

Continuities and Breaks in Chinese Socialism: Contrasting Mao and Xi

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Recent events in China illustrate similarities between Mao Zedong's and Xi Jinping's construction of socialist ideology specifically when it comes to class struggle, economic legitimacy, solidarity, as well as cooperation elicited by propaganda efforts and the construction of common enemy. These similarities in construction have led to concern that Xi's governance will lead to a catastrophic outcome, similar to that of Mao's administration. However, this paper argues that, based on current data and scholarship, Xi is different from Mao in that Xi's policies are proactive and grounded in actual realities. Moreover, his recognition that political and social stability are conducive to a country's economic growth indicates that his administration will not lead to Mao's level of political, economic, and social disaster.

Introduction

The paramount leaders of China are those who are hailed as the most prominent and influential leaders of both party and state.¹ In the course of Chinese contemporary history, there have only been five leaders that have been considered as paramount leaders—Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping. The foundation of any paramount leadership's governance is the ideology, “socialism with Chinese characteristics” or simply Chinese socialism.² While there are arguments that highlight variations in how each paramount leader understands and enforces this ideology, political commentary in recent years has mentioned a high degree of similarity in idea and practice between Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping.^{3 4 5} In this regard, the goal of this paper is to determine the similarities and differences between Mao and

Xi's construction of Chinese Socialism. In doing so, the paper will also examine what these similarities and differences might indicate about the outcome of Xi's administration. While Xi does face resistance to his authoritarian rule, the paper argues that this will not lead to a disastrous end similar as to what happened under Mao. This is because Xi's ruling has led to the maintenance of economic legitimacy which has enabled him to provide for the needs of the majority of Chinese population.

Mao Zedong is the founder of the People's Republic of China (PRC). As the founder, he was also responsible for institutionalizing governance anchored upon Chinese socialism. He served as China's president from the establishment of the country in 1949 until his death in 1976.⁶ While Mao's greatest success was unifying China, his administration ended in a political, economic, and social disaster that succeeding leaders sought to reform. Due to his unrealistic and disruptive policies, there was a long period of economic recession in the country starting from the massive famine in 1959 caused by the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962) and lasting until after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Following the Cultural Revolution, Chinese society also suffered from trauma as a result of Mao inflicting inhumane physical and psychological cruelty, humiliation, torture, and punishment against those who were deemed as being against his left-wing utopian ideas. An estimated 2 million people died during this period.⁷

Xi Jinping is the current president of China. He began his administration in 2012 and recently revoked the two-term limit on his presidency, thus extending his rule of China past the previously expected end of his term in 2023.⁸ During his administration, there has been an emphasis on returning to a strong adherence to Chinese socialism especially with the "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" being enshrined in the Constitution of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), together with Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Thought, during the 19th Party Congress in 2017.⁹ This is significant given that such an intense dedication to ideology has not been observed since the time of Mao.

What sets Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping apart from the other paramount leaders—Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao—are the reforms instituted and maintained by the latter three in terms of governance, policy, and ideology.¹⁰ The latter three did not have a personality cult around their leadership. Instead, they had "collective

leadership” and “consensual decision-making”, as well as “bottom-up intra-party democracy” in contrast to a “top-down dictatorship”. The administrations of Deng, Jiang, and Hu also had effective mechanisms that relayed the concerns of the society directly to the CCP and the state, and they had relatively higher tolerance for intellectual and other freedoms. Moreover, there were some checks and balances on CCP power in effect as well as terms and retirement limits for government and party officials. However, since Xi has secured an unprecedented third presidential term, it is now possible that he will become China’s second leader for life after Mao. Additionally, the three aforementioned leaders also adopted a cautious foreign policy. For instance, they established normal and friendly relations with other countries not only for their own development but also to change the view that China is an untrustworthy, subversive, and disruptive power.¹¹ Finally and more importantly, while all three observed the importance of “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, they created policies based on empirical and pragmatic merits rather than determining policy from an ideological basis. All these reforms were rolled back during Xi Jinping’s administration, which arguably marks a return to the Maoist period.

