\bar{\kappa}$ exceeds both thresholds, i.e. $\bar{\kappa} \geq \kappa_D$? It is reasonable to assume that most real-world regimes fall within this category, since a rational autocrat would not recruit a subordinate unless they had some expectation that the latter would make high effort both during a challenge by the adversary and during a preemptive repressive campaign. In the case of a preemptive repression, the autocrat's expected payoff remains the same as in Expression (2.4) from the previous case. However, if the ruler chooses not to repress, their expected payoff is:

$$(1-\delta)a + \delta[\frac{\kappa_D}{\bar{\kappa}}a\theta_L + (1-\frac{\kappa_D}{\bar{\kappa}})(a-b_A)\theta_H], \tag{4.7}$$

where the first item indicates the ruler's payoff if the adversary does not challenge, and the second term represents the ruler's expected payoff in the event of a challenge by the adversary, where the subordinate makes high effort with probability $(1-\frac{\kappa_D}{\bar{\kappa}})$ and low effort with probability $\frac{\kappa_D}{\bar{\kappa}}$. To sum, the autocrat would launch a preemptive repression campaign if and only if the inequality (2.4) $>$ (2.7) holds, or:

$$\underbrace{\frac{\kappa_P}{\bar{\kappa}}[\delta\theta_L+(1-\delta)]a + (1-\frac{\kappa_P}{\bar{\kappa}})[\delta\theta_H+(1-\delta)](a-b_A)}_{\text{Expected payoff for launching repressive campaign}} > \underbrace{(1-\delta)a + \delta[\frac{\kappa_D}{\bar{\kappa}}a\theta_L + (1-\frac{\kappa_D}{\bar{\kappa}})(a-b_A)\theta_H]}_{\text{Expected payoff for waiting the adversary to challenge}} \tag{4.8}$$

Solving this inequality with respect to $\bar{\kappa}$, we get:

$$\bar{\kappa} < \kappa_P + (\kappa_D - \kappa_P)\frac{\delta[a(\theta_H - \theta_L) - \theta_H b_A]}{(1-\delta)b_A} \tag{4.9}$$

Equation (2.9) describes the autocrat's equilibrium strategy when the subordinate's maximum possible loyalty exceeds the defensive threshold, i.e. $\bar{\kappa} > \kappa_D$. By examining this equation, it is clear that a necessary condition for the autocrat to choose preemptive repression is $\frac{\delta[a(\theta_H-\theta_L)-\theta_H b_A]}{(1-\delta)b_A} > 1$. This condition must be met to ensure that the right-hand side of the inequality, $\kappa_P + (\kappa_D - \kappa_P)\frac{\delta[a(\theta_H-\theta_L)-\theta_H b_A]}{(1-\delta)b_A}$, exceeds κ_D, which is the lowest possible $\bar{\kappa}$ for the subordinate in this scenario. Rewrite this inequality with respect to the ruler's personal strength θ_L, we obtain

$$\theta_L < \theta_H - \frac{[\delta\theta_H + (1-\delta)]b_A}{\delta a} \tag{4.10}$$

Note that this condition is exactly the same as expression (6) in the previous case, which implies that the increase in the autocrat's chance of survival due to agent compliance (i.e. the difference between θ_H and θ_L) must be sufficiently large for the autocrat to consider taking the costly action of launching a repressive campaign.

If the constraint above is satisfied, the autocrat would then decide whether to launch a repressive campaign based on the upper bound of the agent's loyalty level, $\bar{\kappa}$. That is, the autocrat will launch a repressive campaign only if the agent's greatest possible loyalty level $\bar{\kappa}$ is lower than the threshold $\kappa_P + (\kappa_D - \kappa_P)\frac{\delta[a(\theta_H-\theta_L)-\theta_H b_A]}{(1-\delta)b_A}$ and will wait otherwise. In other words, the ruler tends to mobilize the agent with preemptive repression when they expect the agent to be of *less loyal* types. To sum up all three scenarios, we present the overall equilibrium of this game as follows:

Proposition. *(Bayesian Perfect Equilibrium of the Game).*

1. *When the agent's maximum loyalty level $\bar{\kappa} < \kappa_P$: the autocrat will be indifferent between preemptive repression and waiting, and the agent will always make low effort.*

2. *When the agent's maximum loyalty level $\kappa_P \leq \bar{\kappa} < \kappa_D$:*

   if $\theta_L \geq \theta_H - \frac{[\delta\theta_H+(1-\delta)]b_A}{\delta a}$, the autocrat will wait;

   if $\theta_L < \theta_H - \frac{[\delta\theta_H+(1-\delta)]b_A}{\delta a}$, the autocrat will launch a repressive campaign.

During preemptive repression, the subordinate will make high effort only if $\kappa \geq \kappa_P$ and will make low effort otherwise; during a challenge launched by the adversary, the subordinate will always make low effort.

3. *When the agent's maximum loyalty level $\bar{\kappa} \geq \kappa_D$:*

   if $\theta_L \geq \theta_H - \frac{[\delta\theta_H+(1-\delta)]b_A}{\delta a}$, the autocrat will wait;

   if $\theta_L < \theta_H - \frac{[\delta\theta_H+(1-\delta)]b_A}{\delta a}$, there exists a threshold $\bar{\kappa}^* \equiv \kappa_P + (\kappa_D - \kappa_P)\frac{\delta[a(\theta_H-\theta_L)-\theta_H b_A]}{(1-\delta)b_A}$, such that the autocrat will launch a repressive campaign if $\bar{\kappa} < \bar{\kappa}^*$ and will wait if $\bar{\kappa} \geq \bar{\kappa}^*$.

   When being called upon for a repressive campaign, the subordinate will make high effort only if $\kappa \geq \kappa_P$ and will make low effort otherwise; during a challenge launched by the adversary, the subordinate will make high effort only if $\kappa \geq \kappa_D$ and will make low effort otherwise.

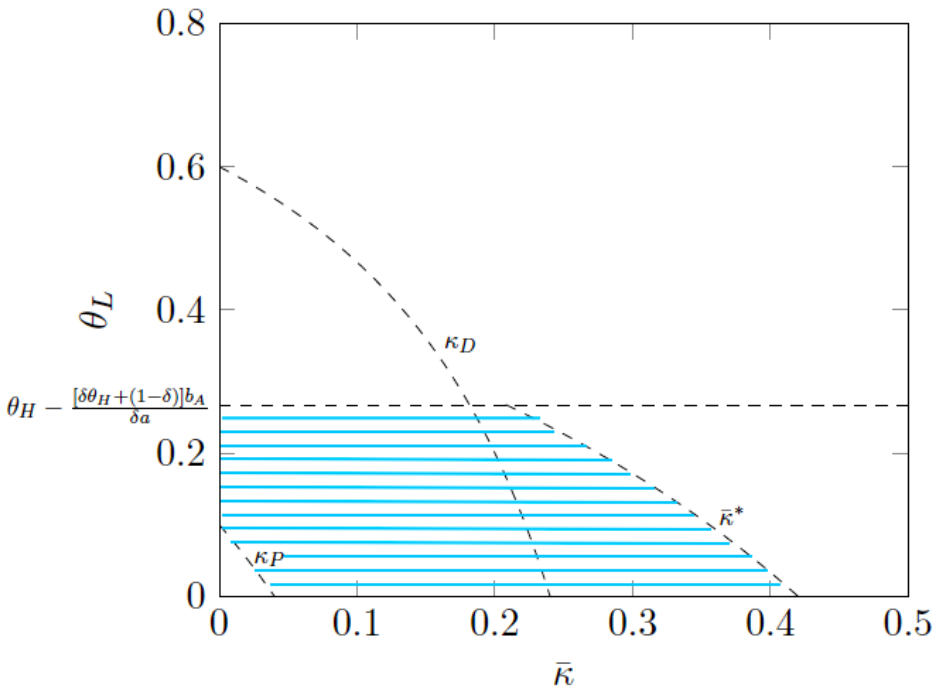

Figure 4.6: The graph visualizes the conditions required for the autocrat to launch preemptive repression against the adversary. The parameters δ, θ_H, a, b_A, and b_R are set to 0.5, 0.9, 1.2, 0.4, and 0.4 respectively. The three dashed curves (from left to right) indicate the subordinate's preemptive threshold κ_P, their defensive threshold κ_D, and the autocrat's repression threshold $\bar{\kappa}^*$. The shadowed area indicates the range where the autocrat has an incentive to launch preemptive repression. As shown in the graph, the autocrat would prefer preemptive repression when the subordinate's loyalty is sufficiently low (when $\bar{\kappa}$ is smaller) and the benefit of the agent's compliance on the autocrat's survival is sufficiently high (when θ_L relative to θ_H is smaller).

This proposition, illustrated in **Figure 2.2**, highlights the tradeoff between an agent's *compliance* and the *cost efficiency* of preemptive repression. While launching a repressive campaign would increase the autocrat's chance of survival by making the subordinate more likely to make high effort, it would also guarantee that a conflict would occur regardless of the adversary's type. On the other hand, if the autocrat chooses to wait, only the strong-type adversary would challenge the ruler. Therefore, to launch a repressive campaign, the autocrat needs to consider the additional cost of unnecessarily combating the weak-type adversary who would otherwise never challenge the ruler. In other words, the autocrat's calculation is whether the expected benefit from the agent's greater compliance outweighs the extra payouts needed for repressive campaigns. As shown in the proposition, the expected benefit from agent compliance is determined by two factors: the *expected benefit from the agent's high effort* and the *perceived loyalty level* that determines an agent's likelihood to make high effort. For the former, if the agent's high effort would lead to a significantly large increase in their chance of survival (indicated by a smaller θ_L relative to θ_H), a repressive campaign inducing the compliance of the agent would bring greater benefit to the ruler. For the latter, if the subordinate lacks loyalty and is perceived to be more likely to defect (indicated by a smaller $\bar{\kappa}$), the autocrat would be better off using repressive campaigns to induce them to make high effort. In contrast, if the expected loyalty of the subordinate is *already high*, the autocrat would rather trust them to come to the regime's defense when challenged by the adversary, rather than further investing in boosting their compliance.

My theory contributes to the literature in two ways. First, it offers new insights into how rulers can motivate and control their bureaucrats. Previous literature suggests that autocrats can retain their subordinates' allegiance by *sending* costly signals about their own strength. However, my study proposes that rulers can also induce agent compliance by *creating uncertainty* about their potential adversary' strength and the level threat facing the regime, thus reducing the subordinates' incentive to defect. Second, my theory provides a fresh perspective on the purpose and effect of authoritarian repression. Traditional literature assumes that repression serves to deter and eliminate *potential power contenders*. In contrast, my study examines the possibility that repression can be strategically employed by the ruler as a means of *incentivizing potentially non-compliant bureaucrats*. My theoretical framework therefore offers new insights into the principal-agent problem and bureaucratic management in authoritarian regimes like Mao's China.

□

Chapter 5

Mass Mobilization and Bureaucratic Control during the Cultural Revolution

"The bureaucratic class is a class in sharp opposition to the working class and the poor and lower-middle peasants. These individuals are already or in the process of becoming bourgeois elements who exploit the workers. How can we rely on them? They are the targets of our struggle, the objects of revolution. The socialist education movement cannot rely on them. The only ones we can rely on are those cadres who do not harbor hatred towards the workers and possess a revolutionary spirit."

Mao Zedong, *Instructions on Comrade Chen Zhengren's On-the-Spot Investigation Report*, 1965

5.1 Question: Why Mass Mobilization?

5.1.1 Popular Participation in Autocracies

During Mao's campaigns, a principle that was repeatedly emphasized was the "mass line," which involved mobilizing and relying on the masses to achieve the regime's political and socioeconomic goals. In the Land Reform, peasants were mobilized by Party cadres to collectively denounce landlords in large-scale struggle sessions and participate in the redistribution of rural lands (Hinton 1998; Javed 2019). In the Great Leap Forward, urban citizens were called upon to suspend their daily work and join mass steelmaking campaigns in order to meet the government's industrial growth targets (Shen and Xia 2011). Mass mo-

bilization was also utilized in repressive campaigns against dissidents and power contenders throughout Mao's rule. During the Anti-Rightist Campaign, citizens were mobilized to identify "hidden rightists" in their workplaces and report any anti-Party speech or behavior by their colleagues and superiors (N. Wang 2020). The most prominent and tragic example of Maoist mass mobilization was the Cultural Revolution, in which "Red Guards" — paramilitary groups formed by radical students stormed Party and government headquarters and targeted officials accused of disloyalty to Mao, which plunged the entire country into chaos and disorder (Walder 2019).

In fact, the engagement of the masses in political processes was not exclusive to Mao's China, but was rather a common feature observed in various non-democratic regimes throughout the 20th century. Communist regimes in the Soviet Union, North Korea, Albania, and East Germany all initiated similar campaigns to mobilize citizens in support of the state's political or policy objectives. These campaigns aimed to increase turnout in Party-controlled elections (Lapidus 1975; Ginsberg and Weissberg 1978), enhance workplace and agricultural productivity (Kim and Oh 2004; Kim and Lee 2016), challenge traditional lifestyles or religious establishments (Blumi 1999; Stone 2008), and identify perceived enemies of the ruling party (Heinzen 2007; Danylenko 2021). However, the practice of mass mobilization was not limited to Leninist autocracies. In Argentina under Juan Perón and in Taiwan under the Kuomintang, mass organizations were created to involve workers and peasants in state-led campaigns aimed at promoting industrial development and agricultural reforms (N.-T. Wu 1988; James 1988; Looney 2021).

