

Emergence of Authoritarian States - Mao's China (Conditions)

General Information

- Timeframe: 1921 to 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) won the Chinese Civil War (CCW).

Impact of War

Topic Sentence

Impact of Second Sino-Japanese War was important as it significantly shifted the balance of military power between the CCP and GMD, while providing economic instability that harmed the GMD image

Second Sino-Japanese War

- Impact on GMD army
 - o Chinese troops experienced over 3 million in casualties
 - o The brunt of these losses were borne by GMD, who engaged the Japanese heavily in the early stages of war, unlike the CCP, which was fighting a guerilla warfare, incurring only light losses
- Impact on public opinion
 - o Public lost a lot of respect for GMD in later stages of war
 - GMD policy of “trading land for time” made it seem as if they were waiting for US
 - o Hyperinflation caused by GMD greater alienated the middle class
- Economic impact
 - o Deficit spending increased
 - Rising military expenditures
 - Loss of customs revenues from coastal provinces that were occupied by Japanese
 - Japanese largely occupied urban areas, which made up GMD support base, resulting in loss in revenue for GMD
 - o Jiang printed more money which led to inflation which greatly impacted the middle classes and led to the GMD losing their support.
- Advantages for CCP
 - o Hsu suggested that the Communists viewed the United Front as a means of pursuing expansion unimpeded by Nationalists
 - o Mao statement that their fixed policy was “70 percent expansion, 20 percent dealing with the GMD, and 10 percent resisting Japan”
 - o Growth in Military Forces
 - Dec 1936 - April 1945 Red Army went from 30,000 to 900,000 men
 - o Growth in Territory
 - March 1945 - Communists had liberated 678 out of 914 rural towns from Japanese
 - Implemented Communist policy of land reforms, village schools, reduction of taxes and abolishing debt.
 - Avoided inflation by trading in goods rather than money

Limitations of War

- Hsu suggests nationalists still held a significant military advantage
 - Signed a treaty of friendship with Stalin, received American aid and support
 - Nationalists still held a significant numerical advantage over communists
 - Nationalist minister of war claimed it was 11 million to 1 million
 - Corroborated by how GMD troops were trained by German forces in 1920s, and had more advanced equipment

Japanese Surrender

- Communist troops were able to seize supplies and surrender from Japanese troops
 - Communists expanded their territory from 116 to 175 counties
- Received Soviet Aid in taking control of much of Manchuria, including Japanese arms in the region

Limitations of Surrender

- Washington ordered Tokyo to surrender only to GMD troops
- American troops helped Nationalists retake almost all important cities in Central, East and South China
- Communists were forced into countryside in North China

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While the impact of war was significant in growing the CCP's territory and military forces, the GMD still held a decisive advantage in terms of their military and diplomatic position. The most significant impact of the war was not material, but rather morale, as the fatigue from the war greatly weakened the better equipped and trained Nationalist Army

Social Divisions

Topic Sentence

There was a significant socioeconomic inequalities in both rural and urban areas of China from as early as the 1900s. These inequalities created the conditions necessary for mass support for the CCP among the lower class.

Rural Poverty

- 85% of population were peasants in the 1930s
 - Peasants were extremely poor
 - Particularly vulnerable to natural disasters; floods and drought
 - Farming techniques were unproductive
- In the second half of 19th century, China population grew by 8%, but land cultivated only grew by 1%
- Landlords increased rents, with some peasants having to pay 80% of their harvest

Impact of Rural Poverty

- Peasants felt as if they were being oppressed by landlords and ignored by government
- Hsu suggests that GMD mainly relied on customs dues and city commercial taxes, and thus saw no reason to resolve rural poverty
- Ultimately led to mass support for CCP from peasants
 - Increase to 1 million members by 1945
 - Claims from Mao that peasants came out to welcome them during Long March

Limitations of Rural Poverty

- Peasant dissatisfaction with GMD was largely due to economic reasons rather than ideological ones
 - Principle of People's Livelihood - regulation of capital and equalisation of land
 - Was not implemented
 - Farm rent reduction to 37.5% of harvest also not implemented
 - It was the CCP's use of these pain points that garnered peasant support

Urban Poverty

- China's urban population remained small in 1930s, making up only 4.5% of the population living in towns of over 100,000 inhabitants
- China's industrial sector comprised less than 10% of GDP
- Huge polarisation in wealth between employers and workers
- Poverty and poor conditions of urban workers

Limitations of Urban Poverty

- Despite large urban social divisions, CCP largely lacked urban support
- Few urban workers supported CCP after failure of urban revolts in 1920s
 - Guangzhou Uprising
- Urban workers remained largely apolitical

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Thus, while social divides created the backdrop necessary for the CCP to gain support from peasants who felt as if they were marginalised, these divisions were ultimately a product of the GMD's economic mismanagement. Peasants were more concerned with the material benefits they achieved from land redistribution, rather than overturning social divides

