Social Embeddedness, Local Officials
and China's Great Famine

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Abstract

This paper studies how social ties between officials and local citizens ensure political accountability during China's Great Famine 1959–1961. We find that counties governed by officials assigned to their home regions had significantly lower famine mortalities than those governed by outside officials. Compared with outside officials, home officials (i) implemented agricultural procurement more flexibly during the Great Leap Forward (GLF) preceding the famine; (ii) expended more on social affairs such as calamity relief during the GLF; and (iii) persecuted fewer people during the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957. These results are consistent with the prosocial incentives and information advantages of home officials. Moreover, we show that the identity of officials shapes political trust in the long run.

If a county official governs a hundred miles of land around his home, then the people of the county will be his sons, the land of the county will be his fields, the cities and the countryside of the county will be his fences, and the granaries of the county will be his granaries. For the sons, he must love them and not hurt them; for the fields, he must treat them and not abandon them; for the granaries, he must repair them and not lose them.

– Gu Yanwu, Chinese Philosopher 1613-1682

1 Introduction

China's Great Famine during 1959–1961, causing 16.5–30 million deaths and 30 million birth deficits, was one of the worst catastrophes in human history.[1] This astonishing famine severity has brought immense academic interest to study its causes and consequences (Lin, 1990; Yang, 1996; Lin and Yang, 2000; Kung and Lin, 2003; Li and Yang, 2005; Kung and Chen, 2011; Meng et al., 2015; Kasahara and Li, 2020). While there is little disagreement that the famine was a manifestation of various perverse policies, we continue to know very little about the bureaucratic system which was responsible for the implementation of the radical policies. A closer look at the bureaucratic system will not only deepen our understanding about the causes of the famine, but also give us an opportunity to observe how the political system works in China and, hopefully, expand our knowledge about autocracies in general.

This paper tackles this issue by uncovering a significant cross-regional variation in terms of the social embeddedness of local officials, measured by whether officials were appointed to their home provinces.[2] Social scientists have long argued that in the absence of democratic rules, social connections between officials and local population (e.g., lineages, marriage networks, and social clubs) create prosocial incentives for officials, facilitate public monitoring and sanctions, and encourage political accountability (Putnam, 1994; Evans, 1995; Tsai, 2007; Xu and Yao, 2015; Ashraf and Bandiera, 2018; Besley and Ghatak, 2018). Moreover, home officials could leverage their acquaintance of the local culture and languages to gain information and improve bureaucratic

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[1] Those counts are based on the estimates of Ashton et al. (1984), Banister (1984), Cao (2005), Coale (1981), and Peng (1987), among others.

[2] Throughout the paper, we refer to the officials working in their home provinces as home officials and the others as outside officials.

efficiency (Alderman, 2002; Kasara, 2007; Balán et al., 2022). Motivated by the wisdom of this literature, we hypothesize that home officials may have an important role in mitigating the famine severity.

The geographic variation of the presence of home officials was shaped during the later phase of the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949), when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) deployed a large number of officials from so-called earlier-liberated areas in northern China to take over the administration of southern regions that were previously occupied by the Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang (KMT). These officials are commonly referred to as the southbound officials. This policy resulted in a significantly lower density of home officials in newly liberated counties over the course of the first two decades of communist China. To gather information on home officials, we digitalized over 1,200 volumes of county gazettes to construct a unique dataset containing the names, home provinces, positions, and office terms of county leaders (i.e., party secretaries and governors). Our measure of the presence of home officials is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or governors during the years before the famine (1950-1958). To measure famine severity, we collected county-level mortality rates during 1955-1966 from the provincial yearbooks of population statistics.

Descriptive evidence shows that the mortalities across counties with more or fewer home officials were remarkably similar during the normal years before and after the famine, but counties with more home officials were associated with a substantially lower mortality than other counties during the famine years. This observation leads us to use a difference-in-difference (DID) strategy to estimate the causal effect of home officials on famine severity. Specifically, we compare mortality in famine years with mortality in normal years across counties with various densities of home officials, controlling for county and year fixed effects.

The result shows that counties governed by home officials during the whole period of 1950-1958 had a famine mortality rate 10.3‰ lower than counties governed completely by outsiders. This effect is substantial given that the average mortality in our sample increased by 17‰ from the pre-famine years to the famine years. The result is robust to a variety of geographic controls, such as distance to political centers, agricultural endowment, and the population share of ethnic minorities.

It is also robust after we control for the roles of other political agents, such as CCP members and provincial officials.

We use two alternative measures of famine severity to address the concern that mortality statistics may be manipulated by local governments. One is the annual size of birth cohort derived from population census data, and the other is famine experience reported by the respondents in a contemporary nationally representative survey – China Family Panel Studies (CFPS). The analysis yields consistent results that in counties with more home officials, more infants were born during the famine years and people are less likely to report starvation experiences during these years.

Then we address the endogeneity concern about the variation of home officials using an instrumental variable strategy. The basic idea arises from the historical background that the policy of dispatching southbound officials was introduced in October 1948. It created a significant decline in the probability of being governed by home officials among counties taken by the CCP after this timing. Using a dummy variable indicating whether a county was taken afterward to instrument the geographic distribution of home officials, we find a consistent effect of home officials to mitigate famine severity. In addition, we compare the mortality differences in a subsample of counties taken right before and after the timing of this policy, and the result is reassuring.

To better understand how home officials mitigated the severity of the famine, we test three channels. First, motivated by Meng et al. (2015), we present evidence showing that agricultural procurement was implemented more flexibly in counties with more home officials. Especially during the Great Leap Forward (GLF) movement, procurement rates in those counties were still adjusted to contemporaneous output while procurement rates in counties governed by outsiders were not. Second, fiscal data of county governments reveals a substantial decrease in the expenditure share on social affairs such as calamity relief during the GLF. However, it decreased significantly less in counties governed more by home officials. Although a bit suggestive, these two findings are consistent with the information advantages and prosocial incentives of embedded officials. Third, the adoption of common dining halls is considered the catalyst for the onset of the famine (Chang and Wen, 1997). We proxy the management of communal dining halls using the amount of grain stock and find no significant difference between the two types of officials.

We complement the analysis of the famine by studying the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957. During this campaign, a large number of people who were dissatisfied with the misconduct and radicalism of local governments were persecuted (Kung and Chen, 2011). The fear of being purged silenced the criticism and thus turned off the self-correction mechanism when policies went to the extreme left (Walder, 2015). By investigating the cross-sectional association between the number of victims and home officials, we find that fewer people were persecuted in counties with more home officials.

Finally, we explore whether the allocation of officials shapes individual political trust in the long term. This is particularly relevant in the setting of China, where political trust is a key source of state legitimacy. Following Martinez-Bravo et al. (2022), we measure individual trust toward local officials using CFPS data. We estimate a DID equation at the individual level by interacting the measure of home officials with a dummy variable indicating cohorts born before the famine. The result shows that famine-exposed individuals in counties governed by home officials have a higher level of political trust than individuals in counties governed by outsiders. As placebo tests, we do not find significant differences of trust in other domains, including trust in parents, neighbors, foreigners, strangers, or doctors. Moreover, we do not observe significant results in the urban population, who experienced much less or no starvation due to the urban-biased food entitlements. Using CCP membership as an indicator for the behavioral realization of political trust, we find a consistent result that famine-exposed individuals in counties governed by home officials are more likely to join the party, and the significant result again only pertains to the rural population.

Our study makes a significant contribution to the literature on the causes of the Great Famine. In this strand of literature, some studies focus on the incentives of government officials. For example, Kung and Chen (2011) suggest that province officials with greater promotion incentives acted more radically during the GLF. Kung and Zhou (2021) find that Central Committee members exerted hometown favoritism by shipping more resale grain to their hometowns. However, the role of lower-level officials is seldom discussed in these studies, so they are unable to explain the vast variation of famine severity at the county level. Our study is particularly related to Kung and Lin (2003), who observe a greater radicalism among officials in regions taken by the CCP later. Our contribution to

their discourse is to construct systematic datasets that permit us not only to investigate the link between the identity of officials and famine severity but also to explore the channels and long-term political consequences.

More broadly, this paper speaks to the long-standing debate on how to match bureaucrats to workplaces. Basically, this debate revolves around how to strike the balance between embeddedness and autonomy (Evans, 1995; Besley et al., 2022). To strengthen vertical control and avoid local capture, many bureaucracies in history stuck to the rule of home avoidance. However, lack of embeddedness reduces prosocial incentives and local information that the bureaucracy could harness on for good. In the context of India, Bhavnani and Lee (2017) find that officials serving in their home states provided more public goods. Xu (2021) finds that during the 1918 Influenza pandemic, towns headed by Indian as opposed to British district officers experienced lower deaths due to greater responsiveness in relief provision. In line with Xu (2021), our study indicates the important role of home officials during catastrophes.

Last but not the least, our results highlight that informal social ties are resilient to autocratic rules and can produce a buffer against autocratic misgovernance. The communist revolution was aimed at an overhaul of the Chinese society and culture, yet social ties survived even within the CCP itself. Kung and Chen (2011) note that "the Great Famine reveals a fundamental shortcoming inherent in totalitarian regimes, that is the incapability to correct bad policies favored by the dictator." Our evidence instead indicates that bad policies were partially corrected by officials' social embeddedness during the implementation process.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. We describe the institutional background in Section 2. Data and variables used in the empirical analysis are introduced in Section 3. We present our identification strategy and main results in Section 4. Section 5 studies the channels. Section 6 discusses the long-term consequences on individual political trust. Section 7 concludes the paper.

2   Background

2.1   The Great Famine

Soon after the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the CCP prioritized the

development of industrial sectors and began to extract extensively from the agricultural sectors (Lin, 1990). Free markets of agricultural products were shut down in 1953, and replaced by a centralized procurement system where peasants were required to sell a mandatory amount of grain to the government at depressed prices. To facilitate procurement as well as support common prosperity, rural households were organized into collective cooperatives. The pace of collectivization was cautious during the early stage (1953-1957), when the scale of cooperatives was limited. However, it was greatly accelerated when the GLF movement was launched in 1958 and cooperatives were merged into large-scale People's Communes.

The absence of property rights and work incentives under the commune system could lead to a drop in crop yield (Lin, 1990). However, statistics released after the famine suggest that the aggregate grain output was still sufficient to feed the nation if distributed appropriately (Meng et al., 2015). This observation leads many scholars to believe that the famine was instead caused by policy failures, particularly excessive agricultural procurement and the poor management of communal dining halls, among others (Yang, 1996; Chang and Wen, 1997; Kung and Lin 2003; Li and Yang 2005; Meng et al., 2015).

Before the harvest, county-level governments had to estimate the current year's grain yield and report it to upper-level governments. A procurement target would be decided in a top-down manner and then assigned to each county. After the harvest, the actual procurement was implemented based on the target (Oi, 1989). During this process, local officials could influence the actual procurement by two means. First, they could influence the procurement target through bargaining, lobbying, or negotiation, although the effectiveness depended on personal connections and sophistication. Second, they could misreport the estimates of grain yield. During the GLF, to show their enthusiasm, local officials began to inflate the estimates of grain yields even when no increase in output took place. Inspired by the Soviet Sputniks, this practice was dubbed "shooting high-yield agricultural satellites." As a result, peasants were left with insufficient amount of grain for them to live on.[1] Meng et al. (2015) observe that food shortages were more severe in grain-production

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[1] Much of the extra grain procured was exported. Between 1957 and 1960, the Chinese government increased total grain exports from 1.9 million tons to 4.1 million tons. Kasahara and Li (2020) estimate that the excess deaths in 1960 would have been lowered by 15% if grain exports in 1959 had been the same as in 1957.

regions, and they find that this can be explained by the progressiveness (i.e., more productive regions were subject to higher procurement rates) and rigidness (i.e., procurement quotas were not being adjusted to contemporaneous outputs) of agricultural procurement.