The autocrat's inclination towards the political participation of the masses is puzzling and contradict the logic of authoritarian regime for apparent reasons. In a political system where power is concentrated in the hands of a small, unelected group of elites, it would be natural for the regime to prefer a passive and indifferent citizenry that accepts the existing political order without seeking to shape it (Linz 2000). Furthermore, even pro-regime mass mobilization, if not properly managed, could spiral out of control and provide an opportunity for potential challengers to seize power. A notable example is the case of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, whose downfall followed a pro-regime mass assembly that transformed into a chaotic anti-government protest, triggering a series of nationwide rebellions that ultimately sealed the autocrat's fate (Hall 2000; Thompson 2002).

Earlier political theorists suggest that authoritarian mass mobilization primarily served as a symbolic display of legitimacy for the regime, rather than serving certain functional purposes. Hannah Arendt, for example, views mass mobilization under totalitarianism as a means to demonstrate the infallibility and

invincibility of the regime's utopian agenda, which could showcase its capacity to "[crush] whoever and whatever stands in its way by means of terror and proceeds to a total reconstruction of the society" (Arendt 1958, 352; Kohn 2015). In line with this thinking, conventional literature on Mao's political campaigns often emphasizes their *ritualistic* and *ideological functions.* Hinton (1984, 1992) illustrates how peasants, through expressing their grievances and participating in struggle sessions against landlords during the Land Reform, developed a strong sense of class consciousness that rallied them behind the CCP's political agenda. Similarly, Perry (2002) considers Mao's mass mobilization as a tactic of emotional and psychological engineering, which aimed at cultivating a collective identity among citizens and strengthening grassroots support for the regime's socioeconomic objectives.

A more recent strand of literature tends to view authoritarian political participation from a *rationalist* perspective, highlighting its role in fulfilling certain strategic functions for the regime. According to this approach, one motive for the autocrat to allow for political participation is to incentivize bureaucratic compliance and deter potential opponents. Authoritarian elections, for example, can create a sense of stability and strength in the ruler's grip on power. The perceived strength of the regime could then incentivize subordinates to exert greater efforts in support of the regime, while discouraging potential challengers from contesting its authority (Gehlbach and Simpser 2015; Gehlbach, Sonin, and Svolik 2016). Empirical studies have shown that high electoral turnouts in Soviet elections, despite being uncontested, could lead to a significant decrease in anti-regime activities within the USSR (Rozenas 2012). Similar empirical findings have been observed in Putin's Russia, where pro-government rallies have been shown to reduce the occurrence of anti-regime protests (Hellmeier and Weidmann 2020).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of the *informational* aspect of authoritarian political participation. By engaging citizens in political processes, authoritarian regimes can gain valuable access to public opinion and make timely policy adjustments based on the feedback received. Studies of China's People's Congresses in the Reform Era have shown that, by increasing competition and representation in the legislature, the regime can obtain more precise information on the quality of local bureaucrats and the citizens' viewpoints on specific policy matters (Truex 2014; Manion 2015; Truex 2016). Driven by the similar motive of obtaining information and detecting bureaucratic misbehavior, the contemporary Chinese regime usually tolerates limited, small-scale protests at the local level (Lorentzen 2013), and establishes online petition channels for citizens to share their grievance and feedback (Distelhorst and Hou 2017). These channels of public participation contribute to the regime's resilience by enabling it to address public

opinions in a timely manner.

5.1.2 Mass Mobilization and Local Bureaucratic Compliance in Mao's China

In this chapter, I study the mass movements during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) to understand the role of mass mobilization in bureaucratic politics during the Mao era. Drawing on archival documents and personal memoirs of officials, I focus on two aspects in which mass mobilization could benefit the central leadership: *diversion* and *accountability enforcement*. Firstly, it functions as a diversionary strategy, which allows disgruntled citizens to attribute the regime's past failures to local officials and channel their anger toward the sub-national bureaucracy instead of the central leadership. This enables the regime to deflect blame for previous disasters caused by its radical agenda and maintain its legitimacy. Secondly, mass mobilization served as a means to monitor and constrain local leaders from below, especially during a time when the central leadership's control over the localities was weak. By allowing ordinary citizens to voice their grievances and engage in collective actions, the regime could achieve greater oversight over local political elites and discourage them from abusing their powers within their jurisdiction.

In my empirical analysis, I use the *China Political Events Dataset, 1966-1971* compiled by Walder (2017), merged with my original provincial-level dataset on annual socioeconomic indicators during the Cultural Revolution, to examine the impact of mass mobilization on subnational bureaucracy. First, I investigate whether the Red Guards Movement diverted pre-existing popular grievances toward local authorities. I utilize the excess death rate during the Great Famine (1959-1961) — one of the largest human-made disasters preceding the Cultural Revolution — as an indicator of pre-existing popular grievance against the regime. I find that provinces with a higher excess death rate during the famine tend to witness a greater number of contentious mass incidents targeting local government authorities during the Cultural Revolution. In particular, the impact of the Great Famine deaths on anti-government incidents is stronger in provinces where the incumbent provincial leader held local office during the Famine. Additionally, mass incidents in provinces with higher Great Famine death rates also tended to have a higher level of violence, as indicated by a greater number of deaths and injuries.

Second, I explore the correlation between the intensity of anti-government collective actions and the characteristics of local officials governing a province. I aim to identify which type of officials were more likely to face confrontation from mobilized citizens during the Cultural Revolution. My data analysis reveals that citizens were more inclined to engage in forceful contentious actions against *influential local*

political elites who had held positions within the locality for extended periods of time. Conversely, provincial leaders with less prior experience in the locality, as well as those with stronger connections to Beijing, were less likely to face such strong confrontations from the masses. These findings support my argument that during the mass mobilization of the Cultural Revolution, the masses aligned themselves with the central authority in order to restrain the excessive influence of long-standing local bureaucrats who held significant power but lacked accountability.

This study provides novel insights into China's bureaucratic politics in three significant ways. Firstly, it sheds light on how the CCP during the Mao era maintained its legitimacy and public support despite severe economic and policy setbacks in the 1950s and 1960s. By framing citizens' suffering and grievances as the result of local official mishandling, rather than the central leadership's flawed political agenda, the Chinese regime effectively diverted public anger towards local authorities through mass mobilization. This approach allowed Mao and the Party leadership to evade accountability for their policy failures. Previous studies have consistently shown that Chinese citizens place higher confidence in central leadership than in local and grassroots bureaucracy. As shown in this chapter, the regime's ability to deflect accountability and shift blame downward may be a key factor in preserving its legitimacy and public trust.

Secondly, this study challenges the conventional view that individuals participating in mass-mobilized campaigns were simply passive "mobs" who blindly followed the directives of their leaders out of fear or ideological devotion. Canonical studies on mass politics, from Le Bon (1903) to Arendt (1958), often invoke the term "herd mentality" to portray participants of mass movements as lacking individual reasoning and agency, who merely conform to the collective behaviors and actions of those around them. Contrary to this view, my study shows that citizens involved in Mao's mass mobilized campaigns were not only capable of controlling the magnitude and selectivity of their actions, but could also seize the momentum of collective action to advance collective interests. Thus, the conventional perception that Mao's mass-mobilized campaign was a symbolic ritual or a top-down display of regime strength was problematic.

In broader terms, this chapter sheds light on the CCP's bureaucratic control strategies during the Mao era, as indicated by its title "squeeze the two ends to control the middle." On the one hand, the regime maintains strict screening and control over the appointment of local cadres to secure their loyalty and reliability to the central leadership. On the other hand, the regime allows limited political participation of ordinary citizens in the political processes to ensure that local officials fulfill their governance responsibilities and address the basic needs and expectations of the population. By effectively "squeezing" the local

bureaucracy between top-down accountability and bottom-up pressure, the regime compels local officials to strike a balance between adherence to the regime's political agenda and the fulfillment of governance duties. This structure offers insights into the role of constrained political participation and representation within an authoritarian regime.

5.2 Background of the Cultural Revolution

5.2.1 The Origin of Mao's "Last Revolution"

As the longest-lasting and most destructive mass campaign under Mao, the Cultural Revolution has been thoroughly examined by scholars in China and the West. Previous studies have sparked numerous debates regarding its origins, intended goals, and consequences. Most scholars agree that Mao's decision to launch the Cultural Revolution was motivated by both his perception of internal threats and his desire for a systematic bureaucratic overhaul. On one hand, following the disastrous Great Leap Forward and the subsequent Famine of 1959-1961, Mao encountered growing opposition from pragmatic members within the Party who criticized his policies for causing the disaster (Meisner 1999, 245–272; MacFarquhar 1999, 137–181). As Mao's power and influence declined, the moderate faction within the Party led by Vice Chairman Liu Shaoqi took increasing control of major policymaking in the early 1960s. The pragmatists implemented a series of market-oriented, liberalizing measures aimed at stimulating peasant productivity and reviving the rural economy, and reversed many of Mao's most damaging policies related to agricultural collectivization and the Great Leap Forward (Meisner 1999, 291–311). As challenges to his agenda intensified, Mao was convinced that "capitalist roaders" had infiltrated the Party apparatus and were plotting to both overthrow him and dismantle his political legacy (MacFarquhar 1999, 431–465; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2008, 14–51). From this perspective, the Cultural Revolution was an intra-party power struggle for Mao to eradicate internal power contenders and restore his personal authority and leadership.

However, scholars also point out that Mao's decision to launch the Cultural Revolution was partially motivated by a genuine intention to overhaul the bureaucracy and address its systemic flaws. According to Mao's perspective, the cadre force within the Chinese bureaucracy had lost its revolutionary spirit and had degenerated into a privileged class that contradicted the Party's proletarian ideals. According to his writings and speeches in the early 1960s, Mao identified two major problems within the cadre force: their *insufficient compliance* with directives from higher authorities and their *indifference* towards the demands

of the people (Z. Mao 1963). For the former, Mao highlighted some local officials' tendency to implement Party directives half-heartedly or even covertly defy them. Given Beijing's limited capacity to oversee and enforce compliance at the local level, policy directions from the top often failed to be fully implemented throughout the chain of command (L. Wu 1995, 109). For the latter, Mao was troubled by the bureaucrats' disconnect from the "mass line" and their lack of engagement with the ordinary citizens under their jurisdiction. In his writings from the 1950s and 1960s, Mao expressed deep concerns that the bureaucrats' unresponsiveness to popular demands could undermine the party's legitimacy and erode its popular support, potentially leading to a "repetition of the mistakes made by the Kuomintang" (Z. Mao 1963). Thus, the Cultural Revolution was seen as an attempt by Mao to change the incentive structure and power dynamics within the Chinese bureaucracy.

5.2.2 Stages of Development

Although the Cultural Revolution was often portrayed as a coherent historical period spanning from 1966 to 1976, it was actually a collection of discrete political events. Throughout this period, the political dynamics and power structure in China underwent significant evolution. The historical scholarship on the Cultural Revolution usually divides it into three distinct phases.

a. Mass Movement and Anarchy (1966-68)

The initial phase of the Cultural Revolution, commonly known as the "Red Guards Movement," was a period of widespread chaos resulting from mass mobilization and grassroots violence across the nation. In August 1966, Mao initiated a call for mass mobilization against political adversaries within the Party. Through a strongly worded public letter, he accused that the Party apparatus had been infiltrated and controlled by "revisionists" who had betrayed the revolutionary cause and were plotting against his authority. Mao urged the masses to protect the Party's revolutionary legacy by "tearing down and rebuild" the regime he had established himself (Z. Mao 1966a, 1966c). In response to Mao's call to action, numerous "Red Guards" groups emerged across China, comprised of radical students and workers who vowed to defend Mao's authority. These groups stormed Party and state headquarters at all levels and carried out attacks against senior leaders whom they deemed disloyal (Dikötter 2016, 53–79). In Beijing, Liu Shaoqi and other moderate Party leaders were beaten and tortured, and more than half of the central government ministries ceased operation due to Red Guard violence (80–93). The violence soon spread to all provinces across

the country. By the start of 1967, a majority of Party and government agencies at the provincial and prefecture-level had been attacked by mobs, which caused severe disruptions to their normal operations.

The first three years of the Cultural Revolution were considered the most violent episode of the entire campaign, which effectively threw the nation into turmoil and anarchy.[1] Political violence during this stage could be attributed to two main factors. A primary source of the violence was the Red Guards' clash with the authorities, including attacks on incumbent Party and government officials or demolition of government headquarters. However, a substantial amount of violence was also driven by *inter-factional conflicts* among various Red Guards groups. These groups, comprised of individuals from different pre-existing socioeconomic backgrounds, engaged in power struggles to gain political dominance and control within a given locality (Schoenhals 1996; Walder 2009).

b. The Military Takeover and the Rule of Revolutionary Committees (1969-71)

The second phase of the Cultural Revolution lasted from 1968 to 1971. Facing the breakdown of the existing bureaucratic system and widespread anarchy, Mao turned to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to restore social stability. Mao viewed the military as the only force capable of reinstating the political order due to their greater perceived loyalty, limited exposure to Red Guards violence, and relative neutrality in the factional conflicts. In January 1967, Beijing started to dispatch troops to major cities in each province, tasked with maintaining order and reining in the Red Guards. PLA officers were sent *en masse* to major factories, schools, and government headquarters, where they assumed responsibility for stopping mob violence and taking over key governance functions (Dong and Walder 2011, 2012).

