

# China Chapter 1: Consolidation & Establishment of the Communist State

## Past essay questions

1. How successful were Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in creating a socialist state in the period of 1949-1961?
2. To what extent do you agree that changes in education were the most successful social development of Mao's China? (Nov 22)
3. "There was significant social change under Mao Zedong up to 1961." To what extent do you agree with this statement.
4. Evaluate the impact of domestic policies on social developments in the People's Republic of China under Mao Zedong. (May 19)
5. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Mao's social policies. (Nov 17)

Socialism in the Chinese context: Land redistribution; peasant participation; class struggle; downwards flow of CCP workers and ideas to the people and upwards flow of ideas and needs to the CCP; gender equality; right thinking; rectification; continuous revolution and Chinese nationalism

1. To address the long-standing inequality between men and women. 2. To destroy the remnants of 'bureaucratic capitalist class' in China. To improve education in the PRC, as it would play an important role in the building of a socialist society.		
Method/Policy + Aim	Positive impact/successful	Negative impact/failure
<p>EDUCATION</p> <p>OVERALL ARGUMENT: Educational policies led to significant social change for the better because it made education more accessible in rural areas.</p>	<p><b>Premise:</b> In 1949, majority of the peasants were illiterate or barely literate</p> <p><b>Mao's policy:</b></p> <p>Expansion of mass education and literacy camps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rapid expansion of primary schooling, especially in rural areas – "work study schools" implemented in rural areas</li> <li>- Nationwide literacy campaigns</li> <li>- Simplification of Chinese characters (1956) to make reading/writing easier</li> <li>- Creation of pinyin, a system that characterised Mandarin sounds into symbols so that spoken mandarin could be written in a standardized form</li> </ul> <p>Soviet-Style Education System (Early 1950s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adoption of a centralized, specialized system influenced by the USSR</li> <li>- Emphasis on science, engineering, and technical training</li> <li>- Strict curriculum and standardized textbooks</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Literacy rates rose significantly (hundreds of millions reached basic literacy) – rose from 20% to 50% from 1949 to 1960</li> <li>- An extra 16 million women were able to read by 1958</li> <li>- Education became accessible to peasants and workers for the first time</li> <li>- Helped unify the country linguistically and culturally</li> <li>- The Soviet style education system produced more skilled technicians and engineers</li> <li>- It supported industrialization under the first Five Year plan</li> </ul>	<p><b>Counterargument:</b> Educational policies had a limited social impact because education remained easily accessible to the elites only, with the quality of education in rural areas remaining low.</p> <p>Quality of education was uneven, especially in rural areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on basic literacy meant limited higher-level intellectual development, as higher education access remained "elite".</li> <li>- Work study schools were left to the party cadres who often lacked elementary education, hence teenage teachers were recruited instead</li> <li>- In each district, there were key schools with the best teachers. In the schools, there was a heavy emphasis on testing, examination and physical education. Although selection was supposed to be based on merit, in practice the children of high-ranking party and government officials occupied most of the places at these schools</li> <li>- Large numbers of students were sent to study at universities in the USSR until the late 1950s. However, as China became isolated from the West, there was no longer opportunities for Chinese students studying at Western universities</li> </ul> <p>Education became overly rigid and examination-focused</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited creativity and critical thinking</li> <li>- Social sciences were not prioritized or even banned</li> <li>- Dependent on Soviet models → became problematic after Sino-Soviet tensions</li> </ul> <p>"Better red than expert"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mao was against intellectuals. He wanted an educated workforce that could drive</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Created a more structured national education system</li> </ul> <p>Ideological Indoctrination in Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integration of Maoist ideology into all levels of education</li> <li>- Political study sessions and propaganda in curriculum</li> <li>- Teachers and students expected to demonstrate political loyalty</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b> Strengthened CCP control over society through educational indoctrination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Created a shared political identity</li> <li>- Helped consolidate the regime after 1949</li> </ul> <p>Class-Based Education Policies There was preference in school admissions for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workers</li> <li>- Peasants</li> <li>- “Revolutionary” families</li> </ul> <p>But discrimination against “bourgeois” or landlord backgrounds</p> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broke traditional elite dominance in education!</li> <li>- And promoted social mobility for lower classes</li> <li>- Reduced class divide through education</li> </ul>	<p>economic growth and industrialization but did not want his people intelligent enough to question the flaws and hypocrisies in his policies</p> <p>Increasing politicisation of education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fear of being labelled a “counter-revolutionary” discouraged debate and suppressed political dissent</li> <li>- Meritocracy was undermined as talented students were excluded due to class background</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b> Education became intellectually restrictive, and suppressed independent thought and intellectual freedom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Due to the poor quality of education in rural areas, benefits reaped from rural education were limited</li> <li>- Education remained accessibly mainly to elites in cities just as it had under GMD rule</li> </ul> <p>Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The cultural revolution undid many of the positive developments prior to 1966</li> <li>- Most schools and universities closed as millions of youth were sent to the countryside to be “re-educated” through hard labour</li> <li>- Led to the “lost generation”→ less than 1% of the working population had a university degree. Only 11% of people received schooling before 16, and 35% before 12</li> </ul>
<p>HEALTH/MEDICAL CARE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve public health to strengthen the workforce <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. As China in 1949 had high disease rates (malaria, cholera, etc) and</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p><b>Thesis:</b> Healthcare policies were effective and had a significant change in China under the CCP’s rule due to the availability of medical facilities that improved public health and increased life expectancy.</p> <p><b>Premise:</b></p>	<p><b>Counterargument:</b> Healthcare policies had limited long term impact due to the small scale of implemented healthcare policies and lack of prioritization by the CCP.</p> <p><b>Evidence:</b> Limited effectiveness and implementation</p>