Grain retained by peasants after procurement was stored and distributed by communal dining halls that began in August 1958 (Yang, 1996; Chang and Wen, 1997). Within the following three months, over 3 million dining halls were established across the country. Due to the over-consumption and food waste in communal dining halls, a substantial deficiency of grain stock happened by the spring of 1959 and triggered the occurrence of nationwide starvation.

The national mortality rate surged from 10.8‰ in 1957 to 25.43‰ in 1960. However, local officials still managed to cover up the occurrence of starvation and excess deaths. As a result, the central government failed to respond to the famine in the first two years (Fan et al., 2016). Only in early 1961 did the top leaders become fully aware of the scale of the famine. Emergency measures, including food reliefs, abandonment of the communal dining halls, temporary restoration of family farming, and opening of the free market, were adopted and the famine was stopped in most parts of the country by the end of 1961.

2.2 The Deployment of Southbound Officials

After the end of WWII, the CCP and the KMT engaged in a three-year civil war during 1946-1949. In the initial phase of the war, the CCP established control over pockets of areas in northern China, while the KMT controlled the south and large cities in the north. The CCP armies had been in a disadvantageous position until late 1947 when they won a series of battles in central China and began counterattacks in northern China. In September 1948, the CCP leader Mao Zedong anticipated that the KMT would be defeated within five years. An upcoming task was to take over the administration of newly-liberated regions. One of the challenging decisions facing the CCP leaders was whether to deploy cadres from its armies or to delegate authority to local guerrilla cadres and underground party members. Local cadres stayed behind the enemy line for a long time,

and Mao took their loyalty and competence as a serious concern.[1] Therefore, he decided on a plan to dispatch an army of cadres from the old-liberated regions in the north to manage the newly-liberated regions in the south (Yang, 2009). According to his plan,

By the third year of the war, 30,000 to 40,000 low, intermediate, and high-level officials must be prepared so that when the army advances in the fourth year, these officials can come with the army and manage approximately 50 to 100 million people in an orderly manner in newly-liberated areas.[2]

Following Mao's decision, a document named *Resolution on the Preparation of Cadres to Seize National Power* was released on October 28, 1948. It mandated the CCP central bureaus and military bases in the old-liberated regions to select and train 53,000 southbound officials in the next two years.

The actual progress of the Civil War was much faster than Mao had expected. After the triumph of three decisive campaigns against the KMT armies during the winter of 1948 and the spring of 1949, Mao updated his anticipation that the war would come to an end within only one year. The progress of the war also accelerated the deployment of the southbound officials. According to official statistics, 62,859 cadres had already been sent out by March 1949, even before the CCP crossed the Yangtze River and occupied the KMT's capital city Nanjing. After taking Nanjing, the CCP Central Committee soon released another document titled *Instructions on the Deployment of 38,000 Officials* on June 11 to deploy more officials to the south.

This policy of southbound officials shaped the political structure in newly-liberated areas during the early two decades after 1949. The majority of officials in those regions were from military bases in northern provinces.[3] Local cadres, most of whom were guerrilla or underground party members, were often appointed to deputy positions or even left idle. In contrast, local revolutionaries in the old-liberated regions in northern China settled down after the war and became local leaders.

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[1] The reason of not using local cadres was clearly reflected in a document issued by the party committee of Yunnan Province. It illustrates as follows: "All positions including prefecture party secretaries, commissioners, county party secretaries and governors, should be held by outside officials, who were trained during the land reform and rectification movements. Local cadres who seized the original leadership should be removed from their positions, and they should participate into the mass struggles to get more training." After reviewing this document, Mao Zedong urged other provinces to consolidate party organizations in the same manner (Yang, 2009).

[2] The plan was documented in *Notice of the Central Committee of the CCP on the September Meeting*.

[3] Some of the southbound officials originated from the south and went back to their home provinces. However, the majority of those officials were completely new to the regions that they were about to rule.

2.3 Social Embeddedness and Local Accountability: Qualitative Evidence

The southbound officials were socially detached from the local society. They spoke different dialects, ate different diets, and even had different cultural norms, which inevitably reduced their incentives to protect the local interests and weakened their ability to gather information. More importantly, the southbound officials had distinct sources of political power and accountability. As pointed out by Yang Kuisong, a famous historian of the CCP history, the southbound officials were highly dependent on the central government for their authority. In return, the CCP was able to establish an unprecedentedly centralized regime covering every corner of China. However, the leaders were not fully aware that this system was at the expense of local interests (Yang, 2009).

Considerable historical accounts suggest that southbound officials were less accountable to the local population. During the early 1950s, some southbound officials implemented radical grain procurement in southern provinces, causing large-scale peasant rebellions.[1] They blamed local cadres to be too conservative while enforcing land reforms, which induced serious factional fights (Vogel, 1969; Fang et al., 2022). In 1956 and 1957 when people attempted to exit from cooperatives after the decline of grain output, southbound officials relentlessly suppressed the movement, so that they could please their superiors in upper-level governments (Zhang and Liu, 2019).

Similar misbehaviors were observed during the period of the GLF. A typical case happened in Yingjing County of Sichuan Province. This county is well-known for a mortality rate as high as 151.13‰ during the famine. Like other regions in Sichuan, Yingjing County was administrated by southbound officials coming from a northern province – Shanxi. At the end of 1958 when the procurement target was about to be decided, the party secretary of Yingjing County reported that the county's agricultural output doubled from 1957 to 1958, while the fact was that the output decreased by over 20%. As a result, grain was over-procured, causing many deaths of starvation. Despite this, local people were afraid to make complaints due to the risks of being purged. In 1959, the party secretary again reported a doubling grain output, which brought him a promotion. At the end of 1959,

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[1] Huang Yanpei, who was the Vice Premier of the State Council, advised Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in April 1950 to replace outside officials with local officials because outside officials only cared about their tasks but not people's livelihood.

communal dining halls in the county ran out of food and people had to rely on bran, leaves, and weeds to live on.[1]

3 Data

3.1 Data on County Officials

We undertook a large-scale project of data digitalization to construct an original dataset of county officials from county gazettes. The dataset covers over 1,200 counties in 18 provinces of mainland China.[2] The chapters on politics and administration in gazettes document the changes of the county's administrative structure and personnel. This provides us the information on the positions, office terms, names, and home provinces of county party secretaries and governors. See Appendix Figure A1 for an example of the archival data from Yingjing County.

County party secretaries or governors are defined as home officials if they were appointed to counties located in the provinces of their birth. This definition is similar to Bhavnani and Lee (2017) and Xu et al. (2021), in which home officials in India are the district officials who served in their home states. Appendix Figure A2 shows the variation in the share of counties governed by home officials over time. The shares remain relatively stable before the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, with about 40% of counties governed by home party secretaries and 60% governed by home governors.

We measure the presence of home officials in each county by the share of years that it was governed by home party secretaries or home governors over 1950-1958. It will be referred to as the HPO index hereafter. Figure 1 presents the geographic variation of the HPO index across our sample counties. One can see that counties in northern China were much more likely to be governed by

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[1] See the website http://beijingspring.com/c7/xw/wlwz/20080530202609.htm for a more detailed introduction of the Yingjing case. Chen (2010) documents another case at a county in the middle of Anhui province, where outside officials forbid farmers to eat immature or unripe crops in the fields during the famine and sent armies to guard the granary against the theft by hungry people. As a result, 101 out of 198 villagers died during the winter of 1959 and the spring of 1960.

[2] The excluded provinces of mainland China are Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Qinghai, Ningxia, Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning. We do not have access to gazettes of the former eight provinces and gazettes in the latter three provinces do not contain officials' hometown information. Besides, during the period we study, Hainan province belonged to Guangdong and Chongqing belonged to Sichuan.

home officials. It is consistent with the historical background that those counties were taken by the CCP earlier and thus less settled by southbound officials.[1]

[Figure 1 about here]

3.2 Mortality Statistics

Our primary outcome variable is the county-level mortality rate, collected from population statistic yearbooks published by provincial Statistic Bureaus in the 1980s. The sample period of our data is from 1955 to 1966, covering years before and after the famine. This dataset has only been used in very recent studies, such as Kasahara and Li (2020), Liu and Zhou (2022), and Cao et al. (2022). A potential concern of this dataset is that county-level mortality statistics may be manipulated by local governments and cannot reflect the actual famine severity. However, Kasahara and Li (2020) find it consistent with provincial mortality rates after aggregation. Despite this, we use two alternative measures including cohort size and self-reported famine experience to eliminate the concern of manipulation.

Appendix Figure A3 plots the average and coefficient of variation of county-level mortality rates across years in our data. The average mortality rate was roughly 12‰ in normal years. With the onset of the GLF in 1958, however, there was a stark increase in the average mortality, reaching almost 29‰ in 1960. Moreover, the coefficient of variation also exhibits a hump shape, indicating a substantial increase in the variation of mortality across counties in the famine years. This geographical variation is visualized in Figure 2. It shows the excess mortality rate across counties, defined by the average mortality rate during the famine years (1959-1961) minus the average mortality rate during the years preceding the famine (1955-1958). Comparing Figure 1 and Figure 2, one can see a clear negative correlation between the presence of home officials and the famine severity. One exemption is the eastern provinces (i.e., Zhejiang and Fujian) which had few home officials but low excessive deaths. These provinces have a strong clan culture, which might have protected local clan members from the exploitation of outside officials (Chen, 2010; Cao et al., 2022).

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[1] The presence of home officials was also common in some southern and southwestern regions, possibly because there were more powerful guerrilla fighters or underground party members before 1949. Vogel (1969) documents that a majority of counties in Guangdong province were administrated by local officials during the early 1950s, but they were quickly replaced by southbound officials due to their unwillingness to enforce radical land redistribution.

3.3 Datasets for Other Variables

From county gazettes, we also collected information on the timing of liberation, grain output and procurement, fiscal expenditure, and the number of victims during the Anti-Rightist Campaign. Grain output and procurement statistics cover the period from 1956 to 1961.[1] Due to its short time span, we collect a supplementary grain dataset for Henan province from the yearbook *Henan Agricultural Statistics 1949-1979*, which enables us to extend the sample period to 1953-1966. [2] Another advantage of this supplementary dataset is that it contains additional information on grain resales and grain stocks, which we will use to proxy the management of communal dining halls. Fiscal expenditure information includes total expenditure and expenditures on different subjects. We mainly focus on expenditures on economic development and social affairs, where the latter includes expenditures on subjects such as education, public health, and calamity relief.

As we have illustrated, we measure the famine severity alternatively using cohort size and self-reported famine experience. Following Meng et al. (2015), we derive cohort size from China's Population Census 1990, by calculating the number of people born in a given county and a given year. Self-reported famine experience is drawn from CFPS, a nationally representative survey conducted by the Institute of Social Science Survey at Peking University.[3] It covers 162 counties located in 25 provinces of mainland China. In its first wave (2010), the CFPS asked respondents whether they have experienced starvation for more than one week. For those who reported "yes", the CFPS further asked when the starvation experience started and ended. The variable "famine experience" is then defined as a dummy which equals one if an individual reported starvation experience during 1958–1961, and zero otherwise. As Chen and Yang (2019) have pointed out, the survey itself did not

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[1] There is a concern that the grain output and procurement statistics of the GLF period are not reliable. However, as discussed by Meng et al, (2015) and Kasahara and Li (2020), the data released in the post-Mao period have been corrected to address misreporting in previous years. Moreover, county gazettes were compiled by local historians who have little incentive to manipulate the data (Almond et al., 2019).

[2] Henan is a typical province featured with high mortality rates and great regional variations in both mortality rates and the type of officials.

[3] Xu and Xie (2015) show that the numerous socioeconomic and demographic variables in the CFPS dataset—for example, age, gender, educational attainment, earnings, and health—line up well with the census data. We can therefore generalize the results obtained using the CFPS survey data to all Chinese people.

explicitly mention the Great Famine, which means that famine experiences were voluntarily reported by respondents without any inducement.