At the same time, Mao also attempted to reinstate the local power structure to realize his vision for a new political order. Mao introduced unitary "revolutionary committees" (RCs) as temporary governing bodies in each locality, which combined the *decision-making power* of the Party committee and the *administrative functions* of the local government. In addition, the RCs were designed to be an inclusive institution where all decisions should be collectively made among representatives from the masses, the cadre, and the military (Walder 2015, 239–242). In Mao's vision, integrating Party and government functions would enhance bureaucratic adherence to the Party's agenda, while increasing representation would

1. Interestingly, early Western scholarship tends to use the term "Cultural Revolution" to only refer to the three-year period from 1966 to 1969 [e.g. Heaslet (1971)]. This narrow definition was based on the notion that this period was characterized by spontaneous and grassroots mobilization that aimed to overthrow the established power structure. The definition of the Cultural Revolution as a ten-year period was largely influenced by the official Chinese historiography after 1978. See A. Chen (1992) for a detailed discussion on the re-periodization of the Cultural Revolution.

improve local authorities' ability to engage with the masses (Goodman 1981; Guang 2004). However, in practice, the RCs were highly centralized bodies where the centrally-appointed director had paramount power (Z. Zhang 1995, 78–84). The directors of RCs were usually selected based on their proximity to Mao and their connections to the military in control of the locality. Out of the 29 provincial-level RCs in 1968, 20 were headed by directors with military backgrounds (C. Jin 2001, 627). This power dynamic granted the PLA a significant role in local politics and allowed it to extend its influence beyond its intended role as an order-keeping force.

During this period, all types of violence declined due to the re-establishment of local political authority. With the intervention of the military force, the factional infighting between different Red Guards groups diminished between 1969 and 1971. Instead, most armed conflicts occurred between the mobilized masses and the newly established authorities. On the one hand, mass-mobilized groups frequently attacked the RCs and military headquarters, due to their perceived lack of representation or their bias and favoritism in the treatment of different Red Guards factions (Su 2011, 60–62). On the other hand, the military launched a series of large-scale repression against the Red Guards and frequently resorted to deadly force to disarm and suppress the mobilized masses. (Walder 1991; Su 2011, 95–124; Walder 2014; Tan 2017)

c. Gradual Return to Pre-1966 Normalcy (1972-76)

The final episode of the Cultural Revolution, which lasted from 1971 until Mao's death in 1976, features the decline and gradual withdrawal of the military from national and local politics, as well as a gradual return to the pre-existing power structure prior to 1966. After the formation of PLA-led revolutionary committees at all levels of government, Mao became increasingly concerned about the military's ability to act independently and potentially challenge his own authority. In his private conversation with close subordinates, Mao expressed strong fear that the military had become so powerful that it would eventually refuse to obey the orders of him or the Party leadership (D. Wang 1997, 85–176). Meanwhile, Mao's relationship with Lin Biao, the highest-ranking military commander who had been designated as Mao's successor, worsened significantly after the ninth Party Congress in 1969 (Q. Jin 1999, 107–136; Song 2016). Aware of Mao's intentions to strip him of power, Lin and his family members secretly considered a coup to overthrow Mao. In 1971, after a failed assassination attempt on Mao during his return trip to Beijing, Lin and his family attempted to defect to the Soviet Union but died in a plane crash in Mongolia (Uhalley and Qiu 1993; Teiwes and Sun 1996).

The accidental death of Lin was a significant turning point in the military's role in politics. Mao used Lin's defection as a pretext to launch a massive purge of senior PLA leaders and provincial military governors with a connection to Lin. In 1973, the Party leadership further ordered the PLA troops to withdraw from major cities and demanded military commanders to resign their civilian roles in RCs. Simultaneously, Beijing rehabilitated former Party and government cadres who had been denounced or sidelined at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution and gradually reassigned them to local leadership positions (Goodman 1981; Xia 2005). After Mao's death in 1976, a group of senior Party leaders led by Deng Xiaoping quickly regained control and assumed leadership at the national level. Meanwhile, the Maoist rebels who gained prominence during the Cultural Revolution were expelled from the Party and prosecuted for their attempts to seize power (Meisner 1999, 376–407). In 1981, an official resolution approved by the CCP Central Committee denounced the Cultural Revolution as a "civil unrest wrongfully started by the leader that brought enormous disasters to the nation," which formally marked an end of this tumultuous era (CCP Central Committee 1981).

5.3 Mass Mobilization, Top-down Diversion, and Bottom-up Accountability

One of the most puzzling aspects of the Cultural Revolution concerns Mao's motivations for initiating mass mobilization. Mao's choice to mobilize the masses seemed paradoxical, because it contradicted the state-building efforts and guiding principles upheld by the regime since 1949. Allowing ordinary citizens to revolt against local leaders could undermine the Party's firm grip on state power, weaken the capacity of the cadre force, and disrupt the centralized chain of command. Why did Mao choose to destabilize the bureaucratic apparatus that had been the pillar of the Party's rule for the past 20 years?

Drawing on extensive archival research, I focus on two specific objectives that Mao sought to achieve through mobilizing the masses during the campaign. Firstly, it served as a strategy to shift responsibility away from the Party leadership and redirect popular grievances towards local leaders. The regime's previous policy failures in the 1950s, especially the Great Leap Forward, have created a dilemma for the regime to justify its legitimacy. On the one hand, the regime had to uphold the notion that the guiding Marxist-Leninist ideology was "scientific" and the decisions made by the central leadership was correct; on the other hand, the disastrous consequence of the actual policies clearly contradicted the claimed infallibility

of the regime's political agenda. To resolve this apparent inconsistency, the regime sought to attribute the governance failures to the mishandling and distortion of the Center's correct agenda by local officials. By mobilizing ordinary citizens to denounce local officials and seek redress for their grievances at the local level, the Party leadership aimed to absolve themselves of responsibility as decision-makers and maintain the perception of their infallibility.

In addition to the objective of diverting past grievances, mass mobilization also served as a means to monitor and rein in local bureaucrats *through the collective actions* of ordinary citizens. The absence of effective checks and balances on local leadership posed challenges for Beijing in monitoring their conduct and ensuring their compliance with the Party's mandates and expectations. Additionally, the lack of accountability and oversight empowered some local officials to engage in excessive or abusive behavior, which could harm citizens' interests and undermine the regime's popularity. By permitting (at least formally) the right to collective action by citizens, the regime could leverage the pressure generated from the bottom-up to monitor the performance of local officials and discourage bureaucratic misconduct. Below, I use anecdotal evidence to illustrate these two mechanisms in action.

5.3.1 Mass Mobilization as a Top-Down Diversionary Strategy

The Great Famine and the Diversion of Accountability

The Great Famine of 1959 to 1961, which led to widespread deaths and malnutrition among rural residents, posed a significant crisis of legitimacy for the central leadership. During the Great Leap Forward, the official narrative repeatedly claimed that Mao's rural agenda, such as agricultural collectivization and the People's Commune, could turn China's backward countryside into a prosperous socialist paradise organized based on the egalitarian principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" (Yi, Kimberley, and Felix 2011). The consequence of the Great Leap Forward, however, was in sharp contradiction to the promised outcome. The collectivization of land and organization of peasants into state-mandated People's Communes caused a severe decline of productivity and led to a sharp decrease in crop production during harvest season (Bernstein 2006). Furthermore, local officials' excessive appropriation of crops from peasants, driven by the need to fulfill Beijing's narratives of abundant harvests, contributed to the widespread food shortage in the countryside (Kung and Chen 2011). Obviously, the claimed infallibility and promise of Mao and the Party leadership in official rhetoric stood in sharp contrast to the regime's

actual policy failures.

During and after the Great Famine, the Party leadership made strong rhetorical efforts to decouple the Party's general policy guidelines from the local officials' *actual implementation* of Beijing's directions. According to this narrative, Mao and the central leaders' grand policy design was impeccable, but it was distorted and misunderstood by local officials during actual implementation. Therefore, the disastrous consequences should not be attributed to the Party's agenda itself, but rather to the improper or inadequate execution of it by subordinate bureaucrats. In February 1962, during a meeting consisting of over 7,000 county and prefecture-level leaders, Premier Zhou Enlai publicly defended the central leadership's decision that "[the disaster] is not the problem of the Party line itself. The shortcomings and mistakes precisely occurred because they deviated from the correct principles determined by the general line and violated many of Chairman Mao's valuable, practical, and visionary opinions" (S. Zhang 2006, 145–147). Deng Xiaoping, then the Secretary-General of the Party, similarly warned not to conflate the Party's "essential line and policy" and the "specific measures and practices that violated the guiding principles" in the assessment of the Great Leap Forward (35–37).

Archival records in the early 1960s show that senior Party officials in the early 1960s made strong efforts to defend the central regime's authority and reputation by asserting that the disastrous outcome of the Great Leap Forward was the result of local officials deviating from the correct directives of the central leadership. In a meeting held in 1962 to reflect on the setbacks of the Great Famine, Mao attributed the failure of the Great Leap Forward to "decentralism" (*fensan zhuyi*) — a term used to describe the tendency of local officials to disregard central guidance and pursue their own initiatives (Y.-f. Chen 2010). Lin Biao, a senior military leader who would later become Mao's designated successor, further attempted to shift the responsibility onto subnational officials during the meeting:

> *In recent years, our country has encountered certain difficulties in certain aspects. It has been proven that these difficulties, in certain respects and to a certain extent, are precisely due to our failure to follow Chairman Mao's instructions, warnings, and ideology…We have made some mistakes in our work, but these are only mistakes in actual implementation, not mistakes in our guiding principles. These mistakes are related to the ideological thinking and work styles of many of our comrades. The majority of our comrades did not intentionally bring harm to their work; rather, it was due to their lack of experience. Of course, we must also acknowledge that there are*

> *a very few cadres who are corrupt, although this does not represent the overall situation of our entire Party.* (CCP Central Committee Party Literature Research Office 1997, 102–112)

Mass Mobilization and Diversionary Attacks on Local Officials

Historical accounts reveal that at the onset of the Cultural Revolution, local citizens had developed strong resentment toward bureaucrats, which was largely driven by their deep grievance from the Great Leap Forward. Mao's call for mass rebellion against "capitalist roaders" in 1966 provided a platform for them to express their pre-existing anger toward local authorities and demand accountability from the incumbent officials. For example, in Sichuan, a province heavily affected by the Great Famine, Party Secretary Li Jinquan was one of the earliest provincial leaders to face public denouncement and torture by the Red Guards. Rebel leader Liu Jieting, in a public declaration announcing the takeover of provincial power, claimed that one of Li's major crimes was his "treacherous handling" of Mao's Great Leap policy:

> *At that time, Li Jinquan, driven by ulterior motives, issued an ill-intended instruction to [distort Chairman Mao's directives and engage in excessive grain appropriation]. As a result, Chairman Mao's directive could not be implemented, leading to extremely severe consequences.* (J. Liu 1967)

From the perspective of Li and his family, however, the accusations and prosecution directed at him were an attempt to scapegoat him and shift the blame from central decision-makers to local policy implementers. Shen Zaiwang, Li's son, expressed his grudge in an article written in preparation for his father's centennial birth anniversary in 2009:

> *Over the years, there have been various criticisms regarding the issue of excessive grain acquisition and starvation in Sichuan. The main target of criticism has been Li Jingquan, who was the key figure in Sichuan at that time. However, it was a decision made by the central leadership…The central authorities decided that Sichuan should make temporary sacrifices and supply its grain to other provinces. Urgent orders were issued one after another, and Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping both made phone calls, demanding that the Sichuan Provincial Committee firmly implement the central decision. The original records of these phone calls have been preserved to this day. In reality, Li Jingquan took all the responsibility upon himself.*[2] (Zaiwang Shen 2009)

2. However, it should be noted that Shen's defense of Li Jingquan was controversial. Some critics argued that Shen attempted

During the Cultural Revolution, Sichuan was not the only example in which the mobilized masses divert their grievance and resentment toward local officials. The leaders of Anhui, Henan and Gansu, the three provinces with the highest death rates during the Great Famine, also faced similar treatment by the Red Guards. Zeng Xisheng and Wu Zhipu, the Party Secretaries of Anhui and Henan respectively, were both subjected to torture and ultimately killed by angry mobs who accused them of negligence in addressing the famine in their provinces. Zhang Zhongliang, the former Party chief of Gansu during the Great Leap Forward, was forcibly brought back to Gansu to face public humiliation and torture, despite having already been reassigned to a different position in Jiangsu since 1965. The Red Guard leader in Gansu, when asked why it was important to repatriate and prosecute a former official, stating that "he owed the people of Gansu a bloody debt of 1.3 million lives" (Ding 1993, 184–85).

