

“Who Lost China?” Land Reform and War Mobilization

Peiyuan Li

University of Colorado Boulder

pe1610@colorado.edu

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.

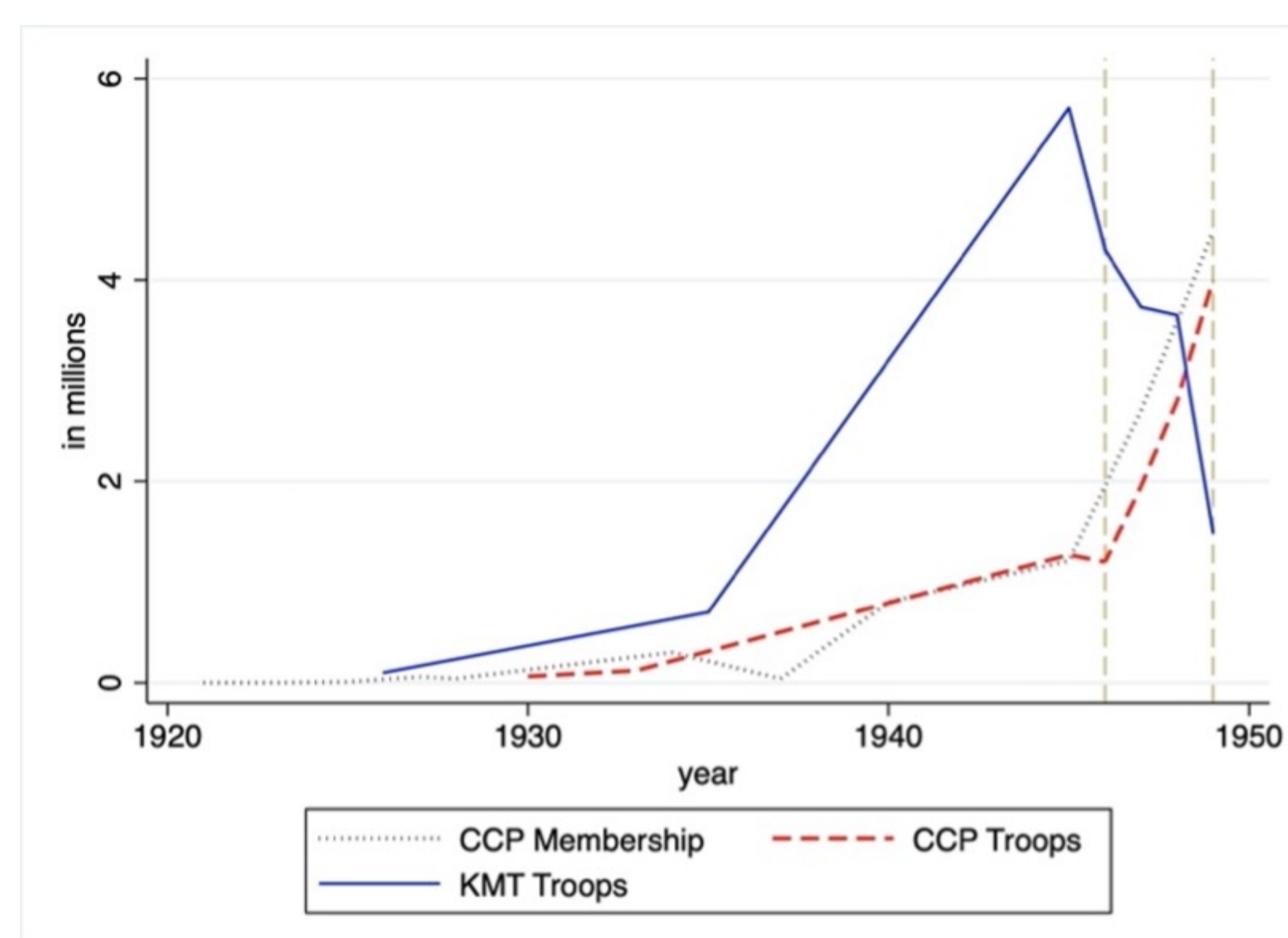


Figure 1: Number of Nationalists (KMT) military troops, the CCP military troops, and overall CCP membership