Economic Factors

Topic Sentence

The economic weakness within the GMD was ultimately the key reason for their loss in the Civil War

Neglect of Economic reforms

- GMD did little to alleviate rural poverty since its inception in 1928
 - o Principle of People's Livelihood - regulation of capital and equalisation of land
 - Was not implemented
 - o Farmland rent reduction also not implemented

Economic collapse

- Deficit spending
 - o 1928-1935: Government tax receipts made up only 80% of spending
 - o Largely subsisted off deficit spending
 - Racked up huge foreign loans
- Post-war economy was sorely mismanaged
 - o GMD printed too much currency
 - Rampant hyperinflation - price index rose 135,000 times
 - Loss of support from urban class - GMD main supporter base
 - o Attempts to rectify inflation with new currency fell short
 - August 1948 - GMD tried to replace now-worthless fabi with Gold Yuan
 - o China's monetary system collapsed by 1949

Impact of Neglect of Economic Reforms

- Mao's moderate economic policies played off the GMD's marginalisation of peasants
 - Focus on rent reduction and land reform
 - Connects with Sun Yat Sen's People's Livelihood
 - Won them popular support

Impact of Economic Collapse

- Jonathan Webb argues that GMD were not defeated but rather "disintegrated" due to their disastrous economic policy
 - GMD-issued fabi was used mainly in urban cities
 - The collapse of the currency resulted in the crumbling of the GMD support base

Limitations of Economic Mismanagement

- Was largely exacerbated by Sino-Japanese War
 - 50% of all industries in Shanghai were destroyed
 - 75% of revenue was spent on military
- Largely due to GMD unwillingness to implement socioeconomic reform
 - Autonomy of warlords meant that unified action was difficult
 - GMD mainly supported by bourgeois class that opposed land redistribution
 - Westad argues that the GMD policies – administrative and fiscal – exploited all classes of citizens for its own purposes
 - Led to the breakdown of trust between Jiang's regime and those he used to represent.

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Hence, although economic weakness created an environment of dissent against the GMD, it was ultimately the rampant corruption of the GMD government that allowed these economic problems to fester.

Furthermore, the CCP failed to control urban-based student and worker uprisings well, meaning economic collapse did not factor into CCP victory.

Weakness of Political System

Topic Sentence

The weakness of the GMD played a major role in Mao's China, yet it was Mao's careful capitalisation on their weaknesses that ultimately allowed him to rise to power

Political Instability in China

- China was defined by the increasing lack of unity in the country by the 1920s
 - 1911 revolution resulted in an ideological emancipation that provided the environment for many disparate political and social theories to spread
 - Death of Yuan Shikai in 1916 meant China lost the only possible unifying figure
- Warlordism (1916-1918)
 - Broke up into small states and provinces, each controlled by a warlord and his private army
- Chaotic environment was fertile ground for emergence of a wide range of political parties and groups

Weakness and Corruption in GMD Government

- GMD was largely unpopular with peasantry
 - Absorbed warlords into party after Northern Expedition
 - Warlords had little concern for welfare of masses and suffering of peasants
 - KMT generals
 - Had landed interest, and would lose capital with land reforms
 - Main support base
 - Middle class
 - Benefitted off current social order
 - Pushback at attempts for reform
- Corruption
 - Officials took over previously Japanese-occupied areas for personal profit
 - Monopolised profitable commodities and enterprises
 - Auctioned relief materials for personal gain
 - Converted Japanese puppet currency to fabi at 200:1 ratio
 - Decimated cash reserves of citizens
 - Alienated an already doubtful population
- Rampant cronyism
 - Progression in Nationalist Army was based on personal connection
 - Capable leaders like Li Zongren sidelined in favour of people with connections to Jiang, like Yan Xishan
- Forceful repression of free speech
 - GMD killed high-profile scholars like Li Gongpu and Wen Yiduo for speaking up against them
- Poor military strategy
 - Made Manchuria the key focus during CCW, stationing his elite, German trained army there
 - Manchuria was surrounded by CCP territory, resulting in heavy losses in his part

Lack of Political Progress

- Sun Yixian originally prescribed a Political Tutelage Period of six years, after which a constitutional government would replace the GMD
 - Constitution was drafted in 1936
 - Political Consultative Conference held in Jan 1946
- Renovationist faction of GMD was unwilling to give up power
 - Elections for National Assembly were held in 1946, but condemned as farcical
 - GMD was regarded as too power-hungry and corrupt to be able to introduce constitutional government

Limitations of Political System

- Hsu suggested that the Nationalist neglect for economic and social reforms was not due to an inherent ineffectiveness of the govt, but rather a combination of the war and the CCP
- Similar situation for the corruption and progress

- Nationalists cited concerns such as foreign invasion and domestic insurrections as reasons to prolong their rulership

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The weaknesses of the GMD served to exacerbate economic factors and alienate the peasant class, which enabled Mao to capitalise on this weakness by presenting himself as a sympathetic reformer.