

CHAPTER 3: The Nanjing Decade (1927-37)

Past IB questions:

1. "The Nationalists failed to attend to China's urgent problems". Examine the nature of these problems between 1926 and 1937. To what extent do you agree that these failures led to the eventual downfall of the Nationalists?
2. To what extent was "warlordism" in China defeated by Jiang Jieshi in the period 1926 to 1937
3. To what extent did Jiang Jieshi's government address the problems facing China in the period between 1927 and 1937?
4. Assess the successes and failures of the GMD rule in China between 1928 and 1937.
5. "Jiang Jieshi's rule in China between 1927 and 1937 betrayed the GMD ideals". To what extent do you agree with this statement?
6. "Given the problems it faced between 1928 and 1937 the Nationalist Government of China achieved a great deal." How far do you agree with this assessment?
7. "Jiang Jieshi was a cruel leader who did little to address the needs of the Chinese people." With reference to the period 1927 to 1937, to what extent do you agree with this statement?
8. "Jiang Jieshi's rule between 1927 and 1937 unified and modernized China." Discuss.

China's urgent problems (brief overview)

1. Japanese aggression
 - a. 1931 Manchurian Incident → When the Kwantung army bombed the railway in 1931 and Japan seized Manchuria and set up Manchukuo
 - b. "Japan is a disease of the skin, communism is a disease of the heart" → Jiang was more focused internal issues before external resistance
2. Warlordism
 - a. The Plains War (1929-30) showed how fragile unity was
 - b. Warlordism was never fully abolished because reunification was largely achieved through negotiations with warlords who were incorporated into the new Nationalist regime while still retaining significant power and influence in their own territories
3. Factionalism within the GMD itself
 - a. Wang Jingwei opposed Jiang after the Shanghai Massacre of 1927
 - b. The army consisted of 4 groups: Jiang's Whampoa clique, Feng Yuxiang's Guominjun, Yan Xishan's Shanxi Clique, Li Zongren's New Guangxi clique
4. Economic weakness and financial instability
 - a. Warlords refused to pay taxes to the central government
 - b. Poor infrastructure hindered national integration
 - c. The Great Depression reduced exports and increased foreign imports
5. Social issues
 - a. Widespread rural poverty with 90-95% of the population being rural peasants
 - b. Government seen as corrupt and immoral

Sun's "Three stages of Revolution" (Sun's political aims)

1. First stage: Military unification which was carried out by the Northern Expedition
2. Second stage: "Political tutelage" which was a provisional government led by the GMD to educate the people about their political and civil rights
 - a. Definition of "Political tutelage":
3. Third stage: Constitutional government
 - a. Definition of constitutional government: government with set of principles that balances and limits power of government to prevent the abuse of authority

Evaluate the impact of Jiang Jieshi's rule over China up to 1937.

Theme	Point + historiography	Counter + historiography
<p>Development of democratic institutions with political stability (Political)</p>	<p>Point: Jiang Jieshi's rule up to 1937 was a success because he brought political stability through a united national government.</p> <p>Evidence: Jiang created a strong and unified nation which could pass laws unilaterally under the one-party system of the GMD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced political fragmentation by eliminating rival parties such as the CCP. - Jiang used the Blueshirts(fascist faction of GMD) to forcefully suppress opposition to protect his position and ensured the GMD stayed in power - In the Plains War from 1929 to 1930, Jiang was victorious against the warlords from various provinces. This extended Jiang's direct rule from 4 to 11 provinces by 1937. The increase in the number of provinces under the GMD allows them to impose their laws upon most of the China united under their control. - The Northern Expedition had united North and Northeast China under the GMD, which resulted in unparalleled national unity up to this point. After the Northern Expedition, Jiang successfully negotiated with the remaining warlords for their recognition of central government in Nanjing. (Hsu, p.652) <p>Result: This allowed Jiang to reduce political fragmentation, establishing a united and authoritative government. This allowed the GMD to govern over a larger part of China more effectively</p> <p>Significance: This marked the first sustained attempt since the 1911 Xinhua revolution to unify China under a single government, allowing China to function as a coherent nation and recover from the mistakes of the Qing. Therefore Jiang Jieshi's rule over China up to 1937 was successful due to unifying most of China after the warlord era.</p> <p>Historiography:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historian Eastman argues that by 1936, there was "a new sense of optimism and national unity" that suffused throughout China. 	<p>Point: Jiang Jieshi's rule up to 1937 had limited impact due to the limited control of regions in China, hence lacking unity amongst regions which led to separatism sentiments and rebels, contributing to an ineffective government and unstable country.</p> <p>Evidence: The Republic of China in reality had limited control over the periphery, with many provinces acting almost independent and under cliques, governed by warlords.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Such examples include the very independent-minded Shanxi and Yunnan cliques, led by Yan Xishan and Long Yun respectively. - GMD only had control of the eastern provinces. Although Jiang cooperated with the remaining warlords, he was unable to assert GMD control over the whole nation. Each warlord had armies, drained national sources, and governed their own territories. - Jiang had given warlords appointments which legitimised their regions' semi-independence in exchange for their recognition of Nanjing; in actuality they lacked a "sense of national commitment" and would not surrender their regional power bases - In August 1928 they also refused to cooperate with Nanjing on reducing the number of troops in the country - In March 1929, the warlords refused to cooperate when the GMD pushed for the reorganisation and centralisation of troops into one national army and the centralisation of regional financial administration. - Result: Warlords still retained a significant amount of power, causing political unity in China to be highly limited <p>Evidence: there was a lack of democratic processes, contradicting "father of the republic" Sun Yat Sen's promises of democracy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were no national elections or other forms of representative institutions introduced, resulting in all political participation being limited to the GMD elite, excluding the peasants, workers and intellectuals. - Use of Blue Shirts Society to enforce Jiang's rule: Blue Shirts Society was a highly effective and feared security organisation, by mid 1930s has 1800 agents. They operated outside the law, free to arrest and hold suspects indefinitely without having to bring charges against them. - They operated under the banner of fascism (open admiration of Mussolini), used violence (eg by ripping up "dangerous" journals and pouring acid on people dressed immodestly during New Life Movement) → goes against democratic ideals by

