

## Reasons for CCP victory during the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949)

### Cool quotes:

- According to **Westad**, the outcome of the Chinese Civil War was in no way predetermined in 1945
- According to **Lynch**, the CCP had, in effect, won the Civil War by the time the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War had ended
- According to **Dreyer**, the two explanations of Nationalism and Communism are not mutually exclusive, as it is possible that some people responded primarily to the CCP's anti-Japanese message, others to its economic program, and others to both
- The CCP's resultant victory was due to a multitude of factors, namely the **impact of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War**, the CCP's **superiority in political leadership**, **military strategies** and finally **socio-economic policies** that garnered the CCP popular support
- In contrast, the GMD, despite being the legitimate government had a poor military strategy, inept political leadership and had alienated popular support through its social policies, thus resulting in its eventual defeat
- It was ultimately a culmination of these factors that allowed the CCP to emerge victorious

Basis of comparison	Guomindang (GMD)	Chinese Communist Party (CCP)
Foreign (Impact of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War)	<p><b>Impact on the GMD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Japan's invasion and occupation of China from 1931-45 greatly debilitated the GMD's military forces and provided reprieve and time for the CCP to build up and equip its Red Army for war</b></li> <li>• <b>Hsu</b>: Although the Nationalist army emerged from the Japanese war better equipped and trained than ever before, it was a tired and weary force</li> <li>• Had <b>borne the brunt of Japanese attacks</b> during the early stages of the war</li> <li>• Resulted in more than 3 million casualties</li> <li>• In contrast, the CCP incurred only light losses as it fought a guerrilla war</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructural devastation, chronic deficit spending and massive war debts weakened the GMD war effort and alienated the Chinese who blamed the government for economic mismanagement</li> <li>• War weariness from the Sino-Japanese war proved to be a significant reason for the lack of morale and motivation of GMD troops during the civil war, which resulted in widespread desertion and defection to the CCP</li> </ul> <p><b>Nationalism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jiang's persistent desire to eliminate Communism also distracted him from the Japanese threat; considered the Japanese a "disease of the skin" while the Communist a "disease of the heart"</li> <li>• Following the Mukden incident in 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria and set up a puppet state</li> <li>• The invasion of Manchuria was allowed to happen as Jiang did not take concrete steps to ensure the territorial integrity of China</li> <li>• <b>Jiang adopted a policy of passive resistance</b> in trading space for time and viewed the Communists as a greater threat than the Japanese up until</li> </ul>	<p><b>Impact on the CCP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign encroachment served as a distraction to ease GMD pressure off the CCP, which allowed them to grow their military and support base</li> <li>• <b>Prevented GMD from continuing Encirclement campaigns, which would have likely destroyed the CCP</b> since the GMD was already making inroads into Yanan</li> <li>• The war enabled the CCP to vastly <b>expand its military forces through mobilizing the rural population without disruption by the GMD</b>; Red Army grew to a million strong</li> <li>• Was a crucial testing ground for Mao's guerrilla warfare tactics, which would later be key to CCP victory during the civil war</li> </ul> <p><b>Nationalism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparatively, the <b>CCP's portrayal of fervent nationalistic resistance against the Japanese enabled it to gain credibility in the eyes of the Chinese</b></li> <li>• In December 1935, Mao called for a "national united front" with the GMD regardless of political faction to oppose Japanese imperialism, playing on Chinese nationalism to rally support for his cause</li> <li>• Mao was able to gain crucial support through the use of <b>propaganda</b>; <b>accused Jiang as being a puppet of Western imperialists</b> and for appearing to be sitting back and waiting for the USA to fight the war for him</li> <li>• Used his guerrilla assaults on the Japanese to portray the CCP as the true nationalist force defending China, despite doing less fighting than the GMD</li> <li>• <b>Johnson</b>: Peasant support for the CCP was not due to class reasons but due to nationalistic reasons in the context of the Japanese invasion</li> </ul>

