

3 China - Mao

3.2 Mao's consolidation of power, 1949 - 1976

Chairman Mao and the People's Republic

- after declaration of People's Republic of China (PRC, Oct. 1949), Mao Zedong and CCP take hasty measures to secure full political control
- sense of victory electrifies nation; communists still face opposition (internal and external)
- CCP under pressure to fulfill their own promises
- country still politically and economically unstable
- urgent challenges: Chiang Kaishek and nationalists in Taiwan as invasion threat, opposition parties, party cadres trained as guerrilla forces, fear of separatist elements, rebellions

Moderate beginnings

- former government servants and police are asked to stay and bring stability
- middle class provides civil servants and industrial managers

The structure of the PRC

- China divided into six regions, governed by bureau of four major officials
- officers of People's Liberation Army (PLA) fill military commander and political commissar posts which puts China under military control effectively

The reunification campaigns

- CCP fears that nationalist elements can weaken united China
- religion poses particular threat to communist control
- PLA units are sent to annex outlying parts of China (reunification campaigns) to secure borders
- Tibetans identify with authority of spiritual leader (Dalai Lama) and fight to defeat autonomy; lack weapons and training: PLA takes full control within six months
- similar happened in Xinjiang: fears it to fall to Soviet hands or becoming part of separatist movement supported by neighboring muslim states

The anti-movements

- 1951: Mao announces "three-anti campaign" (waste, corruption, inefficiency), followed by "five-anti campaign" (industrial sabotage, tax evasion, bribery, fraud, theft of government property)
- Mao begins turning on middle class that supported CCP administration in early years
- as part of mass mobilization campaigns, Mao declares of reactionaries and counter-revolutionaries as enemies of state
- english as language of foreign exploitation, no transactions in english are tolerated
- religion, Chinese customs and traditions, intellectuals come under ferocious attack

Censorship and propaganda

- Feb. 1949: most newspapers are out of business
- after editors are re-educated, CCP relies on self-censorship, so all reports conform party line
- many Chinese participate with enthusiasm: believe they are part of national transformation
- everyone is re-educated, known as "thought reform": everyone has to learn new party doctrine and transform themselves into new people

The Great Terror

- in addition to household registration system, every individual is given class label and ranked good, middle or bad on basis of loyalty to party
- labels determine person's fate and generations to come (children inherit parents' label)
- people turn on neighbors, hopeful of reward and to show allegiance to regime
- vulnerable classes are deemed threat as threat to revolution and drain on resources

Labour camps

- many prison camps scattered across country, network is called Laogai
- forced labour camps, modeled on Soviet gulag
- nine out of ten in camps are political prisoners; judicial procedures are dispensed, people can be arrested and disappear into camps without trial

Mass killings

- most dangerous enemies are imprisoned or quietly executed
- Mao issues quotas for how many per thousand should be killed; many cadres are eager to reach or surpass given goal

Land reform

- “speak bitterness” campaigns and violence used to humiliate, punish and wipe out landlords as class: 2-3 million landlords are killed as feudal China came under attack
- no sooner had peasants gained plot of land, than it was pooled into a cooperative
- cooperatives are easier to requisition grain and develop state monopoly over supplies
- hunger and famine due to high levies

The one-party state

- in number of political purges, parties are removed; by 1952 only CCP is authorized to exist
- communist party claims that power rests with the people
- claim that elections for party officials are held at local level; in reality party officials oversee elections so that anybody critical of Mao would have little chance of making a stand
- real authority rests with Politburo (inner group of 20 leading CCP members)
- Mao is chairman and president: democratic centralism: all communist are revolutionaries, but only leaders are educated in science of revolution: ultimate authority of Mao Zedong
- constitution of 1954: framework for development of legal system: each citizen is granted right to public trial, equality is granted before law; none of it is practiced until after Mao's death

