# How the Newly-built State transformed the old society?
# ——The Mechanical Political Integration Policy and its Impacts in Mainland China, 1949-1958[*]

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**Abstract:**

During the early years of the People's Republic China, by fully controlling socio-economic and political resources under the guidance of the 'General Line for the Transitional Period', the new state integrated various forces into the construction of socialism. As a result, there appeared a high degree of homogeneity in Chinese class society system. The newly-built state removed existing ideological obstacles, and exterminated exploiting classes, which to some extent, have completed the state's objectives and promoted economic production. However, the effects of this kind of "mechanical" integration were quite limited. Most people were mobilized to construct socialism, and little attention was paid to the improvement of productivity and sustainable development. The state underestimated the importance of stimulating the masses' enthusiasm, resulting in a lack of long-term dynamics for further development.

**Key Words:** Political Integration, Strata Differentiation, Class Unification, Unified Integration

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The existing literature on political integration has expanded tremendously since the Second World War. Political integration was widely used to deal with newly-built nation states' political issues and to rebuild a political order. The growing interest has manifested particularly obvious in two fields, namely, the study of international/regional integration and the study of national integration.

In the studies on international/regional integration, scholars have defined political integration as shifting 'regional loyalty to a large entity'.[1] Great efforts have been carried out for European integration at an international level, and then expanded to African integration and Latin America's integration.

Compared to the study of international integration, less effort have been made to research integration on a national scale. There are two kinds of definitions for national political integration; one is state-centered, which assumed that integration maintained and strengthened most of its citizens' "residual loyalty".[2] The other definition is society-centered, for Deutsch, it means "the attainment of a sense of community, accompanied by formal or informal institutions or practices, sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change among members of a group".[3] According to Myron Weiner, the most common integration problems involve problems of "national identity, territorial control, the establishment of norms for the handling of public conflict, the relationship between governors and the governed, and the problems of organizing individuals for the achievement of common purposes".[4] All in all, political integration is the process for the dominant political subjects, to include different social and political forces into a unified framework organically, in order to maintain national loyalty and socio-political stabilization.

With the emergence of a large number of newly independent states in the 1950s and 1960s, the literature on national integration has dramatically increased, especially those focusing on African nations. In most circumstances, the concept we are referring to here could be substituted as "political unification". Few influential researches have been conducted since 1970s. More unfortunately, the People's Republic of China as the biggest newly-found state under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) where great changes have taken place from a traditional "multiple" society, has not gotten enough attention as an analytical

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[1] Karl W. Deutsch, '*Political Community and the North Atlantic Area' in International Political Communities: An Anthology, (Garden City*, N.Y,1966), p. 2; Ernst B. Hass, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces*, 1950-1957,(Stanford, 1958), p.16.

[2] I. Wallerstein, *Africa, the politics of independence* (New York, Random House,1961), p. 87

[3] Deutsch t al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Princeton, 1957). p.6

[4] Myron Weiner, 'Political Integration and Political Development', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 358, New (Mar., 1965), pp. 52-64

model. Well-known to us is that from Sino-British Opium War (1840s) to 1949, frequent wars and social turbulences have continuously perplexed China's stabilization and development. The situation has changed dramatically since CCP took power. In the early period after the founding of a new China (1949-1958), the PRC has made rapid growth in all fields, which somehow profited from its successful political integration. However, since 1958, the new situation has been destroyed.

This paper's goal is to explore how CCP has integrated its people from 1949 to 1958. It attempts to provide a critical review of major integration policies and political integration process in the country. To make the review manageable, the paper concentrates on three tasks: (1) explaining the basis and the process of political integration, and assessing the intended and unintended effects of such integration;(2) highlighting the impact on the relationships among the CCP, the State, and civil society imposed by political integration policies; and (3) finding its successful experience and explaining how potential risks inside which eventually easily destroyed the ideal tendency.

## 2. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

In the political theories, political integration was explained by some common independent variables and intervening variables.

The first one is formal political unity. In Claude Ake's opinion, "to build a single coherent political society and a strong political system is the inevitable demand for political integration".[5] We also find that Etzioni considers a community integrated if "(a) it has an effective control over the use of the means of violence ... (b) it has a center of decision-making that is able to affect significantly the allocation of resources and rewards throughout the community; and (c) it is the dominant focus of political identification for the large majority of politically aware citizens".[6]

The second one refers to socio-political control. As Haurek and Clark said, "social control, the expenditure of resources within a society for the manifest purpose of promoting adequate role performance of its members, appears to be universal".[7] Each unit of the society may be most rationally organized around its primary functions and therefore has the particular resources needed for the efficient performance of that function. The most important control mechanism is to grasp and distribute people's economic resources.

