

研究会記録

Reassessing Wartime U.S.-China Relations:
Leadership, Foreign Aid, and Domestic Politics, 1937-1945

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During the 1930s, both the revival of a powerful Chinese revolutionary movement and Japan's advance toward China challenged a hitherto passive U.S. policy toward East Asia. Since invoking the Open Door policy in 1899, U.S. diplomacy in China had rested on the hope that developments within China and private U.S. influence would contribute to the evolution of a politically and economically integrated nation according to the democratic capitalist model exemplified by the United States. Yet historical developments in the 1930s, especially the rise of Chinese nationalism vis-à-vis the intensifying Japanese encroachment, frustrated American hopes for China and then appeared to make China itself a liability to the United States.¹

The all-out Sino-Japanese confrontation began in mid-1937. Toward the end of 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his top advisers concluded that Japanese control of China would endanger the security of both the United States and those of its European allies with Asian colonial interests. Policy makers in Washington, linking Japanese military activities with its German and Italian counterparts in Europe, set their policy on a new course, one that was designed to actively aid and support the Chinese Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek.² American aid, they hoped, would enable Chiang to withstand Japan's advance and improve his position against his major domestic rivals, the Chinese Communists. If the Nationalists were assured of this support, American officials posited that they would undertake political reforms to create a more popular and effective government, and thus serve as a long-term American ally that would assist in orderly transition of political power in Asia, from closed empires to self-governing, stable nations.³

¹ Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. ix, 2-16.

² For detailed discussions on the U.S.-Japan relationship before Pearl Harbor, see, for example, Jonathan G. Utley, *Going to War with Japan, 1937-1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1985); and Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

³ Xiaoyuan Liu, *A Partner for Disorder: China, the United States, and Their Policies for the Postwar Disposition of the Japanese Empire, 1941-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 10-24.

Although most Americans involved in policy formulation believed in the broad outlines of this idea, its breadth led to a variety of interpretations. Competing bureaucracies, each with a different perspective and approach, clashed over tactics and the interpretation of events in China. By contrast, as the military and political landscape within China and the Nationalist government changed after 1938, it severely strained the U.S. consensus to bolster Chiang Kai-shek.

This paper reexamines several important aspects of the Sino-American relationship, including U.S. aid to China, during World War II to demonstrate how political intrigues and bureaucratic rivalries in the United States played a crucial role in shaping wartime aid policy toward China. It also depicts how political and personal factors both in the United States and in Nationalist China were critical in the two allies' military and foreign policy formulation and strategic planning, including a reexamination of the Chiang-Stilwell dispute. By reconstructing the complicated landscape of the wartime Sino-American relationship, the article reveals how essentially "privatized" foreign policies generated a distorted effect on the rivalry among the Chinese Nationalists to win Washington's favor and support, and how Nationalist leaders such as Chiang Kai-shek and T. V. Soong took advantage of that rivalry to achieve their own interests.

THE ORIGINS OF AMERICAN AID TO CHINA

As of mid-1938, one year after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Chinese Nationalist government had had little aid from the United States. In April 1938, Stanley Hornbeck, a special advisor at the State Department, outlined U.S. priorities in a memorandum to the British Foreign Office, writing that Washington deplored Japanese aggression in China but that Washington would continue to honor the principles of nonaggression and territorial integrity embodied in the Nine Power Treaty. In the meantime, Washington saw no advantage to any attempt at Anglo-American mediation or intervention: neither the risk nor the cost of war with Japan was acceptable. Although some in the State Department questioned China's ability to carry on the fight alone much longer, no senior officials seriously discussed aiding China or imposing economic sanctions on Tokyo.⁴

By the summer of 1938, the pace of the war in China had quickened. The Japanese army has resumed its offensive, closing in on the Nationalists who had retreated toward the

⁴ Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Stanley Hornbeck Papers, Box 43, Stanley Hornbeck to Alexander Cadogan, 13 April 1938.

interior. Nanking was quickly lost, and the major cities of Canton and Hankou were threatened, meaning that the Nationalist base area in the coastal provinces and the lower Yangtze region would be controlled by the Japanese. Wang Jingwei, Chiang Kai-shek's rival within the Nationalist party, set up a peace faction opposed to Chiang, and strains emerged in the United Front with the Chinese Communists. Chiang's survival seemed to hinge on both a successful retreat to the interior and outside support.⁵

Those circumstances pushed Washington to act before Nationalist Chinese resistance collapsed. Interestingly, the official who drove the new policy was not a member of the State Department or the military establishment; it was Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, an intimate of President Roosevelt's, who was deeply convinced that the United States needed to play a more active role in resisting Nazi in Europe and Japan in the Far East.⁶ While traveling in Europe during August 1938, he contacted local Chinese diplomats and encouraged them to send the influential Chinese banker Chen Guangfu to Washington to discuss trade credits.⁷ By the time the Chinese agreed to send Chen, in late August, the military situation had grown more desperate. The Nationalist finance minister H. H. Kung's instructions to Chen reflected a mood of desperation. Chen was to seek an immediate cash loan to prevent the collapse of the Chinese currency and aid from "big American companies with China interests."⁸ According to Morgenthau, economic aid to Nationalist China would deter not only Japanese but also German ambition. To secure a unified China, he wished to grant China a \$25 million commodity credit, through a loan from Export-Import Bank secured by China's promise to deliver an equivalent amount of tung oil to the United States. The cash would be given to the Universal Trading Corporation (UTC), a Chinese Nationalist government front in New York, to purchase U.S. trucks and vital supplies.⁹

Although Secretary of State Cordell Hull spoke against the proposal, Morgenthau's

⁵ John H. Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937-1945: The Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 128-145; Wang Jianlang, *Kangzhan Chuqi di Yuandong Guoji Guanxi* (Taipei: Dongda chubanshe, 1996), pp. 201-232.

⁶ Henry Morgenthau Jr. and John M. Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries: Years of Urgency, 1938-1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), pp. 58-64.

⁷ U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) II (College Park, MD), Record Group (RG) 59, Records of the Department of State, Decimal Files, 893.51/6673-1/2, William Bullitt (U.S. ambassador to France) to President Roosevelt, 8 August 1938.

⁸ Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Arthur Young Papers, Box 88, H. H. Kung to Chen Guangfu, 30 August 1938. See also Wang Zhenghua, *Kangzhan Shiqi Waiguo dui Hua Junshi Yuanzhu* (Taipei: Huanqiu shuju, 1987), pp. 193-194.