<p>low life expectancy of arnd 35-40 years, the ccp needed healthy population for industrialization and agricultural productivity</p> <p>2. Consolidate CCP legitimacy</p> <p>a. CCP wanted to present itself as a protector of the people and providing healthcare showed the superiority of Mao's era to pre-1949 conditions. This could win them popular support and justify authoritarian rule</p> <p>3. Promote socialist equality</p> <p>a. As pre-1949 healthcare was urban-focused and largely only accessible to elites, mao aimed to expand his services to rural peasant and workers to reduce inequality and align healthcare with socialist ideology</p> <p>4. Prevent epidemics and maintain social stability</p> <p>a. As large scale disease outbreaks could disrupt the economy and undermine state control, mass campaigns targeted hygiene and vaccination to maintain a stable and</p>	<p>o As China in 1949 had high disease rates (malaria, cholera, etc) and low life expectancy of around 35-40 years. However, the CCP needed healthy population for industrialization and agricultural productivity</p> <p><b>Evidence:</b></p> <p>Patriotic Health Campaigns (Mass Public Health Drives)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nationwide campaigns to improve sanitation and hygiene, as argued by <b>historian Shao Zifei</b>.</li> <li>- Teams of party workers went into the countryside to explain the connection between dirt and disease</li> <li>- Local populations were enlisted in great communal efforts to drain swamps and eradicate the bugs, rats, mosquitoes and flies that carried dysentery, malaria and other endemic diseases</li> <li>- Big drive against the use of opium</li> <li>- Targeted disease prevention (e.g. cholera, malaria, schistosomiasis)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Significant reduction in infectious diseases</li> <li>- Increase in life expectancy. 1949:36 years, 1957: 57 years</li> <li>- Improved public hygiene awareness</li> <li>- Mobilised mass participation → reinforced collective responsibility</li> </ul> <p>Expansion of rural healthcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on bringing medical services to the countryside</li> <li>- Establishment of rural clinics and cooperative medical schemes</li> <li>- Shift away from urban-only healthcare</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term, campaign-style approach → inconsistent long-term healthcare development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Much of the health focus was on cities and not the rural areas. Health spending never rose above 2.6% of the state budget.</li> <li>- Facilities were basic and underfunded</li> <li>- Shortage of trained doctors</li> <li>- Quality of care was often low</li> </ul> <p><b>Historian Xun Zhou</b> argued that campaigns were politically driven and inconsistent over time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited medical expertise → risk of misdiagnosis or poor treatment</li> <li>- Could not handle complex conditions</li> <li>- Reinforced a two-tier system (basic rural vs better urban care)</li> </ul> <p><b>Historian Mark Selden</b> contends that early socialist development prioritised urban industrial centres.</p> <p>Barefoot doctors described as working with minimal tools like “one needle and herbs”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hospitals and advanced care remained underdeveloped</li> <li>- Political priorities sometimes overrode medical needs (especially during the Great Leap Forward)</li> <li>- Healthcare quality varied widely</li> </ul> <p><b>Historian David Lampton</b> emphasized limited state investment relative to population size as health spending was never above 2.6% of state budget</p> <p><b>Evidence: Impact of CCP politics on the healthcare industry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During the ‘anti-movements’, doctors were condemned as living off the backs of workers. It was said that their long years of training prevented them from learning the dignity of labour and had left them as privileged people who used</li> </ul>
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<p>controllabel society</p> <p>5. Provide mass healthcare, low cost</p>	<p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Historian Xiaoming Li</b> contend that Mao's socialist health policies were major successes as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Millions of peasants gained access to basic healthcare</li> <li>- Reduced rural-urban inequality</li> <li>- Improved life expectancy over time</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Training of "Barefoot Doctors" (late 1950s roots), implemented post 1961</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rapid training of minimally qualified medical workers</li> <li>- Combined basic Western medicine with traditional Chinese medicine</li> <li>- Sent to rural areas to provide frontline care</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dramatically increased availability of healthcare in villages</li> <li>- Cheap and practical solution for a large population</li> <li>- Focus on prevention (vaccination, hygiene)</li> </ul> <p>State Control &amp; Prevention-Focused System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centralised healthcare under state direction</li> <li>- Emphasis on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preventative care (vaccination, sanitation)</li> <li>- Low-cost mass treatment rather than advanced hospitals</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Efficient use of limited resources</li> <li>- Large-scale improvements in public health indicators</li> <li>- Life expectancy rose significantly (57 years in 1957 compared to 36 before 1949)</li> </ul>	<p>their special skills to make money which they then spent on a selfish bourgeois lifestyle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some doctors decided that bearing pain without flinching was a sign of revolutionary purpose, so they halted the use of anesthetics. As a result, many mothers in labour were denied any painkillers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To survive, doctors had to subordinate medical considerations to political ones</li> <li>- De-prioritisation of providing healthcare: Surgeons cancelled operations in order to show their solidarity with the workers by sweeping floors and cleaning toilets</li> </ul>
<p>WOMEN'S RIGHTS</p>	<p><b>Thesis:</b></p> <p>Marriage Law of 1950</p>	<p><b>Counterargument:</b> Mao's policies had limited impact on women's rights (especially in rural areas) due</p>