Given this reversal of reforms, scholars and political experts have debated whether a return to Maoist policies would also mean disastrous outcomes for Xi Jinping’s administration. Those who expect a pessimistic outcome argue that Xi has overreached and this will eventually lead to the reversal of his revolution.¹² His repressive policies have caused discontent in many of China’s business and intellectual communities. Democracy advocates such as influential activists, journalists, previous officials, academics, and business owners have expressed their disapproval of Xi’s policies in the past. Additionally, labor protests have doubled in the course of his administration.¹³ Some Chinese officials have indicated to the press that there have even been attempted coups and assassinations against Xi Jinping.

Even those who have a pragmatic view of Xi’s governance agree that he has been aggressively autocratic in that he has crushed critics and potential rivals, scrapped presidential term limits, enforced digital censorship, engaged in ethnic repression, and enforced a crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong.¹⁴ Yet, they believe that even though his administration will undergo a turbulent period, Xi is more than capable of managing it and will remain in office for a long time. This is also the view

that the paper takes and it will be elaborated on in the rest of the paper.

Comparison between Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping

As Chinese society has evolved, the construction of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” has been modified depending on the present environment as well as how it is perceived by the current paramount leader. However, despite the continuous evolution of Chinese socialism, some features in the ideology have remained consistent across the PRC’s history: class struggle, economic legitimacy, solidarity, as well as cooperation incited by propaganda efforts and a common enemy. Primarily, the CCP and the Chinese state encourages class struggle which takes the form of mass participation in critiquing leaders and policies.¹⁵ With the goal of providing equal opportunities for all, the CCP and the state derive their power from economic legitimacy by offering everyone access to education, employment, healthcare, housing, and other basic needs.¹⁶ This is made possible by the state through mass mobilization of people for economic development. Additionally, a common enemy is often used to bring the people together. This includes domestic enemies such as revisionists and capitalists as well as foreign enemies such as Western imperialists such as the US.^{17 18} Finally, to instill and maintain a transformative or revolutionary orientation among the people that are aligned with the CCP’s agenda, the CCP has consistently invested time, money, and effort in a robust propaganda movement. These four features will be used to categorize and understand the similarities and differences between Mao and Xi’s construction of Chinese socialism.

Class Struggle

“People”, specifically those who are the most oppressed and vulnerable in the society, are at the core of Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping’s construction of Chinese socialism. In line with this, the CCP, which is in essence, the state, is expected to represent and act on behalf of the interests of the people. To support this idea, Mao and Xi respectively coined the concepts “people’s democratic dictatorship”¹⁹ and “people-centered philosophy of development”.²⁰ Both concepts mean that the CCP is a “hierarchical vertical institution with horizontal mechanisms” that infiltrates all levels of the Chinese society.²¹ As a result, people are expected to follow the orders and directives issued by the CCP since they are deemed to be

for the interests of the people. Failure to do so will result in punishment.

Mao and Xi are also firm believers of the idea that revolutionary spirit must be sustained in order for a society to continue to advance. In this regard, people's participation is vital to Chinese socialism. Therefore, the CCP encourages the people to engage in class struggle in which policies and even its leaders are critiqued by the masses. Yet, in both Mao and Xi's governance, class struggle is seen to be only possible and acceptable if done under the parameters set by the state. In Mao's period, those who went over these implicit parameters were violently dealt with; whereas in Xi's administration, the parameters are so explicitly restrictive that people rarely attempt to bypass them.

During Mao's era, the people were given the opportunity to engage in class struggle through the Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Anti-Rightist Campaign. On May 2, 1956, Mao called for "a hundred flowers to bloom and a hundred schools of thought to contend" that intellectuals were asked to evaluate the work of the CCP and provide recommendations for the future.²² Most of the criticism from the intellectuals had to do with how socialism was the front and center of Chinese politics, economy, society, and culture.²³ While Mao welcomed the criticism from the people, he responded by clearly delineating between those who were antagonistic and non-antagonistic to his policies. This led to the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign in which there were several large-scale arrests, detentions under duress, acts of torture, public condemnations, home invasions, and other coercive measures against those who were antagonistic towards Mao's Chinese socialism.²⁴

On the other hand, in 2014, Xi's launched class struggle through his call for the construction of "think tanks with Chinese characteristics".²⁵ This has given rise to Chinese policy research institutions and an expansion of their projects, international engagements, as well as public profiles. In a state without a formal mechanism for receiving people's demands or interests, think tanks provide Xi and the CCP with informed and rational views. However, these think tanks are torn between their responsibility as critical policy analysts and as loyalists of the state.²⁶ In fact, they are under close scrutiny by the government and are overseen by the Propaganda Department which means that most of their works entail explaining and justifying previously made decisions. In this regard, their genuine function is to not only provide Xi and the CCP with information about what is happening

on the ground but also, more importantly, to serve as platforms that disseminate Chinese views of the world.²⁷ Going against these functions would result in the end of government funding to these think tanks.