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[5] Claude Ake, 'Political Integration and Political Stability: A Hypothesis', *World Politics*, Vol.19, No.3 (Apr., 1967)

[6] Amitai Etzioni,*Political Unification:A Comparative Study of Leaders and Forces* (New York, 1965), p.4.

7 Edward W. Haurek and John P. Clark,'Variants of Integration of Social Control Agencies', *Social Problems*, (1967,Vol.15), p.48

The third one is political cultural homogeneity. For instance, Leo Kuper argues: "Integration rests on common values…It presupposes cultural homogeneity."[8] Claude Ake also held that "the primary prerequisite of political integration is the existence of political culture"[9]; to increase cultural homogeneity and value consensus is the software for integration. Political cultural "consists of the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action take place". [10] People's "cognitive, affective, and evaluational orientations-beliefs, feelings, and values"[11] towards the present politics "is especially concerned with the means and ends of government".[11,12]

All the variables can be summarized into three categories for political integration: organizational system, controlling system and ideological system (see Figure 1).This paper is to employ "class analysis" to research. Marx took class as a foundational concept in his broad theoretical agenda in order to expose the evil of capitalism. Unlike Marx, "a great deal of Weber's work concerns the analysis of capitalism as a social order".[13] The generally acknowledged reasons for conducting class analysis are (1) to examine how political system adjusted unequal class relationship. It means the new state used different integrating policy towards different classes creating a new political order; (2) to use class as an independent variable to study the change of social structure as the outcome of political integration. As a result of the political integration, some classes will be unified as the state's allies and others be pushed to the opposite as enemies.
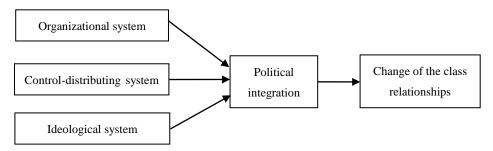


**Figure 1: The System for Political Integration**

8  Introduction to Kuper and M. G. Smith, eds., *Pluralism in Africa* (Berkeley, 1969), p.14.

9  Claude Ake, 'Political Integration and Political Stability: A Hypothesis', *World Politics*,Vol.19,No.3 (Apr., 1967), p. 486

10  Lucian Pye and Sidney Verba, *Political culture and Political Development* (Princeton, 1965),p.513

11  Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, 1963), 14-15.

12  Arend Lijphart, 'Cultural Diversity and Theories of Political Integration', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.4, No.1 (Mar.,1971), p. 4

13  Erik Olin Wright, 'The Shadow of Exploitation in Weber's Class Analysis', *American Sociological Review*, Vol.67,No.6 (Dec.,2002), p. 833

## 3. THE PROCESS OF CHINA'S POLITICAL INTEGRATION FROM 1949 TO 1958

For a newly-built state, to build a single political society from "traditional societies" and elicit devotion and deference from individuals is the most important and urgent task.[14] The PRC was founded on a land ravaged by a century of foreign invasion and civil wars. Traditional society of China was so diversified and lacking of effective organization that it was described as a "sheet of loose sand" by Sun Yat-sen.

After the founding of New China, excepting the bureaucratic bourgeoisie class which was eliminated, there are twelve complex strata left: "landlords, capitalists, rich peasants, middle peasants, intellectuals, professionals, religious professionals, small handicrafts, small business operators, poor peasants, workers and the poor". In order to mobilize people to participate socialism construction, China began its unique integrating process.

### 3.1 The party-state-building and its extension into societies

CCP has realized that political organization is a premise for mobilizing public involvement and support for their party and other programs. Just as John Wilson Lewis wrote in his landmark study, "the leadership technique of the Chinese Communists has been to bring all Chinese into formal organization of various kinds".[15]

In the revolution, the CCP has built a large organizational network of dedicated activists, penetrating into almost every corner of all societies forming the backbone for integration. The number of CCP members has grown from 4,480,000 in 1949 to 10,730,000 in 1956." The party also devoted to construct a powerful administrative apparatus, centering on the state and Party bureaucracies, "which has exercised broader and tighter control over Chinese society than any previous government in the country's history".[16]

The societies with traditional obedience to authorities were regarded naturally as extensions of bureaucratic organization. Based on the Soviet model, China began to "combine each individual farmer into huge collective farmsteads gradually, which using collective labor to promote agriculture modernization".[17] As of June 1956, 91.7% of the 120,000,000 rural households had joined agricultural cooperatives.[18] In 1958, advanced agriculture cooperatives further expanded its scale of operation, which eventually formed people's commune with over

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[14] Claude Ake, 'Political Integration and Political Stability: A Hypothesis', *World Politics*, Vol.19, No.3 (Apr., 1967),p.486

[15] John Wilson Lewis，*Leadership in Communist China* (Ithaca：Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 1.

