Introduction – In October 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power from the Provisional Government. In response a coalition of opponents, called the Whites, attempted to overthrow the Bolshevik ‘Reds’. Eventually, after 3 bloody years of Civil War, the Reds emerged victorious and Russia remained communist for a further 70 years. There were several factors which contributed to the Reds’ victory; The leadership of Trotsky and Lenin, Reds’ control of key resources, the use of terror, divisions in the Whites, unity of the Reds. Perhaps the main reason for the success of the Reds was their control over the most important industrial region of Russia **or** Perhaps the main reason for the success of the Reds was the disjointed effort of the Whites or Perhaps the Reds’ victory was built on the inspirational leadership of Trotsky.

Factor 2 = **Unity of the Reds, Disunity of the Whites**

K – The Reds’ officers and men shared the same goal of establishing a Communist state. This message was reiterated by political commissars who were attached to each unit.

A – This was significant as it ensured that the Reds were usually driven and united. They were more likely to follow orders and to fight determinedly for a cause they believed in.

CA – However, it has been suggested that in fact, the Bolshevik army was dominated by conscripted peasants. This led to divisions as ‘most Bolsheviks saw the peasants as an alien and hostile social force’.

Furthermore, in order to instill order and discipline into the Red Army, Trotsky was forced to employ 75,000 ex-Tsarist officers. This led to ‘a storm of opposition’ from many Bolsheviks.

K – The Whites did not share a common goal. Some wanted a restoration of the Tsar, others wanted a democracy and some wanted a military government. Their leaders, such as Admiral Kolchak and General Denikin, did not share a common strategy.

A- This was crucial as it prevented the Whites from fighting as a unified force. It also meant that morale was lower than the Reds as many soldiers resented fighting for officers who wanted to restore the Tsar.

Evaluation – “The Reds had high morale and felt certain that they were making a new, better world” Robert Service

"It was practically impossible for the Whites to agree on policies. They did not even try." Orlando Figes

Factor 1 = **Superior Red Resources**

K – The Reds controlled the Russian industrial heartland. This meant that their territory contained the cities of Petrograd and Moscow, where there were many factories. Furthermore, the bulk of Russia’s population lived in this area.

A – This was significant as it gave the Reds a large advantage in manpower, around 10 times that of the Whites. Crucially, it also allowed them to control the centres of weapon production so that their forces would be better supplied than the Whites.

CA – However, it can be argued that sheer numbers of troops was not a distinct advantage. It can be argued that this was not overly beneficial as many peasants resented being called up. There were mass desertions and only 40,000 of the 275,000 peasants who were initially called up actually appeared. During the course of the war 4 million men had deserted the Red Army.

K – The area controlled by the Reds was centralized and contained the bulk of Russia’s railway. In particular the city of Moscow was Russia’s main railway hub.

A- This was crucial as it allowed the Reds to transport troops and goods quickly to any battlefield. This contrasts to the Whites who had to send troops huge distances without adequate rail connections.

Evaluation – Richard Pipes believes that the Bolsheviks' control of territory and resources made their victory a 'foregone conclusion'. This suggests that it was a pivotal factor.

Or

Orlando Figes believes that while control of Russia's railways was important in a mobile war, it was actually the Whites' political mistakes that were more significant. 'At the root of their defeat was a failure of politics'.

Factor 4 = **Use of Terror**

K – Lenin created the Cheka, which was the successor to the Tsarist Okhrana. It sought to uncover plots and to punish any real or imagined opponents of the Bolsheviks. Cheka agents executed the Tsar and his family, as well as 140,000 other Russians by 1922. The Cheka devised a host of brutal torture methods, such as rolling victims down a hill in a barrel studded with nails.

A – This was significant as it removed one of the motivations for the Whites, to restore the Tsar. In addition, it created a climate of fear that meant that opposition to the Bolsheviks was extremely limited.

CA – However, it can be argued that the Terror actually lost support for the Bolsheviks. The terror gave rise to protests from all sections of society. Even within the Party there were critics of the excesses.

Evaluation – ‘The ingenuity of the Cheka’s torture methods was matched only by the Spanish Inquisition’ Orlando Figes

Or

Stuart Finkel argues that the Cheka's importance has been overstated, claiming that they had 'a considerable tendency to exaggerate their extent and import'.

Factor 3 = **Leadership of Lenin and Trotsky**

K – Lenin had complete authority in the Bolshevik party. He was extremely ruthless and backed the policy of War Communism, which directed all resources towards the war effort, even if thousands suffered from famine as a result.

A – This was significant as it ensured that the Red Army was always the priority and always well supplied. In addition, Lenin was able to suppress any opposition within the Bolshevik ranks and could therefore dictate a single, unified policy.

CA – However, it can be argued that the policy of War Communism was poorly thought-out, and actually contributed towards the high desertion rates among the Red Army by alienating peasants.

K – Trotsky led the Red Army. He was a brilliant orator, travelling around the Red zone and giving inspirational speeches. He also ensured that the Red Army was ruthlessly organized. Ex-Tsarist officers were recruited, and their families held hostage to ensure their loyalty. Deserters were ordered to be shot.

A- This was crucial as Trotsky ensured that morale was high in the Red Army. He inspired troops, but also made them aware that failure would not be tolerated. The deployment of Tsarist officers ensured that the Red Army had an experienced core to rely on.

Evaluation – "With his dedication to the cause, Trotsky inspired uncertain officers and men, and his ruthlessness against waverers became legendary." Peter Oxley

Or

‘Contrary to conventional wisdom, it [was the Whites] who had the superior generalship and morale. In the final analysis, they appear to have lost…because they faced insuperable handicaps.’ Richard Pipes

Factor 5 = **Foreign Intervention and Propaganda**

K – The Bolsheviks had pulled Russia out of the war. Therefore when the Civil War started, France, Britain and the USA backed the Whites as they hoped that they would re-start the war with Germany. They sent munitions and troops.

A – It has been argued that this foreign aid was not effective in helping the Whites. This was because the foreign powers lacked the spare resources during the war, and when Germany surrendered, there was little incentive to keep fighting for the Whites.

K – The Reds portrayed the Whites as puppets of the foreign powers. They were able to put forward the case that the Reds were the true patriots who were interested only in saving Russia from foreign invasion.

A- This was crucial as the Reds were able to win the propaganda war. It boosted morale in their own ranks, and convinced any waverers not to support the Whites. Furthermore, the Whites were undermined by being linked to foreign powers who wanted to undo the changes made during the February Revolution.

Evaluation – “Foreign intervention was often half-hearted and militarily ineffective.” Evan Mawdsley.

Conclusion

Try to split your conclusion into two sections, which should mirror the argument that you have mentioned in your introduction. The second section should be the viewpoint that you agree with. Make sure that you refer back to the question and answer it.

On one hand it is possible to point to the weakness of the Whites as the key reason for the outcome of the Civil War. Their limited resources and lack of a common military or political policy undoubtedly weakened their cause.

A case can be made that it was the ruthless leadership of Trotsky and Lenin which was crucial in securing victory. By inspiring and supplying the Red Army, as well as terrifying potential waverers, the Reds’ leaders ensured that their army was united behind a common purpose, and were an efficient fighting force.

It can be argued that the Reds’ control over Russia’s industrial heartland was the key reason for success. Access to munitions factories and the railway network ensured an overwhelming military advantage that any opposition would have found impossible to overcome.