

# Local Favoritism in State Formation

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# Overview

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1. Introduction
2. Historical Background
3. Data
4. Empirical Results
5. Validity of Instrumental Variable
6. Persistent Effect of Local Cadres on the Great Famine

# Outline

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# Motivation

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- State capacity is usually considered crucial for long-term development.
  - But in some cases strong state capacity may result in unintended and potentially catastrophic consequences, such as the famines in the Soviet Union and China.
- This paper argues that local favoritism is also important for strong state capacity.
- We explore:
  - does local favoritism (of local cadres) affect policy implementation in the 1950s?
  - how does local flexibility help alleviate the adverse consequences of strong but unconstrained state capacity?

# This Paper

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- We rely on the heterogeneity of local cadres (born locally) and southbound cadres (came from north) in the newly controlled southern China.
- This paper:
  - construct a county-level cross-sectional dataset, including cadres' birthplaces and the intensity of land reform and other political movements.
  - use county-level terrain ruggedness as instrumental variable (IV) and conduct placebo and over-identification tests to verify the validity of the instrument.
  - show a significant negative relationship between the proportion of local cadres and the intensity of land reform.
  - the local favoritism can reduce the procurement and death rates in the Great Famine.

# Literature Review

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- Consequences of a strong state and role of local elites
  - State's efforts to remove powerful local elites and kinship-based networks to build strong state capacity (Migdal, 1988; Fukuyama, 2011; Garfias, 2018; Wang, 2022)
  - Negative consequence of states: repress people's freedom (Scott, 2009), lead to inequality and oppose democratization (Bentzen, Kaarsen & Wingender, 2017) and use mass education to enhance obedience to maintain order (Paglayan, 2022)
  - Strong state capacity with a rigid planned economy: potential catastrophic consequences (Meng, Qian & Yared, 2015; Markevich, Naumenko & Qian, 2021; Wang et al., 2023)
- Local favoritism
  - Local favoritism of political leaders: more public spending (Berry, Burden & Howell, 2010), more infrastructure investment (Burgess et al, 2015; Do, Nguyen & Tran, 2017) and advanced economic development (Hodler & Raschky, 2014)
  - Home favoritism in China: in selection into the Chinese Academies of Sciences and Engineering (Fisman et al., 2017), in the judicial system (Liu et al., 2022) and during the Great Leap Famine (Kung & Zhou, 2021)

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# Land Reform

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- Land Reform was one of the most important political movements initiated by the CCP from 1946 to 1953, aiming to build a more equal society and obtain support from the vast poor peasant class.
- In January 1950, CCP established special committees to advance the land reform in the south (newly controlled regions).
- Two key steps of the reform:
  - classified the “*exploiters*” (landlords and rich peasants) and the “*exploitees*” (middle peasants and poor peasants).
  - confiscated land from the “*exploiters*” and redistributed it to the “*exploitees*”
- However, its timing and duration varied considerably across counties, largely depending on the responses of local government officials.



# Arbitrary Classification of Social Classes

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- The definition of different classes came from the *Land Reform Law* in 1950.
- Landlords owned plenty of land and land rents were their main source of income.
- Rich peasants owned less land than landlords and land rents constituted the majority of their income (they also worked a bit themselves).
- Middle peasants owned only a small amount of land and had to rent additional land from landlords and rich peasants.
- Poor peasants owned virtually no land and were almost full-time employed by landlords and rich peasants.

# Arbitrary Classification of Social Classes

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- Ambiguously distinguishing between rich peasants ( “*exploiters*”) and middle peasants ( “*exploitees*”).
- The key of “*exploitation*”: hiring of labor.
  - which was a long-standing tradition in rural China.
  - even middle and poor peasants often hired labor. [▶ See More](#)
- The government set the threshold at 25% of total income from rent in 1948.
  - This classification still depended largely on the discretion of local officials due to lack of information on household income.
  - The threshold could be relaxed if poor peasants did not oppose the classification.