[16] Harry Harding, *Organizing China: the problem of bureaucracy, 1949-1976* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), p.1

[17] Literature Research Center of CCP compiled, Selected Important Documents since the founding of PRC" (IV),(Beijing:Central Literature Publishing House,1993)p.282

[18] Ibid., p.44

99% of rural households as its members.[19] Meanwhile, CCP lost no time to complete the socialist transformation in handicraft industries and capitalist industries and commerce. From then on, labors in city have been organized by the "unit system", which was described as "organized dependence" by Brantly Womack, "describing the comprehensive and monopolistic control of workers by factory leadership. Its two sub-aspects are, first, the non-market character of the workplace, in which labor is assumed to be immobile and all services are provided through the work unit, and secondly, the Party's monopoly of all organization. The worker is totally dependent on his or her unit for every conceivable need and benefit, cannot escape through a labor market, and cannot organize autonomously within the unit.[20]

After a few years of development, China formed a strong "party-state", with party leadership as the core integrating subject. It has tight control over the state bureaucracy and has penetrated local societies through cooperatives in villages and work units in cities.

## 3.2 Egalitarian distribution and strict social controls

For Marxists, distribution systems form the fundamental basis of class relationships. In order to create an equal society, CCP tried to turn the state into the only agent of distributing resources, eliminating the market.

To win the people's loyalty, CCP's first step after taking power is to "smash the old world" and rebuild egalitarian distribution order across the country. Marxist ideology holds that the ownership system of the means of production determines the distribution system. In the country with almost 90 percent of citizens being farmers, land reform was considered the key to regime legitimacy in the countryside for CCP. From the winter of 1950 to the spring of 1953, masses of poor land tenants and landless peasants received several million acres of farmland and other means of production. In urban areas, in order to consolidate the basis of working-class, CCP maintained and re-declared working class as the leading class in China. Old corporate bureaucracy and its oppression of workers have been abolished led by CCP. New factory management committees and staff representatives were built to help working-class manage enterprise democratically and promote the modernization of production technology. After the reform, the average wage of workers has "increased from 446 yuan per year to 610 yuan per year".[21]On this basis, CCP has launched three transformations from 1953 to 1956. China completed the change from private to state and collective ownership; through sharing the ownership of the means of production, the worker-peasant class came to recognize the CCP as representing their interests. And from then on, cooperatives and units have become the terminal of bureaucratic system administrating people's distribution and daily life.

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[19]  Bo Yibo, *Retrospect for Some Important Decisions and Events*(Vol.2), People's Publishing House, 1993, p.750

[20]  Brantly Womack, 'Transfigured Community: Neo-Traditionalism and Work Unit Socialism in China' ,*The China Quarterly*, No. 126 (Jun., 1991), pp. 313-332

[21]  Zhou Enlai, 'The State Government Work Report in 1957', *People's Daily*, 1957-06-27.

Apart from controlling political and economical resources, CCP also built a strict controlling system for social resources. The Hukou and class-identifying systems were the most powerful tools for controlling social resources. The household registration (Hukou) system is introduced to control social mobility. It is a combination of residence permit and an officially accredited family history, which was obliged to keep by every family safely. "It contains personal information on the family, including details of births, marriages, deaths and divorces".[22] Under the Hukou system's control, the farmer without permit can not work and live in cities. It means the free labor market for people and the opportunities for immigration especially for peasants were closed. Class labels also deeply affected the society. From the early 1950s, every person carried a class label marking their origins according to their economic situation before 1949. In villages, people were divided into four strata as "landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants and poor peasants". In cities, "the process of class labeling was never completely systematic, but in a series of political campaigns, families gradually began to be identified with a label as capitalist, merchant, peddler, worker, or poor peasant".[23] Class labels were inherited by a person's family without any change in about 30 years till 1978. In that special period, without a lower class label, people could not have the precious chance for higher education or joining the army.