<p><b>Orthodox perspective</b> was that Mao's policies were genuinely revolutionary and liberating, especially for oppressed groups like women.</p> <p><b>Revisionist perspective</b> was that Mao's women's rights policies were limited, controlled, and primarily tools of state power, not true liberation.</p> <p>Overall evaluation: Mao's women's rights policies significantly improved women's legal status and expanded their participation in work and public life. However, these reforms were primarily driven by socialist economic and political goals, and traditional gender inequalities persisted due to cultural resistance, weak enforcement, and the continuation of patriarchal norms.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Achieve legal gender equality       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. He wanted to abolish traditional Confucian patriarchy</li> <li>b. And establish equal legal status between men and women</li> <li>c. To essentially dismantle centuries of legal and social female subordination</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Integrate women into workforce       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. To increase labour force participation to support industrialization and collectivization</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Support socialist equality and class transformation</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Abolished arranged marriages, child marriages, concubinage</li> <li>- Payment of dowries and bride-prices forbidden</li> <li>- Legalised free choice in marriage and divorce</li> <li>- Legal marriage age for men was set at 20 years and for women at 18 years: both parties were to marry only by choice, not coercion or by family mandate</li> <li>- Made women legally equal in marriage decisions</li> <li>- <b>Orthodox historian Kay Ann Johnson</b> argues that the law was a "radical legal attack on patriarchy" but unevenly enforced in rural China.</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major legal liberation for women</li> <li>- Increased ability for women to escape abusive marriages</li> <li>- Symbolic destruction of feudal patriarchy</li> </ul> <p>Land reforms and the Great Leap Forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further laws passed in the 1950s granted women the right to own and sell land and property</li> <li>- Women were granted land in their own name following the land redistribution</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major legal liberation for women</li> <li>- Increased ability for women to escape abusive marriages</li> <li>- Symbolic destruction of feudal patriarchy</li> </ul> <p>Integration of Women into the Workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encouraged women to work in factories, communes, and offices</li> </ul>	<p>to rural resistance and existing patriarchal beliefs. In some cases, it even gave women a double burden, worsening their quality of life.</p> <p>Rural resistance was strong; many women faced family backlash</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reports of violence against women seeking divorce in traditional areas</li> <li>- Law enforcement uneven across China</li> <li>- Faced opposition from husbands, mother in laws and cadres. Divorcees were often cut off from any family support</li> <li>- Chinese ingrained notions of female inferiority still existed in a traditionally male dominated society. It was the wish of nearly all Chinese couples to have male children. Therefore, the historic practice of female infanticide continued</li> </ul> <p><b>Revisionist historian Susan Mann</b> contends that women gained legal rights, but family and kinship pressure still constrained real choice.</p> <p>"Double burden": women still responsible for domestic work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Often low-paid, low-skilled jobs assigned</li> <li>- Equality in work often theoretical, not real</li> <li>- Women now were not only expected to raise families, but also work full time</li> </ul> <p>Legal equality did not guarantee social equality, as argued by <b>historian Delia Devin</b></p> <p>Patriarchal attitudes remained strong, especially in rural areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited enforcement mechanisms</li> <li>- Enforcement depended on local cadres (inconsistent). Village leaders feared alienating their neighbours if they pursued implementation</li> </ul>
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<p>a. Liberation of women were tied to replacing traditional hierarchies with socialist equality</p> <p>4. Mao wanted to strengthen state control over family life</p> <p>a. He wanted to reduce influence of traditional family authority</p> <p>b. Essentially to shift loyalty from family units to the communist state</p> <p>Reduce traditional practices viewed as feudal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promoted idea of women as “equal workers in socialist construction”</li> <li>- Linked to collectivisation and industrialisation goals</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Massive increase in female labour participation</li> <li>- Improved economic independence for many women</li> <li>- Helped industrial and agricultural output</li> </ul> <p><b>Revisionist historian Gail Hershatter</b> argues that women were mobilised as workers, but often experienced a “double burden” of labour + domestic duties.</p> <p>Legal Equality and Constitutional Rights (1954 Constitution)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Constitution declared women equal in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Politics</li> <li>o Work</li> <li>o Education</li> <li>o Family law</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formal recognition of gender equality</li> <li>- Women could participate in politics and public life</li> <li>- Increased female literacy and education access</li> </ul> <p>Campaigns Against “Feudal” Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Targeted traditional gender oppression:</li> <li>- Foot binding (symbolically condemned, already declining)</li> <li>- Arranged marriages</li> <li>- Female infanticide (especially rural campaigns)</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decline of extreme patriarchal practices</li> <li>- Cultural shift toward gender modernization, as argued by post-revisionist</li> </ul>	<p>of the new (radical) regulations too vigorously</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some practices persisted informally in rural areas</li> <li>- Cultural backlash in conservative regions</li> </ul> <p><b>Revisionist historian Jonathan Spence</b> argues it represented formal equality, but enforcement was weak outside urban centres.</p> <p>Organisations were state-controlled (limited independence)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation often symbolic rather than decision-making power</li> <li>- Women still underrepresented in high-level politics</li> <li>- Participation increased, but genuine political power remained limited.</li> </ul> <p><b>Historian Elizabeth Perry</b> notes that the campaigns were highly politicised and tied to broader CCP mobilisation strategies.</p> <p>Impact of collectivization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mao’s massive collectivization programme ended the holding of private property by either men or women</li> <li>- Women no longer owned property</li> </ul>
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	<p><b>historian Susan Greenhalgh</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased awareness of women's rights</li> </ul> <p>Women's Organisations and Political Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expansion of All-China Women's Federation</li> <li>- Encouraged women to participate in CCP-led organisations</li> <li>- Mobilised women for political campaigns and literacy drives</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Women gained political voice at local levels</li> <li>- Increased literacy and political awareness</li> <li>- Helped integrate women into socialist state structure</li> </ul> <p>Establishment of the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In 1949, the CCP established the ACWF to promote its policies towards women</li> <li>- Given a mandate to conduct 'woman work', which included the implementation of a New Marriage Law, improving women's health and education and mobilizing women to part in productive labour</li> <li>- Lack of funding and status</li> </ul>	
<p><b>REUNIFICATION CAMPAIGNS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish full territorial control of china       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. He wanted to end fragmentation after decades of war (civil war, warlords, Japanese occupation)</li> <li>b. bring all regions under CCP central authority</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>Integration of frontier regions (Tibet, Xinjiang, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gradual military and political incorporation of border regions</li> <li>- Establishment of CCP administration in remote areas</li> <li>- Agreements like the "Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" (1951)</li> <li>- China chose a new "Dalai Lama" that supported the CCP</li> <li>- A number of prominent political ad religious</li> </ul>	<p>Violent repression and executions Civilian casualties in anti-bandit campaigns Created fear and resentment in some regions</p> <p>The Tibetan Uprising of 1959</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In 1959, Tibet rose up against the Chinese occupation</li> <li>- The Chinese authorities met the national uprising of the Tibetan people with suppression and mass arrests</li> </ul>