# Arbitrary Classification of Social Classes

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- The typical landlord who owned a large amount of land was scarce.
  - The majority of the so-called “landlords” only owned about 2 acres, so they could be arbitrarily classified either as landlords or as rich peasants.
  - *“large landlords make up only 1% of all landlords, middle landlords 19%, and small landlords 80%”* (Mao, 1931). [▶ See More](#)
- This classification was fully in the hands of local officials who led the reform.
  - County cadres classified all the *Bao-jia* chiefs as landlords simply because they hated them in a village in Sichuan Province.

## Local Cadres versus Southbound Cadres

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- There was a growing shortage of experienced and capable cadres after the CCP won the war, especially in newly controlled southern China.
- Many CCP guerrilla members were quickly appointed as county cadres, which were labeled as *"Local Cadres"*.
- In October 1948, the CCP dispatched 62,859 northern cadres to newly controlled southern (and western) China. These cadres were labeled as *"Southbound Cadres"*.

# Local Cadres versus Southbound Cadres

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- Local Cadres [▶ See More](#)
  - born and raised locally; received less communist instillation
  - had respectable family backgrounds and wide social networks in their hometowns
  - reluctant to implement radical political movements due to local connections.
- Southbound Cadres
  - had virtually no local connections; even couldn't understand dialects.
  - devout Communist disciples
  - were highly resolute in implementing orders from the central government, regardless of the damaging consequences to local communities
- Our hypothesis: more local cadres, milder land reform (and other political movements).

# A high-level Case

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- Ye Jianying and Guangdong Province
  - Guangdong is special, strong economy and strong localism.
  - Ye was appointed as governor.
  - Broker between central and local government.
- Land Reform
  - Ye argued: "Guangdong was special, with three areas taking the lead"
  - Central government was unhappy, criticizing right-leaning and conservative
  - Mao appointed Tao zhu to advance the reform.
- Two takeaways
  - Central government had to rely on local cadres at all level.
  - Two types of cadres had different attitude about the land reform.

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# Birth Place of County Cadres

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- We focus on southern and western China, including 752 counties in 15 provinces.
- We collect the birthplaces of main county leaders (*Party Secretary, vice Party Secretary, County Magistrate and vice County Magistrate*) from Jan. 1950 to Oct. 1952 in the county gazetteers and internet news reports.
- Local Cadres were defined at provincial level (=1 if birthplace and workplace in the same province).
- **Key Independent Variable:** county-level proportion of local cadres ( $\# \text{local cadres} / \# \text{cadres with recorded birthplace}$ )



# Intensity of Land Reform and other Political Movements

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- **Key Dependent Variables:** Classification in the Land Reform.
  - the proportion of landlords and rich peasants (population of landlords and rich peasants/whole population).
  - rich peasants ratio in the population of landlords and rich peasants combined.
- Amount of land confiscated per person based on the total population and the combined population of landlords and rich peasants.
- Duration and starting/ending time (of land reform and other movements).
  - starting/ending times are standardized relative to Jan. 1949.
- The number of arrests during the *suppression of counter-revolutionary movements*.
- All these data are obtained from county gazetteers and are county-level.

# Famine Mortality, Procurement Rates, and Controls

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- The intensity of the Great Famine.
  - county-level mortality rates and grain procurement rates in 1960 from ([Kasahara and Li, 2020](#)).
  - city-level famine birth loss rates using a 1% sample of the population census data from 1990 (following on the methodology of ([Meng, Qian, and Yared, 2015](#)))
- A set of county-level controls:
  - $\ln(\text{population})$ , Long March dummy, the establishment times of the CCP and KMT.
  - $\ln(\text{distance to nearest provincial capital})$  in the robustness check.