We also use CFPS data to measure individual political trust. In its second wave (2012), the CFPS asked respondents about the degree of trust towards various subjects, including parents, neighbors, strangers, local cadres, Americans, and doctors. The degree of trust ranges from zero (extremely low trust) to ten (extremely high trust). Political trust is then trust towards local cadres, and we use trust in other domains as placebo tests. For an easier interpretation of the coefficients, we convert the degree of trust into dummy variables that equal one if respondents report 6–10 and zero otherwise. We also measure individual CCP membership as a behavioral indicator of political trust. Table 1 provides a complete summary of the variables used in our empirical analysis and their data sources.

[Table 1 about here]

4   Home Officials and Famine Severity

4.1   Empirical Strategy

To motivate our empirical strategy, we divide the counties in our sample into two groups according to the median of the HPO index. Figure 3 plots the average mortality rates over time. On average, mortality rates in the two groups were remarkably similar in normal years both before and after the famine. Thus, one would expect low and similar trends of mortality rates across counties if the GLF had not been launched. However, when the movement started in 1958, we see a much larger increase of mortality in counties with fewer home officials.

[Figure 3 about here]

This observation leads us to estimate the effect of home officials on famine mortality using the following DID specification:

$$y_{it} = \beta \times HPO_i \times Famine_t + \varphi_i + \eta_t + \epsilon_{it} \tag{1}$$

where y_{it} indicates the mortality rate (deaths-per-thousand) for county i in year t. HPO_i is the share of years that a county was governed by home officials during 1950-1958. $Famine_t$ is a

dummy that is equal to one during the famine years 1959-1961 and zero otherwise.[1] In addition, φ_i is the fixed effect for county i, which controls for time-invariant or slowing-moving differences across counties, such as geographic characteristics or culture; η_t is the fixed effect for year t, controlling for country-wide changes such as national policies or macroeconomic fluctuations; and ϵ_{it} is the error term. The identification requires that HPO_i be uncorrelated with ϵ_{it} conditional on other variables in the equation. While we believe that this is a robust assumption, we will conduct several robustness checks later in Section 4.3. In our regressions, we cluster the standard errors at the county level.

The differences in mortality rates across years presented in Figure 3 can also be estimated using the following dynamic specification:

$$y_{it} = \sum_{\tau=1956}^{1966} \beta_\tau \times HPO_i \times D_t^\tau + \varphi_i + \eta_t + \epsilon_{it} \tag{2}$$

where D_t^τ represents a set of dummies that equal one in year τ and zero otherwise. We choose the beginning year of our sample period 1955 as the reference year. A parallel pre-trend requires coefficients of D_t^τ for $\tau < 1958$ to be close to 0. We also expect the coefficients for $\tau > 1961$ to be small, but it would not be necessary because the differences in mortality rates could persist after the famine due to the deterioration of people's health status.

4.2 Baseline Results

Table 2 reports the baseline results. In column 1, we use the original definition of the HPO index and thus do not distinguish the effects of home party secretaries and home county governors. The negative coefficient indicates that during the famine years, the mortality rate increased significantly less in counties with more home officials. To be specific, counties always governed by home officials preceding the famine ($HPO_i = 1$) would experience a famine mortality 10.3‰ lower than counties without home officials ($HPO_i = 0$). Given that the overall increase in mortality from pre-famine years to 1960 was about 17‰, this effect is sizable.

Columns 2 and 3 distinguish the effects of party secretaries and county governors. That is, we

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[1] Although the mortality rate started to increase in 1958, we stick with a more commonly-used definition of the famine period (1959–1961) in our main analysis. The robustness check that treating 1958 as a famine year is presented in Appendix Table A1.

alternatively define the HPO index as the share of years a county was governed by home party secretaries or home county governors, respectively. Although one may expect heterogeneous effects due to the division of duty between party secretaries and governors, the results suggest that their effects are similar.[1] Therefore, in the following analysis, we no longer distinguish the job positions of county officials.

[Table 2 about here]

Figure 4 presents the dynamic effects estimated via Equation (2). The solid line connects the estimates and the dashed lines indicate the 95% confidence intervals with standard errors clustered at the county level. Consistent with Figure 3, we do not find different trends for counties with different types of officials before 1958. The effect of home officials is significant during the famine years. It is the largest in 1960, the worst year of the famine, and shrinks after a series of national remedy policies were adopted in 1961. The observed small but significant effects in the post-famine period reflect delayed deaths caused by health deterioration.

[Figure 4 about here]

4.3 Robustness

In this subsection, we provide several robustness checks for the baseline results shown in Table 2. First, we control for a set of confounding factors that might influence both the allocation of officials and the mortality rates; second, we rule out the impacts of other political agents; third, we use alternative measures of famine severity to address the concern that mortality statistics may be manipulated by local governments.

4.3.1 Controlling for possible determinants on the allocation of officials

With the county fixed effects holding constant time-invariant confounders in Equation (1), a remaining identification threat is county characteristics that were correlated with the allocation of officials and at the same time, had differential effects on mortality during the famine and non-

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[1] According to the party document, "the party was supposed to be responsible only for broad policy direction, whereas detailed policy execution should be the responsibility of the government and its attendant organizations." It implies that it was the job of governors to procure grain. However, Mao relied disproportionally on party officials to implement the Great Leap's radical policies. Thus, both county governors and party secretaries should be influential during the process of procurement (Oi, 1989; Kung and Chen, 2011).

famine years. We discuss several potential factors to buttress our baseline results.

Geographic Remoteness. To govern jurisdictions far from the central, rulers often have to sacrifice vertical controls and delegate authorities to local agents. Especially when the state capacity is weak, local agents' information advantages can be leveraged for better policy implementation and public goods provision (Balán et al., 2022; Martinez-Bravo et al., 2022). Observing Figure 1, the pattern showing more home officials in southern and southwestern regions is visually consistent with this argument. Moreover, the famine might be more severe in remote regions due to the difficulty to send relief supplies. This causes geographic remoteness to be correlated with both the allocation of officials and famine severity. We address this concern by controlling the interactions between year dummies and two measures of remoteness – the distance to the national capital Beijing and the distance to the provincial capital city. The coefficient reported in column 1 of Table 3 is similar to the baseline estimate.

Agricultural Endowment. Meng et al. (2015) document that famine mortality is positively correlated with agricultural output. Although it is speculative, outside officials might be appointed to more productive regions to extract agricultural output and support industrialization. Following Meng et al. (2015) and Kasahara and Li (2020), we interact year dummies with geographic conditions (ruggedness and altitude) and agricultural suitability of producing wheat and rice, and control them in Equation (1). In addition, we control for the average temperature and precipitation in each year's spring season. In column 2 of Table 3, we show that the coefficient is barely changed.

Population Share of Minorities. To gain support from the minorities, minority regions were given autonomy. This was written into the constitution in 1954. One feature of the autonomous status was that those regions were more likely to be administrated by officials from the local ethnicity. Meanwhile, those autonomous regions might experience lower famine mortalities due to less expropriation from the center. Thus, in column 3 of Table 3, we include interactions between year dummies and the population share of minorities and confirm our baseline result.

[Table 3 about here]

4.3.2 Ruling out impacts from other political agents

Next, we rule out confounding impacts from political agents other than county officials, due to the

concern that the geographic distribution of these agents might be correlated with the presence of home officials. We consider two types of political agents following the literature. First, Yang (1996) suggests that local non-party cadres were eager to advance their political career by signaling their loyalty and thus behaved more radically.[1] Second, Kung and Chen (2011) study the career concern of provincial officials and propose that the incentive to become full members of the Central Committee drove some alternative members to implement radical policies. We revisit these two arguments by controlling for (i) the interactions between the population share of CCP members in 1950 and the famine indicator (column 4 of Table 3); and (ii) two dummies indicating whether a province's First Party Secretary was an alternative member or nonmember of the Central Committee, treating the full members as the reference group (column 5). We find that these controls have minor influences on our estimates for the effects of home officials. Consistent with Yang (1996), a larger population share of CCP members is associated with a lower famine mortality. However, we find lower famine mortalities in provinces governed by alternative members and nonmembers, a result contrary to the argument of Kung and Chen (2011).[2]

4.3.3 Alternative measures of famine severity

Until county-level mortality statistics were used by recent studies, the previous literature had measured the famine severity by cohort size. The idea is that counties suffering more from famine generally had fewer newborn babies. Column 1 of Table 4 reports the effect of home officials on cohort size. The cohort size in counties completely governed by home officials (HPO = 1) is 30.2% larger during the famine period than in counties without any home officials (HPO = 0).

[Table 4 about here]

Another measure is self-reported famine experience in surveys which are independently collected by academic institutes. Following Chen and Yang (2019) and Cao et al. (2022), we exploit

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[1] Yang (1996) and Yang and Su (1998) also highlight the role of outside officials when they explain the career concern of non-party elites. That is, the areas with fewer party members were conquered by the CCP later and had more outsiders in governance, which prompted lower-level local cadres to demonstrate their loyalty to these outsiders with greater eagerness. However, Kung and Lin (2003) suggest that the role of those non-party members should not be overestimated, since they had little discretion in policy formulation and implementation.

[2] This finding is consistent with the historical facts that the First Party Secretaries of the provinces with the highest death tolls were all full members of the Central Committee, such as Zeng Xisheng in Anhui, Wu Zhipu in Henan and Li Jingquan in Sichuan. Yang et al. (2014) also find results different from those of Kung and Chen (2011).

respondents born between 1950 and 1966 in the CFPS and estimate the effect of home officials on individual famine experience. The specification is as follows:

$$y_{ijct} = \beta \times HPO_c \times PreFamine_{it} + X_{ijct} + \varphi_c + \eta_t + \epsilon_{ijct} \qquad (3)$$

where y_{ijct} is the dummy variable indicating famine experience of individual i born in community c of county j and birth year t; $PreFamine_{it}$ indicates whether individual i was born before 1958. This specification is motivated by two arguments. First, people born after 1961 did not experience the famine; second, people born between 1958 and 1961 were too young (0-3 years old) to have memories of their famine experience (Cao et al., 2022). Though it is a little stringent, the second argument is supported by the pattern in Appendix Figure A4, where we show the effects of home officials on famine experience cohort-by-cohort. One can see that the effects for individuals born during and after the famine period are indeed close to zero and insignificant. X_{ijct} is a set of individual characteristics, including gender, education level, and *Hukou* status (rural or urban). Instead of controlling for county fixed effects, we control for a more stringent fixed effect at the community level φ_c, and η_t is the birth year fixed effect. We cluster the standard errors at the community level.

Column 2 of Table 4 shows that for individuals born before the famine, the probability of experiencing starvation during the famine years is 7 percentage points lower in counties completely governed by home officials than in counties completely governed by outsiders. This effect is sizable, given that the average famine experience is 10.2% for the whole sample and 20.7% for individuals born before 1958. Individual-level data offer us another advantage to estimate heterogeneous effects by *Hukou* status. Due to the urban bias in food entitlement, the urban population was almost immune to the famine. Therefore, estimating the effect on the urban sample offers a placebo test for our specification. Columns 3 and 4 report the results for the rural sample and urban sample, respectively. The effect in the rural sample is large and significant, but the effect in the urban sample is much smaller and insignificant.

In addition to the above robustness checks, we show in the Appendix that the effect of home officials on mortality is robust when we consider 1958 as the starting year of the famine; when we

control for other potential confounders, such as the strength of clan culture (measured by the log number of genealogy books) which mitigated famine severity as suggested by Cao et al. (2022), and the importance of political control of each county, measured by an importance rating (*Chong Fan Pi Nan*) invented by *Qing* government (Bai and Jia, 2016; Liu and Zhang, 2022)[1]; and when we only exploit within-province variation by controlling for province-year fixed effects (Appendix Table A1). Finally, we replicate the analysis in provinces including Sichuan, Henan, and Guizhou separately, and the results suggest that the allocation of home officials can also account for the variations of mortality across counties in provinces with the highest death tolls (Appendix Table A2).[2]

4.4   Instrumental Variable Estimates

The results presented so far demonstrate the central role of home officials in mitigating the severity of the famine. We have conducted various robustness checks to strengthen the causal interpretation. One may, however, still worry that there are omitted variables that determine both the officials' allocation and famine severity. To address this concern, we present results using an instrumental variable approach. An appropriate instrument will predict the allocation of officials but will not affect famine mortality through other channels.