5.3.2 Mass Mobilization as a Tactic of Bottom-up Bureaucratic Oversight

Historical records indicate that one of the key factors that drove Mao to launch the Cultural Revolution was his perception of a rigid and unaccountable local bureaucracy. Mao increasingly became frustrated with the limited mechanisms available to the central leadership to hold local leaders accountable and monitor policy implementation at the sub-national level. During private discussions with trusted subordinates, Mao expressed his discontent with limited information and influence he had over local governance, complaining that from 1959 until now, few things were ever discussed with me…there hasn't been anything that they consulted me about" (Z. Mao 1966b). Mao referred to provincial Party committees as secluded "independent kingdoms," which were resistant to external influence and disregarded the guidance from both the central leadership and citizens under their jurisdiction.[3] (Su and Huang 2000).

The ossification and lack of accountability within the sub-national bureaucracy before the Cultural Revolution can be attributed to two main factors. First, the political mobility and turnover during the 1950s and 1960s were limited, and local leaders frequently remained in a single province for an extended period to maintain political stability in the region. Secondly, despite Mao's efforts to promote factional divisions and competition among subnational Party leaders, power remained heavily centralized in the hands of the

to shift all the blame onto the central leaders while denying Li's role in brutally appropriating crops in Sichuan's countryside and worsening the famine. However, the narrative that Li was subject to denouncement and torture from mass organizations in Sichuan for implementing Beijing's policy directives was credible.

3. Many archival records revealed Mao's deep resentment towards the immense power and lack of accountability of local Party bureaucracies. For example, in 1966, Mao famously remarked that Beijing's Municipal Party Committee was an exclusionary "oligarchy," which was so impervious to external scrutiny that "the needle cannot pierce it and water cannot penetrate it." See Su and Huang (2000) and B. Gu (2013).

Party Secretary. Their long tenures and dominant positions within the local party-state allowed them to exert unchecked decision-making power and undermine accountability. An internal report presented to Mao in 1964 identified the primary danger within the bureaucracy as the following:

> *"After some old cadres gained political power following the victory of the revolution, they easily detached themselves from the supervision of the masses. Once they took charge of a unit, they often exploited their positions of power to violate the party's policies, even to the point of doing as they pleased. As bureaucratic tendencies among leaders are prevalent, we are unable to promptly identify serious issues within the lower ranks."* (Zhengren Chen, 1965[1996])

During the Cultural Revolution, Mao recognized the masses as a natural ally of the central regime in restraining unaccountable bureaucratic leaders at the sub-national level. By mobilizing ordinary citizens against local authorities, Mao aimed to enhance both upward and downward accountability. On one side, the Center sought to gather reliable information on the conduct and performance of local leaders by observing the actions of the masses, thus reducing information asymmetry in overseeing local governance. On the other side, allowing ordinary citizens to engage in collective actions would discourage misbehaviors by local leaders and increase their responsiveness to the citizens under their rule. Mao explained these motivations during an informal conversation with an Albanian delegation in 1967:

> *"This is a good opportunity to conduct a review of our cadres. It is a large-scale inspection through the eyes of the masses. We have a fraction of cadres who are not close to the people; they act like privileged lords. I cannot do anything about these people because the country is so big, and I have not met 99 percent of those people. But now, the masses are taking action against them [for me]. Why aren't we afraid of chaos? Because if you don't allow it to be chaotic, these contradictions cannot be exposed."* (Z. Mao, 1967[2011])

5.4 Research Design

5.4.1 Main Hypotheses

Overall, historical accounts suggest that mass mobilization against local authorities during the Cultural Revolution could serve two functions: *top-down diversion* and *bottom-up accountability*. For the former,

mass mobilization could divert the public grievance arising from the regime's past policy failures toward local authorities and allow the central leadership to avoid direct blame for the citizens' grievances. For the latter, mobilizing the masses could weaken and constrain the power of local political elites. By subjecting local officials to intense scrutiny from citizens at the grassroots level, the central regime could effectively discourage them from abusing their power and influence, while increasing their reliance on the central leadership to secure their position.

In this empirical chapter, I will provide evidence for my theoretical prediction by testing two sets of hypotheses. First, I will examine whether provinces that were more severely affected by the Great Famine witnessed a higher frequency and intensity of collective actions against local authorities during the Cultural Revolution. If my proposed mechanism is correct, the Great Famine outcomes should specifically lead to an increase in *anti-authority incidents*, but would not impact other types of violence in the same period, such as inter-factional conflicts between different Red Guard groups, or the authorities' repression of alleged class enemies.

Hypothesis 5. *(Diversionary effects of mass mobilization.)*

a. *Provinces with higher death rates during the Great Famine (1958-61) tended to experience more intense collective actions against local authorities during the Cultural Revolution.*

b. *Higher death rates during the Great Famine had no impact on the intensity of other types of collective actions during the Cultural Revolution.*

Next, I aim to examine whether mass mobilization had an impact on monitoring and restraining the conduct of local officials. As shown in the anecdotal evidence, citizens held stronger grievances against local officials who monopolized local power for an extended time and were subject to little oversight and accountability for their behavior. In contrast, citizens tended to perceive officials dispatched from Beijing with little exposure to the locality as more impartial and less vested in local interests, resulting in less opposition to their rule. Thus, if my theoretical prediction is correct, then incumbent officials with longer experience and deeper involvement with the governed locality could be subject to more intense collective actions from the masses.

Hypothesis 6. *(Accountability effects of mass mobilization.) During the Cultural Revolution, provinces led by incumbent officials with longer prior work experience in the province tended to experience more intense collective actions from mobilized masses.*

5.4.2 Data Scope and Empirical Strategies

The primary data source I use to test my empirical hypotheses is the *China Political Events Dataset, 1966-1971* compiled by Andrew Walder. This dataset includes information on a total of 14,450 contentious incidents that took place during the Cultural Revolution. It provides details such as the locations and dates of these incidents, as well as the recorded number of deaths and injuries associated with each conflict. Among these cases, 2,046 events were identified as *anti-authority* collective actions, which refers to any contentious action directed at local civilian or military government agencies or officials. All anti-authority incidents in the dataset occurred in the initial four years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-69), a period of anarchy marked by widespread violence and conflicts by Red Guards.

In the subsequent analysis, I will examine the dataset at both *aggregate* and *individual* levels. I will first calculate the annual total number of anti-authority incidents and casualties at the provincial level to explore whether the intensity of anti-authority conflicts in a given province was correlated with the pre-existing grievance from the Great Famine. Second, I will perform an individual-level analysis of contentious incidents and explore whether their intensity (indicated by the total number of casualties in each event) was correlated with certain characteristics and local experience of incumbent provincial leaders.

Dependent Variable: Intensity of Anti-Authority Collective Action

The key dependent variable of my analysis is the *intensity of anti-authority challenges* by the mobilized masses, measured in various ways. For the aggregate analysis, I will use (1) the *total number* of incidents in a given year; (2) the *total number of deaths* from all incidents in a given year; and (3) the *total number of casualties*, including both deaths and injuries in a given year to approximate the annual intensity of anti-authority incidents in a province. At the individual level, I will estimate an incident's *level of severity* using a variety of indicators, including the total number of documented deaths, injuries, and victims associated with each conflict.

Key Independent Variables

I employ two key explanatory variables in my empirical analysis, which are used to examine the two proposed effects of mass mobilization respectively. In testing Hypothesis 5, I use the *cumulative excess mortality rate* (CEMR) between 1958 and 1961 as my key explanatory variable to measure the level of pre-

existing grievance from the Great Famine. The calculation method for CEMR, as outlined in China Famine Files (2000), is presented in Formula 5.1. This measure is widely used in previous studies on the Great Leap Forward as a robust indicator of famine severity and human suffering across different provinces.

$$\text{CEMR} = \frac{\text{Observed number of deaths in 1958-61} - \text{expected number of deaths in 1958-61}}{\text{Three-year average of annual total population in 1958-61}} \tag{5.1}$$

Furthermore, the independent variable I use in testing Hypothesis 6 is the *number of years of prior local work* for each director of the Revolutionary Committee (RC), who was the *de facto* paramount leader in each province during the Cultural Revolution. The RC leaders showed significant variation in their past involvement with the provinces they governed. While some were military officers dispatched by the central leadership who had limited exposure to their assigned province, others were former local officials who managed to retain or seize local power since the Cultural Revolution. If my theoretical prediction is correct, officials with longer prior work experience in the province should encounter more intense challenges from the mobilized masses.

Control Variables

In my subsequent regression analysis, I incorporate three sets of control variables to account for inter-regional variations that could potentially influence mobilization intensity in a locality. These controls encompass aspects such as the local regime's capacity and popular support, socioeconomic conditions, and additional characteristics of provincial leaders. The first category consists of *time-invariant measures* that capture a province's *pre-existing level of state capacity and political attitudes* at the onset of the Cultural Revolution, including the length of CCP operations in a province, the number of CCP members by 1966, and the density of individuals denounced as "rightists" during the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957. The second set includes *yearly socioeconomic indicators* within each province that could influence the motivation and ability of citizens to mobilize, such as population size, GDP amount, total crop production, length of railways and roads, and the number of colleges. Lastly, I include control variables related to the provincial leaders' personal backgrounds, including their age, ethnicity, length of Party membership, length of military experience, and length of work experience in the central government. The following Table 5.1 provides an overview of the main covariates included in my regression analyses.

Table 5.1: Main Covariates included in the Empirical Analysis
(Abbreviation: H5: Test for Hypothesis 5; H6: Test for Hypothesis 6)

Variable Name	Rationale for Inclusion	Included in
1. Pre-1966 Indicators of Regime Capacity and Support (Unit: Province)		
Years of CCP presence by 1966	The duration of CCP operations in a province could impact its strength and penetration of the locality and affect its popular support.	H5
Num. of CCP members per 10,000 by 1966	As Koss (2018) suggests, the density of CCP members is correlated with local state capacity.	H5
Num. of "rightists" per 10,000 in 1957	The density of "rightists" denounced during the ARC in 1957 was a rough indicator of pre-existing anti-regime sentiment in a province.	H5
Note: These controls are not included in the test for H6, because the province-level fixed effects will already account for them.		
2. Covariates for Political backgrounds of incumbent officials (Unit: Province-Year)		
Length of Party membership	Seniority in the Party could impact an official's loyalty and compliance with the central leadership and their attitudes towards citizens in the governed province.	H6
Length of military service	A leader's military backgrounds could impact the citizens' attitude and behaviors towards them.	H6
Length of central government work	A leader's tie with the central leadership could impact the citizens' attitude towards and behaviors towards them.	H6
CCP Central Committee member	A dummy on whether the provincial leader was a member or alternate member of the CCP Central Committee. Central Committee membership could indicate the leaders' affinity to the central leadership and shaped the citizens' behaviors and attitudes towards them.	H6
3. Socioeconomic Indicators during the Cultural Revolution (Unit: Province-Year)		
Population	As Fearon and Laitin (2003) suggests, population size could impact insurgent activities in a region.	H5, H6
GDP amount	Level of economic development in a region could impact citizens' grievance and their incentive to engage in collective actions.	H5, H6
Total amount of crop production	Same as above.	H5, H6
Total length of roads	Access to transportation can impact population mobility and citizens' ability to engage in collective actions. During the Red Guards Movement, radical students from different localities "linked up" (*chuanlian*) primarily by train or bus.	H5, H6
Number of colleges	Most Red Guards were college students, and many mobilizations efforts occurred in college campuses.	H5, H6

