

## Mao's Rise to Power

Basis of comparison	Argument	Limitations
Personality	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> Mao's perceptive and shrewd personality enabled him to gain support within the CCP and from the masses, and was integral to the development of the CCP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mao's shrewd and opportunistic nature was apparent in his use of the 1935 Zunyi Conference during the Long March to deliver a blistering attack on the erroneous military leadership of the 28 Bolsheviks</li> <li>• Discredited them by according them the responsibility for the CCP's defeat during Jiang's 5<sup>th</sup> encirclement campaign</li> <li>• <b>Immanuel Hsu:</b> Was a giant step in his quest for supreme power by enabling him to emerge as the undisputed leader of the CCP</li> <li>• Was able to gain supporters like Zhou Enlai and Zhu De who would be vital to his rise to power</li> <li>• Was and adaptable and perceptive visionary and ideologue, which was fundamental to the development of communism in China</li> <li>• Adapted Marxism-Leninism to suit China's socio-economic landscape in defiance of the Comintern, changing its emphasis on urban revolution to one with a rural focus</li> <li>• This, together with his moderate land reforms in Jiangxi and Yenan, won widespread support from the peasants who would comprise the CCP's core group of supporters</li> <li>• This greatly strengthened the CCP's position in China and raised Mao's political clout</li> <li>• Following the failed Autumn Harvest Uprising of 1927, Mao recognized the importance of developing a professional army trained in guerrilla tactics</li> <li>• Encompassed by his dictum "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun"</li> <li>• Mao's strategy of a "People's War" using guerrilla tactics was vital in ensuring the survival of the CCP during Jiang's first 4 encirclement campaigns from 1930-33</li> <li>• Was a major factor for the defeat of the GMD during the Chinese Civil War, which cemented Mao's position of power</li> </ul>	<p><b>Circumstances</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, personal appeal and ability alone would not have sufficed to bring him to power without the right opportunities for him to gain support, which were provided by the failings of the GMD</li> </ul> <p><b>Use of Force</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, although Mao's personal appeal and ability enabled him to emerge as the paramount leader of the CCP, it would not have sufficed to gain him control over China without his victory during the Chinese Civil War</li> </ul>