⁹ NARA, RG59, 893.51/6736-1/8, Herbert Feis to Hull, 12 November 1938; Chen to Kung, 17 November 1938, Arthur Young Papers, Box 88.

lobbying efforts, along with the U.S. shock at the German dismemberment of Czechoslovakia following the Munich agreement in October 1938, magnified the argument about whether to grant China economic credits. In addition, by late November, Chiang Kai-shek's government, which had begun receiving military aid from the Soviet Union, signaled the Americans that dependence on the Soviets would enhance the Nationalists' precarious war position. Morgenthau advised his colleagues that delaying the loan decision would be driving Chiang into the "hand of Russia" and communism.¹⁰

Not surprisingly, the Japanese were the unwitting impetus that prodded Washington toward decisive action. In November 1938 Tokyo declared that it no longer considered the Open Door an operative principle in East Asia. That ominous statement coincided with Japanese military victories in the supposed Nationalist strongholds of Hankou and Canton.¹¹ Desperate for U.S. support, Nationalist officials informed the U.S. naval attaché in China, James McHugh, that Chiang Kai-shek might have to consider making peace with Japan.¹²

Be it true or not, Washington policy planners scurried to meet the crisis. On December 15, after clarifying the details of the aid program, the U.S. government announced an agreement between the Export-Import Bank and the UTC to extend a \$25 million credit to the Nationalist government.¹³ That achievement, which Chiang Kai-shek called his "Japanese enemy's biggest blow"¹⁴ since the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 1937, also had significant political implications. In the United States, the authorities in Washington had apparently agreed that Chinese resistance to Japan would serve as the first line of U.S. defense. In China, the almost simultaneous U.S. decision to grant credits to Chiang's government at the same critical moment when Wang Jingwei resolved to join the Japanese and split the Kuomintang party cushioned the impact of his defection. Hu Shi, Nationalist China's ambassador in Washington, later told Stanley Hornbeck that the December loan played a crucial role in sustaining Chiang's grip on the Nationalist regime.¹⁵

¹⁰ Morgenthau and Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, pp. 59-60. On Sino-Soviet collaborations during the early wartime period, see also O. Edmund Clubb, *China and Russia: The "Great Game"* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 306-318.

¹¹ Lloyd E. Eastman, Jerome Chen, Suzanne Pepper, and Lyman P. Van Slyke, *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 115-125.

¹² NARA, RG59, 793.94/14364, Nelson T. Johnson to State Department, 16 November 1938.

¹³ Wang, *Kangshun Shiqi Waiguo dui Hua Junshi Yuanzhu*, p. 193.

¹⁴ Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Chiang Kai-Shek Diaries (hereafter CKSD), Box 40, diary entry for 17 December 1938.

¹⁵ NARA, RG59, 893.51/6908, Memorandum by Hornbeck, 16 May 1939.

CHINESE POLITICS V.S. WASHINGTON BUREAUCRACY

During 1939, both the State and the Treasury Departments were seeking to convince themselves of Nationalist China's strategic importance to the United States. In May, Henry Morgenthau's aide recommended granting China a "well publicized loan" that, it was hoped, would deter Japanese aggression elsewhere and ensure that the United States would capture the bulk of "reconstruction work" and trade with postwar China.¹⁶ Yet Morgenthau found it impossible to shake Secretary of State Hull's fear of further antagonizing Japan. Thus, through the beginning of 1940, arguments favoring increased assistance to Chiang Kai-shek's regime could not overcome deeply rooted fears of provoking Tokyo.¹⁷

Ironically, Japan once again tipped the scales in favor of a bolder U.S. policy toward wartime China. Early in the spring of 1940, Wang Jingwei established his pro-Japanese Nationalist regime in Nanking, a move destined to undermine the loyalty of Chiang Kai-shek's shaky coalition in Chongqing. Meanwhile, speculations continued concerning clandestine peace negotiations between Japan and Chiang's men, notably his brother-in-law H. H. Kung.¹⁸ In the eyes of Washington, it became imperative to signal its support for Chiang and its opposition to Wang's puppet regime. On 7 March 1940, Morgenthau concluded arrangements to grant UTC \$20 million in return for future tin shipments.¹⁹

Having succeeded in obtaining the additional credits of March 1940, the Chinese Nationalists pressed Washington for more aid, warning of an imminent currency collapse, and having Arthur Young, then the U.S. financial adviser to Chiang Kai-shek, to bring pressure on the Treasury Department.²⁰ In June 1940, Chiang sent T. V. Soong, another brother-in-law, as his personal envoy to Washington to secure more assistance from the United States. Soong's new appointment, from Chiang's perspective, might also serve as a message from Chongqing to Washington that China would not come to terms with the Japanese as long as the U.S. aid was forthcoming.²¹

On his arrival in Washington, the ambitious and energetic T. V. Soong continuing the

¹⁶ Morgenthau Jr. and Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, pp. 95-99.

¹⁷ Smith Berthon, *Allies at War: The Bitter Rivalry among Churchill, Roosevelt, and de Gaulle* (New York: Carroll & Graft, 2001), pp. 25-26.

¹⁸ James C. Hsiung and Steven I. Levine eds., *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937-1945* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), pp. 51-78.

¹⁹ Wang, *Kangshun Shiqi Waiguo dui Hua Junshi Yuanzhu*, pp. 196-197.

²⁰ NARA, RG59, 893.51/7120, Hornbeck to Morgenthau, 11 April 1940.

²¹ In his diary, dated 28 November 1941, Chiang Kai-shek attributed Washington's increased hard-line stance toward Japan to the appointment of T. V. Soong as his personal envoy and the latter's contributions in the United States. See CKSD, Box 41, diary entry for 28 November 1941.

a dialogue on aid projects, proposed a three-way trade in raw materials and cash among China, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Profits from U.S. purchases and resale of Russian and Chinese raw materials would be funneled back through Russia to China, to the tune of \$140 million.²² Although this confusing plan made Chiang Kai-shek reluctant to accept, it appears to be the first time that the Chinese Nationalists attempted to involve both Washington and Moscow in a scheme to aid the Nationalists.²³ Such a plan would not only benefit the Nationalist government economically but would transmit a political message to Chiang Kai-shek's adversaries, both in Tokyo and in Yan'an. Morgenthau initially showed an interest in Soong's idea, which might have led to stockpiling strategic materials, helping Nationalist China, and improving relations with the Soviet Union. The State Department, however, raised such violent objections to the suggestions of trafficking with Russia, then still nominally allied to Nazi Germany, that Morgenthau finally abandoned the proposal.²⁴

Learning from this episode, Soong quickly discovered how to manipulate the bureaucracy in Washington by bringing China's domestic political factors into his play. During September 1940 Morgenthau approached Hull, suggesting that more aid be given China. Hull approved, suggesting extending additional credits to Chongqing. Accordingly, Hull and Morgenthau arranged for Jesse Jones, the federal loan administrator, to grant China \$25 million, with a hint of more aid to follow. Although Soong first insisted that the loan be at least \$50 million, he graciously accepted a loan of \$25 million on behalf of the Central Bank of China in late September 1940.²⁵ But the terms of the loan omitted any restriction on military uses of the funds, indicating a time when U.S. assistance still focused on domestic aid for Nationalist China, not open-ended and dangerous military support.²⁶

This loan was augmented, as Soong had wished, in November 1940, at the same time that a crisis was brewing in Chongqing in response to Tokyo's formal recognition of the Wang Jingwei puppet regime in Nanking. President Roosevelt now took the initiative, pressing his subordinates for quick action. On the morning of 29 November, the president phoned

²² Morgenthau Jr. and Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, pp. 360-362. On T. V. Soong's strategic thinking and ideology regarding obtaining foreign aid, see also Wu Jingping, *Song Zhen Sixiang Yanjiu* (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1998), pp. 261-290.