# Summary Statistics

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Table 1: Summary Statistics

VARIABLES	N	mean	sd	min	max
Proportion of LC (LC/Cadres with Native Place)	752	0.31	0.35	0	1
Proportion of Landlord (Landlords+RP/Population)	752	0.09	0.04	0.01	0.42
Proportion of RP (RP/Landlords+RP)	693	0.42	0.12	0.09	0.86
Duration of Reform	691	25.60	10.04	8	76
ConfiscateLand/Population	600	0.07	0.14	0.00	2.38
ConfiscateLand/Landlords+RP	600	0.92	1.40	0.00	20.16
Suppression Start Time	648	23.34	8.92	0	130
#Anti-revolution/Population	361	0	0.01	0	0.07
Death Rate during the Great Famine (‰)	313	35.19	26.26	3.44	204.24
Procurement Rate during the Great Famine (%)	295	0.32	0.13	0.04	0.68
City-Level Birth Loss during the Great Famine	149	38.81	15.08	0.20	77.70

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# Empirical Strategy

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- We estimate the following cross-sectional equation:

$$\text{Intensity}_{cp} = \alpha + \beta \text{Proportion of Local Cadres}_{cp} + \delta \text{Controls}_{cp} + \sigma_p + \varepsilon_{cp}$$

- where  $c$  donates the county and  $p$  donates the province.
- $\beta/10$  measures the impact of a 10% increase in the proportion of local cadres on the intensity of the land reform (and other political movements).
- Endogeneity problem
  - omitted variables may bias the estimation.

# Instrumental Variable Strategy

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- We use county-level terrain ruggedness as an instrument variable (IV).
- **Relevance:**
  - More rugged terrain --> more guerrillas and secret CCP members before the CCP's occupation --> more county-level local cadres after the PRC.
  - recall that guerrillas and secret CCP members were the primary sources of local cadres.
  - Similar argument with (Nunn and Puga, 2012)
- **Exclusion:**
  - ruggedness will not affect outcome variables through other channels.
  - we tackle the exclusion restriction by subsample placebo and over-identification tests.
- The government uses land reform to mobilize people. (Hao, Ma, Xi & You, 2025)

# Empirical Results

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- More local cadres, milder land reform.
- The proportion of local cadres shows a significant
  - negative effect on the proportion of landlords and rich peasants.
  - positive effect on the proportion of rich peasants in the combined population of landlords and rich peasants.
- An increase of 10% in the proportion of local cadres (mean = 30.5%) leads to
  - a 0.8% reduction in the proportion of landlords and rich peasants (mean = 9.1%).
  - a 4.2% increase in the proportion of rich peasants among landlords and rich peasants (mean = 42%).

# Empirical Results - Classification

Table 2: Local Cadres and the Classification of Landlords and Rich Peasants

VARIABLES	Proportion of Landlords and Rich Peasants				Rich Peasants/Landlords and Rich Peasants	
	(1) OLS	(2) IV	(3) OLS	(4) IV	(5) OLS	(6) IV
Proportion of Local Cadres	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.16** (0.08)	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.08** (0.04)	0.04** (0.02)	0.42** (0.18)
ln(population)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
CPC			-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00*** (0.00)	-0.00*** (0.00)
Long March			-0.01* (0.00)	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)
KMT			0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Province FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
First Stage F		26.63		21.44		20.57
Observations	752	752	707	707	657	657
R-squared	0.158		0.163		0.168	



# Empirical Results - Land Confiscation

Table 3: Local Cadres and Land Confiscation

VARIABLES	Land Confiscation/ Population		Land Confiscation/ Landlords and Rich Peasants	
	(1) OLS	(2) IV	(3) OLS	(4) IV
Proportion of Local Cadres	-0.05** (0.02)	-0.34** (0.16)	-0.28 (0.23)	-2.42* (1.43)
ln(population)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.09 (0.10)	-0.13 (0.11)
CPC	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Long March	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.13 (0.09)	-0.25* (0.14)
KMT	-0.00	-0.00**	-0.02	-0.02
Province FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
First Stage F		22.67		22.88
Observations	608	608	577	577
R-squared	0.158		0.134	