<p>2. Eliminate remaining nationalist opposition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Crush remnants of KMT</li> <li>b. Destroy guerilla resistance and underground networks</li> <li>c. Prevent any possibility of counter-revolution or civil war revival</li> <li>d. To essentially secure CCP monopoly on political power</li> </ol> <p>3. Consolidate communist party authority</p> <p>4. Restore stability after decades of war</p> <p>5. Strengthen national unity and identity</p> <p>Lay foundations for socialist transformation</p>	<p>leaders of autonomous regions, including Ulanhu of Inner Mongolia and the Panchen Lama of Tibet were branded traitors or revisionists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Many nationality autonomous areas were abolished. Culture, diet and customs of ethnic minorities were deemed backward and prohibited.</li> </ul> <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expanded territorial unity of China</li> <li>- Brought previously semi-independent regions under central control</li> <li>- Improved infrastructure and state presence in remote areas</li> </ul> <p>China sought to destroy the Tibetan and Muslim identity and flooded the area with Han settlers; monasteries/mosques were destroyed; forced into secular lives and a massive propaganda campaign was carried out to destroy their societies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 20% of the Tibetan population had been imprisoned and half of them had died in prison</li> <li>- Tibetans were banned from mentioning the Dalai Lama and many Tibetan religious practices were banned</li> </ul> <p>Famine in Tibet during the Great Leap Forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quarter of its 4 million people were wiped out</li> <li>- According to Historian Lynch, the famine in Tibet was a man-made disaster, an act of genocide to destroy Tibetan resistance. Chinese occupiers in Tibet demanded that the communal and socialist farming techniques created by Chairman Mao to be adopted in Tibet. Tibetans were forced to grow wheat and maize even though they were not suited to the local soil or climate, leading to the destruction of Tibet's arable food production.</li> </ul>
<p>LAW &amp; ORDER, removal of westernization and control of religion</p>	<p>Military campaigns to eliminate remaining opposition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PLA operations to destroy:</li> <li>- Nationalist remnants (Kuomintang guerrillas)</li> <li>- Bandits and local militias</li> <li>- "Bandit suppression campaigns" in rural and frontier regions</li> </ul> <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ended large-scale civil conflict</li> <li>- Improved internal security and stability</li> <li>- Strengthened CCP control over countryside</li> </ul> <p>Campaign to Suppress Counter-Revolutionaries (1950–51)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Targeted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Former Kuomintang members</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Massive repression: Hundreds of thousands to millions persecuted/executed</p> <p>Climate of fear and suspicion</p> <p>Legal system became politicised (not independent)</p> <p>False accusations common during campaigns</p> <p>Intellectual isolation from global developments</p> <p>Loss of expertise (foreign professionals expelled)</p> <p>Suppression of academic and cultural freedom</p> <p>Over-reliance on ideology instead of innovation</p>