²³ Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, T. V. Soong Papers, Box 59, Chiang to Soong, 16 and 18 July 1940.

²⁴ David Rees, *Harry Dexter White: A Study in Paradox* (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1973), pp. 109-111; Jerrold and Leona Schecter *Sacred Secrets: How Soviet Intelligence Operations Changed American History* (Washington DC: Brassey's Inc., 2002), pp. 30-31.

²⁵ Wang, *Kangzhan Shiqi Waiguo dui Hua Junshi Yuanzhu*, pp. 197-198.

²⁶ Arthur Young Papers, Box 88, Memorandum of conversation, dated 28 September 1940.

Morgenthau saying he was worried that something going on between Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Jingwei urged the Treasury Department to make a stabilization loan of \$50 million to the Chinese “in the next 24 hours.” In addition, the president wanted the Export-Import Bank to make an equally large commodity credit available to China.²⁷

Morgenthau was placed in an awkward position because he had to consult Congress before granting any large currency stabilization funds to a foreign nation, which the president's 24-hour time limit made impossible. Thus on 30 November, Morgenthau called T. V. Soong to determine why an immediate loan was so urgent. Soong told him that Chiang Kai-shek actually wanted between \$200 and \$300 million but would settle for \$100 million for the time being. The loan's immediacy, Soong explained, was to demonstrate U.S. defiance of Tokyo's recognition of Wang's regime; anything short of \$100 million would cause Chiang to lose both face and power.²⁸ By this time, threats of surrender had become standard Nationalist Chinese negotiating practice.

Frustrated by Morgenthau's delay, Soong went to the State Department, where he enlisted support from Cordell Hull and his undersecretary of state, Sumner Welles. Welles then met with the Treasury secretary and, after some discussion, persuaded the reluctant Morgenthau to release a statement that same day (November 30) saying that the Treasury Department had the “intention to ask Congress” to approve the \$100 million for Nationalist China. Soong thus undercut Morgenthau's pledge to go before Congress before making such a deal.²⁹

Morgenthau's frustration over the November loan episode revealed both the present and the emerging problems of the China aid program. In the Roosevelt administration, lines of authority blurred as various agencies claimed jurisdiction over setting and implementing policy. The resulting confusion both interfered with coherent, long-range planning and allowed powerful Chinese lobbyists such as T. V. Soong to manipulate decisions in Washington.³⁰ As relations between the United States and Japan grew tense at the end of 1940, President Roosevelt set out to forge a tightly administered program designed not only to expedite economic aid to China but to transform it into a useful military and political ally.

²⁷ Morgenthau Jr. and Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, pp. 363-364.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

²⁹ Arthur N. Young, *China and the Helping Hand, 1937-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 136-137.

³⁰ Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China*, pp. 36-38.

U.S. AID AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

The announcement of the loan to China gave Chiang Kai-shek the financial reassurance he needed and also strengthened Chiang's position vis-à-vis his much-hated Chinese Communist rivals. Just a few weeks after the loan was announced, in mid-January 1941, the Nationalists attacked and destroyed most of the New Fourth Army (NFA) in southern Anhui Province, marking the end of any hope of reconciliation between the Nationalist government and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).³¹ At the time of the NFA incident, the Nationalists had many staunch American supporters, including Ambassador to China Nelson T. Johnson, who believed that the Nationalists represented China's future, and that the Communists subverted a unified resistance to Japan.³² James McHugh, the U.S. naval attaché in Chongqing who was a personal friend of the Soong family, also blamed China's problems on the Communist Party. Alarmed by suggestions from Washington that aid be given to all anti-Japanese groups, regardless of their politics, McHugh warned the State Department that pro-communist Americans wanted American aid to China to be used to destroy the Nationalist government.³³

To cope with the conflict in China, Japan's military buildup in Southeast Asia, and Britain's grave danger from Nazi air and sea assault, in early 1941 President Roosevelt introduced Lend-Lease legislation in Congress. That legislation would allow the president the discretionary authority to supply vast amounts of military aid to de facto allies, making the White House in charge of military and economic aid to Britain and China. No longer would aid proposals be channeled through the often competitive bureaucracies of the State and Treasury Departments, the Export-Import Bank, or Congress. Henceforth, the president himself could transfer strategic aid directly to allies.³⁴

Although the new program was specifically aimed at alleviating Britain's financial crisis, it held equal promise for the Chinese, which T. V. Soong sensed immediately. No sooner had Lend-Lease legislation been introduced in January 1941 than Soong urged Roosevelt to send a special personal envoy to Chongqing to confer with Chiang Kai-shek.³⁵ Roosevelt appeared to relish, choosing his economic adviser Lauchlin Currie to undertake the mission.

³¹ Eastman et al., *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927-1949*, pp. 233-239.

³² NARA, RG59, 893.00/14631, Johnson to Hull, 3 January 1941.

³³ NARA, RG59, 893.24/1048, Memorandum by George Atcheson, dated 24 April 1941.

³⁴ Leon C. Martel, *Lend-Lease, Loans, and the Coming of the Cold War: A Study of the Implementation of Foreign Policy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 24-34; Hubert P. van Tuyll, *Feeding the Bear: American Aid to the Soviet Union, 1941-1945* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), pp. 3-21.

³⁵ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 59, Chiang to Soong, 25 January 1941.