5.5 Regression Estimates

5.5.1 Testing for Hypothesis 5

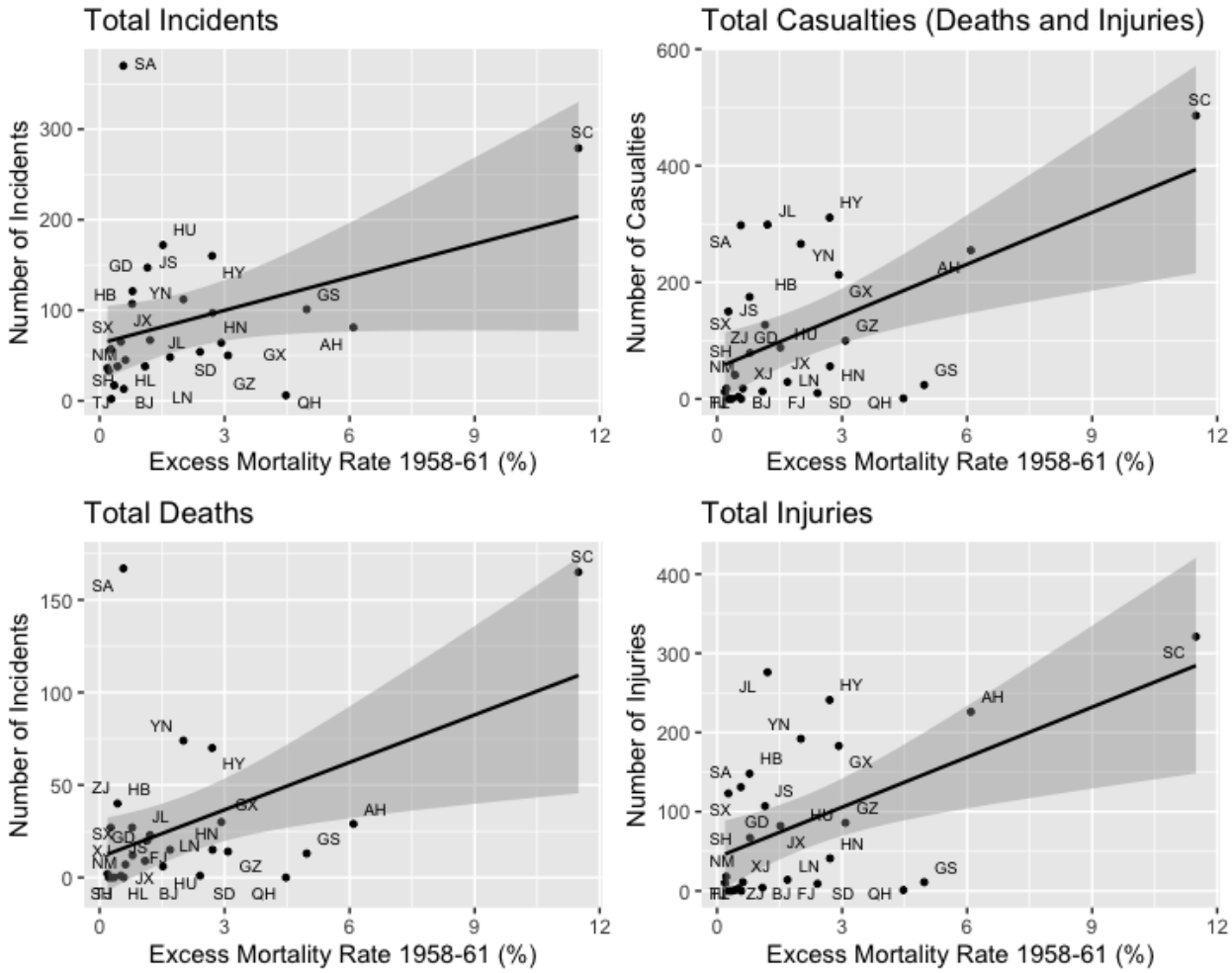

Figure 5.1: Graphic illustration of the correlation between the level of Great Famine sufferings and the intensity of collective actions against local authorities between 1966-69. The x-axis represents the excess mortality rate (%) in a province during the period 1958-1961, while the y-axis represents the total counts of incidents, casualties, deaths, and injuries in the provinces during the period 1966-1969.

I perform a series of regression analyses to examine whether pre-existing popular grievance from the Great Leap Forward could impact the intensity of collective actions against local authorities between 1966 and 1969[4]. The results are presented in **Table 5.2** and visually illustrated in **Figure 5.1**. I measure the intensity of mobilization against local authorities each year in each province using four different metrics:

4. According to Andrew Walder's dataset, all incidents targeting local authorities took place during the first four years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1969). No such incidents have been documented since 1970.

the total number of anti-authority incidents, the total number of physical casualties (including both deaths and injuries), and a specific breakdown of casualties into deaths and injuries. I included a series of controls to address the pre-existing levels of state capacity and regime support before 1966, as well as annual socioeconomic indicators that could impact the citizens' ability or willingness to mobilize. Lastly, I include year fixed effects to account for the inter-temporal variation of mobilization intensity throughout the period.

Table 5.2: Aggregate Analysis: Great Famine Grievance and Anti-Local Authority Incidents (1966-69)

	DV: Aggregate Anti-Authority Conflict Intensity			
	Total Incidents	Total Casualties	Casualty Breakdown: *Deaths*	*Injuries*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Key Independent Variable:				
Provincial excess mortality rate, 58-61	3.155*	6.410**	2.418***	3.991
	(1.602)	(3.068)	(0.887)	(2.718)
Controls:				
Pre-1966 time-invariant controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yearly socioeconomic indicators	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Num. of units	108	108	108	108
Num. of years	4	4	4	4
Num. of provinces	27	27	27	27
R^2	0.490	0.390	0.381	0.306
Adjusted R^2	0.386	0.266	0.255	0.165
Residual Std. Error	30.849	58.540	17.020	51.996

Notes: For a complete list of control variables and the full regression results, see **Appendix Table C2**. Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

The findings support the notion that pre-existing grievances from the Great Leap Forward contributed to a higher intensity of collective actions against local authorities during the Cultural Revolution. According to the results, a one percentage point increase in the excess mortality rate corresponds to a 3.06 increase in incidents and a 6.219 increase in casualties within a province in a year. When breaking down the casualties into deaths and injuries, it is clear that Great Famine-era mortality led to a more significant increase in deaths rather than injuries from anti-authority collective actions. Overall, the results suggest that pre-existing grievances may both contribute to the *frequency* and *severity* of collective actions targeting local authorities at the provincial level.

One alternative explanation for the observed correlation, as suggested by Dikötter (2011) and J. Yang

(2012), is that the Great Famine may have led to a general erosion of social capital and mutual trust among citizens, which increased their propensity for violence during periods of instability in more famine-stricken provinces. If this alternative explanation holds true, then famine mortality should be associated with an increase in *all forms* of violence and conflicts during the Cultural Revolution. In **Appendix C3**, I examine the impact of Great Famine mortality on the total number of conflicts and casualties within a province in a given year. The results show that, while more famine-stricken provinces experienced a greater number of conflicts (partly attributable to more anti-authority incidents), there was no significant increase in the level of violence (measured by total casualties, deaths, and injuries). This finding supports the plausibility of my explanatory framework — that mass mobilization allowed the masses to redirect their past grievances toward the local authorities.

5.5.2 Testing for Hypothesis 6

I then examine the hypothesis that mass mobilization could serve as a mechanism to curb the excessive influence of local leaders who had governed the locality for a prolonged period. **Table 5.3** presents the main results of my regression analysis. The unit of analysis is each anti-authority incident that occurred between 1966-69. Consistent with previous analyses, I use total casualties, total number of deaths, and injuries as dependent variables to measure the intensity of mass mobilization. In Models (1), (3), and (5), I only include the incumbent provincial leader's *years of local work experience since 1949* as the explanatory variable. In Models (2), (4), and (6), I add a series of covariates that reflect connections with the Center and the military, such as years of prior work experience in central authorities, years of military service, and a dummy variable indicating whether the leader was a member of the Central Committee.[5] I hope to explore whether an official's political ties with different stakeholders of power could impact the propensity of the masses to engage in contention. To control for the heterogeneous conditions across different localities, I include provincial fixed effects and cluster the standard errors on the provincial levels.

Overall, the results of my analysis provide support for my theoretical prediction that mass mobilization targeted locally established officials with extensive length of rule. More years of local work could lead to a significant rise in the casualties caused by mass incidents against local authorities, particularly the occurrence of injuries. Additionally, an official's greater involvement with the central leadership (indicated by both years of central work and membership in the Central Party Committee) seemed to have a negative

5. Includes alternate member of the Central Committee.

impact on anti-authority casualties, which might imply that citizens had great trust in Beijing-dispatched officials who were perceived to more impartial and less embedded in local interests. Overall, these findings support my argument that mass mobilization provides a bottom-up way for the central leadership to constrain and manage sub-national leaders. To strengthen the validity of my results, I perform a series of robustness tests, shown in **Table C4** of the appendix, to check whether my results remain robust under different model specifications.

Table 5.3: Prior Local Engagement and Anti-authority Conflict Intensity

	Dependent variable: Anti-Authority Conflict Intensity					
	All Casulties		Casualty Breakdown: *Deaths*		*Injuries*	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Leader's Career History:						
Yrs. of local experience	6.233***	8.700***	0.622*	−0.074	5.611***	8.774***
	(1.132)	(1.691)	(0.329)	(0.384)	(1.032)	(1.726)
Yrs. of central gov. experience	—	−7.156***	—	−0.357	—	−6.799***
		(2.079)		(0.420)		(2.088)
Yrs. of military service	—	2.512	—	−0.041	—	2.553
		(1.458)		(0.187)		(1.519)
Central committee mem.	—	−1.609	—	−0.815**	—	−0.794
		(2.177)		(0.321)		(2.213)
Yearly socioeconomic controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clustered s.e. by province	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Num. of incidents	908	908	908	908	908	908
R^2	0.064	0.065	0.034	0.035	0.060	0.061
Adjusted R^2	0.026	0.023	−0.005	−0.009	0.022	0.019
Residual Std. Error	13.355	13.380	2.617	2.622	12.527	12.548

Note: For a complete list of control variables and the full regression results, see **Appendix C5** in the appendix. Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

5.6 Discussion: "Squeeze the Two Sides to Control the Middle?"

This chapter has two main implications for the authoritarian politics literature. First, it highlights the *individual agency* of the masses in authoritarian political participation. Rather than irrational mobs driven by "herd mentality" who followed the leaders' call, the mobilized masses showed the ability to shape the magnitude and targets of their collection action, and seized the opportunity to hold sub-national leaders accountable for their behaviors. As exemplified in the Cultural Revolution, citizens strategically aligned

themselves with Beijing and "capitalized" on its tolerance for grassroots movements to sanction and restrain local officials who wield extensive power but face little oversight. In this regard, ordinary citizens demonstrated the potential to impact governance and power dynamics even under a rigid totalitarian regime.

My study also shed light on the autocrats' strategy of using pro-regime popular participation as a means to control and oversee subordinate officials while preserving their central authority. This motivation might explain why some autocrats allowed or even encouraged certain semi-democratic elements in the political processes. As shown in this case, by mobilizing the masses against local authorities, Beijing could divert and limit the citizens' grievance from the regime's policy failures at the sub-national level, thereby reducing the public pressure and accountability on the central leadership. Furthermore, by directing citizens to seek redress and accountability from local officials, the central government can enhance its control and oversight over these bureaucrats positioned in the middle of the command chain.

Similar to previous chapters, I would like to reiterate that this chapter should not be interpreted as a defense of the Cultural Revolution by any means, or an argument for the "positive aspects" of it. As numerous research has pointed out, the Cultural Revolution was one of the greatest tragedy of the 20th century which inflicted enormous economic and social costs on China. The mass mobilization had resulted in massive violence, dragged the entire nation into chaos, and senselessly claimed millions of lives. The need for Mao to use mass mobilization to constrain and oversee its bureaucracy itself exposed the inherent flaws and the ossified nature of the political system, and did not indicate Mao's genuine commitment to democracy or broader political participation by any means. □

Chapter 6

Conclusion

"[The Cultural Revolution] is a *drill*. Our young people, who have not experienced the test of revolutionary warfare and lack political experience, should be given the opportunity to face challenges and broaden their horizons in the midst of storms and tempests. This will allow them to undergo necessary training and become steadfast successors of the revolution. This campaign is meant to *test and train our soldiers*."

Mao Zedong, *Conversation with the Provincial Leadership of Jiangxi Province*, June 15, 1966

6.1 Mass-Mobilized Campaigns as a Vehicle of Bureaucratic Control

This dissertation focuses on how mass-mobilized campaigns during the Mao era impacted the behaviors and responsiveness of the Chinese bureaucracy. The term "campaigns," by definition, refers to intentional *states of exception* implemented by the regime leadership to advance specific political objectives. During these campaigns, the existing bureaucratic hierarchy was often disrupted, the existing power-sharing arrangements within the regime were shaken, and established bureaucratic norms and operational routines were bypassed in favor of *ad hoc* political mandates. Instead of relying on a regular bureaucracy with a centralized chain of command to carry out expected tasks, these campaigns involve a wide range of stakeholders, including ordinary citizens, rank-and-file cadres, and bureaucrats parachuted from the Center to the locality, all working together to fulfill the regime's political and policy priorities.

During the Mao era, mass-mobilized campaigns were implemented to address specific challenges and obstacles *within the bureaucracy* that impeded the political agenda of the leadership. As elaborated earlier

in the three empirical cases, many of these issues were rooted in the authoritarian structure of the Leninist Party-state. One major problem was the *lack of motivation* among certain groups of subordinate officials to fulfill the regime's tasks, due to factors such as the high costs of implementation, unclear career prospects for promotion, or grievances over unfair power-sharing among different factions. This problem was further exacerbated by the absence of accountability and oversight mechanisms for local bureaucrats under the hyper-centralized political structure. Using the words of J. Yang (2012), once local leaders became "dictators facing downward," they would be less willing to serve as "slaves facing upward" given their enormous local power and control over information in their respective jurisdictions.

In essence, the non-compliance and unresponsiveness of subordinate bureaucrats were principal-agent problems inherent in any hierarchical organization. Although the CCP presented itself as a vanguard Party armed with a revolutionary ideology and noble, transformative goals, in practice it had to operate as *just another bureaucracy* staffed by career-focused officials responsible for policy implementation. Ironically, despite Mao's strong emphasis on the ideological re-education of cadres, subordinate officials' responses to central directives were still influenced by various private incentives and concerns (e.g. their expected career rewards and promotion prospects, their relationship with the target population affected by the policies, and power dynamics among different factions within the local authorities).[1] Thus, when individual officials' private agenda did not align with the regime's, they would be hesitant to faithfully comply with their assigned tasks, or deviate from the higher authority's expected goals and targets.