# Empirical Results - Duration, Starting and Ending times

Table 4: Local Cadres and Reform Duration

VARIABLES	Reform Duration		Starting Time		Ending Time	
	(1) OLS	(2) IV	(3) OLS	(4) IV	(5) OLS	(6) IV
Proportion of Local Cadres	5.45*** (1.24)	16.82* (10.19)	0.51 (1.90)	74.27*** (24.61)	7.66*** (1.61)	88.28*** (29.41)
ln(population)	1.01** (0.44)	1.20** (0.49)	-4.76*** (0.71)	-4.32*** (1.17)	-3.36*** (0.81)	-2.63* (1.44)
CPC	-0.06 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.07)	-0.04 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.16)	-0.11 (0.10)	-0.21 (0.18)
Long March	0.82 (0.70)	1.54 (0.96)	-1.27 (0.80)	3.53 (2.53)	-0.58 (1.03)	4.67 (3.06)
KMT	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.00 (0.06)	-0.17* (0.10)	-0.02 (0.17)	-0.14 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.17)
Province FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
First Stage F		21.47		24.83		20.36
Observations	654	654	762	762	716	716
R-squared	0.348	0.249	0.575		0.388	

# Robustness Checks

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- exclude provinces with high data missing rates (e.g., Inner Mongolia, Shanghai).
- exclude provinces with strong localism (e.g., Guangdong).
- restrict the sample to land reforms that started after 1949.
- add  $\ln(\text{distance to nearest provincial capital})$  as control variable.
- restrict the sample to the counties with complete birthplace data.
- use the average proportion of local cadres if the duration of the land reform exceeded one year (e.g., starting in the autumn of 1950 and ending in the summer of 1951).
- replace the independent variable by  $(\# \text{local cadres} / \# \text{all cadres})$ . [▶ Robustness Checks](#)

## Further Discussion on Local Favoritism in the 1950s

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- Local favoritism (of local cadres) indeed affects the intensity of the land reform.
- But how does this effect differ between cities and villages?
  - The government usually had weak control below the county level in imperial China.
  - And rural society had long-standing tradition of local autonomy.
  - Even after the PRC, the CCP still had weaker control in villages than in cities.
- So we should observe much stronger local favoritism in villages than in cities.
- We test this by comparing two political movements roughly in the 1950s:
  - "*Suppression of Counter-Revolutionaries*", which covered all state.
  - "*Three-Antis-Five-Antis*", which focused on cities.

## Further Discussion on Local Favoritism in the 1950s

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- *"Suppression of Counter-Revolutionaries"*
  - aim to eliminate remnants of the KMT and other counter-revolutionary forces through mass mobilization and judicial trials.
  - local cadres had the arbitrary power by defining the "Counter-Revolutionaries" (even complaints about the government and slander against political leaders).
- *"Three-Antis-Five-Antis"*
  - target crime by government officials and private business owners (thus mainly in cities).
  - include corruption, bureaucracy, tax evasion and so on.
  - the actual definition remains ambiguous.

# Empirical Results - "Suppression of Counter-Revolutionaries"

Table 5: Local Cadres and the Suppression of Counter-Revolutionaries

VARIABLES	#Suppression/ Population		Suppression Starting Time	
	(1) OLS	(2) IV	(3) OLS	(4) IV
Proportion of Local Cadres	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.04** (0.02)	2.62* (1.41)	27.31* (15.97)
ln(population)	-0.00** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)	-1.96*** (0.66)	-1.95*** (0.71)
CPC	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.03 (0.09)
Long March	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.40 (0.75)	0.94 (1.23)
KMT	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.05 (0.09)	0.07 (0.09)
Province FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
First Stage F		21.29		25.39
Observations	370	370	670	670
R-squared	0.257		0.132	