During his visit to Chongqing in February and March 1941, Chiang demanded another infusion of U.S. aid, \$50 million this time, and a promise to deliver to China a modern air force. Were such aid denied, Chiang claimed, dire results might ensue.³⁶ In the meantime, Madame H. H. Kung told James McHugh (who was in close contact with Currie) that her husband had just received new Japanese peace feelers, explaining that the Nationalists needed to know the enemy's terms if further resistance became impossible. The Kungs may also have feared for their own political and financial future in that T. V. Soong was slated to become China's Lend-Lease agent in Washington, thus surely threatening the Kungs' roles in their nation's future.³⁷

On his return to Washington, Currie in his report on his mission wrote that if the United States wished to preserve and increase China's value as a barrier against Japanese expansion, it had no choice but to play a more direct role in Chinese politics. In the meantime, Currie arranged for James McHugh, known for his intimacy with both Chiang Kai-shek and T. V. Soong, to serve as a conduit between China's leading families and the White House. Currie encouraged McHugh to send his reports directly to the president and to pass on messages from Chiang best kept out of regular channels.³⁸ The policy advocated by Currie and gradually adopted by Roosevelt in reforming China's political system and linking to it to an American alliance in postwar Asia now seemed feasible to policy planners in Washington. Currie and Roosevelt were convinced that by creating a "special relationship," increasing aid, and sending advisers to China, it would bring about fundamental change within China, prevent civil war, and reduce the likelihood of a successful communist revolution.³⁹

Washington's new policy of more aid to China put the Sino-U.S. relationship on a new level. In mid-April 1941, a few weeks after Currie's return to America, an impatient Chiang Kai-shek told T. V. Soong to press Roosevelt for items including military supplies, military aircraft (which Chiang had been requesting since late 1940), and a \$50 million loan.⁴⁰ Those requests were endorsed by James McHugh in Chongqing, who urged Washington to "boost Chinese morale" after the recently concluded Soviet-Japanese nonaggression pact and the growing reluctance of the Treasury Department to pump unregulated currency stabilization

³⁶ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 59, Chiang to Soong, 13 and 24 March, and 24 April 1941.

³⁷ NARA, RG59, 893.50/245-1/6, Memorandum by Joseph Jones of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs, 14 April 1941.

³⁸ NARA, RG59, 003/1193, Visit to China of Lauchlin Currie file, 3 March 1941; Currie to President Roosevelt, 25 April 1941, *ibid*.

³⁹ Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China*, pp. 47-53.

⁴⁰ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 59, Chiang to Soong, 17 and 24 April 1941.

funds into China.⁴¹

McHugh's complaints stemmed from a growing dispute between Morgenthau and Soong over the means and timing of economic assistance. Soong wanted unregulated infusions of dollars, whereas Morgenthau insisted that aid be given in small, periodic, and regulated amounts to discourage speculation. Unable to persuade the Treasury secretary to concede, Soong, with support from McHugh and Currie, in the end run around the Treasury, got the White House to endorse the Nationalists' demands.⁴² But both Currie and Morgenthau agreed to send American advisers to China in order to oversee the funds and alleviate other problems in the aid program. Thus in the summer of 1941 a group of financial and transportation advisers, including Owen Lattimore, a liberal and noted Asian scholar, whom Currie had recommended Roosevelt and who became Chiang Kai-shek's political adviser, were sent to China.⁴³

Given Chiang's pride and dislike of foreign meddlers, why did he agree to such an intrusion? Most likely it was, first, because President Roosevelt supported the plan, making it awkward to reject out of hand. Second, since Lend-Lease would be run by the executive branch, Chiang would be able to deal directly with the source of power. Finally, as T. V. Soong pointed out to Chiang, a presidential adviser might provide an alternative channel to the regular diplomatic communications between China and the United States.⁴⁴ Once Chiang accepted, however, Lattimore's mission disappointed both parties. His stay in China proved both brief and unproductive; Chiang did not need advice on reform; rather he needed guns, planes, and money. In 1942, Chiang sent Lattimore back to Washington, suggesting that he use his scholarly influence to lobby for more U.S. aid to China.⁴⁵

T. V. SOONG AND CHINA'S PERSONA DIPLOMACY

Despite Lattimore's failure, the Americans and the Chinese Nationalists discovered common ground in the Lend-Lease program. Soon after its passage in March 1941, the White House began working closely with T. V. Soong, who ran the Chinese aid mission through an organization called China Defense Supplies (CDS), which was a mercantile corporation as much as a government agency. Soong soon developed access to the center of power in

⁴¹ Transcript of Treasury Department meeting, dated 21 April 1941, from Morgenthau Jr. and Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, p. 373.

⁴² T. V. Soong Papers, Box 59, Soong to Chiang, 22 and 24 May and 13, 18, 23, 25 June 1941.

⁴³ Robert P. Newman, *Owen Lattimore and the "Loss" of China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 55-74.

⁴⁴ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 59, Soong to Chiang, 3, 11 and 23 June 1941.

⁴⁵ Newman, *Owen Lattimore*, pp. 93-94.

Washington and was able to convince President Roosevelt to factor China into his strategic thinking. Meanwhile, Soong, combining his networking skills with his mass media and public relations skills, convinced officials close to President Roosevelt to render assistance to Nationalist China.⁴⁶

CDS was a testament of T. V. Soong's diplomacy. The corporation's roster included former members of the White House staff, the Federal Power Commission, the army air force, China missionaries, and businessmen with links to major industrial corporations. Prominent names included Thomas Corcoran, William Youngman, Claire Chennault, and Roosevelt's distant cousin, Joseph Alsop, who served as a public relations aide.⁴⁷ Soong had carefully selected staff to ensure a sympathetic reception for Chinese aid requests, forging a lasting relationship between the Washington establishment and the Chinese Nationalists that became known as the China Lobby.⁴⁸ In the first half of 1941, Soong's influence grew so rapidly that Henry Morgenthau once remarked bitterly to his staff that "the trouble with Mr. Currie is, I don't know whether he is working for the President or T. V. Soong."⁴⁹

Nationalist China's formal ties to the Lend-Lease pipeline began in early April 1941, when Soong applied for three types of aid: sufficient arms and equipment for thirty divisions, construction equipment with which to build a railroad and highway between India-Burma and southwest China, and 1,000 airplanes and pilots under the command of Claire Chennault that could be used to make an offensive strike against the Japanese home islands.⁵⁰ Soong and Chennault, assisted by the White House, established the American Volunteer Group (AVG) in Washington, which began to recruit pilots and sign contracts with them under the aegis of the Central Aircraft Manufacturing Corporation (CAMCO), a Chinese government entity. CAMCO thus was in charge of all the American volunteer pilots in China as well as military procurement and supply; using CAMCO, Soong was able to transfer funds from the Lend-Lease aid and use them to expand China's air force. By late September 1941, more than 100 pilots and mechanics had signed contracts with CAMCO as the agent of the Chinese

⁴⁶ Tai-chun Kuo and Hsiao-ting Lin, *T. V. Soong in Modern Chinese History: A Look at His Role in Sino-American Relations in World War II* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2006), p. 25.

⁴⁷ Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 220-221.

⁴⁸ For a detailed discussion on the China Lobby, see, for example, Ross Y. Koen, *The China Lobby in American Politics* (London: Octagon Books, 1974).