Power struggles

- Mao grows increasingly paranoid and fears his position is under threat: impact of Korean War (1950-53) and hardships caused by first Five-Year Plan (1952-56) as challenges
- at end of Second World War, Korean peninsula is occupied by US forces in south and Soviet forces in north, divided at 38th parallel; two nations formed in 1948
- June 1950: North Korea invades South Korea to seize territory; United Nations led by US intervene on side of South Korea; by mid-Sept. North Korea occupies most of land
- Cold War rivalry causes that USA and Soviet Union do not reach agreement over reunification: establish opposing systems; Stalin supports communist system under Kim Il-Sung and President Truman ensures non-communist south under Syngman Rhee
- US State Department believes that Stalin and Mao orchestrate communist invasion of South Korea (communism is seen as monolithic force driven by Moscow)
- Mao is kept dark about Stalin's motives; Stalin wants to provoke USA: boycotting UN Security Council over refusal to recognize PRC as legitimate government of China
- once UN forces push North Koreans back towards 38th parallel, Mao realizes that Americans are unlikely to stop: Mao persuades military commanders to send Chinese troops
- Mao is determined that boundaries of Bamboo Curtain should not be crossed
- to mobilize masses, China starts campaigns supported by propaganda
- when truce is called in 1953, Mao can claim high propaganda victory: he pushed UN troops back but persuades leadership in first place too
- China's economy is severely hit as result of war
- many peasants hide supplies out of fear of starvation
- pressure to repay Stalin for Soviet supplies worsens pressure on budget

Mao and Stalin

- tensions always exist; Stalin fails to support CCP, ideological disagreements
- Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance (1950): loan, allowing China an economic reform (comes at high price: strict terms of interest)

- considerable exchange of information/knowledge
- Stalin's death and Khrushchev's leadership significantly alter relations

Party purges

- Mao grows concerned about potential rivals within party
- Gao Gang and Rao Shushi abusing their positions and establishing "independent kingdoms"
- many other leaders denounced and sent to camps for treachery and splitting party: Mao's actions serve as reminder for other party members to tow the line

Mao's grip on power, 1955 - 1976

- 1955: Mao seems to have reached peak of his power
- China appears to glow on international stage due to industrial and agricultural reform
- still, enormous political upheavals

The registration system

- state takes more control over countryside: gain grain; more peasants placed into cooperatives
- many peasants leave countryside for urban areas to supplement income and escape famine
- household-registration system is extended to countryside to prevent people leaving it
- anyone wanting to change residence needs a migration certificate
- ration cards have to be presented in local stores where peasants were registered

The impact of de-Stalinization

- 1956: new Soviet leader (Nikita Khrushchev) launches bold attack on Stalin: denounces him
- denouncing Stalin has considerable impact on Mao: easily interpreted as attack on his "cult of personality" and his agricultural reforms
- cult of personality is denounced and shift to collective leadership is encouraged: Mao needs to divert criticism from his style of leadership and perceived failures to maintain control

The "Hundred Flowers" campaign

- Mao encouraging open criticism in party and country
- criticism is mild at first, then leading party members come under attack: party accused of corruption and lacking realism
- Mao calls halt: launches anti-rightist movement to force biggest critics to redact criticism
- different reasons for campaign: deliberate trick by Mao to easily expose critics, Mao's motives more pragmatic (wants bureaucratic inefficiencies to be publicly identified, result of confusion within the party over pace of industrial and agricultural reform)
- by rooting out opposition, Mao strengthens his position in party

The Purge of Peng Dehuai

- 1959: Mao's position comes under threat: at party gathering Peng Dehuai openly speaks about famine in the countryside caused by the agricultural reform
- delegates praise Mao's leadership and denounced Peng as troublemaker

The Tibetan Uprising of 1959

- Tibet rises up against Chinese occupation: authorities meet uprising of Tibetan people with suppression and mass arrests
- Tibetan religion comes under attack and state intensifies control over their way of life
- CCP encourages Chinese settlement in Tibet and many religious practices are banned

The Cultural Revolution, 1966 - 1976

- 1962: Mao slips into background of party: reputation is damaged with the Great Famine
- Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping (General Secretary) are instructed to save the countryside and stop famine: they reverse collectivization and grow popular

- to reassert his authority, Mao launches the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1966: results in genocide, class war, cultural destruction, economic chaos and purges of “disloyal” people: enables Mao to return to the forefront of CCP as undisputed leader of China

The Little Red Book

- Lin Biao (one of Mao’s most loyal supporters) compiles the Little Red Book with thoughts and sayings of Mao since 1920s
- it enshrines Mao as cult leader; social necessity, vital point of reference for solving disputes

The Purge of Wu Han

- Lin Biao launches attacks to blacken name of Wu Han (a playwright), who is critical of Mao
- Maoists interpret the play as a criticism of Mao’s dismissal of Peng Dehuai