Although the strict controlling system organized people into a unified working framework, it also froze social mobility, leading to a society with less dynamics.

## 3.3 Sculpting ideology and the transformation of education

Ideology is the tool for political integration which shapes peoples' values. As North said, "by ideology I mean the subjective perceptions (models, theories) all people possess to explain the world around them. Whether at the micro level of individual relationships or at the macro level of ideologies providing integrated explanations of past and the present".[24]In order to reorganize society, CCP resorted to ideology remolding and education transformation.

Mao emphasized that "in the process of building a socialist society, all people including exploiters and general labors need to be transformed ideologically".[25]CCP launched the Rectification in 1950 and an ideological reform movement in October 1951, which emphasized the socialism ideological consistency and the authority of higher leaders at all lower levels of the party and bureaucratic system."Political education escalated thereafter into a rectification-style campaign based on individual criticism and self-criticism and was developed among college and secondary school teachers throughout the country".[26]

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[22] Michael Dillon, *Contemporary China: an introduction* (Routledge, 2008), p. 66

[23] James L. Watson edited , *Class and social stratification in post-revolution China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 100

[24] Douglass Cecil North, *Institutions, institutional change, and economic performance* (Cambridge University Press,1990), p. 23.

[25] *Collected Works of Mao Ze Dong* (Vol.7), (Beijing:People's Publishing House,1999, p. 223

[26] Roderick MacFarquhar, John K.Fairbank, *The Cambridge history of China: People's Republi*c, Vol. 14, (Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 205.

For the original exploiting classes, CCP adopted a kind of compulsory ideological transformation. For example, the landlords were not only deprived of their land ownership with a part of land left, but forced by the government to live on their hard work and to transform their feudal ideology, aiming to become farmers of the new society. For the national bourgeoisie, the government purchased their businesses peacefully and changed their exploiting views by individual criticism and self-criticism. Workers and peasants, being in alliance with the CCP state, should also participate in ideological remolding. Mao said "only we reform ourselves well, would our party and working-class lead our people to transform and construct our society further".[27] "If we become too loose in our work on farmers' ideological education, capitalism would be rampant", so, "we should engraft socialism ideas into their minds".[28] In rural areas, mobilizing class consciousness against exploiting classes was an ideal way of doing this. "Public accusation meetings (控诉会) culminated in that period in which landlords were publicly accused by the downtrodden and exploited for their past sufferings".[29] For the 3,840,000 intellectuals among 0.6 billion of the total population in 1956, CCP held a contradictory attitude. Mao and his colleagues of course wanted to mobilize them into socialism construction, but they also worried them against "both socialist-minded and professionally proficient" (又红又专), taking "liberal intellectuals as the main objects of ideological integration".[30] The integrating approaches for intellectuals can be summarized as "to improve their working situation and living standard; to solve the problem of their unemployment and improper working arrangements; to absorb advanced intellectuals into Party system, and, to cultivate and expand the rank of 'red and expert' intellectuals of the new times".[31]

Propaganda and education are also ideological tools for the state to integrate the society. CCP established a national propaganda system and ordered the registration of all newspapers. "Publicly, all major propaganda policies were issued in the name of Central Committee".[32] Several hundreds of Chinese newspapers were not allowed to continue because they were deemed unacceptable and denied permits. One creative way what the CCP spread its message was through the use of wall posters, one of the oldest forms of Chinese communications".[33] And, most villages, factories and families were equipped with loudspeakers, diffusing the latest

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[27] *Manuscripts Mao Zedong since 1949* (Vol.6), (Beijing:Central Literature Publishing House, 1992), p. 451

[28] *Manuscripts Mao Zedong since 1949* (Vol.5), (Beijing:Central Literature Publishing House, 1991), pp. 505,503

[29] Julia Strauss, 'Rethinking Land Reform and Regime Consolidation in the People's Republic of China: the Case of Jiangnan 1950-1952', *Chinese History and Society 31*, 2006, p. 24

[30] Literature Research Center of CCP compiled, *Monographic Selected Works of Mao Zedong*, (Beijing:Central Literature Publishing House, 2003), pp. 1683-1695

[31] Shen Zhi Hua, *The history of People's Republic China* (Vol.3),( Hongkong :Chinese University of Hongkong Press,2008),pp.67-70

[32] Alan P.L.Liu, *Communications and national integration in Communist China* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1971), p. 40

[33] Shannon E. Martin, David A. Copeland, *The function of newspapers in society: a global perspective*, Praeger (Westport, CT,2003),p.57

news and CCP's direction. Meanwhile, the old education system has been destroyed and renewed after 1949. Schools were not only a place to learn knowledge but also an important workplace preparing students ideologically to be abide by national plans.