	<p>1937, which made him appear to be persecuting political opponents for partisan objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was too preoccupied with the struggle against internal enemies and putative opponents to resist the Japanese seriously</li> <li>• Served to accelerate the disintegration of the GMD's support base and drive many GMD supporters into the arms of the CCP, who were seen as reformers and the true nationalists in China</li> </ul> <p><b>Limitations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, the GMD still possessed numerous advantages following the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War</li> <li>• Regained control of nearly all important cities and communication centres in Central, East and South China, while the CCP retreated to the countryside</li> <li>• The GMD had military superiority over the CCP, outnumbering them 5:1</li> <li>• CCP troops could in no way match the GMD's elite forces in terms of training and equipment</li> <li>• Retained the ability to fund its war campaign through taxes and conscript men</li> <li>• Hence, according to <b>Westad</b>, the outcome of the Chinese Civil War was in no way predetermined in 1945</li> <li>• Other factors were crucial to CCP victory</li> </ul>	
Political	<p><b>Weak GMD Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jiang and the GMD were characterized by corruption, inefficiency and repression, which weakened it tactically and alienated many of its supporters</li> <li>• Jiang tolerated corruption in the GMD administration as long as the loyalty of his commanders were secured</li> <li>• Promotion and advancement in the GMD army depended not on their ability but on loyalty and connections</li> <li>• This meant that weak and corrupt leaders filled key army positions, which would affect the caliber of its military policies.</li> <li>• Squandered much of the aid provided by the USA to the GMD during the civil war, which could have been invested in military arms and greatly improved the GMD's chances of winning; amounted to \$3.8 billion invested in China</li> <li>• Jiang's obsessive need to accumulate power, and his intolerance of criticism and potential opposition also led to numerous political blunders</li> <li>• For example, he constantly made great efforts to exclude more capable GMD generals like Li Zhongren from the government, whom he viewed as a threat to his power</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mao's Leadership of the CCP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversely, CCP leader Mao Zedong's political leadership was far more conducive for a strong and united fighting force</li> <li>• Mao has become the undisputed leader of the CCP by 1945; had dominated key positions in the party and his ideology was accepted as dogma</li> <li>• Was an inspirational leader and had brilliant organizing ability; won the loyalty of a large part of the population who were deeply committed to the war effort</li> <li>• Mao was highly receptive to opinions and delegated roles to subordinates</li> <li>• Ensured an extremely cohesive leadership of the CCP through the appointment of extraordinary leaders such as Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, Liu Shaoqi and Zhu De, who played important administrative and military roles</li> <li>• This, along with his willingness to use purges such as the Yanan rectification campaign in 1942, which removed all potential opposition and uncooperative members, allowed Mao to preserve the unity of purpose and command within the CCP</li> <li>• Facilitated communications and top-level debates over tactics; ensured all decisions within the CCP were well thought-out and deliberated among the</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Another instance was through his interference in the capable GMD General Bai Chongxi's affairs, despite his victory over Lin Biao's forces in 1946</li> <li>• Resulted in the GMD making serious tactical mistakes during the civil war</li> </ul>	<p>leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were more competent tactically</li> </ul> <p><b>The CCP's ideological appeal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CCP advocated a profound restructuring of society in accordance with Marxist-Leninist principles</li> <li>• Aimed to create a classless society and socialist economy through the elimination of the bourgeois classes</li> <li>• In particular, Mao "Sinified" Marxism-Leninism by changing the urban revolution to one with a rural focus</li> <li>• Mao's ideology and pro-peasant policies including moderate land reform and rent reduction during the Yen-an years won the hearts of many Chinese</li> <li>• In face of GMD brutality and indifference to their plight during the Nanjing Decade and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War</li> <li>• CCP membership grew from 40,000 in 1937 to 1 million in 1945, and 4 million in 1949</li> <li>• It was from this expanding membership that the volunteers for the Red Army came</li> <li>• Vital to the CCP's victory as these members would form the bulk of the PLA to defeat Jiang</li> </ul>