Land Reform 1946-1949

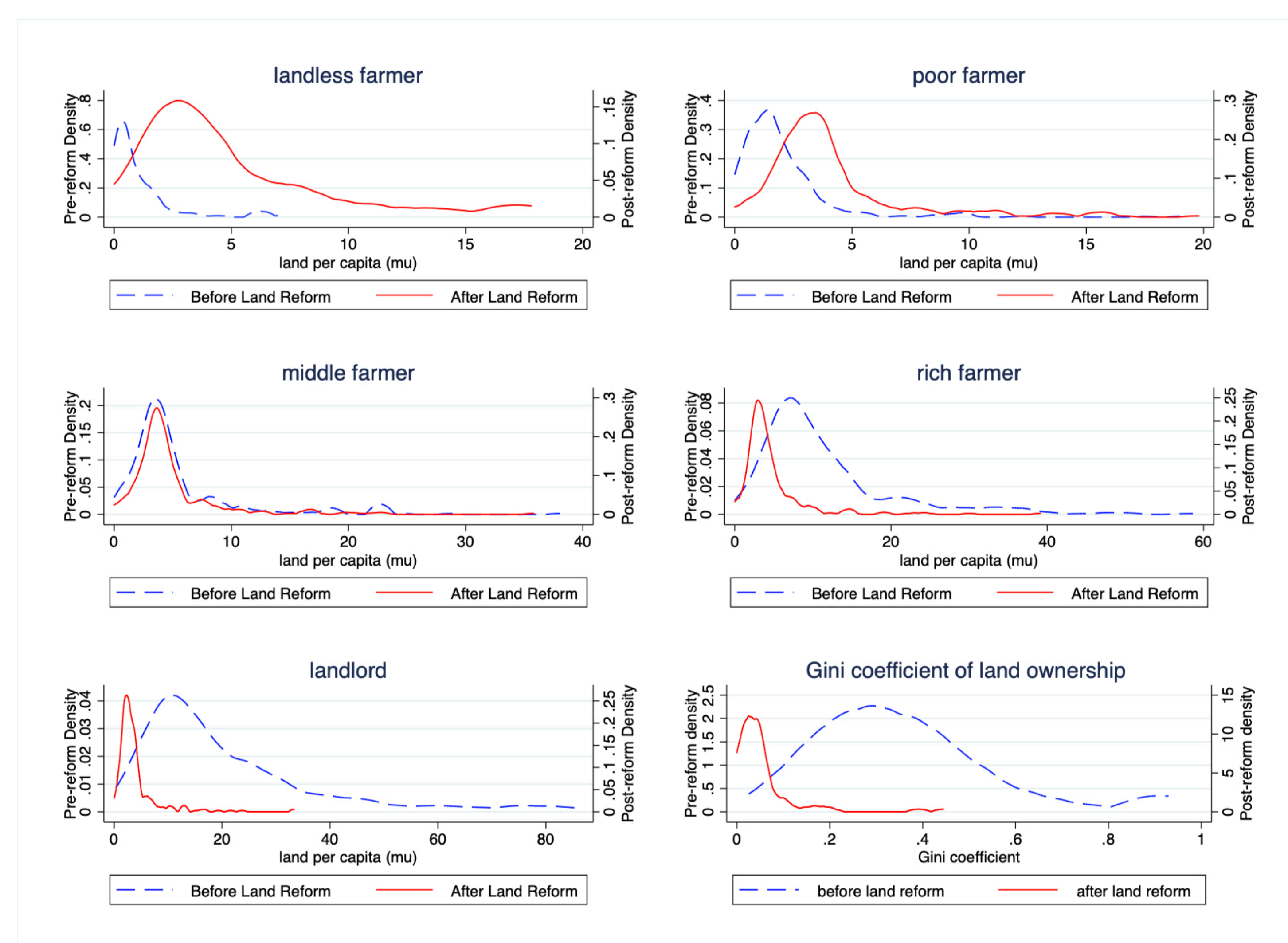


Figure 2: Land ownership before and after land reform

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

$$\ln \text{Soldier Death}_{ct} = \alpha L_{ct} + \beta_1 L_{ct} \times \text{Gini}_c + \beta_2 L_{ct} \times \text{dis_KMT}_{ct} + \beta_3 L_{ct} \times \text{Gini}_c \times \text{dis_KMT}_{ct} + \delta \ln \text{Soldier Death}_{c,t-1} + \Gamma X_c \times \eta_t + \text{Prov}_p \times \eta_t + \zeta_c + \eta_t + \epsilon_{ct} \quad (1)$$

Where $\text{Soldier Death}_{ct}$ refers to the number of CCP’s soldiers who were from county c and died in month t .

L_{ct} 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_{ct} denotes the shortest distance between county c and KMT military bases in month t .