Economic Legitimacy

Economic legitimacy is the ability of the leader to provide the needs of the people in exchange for their loyalty to the leader and the party. These needs include, but are not limited to, shelter, food, clothing, education, and opportunities for social mobility. To provide these needs, continuous economic growth of China is important and only the CCP and its leaders can ensure this.²⁸ Mao and Xi are similar in their ultimate goal of the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” through strong adherence to Chinese socialism.^{29 30} While this is the goal of every Chinese paramount leader, steps and projects undertaken by both Mao and Xi are remarkably similar in their aggressiveness and scale. The only difference is that Xi’s economic project is grounded on scientific knowledge and research unlike Mao’s, which resulted in the latter’s failure to secure economic legitimacy.

Mao carried out the Great Leap Forward from 1958 to 1962, which was a large-scale national effort of rural industrialization, collectivization, and manual labor.³¹ The objectives of the Great Leap Forward were to triple production of steel and other major industrial products as well as agricultural outputs for the next 15 years. Mao did not reach out to Chinese intellectuals and economic experts when formulating this policy after what happened during the Hundred Flowers Campaign and Anti-Rightist campaign.³² It was because he believed that Chinese intellectuals would have proposed alternative policies that contradicted his Chinese socialism as mentioned in the previous section. As a result, his economic policy targets were unrealistic, and his policy methods lacked scientific backing. For example, the widespread rural effort to forge steel by smelting metal objects in backyard furnaces failed because the steel was of poor quality.³³ Another instance was Mao launched a national campaign to kill pests like sparrows without the scientific knowledge that sparrows were integral to eating insects that preyed on crops.³⁴ Due to measures like this, there was massive insect infestations in the summers of 1959 and 1960. Additionally, the rural population was asked to engage in many forms of mass digging and construction projects like building dams, irrigation canals, reservoirs,

and roads.³⁵ All of this infrastructure was dug and made by hand, which diverted the rural population away from agricultural activities. This, together with the massive insect infestation, eventually led to the Great Famine of 1959 to 1961 which took an estimated 15 to 46 million lives.³⁶

In Xi's case, he introduced the concept of the "Chinese Dream" which has been enshrined in the wide-ranging and ambitious Third Plenum economic reform plan of November 2013.³⁷ The plan's primary aim is to invest in technological innovation, which has already made into a reality through the "Made in China 2025" program. The plan also aims to retrain workers from production to service and other value-added industries to avoid the middle-income trap. Lastly, a very important initiative is China's heavy investment in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which has been identified to be crucial to its economic expansion.³⁸ The ultimate goal of the BRI is the development of infrastructure that connects Asia to Europe such as commercial and financial centers, deep-water ports, electric grids, highways, pipelines, rail lines, residential housing, telecommunication networks etc. This large undertaking will allow Xi to provide jobs for Chinese people and even extract resources to be shipped back to China. All these policy initiatives were formulated in consortium with a group of 25 high-level Chinese think tanks covering economics, ideology, international affairs, law, military, science and technology, and politics.³⁹ While many Chinese think tanks are restricted in various ways, their scientific contributions are still recognized by Xi as playing a crucial role in policymaking, especially since his plans that grant him economic legitimacy require special knowledge and expertise.