- Landlords, political opponents
- Mass arrests, public trials, executions

#### Three-Anti (1951) Campaigns

- Targeted waste, corruption and inefficiency
- Targets of these campaigns included managers, state officials and party members
- Involved mass meetings at which officials and managers were denounced, investigations by Party committees and the eventual humiliation of those found guilty
- Party members were forced to subject themselves to self-criticism and face group pressure to 'rectify' their errors of thought or deed

#### Five-Anti (1952) Campaigns

- Targeted:
  - Industrial sabotage, tax evasion, bribery, fraud and theft of government property
- Aim: Mao wanted to destroy the remnants of the bureaucratic capital class

#### Impact of the Five-Anti Campaigns:

- Estimated that as many as 2-3 million committed suicide rather than to face humiliation
- Thousands of businessmen were tortured

#### Thought Reform campaign, 1951-1952

- CCP launched a Thought Reform Campaign and targeted intellectuals to force them to study and adopt Mao Zedong Thought
- Professors were forced to make confessions in front

of their students, to attend study sessions and to make self-criticism

Expansion of security apparatus

- Strengthening of police, surveillance, local informants

Impact

- Restored law and order after years of war
- Eliminated opposition → political stability
- Reduced corruption (at least temporarily)
- Strengthened CCP control nationwide

Removal of Westernisation

- Anti-Western / Anti-Imperialist campaigns
  - o Propaganda against:
    - o USA, Western capitalism
    - o Korean War used to intensify anti-Western sentiment
- Cultural and intellectual control
  - o Censorship of Western books, media, ideas
  - o Education reshaped to promote socialism
- Expulsion of foreign influence
  - o Removal of:
    - Foreign businesses
    - Missionaries
  - o Closure or takeover of Western institutions

Impact

- Strengthened Chinese sovereignty and independence
- Reduced foreign economic and cultural domination
- Promoted national unity and identity
- Reinforced socialist ideology

Hundred Flowers Campaign, 1957

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Let a hundred flowers blossom, let a hundred schools of thought content”</li> <li>- Goal: widespread discussion as a precursor to the major push toward a socialist economy</li> <li>- Between May and June 1957, the central government received a deluge of letters. Students at Beijing University created a ‘Democratic Wall’ and complained of political corruption, Russian influence, low living standards, censorship of foreign literature, economic corruption, and the privileged lifestyle of party cadres and the leadership of the CCP</li> <li>- <b>Historian Philip Short</b> dismisses the idea that Mao was setting up a trap and argues that Mao underestimated the volume and bitterness of the criticisms</li> <li>- <b>Historian Chang and Halliday</b> believe that Mao cooked up this devious plan to invite his enemies to speak out so that he could use what they said as an excuse to victimize them</li> </ul> <p>Anti-Rightist Campaign, 1957</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In early July 1957, Mao called off the 10 flowers campaign and re-imposed censorship</li> <li>- “Rightists” – those who were not adequately “left” or pro-Communist in their thinking, essentially anybody who opposed Mao</li> <li>- Around half a million were branded as rightists and subjected to persecution, ranging from imprisonment, time in labour camps, public shootings etc. Many Chinese committed suicide</li> </ul>	
<p>Agrarian Reform Law (1950), “speak bitterness” sessions with the landlords.</p> <p>Improvement in working and living conditions.</p>	<p>Cooperatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In the 1<sup>st</sup> 5-year plan, peasants gained agricultural cooperatives where they pooled their land, labour, equipment and animals and received a return of the output, with 96% of all peasant</li> </ul>	<p>Counterargument:</p> <p>Working conditions worsened in cooperatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperatives forced people to work in massive farms often a great distance from their home villages</li> </ul>

	<p>households living in co-ops. The co-ops were very popular because they offered childcare, elderly care, and food which seemed like a significant improvement than having to manage the family unit while working in farms.</p> <p>Agrarian Law 1950 – elimination of landlords</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agrarian law authorized the redistribution of land in China</li> <li>- Peasants were encouraged to kill their landlords and the land was redistributed from wealthy landowners to peasants</li> </ul> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> Five-year plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peasants were mobilized for gigantic projects in water control and irrigation</li> <li>- E.g. In January 1958: 100million peasants had allegedly opened up 7.8 million hectares of land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperatives led to very long working hours and the abolition of private life</li> <li>- Mass campaigns instructed peasants to engage in dubious agricultural practices that severely decreased agricultural output. For example, the “great Sparrow Campaign”, sought to destroy rates, flies, sparrows and mosquitoes. The death of the birds caused the insect population to skyrocket which undermined agriculture severely</li> </ul> <p>Mass famine caused by the Great Leap Forward/ 2<sup>nd</sup> Five-year plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An estimated 30 million people died in the famine from 1959-62 (The bitter years), one of the largest famines in human history</li> <li>- As many higher-ups in the cooperatives lied about the grain output, the CCP took the grain based on inflated estimates. This led to a massive shortage of food in cooperatives which caused people to die en masse.</li> <li>- Real grain output declined from 200 million tons in 1958 to 160 million tons in 1960</li> <li>- Grain and foodstuffs collected by the government gathered in warehouses although China was facing food shortages – Evidence of bureaucratic mismanagement</li> <li>- Due to the food shortage, people were forced to eat tree bark, clay, grass roots or turn to cannibalism in extreme cases</li> </ul>
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## **To what extent do you agree that changes in education were the most successful social development of Mao's China?**