Our proposed instrument is derived from the timing when a county was taken by the CCP. Since the policy of deploying southbound officials was introduced in October 1948, counties taken over by the CCP after that point of time were more likely to be administrated by officials from other provinces. Moreover, the timing of takeover was determined by outcomes of battles fought between the CCP and KMT armies, which were hard to be anticipated and thus arguably exogenous to county characteristics that might affect famine severity. The instrument is then constructed as a dummy variable *After*, which equals one if a county was taken over in or after October 1948 and zero otherwise.

Figure 5 presents the average HPO index of counties by the month of takeover. One can see a

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[1] *Chong Fan Pi Nan* represents different characteristics of a county, where *Chong* indicates the county is important in transportation or communication, *Fan* is the importance in business, *Pi* is the difficulty to gather taxes, and *Nan* is the intensity of crime.

[2] Anhui province was also heavily hit by the famine. However, our mortality data of Anhui is extremely unbalanced in which 64% of observations are missing. It causes us unable to obtain precise estimates.

high and stable HPO index among counties taken before the deployment of southbound officials, but a steady decline of HPO in counties taken afterward. The cross-sectional correlation between our instrument and HPO across counties is further demonstrated in column 1 of Table 5. It shows that counties taken after October 1948 had an HPO index 0.395 lower than counties taken before. Column 2 includes a set of geographic controls that might influence the process of takeover (i.e., the log distance to Beijing, the log distance to the provincial capital city, ruggedness, and altitude). The gap decreases in magnitude but remains highly significant.

[Figure 5 about here]

We implement the IV estimation by instrumenting the interaction term $HPO \times Famine$ by $After \times Famine$. Columns 3 and 4 report the second-stage estimates. In column 3, an increase in the HPO index from 0 to 1 decreases famine mortality by 15.90‰, which is in the range of inflation of a typical IV estimate. . The reduced-form results are presented in columns 5 and 6, showing a lower famine mortality in counties taken after the policy.

[Table 5 about here]

A caveat of the IV design is that counties taken very early and counties taken very late could have different features in addition to the type of officials. To alleviate this concern, we complement the above analysis with an exercise focusing on counties taken within narrow intervals of months (+/- 6, 5, 4, or 3 months) around October 1948. Appendix Table A3 presents the results of OLS, reduced-form, and second-stage estimates in those subsamples. Different columns indicate varying month intervals. The results consistently reveal lower famine mortalities in counties with more home officials.

5   Channels

This section attempts to understand the potential channels through which home officials mitigated famine severity. Although many channels may be relevant, we focus on three important aspects due to data availability – agricultural procurement, fiscal expenditure, and the management of communal dining halls. Among them, agricultural procurement and the communal dining halls have been identified by the existing literature as the two most important causes for the famine. As a

complementary exercise, we will also study the Anti-Rightist Campaign to provide additional evidence for the difference of radicalism between the two types of officials.

5.1 Agricultural Procurement

Building on the previous literature, we focus on two features of agricultural procurement. First, we examine the procurement rate defined by the amount of agricultural output being procured divided by the total output. Appendix Figure A5 presents the average procurement rates across years in our two datasets – data from 18 provinces covering 1956–1961 and data from Henan province covering 1953–1966. Both datasets reveal an evident increase in procurement rate during the GLF, reaching over 35% in 1959.[1] We estimate the effect of home officials on procurement rate using Equation (1). Since the policies during the GLF caused the famine, we replace the *Famine* dummy by a dummy indicating the GLF years (1958-1960). The results presented in columns 1 and 3 of Table 6, however, do not tell us a significant difference between home and outside officials.[2]

The second facet of agricultural procurement we explore is its flexibility. This is motivated by Meng et al. (2015), who suggest that the rigidity of procurement policy is a fundamental cause of the famine. Since the procurement target was decided before the harvest, actual procurement was not easy to be adjusted to contemporaneous output. The rigidity was further amplified when local officials began to misreport the estimates of grain yield during the GLF.[3] Following Kasahara and Li (2020), we formalize the flexibility of procurement using the elasticities between procurement rate and contemporaneous/past agricultural output. A flexible procurement policy is then featured by a high elasticity between the procurement rate and contemporaneous output and a low elasticity between the procurement rate and the past year's output.

Based on this idea, we estimate the following equation to quantify the difference in

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[1] The average procurement rates in Appendix Figure A5 are similar to the statistics presented in Table 1 of Kung and Lin (2003). Besides, the figure also shows that the average procurement rates over time in Henan derived from the two datasets are almost the same.

[2] After we control for county characteristics, the result indeed shows that home officials procured significantly less grain during the GLF (Appendix Table A4). We take a closer look at the Henan data through an event study. Appendix Figure A6 suggests that home officials started to procure less grain as early as 1957, and they continued to procure less after the famine.

[3] The procurement in Yingjing county provides a typical case that the procurement target was based on the past year's output instead of contemporaneous output.

procurement flexibility across counties and to see whether the difference changes in GLF and non-GLF years:

$$Ln(Procurement\ Rate)_{it} = \gamma_1 * HPO_i * Ln(Output)_{it} * GLF_t + \gamma_2 * HPO_i * Ln(Output)_{it-1} * GLF_t$$
$$+ \lambda_1 * Ln(Output)_{it} * GLF_t + \lambda_2$$
$$* Ln(Output)_{it-1} * GLF_t$$
$$+ \beta_1 * HPO_i * Ln(Output)_{it} + \beta_2$$
$$* HPO_i * Ln(Output)_{it-1}$$
$$+ \theta_1 * Ln(Output)_{it} + \theta_2$$
$$* Ln(Output)_{it-1}$$
$$+ \delta * HPO_i * GLF_t + \varphi_i + \eta_t + \epsilon_{it}$$

(4)

In non-GLF years, θ_1 and θ_2 capture the procurement flexibility in counties always governed by outsiders, and β_1 and β_2 measure the relative flexibility in counties with more home officials. The change of procurement flexibility during the GLF years versus the non-GLF years in counties governed by outsiders is captured by λ_1 and λ_2. Then γ_1 and γ_2 reflect the relative change of flexibility in counties governed by more home officials.

The results presented in columns 2 and 4 of Table 6 yield two common findings. First, the procurement in counties governed by outsiders was flexible during the normal years, in the sense that the procurement rate was adjusted to contemporaneous production (θ_1 is significant, but θ_2 is not). However, the procurement became extremely rigid during the GLF, indicated by the magnitudes of $\lambda_1 + \theta_1$ (close to 0) and $\lambda_2 + \theta_2$ (much larger than 0). Second, the rigidity was reduced in counties governed by home officials. In counties with HPO being 1, the elasticity between procurement rate and contemporaneous production during the GLF years is sizable – 0.459 (0.431-0.443+0.53-0.059) in column 2 and 0.774 (0.487-0.463+0.588+0.162) in column 4. The corresponding elasticity between procurement rate and past production is small – 0.191 (0.01+0.381-0.512+0.312) and 0.087 (0.119+0.308-0.377+0.037). Appendix Table A4 presents robustness with more controls.

[Table 6 about here]

In sum, these results suggest that consistent with Meng et al. (2015), the rigidity of procurement was a unique phenomenon in the GLF period. Moreover, the higher flexibility during the GLF in counties with more home officials is probably one of the explanations for the lower famine mortality rates in those regions. This finding could be interpreted as evidence for the advantages of home officials in gathering information on agricultural production. It is also possible that home officials were less inclined to exaggerate or misreport output than outside officials due to their prosocial incentives.

5.2 Fiscal Expenditure

One important feature of the GLF is that resources were pooled into economic sectors in immense magnitudes. This can be observed from Appendix Figure A7, where we plot the structure of fiscal expenditures of county governments during 1953–1966. There is a sharp increase in the share of expenditure on economic development when the GLF was initiated in 1958 and a decline after its cease in 1961. Correspondingly, the share of fiscal expenditure on social affairs decreased substantially during 1958–1961. Since calamity relief was included in the expenditure on social affairs, analyzing this expenditure could also shed some light on the role of home officials in famine relief.[1]

Specifically, we estimate the effects of home officials on the structure of government expenditure using a specification similar to Equation (1), replacing *Famine* with *GLF*. The results are presented in Table 7, where the odd columns only control for county and year fixed effects, and the even columns further control for a set of county characteristics. An increase of the HPO index from 0 to 1 decreases the share of government expenditure on economic development during the GLF by 5.7 percentage points (column 1) and increases the share on social affairs by 3.8 percentage points (column 3). These results are consistent with the prosocial incentives of home officials.

[Table 7 about here]

5.3 The Management of Communal Dining Halls

Communal dining halls were adopted at a quick pace. This prevents the previous literature to come

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[1] Unfortunately, county gazettes do not provide disaggregated expenditure data for calamity relief, so we have to rely on social expenditure to observe the impact of home officials on famine relief.

up with an appropriate measure that captures its variation across regions. We attempt to proxy the management of communal dining halls using data on grain stock from Henan province. The idea is that if the communal dining halls were poorly managed in a specific year (i.e., over-consumption, waste, or corruption), less grain would be retained for the next year. We measure the proportion of retained grain as follows:

$$Stock\ Rate_t = \frac{Stock_{t+1}}{Stock_t + Production_t - Procurement_t + Resale_t} \tag{5}$$

where $Stock_{t+1}$ is the amount of grain retained until March of the next year, and $Stock_t$ is the grain inherited from last year. The denominator is the disposable grain in year t, that is total grain after procurement ($Stock_t + Production_t - Procurement_t$) plus grain sold back by the government to the rural residents ($Resale_t$). We plot the average proportion of retained grain across counties in Henan in Appendix Figure A8. One can observe a sharp decline in grain stock after the adoption of communal dining halls in 1958. When this policy was officially abolished in 1961, only 5% of disposable grain was retained for the next year.

We estimate the effect of home officials on grain stock using Equation (1) and present the results in Appendix Table A5. The dependent variable in column 1 is the stock rate defined above. We use the log of grain stock retained for the next year as an alternative measurement in column 2. The results suggest an insignificant difference between home officials and outsiders in managing the communal dining halls. Nevertheless, this finding should be interpreted with caution, since the change of grain stock might capture variations other than the communal dining halls. Data limitations have prevented us from exploring this channel more systematically.

5.4 The Anti-Rightist Campaign

The above analysis focuses on the causes that have been explored by the literature. Besides those radical policies, the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957 is an important political event that fueled the radicalism during the GLF era. During this campaign, people expressing their critiques of the party and its local agents were branded as "rightists" and persecuted. Therefore, local people including intellectuals and political elites were silenced in the subsequent years. The campaign shut down the mechanism of feedback and correction when extreme policies were implemented. More importantly, the risks of persecution also forced local officials to cover up the deaths and low agricultural outputs

during the early years of the famine. It explains the blockage of information in the party and across different hierarchies of government, and their slow response to the famine.[1]

Table 8 presents the cross-sectional relationship between the presence of home officials and the intensity of the Anti-Rightist Campaign measured by the log number of victims. Since the campaign was launched in 1957, we measure home officials using two alternative variables: (i) a dummy indicating whether a county was governed by home officials in 1957; and (ii) the share of years that a county was governed by home officials during 1950-1956. Columns 1 and 4 show that the intensity of the campaign is negatively and significantly correlated with the presence of home officials. Controlling county characteristics in columns 2 and 5 increases the magnitudes of coefficients. Moreover, the magnitudes are reduced but remain sizable and significant, when we only exploit within-province variations in columns 3 and 6.

These results, again, show that home officials were less radical than outsiders. In addition, less fear of being persecuted reduced information friction, which might have contributed to the flexible procurement in counties with more home officials.