Mass-mobilized campaigns were a unique approach taken by Mao to "stir up" the bureaucracy and induce its compliance and responsiveness in executing costly or undesirable policies, while maintaining the Party's monopoly of power. In the three empirical chapters, I propose three mechanisms that campaigns could bolster the compliance of subordinate bureaucrats. During the Anti-Rightist Campaign, outgroup members of the regime were given an opportunity to credibly signal their trustworthiness and clear up the leader's suspicion of disloyalty due to their previous backgrounds. This prospect of gaining Beijing's trust and mitigating their career hurdles motivated them to engage in more heavy-handed repression of alleged "rightists" in their assigned localities. During the Land Reform, the regime leveraged factional competition among southbound and locally-embedded cadres to create a tense environment of pressure and mutual scrutiny. Hence, local officials had to work diligently to meet the campaign targets set by the Center,

1. For a game-theoretic analysis of the tension between an autocrat's political agenda and the subordinate bureaucrats' career concerns, see Montagnes and Wolton (2019). For a discussion of this tension in the context of Leninist autocracies, see Scott Gehlbach's response to the article: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2ppF3hiQAU&t=1995s.

despite (and because of) having to work with hostile peers from rival factions. Finally, during the Cultural Revolution, Mao agitated a large-scale mobilization campaign where the masses were instructed to target local bureaucrats in defense of the leader. By permitting ordinary citizens to express their grievances regarding the regime's past policy failures towards local authorities and take direct action against local leaders, the regime was able to enhance its oversight over sub-national officials and restrict their behavior in a system without institutionalized checks and balances.

Taken together, I contend that the mass-mobilized campaigns during the Mao era should be seen as a distinct approach to *statebuilding*. Intentionally or inadvertently, those campaigns improved the compliance of subordinate officials to the regime's agenda and directives and allowed the central leadership to better oversee and influence their behavior. As chaotic and arbitrary as they seemed to be, those campaigns appeared to strengthen the regime's capacity and cohesion, rather than undermine them.

6.2 Contemporary Relevance of This Project

The political norms and practices in the Mao era cast a long shadow on China's subsequent development. Many aspects of governance in contemporary China, especially during the Xi Jinping era, reflected the legacies of Mao's political campaigns. The late political scientist Mayling Birney famously characterized the governance model in post-Mao China as the "rule of mandates:" once a top policy priority has been set by the Center, all efforts should be redirected to achieving the planned target, even if it requires circumventing the existing legal framework, suspending less prioritized tasks, and deviating from the established norms and routines of bureaucratic functions (Birney 2014).[2] After Xi came to power in 2013, the regime has increasingly adopted a "campaign-style" approach to enforce policy mandates. For instance, ordinary citizens have been mobilized to report hints of local official misdeeds during the Anti-Corruption Crackdown (Menzel 2019; Gueorguiev 2021) and identify cases of illegal industrial pollution during his environmental protection drive (Buntaine et al. 2022). Furthermore, central "inspection teams" with extra-judicial powers were deployed to local governments with minimal advance notice to interrogate officials and gather potential evidence of corruption (Carothers and Zhang 2023). In rural areas, "first secretaries-in-residence" sent by higher authorities were stationed in villages to supervise Beijing's poverty alleviation

2. Birney's unfinished book project, *The Rule of Mandates*, aimed to conceptualize the mechanism of governance in post-Mao China. However, her sudden passing in 2017 halted the progress of the project. I would like to thank Kevin Luo for directing me to her other published works.

campaign, who had broad authority overlapping with local village officials (Liao, Tsai, and Lin 2020). Those practices all bear strong resemblances to certain patterns of the mass campaigns of the Mao era in various ways. Thus, studying Mao's campaigns can definitely help us understand the contemporary mechanism of governance and control in present-day China.

6.3 Closing Remark: How the Red Sun Stayed in the Sky?

I conclude this dissertation by returning to Gao Hua, the late Chinese historian whose works inspired the initial idea of this project. In the epilogue of his seminal work, *How the Red Sun Rose*, Gao revealed that his primary motivation of studying Mao's China stemmed from his personal experiences during the Cultural Revolution. As a teenager, the young Gao observed a startling paradox: complete chaos and collapse of social order on one hand, and Mao's unprecedented consolidation of power on the other hand. For the former, he recalled:

> *The Red Terror that swept through Nanjing in late August 1966 left a lasting impression on me that I will carry with me for a lifetime. One day, I overheard a conversation between my parents, where my father*[3] *mentioned that we might not be able to escape this time, and if we didn't flee, he could be beaten to death...In the turbulence of the Cultural Revolution, I witnessed countless scenes of chaos. The same influential figures who once prosecuted and denounced the capitalist "tigers" during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, were soon themselves toppled from power by the masses...* (Gao 2018, 709)

Meanwhile, in the midst of this complete terror and chaos from mass mobilization, Mao's grip on power appeared unshaken and was further consolidated to an unprecedented level. Gao remembered the confusion he secretly held in his heart:

> *I quietly had doubts about Mao Zedong in my heart. I knew that in China, everything was decided by him alone. Even though Liu Shaoqi — whose portraits had been displayed together with Mao everywhere before the Cultural Revolution — if Mao Zedong didn't like him, Liu Shaoqi would immediately be overthrown.* (710)

3. Gao's father was denounced as a rightist in 1957, which sparked his family's concern for safety during the Cultural Revolution. — author's note.

How did the complete disorder and anarchy occur simultaneously with the leader's unprecedented consolidation of personal power? Using Gao's metaphor, once the "Red Sun" rose, how did it manage to remain in the sky for so long? It was these questions that sparked my entire dissertation project as I delve into Gao Hua's work. In this respect, this dissertation is my humble tribute to Gao's scholarly cause, and I hope it can make a small contribution to our understanding of the mechanisms and impacts of power consolidation and political control in the Mao era. □

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Appendix Tables

Note: This appendix only includes the **key regression results** presented in the main text of the dissertation. A more comprehensive supplemental document containing additional robustness checks, dataset coding details, and qualitative/anecdotal materials is available. For more results, please reach out to the author at jqian3@wisc.edu.

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A1: Summary Statistics, Provincial-Level (27 provinces)

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Key dependent variable:					
Num. of rightists per 1,000	27	0.917	0.445	0.319	2.236
Provincial leader's personal characteristics:					
Red Army combatant	27	0.593	0.501	0	1
Undercover cadre	27	0.407	0.501	0	1
Ethnic minority	27	0.111	0.320	0	1
Age by 1957	27	48.704	4.802	40	57
Years in CCP by 1957	27	28.074	4.047	21	36
Born locally	27	0.259	0.447	0	1
Postsecondary education	27	0.333	0.480	0	1
Political rank: full CC member	27	0.370	0.492	0	1
Political rank: alternate CC member	27	0.296	0.465	0	1
Geopolitical conditions of provinces:					
Num. of CCP members per 1,000	27	18.575	6.719	10.707	36.324
Distance from provincial capital to Beijing (1,000km)	27	1.075	0.626	0.000	2.411
Pre-1947 CCP enclave density	27	0.355	0.280	0.000	0.829
Fraction of provincial population as urban	27	0.219	0.191	0.071	0.945

A2. Summary Statistics, Prefecture-City Level (91 prefecture cities)

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Key dependent variable:					
Num. of rightists per 1,000	91	2.361	1.989	0.177	12.423
Provincial leader's personal characteristics:					
Red Army combatant	91	0.099	0.300	0	1
Undercover	91	0.462	0.501	0	1
Post-1938 combatants	91	0.440	0.499	0	1
Age	91	41.055	4.433	32	56
Ethnic Minority	91	0.055	0.229	0	1
Locally born	91	0.330	0.473	0	1
Postsecondary education	91	0.176	0.383	0	1
Years in CCP by 1957	91	20.648	3.796	16	32
Geopolitical conditions of provinces:					
Num. of CCP members per 1,000	91	28.970	24.733	3.837	201.371
Distance from city to provincial capital (1,000km)	91	0.144	0.132	0	0.487
Distance from city to Beijing (1,000km)	91	1.045	0.583	0.140	2.411
Provincial capital dummy	91	0.264	0.443	0	1

A3. Summary Statistics, Individual-level (451 Individual Rightist Cases)

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Type of Penalty:					
Coercive penalty	441	0.190	0.393	0	1
Non-coercive penalty	441	0.810	0.393	0	1
Personal Characteristics					
Male	451	0.953	0.211	0	1
Age	451	41.264	9.815	14	71
Belonging to reactionary classes	447	0.503	0.501	0	1
Denounced by:					
Provincial authorities	451	0.698	0.459	0	1
Central ministries	451	0.302	0.459	0	1
Type of Alleged Wrongdoings:					
Oppose political system	451	0.186	0.390	0	1
Oppose central policy	451	0.794	0.405	0	1
Defy superior cadres	451	0.936	0.246	0	1
Demand redress of past campaigns	451	0.490	0.500	0	1

A4. Difference of Means Tests, Provincial-level (27 Provinces)

Variables	Difference of Means		
	Means		*p-value*
	Combatant	Undercover	
Outcome Variable:			
Number of rightists/1,000 citizens	0.737	1.180	0.022**
Leadership Personal Characteristics:			
Fraction of ethnic minority	0.188	0.000	0.083*
Age by 1957	49.625	47.364	0.266
Born locally	0.250	0.273	0.901
Postsecondary education	0.250	0.273	0.901
Years of CCP membership by 1957	28.880	26.910	0.279
Political Rank			
Fraction of CC full member	0.375	0.364	0.955
Fraction of CC alternate member	0.375	0.182	0.280
Fraction of CC non-Member	0.250	0.455	0.303
Provincial-level Covariates:			
CCP member density per 1,000	17.788	19.720	0.525
Provincial capital's distance to Beijing	1109.210	1025.880	0.747
Fraction of counties with preexisting CCP enclaves	0.261	0.492	0.039**
Fraction of citizens as urban residents	0.201	0.245	0.622
N	16	11	

Excluding Taiwan (not controlled by the PRC) and Tibet (where ARC was not implemented outside of the Party committee). All FPSs were male so gender not included. *p*-value: * 0.1; ** 0.05; *** 0.01.

A5. OLS Regressions, Provincial-level (27 provinces)

	Dependent variable:			
	Num. of rightists per 1,000			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Type: undercover	0.444***	0.509***	0.397**	0.384**
	(0.154)	(0.155)	(0.150)	(0.177)
Personal covariates:				
Age by 1957		0.014		0.012
		(0.032)		(0.032)
Ethnic minority		−0.165		−0.122
		(0.296)		(0.272)
Born locally		−0.194		−0.188
		(0.205)		(0.196)
Postsecondary education		−0.260		−0.221
		(0.152)		(0.139)
Years in CCP		0.038		−0.005
		(0.039)		(0.040)
Rank: CC full member		−0.121		−0.001
		(0.245)		(0.235)
Rank: CC alt. member		−0.139		−0.215
		(0.210)		(0.197)
Local covariates:				
CCP member per 1,000			−0.006	−0.018
			(0.013)	(0.015)
Distance to Beijing (1,000km)			−0.016	−0.094
			(0.143)	(0.166)
Pre-1947 CCP enclave density			−0.018	−0.003
			(0.303)	(0.327)
Percentage urban residents			1.399***	1.306**
			(0.404)	(0.525)
Constant	0.737***	−0.807	0.582	0.630
	(0.098)	(0.932)	(0.414)	(1.263)
Observations	27	27	27	27
R^2	0.249	0.560	0.583	0.719
Adjusted R^2	0.218	0.364	0.484	0.478
Residual Std. Error	0.394	0.355	0.320	0.322
F Statistic	8.268***	2.863**	5.872***	2.985**

Note: Exclude Tibet and Taiwan. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A6. Difference of Means Tests, Prefecture-level (91 Prefecture-level Cities)

Variables	Character Traits		
	Means		*p-value*
	Combatant	Undercover	
Outcome Variable:			
Number of rightists/1,000 citizens	2.023	2.721	0.096*
Leadership Personal Characteristics:			
Fraction of ethnic minority	0.064	0.114	0.703
Age by 1957	40.000	42.182	0.017**
Born locally	0.340	0.318	0.824
Postsecondary education	0.106	0.250	0.077*
Years of CCP membership by 1957	20.170	21.159	0.213
Provincial-level Covariates:			
CCP member density per 1,000	30.139	27.772	0.638
City's distance to Beijing	1088.766	998.955	0.466
City's distance to provincial seat	175.915	109.409	0.015**
Provincial seat dummy	0.170	0.364	0.038**
N	47	44	

Excluding Shiqi City, which was relegated to a township before the end of ARC. All FPSs were male so gender is not included. *p*-value: * 0.1; ** 0.05; *** 0.01.