In the 1950s and 1960s, Mao implemented numerous social policies which helped to modernise China and increase the standard of living for all Chinese citizens. Beyond improving literacy rates and increasing the number of tertiary institutions, Mao also implemented health policies such as the Patriotic Health Movement and the training of the Barefoot Doctors. Although changes in education were generally successful in achieving social development in Mao's China, it was the complete revitalisation of China's healthcare system which serves as the most successful social development, given its tangible and widespread benefits for the entire population.

Firstly, the improvement in education standards across the entire country was a generally successful social development. In the 1950s, Mao was concerned that high illiteracy would limit the country's development. Therefore, by the mid-1950s, Mao implemented a national system of primary education. In October 1955, a national conference officially introduced "Putonghua", as the standard, common language of the PRC. This would become the language that 80% of Chinese people spoke. This helped to ease the learning process since all Mandarin speakers could now express the words they said in a standardised, recognisable form to all. This allowed students to understand the content taught in class more easily and communicate with each other without language barriers. At the same, Mao also improved access to tertiary education by increasing the number of local universities and courses available to Chinese students. Universities were also remodelled to concentrate more on technical and scientific subjects, reflecting the country's need for more trained specialists. These changes in education played a vital role in building a socialist society by expanding job opportunities for youth, thereby raising their standard of living. Education also had additional economic and political impacts, such as improving economic development by training large numbers of skilled specialists and improving political indoctrination by first increasing literacy rates. However, this improvement in education were not uniform throughout the entire country. Mao introduced "key schools" in each district, equipped with the best teachers and resources, for high-performing students in the country. However, in practice, enrolment was not selected based on merit. Instead, it was the children of high-ranking party and government officials who occupied most of the places at these schools. Therefore, this emphasises how the benefits of education were mainly concentrated around an elite group of students, rather than distributed across the entire country fairly.

Although changes in education was only partially successful social development for youths as a whole, education policies were extremely beneficial to women. Mao's tenure was the period under which female education and literacy rates saw their most dramatic increase in all of Chinese history; the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) issued official declarations that all children, male or female, were expected to receive at least five years of education, this being the first time all girls across China had the opportunity to attend school. As a result, there were mass campaigns in 1952, 1956 and 1958 to encourage women to attend evening classes in their villages. An additional 16 million women were able to read by 1958. This broadened women's options in Chinese society, giving them the opportunity to study at technical schools and become professionals. These benefits extended to the rural women in the countryside. During the "Down to the Countryside Movement", Mao sent many students, including females, to the mountain and down to the villagers to live among the peasants. This allowed these students to educate those who lacked access to education and to improve literacy rates (especially among rural women) in China. The exposure of rural women to urban youths during this period of mass temporary migration introduced new, more revolutionary ideas to women previously entrenched within more traditional, discriminatory ideals. Coupled with access to higher-quality and specialised education under Mao's other policies, these rural women could significantly improve their educational and employment outcomes, shifting them from agriculture to formal employment. This provided women with the option of upward social mobility and thus improved their financial independence. One must acknowledge that prior to Mao's educational policies in the 1950, it was extremely rare for women to receive formal education. Therefore, even though

women's education was continually disrupted by CCP propaganda campaigns and policies, women definitely benefited from higher standards of living and increased levels of education, which they would otherwise never have experienced without Mao's educational policies.

On the other hand, Mao's health policies were generally successful for social development across the entire country, helping to increase the standard of healthcare and life expectancy of Chinese citizens. Mao's Patriotic Health Movement was largely successful in providing the people with accessible healthcare. From 1949 onwards, based on their experiences in Jiangxi and Yanan, Mao introduced a series of programmes known as the "Patriotic health movements". Teams of party workers went into the countryside to explain in simple terms the connection between dirt and disease. The local populations were enlisted in major communal efforts to drain swamps and eradicate the bugs, rats, mosquitoes, and flies that carried dysentery, malaria, and other endemic diseases that had been afflicting the peasants. This movement also involved the training of many more doctors and nurses, with the specific aim of providing direct medical care in the remote parts of China. In the 1950s, large numbers of Chinese people were treated by a qualified doctor for the first time in their lives. This provided numerous social benefits to Chinese citizens. Firstly, this provided the benefit of increased job opportunities, as more working individuals were able to find a job in the healthcare industry. Simultaneously, Chinese citizens enjoyed a higher standard of living, given that the general populace, even in rural villages, could be vaccinated against life-threatening diseases. At the same time, the mortality rate for endemic diseases was significantly lower with proper treatment, lowering the fatality rate caused by health complications. It can be noted that the number of qualified doctors never reached the original targets due to politics. This is because the original good intentions of the Communists were undermined by the self-inflicted disruption caused by the Great Leap Forward, which labelled doctors as part of the bourgeoisie class that lived off the backs of peasants. Nevertheless, even with fewer practising doctors after the Great Leap Forward, Chinese citizens continued to experience the long-term effects of an improved healthcare system, emphasising how Mao's health policies were very successful for social development.