⁴⁹ Transcript of conversation between Morgenthau and Currie, quoted from Morgenthau Jr. and Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, pp. 375-377.

⁵⁰ Wang, *Kangzhan Shiqi Waiguo dui Hua Junshi Yuanzhu*, pp. 240-245.

government.⁵¹

Soong had done a marvelous job in his fellow Nationalists' hour of need. His achievement was unique, in that he had to mediate between officials in Chongqing and Washington, whose concerns and interests were often confusing, if not conflicting.⁵² To a considerable extent, his lobbying endeavors in Washington in 1941 pushed the Roosevelt administration toward the financial freeze and, consequently, the de facto oil embargo against Japan from May to August 1941.⁵³ On the other hand, Soong's requests for more aid put an additional strain on U.S. military production, causing trans-departmental conflict in Washington to emerge once again. As Currie pressed the War Department to meet Soong's order of 31 March 1941, military experts discovered that the Chinese often failed to specify exactly which weapons and supplies they needed and that much of what they did specify proved unavailable or inappropriate for Chinese capabilities.⁵⁴ After some bargaining, the War Department settled on a weapons shipment valued at \$45 million, which President Roosevelt approved on 23 April 1941. A second shipment, valued at \$100 million, followed shortly.⁵⁵

But the problems loomed of delivery and utilization. Supplies took several months to reach China and had to be distributed to largely untrained Nationalist military units. General George Marshall, the army chief of staff, convinced Roosevelt to create an American Military Mission to China (AMMISCA) in early July 1941 to be commanded by General John Magruder, previously an attaché in China who was now expected to devote himself to improving the Burma Road and overseeing the distribution and use of Lend-Lease aid.⁵⁶ Marshall, however, had more in mind than efficiency when he proposed the creation of AMMISCA in Chongqing. Like Morgenthau before him, the general was worried about the Chinese penetration of the policy making bureaucracy in Washington. The links between T. V. Soong, Currie, CDS, and numerous current and former officials, he felt, could endanger U.S. control over military aid, in that the War Department's role had been reduced to filling orders issued by Soong and Currie.

⁵¹ Robert Hotz ed., *Way of a Fighter: The Memoirs of Claire Lee Chennault* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1949), pp. 98-104. See also Daniel Ford, *Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and the American Volunteer Group* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1995).

⁵² Wu Jingping, *Song Zaven Pingzhuan* (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 1998), p. 346.

⁵³ Edward S. Miller, *Bankrupting the Enemy: The U.S. Financial Siege of Japan before Pearl Harbor* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2007), pp. 170-174.

⁵⁴ Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, 1953), pp. 14-17.

⁵⁵ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 59, Soong to Chiang, 27 August 1941; Wang, *Kangzhan Shiqi Waiguo dui Hua Junshi Yuanzhu*, pp. 245-246.

⁵⁶ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 59, Soong to Chiang, 22 and 26 August and 4 September 1941.

By establishing his own group in China, Marshall believed, he could ensure U.S. influence over aid requests and utilization.⁵⁷

Not surprisingly, Soong, Currie, and CDS employees suspected that AMMISCA hoped to circumvent their influence over the president, especially after Chennault warned Madame Chiang Kai-shek that Magruder had been sent to break the influence of Currie and Soong over Lend-Lease. Chennault asserted that the army planners cared only about Europe and would give China as little aid as possible.⁵⁸ Soong also warned Chiang Kai-shek that Magruder was both a military man and a highly skilled politician, meaning that the Nationalists could not treat him simply a military mind.⁵⁹

The simultaneous strains of assisting both European and Asian allies, of rearming at home, and of bolstering the small military forces in the Pacific all required caution when dealing with Japan. At least through November 1941, U.S. leaders still believed it possible to postpone a war with Japan.⁶⁰ From July until late November, Washington and Tokyo sought in vain to negotiate a solution. In Washington's final analysis, China again emerged as a crucial sticking point. Toward the end of 1941, the belief in Washington that any sort of compromise with Japan could lead to collapse of Nationalist Chinese resistance had become deeply entrenched.⁶¹

Fearing that, in the unlikely event of a compromise, China might be sacrificed, the Nationalist government did everything in its power to make its case to the American leaders. Communicating to Washington through every available channel—the embassy, the CDS, T. V. Soong, James McHugh, Morgenthau, and Roosevelt—the Chinese warned of the Japanese plan to invade western Yunnan province and keep China out of the war by closing its supply lines to the West. In a message passed by Soong from Chongqing to the State Department dated 25 November 1941, Chiang Kai-shek endeavored to convince Washington that his army would collapse and the Japanese would be able to carry out their plans were there any relaxation of the embargo or regulations on the U.S. side.⁶²

⁵⁷ Ed Cray, *General of the Army: George C. Marshall, Soldier and Statesman* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), pp. 560-582.

⁵⁸ Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Claire Chennault Papers, Box 4, Chennault to Madame Chiang Kai-shek, 28 October 1941.

⁵⁹ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 59, Soong to Chiang, 4 September 1941.

⁶⁰ George Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth: Rethinking the Unthinkable* (Washington DC.: Potomac Books, 2007), pp. 239-262.

⁶¹ Liu, *A Partner for Disorder*, pp. 16-17.

⁶² NARA, RG59, 793.94/17001-4/5, Soong to Henry Stimson, 25 November 1941; T. V. Soong Papers, Box 59, Chiang to Soong, 25 November 1941; and Soong to Chiang, 26 and 27 November 1941.

At this critical juncture, T. V. Soong's lobbying capabilities in Washington came to the fore. During November 1941, figures such as Morgenthau worried lest China be deserted by the United States in some compromise deal. Late that month, Soong warned of an anti-Chinese plot burgeoning among high authorities in Washington. Morgenthau reacted by drafting a letter to Roosevelt imploring him not to compromise with Japan at China's expense.⁶³ But the letter seemed redundant. On 26 November, the State Department called on Japan to abandon its bargaining position. Tokyo was asked to withdraw from China and Indochina, renounce the use of force, and pledge to respect the status quo throughout Asia and the Pacific. Not until those conditions were met would the United States consider resuming trade with Japan. Neither China nor any other country would be abandoned by the United States.⁶⁴ Thus by the end of 1941 the linchpin of U.S. policy in East Asia had become preserving and supporting Nationalist China.

U.S.-CHINA WAR STRATEGIES REVISITED

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 8 December 1941, brought the United States, Britain and Nationalist China together as allies against the Axis powers. In early 1942, to coordinate the war effort, leaders of the Allied nations agreed on a command structure, with British general Sir Archibald Wavell as supreme commander of the Far East front of the member nations of the ABDA (Agreement among the Governments of Australia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States). Chiang Kai-shek would serve as supreme commander of the Allied forces in a separate China theater, initially encompassing China, Burma, and India, in which he would command all land and air forces of the United Nations "which are now or may in the future be operating in the Chinese theater."⁶⁵ Meanwhile, with George Marshall's support, General Joseph Stilwell was appointed by Washington as Chiang's chief of staff in the China theater.

