
United States Involvement in China's Military Establishment in the 1940s

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Introduction

In early twentieth-century China, national unification and the creation of a modern military capable of achieving it were extremely important challenges. In particular, the Nationalist Government of China, led by Chiang Kai-shek, can be regarded as the regime that, since its establishment in 1930, earnestly sought to address these challenges. Moreover, Chiang Kai-shek's efforts to build and modernize the military were always accompanied by foreign assistance. The first major partner was Nazi Germany, but most of the benefits of that cooperation were depleted in the fighting against the Japanese Army in 1937-1938. For this reason, the Nationalist Government was forced to maintain its position in the southwest region as its base of operations and to restart its program of military buildup.

It was the United States that supported the Nationalist government in this effort. After the outbreak of war with Japan, the United States began providing full-scale support to build the Nationalist Government forces from the latter half of 1942. The relationship between the United States and the Nationalist Government forces underwent many twists and turns from the Second World War until the Nationalist Government's relocation to Taiwan in 1949, and played a significant role in shaping the security environment of East Asia. In other words, the relationship between the United States and the Nationalist Government's program of military buildup was not simply a matter of fluctuations in its military strength; it was a significant historical factor that shaped the outcome of the Sino-Japanese War and the postwar political situation within China, thereby influencing the formation of the postwar regional order in East Asia.

Another issue was that this Sino-American military cooperation was set against the backdrop of the Allies' global war-effort network during World War II. In recent years, particularly in Japan, a view has gained traction that Japan's war during World War II was a composite, multi-theater conflict spanning regions such as Southeast Asia and China. Here, this "composite" nature refers to the interconnection of battles fought across multiple theaters, such as the "southern" fronts of Burma and Malaya, and the China front.

This "composite" nature, understood as the interconnection among battles fought independently across multiple theaters, was naturally shared by China as well. However, for China, global networks linking regions that were not themselves battlefields also had a major influence on its ability to wage war. The modernization of China's military capabilities and creation of new military forces with the support of the United States were carried forward amid a global war that spanned multiple regions.

Of course, as many studies point out, in the Allies' war effort against Japan after the outbreak of the Pacific War, the China front and the role of the Nationalist government there occupied only a secondary position. For example, China received only a very small share of the foreign military aid provided by the United States under the Lend-Lease Act. Moreover, in the Allies' strategy against Japan in the Far East, the China front received far fewer resources than other fronts, such as the Pacific. On the Burma front, the Allies were unable to establish smooth cooperation with Britain, and as a result, they failed to formulate a coherent operational plan against Japan. Nevertheless, for the Nationalist Government, cooperation with the United States concerning the Far Eastern front designated by the Allies as the China-Burma-India (CBI) theater continued to

occupy an important place in its efforts to build and modernize its military in the war against Japan,

and this cooperation extended into the postwar period.

In light of the above, this report examines how Sino-American military cooperation in the 1940s, particularly during World War II, shaped the formation of the security environment in East Asia from wartime through the postwar period.

1. United States Support for Military Buildup

After the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Nationalist Government once again embarked on a military buildup with foreign support. The United States became fully involved in this military buildup by providing training and equipment. The origins lie in the Burma Campaign fought from March to May 1942. In this campaign, the Nationalist Government dispatched an expeditionary force to Burma to conduct joint operations with the British Army. However, under attack by the Japanese Army, the units were split into eastern and western groups, one retreating toward Yunnan in China and the other toward India. The units that fled to India were reorganized by U.S. General Stilwell, who was commanding the expeditionary force. On April 16, 1942, General Gruber, who had been dispatched to Chongqing under Stilwell's orders, presented to the Nationalist Government leadership Stilwell's plan to provide U.S. military training and equipment to Chinese ground forces in India and Yunnan, build them into elite units, and use them for the counteroffensive operations in Burma¹.

However, Stilwell's plan for military support to China was not necessarily welcomed by the Chinese leadership. The relationship between Chiang Kai-shek and Stilwell, already strained by the defeat in the Burma Campaign, had become extremely tense, further aggravated by problems such as the reduction of U.S. support to China following the closure of the Burma Road. However, the conflict between them was resolved through the mediation of Lauchlin Currie, the special envoy of U.S. President Roosevelt, who had been visiting China since July. Through Currie's mediation, the matter was settled, with the United States promising to increase its provision of aircraft and materiel, and Chiang Kai-shek agreeing to allow Stilwell to assume command of the Chinese Army in India (CAI)². At the end of July, Chiang Kai-shek responded to Stilwell's request and decided to provide 21 divisions for training in India and the Burma counteroffensive operations³.

U.S. military support for the Chinese Forces began with the establishment of a new force in India known as the Chinese Army in India (CAI). Ramgarh, which became the Sino-American base for training the new-style units, was situated in Bihar Province, India, in a highland border region near the Tibetan mountains. The Chinese units stationed in India were officially designated the "Chinese Army in India (CAI)", composed of the CAI General Headquarters under General Stilwell as commander, and the subordinate New 1st Army as the core of its forces. Additionally, Stilwell concurrently served as the director of the "training center" established under the CAI, where he oversaw the training of Chinese military personnel. After its formal establishment in August 1942, the CAI continued to

¹ *History of the Founding of the National Revolutionary Army, Part III (2)*, National Revolutionary Army History Compilation Committee, Taipei: Bureau of Compilation and Translation of History and Politics, Ministry of National Defense, 1993, p. 1514; "An Overview of the China Expeditionary Force's India-Burma Anti-Japanese Resistance", Wang Chuying, (*India-Burma Expeditionary Force Resistance*, edited by the Editorial and Review Committee of the "India-Burma Expeditionary Force Resistance" Project, Committee for Literature and History Data Research, National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Beijing: China Literature and History Press, 1992), p. 115.