		<p>enforcing authoritarian rule via use of force and terror</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corruption was rampant among GMD officials, furthering betraying democratic ideals, preventing certain political goals from being met, and weakening the GMD government's credibility. Even though GMD supposed to be against drugs in theory, the Green Gang (gang led by drug lords) paid vast bribes to GMD to ensure their monopoly on the drug trade → funnelled share of profits to GMD, keep govt functioning. - Significance: This went against Sun's promise of transitioning into a constitutional government and upholding democratic ideals, bringing much discontent to the ordinary citizens who supported the GMD because of Sun's ideology. <p>Evidence: Internal factionalism within the GMD distracted and disabled the GMD from the central task of the reconstruction of China.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The GMD suffered from severe factionalism, with many members sympathetic to the communist cause and others fervently anti-communist. In Nanjing, Jiang collaborated with the right wing while the left wing was left out of office; this left wing group retaliated by attacking the government and even formed alliances with the warlords against Jiang. (Hsu, p.653) - Significance: This disrupted China's political stability and unity. <p>Overall result: separatism was rife in the country. Separatist governments were set up in Canton and Peiping.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple rebellions and civil wars (such as the Cental Plains War in 1929-30) occurred throughout Jiang's rule, fought by separatists and warlords and supported by both extremes of the GMD. Jiang succeeded in crushing these through military force, but the fact that he had such resistance suggests his rule did not in fact bring about political stability. His government also had limited control over regions such as Guangxi, showing national unity was not complete; historian Immanuel Hsu goes as far as to call unity a "myth" (p.656).
Economic development	<p>Point: Jiang Jieshi's rule significantly impacted China in a positive way by enforcing new policies to drive economic development.</p> <p>Evidence: Industrialization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jiang and his government promoted industrialization, especially in cities such as Shanghai, Nanjing and Guangzhou, to try to prepare the country for a potential war economy and to resist the Japanese expansion 	<p>Point: Jiang's rule did not benefit the Chinese economy because the GMD never reached fiscal balance and instead relied on deficit spending and printing of money to finance their policies.</p> <p>Evidence (farmers): Massive decline in income for rural farmers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programs were not national, nor were they universal in the areas they were implemented → so there were many farmers who did not reap the benefits of the land program - There were growing rents & taxes which were needed to support the growing demands of the