# Empirical Results - “Three-Antis-Five-Antis”

Table 6: Local Cadres and the Three-Antis-Five-Antis

VARIABLES	Three Anti		Five Anti	
	Starting Time		Starting Time	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	OLS	IV	OLS	IV
Proportion of Local Cadres	0.02 (0.30)	3.92 (2.75)	0.53 (0.40)	4.89 (5.05)
ln(population)	-0.01 (0.10)	-0.04 (0.11)	-0.01 (0.13)	-0.10 (0.17)
CPC	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.07** (0.03)
Long March	0.12 (0.29)	0.36 (0.35)	0.78** (0.35)	1.04** (0.46)
KMT	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)
Province FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
First Stage F		23.51		19.70
Observations	706	706	579	579
R-squared	0.205	0.051	0.119	

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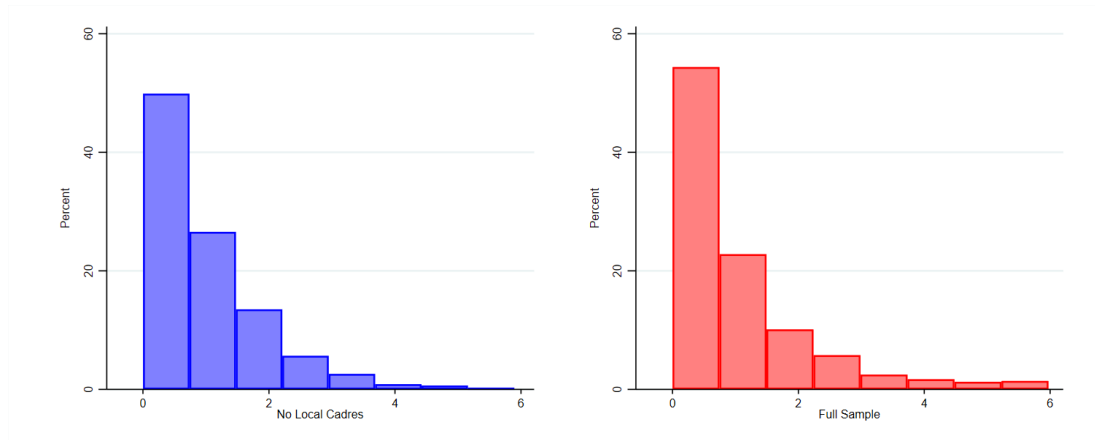
## Validity of IV - Subsample Regression

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- **Exclusion Restriction:** IV does not affect the outcomes through any channel other than local cadres.
- In our sample, 342 counties had no local cadres.
  - No variation in local cadres, but variation in ruggedness.
  - Significant correlation between outcomes and instrument --> exclusion violated
  - We use this as a placebo test.
- All estimations are not significant, confirming the validity of the instrument.

# Validity of IV - Subsample Regression

Figure 1: The distribution of ruggedness in the subsample (left panel) and full sample (right panel)



# Validity of IV - Subsample Regression

Table 7: Correlation between Land Ruggedness and Main Outcome Variables

VARIABLES	(1) Proportion of Landlord and Rich Peasants	(2) Rich Peasants Landlord and Rich Peasants	(3) Confiscation/ Population	(4) Confiscation/ Landlords and Rich Peasants
Ruggedness	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.16 (0.23)	0.68 (1.67)
ln(population)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.32** (0.15)	-2.12** (1.01)
CPC	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.04 (0.20)
Long March	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.14 (0.24)	-3.18* (1.79)
KMT	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.17 (0.22)
Constant	0.21*** (0.03)	0.40*** (0.09)	18.55*** (6.88)	244.97*** (11.28)
Province FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	342	319	293	279
R-squared	0.190	0.125	0.208	0.306

## Validity of IV - Over-Identification Tests

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- We select two alternative instruments.
- the speed of the CCP's expansion in the Chinese Civil War.
  - defined as the number of counties newly occupied by the CCP per month.
  - most of the southbound cadres were military-affiliated.
  - faster speed --> no time to train local cadres/distrust local cadres/need stronger state control --> less local cadres.
- county's distance to the nearest provincial capital.
  - defined as a dummy variable using 200 kilometers as the threshold.
  - shorter distance --> stronger state control --> less local cadres.
- All estimates are quite similar and pass the tests.