[Table 8 about here]

6 Long-Term Consequences on Political Trust

Lastly, we examine whether the identity of officials shapes the political trust of individuals who were exposed to the famine. This question is particularly relevant in the case of China, where political trust constitutes one of the most important foundations of regime legitimacy. Lack of political trust could be associated with lower compliance with government policies or higher tendencies to protest. Nevertheless, there are no *prior* reasons to believe that individual political trust would be definitely lowered by their famine experience. Soon after the famine, the central government launched massive propaganda to blame the catastrophe on bad weather. Chen and Yang (2019) find that famine survivors are able to realize the government's liability only if the weather conditions were regular.

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[1] The campaign also distorted information by sending many able bureaucrats to reeducation and thus reduced the number of statisticians and demographers to project productions in 1959 (Spence, 1990).

To test the link between the type of officials and political trust, we estimate Equation (3) with the outcome being individual trust in local cadres from the 2012 wave of CFPS data. The results presented in Table 9 show a significantly higher political trust among famine-exposed individuals in counties with more home officials. An increase of the HPO index from 0 to 1 increases the political trust of famine-exposed individuals by 9.4 percentage points or 23.5% of the average political trust in the sample. Lower political trust in regions governed by outsiders could be a direct manifestation of higher famine severity. However, it is also likely that the identity of officials has enabled local people to infer the government's liability during the famine and thus shaped their political trust in the long run.

We present two falsification tests upon the above analysis. First, we divide our sample by their *Hukou* status. Columns 2 and 3 of Table 9 show that the coefficient is only significant for rural individuals, which is consistent with the fact that the famine mainly occurred in rural regions. Second, we show that the observed effect is specific to trust in local cadres. Columns 4 to 8 present the coefficients across other dimensions of trust, including trust in parents, neighbors, Americans, strangers, and doctors. The results suggest that none of those trusts are significantly affected by the type of officials. A remaining concern is that respondents tend to avoid expressing their true political attitudes in surveys. Using CCP membership as a behavioral measure, we show in Appendix Table A6 that famine-exposed individuals in counties with more home officials are also more likely to join the party. Again, the effect only exists in the rural population.

[Table 9 about here]

7 Conclusion

Creating an effective bureaucratic system is one of the most pressing problems during the process of state building. The fear of collusion between officials and local elites has often motivated rulers to strengthen vertical control by reducing social relations between bureaucrats and the local population. However, in countries where judicial and other institutions are weak and incapable of constraining misbehaviors by the state's agents, a lack of embeddedness would undermine local accountability and governance effectiveness.

In this study, we have shown that during the Chinese Civil War, the CCP leaders deployed a large number of southbound officials to control the regions previously occupied by the KMT. This policy created a vast variation regarding the social embeddedness of local officials across regions. Officials appointed to their home provinces were more constrained by their social relations with the local population, and they leveraged their information advantages to improve administrative efficiency. When the GLF was launched in 1958, home officials implemented agricultural procurement more flexibly and distributed more government expenditure on social affairs such as calamity relief. As a result, counties governed by home officials suffered a much lower mortality rate during the Great Famine.

The significance of our results is that informal rules acted as an important mechanism for ensuring local accountability under a tightly controlled political regime. The communist revolution was intended not only to change China's political and social structure, but also to create a new way of life for the whole population through drastic social movements. The revolution was supposed to sweep away the influence of traditional social norms such as blood and geographic ties. Our results, however, suggest that social ties survived underneath the vehement tides of political and social changes and continued to play a vital role in grassroots governance. The CCP seemed to have realized this after the peak of the Cultural Revolution and increased the share of home officials drastically since the early 1970s (Appendix Figure A2).

Our paper raises a general question as to how a country harmonizes the pace of modernization and the transformation of its own traditions. The CCP believed that it was necessary to eradicate China's traditional social and political structure to bring modernization to the country. Notwithstanding the destruction it had brought about, much of this structure survived. For most countries undergoing modernization, the quest for modernization involves importing institutions and norms from advanced countries, many of which conflict with a country's own traditions. How to strike a balance during this process remains an unsolved question for many of those countries.

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Figures and Tables
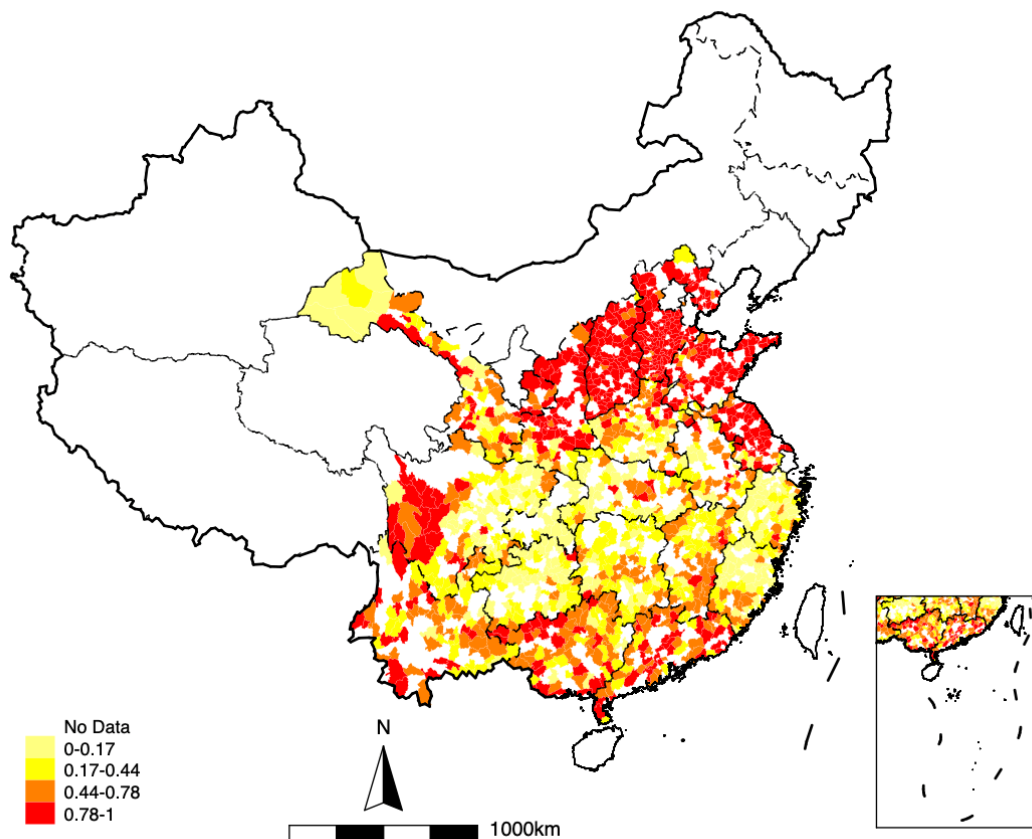
Figure 1: The Geographic Variation of the HPO Index

Notes: This figure presents the geographic variation of the HPO index across over 1,200 counties located in 18 provinces in mainland China. The HPO index is defined as the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958.
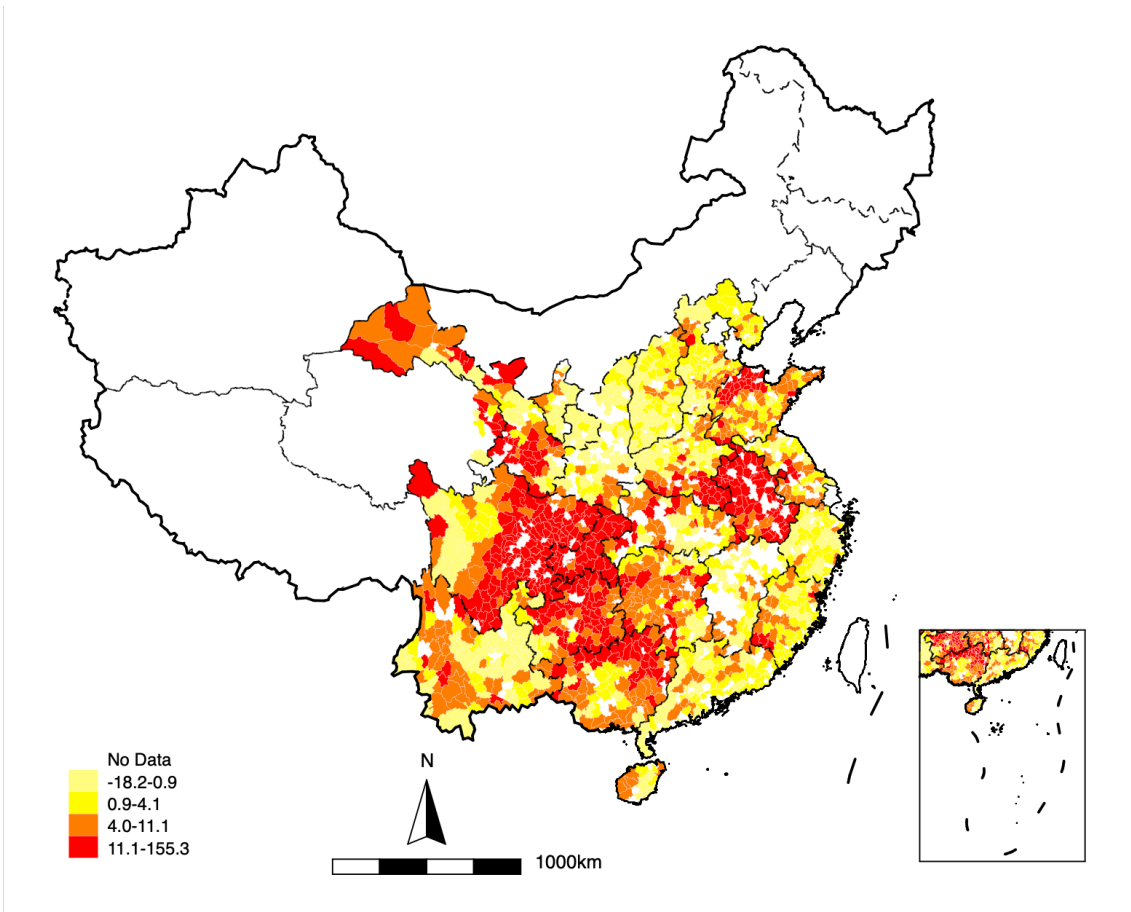
Figure 2: The Geographic Variation of the Excess Mortality Rate

Notes: Excess mortality rate is defined as the average mortality rate during the famine years (1959-1961) minus the average mortality rate during years preceding the famine (1955-1958).
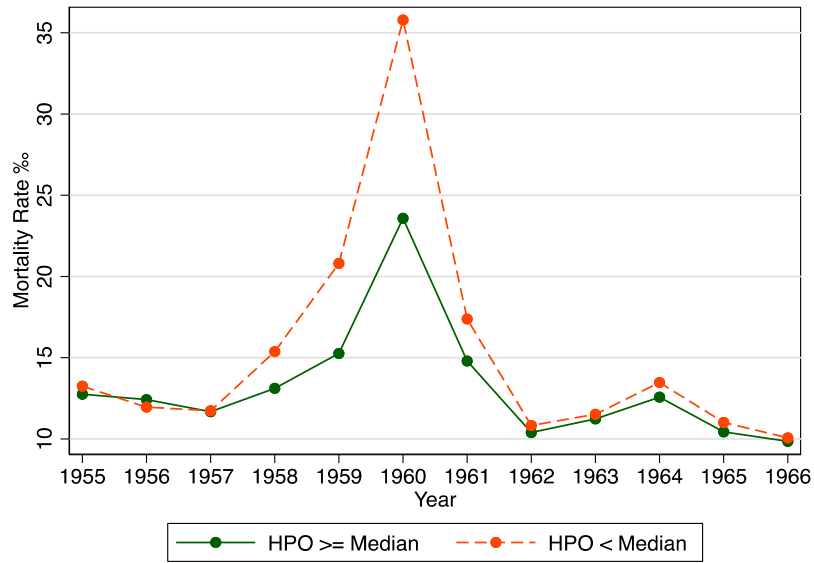
Figure 3: Average Mortality Rate across Years

