

Model Essay 1

This essay uses one piece of evidence/evaluation from the “essay statements” – it is important to get students to understand that you can’t write everything. They need to select what evidence is most sufficient to answer the question.

Introduction

Whilst the international situation through the actions of the USA and the USSR from 1937 to 1949 were important issues in determining the outcome of the Civil War there were other factors. The strengths of the CCP in terms of its leadership were also very important. It will be argued that Nationalist weaknesses were the most important factor in explaining the CCP’s victory. Their poor military strategy and lack of control over China’s precarious economy, and pervasive party corruption, ensured that they lost the support of the Chinese people.

Paragraph 1

POINT International intervention in China between 1937 and 1949, by both the USSR and USA, can explain the Communist victory in the Civil War.

EVIDENCE/EXPLANATION The USA’s role as the GMD’s major ally had also been very fraught. By far the largest foreign influence on the situation was the aid given by America. After the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbour in 1941, the US saw Chiang’s Nationalists as a key ally to help defeat the Japanese. However, the relationship between the GMD and the USA became extremely dysfunctional; due to the opposing characters of Stilwell, the American commander in China, and Chiang. This lack agreement over strategy, such as Stilwell’s “Burma strategy” of 1944 eroded the difficult relationship between the two powers. Stilwell referring to Chiang as “the peanut” and believed the GMD were corrupt and incompetent. He failed to understand the enormous problems Chiang faced in persecuting the war. After Chiang insisted on Stilwell’s replacement, Stilwell briefed the press who wrote damning articles about the GMD in the US. As a result during the Civil War, although the US were deeply involved e.g. the air lift carried out by US forces to move 110,000 GMD soldiers to Manchuria, the US were reluctant to completely underwrite the GMD and Congress blocked funding.

LINK Therefore, the international context was important in allowing the CCP victory as it provided crucial military backing for the CCP and failed to provide enough support for the GMD, which thus allowed the balance of power to tilt towards the former.

Paragraph 2

POINT The strengths the CCP showed in its handling of military campaigns against the GMD, and its ability to win over the ‘hearts and minds’ of the Chinese people, was a reason for the CCP’s successes.

EVIDENCE/EXPLANATION The Communists' shrewd military tactics and strategy were crucial in their victory. The use of guerrilla warfare in the face of sustained Nationalist attacks in 1946 – 47 was vital to the survival of the CCP and ensured that the Nationalists failed to capitalise on any advantages they may have had. The Communists were able to exhaust their opponents before employing ambush techniques and eventually wiping them out. The Nationalists captured Yun 'an in 1947 but the CCP had retreated already, and the Nationalists achieved little strategic gain for their resources. Such an approach severely weakened the Nationalist forces and provided a platform for the CCP's transition from attrition tactics to ones of open military confrontation in 1948, culminating in an eventual Communist victory such as the Battle of Huai-Huai in central China.

LINK Therefore, it was the CCP's strengths that allowed them to win the Civil War as they were able to overcome the considerable advantages that the GMD had, as well as the hostility of the USA and the indifference of the USSR, to comprehensively defeat the Nationalists.

Paragraph 3

POINT The weaknesses and mistakes of the GMD explains the victory of the CCP in the Civil war.

EVIDENCE/EXPLANATION The GMD's record in government lost it the support of many Chinese people. During this time China had been devastated by war and the huge losses of both manpower and industry. Hence, when the Civil War commenced, there was a genuine lack of confidence in their ability to deliver results, particularly among the urban population and the peasants who had felt the full effects of China's social and economic collapse. To fund the war Chiang had printed money, leading to hyperinflation, which destroyed the savings of the middle classes. He had conscripted peasants into the army to make up for manpower losses. Contrary to Mao, whose leadership hadn't been tested and who was therefore able to promise radical reform within China, Chiang had already lost the support of his people.

LINK Therefore, it was the collapse of the Nationalists in 1948 – 49 that explains the victory of the CCP. The inability to resist the CCP due was caused by the exhaustion of war and Chiang's inability to revive his party, which meant that the CCP won by default.

CONCLUSION

The international situation is certainly an important aspect that explains the victory of the CCP. The US support for the GMD was not total, which contributed to the GMD's collapse in 1948/9. The USSR intervened at crucial moments, especially in 1945 – 46. However, the fact that both the USSR and the USA supported the Nationalists, expecting their victory, would indicate that their contribution was limited given that the CCP won. The CCP's strengths as a party who had the support of the peasantry and a disciplined leadership compares favourably with the GMD. However, the CCP were

still largely unknown as a political force in China in 1949. They only controlled the north of China, and the Nationalists were expected to win the Civil War given that they had been the dominant force since 1927. Therefore it would be best to argue that it was the weaknesses of the GMD that explains the victory of the CCP. They won by default due to the collapse in support for the Nationalists amongst the Chinese people who were prepared to accept anything else, rather than because of their enthusiasm for Communism.

Evaluation paragraphs

For your more able students you can challenge them to make their essay into an argument by having a short paragraph challenging the importance of a particular factor. This makes it easier to present a view that one factor is more important than the others. Here are two suggestions for paragraphs that can be added to the model essay.

Paragraph 1

The role of the international powers in the CCP's victory in 1949 can be exaggerated. Both the USSR and the USA had multiple concerns, particularly with the events in Europe after 1945 and the beginnings of the Cold War and dealing with the political and economic challenges posed by the end of World War II. The USSR gave the Communists very little aid for instance, and Chiang distrusted the Americans: especially after his experience with Stilwell in 1944. This would suggest that the key to understanding the CCP lies within China rather than with the wider international context.

Paragraph 2

The role of the CCP in its own victory can be exaggerated given that for most of the period up until 1949 its influence was largely restricted to the northern part of China, largely in rural areas. CCP propaganda was very effective in attracting intellectuals such as Ding Ling to join the party by appealing to their idealism, but many Chinese had little knowledge of the CCP. US journalists had been impressed thanks to propaganda trips such as Wedemeyer's Dixie Mission in 1944, but this has often led western historians to exaggerate the popularity of the CCP in the late 1940s. As the Warlord period had shown, such local powers could exist independently for a considerable period of time without being able to mount control over the whole of China.