# Validity of IV - Over-Identification Tests

Table 8: Over-Identification Tests

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Proportion of Landlord and Rich Peasants				
Proportion of Local Cadres	-0.08** (0.04)	-0.06* (0.03)	-0.07** (0.03)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.06* (0.03)
ln(population)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)
CPC	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Long March	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)
KMT	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Constant	0.21*** (0.03)	0.20*** (0.03)	0.20*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.03)	0.20*** (0.03)
Province FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Instruments	Ruggedness	Ruggedness Speed	Ruggedness Distance	Speed Distance	Ruggedness Speed Distance
Hansen J Statistic		0.2613	0.6786	0.3501	0.5218
Observations	707	707	707	707	707

## Validity of IV - Decomposing the IV–OLS gap

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- We decompose the IV-OLS gap following (Ishimaru, 2024).
- IV-OLS gap = covariate weight (CW) + treatment weight (TW) + marginal effect (endogenous bias, ME).
- Endogenous bias (ME) accounts for 81% of the total IV–OLS gap (-0.060 of -0.074)

Table 9: Decomposing the IV–OLS gap

Coefficients	OLS	IV	IV-OLS	$\Delta$ CW	$\Delta$ TW	$\Delta$ ME
Estimate	-0.009	-0.083	-0.074	-0.015	0.001	<b>-0.060</b>
Standard Error	(0.004)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.041)

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# Persistent Effect of Local Cadres on the Great Famine

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- We have shown that local cadres were flexible in implementing policies.
- The relatively flexible style of governance may have continued in counties where there were more local cadres during the land reform.
- In this section we conjecture that:
  - this local flexibility persisted due to local favoritism.
  - it can mitigated the catastrophic consequences caused by a central government with strong state capacity but lacking in checks and balances.
- We test it in the context of the Great Famine:
  - occurred between 1959 and 1961, causing dozens of million of people died.
  - caused because central government monopolized the purchase and sale of grains.
  - farmers lacked enough food to sustain themselves because of excessive procurement.



# Persistent Effect of Local Cadres on the Great Famine

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- We use the same regression specification at the county and city level, with a set of new controls for productivity and geography. [► Controls](#)
- **Dependent variables:** city-level birth loss rates, county-level procurement and death rates in 1960.
- Local flexibility persisted and could mitigate the negative effects caused by the state.
- An increase of 10% in the proportion of local cadres leads to
  - a 6.6% reduction in procurement rate.
  - a 7.18% reduction in birth loss and a 0.64% reduction in mortality rate.

# Persistent Effect of Local Cadres on the Great Famine

Table 10: Local Cadres and the Great Famine

VARIABLES	(1) Fertility Loss City Level	(2) Fertility Loss County Mean	(3) Fertility Loss County Mean	(4) Fertility Loss County Mean	(5) Mortality Rate	(6) Mortality Rate	(7) Procurement Rate	(8) Procurement Rate
Proportion of Local Cadres (City Level)	-53.29 (32.77)		-71.82* (41.80)					
Proportion of Local Cadres (County Mean)		-54.87* (33.01)		-71.76* (40.91)				
Proportion of Local Cadres					-63.86*** (19.67)	-64.19* (33.11)	-0.48*** (0.17)	-0.66* (0.36)
Controls	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
Province FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
First Stage F	19.71	26.99	28.96	38.03	17.86	14.76	10.93	9.09
Observations	138	136	139	137	388	343	363	270

# Conclusion

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- We contribute to the local favoritism literature with a quantitative, causal study.
  - using unique hand-collected data and an instrumental variable strategy, we find that local favoritism in the 1950s significantly affected the implementation of central policies.
  - this local favoritism was much stronger in villages than in cities.
- We provide a new perspective on state capacity and its consequences.
  - local favoritism provides an important buffer to mitigate the negative effects caused by the centralized regime with strong state capacity.
  - such persistent presence of local favoritism may have implications for subsequent political movements, even the Reform and Opening-up. ([Bravo et al., 2022](#))