## 4. EFFECTS AND POTENTIAL RISKS RESULTING FROM THE INTENSIFIED INTEGRATION

At least three groups of results and potential risks were left by the intensified integration, which can be summarized as follows:

To begin with, a class society with high degree of homogenization formed after the integration in which the party-state served as the determining force. As a result, all those with a class-identity given by CCP did not have their identities changed until 1978. Exploiting class vanished and the process for class differentiation was forced to stop and substituted with differences between townspeople and villagers. The original complex social structure was turned into a simple one with "two classes (peasants and workers) and one stratum (intellectuals)". Although the process of integration was filled with egalitarianism, it objectively froze the society simultaneously.

Moreover, to involve most of the people into socialist construction is an epoch-making event for China after 1949, since then modernization has not only been the elites' enterprise. With the assumption of organizing most Chinese people within various tight organizations, CCP penetrated into local societies as the only authority subject substituting traditional social elites, which boosted production dramatically. Under central planning, at first, industrial GDP grew at a remarkable 16.1 percent per annum between 1952 and 1957, whereas GDP grew by 9 percent per annum(Table 1).[34] But the growth was only an aggregation of the large population after long sufferings. Individual's welfare was overlooked by CCP which would eventually challenge the persistence of this integrating pattern with its exceeding emphasis on a heavy industrial base. Practices proved this to be true later in history. In order to maintain people's enthusiasm, CCP had to resort to mass campaigns again and again.

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[34] Shenggen Fan,Connie Chan-Kang, 'Road development, economic growth, and poverty reduction in China', *International Food Policy Research Institute* (IFPRI), 2005, p. 5.

**Table 1 Gross domestic product by sector (billion yuan, 2002 constant prices)**

| Year | GDP Total | Agriculture | Urban Industry | Urban Service |
|------|-----------|-------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1952 | 259 | 131 | 54 | 74 |
| 1957 | 403 | 162 | 120 | 121 |
| 1962 | 364 | 143 | 114 | 107 |

(Source: Based on China's National Bureau of Statistics, Statistical yearbook of China 2002.)

Last but not least, although the integration transformed China into a powerful and stable nation with an unprecedented order, it also undermined socio-political development in late periods. This is particularly true in the institutional absorption of civil society by the state, which gave rise to an institutional logic that links political power directly to economic outcomes and society. After the initial integration, a highly overlapped social-political structure dominated across the society. The local community became an extended political organization bearing administrating functions. According to Almond, the process of political development involves "differentiated political system with a secularized political culture".[35] Needless to say, the overlapped structure did not provide any possibility for differentiation, which eventually constrained both the development of civil society and politics.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS: A KIND OF MECHANISTIC TRANSFORMATION-TYPE INTEGRATION

Evidently, under CCP's strong leadership, mainland China has entered into a new era putting most of its population under highly strict organizations. Through the analysis above, we can describe this period of integration as a "transformation-type integration" (see Figure 2). The party-state transformed the local societies by work units in cities and cooperatives in villages. It initiated public ownership, class-identity and Hukou systems to control and distribute people's economic resources, socio-political resources respectively; and, last but not least, remolded people's ideology by dominating propaganda authorities and educational reforms.
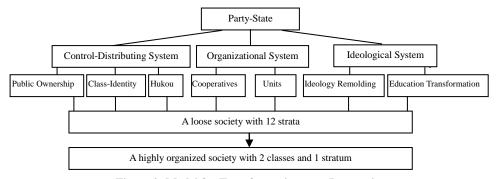


**Figure 2: Model for Transformation-type Integration**

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[35] Almond,G.A and Powell, G.B.Jr, *Comparative Politics: System, Process, and Policy*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Little Brown Company, 1978), p. 20

This transformation-type integration was characterized with public power controlling everything even including people's individual life, which naturally created a highly overlapped socio-political structure. On the basis of public ownership, public power became the core of social development and shaped stark differences among classes.

And, as the initial integration was so mechanical and paid so little attention to people's different demands, it gradually became difficulty to maintain the people's natural loyalty. This was proved by subsequent historical developments, in which CCP had to launch more mass movements against its "imagined enemies" to draw dynamics.

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