

*The Life Span of Unified Regimes in China**

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Abstract

This paper identifies and analyses a pattern found in recorded historical periods in China. The length of national unity is negatively correlated with that of previous national disorder, and this correlation is statistically highly significant. In other words, the longer the preceding disorder, the shorter a unified regime would last. This paper suggests two possible common causes. First, the rulers of these unified regimes faced the daunting task of neutralizing powerful centrifugal forces as well as providing services for the war-stricken population. Second, these new rulers tended to be deluded by their own historical achievement of unifying a long-divided nation and so exerted either too much or too little effort in building the regime. The paper also analyses the specific causes for the fall of each short-lived unified regime. This paper intends to invite reexamination of and a debate about China's political history.

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