Notes: The counties in our sample are divided into two groups according to the median of the HPO index.
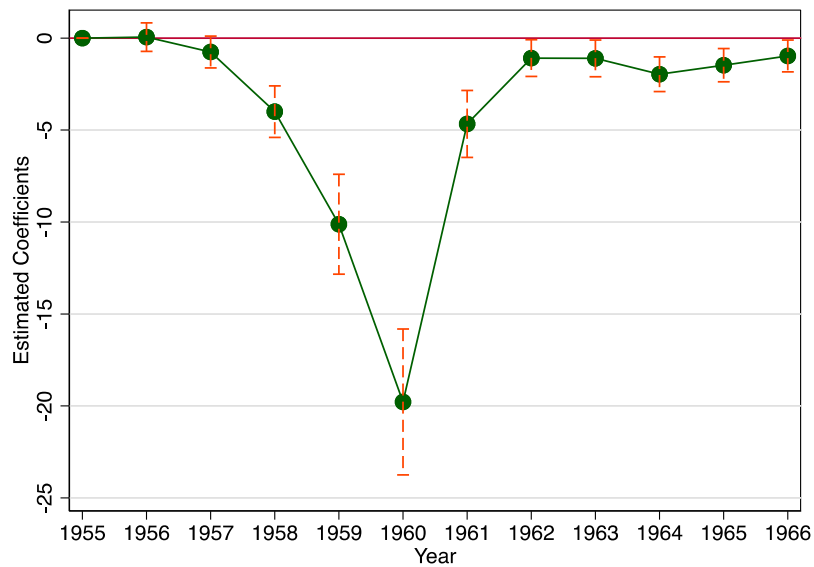
Figure 4: Dynamic Effects

Notes: This figure plots the estimates of β_τ in Equation (2) and their 95% confidence intervals. The standard errors are clustered at the county level.
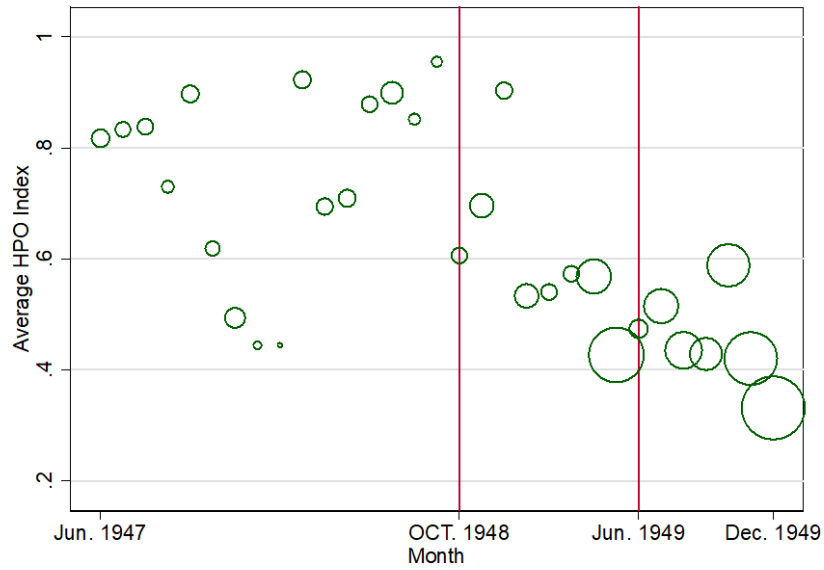
Figure 5: Average HPO Index across Counties by Month of Takeover

Notes: The left solid line indicates October 1948, when the first policy to deploy 53,000 southbound officials was introduced. The right solid line indicates the second policy to deploy 38,000 southbound officials in June 1949. The size of the circles represents the number of counties taken by the CCP each month.

Table 1: Summary Statistics and Data Sources

| Variables	Data Sources	Obs.	Mean	S.D.
Panel A: County-Level Variables				
HPO	1	1,266	0.58	0.37
After (August 1948)	1	1,245	0.71	0.45
Ln(Num. of Victims)	1	962	4.81	0.96
Ln(Distance to Beijing)	2	1,248	6.87	0.71
Ln(Distance to Province Capital City)	2	1,248	5.12	0.65
Ruggedness	2	1,250	0.64	0.28
Altitude	2	1,250	0.67	0.78
Agricultural Suitability of Wheat	3	1,265	7.11	1.25
Agricultural Suitability of Rice	3	1,265	3.15	3.09
Share of Minorities	4	1,243	0.12	0.25
CCP	1	1,165	0.82	1.40
Clan	5	1,240	3.66	1.79
Chong Fan Pi Nan	6	941	1.34	1.07
Panel B: County-Year-Level Variables				
Mortality Rate ‰	7	14,038	14.15	10.84
Ln(Cohort Size)	4	14,623	4.00	0.98
Procurement Rate	1	4,633	0.26	0.12
Procurement Rate (Henan)	8	1,283	0.19	0.09
Ln(Output)	1	4,633	11.05	0.74
Ln(Output) (Henan)	8	1,283	9.64	0.56
Stock Rate (Henan)	8	1,168	0.09	0.05
Share of Expenditure on Economic Development	1	11,796	0.42	0.13
Share of Expenditure on Social Affairs	1	11,796	0.30	0.18
Temperature	9	14,022	148.50	39.13
Precipitation	9	14,022	892.32	677.35
Panel C: Province-Year-Level Variables				
AN (Alternative Member)	10	206	0.48	0.50
NM (Non-Member)	10	206	0.30	0.46
Panel D: Individual-Level Variables				
Famine Experience	11	4,985	0.10	0.30
Trust in Cadres	12	3,934	0.40	0.49
Trust in Parents	12	3,934	0.88	0.32
Trust in Neighbors	12	3,934	0.60	0.49
Trust in Americans	12	3,934	0.08	0.28
Trust in Strangers	12	3,934	0.05	0.22
Trust in Doctors	12	3,934	0.67	0.47
CCP Membership	12	4,985	0.06	0.25

Data Sources:

1. County Gazettes
2. CHGIS
3. FAO's Global Agro-Ecological Zones Database
4. China Population Census 1990
5. The General Catalog of Chinese Genealogy
6. Shared by Liu and Zhang (2022)
7. Provincial Population Statistics Yearbooks
8. *Henan Agricultural Statistics 1949-1979*
9. Terrestrial Air Temperature and Precipitation: Monthly and Annual Time Series (1950-1996)
10. Collected by the authors from Baidu Baike
11. China Family Panel Studies 2010
12. China Family Panel Studies 2012

Table 2: The Effects of Home Officials on Famine Severity

Dependent Variable	Mortality Rate ‰		
	PS/CG	PS	CG
	(1)	(2)	(3)
HPO × Famine	-10.261***	-8.778***	-9.733***
	(1.056)	(0.818)	(1.022)
County FE	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Observations	14,033	12,550	13,305
R-Squared	0.442	0.438	0.440

Notes: Data on county officials are collected from county gazettes, and statistics on mortality are drawn from provincial population yearbooks. In column 1, *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. We alternatively define *HPO* as the share of years a county was governed by home party secretaries in column 2 or home county governors in column 3. *Famine* is a dummy indicating famine years 1959-1961. The sample period is from 1955 to 1966. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 3: Robustness Checks with Additional Controls

Dependent Variable	Mortality Rate ‰				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
HPO × Famine	-9.087***	-8.976***	-9.591***	-8.703***	-7.600***
	(1.214)	(1.241)	(1.262)	(1.345)	(1.325)
CCP × Famine				-0.901***	-0.735***
				(0.231)	(0.209)
AM					-4.207***
					(0.449)
NM					-2.586***
					(0.349)
Geographical Remoteness	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Agricultural Endowment	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Share of Minorities	N	N	Y	Y	Y
County FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	13,855	13,828	13,758	12,848	12,848
R-Squared	0.453	0.475	0.479	0.480	0.487

Notes: Data on county officials and party members are collected from county gazettes, and statistics on mortality are drawn from provincial population yearbooks. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *Famine* is a dummy indicating famine years 1959-1961. *CCP* is the population share of party members in 1950. *AM* and *NM* indicate whether provincial first party secretaries were alternative Central Committee members or non-members. We control for geographic remoteness by interacting year dummies with the distance to the national capital and the distance to the province capital. Agricultural endowment controls include (i) interactions between year dummies and ruggedness, altitude, and agricultural suitability of producing wheat and rice; and (ii) the average temperature and precipitation in each year's spring season. We control for the share of minorities by interacting it with years dummies. The sample period is from 1955 to 1966. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 4: Robustness Checks with Alternative Measurements of Famine Severity

Dependent Variable	Ln(Cohort Size)	Individual Famine Experience		
		Full	Rural	Urban
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
HPO × Famine/Pre-Famine	0.302***	-0.070*	-0.089*	-0.023
	(0.026)	(0.042)	(0.052)	(0.067)
County FE	Y	N	N	N
Year FE	Y	N	N	N
Community FE	N	Y	Y	Y
Birth-Year FE	N	Y	Y	Y
Observations	14,623	4,985	3,661	1,324
R-Squared	0.921	0.294	0.316	0.241

Notes: Data on county officials are collected from county gazettes. Cohort size is derived from China Population Census 1990. Individual Famine experiences are reported by respondents in CFPS 2010. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *Famine* is a dummy indicating famine years 1959-1961. *Pre-Famine* indicates cohorts born before 1958. The sample period in column 1 is from 1955 to 1966 and the sample in columns 2-4 is composed of individuals born between 1950 and 1966. In columns 2-4, we also control for individual characteristics including gender, education level, and *Hukou* status. Standard errors are clustered at the county level in column 1 and community level in columns 2-4. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 5: Robustness Checks using IV

Dependent Variable	HPO		Mortality Rate ‰			
			Second Stage		Reduced Form	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
After	-0.395***	-0.207***				
	(0.018)	(0.028)				
HPO × Famine			-15.903***	-23.418***		
			(1.534)	(4.231)		
After × Famine					6.485***	4.971***
					(0.622)	(0.826)
K-P F Statistics			490.280	55.792		
Controls	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
County FE	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	1,245	1,243	13,820	13,797	13,820	13,797
R-squared	0.231	0.288	-	-	0.432	0.453

Notes: Data on county officials and the timing of liberation are collected from county gazettes, and statistics on mortality are drawn from provincial population yearbooks. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *Famine* is a dummy indicating famine years 1959-1961. *After* indicates whether a county was taken over by the CCP after October 1948. In column 2, we control for the distance to the national capital and province capital, ruggedness, and altitude. Columns 4 and 6 control for the interactions between those variables and year dummies. The sample period is from 1955 to 1966. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

Table 6: The Effects of Home officials on Procurement Rate and Flexibility

Dependent Variable	Ln(Procurement Rate)			
	18 Provinces		Henan	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
HPO × GLF	0.038	-0.183	0.017	-2.059
	(0.030)	(0.578)	(0.058)	(1.278)
HPO × Ln(Output) × GLF		0.530***		0.588**
		(0.179)		(0.249)
HPO × l.Ln(Output) × GLF		-0.512***		-0.377*
		(0.173)		(0.212)
Ln(Output) × GLF		-0.443***		-0.463***
		(0.101)		(0.163)
l.Ln(Output) × GLF		0.381***		0.308**
		(0.097)		(0.130)
HPO × Ln(Output)		-0.059		0.162
		(0.190)		(0.128)
HPO × l.Ln(Output)		0.312**		0.037
		(0.132)		(0.121)
Ln(Output)		0.431***		0.487***
		(0.108)		(0.092)
l.Ln(Output)		0.010		0.119
		(0.068)		(0.082)
County FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	4,633	3,855	1,283	1,194
R-Squared	0.718	0.749	0.661	0.719

Notes: Data on county officials are collected from county gazettes. Agricultural production and procurement data in columns 1 and 2 are collected from county gazettes and the data of Henan province in columns 3 and 4 are from *Henan Agricultural Statistics 1949-1979*. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *GLF* is a dummy indicating the years of the Great Leap Forward 1958-1960. *Ln(Output)* is the log of contemporaneous output and *l.Ln(Output)* indicates the log of output in the past year. The sample period is 1956/7-1961 in columns 1/2 and 1953/4-1966 in columns 3/4. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 7: The Effects of Home Officials on Government Expenditure