Solidarity

The maintenance of solidarity is crucial to the Chinese socialist society. Mao and Xi fostered unity within the party and government through practices which strengthened and consolidated their rule mainly through the use of a one-man dictatorship with no term limits to limit or even block resistance to their ideas and policies. Mao was not only the chair of the PRC but also the chair of the CCP and the Military Affairs Commission.⁴⁰ All these positions ensured that he remained in power for as long as he deemed necessary and as long as his capabilities allowed. Similarly, Xi has recently secured his third term in October 2022 as the paramount leader of China, the CCP's general secretary and the

Central Military Commission's chairman.⁴¹ Essentially, Chinese politics under Xi has again become a one-man dictatorship consolidated through the organs of the CCP, just like Mao's era.⁴² While all five paramount leaders have occupied multiple positions within the party and the state, Deng, Jiang, and Hu were not micromanagers like Mao and Xi. Though they provided broad directives, they delegated the task of turning these broad directives into specific policies to other leaders in the party and the state.⁴³ Xi Jinping has systematically consolidated and strengthened his power on three levels: the nation, the party, and in Xi himself.⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ This has been done by the aforementioned abolishment of the presidential term limits and his holding of all key positions in the party, as well as the purge of his adversaries, which will be discussed in the next section.

Meanwhile, cohesion in society has also been preserved by Mao and Xi through the practice of a cult of personality and systematic censorship. During Mao's rule, he was revered by his people as if he were some sort of god.⁴⁶ Mao held public assemblies that were attended by millions of people clamoring "Long Live Chairman Mao". Twice a day, no matter where the people were, they were expected to face in the direction of Beijing. At 10AM, they were supposed to "ask Chairman Mao for instructions" and in the afternoon the people were to "report back" to him. This was a widespread demonstration of blind obedience that later sparked a surge of violence and destruction. Just like Mao, Xi has also constructed a massive cult of personality around himself. Titles such as the Chairman and the Great Helmsman, which were only applied to Mao in the past, are now used in reference to Xi. Moreover, similar to the "Mao Zedong thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics", the "Xi Jinping thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era" is also enshrined in both the CCP and state constitutions.⁴⁷ While Mao Thought was made available to the people through printing millions of copies of the Little Red Book or the "Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong", Xi Thought is accessible through the Little Red App "Study the Great Nation". Merchandise that show veneration to Xi are also available in shops all over China, which are similar to the pins and posters with Mao's face available during his rule.⁴⁸ Additionally, many forms of media follow Xi's activities and celebrate his governance of China, which is reminiscent of the adulation Mao received during his public assemblies.

With regard to systematic censorship, books and other items that ran counter to Mao's Chinese socialism or even ones that contained

Western and liberal ideas were confiscated and burned from 1961 to 1965 as a response to the emergence of moderates and pragmatists who called for reforms that aimed to address Mao's failed Great Leap Forward.⁴⁹ Currently, Xi, similar to Mao, has also banned all forms of Western paraphernalia and online platforms that he deems may spark resistance against his leadership and his brand of Chinese socialism.⁵⁰

⁵¹ Technological advancements have been utilized by the Chinese government to make it nearly impossible for the people to conceal anything from the state. These advancements include “facial and voice recognition, GPS tracking, supercomputer databases, intercepted cell phone conversations, the monitoring of app use, and millions of high-resolution security cameras”.⁵² Chinese online social media platforms such as Weibo are also regulated by banning words found on the list sent by Xi and the CCP.⁵³ These information and communication technologies (ICT) have allowed Xi and the CCP to suppress anyone who is opposed to the way China is being governed.

Cooperation incited by Propaganda efforts and a Common Enemy

With both Mao and Xi, the concept of the People's War is central to eliciting cooperation from the people.⁵⁴ Propaganda efforts as well as designating a common enemy that the people can all rally against are ways by which this cooperation is elicited. To reinforce people's cooperation, propaganda efforts that aimed at ideological mobilization and indoctrination of the masses were undertaken by both Mao and Xi through the Little Red Book and the Little Red App respectively. The book and the app are collections of speeches and writings relevant to Mao and Xi's construction of Chinese socialism and their plans for China.⁵⁵ Whereas Mao's Little Red Book was inward-looking, espousing the need to protect China from foreign influence, Xi's Little Red App shows his commitment to Chinese socialism while at the same time revealing his aspiration to make China a modern nation that connects with the world.

In eliciting effective cooperation from the people, designating a common enemy is the key. Mao brought the Chinese masses together through a sweeping political and physical attack on revisionist and capitalist roaders during the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁶ Usually revisionist and capitalist roaders were former bourgeoisie as well as intellectuals and technical experts who were subjected by a group of vigilante youth—known as

Mao's Red Guards—to public humiliation, mass denunciation sessions, and physical torture. Some of them were killed, and many also committed suicide. Apart from civilian intellectuals and elites, disgraced government officials as well as moderate CCP leaders were sent to labor camps called the May 7 Cadre Schools. Estimates indicate that 3 million people were sent to these labor camps, but some were even either imprisoned or put to death. During the Cultural Revolution, the cooperation of the people was forced through a wholesale purge of those that were deemed as against Mao's views, and this effort resulted in as many as two million deaths.