Many works on wartime Sino-American relations argue that the Allied military catastrophe in Burma in May 1942 was the main cause of the breach between Chiang Kai-shek and his American chief of staff, for Chiang and his advisers blamed the Burma defeat on Stilwell's arrogance and his ignoring Chiang's advice, thus sacrificing China's best divisions in

⁶³ Morgenthau Jr. and Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, pp. 383-385, 389-391.

⁶⁴ Victor, *The Pearl Harbor Myth*, pp. 259-263.

⁶⁵ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 60, Memorandum by Stephen Early, 3 January 1942.

his retreat from Burma.⁶⁶ A careful examination of the Chiang-Stilwell dispute, however, brings out other previously unnoticed aspects of the wartime Sino-U.S. relationship. Burma was important for the Nationalists not only because of its geostrategic importance to the war-besieged southwest China but also because Chiang Kai-shek needed Burma to make the war against Japan one in which the United States and Britain were fully involved and in which China would participate on equal terms. The Nationalists probably believed that this was the only way to prevent a disadvantageous peace between the United States, Britain, and Japan after Germany's defeat. Remember that it was not until the Casablanca conference of January 1943 that the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan became established Allied war aims.⁶⁷

Given the lack of thought and experience that went into defending Burma, it is not surprising that none of the Allies fought well in the spring of 1942. Rangoon fell to the Japanese on March 8, followed by the Allied loss of Lashio in north Burma on 29 April and Myitkyina on 8 May. In late May, Stilwell ordered the Chinese Fifth Army to retreat into India from Burma, contrary to Chiang Kai-shek's demand that his troops concentrate and rally around Myitkyina for a breakout. An angry Chiang then accused Stilwell of "losing his nerve."⁶⁸

In June 1942, after his retreat from Burma, Stilwell outlined a plan for recovering Burma that stressed building a land-based line of communication from Assam to Yunnan. Once established, according to Stilwell, the United States could supply and train Nationalist divisions that would then drive to south China, open harbors there, and swing north to dislodge the Japanese from the rest of China and cut it off from its resources in China and Southeast Asia.⁶⁹ The War Department, however, dismissed China's strategic importance and, more significantly, did not agree that Japan must be defeated there. Hans van de Ven's research demonstrates that, after the defeat in Burma, the U.S. military chiefs in Washington depicted the Chinese army as so weak that it would not be able to stage a major offensive and that local resources would produce as many small arms as their "limited forms of resistance" required, provided Japan staged no major offensives against the Nationalists.⁷⁰

Because top U.S. military leaders such as George Marshall did not agree with

⁶⁶ See, for example, Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*; David Rooney, *Stilwell the Patriot: Vindgar Joe, the Brits and Chiang Kai-shek* (London: Greenhill Books, 2005).

⁶⁷ Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and US Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 266-270.

⁶⁸ CKSD, Box 42, diary entry for 31 May 1942.

⁶⁹ Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, pp. 152-158.

⁷⁰ Hans J. van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p. 34.

Stilwell's views, the best thing for Washington to do was to keep the U.S. Tenth Air Force in India out of the fighting; it would go into action only when Japanese planes and fleets threatened Ceylon and the western part of the Indian Ocean. Meanwhile, in Ramgarh, Stilwell was allowed to train and equip the two Nationalist divisions retreated from Burma, using the 45,000 tons of Lend-Lease aid that had piled up in India.⁷¹ Such a program fit Washington's aim of keeping Nationalist China in the war at little cost to the United States.

In the early summer of 1942, the brothers-in-law Chiang Kai-shek and T. V. Soong, suspicious of Stilwell's decision to retreat with two of China's best divisions into India rather than China, discussed Stilwell's suitability for the China theater, although they realized that, after the fall of Burma, little U.S. aid could be delivered to China.⁷² Also, the higher echelons in Chongqing did not want the British to have control over their forces, which had now retreated to India, and any of their military resources. To secure more American aid, and keep the British away from his best divisions, Chiang was convinced that it would be useful to have Stilwell control the forces in India for the time being.⁷³ Stilwell, however, saw an opportunity to gain command over an army to fight Japan and thus avenge his defeat.

It was within this broader view toward China by the United States that the air force buildup in China, an idea promoted by Claire Chennault and lobbied for by T. V. Soong, was allowed to go ahead. To Roosevelt and, to some extent to Marshall, supporting Chennault and building up an air force in China that could strike Japan and cooperate with the U.S. Pacific Fleet provided an economical way to deliver demonstrable results. Predictably, however, Stilwell objected to this new strategy, which he saw would come at the cost of his program to equip and train Nationalist Chinese Army divisions in Ramgarh and thus recapture north Burma.⁷⁴ The differences over war strategies and lack of cooperation between Chennault and Stilwell was serious and detrimental to the war effort, both were called to Washington in May 1943.

The disagreement among the U.S. military hierarchy gave the Chinese Nationalists another chance to maneuver for their interests. In Washington, during a discussion at which both Churchill and Roosevelt were present, Stilwell harshly criticized Chiang Kai-shek, insisted that the Japanese army must be defeated in China, and argued that opening a road through

⁷¹ Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, p. 366.

⁷² See, for example, T. V. Soong Papers, Box 60, Soong to Chiang, 12 and 16 June, and 6 and 23 July 1942.

⁷³ Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China*, p. 35.

⁷⁴ Wesley Bagby, *The Eagle—Dragon Alliance: America's Relation with China in World War II* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), pp. 73-75.

north Burma should take priority.⁷⁵ Stilwell's arguments were bitterly refuted by Chennault, who quoted T. V. Soong's warning that the situation in China was critical and that Chongqing might have to surrender if the air force support was not forthcoming. Roosevelt eventually decided in favor of the air program, promising Soong an increase in supplies to China to 10,000 tons a month flown in over the Hump, at the time the Hump route was delivering not even half that amount. He also ordered that Chennault should receive the first 4,700 tons of supplies delivered to China.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, in "compensation" to Stilwell, Roosevelt approved a campaign to recover north Burma, a decision Chiang Kai-shek agreed to, with three conditions: an air force of five hundred planes (to be increased to a thousand if necessary), a naval force of three battleships and eight carriers, and a substantial U.S. infantry force.⁷⁷