Ideology	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> Mao and the CCP promoted a form of Marxism-Leninism adapted to suit the socio-economic landscape of China, which won him tremendous support from the peasantry.</p> <p><u>Maoism</u></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>• Marxism-Leninism was deeply appealing to many rural Chinese because of its egalitarian values and radical solutions to the problems China faced</li> <li>• Eg. The agrarian crisis</li> <li>• In addition, Mao 'sinified' Marxism-Leninism by changing its emphasis on urban revolution to one with a rural focus, mobilizing the peasants to construct communism in China</li> <li>• Mao won them over with his moderate land reform campaigns during the Jiangxi Soviet and the Yen'an decade, redistributing land from rich and oppressive landlords to poor farmers</li> <li>• Attracted a core group of supporters to the CCP with more than 80% of them being peasants; would form the bulk of the PLA to defeat Jiang</li> <li>• "Primacy of Mao thought" where Mao was seen as always right</li> <li>• Gave him the justification to eliminate potential challenges to his power such as during the 1942 Yen'an Rectification Campaign without much intraparty resistance</li> </ul> <p><u>Nationalism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CCP espoused nationalism and were in favour of protecting China's territorial integrity against foreign incursion</li> <li>• Notably the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931</li> <li>• In December 1935, Mao called for a "national united front" of the Chinese people to oppose Japanese imperialism, playing on Chinese nationalism to rally support for their cause</li> <li>• Following its victory during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War, the CCP rather than the GMD were seen by many as the true nationalists in China, which gained it significant support</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> <li>• Especially supported the national struggle against the Japanese invaders, where Mao's Communists were able to present themselves as the true defenders of China in contrast to the GMD</li> </ul>	<p><b>Use of Force</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While ideology might have gained Mao and the CCP overwhelming support and influenced the peasants to swell the ranks of the PLA, it fails to explain how the Communists were victorious against the larger, better equipped Nationalist force</li> <li>• The answer must be found in Mao's use of guerrilla warfare to successfully wrest control of China from the GMD</li> </ul> <p><b>Existing regime</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, the failure of the GMD in alleviating the plight of the peasants and engaging the Japanese threat was what caused a surge in popular support for the CCP's ideology</li> </ul>
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Role of the Party	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> The CCP allowed Mao to utilize the skills and abilities of his party members to aid him in his rise to power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mao was able to gain the support of figures like Zhou Enlai and Peng Dehuai during the 1935 Zunyi Conference</li> <li>• Used their organization abilities and military genius in order to further the communist cause in China, especially during the Chinese Civil War</li> <li>• The adoption of guerrilla tactics and organization of the PLA was achieved under Zhu De, which was vital to the CCP's campaign during the first stage of the civil war</li> <li>• Lin Biao was responsible for successfully transforming the PLA into a conventional army in 1947, which led the CCP to deliver a knockout blow to the GMD in a series of decisive victories eg. The 1948-49 Huai Hai campaign</li> <li>• Additionally, the party also assisted in winning over peasants for Mao through the use of propaganda</li> <li>• Thus, the party was vital in providing Mao with the support for him to rise to power</li> </ul>	<p><b>Personality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, it was Mao's shrewd, pragmatic and perceptive nature that won him the respect and loyalty of many CCP leaders</li> </ul> <p><b>Ideology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, Mao was responsible for providing the ideological backbone of the party through the development of Maoism</li> <li>• Mao's ideology gave the CCP direction and bonded its members together</li> </ul> <p><b>Use of Force</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of force via the 1930 Futian Incident and 1942 Yen'an Rectification Campaign ensured unity and adherence to Mao's ideology and authority within the CCP</li> </ul>
Propaganda	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> Mao and the CCP relied heavily on propaganda to gain support from the rural peasants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CCP managed to turn the Long March, a 6,000 mile historic trek in a retreat from Jiang's forces from 1934-35, into a major propaganda victory</li> <li>• Although a military defeat with 90% of CCP members eliminated, Mao manipulated the mythic significance of the Long March to turn the communists into heroes</li> <li>• Used events like the Luding Bridge incident to emphasize the bravery of the CCP</li> <li>• The heroism attributed to the Long March inspired many young Chinese to join the CCP during the late 1930s and early 1940s</li> <li>• Would eventually form the PLA to fight against the GMD during the Chinese Civil War</li> <li>• Used the Long March to discredit the GMD and raise its own prestige</li> <li>• Managed to present what had begun as a military defeat as an epic journey to fight their way to their base in Yen'an to engage the Japanese threat</li> <li>• Assume the role of the true nationalists in China and allowed it to gain tremendous support</li> </ul>	<p><b>Use of Force</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While propaganda might have gained Mao and the CCP overwhelming support and influenced many to swell the ranks of the PLA, it fails to explain how the Communists were victorious against the larger, better equipped Nationalist force</li> <li>• The answer must be found in Mao's use of guerrilla warfare to successfully wrest control of China from the GMD</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>	
Existing regime	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> Mao and the CCP capitalized on the discontent of the Chinese population with the GMD in order to promote their ideology and practical policies for China, winning over tremendous support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the Nanjing Decade from 1928-37, the GMD failed to develop China's economy substantially, which remained riddled with widespread corruption</li> <li>• Jiang's policies were crafted mostly to the benefit of the urban business class</li> <li>• Sorely neglected the rural peasantry, which comprised 85% of the population and faced acute poverty</li> <li>• Disillusioned with Jiang's failure to alleviate their plight, many peasants turned towards the CCP and their promise of land reform as a part of the Maoist ideology</li> <li>• Moreover, in face of Japanese incursion into Manchuria in 1931, Jiang's policy of passive resistance in trading space for time had led to the disintegration of the GMD's support base</li> <li>• This was made worse by Jiang's continued pursuit of the CCP in Jiangxi, appearing to be persecuting political opponents for partisan objectives</li> <li>• Such failures had only served to drive many GMD supporters into the arms of the CCP, who were seen as reformers and the true nationalists in China</li> <li>• According to <b>Johnson</b>, the growth of peasant nationalism was the most important reason for the CCP's victory during the civil war and Mao's rise to power</li> <li>• They would eventually form the bulk of the PLA to defeat Jiang's forces</li> </ul>	<p><b>Personality/Opposition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• However, the weaknesses of the GMD would have benefited the CCP as a whole and not just Mao</li> <li>• Mao's ability to emerge as party leader and consequently national leader in 1949 must thus be examined by considering his personality/the weaknesses of his opposition</li> </ul> <p><b>Ideology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mao's ideology of egalitarianism and rural revolution was what attracted the peasants to the CCP in light of the GMD's weaknesses</li> </ul> <p><b>Use of Force</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite the weaknesses of the GMD, Jiang was still able to extend his rule over a sizeable portion of China during the 1930s</li> <li>• Without the CCP's victory over the GMD during the Chinese Civil War in 1949, Mao would have remained a mere party leader rather than a leader of a single-party state</li> </ul>
Circumstances	<p><u>Economic distress</u> The GMD's failure to resolve China's chronic economic problems, particularly the agrarian crisis, allowed Mao's communist ideology to gain traction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• China had been predominantly rural since the imperial Manchu dynasty</li> <li>• The peasants, who comprised 85% of the population, bore the brunt of poor harvests, landlordism, natural disasters and war, while livings standards remained abysmal</li> <li>• When the GMD government came to power in 1928, it did little to alleviate the plight of the peasants, failing to carry through its declared policies of</li> </ul>	