Just like Mao during the Cultural Revolution, Xi has set up a cohesive party and government through his anti-corruption purge campaign which ensures the ideas that the party, the government, and the state adheres to is the Chinese socialism he conceptualized. By 2018, more than 2.7 million officials had been subjected to investigations by the Chinese authorities and more than 1.5 million had been given punishment. This purge led to 42 Central Committee members, 71 military generals, 4,000 military officers, and a former member of the Politburo Standing Committee being imprisoned. Under Xi's administration, strengthening the nation entails preventing China from being swallowed up by the US-led international order especially in regard to issues such as Taiwan independence, China's claim in the South China sea, and US-China economic relations.⁵⁷ This rhetoric has elicited the support of cybernationalists such as the 50 Cent Army and the Little Pink. The "50 Cent Army" or "Wumao" is mostly comprised of government officials who work part-time outside of their full-time jobs.⁵⁸ They are considered as an enormous workforce given that they produce an estimated number of 448 million posts per year. These posts, and their other cyber activities in general, are devoted to supporting the Chinese state and regime, as well as the revolutionary history of the Communist party. The content of their posts are usually favorable comparisons of China vis-a-vis other countries and praise for China. The 50 Cent Army can be seen as the Xi regime's effort to strategically distract Chinese people from collective action, grievances, or negativity towards China. Meanwhile, the "Little Pink" or the "Xiao Fenhong" are a collective of young netizens who proudly proclaim their nationalism by posting about China's successes while being outspoken against any anti-Chinese sentiment.⁵⁹ They strongly criticize individuals who post negative content about China or make comments that glorify Western countries.⁶⁰ Although they are

not organized by the Chinese state authorities, the Little Pink has been highly lauded by the CCP's state-run media including the People's Daily and the Global Times. They have also been praised by the Communist Youth League. In fact, they are considered similar to Mao's Red Guards. While cybernationalism is a modern development, it shares common characteristics with the purges that occurred during the Mao's period given that those who do not espouse the same ideals of Xi are cancelled online. While cancelling in the cyberspace is a virtual phenomenon, it can be argued that the online mass denunciations recreate the purges during Mao's Cultural Revolution. Even if those who have been cancelled online are not sent to labor camps or prisons similar to the Mao's era, there are cases where targeted individuals have either voluntarily left or been forcibly banned from social media as well as other cases where this has led to a loss of employment or social status.^{61 62}

Is Xi Jinping going to turn out like Mao Zedong?

As elaborated on in the previous sections, the construction of Xi Jinping's Chinese socialism in terms of class struggle, economic legitimacy, solidary, as well as cooperation incited by propaganda efforts and a common enemy are very similar in nature with Mao Zedong's conception of Chinese socialism. Essentially, Xi's administration can be seen to be as repressive and illiberal as Mao's. Moreover, Xi has become entirely closed off to ideas that contradict his own regardless of whether they are from other officials in the CCP or the Chinese masses at large, which is reminiscent of Mao's behavior during the course of his governance. This has raised concerns on whether these similarities mean Xi's rule will culminate as disastrously as that of Mao's. This paper argues that Xi's administration will not reach the level of catastrophic outcomes that occurred during Mao's rule since Xi's policies are proactive and grounded in actual realities. More importantly, Xi also recognizes that political and social stability are needed for China's economic growth.

First, Xi's policies are proactive. He envisions China achieving the material characteristics of a great international power and earning the esteem of its peers.⁶³ To do so, he has provided wide-ranging and long-term policies and mechanisms that people are expected to follow. In this regard, people have advance warning of the level of repressiveness of policies that seek to regulate them so they are able to adjust their behavior

accordingly. Most Chinese people understand that they must either follow along with Xi's program or suffer the consequences. Many who have the capacity, such as wealthy elites, have already left China.⁶⁴ This indicates that the Chinese people under Xi prefers a less confrontational resolution rather than being subjected to humiliation and violence. On the other hand, given that Mao's policies were reactive,⁶⁵ people at that time had no prior indication as to how Mao would react and respond. Moreover, Mao's reactions arose as a result of the intellectual critique of his ideas. Mao expected that the Chinese people would be agreeable and supportive of his policies so when the opposite occurred, he overreacted.