# Conclusion

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- Even after the founding of the People's Republic of China, despite the greatly strengthened state capacity and the establishment of a powerful bureaucratic system, ancient traditions of local autonomy continued to play a role. Local cadres acted a lot like traditional gentry: they ran state affairs, but also partly looked out for local interests.
- The fate of local cadres: dismissed, punished and purged.
- To be continued: Anti-Localism Campaign from 1952

# Thanks

## Appendix A. Tables and Notes

# Robustness Checks

Table 11: Robustness Checks with Different Setting

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Proportion of Landlords and Rich Peasants					
Proportion of Local Cadres	-0.09** (0.04)	-0.09** (0.04)	-0.09** (0.04)	-0.09* (0.05)	-0.09* (0.05)	
Proportion of Local Cadres(Mean)						-0.08** (0.04)
ln(population)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)
CPC	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Long March	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.01)
KMT	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Province FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	699	661	679	707	636	707

# Robustness Checks

Table 12: Estimation Using Alternative Local Cadre Proportion

VARIABLES	(1) Proportion of Landlord and Rich Peasants	(2) Rich Peasants/ Landlord and Rich Peasants	(3) Confiscation/ Population	(4) Confiscation/ Landlords and Rich Peasants	(5) Reform Duration	(6) #Suppression/ Population
Proportion of Local Cadres	-0.10** (0.05)	0.42** (0.19)	-6.77** (3.20)	-47.70* (27.88)	22.75* (12.43)	-0.04** (0.02)
ln(population)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.24* (0.14)	-1.74 (1.52)	1.25** (0.49)	-0.01** (0.00)
CPC	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00** (0.00)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.10 (0.24)	-0.08 (0.07)	0.00 (0.00)
Long March	-0.01** (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.48 (0.31)	-4.41* (2.31)	1.76* (1.04)	-0.00 (0.00)
KMT	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.03* (0.02)	-0.29 (0.20)	-0.04 (0.07)	-0.00 (0.00)
Province FE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	706	676	624	593	654	380



# Arbitrary Classification of Social Classes

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- For example, a survey conducted by the Shandong provincial government in 1944 found that 14.08% of the middle peasants employed hired labor. ([Central Archives of China and Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 1992](#)).
- Even the middle and poor peasants hired labor during busy farming seasons in Guangxi province ([Xue, 2011](#)). [▶ Back](#)
- According to a survey conducted by the KMT government in 1937, only 1.34% of households had over 120 acres, and less than 0.1% had more than 500 acres ([Second Historical Archives of China, 1994](#)). [▶ Back](#)

## Local Cadres versus Southbound Cadres

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- Mao zedong dissatisfied with the slow process of the land reform in Guangdong province, he appointed Tao Zhu, a leader from Hunan province, to replace a high-level local official. He also sent 1,000 southbound cadres to Guangdong province to carry out the reform. (CCP Guangdong Provincial Committee's Party History Research Office, 1999).
- For example, in Huiyang County, Guangdong province, where southbound cadres dominated, land reform cadres beat 19 people to death between May 30 and June 5, 1951. Over the course of that year, 199 landlords and rich peasants in the county committed suicide due to the land reform (CCP Guangdong Provincial Committee's Party History Research Office, 1999).

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# Controls in the Great Famine Regression

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- the establishment time of the CCP, whether the county is on the Long March route, log population in 1960, grain output in 1960, a series of potential grain productivity data, the urbanization rate in 1964, whether the county belongs to a provincial capital, and whether the county belongs to a previous treaty port. The population and grain data are obtained from [\(Kasahara and Li, 2020\)](#), and the urbanization rate is obtained from [\(Chen et al., 2020\)](#). [▶ Back](#)