A7. OLS Regressions, Prefecture-level (91 prefecture cities)

	Dependent Variable: Number of Rightists per 1,000					
	Baseline: All combatants			Baseline: Red Army officers		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Type: undercover	0.865***	1.048**	1.139**	1.562*	2.764***	1.830***
	(0.294)	(0.387)	(0.483)	(0.831)	(0.984)	(0.405)
Type: post-1938 combatants				0.853	2.314	0.932
				(0.982)	(1.423)	(0.990)
Personal covariates:						
Age by 1957		−0.099	−0.106		−0.091	−0.102
		(0.071)	(0.074)		(0.075)	(0.075)
Ethnic minority		1.487	−0.251		1.046	−0.312
		(1.680)	(0.381)		(1.155)	(0.356)
Locally born		−0.059	0.128		−0.061	0.127
		(0.426)	(0.370)		(0.470)	(0.391)
Postsecondary education		−0.304	−0.719		−0.292	−0.693
		(0.505)	(0.470)		(0.493)	(0.470)
Years in CCP		0.114*	0.090*		0.235***	0.140**
		(0.055)	(0.045)		(0.076)	(0.056)
Local state capacity:						
CCP members per 1,000			0.050***			0.047***
			(0.009)			(0.009)
Distance to provincial seat (1,000km)			2.414			2.527
			(2.164)			(2.139)
Distance to Beijing (1,000km)			−2.096*			−2.079
			(1.137)			(1.214)
Provincial seat			0.396			0.424
			(0.999)			(1.016)
Provincial FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Province Clustered s.e.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	91	91	91	91	91	91
R^2	0.356	0.398	0.544	0.367	0.433	0.549
Adjusted R^2	0.122	0.112	0.280	0.124	0.150	0.275
Residual Std. Error	1.863	1.874	1.688	1.861	1.834	1.693

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A8. OLS Regressions, Individual-level

	Dependent Variable: Dummy on Coercive Penalty						
	Provincial Leaders Only				Provincial & Ministry Leaders		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Undercover	0.147**	0.186***	0.207***	0.142**	0.184***	0.175***	0.107***
	(0.063)	(0.059)	(0.072)	(0.065)	(0.043)	(0.040)	(0.037)
Affiliation type: ministry					0.068	0.129***	0.009
					(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.039)
Leader Background:							
Age by 1957		0.005	0.001	0.014		−0.012**	−0.002
		(0.010)	(0.015)	(0.016)		(0.005)	(0.006)
Ethnic minority		−0.059	−0.069	−0.051		−0.109**	−0.052
		(0.074)	(0.081)	(0.096)		(0.046)	(0.062)
Postsecondary education		−0.038	−0.042	−0.025		−0.028	−0.026
		(0.056)	(0.058)	(0.063)		(0.043)	(0.051)
Years of CCP membership		−0.029**	−0.027*	−0.029*		0.001	−0.008
		(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.017)		(0.008)	(0.008)
Rank: CC full member		0.214***	0.217**	0.127		0.103	0.046
		(0.077)	(0.090)	(0.087)		(0.064)	(0.053)
Rank: CC alt. member		0.192**	0.175*	0.134		0.127*	0.092
		(0.092)	(0.094)	(0.110)		(0.066)	(0.066)
Born locally		−0.037	−0.042	−0.053	—	—	—
		(0.100)	(0.091)	(0.099)			
Provincial State Capacity:							
CCP members/1,000			−0.007	−0.004	—	—	—
			(0.006)	(0.006)			
Distance to Beijing (1000km)			−0.069	0.004	—	—	—
			(0.091)	(0.0850)			
Pre-1947 CCP enclave density			−0.093	0.031	—	—	—
			(0.204)	(0.169)			
Individual rightist's background							
Male				−0.001			0.002
				(0.054)			(0.051)
Age				−0.009***			−0.009***
				(0.002)			(0.002)
Reactionary social class				0.009			0.016
				(0.034)			(0.031)
Individual rightist's wrongdoings							
Oppose political system				0.275*			0.312***
				(0.161)			(0.087)
Oppose central policy				0.012			0.042
				(0.078)			(0.050)
Defy superior cadres				−0.025			0.037
				(0.093)			(0.070)
Demand redress of past grievance				0.085***			0.080***
				(0.031)			(0.028)
Constant	0.092**	0.539*	0.904	0.548	0.090***	0.582***	0.633***
	(0.036)	(0.310)	(0.755)	(0.765)	(0.030)	(0.203)	(0.224)
Observations	308	308	304	300	441	441	437
Clustered s.e. by affiliation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R^2	0.040	0.085	0.088	0.221	0.067	0.090	0.253
Adjusted R^2	0.037	0.061	0.053	0.172	0.063	0.074	0.227
Residual Std. Error	0.356	0.352	0.355	0.334	0.381	0.378	0.347

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A9. Mechanism Analysis, Individual-level

	Dependent Variable: Dummy on Coercive Penalty					
	All Models: Include Both Provincial and Ministry Leaders					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Leader's revolutionary background:						
Undercover	0.107***		0.047		−0.018	−0.038
	(0.037)		(0.041)		(0.051)	(0.051)
Reactionary Social Class		0.104**	0.032			0.043
		(0.047)	(0.040)			(0.034)
Undercover × Bad Social Class			0.170**			0.118*
			(0.073)			(0.070)
Arrested				0.141***	0.023	−0.008
				(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.038)
Undercover × Arrested					0.182***	0.168**
					(0.069)	(0.069)
Affiliation: Ministry	0.009	−0.008	−0.041	0.020	0.001	−0.040
	(0.039)	(0.046)	(0.041)	(0.043)	(0.039)	(0.042)
Leader's personal background:						
Age by 1957	−0.002	−0.0004	0.002	−0.001	0.001	0.004
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Ethnic minority	−0.052	−0.042	−0.009	0.004	−0.002	0.018
	(0.062)	(0.066)	(0.060)	(0.071)	(0.068)	(0.069)
Postsecondary education	−0.026	−0.045	−0.081*	0.006	−0.012	−0.065
	(0.051)	(0.059)	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.045)	(0.045)
Years of CCP membership	−0.008	−0.009	−0.008	−0.017*	−0.016**	−0.014*
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.007)
Rank: CC full member	0.046	−0.001	0.010	0.055	0.008	−0.024
	(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.049)	(0.056)	(0.054)	(0.057)
Rank: CC alt. member	0.092	0.059	0.038	0.053	0.028	−0.003
	(0.066)	(0.064)	(0.053)	(0.066)	(0.055)	(0.055)
Individual rightist's background:						
Male	0.002	0.003	0.022	−0.003	0.009	0.024
	(0.051)	(0.046)	(0.049)	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.048)
Age	−0.009***	−0.010***	−0.010***	−0.010***	−0.009***	−0.009***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Reactionary social class	0.016	0.005	0.012	0.019	0.020	0.015
	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.030)	(0.031)
Individual rightist's wrongdoings:						
Oppose political system	0.312***	0.333***	0.321***	0.316***	0.304***	0.313***
	(0.087)	(0.087)	(0.085)	(0.085)	(0.086)	(0.085)
Oppose central policy	0.042	0.027	0.033	0.047	0.058	0.047
	(0.050)	(0.044)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.048)
Defy superior cadres	0.037	0.054	0.046	0.042	0.038	0.046
	(0.070)	(0.069)	(0.069)	(0.073)	(0.074)	(0.072)
Demand redress of past grievance	0.080***	0.073***	0.084***	0.073***	0.081***	0.084***
	(0.028)	(0.028)	(0.029)	(0.027)	(0.028)	(0.029)
Constant	0.633***	0.686***	0.490**	0.859***	0.741***	0.580***
	(0.224)	(0.222)	(0.224)	(0.214)	(0.203)	(0.208)
Observations	437	437	437	437	437	437
Clustered s.e. by affiliation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R^2	0.253	0.250	0.274	0.261	0.273	0.285
Adjusted R^2	0.227	0.223	0.245	0.235	0.243	0.253
Residual Std. Error	0.347	0.348	0.343	0.345	0.343	0.341

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

A10. Difference of Means Tests: All Provincial Leaders between 1950–66

Variables	Difference of Means		
	Means		*p-value*
Cadre Characteristics	Combatant	Undercover	
Personal Characteristics			
Age by 1949	41.600	39.937	0.137
Ethnic Minority	0.040	0.048	0.845
Postsecondary Education	0.180	0.469	0.0008***
Length of Party Membership by 1949	20.880	17.111	0.000***
Pre-existing Political Rank by 1949:			
Percentage of Non-CC Members	0.740	0.921	0.014**
Percentage of CC Alternate Members	0.120	0.031	0.091*
Percentage of CC Full Members	0.120	0.047	0.182
Type of Job Assignment:			
Only served as FPS	0.480	0.317	0.082*
Only served as Governor	0.220	0.508	0.001**
Served both roles	0.300	0.174	0.126
Political Fate, 1949–1976:			
Promotion in Party Rank	0.600	0.317	0.003**
Died of torture in Cultural Revolution	0.080	0.238	0.019**
N	50	64	

Note: Exclude the four governors (Deng Baoshan 邓宝珊, Chen Qian 程潜, Burhan Shehidi 包尔汉, and Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme 阿沛阿旺晋美) who were not CCP members. They were former officials of Kuomintang, Xinjiang, or Tibetan governments who defected to the CCP during the Chinese Civil War (1945-49) and the Battle of Chamdo (1950-51). As a return, they were appointed as the figurehead governors in their home provinces but wielded no real power.

Table A11. Logistic Regressions, Impact of Provincial Officials' Backgrounds on Career Outcomes

	Dependent Variable: Fates of Provincial-level Officials			
	Promoted in the Rank		Killed in Cultural Revolution	
	(1) No Control	(2) Personal Controls	(3) No Control	(4) Personal Controls
Cadre Background Dummy:				
Undercover	−1.122***	−0.924*	1.259**	1.629**
	(0.393)	(0.514)	(0.599)	(0.658)
Personal Characteristics:				
Ethnic minority		21.006		−16.054
		(2,278.907)		(1,625.549)
College or above		0.387		−0.207
		(0.572)		(0.593)
Age by 1949		0.007		−0.023
		(0.062)		(0.069)
Years of CCP membership by 1949		0.210***		0.128
		(0.079)		(0.081)
Preexisting Political Rank by 1949:				
Full CC member		−2.225**		−0.757
		(0.967)		(1.231)
Alternate CC member		17.688		−0.417
		(1,918.538)		(1.181)
Constant	0.405	−4.212**	−2.442***	−3.995*
	(0.289)	(2.008)	(0.521)	(2.334)
Observations	114	114	114	114
Log Likelihood	−74.153	−54.813	−48.787	−46.013
Akaike Inf. Crit.	152.305	125.626	101.574	108.026

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

B1. Major Characteristics of Four Sample Provinces

Variable	Jiangsu	Zhejiang	Fujian	Guangdong	Mean
Landmass (km^2)	102,658	104,141	121,400	179,800	126999.75
Population in 1950 (million)	35.83	21.21	12.11	28.49	24.41
GDP in 1950 (billion *yuan*)	4.841	1.742	1.273	7.37	3.807
Earliest year of CCP operation	1921	1922	1926	1921	—
Year of complete CCP control	1949	1949	1950	1950	—
Party Secretary name*	Ke Qingshi	Jiang Hua	Zhang Dingchen	Tao Zhu	—
Party Secretary's faction	Non-local	Non-local	Local	Non-local	—
Governor name*	Chen Peixian	Tan Zhenlin	Zhang Dingchen	Ye Jianying	—
Governor's faction	Non-local	Non-local	Local	Local	—

*Note: If a leadership turnover occurred in the midst of the Land Reform, the leader with the *longer tenure* was counted.

B2. Summary Statistics of County-level Data, 216 Counties

Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Party Secretary, locally-embedded	216	0.338	0.474	0.000	1.000
Governor, locally-embedded	216	0.483	0.501	0	10
Factionalized leadership	216	0.314	0.465	0	1
Population by 1949	216	270,154.6	185,283.8	22,619	844,514
Landmass (km^2)	216	1,837.963	900.876	114	5,634
Total land confiscated (mu)	216	210,038.6	173,568.3	3,912	1,066,300
Total eligible household	216	49,805.78	34,190.94	1,411	210,732
Average land per household *(mu)*	216	4.559	2.453	0.669	18.403
Num. of CCP members by 1949	216	425.515	826.225	7	8,099
Years of CCP operation	216	20.633	4.858	0	27
CCP revolutionary base	216	0.437	0.497	0	1
Anti-Japanese Guerrilla Area	216	0.304	0.461	0	1

B3: Baseline Analysis: Faction-driven Radicalization (Complete Table)

	Dependent variable:					
	Per capita confiscated land (in *mu*)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Locality fixed effect		Time fixed effect		Locality + Time	
(Baseline group: unitary leadership)						
Factionalized leadership	0.475*	0.522*	0.499	0.461**	0.549*	0.585**
	(0.277)	(0.278)	(0.273)	(0.136)	(0.285)	(0.280)
Socioeconomic Controls:						
Population in 1949	−0.557**	−0.679**	−0.926	−0.807*	−0.585**	−0.692**
	(0.252)	(0.297)	(0.541)	(0.273)	(0.262)	(0.306)
Log of Land Area	0.035	−0.065	0.612*	0.696***	0.051	−0.042
	(0.365)	(0.412)	(0.252)	(0.088)	(0.392)	(0.431)
State Capacity Controls:						
Log (Num. of CCP Members)	—	0.228	—	−0.299***	—	0.213
		(0.178)		(0.031)		(0.172)
Years of CCP Operation	—	−0.020	—	−0.003	—	−0.022
		(0.037)		(0.029)		(0.039)
Dummy: Revolutionary Base	—	0.205	—	−0.159	—	0.212
		(0.350)		(0.698)		(0.349)
Dummy: Anti-Japanese Guerrilla	—	−0.087	—	0.234	—	−0.053
		(0.422)		(0.617)		(0.438)
Fixed effect: Prefecture	✓	✓			✓	✓
Fixed effect: Starting time			✓	✓	✓	✓
Group-clustered SE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Num. of counties	216	216	216	216	216	216
R^2	0.528	0.530	0.146	0.168	0.534	0.535
Adjusted R^2	0.432	0.415	0.117	0.118	0.428	0.409
Residual Std. Error	1.676	1.707	2.089	2.095	1.683	1.715

Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

B4: Mechanism Analysis: Faction-Driven Radicalization (Complete Table)

	DV: Per capita confiscated land (in mu)			
	Interaction between leadership backgrounds			Pairwise combination
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Interaction of secretary/governor factions:				
(Baseline: either official is local)				
Non-local Secretary	0.409		0.855*	–
	(0.411)		(0.438)	
Non-local Governor		0.199	1.090*	–
		(0.409)	(0.567)	
Non-local Secretary × Non-local Governor			−1.322**	–
			(0.636)	
Dummies for each pairing pattern:				
(Baseline: Both officials were local)				
Both officials were non-local	–	–	–	0.622
				(0.548)
Local secretary + non-local governor	–	–	–	1.090*
				(0.567)
Non-local secretary + local governor	–	–	–	0.855*
				(0.438)
Population in 1949	−0.647**	−0.639***	−0.785**	−0.785**
	(0.309)	(0.096)	(0.092)	(0.332)
Log of Land Area	0.020	−0.029	0.035	0.035
	(0.470)	(0.085)	(0.086)	(0.455)
Log (Num. of CCP Members)	0.222	−0.015	−0.022	0.246
	(0.178)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.173)
Years of CCP Operation	0.028	0.030	0.028	0.028
	(0.042)	(0.071)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Dummy: Revolutionary Base	0.107	0.132	0.231	0.231
	(0.282)	(0.387)	(0.331)	(0.331)
Dummy: Anti-Japanese Guerrilla	0.033	−0.057	0.018	0.018
	(0.446)	(0.420)	(0.433)	(0.433)
Fixed effect: Prefecture	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fixed effect: Starting time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Group-clustered SE	✓	✓	✓	✓
No. of counties	216	216	216	216
R^2	0.529	0.525	0.540	0.540
Adjusted R^2	0.401	0.396	0.407	0.407
Residual Std. Error	1.727	1.734	1.717	1.717

Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

B5: Robustness Test: Impact of Each Pre-1949 Factor on Local Leadership Factionalization

	Dependent variable:						
	Factionalized Local Leadership						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Pre-1949 Factors:							
Old revolutionary zone	−0.165*						−0.182*
	(0.083)						(0.099)
Num. of CCP members by '49 (log)		−0.003					−0.020
		(0.043)					(0.063)
Years of CCP presence before '49			−0.003				−0.005
			(0.007)				(0.009)
Anti-Japanese guerrilla area				0.021			0.051
				(0.081)			(0.089)
Population by 1949 (log)					0.053		0.112
					(0.060)		(0.097)
Land area (log)						−0.052	−0.037
						(0.064)	(0.086)
Prefecture f.e.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clustered s.e.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Num. of counties	216	216	216	216	216	216	216
R^2	0.206	0.189	0.193	0.191	0.190	0.195	0.211
Adjusted R^2	0.078	0.054	0.063	0.060	0.058	0.065	0.048
Residual Std. Error	0.447	0.453	0.451	0.452	0.452	0.450	0.454

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

C1. Summary Statistics Table, Aggregated Data on Anti-Authority Incidents

Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
(*Unit: per-year, per-province*)					
Total number of incidents	108	22.037	36.178	0	191
Total number of casualties	108	28.454	59.779	0	289
Total number of deaths	108	7.102	17.407	0	110
Total number of injuries	108	21.352	49.633	0	272
Great Famine Excess Mortality Rate	108	2.041	2.415	0.19	11.49
Population (10,000)	108	2,749.52	1,596.789	241	6,265
GDP amount (100 million)	108	234.886	91.031	18.02	696
Length of road (km)	108	21,741.580	7,140.941	2,619	39,200
Num. college students	108	16,393.480	17,842.370	1,700	111,200
Amount of crop production	108	755.772	455.27	50.46	1,598.5
(*Unit: per-province*)					
Years of CCP presence by 1966	108	24.963	3.560	12	28
Number of CCP members by 1966	108	612,848.1	388,699.6	67,920	1,593,737
Number of CCP members by 1966 (per 10,000)	108	246.548	64.521	100.957	411.115
Number of Rightist denounced in 1957 (per 10,000)	108	9.174	4.392	3.191	22.356
Total number of provinces:	27				
Total number of years:	4			1966	1969

Notes:

- This dataset *only* includes *anti-authority incidents* that occurred between 1966 and 1969, defined as contentious collective actions by mass organization against any local military or government agencies. It is a *small subset* of all conflicts that occurred between 1966 and 1969. Other types of conflicts, such as inter-factional conflicts among Red Guards, or government repression of mass groups, are not included.
- This dataset is aggregated from Walder (2017)'s individual-level dataset. The number of incidents and casualties could be underestimated, because it is not possible to exhaustively include all incidents in the original dataset.

C2. Impact of Great Famine Grievance on Anti-Authority Incidents (1966-69), Full Table

	Dependent variable: Anti-Authority Conflict Intensity			
	Total Incidents	Total Casualties	Casualty Breakdown: *Deaths*	*Injuries*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Key Independent Variable:				
Provincial excess mortality rate, 58-61	3.155*	6.410**	2.418***	3.991
	(1.602)	(3.068)	(0.887)	(2.718)
Controls for Preexisting Political Conditions:				
Years of CCP presence by 1966	−0.198	−0.193	0.019	−0.213
	(1.600)	(3.064)	(0.886)	(2.714)
Num. of CCP members per 10,000	−0.010	0.004	−0.009	0.013
	(0.065)	(0.125)	(0.036)	(0.111)
Num. of Rightists per 10,000	−2.560*	−0.586	−1.185	0.600
	(1.498)	(2.868)	(0.829)	(2.540)
Yearly Socioeconomic Conditions:				
Population (log), $t-1$	31.737	60.778	25.542**	35.235
	(21.622)	(41.403)	(11.966)	(36.676)
GDP amount (log), $t-1$	2.139	30.767	11.063*	19.704
	(11.038)	(21.137)	(6.109)	(18.723)
Total road length (log), $t-1$	13.141	−3.187	8.359	−11.546
	(13.787)	(26.401)	(7.630)	(23.387)
Number of college students, $t-1$	0.0005	−0.0004	0.0001	−0.001
	(0.0004)	(0.001)	(0.0002)	(0.001)
Total crop production (log), $t-1$	−20.911	−26.830	−19.411*	−7.419
	(20.128)	(38.543)	(11.139)	(34.143)
Num. of units	108	108	108	108
Num. of years	4	4	4	4
Num. of provinces	27	27	27	27
R^2	0.490	0.390	0.381	0.306
Adjusted R^2	0.386	0.266	0.255	0.165
Residual Std. Error	30.849	58.540	17.020	51.996

Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

C3. Impact of Great Famine Grievance on All Incidents (1966-69), Full Table

	Dependent variable: Anti-Authority Conflict Intensity			
	Total Incidents	Total Casualties	Casualty Breakdown: *Deaths*	*Injuries*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Key Independent Variable:				
Provincial excess mortality rate, 58-61	6.683**	94.321	−107.421	201.743
	(2.711)	(244.028)	(132.205)	(171.606)
Controls for Preexisting Political Conditions:				
Years of CCP presence by 1966	−2.601	27.835	−56.323	84.157
	(2.671)	(240.463)	(130.273)	(169.099)
Num. of CCP members per 10,000	0.081	−13.602	−11.959**	−1.644
	(0.101)	(9.096)	(4.928)	(6.397)
Num. of Rightists per 10,000	−5.054**	18.059	168.948	−150.888
	(2.495)	(224.605)	(121.683)	(157.948)
Yearly Socioeconomic Conditions:				
Population (log), $t-1$	124.378***	4,822.196	2,411.095	2,411.102
	(41.266)	(3,714.665)	(2,012.463)	(2,612.241)
GDP amount (log), $t-1$	38.957*	2,405.748	660.964	1,744.785
	(20.541)	(1,849.058)	(1,001.748)	(1,300.301)
Total road length (log), $t-1$	21.814	2,013.902	507.675	1,506.227
	(18.040)	(1,623.880)	(879.755)	(1,141.951)
Number of college students, $t-1$	0.0005	−0.006	−0.006	−0.001
	(0.0005)	(0.044)	(0.024)	(0.031)
Total crop production (log), $t-1$	−69.328*	−4,023.908	−1,798.925	−2,224.984
	(37.833)	(3,405.628)	(1,845.038)	(2,394.918)
Num. of units	108	108	108	108
Num. of years	4	4	4	4
Num. of provinces	27	27	27	27
R^2	0.490	0.390	0.381	0.306
Adjusted R^2	0.386	0.266	0.255	0.165
Residual Std. Error	67.684	6,092.729	3,300.806	4,284.552

Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.

Remark:

- As can be seen in Tables C2-C3, Great Famine mortality only led to a significant increase in the severity of local collective actions against *authorities*, but not all types of conflicts. This finding strengthens my theoretical prediction that mass mobilization can help divert public grievance towards local authorities.

C4. Robustness Tests, Impact of Great Famine Grievance on Anti-Authority Incidents (1966-69)

	Dependent variable:					
	Total number of incidents			Total number of incidents		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Key Independent Variable:						
Provincial excess mortality rate, 58-61	3.055***	3.442***	3.155*	7.402***	7.879***	6.410**
	(1.152)	(1.152)	(1.602)	(2.101)	(2.127)	(3.068)
Controls for Preexisting Political Conditions:						
Years of CCP presence by 1966		1.704**	−0.198		2.151	−0.193
		(0.822)	(1.600)		(1.517)	(3.064)
Num. of CCP members per 10,000		0.013	−0.010		−0.008	0.004
		(0.046)	(0.065)		(0.084)	(0.125)
Num. of Rightists per 10,000		−1.389*	−2.560*		−2.025	−0.586
		(0.703)	(1.498)		(1.298)	(2.868)
Yearly Socioeconomic Conditions:						
Population (log), $t-1$			31.737			60.778
			(21.622)			(41.403)
GDP amount (log), $t-1$			2.139			30.767
			(11.038)			(21.137)
Total road length (log), $t-1$			13.141			−3.187
			(13.787)			(26.401)
Num. of college students, $t-1$			0.0005			−0.0004
			(0.0004)			(0.001)
Total crop production (log), $t-1$			−20.911			−26.830
			(20.128)			(38.543)
Num. of units	108	108	108	108	108	108
Num. of years	4	4	4	4	4	4
Num. of provinces	27	27	27	27	27	27
R^2	0.391	0.427	0.494	0.258	0.286	0.380
Adjusted R^2	0.367	0.387	0.406	0.229	0.236	0.273
Residual Std. Error	28.782	28.316	29.868	52.487	52.260	57.194

Significance Levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

C5. Prior Local Engagement and Anti-authority Conflict Intensity, Full Regression Results

	Dependent variable: Anti-Authority Conflict Intensity					
	All Casulties		Casualty Breakdown:			
			Deaths		*Injuries*	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Leader's Career History:						
Yrs. of local experience	6.233***	8.700***	0.622*	−0.074	5.611***	8.774***
	(1.132)	(1.691)	(0.329)	(0.384)	(1.032)	(1.726)
Yrs. of central gov. experience	—	−7.156***	—	−0.357	—	−6.799***
		(2.079)		(0.420)		(2.088)
Yrs. of military service	—	2.512	—	−0.041	—	2.553
		(1.458)		(0.187)		(1.519)
Central committee mem.	—	−1.609	—	−0.815**	—	−0.794
		(2.177)		(0.321)		(2.213)
Province's Yearly Socioeconomic Conditions:						
Population (log), $t-1$	−46.520	−130.743*	−2.282	8.450	−44.238	−139.193**
	(56.785)	(69.188)	(14.219)	(10.778)	(55.414)	(64.633)
GDP amount (log), $t-1$	−23.040	−7.262	−2.336	−9.745***	−20.704	2.483
	(21.762)	(23.276)	(2.268)	(3.009)	(22.387)	(24.451)
Crop production (log), $t-1$	28.388*	25.874**	−2.036	−2.304	30.423*	28.177**
	(14.744)	(11.330)	(2.816)	(2.366)	(16.406)	(12.652)
Total road length (log), $t-1$	−67.129	−85.610*	−6.303	3.901	−60.826	−89.511*
	(44.137)	(44.982)	(3.723)	(6.316)	(44.149)	(47.789)
Num. of college students, $t-1$	−0.0001	−0.0001	0.0001**	0.00005**	−0.0002	−0.0001
	(0.0002)	(0.0001)	(0.00002)	(0.00002)	(0.0002)	(0.0001)
Province fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clustered s.e. by province	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Num. of incidents	908	908	908	908	908	908
R^2	0.064	0.065	0.034	0.035	0.060	0.061
Adjusted R^2	0.026	0.023	−0.005	−0.009	0.022	0.019
Residual Std. Error	13.355	13.380	2.617	2.622	12.527	12.548

Significance levels: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01.