Dependent Variable	Share of Expenditure on Economic Development		Share of Expenditure on Social Affairs	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
HPO × GLF	-0.057***	-0.030***	0.038***	0.030***
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Controls	N	Y	N	Y
County FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	12,661	12,380	12,661	12,380
R-Squared	0.722	0.742	0.697	0.722

Notes: Data on county officials and government expenditure are collected from county gazettes. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *GLF* is a dummy indicating the years of the Great Leap Forward 1958-1960. The sample period is from 1953 to 1966. In the even columns, we include controls of geographic remoteness, agricultural suitability, and share of the minority. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 8: The Effects of Home Officials on the Anti-Rightist Campaign

Dependent Variable	Ln(Num. of Victims)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
HPO1957	-0.153**	-0.196***	-0.083*			
	(0.066)	(0.059)	(0.050)			
HPO1950-1956				-0.197**	-0.344***	-0.160*
				(0.083)	(0.080)	(0.082)
Controls	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Province FE	N	N	Y	N	N	Y
Observations	962	945	945	944	927	927
R-Squared	0.006	0.308	0.597	0.006	0.308	0.594

Notes: Data on county officials and the number of victims during the Anti-Rightist Campaign are collected from county gazettes. *HPO1957* indicates whether a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors in 1957, and *HPO1950-1956* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1956. In columns 2 and 5, we control for geographic remoteness, agricultural suitability, and share of the minority. In columns 3 and 6, we further control for province fixed effects. We report robust standard errors. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 9: The Long-Term Effects of Home Officials on Trust

Dependent Variable: Trust In	Cadres			Parents	Neighbors	Americans	Strangers	Doctors
	Full Sample	Rural	Urban					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
HPO × Pre-Famine	0.094**	0.118**	0.029	0.017	0.065	0.009	0.005	-0.017
	(0.044)	(0.055)	(0.066)	(0.028)	(0.043)	(0.028)	(0.020)	(0.041)
Community FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Birth Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	3,934	2,941	993	3,934	3,934	3,934	3,934	3,934
R-squared	0.145	0.148	0.146	0.136	0.146	0.104	0.103	0.137

Notes: Data on county officials are collected from county gazettes. Individual trusts are reported by respondents in CFPS 2012. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *Pre-Famine* indicates cohorts born before 1958. The sample is composed of individuals born between 1950 and 1966. In each column, we control for individual characteristics including gender, education level, and *Hukou* status (except for columns 2 and 3). Standard errors are clustered at the community level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Appendix

县人民政府（人民委员会、革命委员会）正、
副县长（正副主任）一览表

| Name 姓　名	Position 职　别	Gender 性　别	Office Terms 任　职　时　间	Hometown 籍　贯	Education Level 学　历
卜毅民	县　长	男	1950 年 2 月 ~ 1951 年 4 月	山西平遥	高中
刘　恩	县　长	男	1951 年 4 月 ~ 1952 年 9 月	山西孝义	高中
曹　流	县　长	男	1952 年 9 月 ~ 1953 年 2 月	山西临汾	高小
闫命新	县　长	男	1953 年 2 月 ~ 1953 年 11 月	山西临县	初中
郭长顺	县　长	男	1953 年 11 月 ~ 1954 年 11 月	山西浮山	初中
庹开荣	县　长	男	1954 年 10 月 ~ 1955 年 2 月	四川荥经	初中
陈彦荣	县　长	男	1955 年 2 月 ~ 1957 年 9 月	山西柳林	高小
庹开荣	县　长	男	1957 年 9 月 ~ 1960 年 10 月	四川荥经	初中
刘德昌	县　长	男	1960 年 10 月 ~ 1964 年 12 月	山西洪洞	初中
庹开荣	县　长	男	1964 年 12 月 ~ 1965 年 12 月	四川荥经	初中
严光荣	县　长	男	1965 年 12 月 ~ 1968 年 10 月	四川合川	初中
姚　清	主　任	男	1968 年 10 月 ~ 1970 年 8 月	山西朔县	初中

Figure A1: The List of County Governors from the Gazette of Yingjing County

Notes: Yingjing County is well-known for an extremely high mortality rate during the famine. It is governed by southbound officials from Shanxi for most of the years during the 1950s. This list contains information on officials' gender and education level. However, this set of information is missing in most of the other counties in our sample.
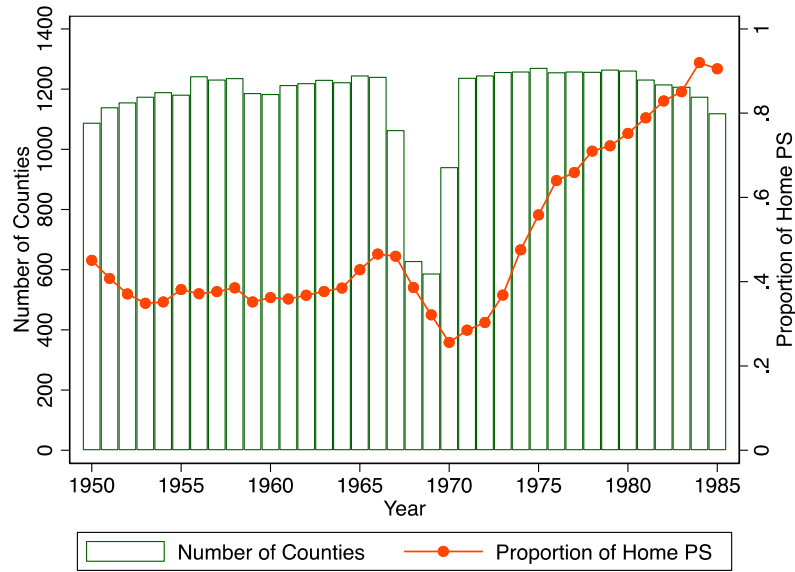
(a) County Party Secretaries
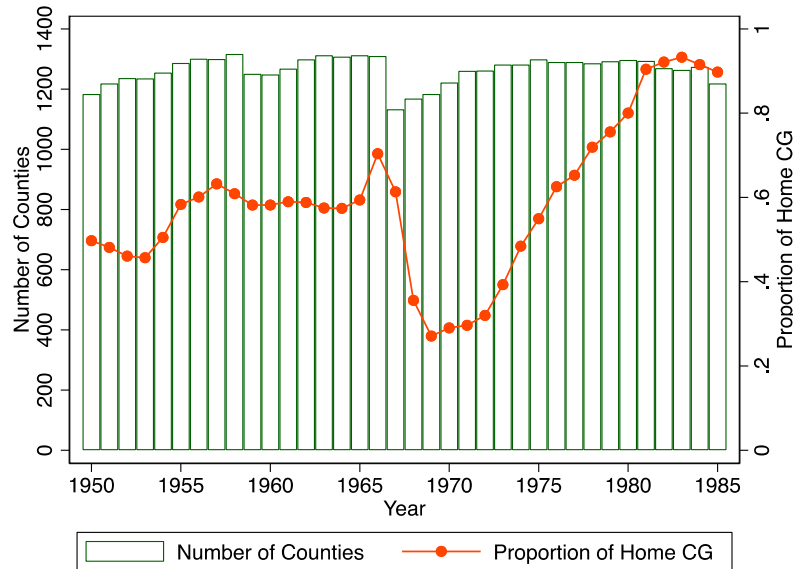
(b) County Governors

Figure A2: Share of Counties Governed by Home Officials across Years

Notes: Each bar indicates the number of counties that we have information on the home provinces of their officials each year. It varies across years because the home provinces of some officials are missing in county gazettes. The original dataset we collected covers 1950–1985, but we focus on the period from 1950 to 1958 in this study.
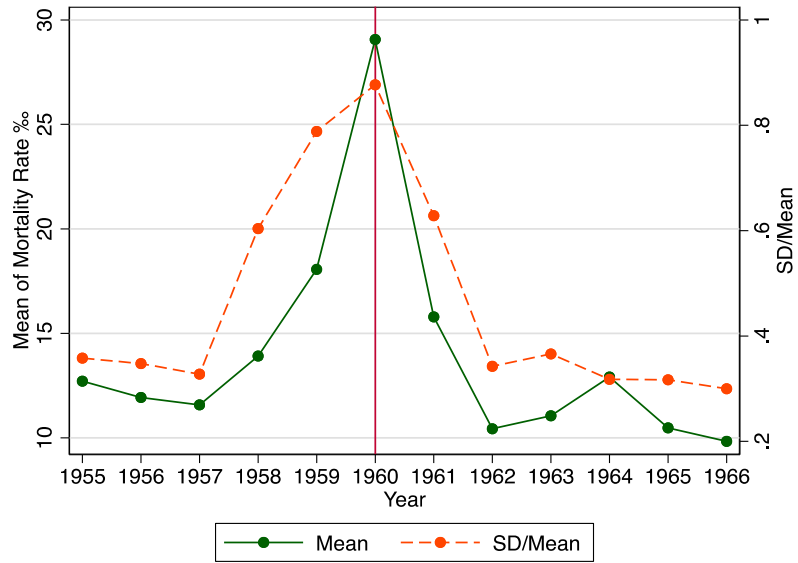
Figure A3: Mean and Coefficient of Variation of Mortality Rates

Notes: The coefficient of variation is the standard deviation of mortality rates across counties divided by the mean.
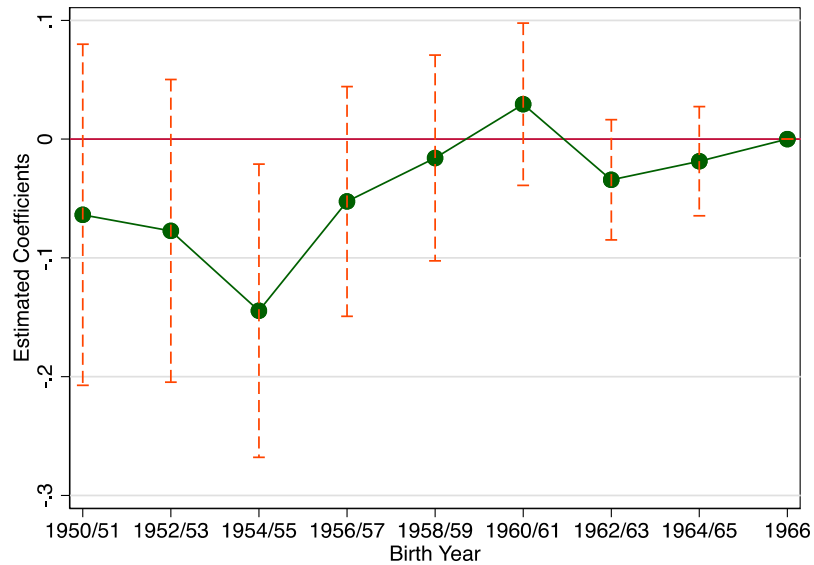

Figure A4: The Effects of Home Officials on Famine Experience across Birth Cohorts

Notes: The sample is composed of individuals born between 1950 and 1966. Individuals born in 1966 are the reference group. In the regression, we control for community fixed effects, birth year fixed effects, and individual characteristics including gender, education level, and *Hukou* status. Standard errors are clustered at the community level and we report 95% confidence intervals in the figure.
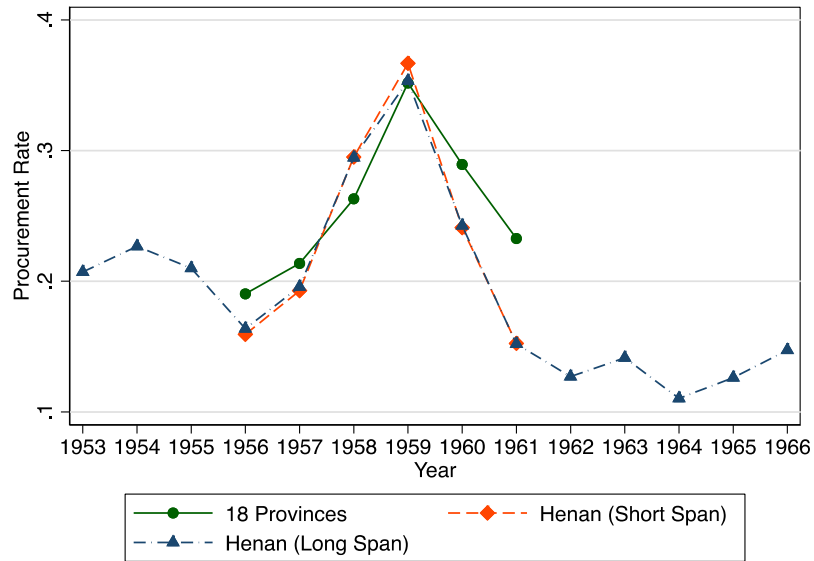
Figure A5: Average Procurement Rate across Years