Power struggles in the CCP

- divisions emerging in CCP: Maoists on the left grow in prominence
- Jiang Qing (Mao’s wife) is dominant figure in the Shanghai Forum (uncompromising radicals who advocate toughest measures against Mao’s opponents) and Gang of Four (most extreme members of Shanghai Forum)
- Forum argues that PLA should root out all those “taking the capitalist road”: Central Cultural Revolution Group (CCRG; subcommittee of Politburo) plays key part in purges

The events of the Cultural Revolution

- purges within party become part of a national movement
- July 1966: Mao makes timely comeback to forefront of politics when he swims across the Yangzi River in a carefully staged event
- Mao calls on members of CCP to renew the class struggle and remove revisionists
- mass demonstration in Tiananmen Square chanting Mao’s words; further seven rallies take place in following months
- Mao urges students to target “enemies”, Lin Biao identifies “Four Olds” (ideas, culture, customs, habits) for them to attack
- many feel that they are defending the revolution: cult of Mao is rising to new heights
- Red Guards: devout young people form themselves into paramilitary social movement
- millions (landlords, rich peasants, reactionaries, bad elements, rightists, even devoted CCP members) are tortured or beaten to death and many more have their lives irreparably damaged
- Mao lets it be known that Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi are not following party line: publicly denounced and either imprisoned or sent into labour camps
- as moderates within CCP are removed, Lin Biao and Jiang Qing increase influence
- 1967: Chinese militants are behind violent attacks in over 30 countries outside China
- 1968: Red Guards are getting out of hand: turn on one another, competing over their level of devotion to Mao; industrial production is gravely affected; schools and universities closed
- campaign urges Red Guards to live among peasants and learn about hardships endured by 80% of the population (shows how China’s rebellious youth is still under government control)
- many are unprepared for the hardships they face and begin questioning their idealism and even the goodwill of Mao Zedong
- CCRG with Gang of Four establishes committees to remove any forms of capitalism
- early 1970s: disillusionment with the Cultural Revolution begins to set in; still too dangerous to openly oppose Mao, but as his health declines a power struggle begins for the succession
- Lin Biao (Mao’s nominated successor) fears that his life is under threat and plots to remove Mao; plot is leaked to Zhou Enlai; Lin tries to escape by plane, which crashes

The decline of the Cultural Revolution

- Deng Xiaoping profits from Cultural Revolution (Zhou Enlai tells him to return from exile)
- rise of moderates is met with fury by Gang of Four
- at Zhou Enlai’s memorial on Tiananmen Square (when he died) there is a large-scale demonstration in support of his moderating policies
- 1976: after years of failing health, Mao dies
- in power struggle that follows: Gang of Four is removed, Cultural Revolution comes to an end, by 1978 Deng Xiaoping emerges as paramount leader of China

Mao's foreign policy

- Mao wants China to gain recognition as a powerful state on the world stage
- wants to show people that communist revolution would restore national pride and prevent any repeat of the imperialist aggression of the past

The Bandung Conference, 1955

- Asian and African nations gather to discuss peace and role of their countries in the Cold War, economic development and decolonization
- Mao appears to be leader of communist world after Stalin's death

The Sino-Soviet rift, 1958 - 1976

- Mao's alliance with Stalin strengthens his consolidation of power; Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin weakens Mao's position
- Mao is fearful of the Soviet Union's improved relations with the West and China's subsequent isolation: accuses Nikita of betraying the revolution
- tensions increase when both sides fail to find an agreement
- diplomatic relations are severed at Moscow Conference (1961) when Zhou Enlai and the Chinese delegation walk out
- both countries try to humiliate the other on the world stage
- mid-1960s: all Soviet experts and advisers are withdrawn from the PRC
- China produces its first hydrogen bomb in 1964 and, to the alarm of the Soviets, Mao announces his willingness to use it
- lowest point in relation in 1969: minor incident sparks a war on Sino-Russian border
- Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping, adapts a more tolerant approach to the USSR and the West

Relations with the US

- victory of CCP ushers in decades of tensions with America
- anti-American campaigns intensify during the Korean War and Cultural Revolution
- China's moral and diplomatic support of America's enemies during Vietnam War heightens tensions
- like Stalin, Mao always fears that the western powers would launch an attack on China: defensive strategy "Third Line": vast network of fortifications across China, above and below
- 1971: new course of Mao: invites US table tennis team to play in China; Zhou Enlai and Henry Kissinger steer negotiations ("ping-pong diplomacy")
- by warming the USA, Mao aims to undermine the position of USSR as a world power
- UN accepts China's seat on the Security Council
- Mao invites president Nixon to China (1972) and greets him: parting of Bamboo Curtain as major diplomatic success
- much still divide the countries, but PRC creeps out of isolation; by 1979 both countries had established full diplomatic relations

