Introduction

- How did the Chinese Communist Party rally millions of farmers to win in 1949?
- The critical stage was to initiate a land reform via class struggle, empowering farmers to violently grab land from landlords, but whether the ownership permanently went to farmers depended on the war outcome.
- Using death records of 5,661,662 communist soldiers, I find that for counties within 82 kilometers of KMT forces, land redistribution to farmers accounted for the CCP’s soldier casualties following the land reform. However, in counties that are farther than 82 kilometers from KMT forces, land transfer to farmers discouraged farmers from fighting, resulting in fewer soldier deaths.

Land Reform 1946-1949

Data

- Death Number of Communist Soldiers
  - The military efforts made by soldiers from a county in a month.
- Land Ownership and Land Redistribution
  - I adopt pre-reform Gini coefficient in land ownership as the proxy of land gain by farmers in the land reform.
- Distance to KMT forces
  - The distance is to measure the possibility of reprisal from homecoming legions organized by landlords and the KMT forces.

Specification

\[ \text{lnSoldier Death}_{c,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Land} \times \text{Gini}_c \times \beta_2 \text{dis} \times \text{KMT}_{c,t} + \beta_3 \text{Land} \times \text{Gini}_c \times \text{dis} \times \text{KMT}_{c,t} + \delta \text{lnSoldier Death}_{c,t-1} + \Gamma \text{X}_c \times \eta_t + \text{Prov}_t \times \theta_t + \zeta_c + \eta_t + \epsilon_{c,t} \]  

(1)

Where Soldier Death_{c,t} refers to the number of CCP’s soldiers who were from county c and died in month t.

L_{c,t} is a dummy variable equal to 1 following the start of the land reform in county c. Gini_{c}, is the prior-reform Gini coefficient in land ownership in county c. dis _{KMT}_{c,t} denotes the shortest distance between county c and KMT military bases in month t.

Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLES</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ln(Soldier Death,c,t)</td>
<td>0.140***</td>
<td>0.120***</td>
<td>0.175***</td>
<td>0.111***</td>
<td>0.152***</td>
<td>0.101***</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L × Gini</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L × dis KMT</td>
<td>-0.775***</td>
<td>-0.620***</td>
<td>-0.888***</td>
<td>-0.542***</td>
<td>-0.816***</td>
<td>-0.582***</td>
<td>-0.451</td>
<td>-0.433</td>
<td>-0.433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L × Gini × dis KMT</td>
<td>-5.762***</td>
<td>-3.800***</td>
<td>-5.440***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ln(Soldier Death,c,t-1)</td>
<td>0.105***</td>
<td>0.094***</td>
<td>0.079***</td>
<td>0.105***</td>
<td>0.094***</td>
<td>0.079***</td>
<td>0.105***</td>
<td>0.094***</td>
<td>0.079***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dis KMT</td>
<td>-0.607***</td>
<td>-0.615***</td>
<td>-0.789***</td>
<td>-0.736***</td>
<td>-0.772***</td>
<td>-0.772***</td>
<td>-1.003***</td>
<td>-1.003***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mechanism

1. For farmers from County 1, to transfer more land from landlords to farmers will encourage farmers to fight.
2. For farmers from County 2, to transfer more land from landlords to farmers will discourage farmers to fight.

Reference