Second, while Xi is illiberal like Mao, he is not ignorant of other ideas. He expects oppositions to his vision and policies. That is precisely why he called for the creation of think tanks with Chinese characteristics.⁶⁶ He needs access to information vital to his policymaking that is grounded in reality. While these think tanks are expected to be loyal to Xi, he also expects them to provide research on opposing views. This allows Xi to be one step ahead of any opponents and reduces his need to be aggressive against dissent. He does not change his mind with regard to his vision and policies but at least these think tanks are able to provide Xi the most effective and efficient ways by which he can enact his policies. This indicates Xi's acknowledgement that scientific and other expert research is crucial to policymaking. Again, this is completely different from Mao whose distrust of intellectuals resulted in catastrophes like famine.

Finally, Xi recognizes that the way to maintain political and social stability in China is to sustain his and the CCP's economic legitimacy. Unlike the economic recession and disruptions that occurred during Mao's implementation of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, China under Xi has continued to manifest positive economic development.^{67 68} Moreover, despite high levels of repression in terms of China being a surveillance state and having punitive measures for insubordination, the majority of the Chinese population has continued to benefit from this development.⁶⁹ Between 2012-2019, before the start of COVID-19, China's annual GDP growth rate was approximately 7%. The state was actively investing in building domestic infrastructure, and the unemployment rate was relatively low as Xi launched programs that aimed to eliminate "absolute poverty". There was also increased innovation and high-tech manufacturing under the "Made in China 2025" program. Coverage of social services

also expanded. All of these have factored into Xi's economic legitimacy before the COVID-19 pandemic. The key to Xi's continuous legitimacy in the future will be his ability to effectively respond to the economic, political, and social issues that emerge in the post-pandemic world.

Conclusion

"Socialism with Chinese characteristics" is the ideology that guides the governance of every paramount leader in the PRC. In the case of Mao and Xi, they have manifested similarities and differences in terms of the ideology's elements which include class struggle, economic legitimacy, solidarity, and cooperation by propaganda efforts and a common enemy. Primarily, in terms of class struggle, Mao and Xi coined the concepts "people's democratic dictatorship" and "people-centered philosophy of development" respectively. These concepts reflect the idea that people should follow the CCP since it stands for the interests of the people. Additionally, people are given the opportunity to critique CCP's policies within the parameters set by the party as a form of class struggle, such as during Mao's Hundred Flowers campaign and Xi's call for "Think Tanks with Chinese characteristics". The main difference is that the former resulted in a state-incited violence against Mao's critics, while the evaluation of policies in the latter were taken into account in the formulation and implementation of Xi's policies. Second, in relation to economic legitimacy, Xi's domestic and international economic endeavors are similar in terms of aggressiveness and scale as Mao's Great Leap Forward. However, unlike Xi's current success, Mao's economic project was not based on scientific knowledge and thus resulted in a disastrous failure that led to millions of people dying due to massive starvation as well as political and social instability. Third, with regard to solidarity, both Mao and Xi have ensured this through a one-man dictatorship with no term limits as well as a large-scale cult of personality through the Little Red Book and Little Red App. Systematic censorship through the confiscation and burning of adversarial paraphernalia was initiated under Mao and censorship using ICT occurs under Xi. Modern developments have enabled Xi to be less violent in his methods of suppressing dissent. Lastly, in eliciting cooperation through propaganda efforts and a common enemy, Mao found support from the Red Guards while Xi has his cybernationalists. Although the nature of cooperation that Mao has incited

from the Red Guards was physical, violent, and public, whereas Xi's cybernationalists attack virtually, they both inflict similar trauma to their targets such as loss of employment and social status. These differences indicate that Xi's governance will generate different results from that of Mao's. It is likely that a political, economic, and social disaster will be avoided given that Xi acknowledges that political and social instability are not conducive to economic growth and sustainability. Given that Xi's methods have yielded success for his economic legitimacy thus far, it is deemed that Chinese people are willing to endure living in a repressed society as long as they can continue to receive economic benefits.

Notes

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