Military	<p><b>Tactics and strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jiang was unable to exploit his numerical advantage and assistance by the USA to win the war, while his poor military tactics and strategies left them prone to CCP attack</li> <li>• Going against US advice, Jiang committed his best troops to fight in Manchuria without first securing complete control over northern and central China, out of which he lost nearly 250,000</li> <li>• Tended to focus on urban areas that could easily be cut off due to long communication lines; was exploited by the CCP's guerrilla tactics</li> <li>• Dedicated a disproportionate amount of troops and resources for insignificant objectives like capturing the CCP base in Yen-an; lost 400,000</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality of army</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The GMD army was mainly a conscript army in which ordinary soldiers had little incentive to fight</li> <li>• Lack of unified army – GMD army was a coalition of armies, as Chiang had incorporated the warlord armies in the 1920s-30s; resulted in factional struggles which undermined Jiang's trust in them</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tactics and strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CCP's superiority in military strategy and tactics proved to be decisive in determining the outcome of the civil war</li> <li>• Mao's use of guerrilla warfare proved highly effective against the Japanese during WWII and was equally successful against the numerically superior GMD forces in Manchuria</li> <li>• Was geographically suitable for guerrilla warfare due to its hilly terrain and large forested areas</li> <li>• Using "wear and tear" military tactics, the CCP took advantage of their numerical weakness and was able to gradually pick off GMD units</li> <li>• The CCP's strategic move to conventional warfare at the last stages of the war was the knockout blow to the GMD; proposed by military genius Lin Biao</li> <li>• Eg. Huai Hai Campaign from 1948-49</li> <li>• <b>Westad:</b> The Communists won the Civil War because they made fewer military mistakes than Jiang</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality of army</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CCP army was of a better quality overall despite their numerical weakness</li> <li>• Enjoyed greater morale having suffered less during WWII</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivated through Mao's use of effective propaganda and indoctrination</li> <li>Furthermore, while Jiang prohibited surrender, resulting in massive defections to the CCP, Mao adopt a lenient and welcoming treatment of these defectors, taking them into the Red Army and thus granting the CCP army invaluable numbers</li> <li>Allowed the CCP to overcome its numerical disadvantage through greater commitment</li> </ul>
Socio-economic	<p><b>Economic mismanagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fiscal irresponsibility and corruption destroyed the savings and livelihood of people, while the lack of rural reforms alienated peasants and drove them to the CCP</li> <li>Was the single most powerful reason for the GMD's downfall according to <b>Lynch</b></li> <li>Jiang's main focus was on eradicating communism and sorely neglected economic development</li> <li>Loss of tax revenue during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War led to the reckless printing of money</li> <li>Coupled with failed currency reforms led to massive hyperinflation</li> <li>Wiped out many businesses and caused great poverty for hundreds of millions</li> <li>Resulted in the disintegration of GMD support from many of the middle class and business elites, who were driven to the CCP</li> <li>Failed to carry out its declared policies of land reform and equitable rents as part of Sun's principle of "People's Livelihood"</li> <li>In GMD-controlled areas there were high taxes, forced labour and hoarding of grain, while in CCP-controlled areas peasants enjoyed moderated land reforms and rent reduction</li> <li>Overwhelming neglect for badly needed social and economic reforms resulted in disillusionment with the GMD</li> </ul>	<p><b>Effective land reform policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CCP were able to portray themselves as humanitarian with genuine care for the peasants and rural Chinese through land confiscation and redistributions during the civil war</li> <li>Agrarian Law in 1947 encouraged peasant participation in land reform movements; sharpened revolutionary nationalism in favour of the CCP</li> <li>Moderate land reforms, rent reduction and the promotion of cooperatives since the Yen'an years translated into popular endorsement</li> </ul> <p><b>Treatment of people</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While the GMD was heavily exploitative and imposed heavy taxes, forced requisitions and conscription, the CCP's Three Rules and 8 points of conduct ensured that military did not mistreat peasants</li> <li>While the GMD failed to promote real democracy, as many realized that the People's Political Council was a sham, peasants were given the right to vote by the CCP, and the adoption of Three-thirds system for all representative body gave appearance of supporting popular democracy</li> <li>Managed to earn the long-term support in the countryside even since the days of the Long March and Yen'an soviet</li> <li>Gained the CCP valuable support and manpower, adding to its party and military base and helping the CCP to emerge victorious</li> </ul>

### Conclusion

- Claim that Nationalists had lost the fight before war had begun, or by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War is misleadingly straightforward, as it had the numerical and strategic upper hand over the CCP
- Phillip Short's analysis that the 'Nationalists lost due to poor leadership, morale, intelligence and corrupt bureaucracy' provides a more holistic view of why the GMD lost (however the timely impact of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War cannot be neglected)
- Thus, it was the culmination of the war, as well as Communist superiority in leadership, military capability and strategy, and socio-economic policies that caused the Communists to win the Civil War