Relations with other nations

- China's relationship with India is based on mutual border agreements; tensions appear when China supports Pakistan in 1965 war with India; relations do not stabilize until Mao's death
- little mutual aspect with West; UN heavily criticizes Mao for his hardline policies in Tibet
- relations with Taiwan are always hostile; Mao attempts to regain it for Chinese mainland but it remains independent

3.3 Mao's economic and social policies

- when he takes power, seems to have a genuine aspiration to improve people's conditions
- greatest challenge is the pressure on Mao's revolutionary goals, when those who speak the truth about any problems are labelled rightists and purged
- reforms undoubtedly make gains, with human tragedy of Great Leap Forward and disruption of Cultural Revolution; clear that politics get often in the way of progress

The Chinese Communist Party's economic policies

- 1949 (CCP to control): inflation rate is out of control (1000%); stabilized by 1951 (15%)
- achieved by cuts in public spending, increased taxation on urban residents, replacing old Chinese dollar with new currency (renminbi/yuan)

The first Five-Year Plan, 1952 - 1957

- Mao determined that China would industrialize on similar scale as Soviet Union: for it to succeed, China needs to become a command economy
- 1952: China's first Five-Year Plan is introduced: country now has potentially huge industrial workforce due to migration from countryside to towns
- Sino-Soviet agreement (1950): USSR agrees to provide China with economic assistance (provision of resources and advisers); China has to pay high interest loans (worsens relations)
- plan targets coal, steel, petrochemicals and development of transport industry
- impressive example: vast road and rail bridge across Yangtze River at Nanking
- pressure to reach industrial targets is immense
- even when western analysts filter the numbers, the results are notable

The Great Leap Forward, 1958 - 1962

- term Mao uses to describe second Five-Year Plan
- aim is to turn China into a modern industrial power
- though Mao sees peasants as central to revolution, rests future of China on industrial workers
- Mao has ambitions to overtake industrial output of capitalist world at rapid speed
- 1958: Mao resents China's reliance on USSR and tensions emerge
- China needs transformation of economy to become more independent
- "General Steel" for industrial economy; "General Grain" for food supplies
- plan is that collectivized peasants would produce a surplus of food for export abroad
- propaganda machine goes into overdrive
- reliance on idea that faith in human will would meet or surpass targets
- example of great idea met with failure: backyard furnaces campaign (families would produce steel too); jubilant officers report to Mao that people answer his bidding; in reality little quality steel is produced; authorities keep this quiet

State-owned enterprises

- industry is brought under government control: private firms and companies can no longer exist to make own profits (work as state-owned enterprises; SOE)
- wages, prices, production targets are fixed by the state
- SOEs are given state subsidies and workers receive a guaranteed wage
- problem that there is little incentive for SOEs to become efficient and highly productive
- workers' advantage: "iron rice bowl": provision of accommodation, medical and health benefits
- though some production figures look impressive, there are fundamental weaknesses in the second Five-Year Plan: China lacks material know-how and technical skills required
- two guiding principles of quality of control (monitoring production) and applied communism (planning according to Marxist ideas) are hindered by underlying weaknesses
- factors hindering economic reforms: USSR stops providing technical assistance (1960), reforms are ideologically driven, Mao's leadership not accepting responsibility for failure (bourgeois elements are blamed for sabotage), Mao does not have scientific expertise for policies

The Great Famine, 1958 - 1962

- Mao wants to revolutionize food production so he can increase the industrial workforce
- collectivization is achieved in five steps: landlords are wiped out and land is redistributed, peasants encouraged to work as "mutual aid" teams, peasants organized into cooperatives, household registration system limits peasant movement, peasants forcibly arranged into communes which ends private ownership of land
- China has a severe labour shortage
- rearrangement into communes is an integral part of Great Leap Forward; PRC central government controls farming methods, sale and distribution of produce, prices
- Mao claims that land reforms are in tune with peasants: any resistance is crushed

- Mao's doubts about peasant class results in their ultimate betrayal: agricultural expertise is replaced by Lysenkoism (flawed farming techniques by Trofim Lysenko)
- population is called to end menace of crop-eating birds: thousands of birds destroyed: explosion of crop-eating insects; state officials continue to requisition grain
- most provinces of China are affected by the following famine; starvation
- parents sell their children and cannibalism is rife; problem that officials continue to claim that production targets are met: speaking truth is too dangerous
- Mao blames: peasants for hoarding food, local officials for being incompetent, bad weather which affects harvests
- Mao's reputation is tarnished, confronted by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, he withdraws from the political frontline
- they revoke the reforms and allow private farming (Mao would punish them later)