	<p>land reform and equitable rents as part of Sun Yixian's principle of "People's Livelihood"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rather, Jiang's policies favored the urban business class, who made up his main support base and had little sympathy for the peasants</li> <li>• This served as a stark contrast to the CCP's moderate land reform policies in Jiangxi and Yen'an, which included land redistribution and rent control as part of the Maoist ideology</li> <li>• Allowed the CCP to gain mass appeal and support</li> <li>• <b>Jonathan Webb:</b> The key reason why the GMD lost the civil war was their disastrous economic policies</li> <li>• Failed to stem chronic corruption, speculation and plundering of factory stocks</li> <li>• Unemployment reached 30% in 1946; overprinting of money after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War led to hyperinflation</li> <li>• Destroyed the savings of the millions of Chinese especially the middle and urban business classes, their main group of supporters</li> <li>• Hastened the disintegration of his support base</li> </ul> <p><u>2<sup>nd</sup> Sino-Japanese War</u></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>• Prevented GMD from continuing Encirclement campaigns, which would have likely destroyed the CCP since the GMD was already making inroads into Yen'an</li> <li>• Formation of a 2<sup>nd</sup> United Front with the GMD gave the CCP a period of respite; allowed it to vastly expand its military forces through mobilizing the rural population</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> <li>• Left the GMD army exhausted from fighting, as it had borne the brunt of Japanese attacks during the early stages of the war and suffered heavily losses</li> <li>• In addition, Jiang's policy of passive resistance in trading space for time deeply unpopular with the Chinese, appearing to be sitting back and waiting for the USA to win the war for China</li> <li>• The CCP was able to capitalize on this to portray themselves as the true nationalists defending China from their base in Yen'an</li> </ul>	
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Opposition	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> The weaknesses/lack of united opposition to Mao reduced the threat to his rise to power.</p> <p><u>Lack of united opposition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mao faced opposition from a variety of sectors outside the CCP</li> <li>• However, there was a lack of coordination among them to oppose Mao and degrade his power</li> <li>• During the warlord period, China was fractious and warlords ruled large swathes of territory independently of any central government</li> <li>• Hence, Jiang's Nationalist government was unable to control China in its entirety</li> <li>• <b>Jack Gray:</b> In 1930, Jiang directly controlled only 8% of the land and 25% of China's population, with the remainder under the warlords</li> <li>• Taking advantage of the tenuous relationship between Jiang and the warlords, Mao was able to persuade warlord Zhang Xueliang to kidnap Jiang during the 1936 Xian incident</li> <li>• Resulted in the formation of a 2<sup>nd</sup> United Front between the GMD and CCP to resist the Japanese</li> <li>• Through this alliance, Mao was able to safeguard the existence of the CCP by preventing Jiang from continuing his encirclement campaigns</li> <li>• Would have likely destroyed the CCP since the GMD was already making inroads into Yanan</li> </ul> <p><u>Weaknesses of opposition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mao was able to turn the weaknesses of his opposition within the CCP to his advantage</li> <li>• Within the CCP, Mao's greatest threat came from the 28 Bolsheviks and Zhang Guotao</li> <li>• During the early 1930s, Mao's position was being eroded and marginalized by the 28 Bolsheviks, who were educated in Moscow and were used by Comintern to impose Stalin's will on the CCP</li> <li>• Mao was able to use the 1935 Zunyi Conference during the Long March to deliver a blistering attack on the erroneous military leadership of the 28 Bolsheviks</li> <li>• Discredited them by according them the responsibility for the CCP's defeat during Jiang's 5<sup>th</sup> encirclement campaign</li> <li>• Had abandoned Mao's successful guerrilla tactics that had enabled the CCP to survive the first 4 encirclement campaigns, in favour of a positional warfare strategy</li> <li>• During the Long March, Mao's authority was challenged by Zhang</li> </ul>	<p><b>Use of Force</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While Mao was able to turn his opposition to his advantage and gain support and legitimacy, he would not have risen to national prominence if not for his victory over the GMD during the Chinese Civil War</li> <li>• Eliminated the largest source of opposition to his rise to power</li> </ul> <p><b>Weaknesses of opposition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The failure of opposition to present a united challenge to Mao's rise to power was not so much due to their disunity but rather because of their individual weaknesses</li> </ul>
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	<p>Guotao, a strong rival to Mao with an army 4 times larger than his</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thought he was the rightful leader of the CCP; challenged Mao's decision to head towards Shaanxi and diverted westwards instead</li> <li>• Was confronted by a GMD general; forced to re-join Mao's forces</li> <li>• Shattered his credibility and ability to oppose Mao</li> </ul>	
Use of Force	<p><b>Topic Sentence</b> According to <b>Robert Whitfield</b>, the Communist victory in 1949 and Mao's rise to power was primarily a military victory, and thus the use of force through the PLA was crucial.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was done through his focus on guerrilla warfare</li> <li>• Proved to be an effective tactic as Jiang was unable to exterminate the CCP during the encirclement campaigns of the 1930s</li> <li>• Ensured the survival of the CCP and Mao as a contender for power in China</li> <li>• What enabled Mao to eventually rise to power and defeat Jiang was his success during the Chinese Civil War where the PLA triumphed over the GMD through a combination of guerrilla and conventional warfare tactics, despite being numerically inferior</li> <li>• The GMD lost its hold on power over China and retreated to Taiwan in 1949, enabling the CCP to establish the People's Republic of China with Mao as preeminent leader</li> <li>• Without having won the civil war, Mao would have remained a mere party leader rather than a leader of a single-party state</li> </ul> <p><u>Internal opposition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mao also used force to eliminate threats to his rise to power within the CCP</li> <li>• During the 1930 Futian incident, local Jiangxi communists loyal to the Comintern were opposed to Mao's pro-peasant policies of moderate land reform, which deviated from Marxist ideology</li> <li>• Mao used the claim that an anti-Bolshevik league had infiltrated the communists to carry out a purge of 4,400 where half were executed</li> <li>• A similar purge was conducted during the 1942 Yen'an Rectification Campaign, which saw the killing of 10,000 individuals and the removal of the 28 Bolsheviks and Zhang Guotao from their posts</li> <li>• Created an atmosphere of terror and repression; held regular "self-criticism" sessions to ensure conformity to Mao Zedong Thought</li> <li>• Thus, force enabled Mao to remove his ideological opponents and strike fear into the hearts of the remainder</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ideology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mao's ideology was the main glue that bonded the PLA to the party and gave the CCP direction during the Chinese Civil War</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chang and Halliday:</b> Argued that what bounded the peasants together was not ideology but terror</li> <li>• Claimed that the Communists' violence traumatized millions into submission and forced them to support the war</li> </ul>	
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**Most critical factor:**