Result

Table 1: Main results

VARIABLES	$\ln(\text{Soldier Death}_{ct} + 1)$								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
L	0.140*** (0.049)	0.120*** (0.043)	0.165*** (0.035)	0.111*** (0.029)	0.175*** (0.048)	0.133*** (0.043)	-0.058 (0.068)	0.003 (0.0572)	-0.080 (0.058)
$L \times \text{Gini}$	-0.102 (0.097)	-0.164* (0.088)			-0.051 (0.117)	-0.085 (0.094)	0.559*** (0.169)	0.249* (0.136)	0.284** (0.142)
$L \times \text{dis_KMT}$			-0.755*** (0.249)	-0.626*** (0.175)	-0.686** (0.293)	-0.543*** (0.188)	2.078*** (0.610)	1.034** (0.453)	1.898*** (0.493)
$L \times \text{Gini} \times \text{dis_KMT}$							-5.745*** (1.110)	-3.266*** (0.873)	-3.445*** (0.901)
$\ln(\text{Soldier Death}_{c,t-1} + 1)$		0.193*** (0.012)		0.194*** (0.012)		0.192*** (0.012)		0.190*** (0.012)	0.170*** (0.012)
dis_KMT			-0.695*** (0.178)	-0.305* (0.173)	-0.706*** (0.176)	-0.328* (0.174)	-0.922*** (0.166)	-0.571*** (0.183)	-1.103*** (0.338)
County FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Month FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Controls \times Month FE	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Prov FE \times Month FE	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Observations	19,829	18,257	19,940	18,365	19,829	18,257	19,829	18,257	18,257
R-squared	0.170	0.289	0.174	0.289	0.173	0.289	0.176	0.290	0.346
Number of counties	624	591	627	594	624	591	624	591	591

Mechanism

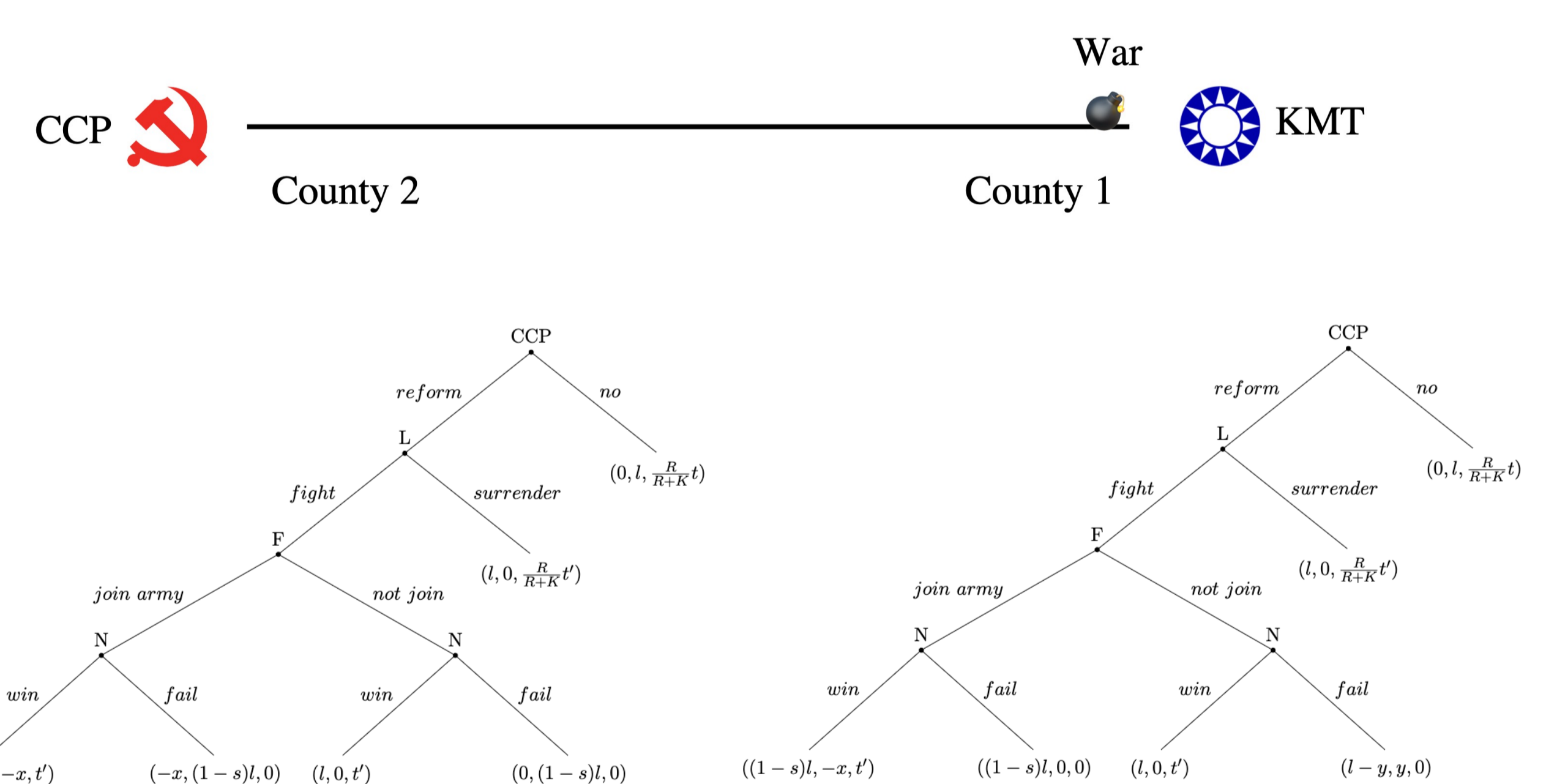


Figure 3: Model, County 1 and County 2

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

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