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The most evident growth was in light industries such as textiles, cement and tobacco. These industries required relatively low capital investment and could rely on China's large labor force. ○ By the mid-1930s, industrial output in these sectors had risen steadily which contributed to increased employment levels and urban economic activity in China. <p>Agricultural policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Land to the Tiller", also known as Land Redistribution policy, redistributed land from large landowners to tenant farmers or landless peasants. - Creation of stable financial sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promoted the National Products Movement to favour Chinese goods, hence reducing trade deficit by decreasing imports. - Land ceilings: GMD imposed a maximum limit on the amount of land people could own, with excess land being redistributed - Rural financial assistance bureaus: provided capital to the countryside and cooperatives e.g. field tools and 180,000 kilograms of rice seeds were given to rural farmers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Historiography: William Kirby points to banking reform, infrastructure expansion, and industrial growth as evidence of genuine economic progress. <p>Explanation: By doing this, Jiang Jieshi managed to develop new industries to resist the Japanese expansion and to prepare a war economy. Therefore, Jiang jieshi positively impacted China's economy.</p>	<p>GMD and military → increased financial burden on poor rural farmers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impacts of great depression: massive domestic price decrease as well as an increase in foreign imports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In 1932, agricultural prices were 41% of 1921 levels ○ Rural incomes had fallen to 57% of 1931 levels by 1934 in some areas <p>Evidence (industrialization):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GMD was dominated by the capitalist class, with most rebuilding focused on ports and cities. As a result, industrialization did not penetrate much into rural areas - Poor working conditions: workers were paid very low wages and often worked up to 13 hours - Widespread corruption: there was much corruption among party officials, rendering unions powerless <p>Evidence (stable financial sector):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GMD kept printing new money → huge inflation, no investor confidence, huge government deficit, international traded deficits - Great depression caused international silver prices to rise, resulting in the outflow of money from China as their currency was based on the silver dollar → weak currency - The warlords refused to send their taxes to the central government, and the army took up ½ of state expenditure - National Products Movement failed because Chinese productivity was so low and the quality was so poor that people preferred foreign goods <p>Historiography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historian Rana Mitter stressed that growth was geographically uneven and concentrated in coastal cities - Historian Lucien Blanco claims that the GMD failed the countryside which worsened peasant hardship - Immanuel Hsu pg 566: "The continuous drain caused inflation, high interest rates, tight money, decline in the stock market, stagnancy in real estate, and bankruptcies in enterprises" - Immanuel Hsu pg 573: "The chronic ill of budgetary imbalance led to the abusive issuance of notes, which later was to cause severe inflation during the Japanese and civil wars and precipitated the economic collapse of the government in 1949"
Social development	<p>Point: The social policies introduced by Jiang Jieshi were successful in developing China because they projected China to be a progressive</p>	<p>Point: Jiang's social policies were limited in their ability to modernise China's social culture because they had limited impact in rural areas.</p>

	<p>country, aiming to gain support and recognition from western powers to rid of China of unequal treaties.</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jiang introduced the New Life Movement, emphasising four virtues: Law, Righteousness, Cleanliness and Shame, to promote morality and disciplined and proper character to the Chinese people. - Regarding women's rights, Jiang's policies gave women the right to vote and civil rights. However, to avoid appearing overly progressive to the US, Jiang still encouraged women to follow traditionalist Confucianist values and not be taken in by feminist ideology. - Historians like Odd Arne Westad agreed on the view that social opportunities expanded, especially in aspects like education. - Rise in education: the number of educational institutions experienced a four-to-five-fold increase, with 13 National universities, 9 provincial universities. The greater number of opportunities for people to get educated likely lead to higher literacy rates, contributing to the progressive depiction of China. - Jiang also attempted to revive the "Chinese Village", aiming to modernise the Chinese countryside which included strengthening the economic, political and health structure and health of the rural villages. This aimed to increase the overall wellbeing of peasants in China and thus increase their ability to fight back in the case of Japanese Invasion. 	<p>Evidence: Many of the social programmes were poorly planned, and resented by the Chinese as they viewed it as an interference in their lives and the policies became thoroughly unpopular.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The New Life movement was also a failure, as people did not resonate with it - there was widespread moral corruption in Shanghai so much so that it was coined the "sin city" of Asia, which contradicted the Four Virtues and caused the GMD to appear as hypocrites. - There were limited medical facilities – a population of 450 million had just 5,000 doctors and 30,000 hospital beds, thus there was no significant improvement in the health of the people. - a return to Confucian values offered no new ideas and ended up reversing the values that the May 4th movement intended to promote. - Regarding education, there were only 1/2 million pupils in the 1930s. There were deep controls over the educational system where intellectuals and students were not allowed to play a significant role, and students were often subjected to raids and arrests, and did not have a conducive learning environment, severely inhibiting their ability to learn. - The successful invasion and occupation of Manchuria by Japan in 1931 revealed the failures of the Rural Reconstruction movement, and negated any successes of the movement. - Historians like Lloyd Eastman believed that social development under Jiang Jieshi was "constrained by structural weaknesses and prioritisation of coercive power". This is due to the education and welfare spending being urban-focused, leaving rural China untouched. - The future CCP Victory in the Civil War in 1949 revealed that rural areas were considerably pro-CCP and anti-GMD, highlighting the people's resentment for Jiang's policies.
<p>Military reforms</p>	<p>Point: Jiang Jieshi's military successes helped to achieve national unification and stability for the GMS</p> <p>Evidence: The GMD's encirclement campaigns 1929 to 1934</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 1929, on the recommendation of his German military advisers, Jiang adopted a series of encirclement campaigns aimed at denying resources to the Reds until they finally broke. - The encirclement was achieved by squeezing the Communists into an ever-shrinking area by targeted aerial bombing and by means of pillboxes and manned blocks on the roads and waterways leading in and out of the CCP strongholds. - The massive siege began to work and by 1934, a succession of serious defeats for the Reds convinced Mao that to continue to defend the Jiangxi base would prove suicidal. 	<p>Point: the military reform had a negative impact on Jiang's rule because</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only 79 divisions of a total of 165 reported to Nanjing, of which only 17 were of a suitable quality for war. - Jiang only ordered the implementation of 20 divisions in the Baojia system in 1932, when he had the aim of 50 troops by 1937. - Weakness of the Baojia system is evidenced by Jiang's loss in the 1937 XianJiang war - Most troops were unwilling, poorly military trained, and poorly equipped – soldiers were to sleep naked with their hands and feet tied together so they would not run away in the middle of the night - The reform's ineffectiveness led to the death of many soldiers - Jiang had no modern armoured units and lacked both an air force and navy, which made the army