1. Use of Force
2. Ideology

**Time frame:** 1921 – 1949 (Became Chairman of the PRC following his victory over Jiang Jieshi during the Chinese Civil War)

**Terms:**

1. "Personal appeal" – Qualities that allowed Mao to attract support and be a popular choice for a leader
2. "Personal ability" – Skills or actions that Mao possessed that he used to gain more power, eg. opportunism and ruthlessness
3. "Ideology" – Set of ideas and beliefs based on which a country is governed in, which Mao used to gain support
4. "Conditions of the state" – Structural problems inherent within the existing government that enabled Mao to capitalize on to attract support and seize power
5. "Circumstance" – Fortuitous events that aided Mao's rise to power
6. "Economic crisis" – State of turmoil and suffering brought about by economic collapse
7. "Force" – Use of violence through military and paramilitary organizations to combat and suppress opponents
8. "Rise to power" – Mao's rise to power would refer to his efforts and the circumstances that led to him outmaneuvering his opposition to emerge as Chairman of the PRC in 1949

Personality intro

Much of the great man historical theory as suggested by Thomas Carlyle would have suggested that the rise of dictators like Mao was more due to their personal appeal and ability.

Circumstances intro

The rise to power of many leaders of single-party states in the 20<sup>th</sup> century would have been impossible without the unique circumstances and conditions within their respective nations. Mao was no exception.