STILWELL'S RECALLS SEEN FROM DOMESTIC POLITICS

Roosevelt's endorsement of Chennault's plan was an outward triumph for T. V. Soong and his cohorts in Washington, who had been endeavoring to enhance China's airpower. But Stilwell's vehement opposition to the plan infuriated the Chongqing leaders: once again Soong lobbied hard in Washington for Stilwell to be replaced. In a confidential dispatch to Chiang dated 29 September 1943, about his meeting with Roosevelt, Soong reported that he had reached several important agreements, including the removal of Stilwell "at any cost."⁷⁸ In a private letter from Soong to Harry Hopkins in October 1943, Soong said he had told Chiang the "good news" and urged the Generalissimo to telegram President Roosevelt at once.⁷⁹

At this juncture, several factors came into play that affected the Chinese leadership's decisions. In mid-August 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill had met for the Quadrant Conference in Quebec, Canada, at which the Allied leaders set up a new Allied Command for Southeast Asia under the Combined Chiefs of Staff, separate from the British India Command as well as from China.⁸⁰ Churchill wanted Britain fully involved in the defeat of Japan and was eager to have the British in a good position to recover Britain's former colonies in Asia. Lord Mountbatten was appointed supreme allied commander of the new Southeast Asia Command

⁷⁵ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 61, Soong to Chiang, 1 May 1943.

⁷⁶ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 61, Soong to Chiang, 18 June 1943.

⁷⁷ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 61, Soong to Chiang, 17 and 25 May 1943.

⁷⁸ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 61, Soong to Chiang, 29 September 1943.

⁷⁹ T. V. Soong Papers, Box 61, Soong to Hopkins, 12 October 1943.

⁸⁰ David Stone, *War Summits: The Meetings that Shaped World War II and the Postwar World* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2005), pp. 85-93.

(SEAC).⁸¹

The decisions made at the Quadrant Conference and the creation of SEAC gave Chiang Kai-shek cause for concern. The formation of SEAC, which transferred Thailand and Burma from the China theater to its domain, meant that Nationalist Chinese forces might be used not to support China in resisting Japan but to aid Britain in recovering Burma.⁸² When Chiang met with Lord Mountbatten in Chongqing on 19 October 1943, Mountbatten informed him there were no plans for U.S. ground forces to participate in the delayed north Burma campaign and asked the Chinese that he be given command over all Chinese forces once they entered Burma.⁸³ When Chiang asked whether the allied naval and airpower support would be forthcoming, Mountbatten answered that he was “hopeful.”⁸⁴ Chiang, then, was asked to agree to his Ramgarh and Yunnan forces being deployed in Burma under British command in an operation, to which the Allies attached little priority, were unwilling to promise air or naval support, for which no U.S. ground forces would be available, and that would strengthen Britain’s position in Southeast Asia.⁸⁵

Hoping to make use of Stilwell as he had done in the spring of 1942, to maintain control over his forces in India and in Burma, may be why Chiang Kai-shek retracted a request for Stilwell’s recall in mid-October 1943. Retaining Stilwell, who wanted a more substantial U.S. commitment in China and to ultimately fight there, may have appeared to Chiang the best way to secure a greater effort from Washington as well as to maintain leverage in SEAC.⁸⁶ Mountbatten’s attitude toward Stilwell’s recall might have also influenced Chiang’s decision: in his diary entry for 15 October 1943, Chiang evidenced a determination to keep Stilwell, when he learned from an informal source that the new SEAC commander was reluctant to have Stilwell, now also serving as his deputy and having good grasp of the China-Burma-India theater recalled, as no suitable candidate was available to replace Stilwell.⁸⁷

But T. V. Soong, who had been pressing since the spring of 1943 for Stilwell’s recall, was infuriated and humiliated by Chiang’s decision: in mid-October 1943 the two men

⁸¹ A. J. Stockwell, “Imperialism and Nationalism in South-east Asia”, in Judith M. Brown and WM. Roger Louis eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 479-485.

⁸² Aron Shai, *Britain and China, 1941-47: Imperial Momentum* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 53-56.

⁸³ Minute of conversation between Chiang and Mountbatten, 19 October 1943, in Qin Xiaoyi ed., *Zhonghua Minguo Zhongyao Shiliao Chubian—Dui Ri Kangzhan Shiqi* (Taipei: KMT Historical Committee, 1981), 3:3, pp. 272-281.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945*, pp. 38-39.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

⁸⁷ CKSD, Box 43, diary entry for 15 October 1943.

quarreled bitterly.⁸⁸ Chiang regarded Soong as a pro-American progressive liberal whose carefully nurtured contacts in the United States would have men favorably disposed to him appointed to the new posts that Stilwell's recall would bring about. With the Yunnan force set to slip out of Chiang's control once it entered Burma, Soong might engineer a situation in which Chiang's power would decline and his own influence greatly strengthen. To Chiang, retaining Stilwell would thus undercut Soong, a main contender for power in China.⁸⁹

Stilwell's staying on in the fall of 1943 did not improve the Allied war situation in Burma. On 27 March 1944, Chiang Kai-shek sent a message to Roosevelt, refusing to deploy his Yunnan force into north Burma, because he faced a strong Japanese offensive in China and the Soviets had begun to move into northern Xinjiang. With China unable to hold its current positions against the Japanese, Chiang argued, removing the Yunnan force and the U.S. Air Force in India would further undermine Nationalist fronts in China, and allow the Japanese to advance into south and southwest China.⁹⁰ An unsympathetic Roosevelt responded to Chiang on April 3 that American aid would be "unjustified" if the Yunnan force did not cross the Salween River into Burma.⁹¹ Meanwhile, Stilwell suggested to Marshall that Washington should stop its Lend-Lease aid to Nationalist China unless Chiang's Yunnan force immediately began operations. Thus, on 13 April Marshall instructed Stilwell to stop supplies to the Chinese force in Yunnan and allocate them to the U.S. Air Force in China.⁹² The furious and frustrated Chiang ordered his troops to move.

By July 1944, as a result of Japan's Operation Ichigo in China, Allied strategy in East Asia lay in ruins, draining the relationship between Chongqing and Washington. In early July, the worsening situation in the China theater forced Marshall to warn Roosevelt that all the military power and resources in China must now be entrusted to "one individual capable of directing that effort in a fruitful way against the Japanese."⁹³ Thus on 6 July, Roosevelt wrote to Chiang suggesting that Stilwell be appointed commander of all Chinese forces. Chiang

⁸⁸ After the quarrel, for the next three months Soong was left cooling his heels in his residence and was not allowed to participate in official events, including the Cairo Summit held in November 1943. See Kuo and Lin, *T. V. Soong in Modern Chinese History*, p. 23.

⁸⁹ Chiang's resentment at Soong's political ambitions was revealed in his personal diaries of this period. See, for example, CKSD, Box 43, diary entries for 17 and 18 October 1943. For a detailed discussion on the delicate relationship between Chiang and Soong during this critical period of time, see also Theodore White ed., *The Stilwell Papers* (New York: William Sloane, 1948), pp. 230-234.