Notes: The data from 18 provinces covering 1956-1961 are collected from county gazettes. The other data from Henan province covering 1953-1966 are drawn from *Henan Agricultural Statistics 1949-1979*. We compare the average procurement rates over time in Henan derived from the two datasets.
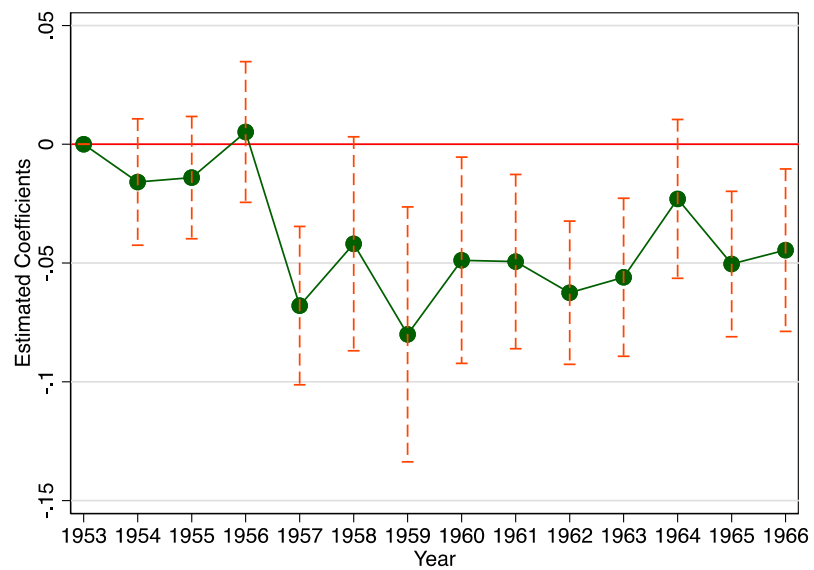

Figure A6: Dynamic Effects of Home Officials on Procurement Rate in Henan

Note: We estimate the dynamic effects of home officials on the procurement rate in Henan province using a similar specification as Equation (2). The sample period is 1953-1966 and the reference year is 1953. The outcome variable is the log procurement rate. Standard errors are clustered at the county level and we report 95% confidence intervals.
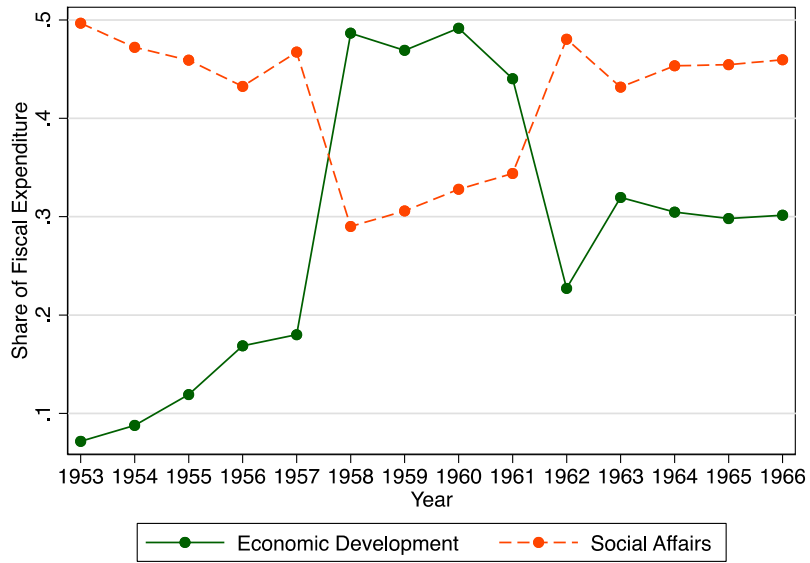
Figure A7: Government Expenditure across Years

Notes: The expenditure of social affairs includes expenditure on subjects such as health, education, calamity relief, etc. The remaining category is the expenditure on administration.
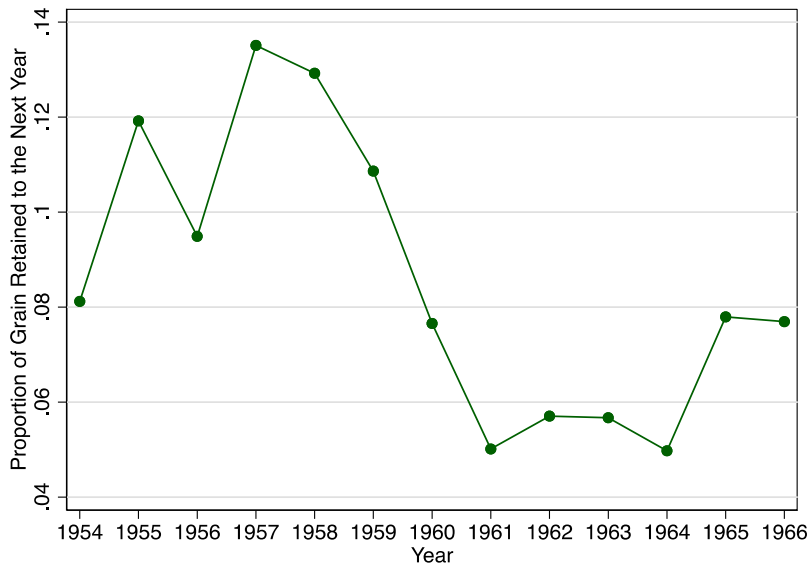

Figure A8: Average Stock Rate across Years

Notes: Data on grain production, procurement, resale, and stock are drawn from *Henan Agricultural Statistics 1949-1979*. The stock rate is measured by the proportion of disposable grain retained to the March of next year.

Table A1: Robustness Checks with Alternative Famine Definition and Further Controls

Dependent Variable	Mortality Rate ‰			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
HPO × Famine	-8.745***	-11.342***	-9.559***	-6.032***
	(0.891)	(1.098)	(1.173)	(1.376)
Clan	N	Y	N	N
Chong Fan Pi Nan	N	N	Y	N
Province-Year FE	N	N	N	Y
County FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	N
Observations	14,033	13,736	10,369	14,033
R-Squared	0.439	0.451	0.439	0.607

Notes: Data on county officials are collected from county gazettes, and statistics on mortality are drawn from provincial population yearbooks. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. We define the famine years to be 1958-1961 in column 1 and 1959-1961 in other columns. In column 2, we control for the interactions between year dummies and the intensity of clan culture, measured by the log number of genealogy books. In column 3, we control for the interactions between year dummies and importance rating in *Qing* Dynasty. We exploit within-province variation by controlling for province-year fixed effects in column 4. The sample period is from 1955 to 1966. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A2: The Effects of Home Officials in Provinces with the Highest Death Tolls

Dependent Variable	Mortality Rate ‰		
	Sichuan	Henan	Guizhou
	(1)	(2)	(3)
HPO × Famine	-25.173***	-6.310**	-14.456**
	(5.564)	(3.152)	(6.882)
County FE	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Observations	1,443	1,086	708
R-Squared	0.666	0.380	0.488

Notes: Data on county officials are collected from county gazettes, and statistics on mortality are drawn from provincial population yearbooks. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *Famine* is a dummy indicating famine years 1959-1961. The sample period is from 1955 to 1966. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

Table A3: The Effects of Home Officials in Counties Taken Within Narrow Intervals of Months around October 1948

Dependent Variable	Mortality Rate ‰			
	+/- 6 Months	+/- 5 Months	+/- 4 Months	+/- 3 Months
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Panel A. OLS			
HPO × Famine	-11.014***	-17.996***	-19.228***	-18.876***
	(2.603)	(3.518)	(4.224)	(5.113)
R-squared	0.454	0.451	0.451	0.450
	Panel B: Reduced Form			
After × Famine	5.203***	6.197***	7.008***	6.953***
	(1.413)	(1.861)	(2.050)	(2.305)
R-squared	0.443	0.419	0.420	0.422
	Panel C: Second Stage			
HPO × Famine	-28.388***	-32.708***	-31.280***	-34.420***
	(8.798)	(10.248)	(9.204)	(11.743)
K-P F Statistics	14.902	13.577	19.756	13.628
County FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y	Y	Y
Num. of Counties	208	146	123	102
Observations	2,066	1,501	1,258	1,041

Notes: Data on county officials and the timing of liberation are collected from county gazettes, and statistics on mortality are drawn from provincial population yearbooks. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *Famine* is a dummy indicating famine years 1959-1961. *After* indicates whether a county was taken over by the CCP after October 1948. The sample period is from 1955 to 1966. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

Dependent Variable	Ln(Procurement Rate)	
	18 Provinces	
	(1)	(3)
HPO × GLF	-0.093***	-0.380
	(0.029)	(0.614)
HPO × Ln(Output) × GLF		0.537***
		(0.177)
HPO × l.Ln(Output) × GLF		-0.508***
		(0.173)
Ln(Output) × GLF		-0.455***
		(0.091)
l.Ln(Output) × GLF		0.379***
		(0.089)
HPO × Ln(Output)		-0.168
		(0.184)
HPO × l.Ln(Output)		0.241*
		(0.124)
Ln(Output)		0.416***
		(0.091)
l.Ln(Output)		0.072
		(0.046)
Controls	Y	Y
County FE	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y
Observations	4,419	3,677
R-Squared	0.740	0.764

Notes: Data on county officials, agricultural production, and procurement are collected from county gazettes. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *GLF* is a dummy indicating the years of the Great Leap Forward 1958-1960. *Ln(Output)* is the log of contemporaneous output and *l.Ln(Output)* indicates the log of output in the past year. The sample period is 1956/7-1961 in column 1/2. We control for average temperature and precipitation in the spring season and interactions between year dummies and distance to the national capital, distance to the provincial capital, ruggedness, altitude, agricultural suitability, and share of minorities. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A5: The Effects of Home Officials on Grain Stock

Dependent Variable	Stock Rate	Ln(Stock)
	(1)	(2)
HPO × Famine	0.003	0.120
	(0.007)	(0.102)
County FE	Y	Y
Year FE	Y	Y
Observations	1,168	1,269
R-Squared	0.561	0.760

Notes: Data on county officials are collected from county gazettes. Grain stock is derived from *Henan Agricultural Statistics 1949-1979*. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *Famine* is a dummy indicating famine years 1959-1961. *Stock Rate* measures the proportion of disposable grain retained for the next year. The sample period is from 1953 to 1966. Standard errors are clustered at the county level. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

Table A6: The Effect of Home Officials on CCP Membership

Dependent Variable	CCP Membership		
	Full Sample	Rural	Urban
	(1)	(2)	(3)
HPO × Pre-Famine	0.035*	0.047**	0.006
	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.037)
Community FE	Y	Y	Y
Birth Year FE	Y	Y	Y
Observations	4,985	3,661	1,324
R-Squared	0.192	0.150	0.291

Notes: Data on county officials are collected from county gazettes. CCP membership is a dummy variable, reported by respondents in CFPS 2012. *HPO* is the share of years that a county was governed by home party secretaries or home governors during 1950-1958. *Pre-Famine* indicates cohorts born before 1958. The sample is composed of individuals born between 1950 and 1966. We control for gender and education level in each column and *Hukou* status in addition in column 1. Standard errors are clustered at the community level. *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.