Women also benefited from these changes in health standards. The improvement in healthcare extended to the countryside, improving the lives of rural women there. For instance, the number of trained midwives increased. They were able to monitor mothers before, during, and after birth, helping to prevent and manage complications such as heavy bleeding or infections. This improved women's health in China by making pregnancy and childbirth safer. Teams of trained doctors, also known as barefoot doctors, were sent to the countryside to improve sanitation and provide greater access to contraception and midwifery services. Concurrently, birth control was also introduced, allowing women more control over family planning and more autonomy over their bodies. In 1954, the state pharmaceutical company began introducing contraceptives. With access to contraception, women could choose when and how many children to have, allowing them to avoid frequent or unplanned pregnancies. In 1963, the Birth Control Bureau launched a campaign to cut birth rates. This saw major success, with birth rates decreasing from 43 per 1000 people in 1963 to 18 per 1000 by 1978. These policies helped to prevent overpopulation, ensuring a higher standard of living for all. This reduced the strain and health risks associated with frequent births, improving women's health overall. Additionally, birth control also gave women more time and opportunities to pursue education and employment, allowing them to break out of their stereotypical confines of being the subservient housewife in the family if they choose not to have a child.

In conclusion, both education and health policies were beneficial towards the social development of Mao's China. While education policies were generally successful at improving literacy rates across the country, high quality education was reserved exclusively for the children of CCP officials, and other wealthy families. This emphasises how the benefits of education were not equitably distributed across all youths in China, thereby limiting the effectiveness of the policy. Conversely, Mao's health policies were extremely successful at improving the standard of healthcare uniformly, ensuring that rural villagers, women, and the general public could all enjoy the benefits of increased healthcare. As a result, changes in healthcare were the most successful social development in Mao's China, due to the tangible benefit of the policies applying to everyone in China, rather than a select few.

(By Jerome Ong)

**“There was significant social change under Mao Zedong up to 1961.” To what extent do you agree with this statement.**

Under the rule of Mao Zedong from the 1950s to 1960s, Mao implemented numerous social policies with the goal of improving literacy, improving healthcare, and achieving socialism in the Chinese context. “Significant social change” will be measured by the extent of the impact of the specific social policy on the people under Mao’s rule. Mao imposed numerous healthcare, educational, and women policies aimed to improve the quality of life, such as the Patriotic health movement, Marriage Law of 1950 etc. Although educational and women policies were only mildly successful, Mao’s healthcare policies were arguably his most significant and successful policies because it significantly reduced the spread of disease and massively increased the average lifespan of a Chinese person.

Firstly, Mao’s healthcare policies led to significant social change because it massively improved public health through disease prevention and the availability of medical care. Prior to Mao’s rule, China had high disease rates and a low life expectancy of around 35-40 years of age. Mao introduced Patriotic Health Campaigns (1952) to improve sanitation and hygiene, as argued by historian Shao Zifei. Teams of party workers were sent to the countryside to educate the peasants about the connection between dirt and disease. Local populations were enlisted in great communal efforts to drain swamps, and eradicate pests that carried dysentery, malaria and other endemic diseases. There was centralized healthcare under state direction, with an emphasis on preventative care (e.g. vaccination and sanitation). There was also an expansion into rural healthcare, with the establishment of rural clinics and cooperative medical schemes, a gradual shifting away from urban-only healthcare. The impact of this policy was incredibly successful: significant reduction in infectious diseases, increase in life expectancy from 36 years to 57 years by 1957, improved public hygiene awareness. This argument is supported by historian Xiaoming Li who contends that Mao’s socialist health policies were major successes as millions of peasants gained access to basic healthcare which reduced rural-urban inequality and improved life expectancy over time.

A counterargument is that healthcare policies actually had a limited long-term impact due to the small scale of implementation and lack of prioritization by the CCP. Medical facilities were basic and underfunded, with a shortage of trained doctors. As a result, quality of care was often low. Many doctors had limited medical expertise and could not handle complex conditions, reinforcing a two-tier system of basic rural healthcare versus more advanced urban care only available in cities. This is supported by historian Mark Selden who contends that early socialist development prioritized urban industrial centres over the countryside. The political situation also diminished the effectiveness of healthcare. During the anti-movements, doctors were condemned as living off the backs of workers who never learned the dignity of labour. To survive purging, doctors had to subordinate medical considerations to political considerations. For example, there were surgeons who cancelled operations to show their solidarity with the workers by sweeping floors and cleaning toilets. Additionally, most of the benefits brought about by Mao’s earlier healthcare policies were negated by the Great Leap Forward. The Great Leap Forward saw the life expectancy of Chinese people reduce to 33 years by 1961.