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsequently, the CCP fled from Jiangxi and embarked on the Long March and reached Yanan in 1935. By 1935, the Communists appeared to be a broken force and it seemed that the GMD had established control over China and was recognized by the Western powers as the legitimate government of China. <p>Evidence: German military aid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Between 1934 and 1935, Jiang's chief military adviser was General Hans von Seeckt who headed a German military mission to China. - Seeckt suggested reforming Jiang's army into 60 highly trained divisions and although only a third of these had been created by the time of the Japanese invasion in 1937, Seeckt's influence had been an important one. - The Nationalists' tactics, discipline and uniforms were all based on German models and it was Nazi Germany that, until 1936, supplied most of the GMD's weaponry. <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This could be seen through the steps taken for a full-scale war with Japan, which included the construction of forts, building of arsenals and many others - the Baojia system allowed for the cutting down of large costs while still allowing for solid expansion of 20 full divisions to be raised through the system by 1937, with 50000 conscripted soldiers being called up into the regular army and linked to the army system, thus raising the number of divisions. - Evidence of the Baojia system's strength: this military successfully won the central plains war against warlords, thus uniting China. - the Nationalists also succeeded in revoking a number of foreign municipal concessions. The British, who bore the major brunt of Chinese pressure, agreed to relinquish their concessions at Hankow, Kiukiang, Chinkiang, Weihaiwei and Amoy by 1930. The Belgian concession at Tientsin was also recovered in January 1931. 	<p>incredibly weak, leading to one of the contributing causes of China's poor defence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -
<p>Successful foreign policy</p>	<p>Point: Jiang achieved some success for Sun's principle of nationalism as he managed to get rid of foreign domination by achieving tariff autonomy and recovering foreign concessions</p> <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 1928, the Nanjing government managed to reverse the fixed tariff of 5 percent ad valorem, imposed after the Opium War which had been a constant reminder of China's semi – colonial status. 	<p>Point: Jiang's also had numerous military failures that destabilised the GMD</p> <p>Evidence: Manchurian crisis 1931</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria and set up a puppet state there in 1932 which they called Manchukuo. - In May 1933, China signed a truce with Japan, ceding the northeast of China to Japan.

- The United States, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Britain, France and Japan entered into equal and friendly tariff agreements with China
- From 1927-1930, the British agreed to relinquish their concessions at Hankou, Jiujiang, Weihai and Amoy

Result: Jiang helped to end foreign domination which helped to end the century-old national humiliation.

Significance: Greatly legitimised Jiang's regime and helped increase support for the GMD.

- Jiang needed time to build up its military resources before challenging Japan and hope that international reaction would restrain Japan. In addition, Jiang wanted to eliminate the CCP completely within China. Jiang adopted policy which was expressed through the slogan "internal pacification before external resistance"!
- Jiang's government suffered badly in public esteem for claiming to defend the nation but seeming to stand aside while Japan dismembered it. Jiang did not meet Sun's aim of nationalism as he failed to get rid of Japanese influence in China by appeasing Japanese aggression in northern and north-easter China.