⁹⁰ Chiang to Roosevelt, 27 March 1944, in Qin ed., *Zhonghua Minguo Zhongyao Shiliao Chubian*, 3: 3, pp. 297-298.

⁹¹ Roosevelt to Chiang, 4 April 1944, *ibid.*, p. 299.

⁹² Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, pp. 566-567.

⁹³ Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945*, p. 55.

agreed, because he could not afford a rift with the United States; however, he demanded that a personal emissary from Roosevelt be stationed in Chongqing and a guarantee that communist forces not be incorporated in the Chinese command structure unless and until they accepted Nationalist authority. Chiang also demanded authority over Lend-Lease supplies be transferred to the Nationalists and a precise definition of Stilwell's authority.⁹⁴

In the meantime, the situation in China continued to deteriorate. The fall of the strategic cities of Hengyang, Guilin, and Liuzhou to Operation Ichigo in southwest China created dark hours for the Nationalists in Chongqing. In early September 1944, when the situation in Burma was loosing up, Chiang urged Stilwell to stage a diversionary attack on Bhamo that would relieve the Yunnan force in north Burma so it could be redeployed within Yunnan to keep away further Japanese thrusts into southwest China. Stilwell refused and continued to withhold fuel from the U.S. Fourteenth (previously the Tenth) Air Force unit that was to come to China's rescue.⁹⁵ When Chiang threatened to withdraw his Yunnan force from Burma, Marshall and Roosevelt took a drastic action. In his message to Chiang dated 16 September, Roosevelt threatened to withdraw U.S. aid and demanded that Chiang hand over all his Chinese military forces to Stilwell, in whom Chiang had no faith.⁹⁶ Clearly, Roosevelt was now making Chiang responsible for the turn of events in China. Staking his claim to legitimacy on the successful prosecution of the war, Chiang could not afford to let that charge go unchallenged.

In a letter to Roosevelt on 9 October, Chiang rejected Roosevelt's demand to hand over his command to Stilwell and charged that the Burma campaign had drained off most of his properly trained and equipped reserves. Japan's Ichigo Operation in China, Chiang argued, had been six times as large as those that the United States and Britain faced in Burma, but that Stilwell "had been completely indifferent and refused to release Lend-Lease already in Yunnan."⁹⁷ At this juncture, to both Chiang and Roosevelt, it was no longer Stilwell's retention but his dismissal that became useful.

Stilwell's final removal in October 1944 was yet another example of how domestic political factors deeply affected both China and the United States during the war. Chiang

⁹⁴ See: CKSD, Box 43, diary entry for 7 July 1944; Chiang to Roosevelt, 8 July 1944, in Qin ed., *Zhonghua Minguo Zhongyao Shiliao Chubian*, 3: 3, pp. 636-637; Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, pp. 600-602.

⁹⁵ Minute of conversation between Chiang Kai-shek and Patrick Hurley, 12 September 1944, in Qin ed., *Zhonghua Minguo Zhongyao Shiliao Chubian*, 3: 3, pp. 662-671.

⁹⁶ Roosevelt to Chiang, 18 September 1944, *ibid.*, pp. 658-659.

⁹⁷ Chiang to Roosevelt, 9 October 1944, *ibid.*, pp. 683-684.

wanted Stilwell dismissed not only because he had no faith in him and did not want to lose control of his armies but also because Stilwell had been loud in his support of U.S. military contacts with the Chinese Communists.⁹⁸ Stilwell's recall became useful to Roosevelt too. Many saw Stilwell's actions as responsible for the crisis in China at a time when the outcome of the 1944 presidential election was in doubt. Roosevelt's opponent, Thomas Dewey, was doing well in public opinion polls in October, suggesting that support for Roosevelt was slipping.⁹⁹

Thus both Chiang and Roosevelt used the Stilwell issue for political purposes. As the U.S. elections approached, military developments around the globe suggested not a glorious Allied advance on all fronts but a string of difficulties and miscalculations both in Europe and in Asia-Pacific, particularly in China, the country about whose future the influential people such as Henry Luce cared so much. The best course of action to Roosevelt, therefore, was to distance himself from Chiang; Stilwell's recall became the most feasible way to achieve that end.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper reconsiders several issues in the U.S.-China relationship, primarily from 1938 to 1944, from a fresh angle. It suggests that, around 1938, American policy makers began linking Japanese action in the Far East with its German and Italian counterparts in Europe. Accordingly, Washington set new policy to aid and support the Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek. The aid's original purpose was to enable Chiang to withstand Japan and improve his position as a reformer of a popular and effective government. Competing bureaucracies in Washington, however, each with a different perspective and approach, clashed over tactics and interpretations of events in China. The resulting confusion allowed Chinese leaders such as T. V. Soong to manipulate U.S. decisions. As a result, wartime U.S. aid to China not only affected Washington's strategic planning in East Asia but gave rise to political intrigues within both the United States and Nationalist China.

This paper also demonstrates how politics dominated Allied military, aid, and strategic planning during World War II. This was best illustrated by the Stilwell issue, which has long haunted Sino-U.S. relations. My research suggests that Stilwell's position in China owed itself to the uses others could make of him. In the spring of 1942, Chiang Kai-shek and T. V. Soong gave him command over the Chinese divisions fighting in Burma to keep their forces

⁹⁸ For a careful analysis of this subject, see, for example, Carole J. Carter, *Mission to Yenan: American Liaison with the Chinese Communists, 1944-1947* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997).

⁹⁹ Van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925-1945*, pp. 58-59.

out of the British hands and secure greater amounts of U.S. aid. In the fall of 1943, Stilwell was again useful to Chiang when he thought the newly created SEAC might endanger his position with the Allies. Chiang might have kept Stilwell as a way to counter T. V. Soong, although the details remain murky. In the same way, in October 1944, when Chiang blamed Nationalist reverses on Stilwell, Roosevelt found it advantageous to distance himself from Chiang and China in the run-up to the general elections by removing Stilwell.

In the larger picture, reconsidering the wartime Sino-U.S. relationship leads us to the following thesis: the sudden upsurge of U.S. interest in Nationalist China in the latter half of the 1930s plunged Washington into a situation that few Americans understood. Accordingly, the U.S. aid mission to China, which began as an attempt to bolster the Nationalist government in its fight against the Japanese, gradually became a tangle of conflicting personalities and unclear political motivations. Whether American operations in wartime China and the increased American support for the Nationalists turned out to be an ill-informed decision that forced the United States into a battle for the control of Asia—a battle that continued into the Cold War era—deserves further scrutiny.

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