In evaluation, healthcare reform was still largely significant because the significant reduction in disease spread marked remarkable progress of the national healthcare system. Although the life expectancy fell massively during the Great Leap Forward, the education about disease spread benefitted the rural population long after the Great Leap Forward ended. Additionally, while rural healthcare was not as medically advanced or proficient as urban healthcare, the fact that peasants even managed to receive

some form of medical care displayed significant change as most peasants had never seen a doctor before the CCP came into power. Mao's creation of rural healthcare slowly began to bridge the rural and urban healthcare divide, providing critical medical care in the countryside which saved massive amounts of Chinese people.

Secondly, Mao's educational policies had a significant impact because it greatly reduced the illiteracy rate and made education more accessible in rural areas, bridging the rural-urban divide. There was an expansion of mass education and literacy camps, with "work study schools" implemented in rural areas. The number of primary school students increased from 26 million in 1949 to 64 million in 1954. In 1956, Chinese characters were simplified and romanised into pinyin so that language could be standardized, this helped increase literacy because the written language was easier to learn. The increase in literacy created a more educated working class, and social mobility increased as people could get better qualifications even if they were from poorer rural backgrounds. There was an increase in tertiary institutions, with 200 universities in 1949 increasing to 1289 by 1961. In the early 1950s, a soviet style education system was also adopted, with a n emphasis on science, engineering, and technical training. This system helped produce more skilled technicians and engineers. It also supported industrialization under the first Five Year Plan.

However, a counterargument was that educational policies impact was limited because the quality of education in rural areas remained low. Work study schools were left to the party cadres who often lacked elementary education, hence teenage teachers were recruited instead. In the top key schools, although selection was supposed to be based on merit, usually the children of high-ranking party and government officials occupied most of the places at these schools. Education was also becoming increasingly politicised. The fear of being labelled a "counter-revolutionary" discouraged debate and suppressed political dissent. Content taught in schools revolved around CCP propaganda, with integration of Maoist ideology into all level of education, suppressing critical thinking and free thought. Mao was also anti-intellectual, because he did not want intellectuals to question the flaws and hypocrisies in his policies.

To evaluate, Mao's educational policies were partially significant. It is undeniable that Mao's educational policies were transformative prior to the Cultural Revolution, with a massive increase in literacy rate from 20% to 50% which created a more educated workforce. Rural education also made education opportunities accessible to peasants, bridging the rural-urban divide. However, Mao's policies are only partially significant because the focus on basic literacy meant limited higher level intellectual development, resulting in higher education access remaining "elite". Due to the politicisation of education, even lower-level education became less effective due to the focus on CCP propaganda and the suppression of intellectual freedom. Despite the flaws in education, Mao's educational policies still remain significant because of its enormous impact on literacy rates which created the foundation for educational development in the future past Mao's rule.

Thirdly, Mao's social policies on women were significant because he gave them more legal rights and integrated women into the workforce. With the Marriage Law of 1950, arranged or child marriages were abolished. Divorce was made much easier, granting women the agency to leave abusive relationships. Orthodox historian Kay Ann Johnson argues that the law was a "radical legal attack on patriarchy". Women were also integrated into the workforce, with women working in communes, factories and offices. The 1954 constitution also declared women equal in politics, work, education and family law. Campaigns against feudal practices targeted traditional oppressive practices like foot binding and female infanticide (especially in rural areas). As a result, women gained more agency in marriage, more political rights, and more women

were integrated into the socialist state structure. Due to Agrarian land reform in 1950 and after the killing of landlords, women were even allocated land in their own name.

However, a counterargument is that Mao's policies were insignificant due to rural resistance and existing patriarchal beliefs. Many women in rural areas faced family backlash, with reports of violence against women seeking divorce in traditional areas. Women who wanted to divorce faces opposition from husbands, mother in laws and cadres, often cut off from any family support after divorce. Village leaders were also hesitant to enforce such radical policies due to fear of being cut off by other villages. Some traditional practices like foot binding persisted informally in rural areas, and enforcement was inconsistent as it depended on local enforcement. Therefore, revisionist historian Susan Mann contends that women gained legal rights, but family and kinship pressure still constrained real choice. In reality, most women were subjected to a double burden, where they now were responsible for working and family rearing. In the workforce, women were low-paid and only assigned low-skilled jobs. Equality in work was only theoretical, not real. Revisionist historian Jonathen Spence argues that it represented formal equality, but enforcement was weak outside urban centres. Moreover, due to collectivization, most women who owned land or property relinquished it during the Great Leap Forward.

In evaluation, Mao's policies were insignificant because of the difficulty in implementation. While Mao's policies have women legal rights in voting and marriage for example, actual implementation was limited due to the patriarchal structures especially in rural areas. While this is not a direct failure of the policy itself, the policies still only aided some women, typically women who lived in urban areas. Despite the failure in actual implementation, Mao's policies towards gender equality undeniably altered the legal rights of women for the better, marking a shift in societal norms towards greater female rights.

In conclusion, Mao's social policies were partially significant. His healthcare policies were undeniably significant, transforming the accessibility of medical care through disease education and rural expansion. However, his other social policies like his policies towards women and education lacked significance as they did not alter the existing status quo of the Chinese people, lacking long term visible impacts either due to failures in implementation or due to the political landscape of China.

(By Christy Su)