

Mao's consolidation of power between 1949 and 1953 essay sample

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Mao used terror and repression constantly in the years from 1949 to 1953, however there were also other methods which he used to consolidate his power, and it is hard to decide whether both methods were equally successful or whether one of them was vital to the survival of the communist party with Mao as its dictator.

Mao used terror and repression most notably to eliminate political threats to his power. The best examples of this are the purges of the CCP, including those of Gao Gang and Rao Shushi, who supported him but appeared slightly too ambitious, and the Suppression of Counter Revolutionaries campaign. Mao imprisoned Rao, who died in prison 20 years later, and caused Gao to commit suicide to avoid further humiliation; these two methods definitely count as fear and repression. The suppression of counter revolutionaries involved 28, 332 executions. These two examples scared the Chinese population into following communism blindly and repressed anyone with political ideas different to Maos, and is a perfect example of Mao using terror and repression to consolidate his power and control the population.

Mao often used repression more than terror, for example in the three and five antis campaigns, which he arguably used as an excuse to punish people to demonstrate his power. Those found guilty of any of the antis were only subjected to labour camps, fines or confiscation of property, but many people committed suicide rather than facing the humiliation an estimated 2-3 million people. This reaction just illustrates how effective repression was in China; Mao did not always have to rely on execution or other physical punishments to control his people.

Mao had many means of threatening people to prevent them from challenging him. Labour camps or lao-gais acted as an excellent deterrent and had been proven in several other dictatorships such as Stalins and Hitlers. People sent there often died or committed suicide before they went. Another common feature of dictatorships that Mao too decided to use was the method of encouraging neighbors and friends to spy on each other and report any suspicious activity or talk to the government. This prevented any people gathering together to plan an uprising and also ensured that Mao controlled even peoples personal lives. For this reason it was one of the best methods of power consolidation.

Mao wanted the whole nation to fear him enough to refrain from challenging him or his form of government, relying on the executions of people to not only literally eliminate the threat they posed, but also to terrorise the rest of the population into submission. He did this through public executions. Jung Chang wrote Mao intended most of the population children and adults alike to witness violence and killing. His aim was to scare and brutalise the entire population In this way he managed to indoctrinate young people and also instill fear and respect in the adult population. It is a perfect example of how he used terror and repression to consolidate his power.

Some historians disagree with Chung and Halliday. There is also some evidence to support this alternative point of view. Mao knew that a good way to consolidate his power would be to win the support of the people. He did this by numerous reforms, such as those in education and land, installed at the right pace, and these improved the conditions for many people in China

which helped gain support for the communists. Although this is one of the only examples of Mao trying to gain support to consolidate power rather than ruling by fear, it was very important that people saw an improvement in China.

I personally agree that Maos consolidation of power between 1949 and 1953 was entirely dependent on terror and repression. Although the reforms put in place by Mao were important, these reforms alone would not be sufficient to consolidate Maos power, but if Mao had solely used terror and repression he would have been able to consolidate his power anyway. The reforms simply made it a little easier as he did have a bit of support from peasants as well as just having them follow him through fear.

Bibliography : Wild Swans, Jung Chang
Mao: the Unknown Story by Jung Chang and John Halliday
[www. wikipedia. com](http://www.wikipedia.com)