Religious policies

- communism's official view of religion: capitalist invention to suppress the exploited classes
- Mao's China: religion is to be replaced by loyalty to the party
- Christian churches are forced to close and property is confiscated
- slogans against Buddhism and Christianity become commonplace
- China's traditional faiths (Buddhism, Confucianism) are banned from being practiced openly and nobody is allowed to wear religious clothes
- ancestor worship is ruled out
- songs, dances, festivals are replaced with political meetings and agitprop (agitation propaganda: political ideas through entertainment) performances
- to give appearance of tolerance, some churches are allowed to remain open as long as they "do not endanger the security of the state" (patriotic churches)
- clergy had to profess open support for the communist regime
- permanent rift between Vatican and PRC: Pope rejects patriotic churches
- during Cultural Revolution (1966-76) religion is attacked as one of "four olds"
- CCP attack on religion is motivated by fear of religious separatism in Xinjiang and Tibet: CCP uses invasion and repression to control provinces

Policies affecting women and the family

- imperial China has a patriarchal society
- medieval practice of foot-binding is still practiced (break and bind feet to have them small)
- in rural China it is commonplace to be forced or sold into arranged marriages; price is according to how many children she is likely to have
- Mao continues to give impression that he is a firm believer in women's rights (foot-binding is outlawed); but PRC is very much a male-dominated system
- Marriage Reform Law (1950): concubinage is abolished, arranged marriages come to end, paying of dowries is forbidden, women which were forced to marry are permitted to divorce, all marriages had to be registered with the state
- new marriage reforms are jubilantly received; many women divorce and remarry multiple times
- social disruption follows: women take multiple husbands in couple of years
- many women benefit from land reforms: land is granted to their name (breaks tradition that only men have property), gains are short-lived because of collectivization
- women are officially regarded as equals to men: number of working women quadruples (1949-76); for some demands they are unsuitable and no better off than before
- difficult to challenge ingrained ideas about women and their role
- historic practice of female infanticide (killing newborn girls) continues: boys bring honor
- in Xinjiang province (muslim) female equality is not received well
- collectivization involves a deliberate attack on traditional Chinese family: Mao says it is necessary to destroy family for good of state: children are told to refer to Chairman Mao as their father and relegate personal love below their loyalty to party
- women suffer most during famine years: scramble to provide for children: many decide which child would starve so the others can survive
- prostitution thrives as women offer themselves for food; in some parts, officials set up brothels for special use by Party members
- during Cultural Revolution, normal everyday family life is denounced and destroyed

Mao's cultural policies

- from 1930s, Mao makes clear that China's culture needs to reflect values of proletarian society
- censorship and propaganda become crucial means
- duty of creative artists is to serve the people
- thousands of books are burned (politically incorrect), war on foreign cinema and western music
- Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, becomes the "cultural purifier of the nation"
- only literature, art, media that promotes Chinese themes is allowed
- any creative artists who resist are sent to labour camps for "re-education"

Literacy, language and education

- 1949: majority of peasants are illiterate: Mao makes education of masses a priority
- mid 1950s: national system of primary education is established
- success of educational reforms can be partly attributed to reform of Mandarin language (1955): PRC introduces a written form of Mandarin that all can recognize
- system of education as a whole makes little advance: Cultural Revolution causes many to stop attending school or university
- even when educational establishments re-open, creativity and critical thinking are greatly undermined because priority is to produce students conforming Party ideals

Health reforms

- biggest challenge to PRC in 1949 is lack of universal access to healthcare; new government aims to direct medical care to remotest areas of China
- patriotic health movements: government-funded schemes provide people with basic advice on health and hygiene; local populations launch huge communal efforts
- many doctors and nurses are trained in 1950s so large number of people can receive professional medical care
- Cultural Revolution damages health reform because doctors are targeted for bourgeois lifestyle
- showing pain is condemned as bourgeois: doctors no longer use anesthetics and analgesics
- many women are denied painkillers during childbirth
- late 1960s: crash program for training doctors is introduced: trainees would engage in months of intensive practical study, then live with peasants (known as barefoot doctors); these young idealists improve lives of peasants by providing medical treatment often free of charge
- full national health service is not established during the era of CCP rule