² *Allies at Loggerheads: Sino-American Military Cooperation During the Pacific War, 1941–1945*, Ch'i, Hsi sheng, pp. 232-233

³ *Ibid*, pp. 258-259

receive troop reinforcements from China, and by the summer of 1944, it had expanded to two armies comprising six divisions. Moreover, soldiers recruited from students and intellectuals through wartime mobilization campaigns were sent to India as the “Youth Expeditionary Force” for training. The Ramgarh base and the CAI were disbanded in March 1946 when the last unit departed from the site⁴.

In April 1942, as Stilwell began organizing the CAI, he first established an independent command structure. To ensure that the U.S. military personnel controlled the force, he created a “General Headquarters” above the two divisions that formed its core combat force⁵. Command and control of the General Headquarters was exercised by U.S. military personnel, who centralized and oversaw all functions of the subordinate units, including command, training, and personnel matters. The General Headquarters exercised direct control over all aspects, from peacetime training to combat command and logistical support during wartime. Drawing on his experience in the Burma campaign, Stilwell, who regarded the senior officers of the Nationalist Government forces as lacking ability, promoted the building of an entirely new force centered on the CAI General Headquarters⁶.

With regard to the CAI’s training system, the Ramgarh training center offered five courses: infantry, artillery, tanks, tactics, and logistics. Each course had a six-week training period per intake, and the course directors and instructors were U.S. military personnel⁷. Through intensive and thorough training, Stilwell sought to create, in a short period, a force proficient in U.S.-style equipment and operations⁸. By 1943, after roughly a year of training, the CAI leadership had come to have confidence in the results they had achieved. As training progressed, Chiang Kai-shek eventually took a strong interest in its results, and in September 1943, he requested that training for armored and mechanized units be added.⁹

The reorganized CAI had become vastly different from the Nationalist Government forces in every aspect, from the quality of its personnel and equipment to its tactics and composition of units. With each division and regiment equipped with field artillery and mortars, their firepower increased substantially, and improvements were also made in communication capabilities to enable their effective employment. Furthermore, directly subordinate to the U.S.-controlled General Headquarters were an artillery regiment equipped with 36 heavy guns and a supply unit with nearly 400 vehicles. In other words, the CAI General Headquarters was structured to carry out the style of warfare sought by American officers, one that employed large quantities of materiel and weapons to deliver formidable firepower¹⁰.

⁴ Military Affairs Commission – Bulletin Report Materials (4 March 1946), “Special Transmission Archives: General Historical Materials”, Catalogue No. 002-080200-00533-021, Academia Historica Collection - Chiang Kai shek Presidential Archives.

⁵ However, when the 54th Army was sent to India, Stilwell accepted only its troops, excluding the Army headquarters (*An Account of the Chinese Army in India*, Zheng Dongguo (*India-Burma Expeditionary Force Resistance*) p.73).

⁶ *From Training in India to a Victorious Counteroffensive*, Wang Jiren (included in *India-Burma Expeditionary Force Resistance*) p.323; *An Account of the Chinese Army in India*, Zheng Dongguo in *India-Burma Expeditionary Force Resistance*) p.72

⁷ *History of the Founding of the National Revolutionary Army, Vol. III (2)* p.1543; Memorandum (11 November 1943), “Cairo Conference (1)”, Catalogue No. 002-080106-00021-001, from the Academia Historica Collection - Chiang Kai shek Presidential Archives. For the training situation at Ramgarh, *Stillwell's Mission to China*, Romanus and Sunderland, pp. 218-219, was also referred.

⁸ *ibid*, p. 177.

⁹ Boatner “Note on Ramgarh”, Haydon L. Boatner Papers, Box 2, Hoover Archives.

¹⁰ Table of Planned Allocation and Already Issued Quantity of Weapons and Vehicles for the Logistics (Motorized) Corps of the Chinese Army in India, “Proposed Organizational and Duty Structure Plan for the Newly Reorganized First Army”, Archive No.: 31/583.2/1-2, from the Collection of the National Archives Administration, National Development Council – Ministry of National Defense Archives; *History of the Nationalist Government Forces Youth*

Regarding the internal workings of CAI, senior Chinese military personnel noted that the Director of Training, who oversaw the training of Chinese soldiers, wielded authority second only to Stilwell¹¹. The organization and operations of CAI were entirely entrusted to the U.S. military, with Chinese military personnel granted only limited discretionary authority, which, in turn, solidified the CAI's independent character, separate from the Nationalist Government forces. The CAI was completed by the U.S. military under a consistent leadership policy with the aim of modernizing the force so that it would be capable of waging the Burma counteroffensive operations.

Meanwhile, in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China, the building of new Chinese-led units based on U.S. military support was progressing in parallel with CAI. In March 1943, an Expeditionary Force was established in Kunming. The Nationalist Government and the United States planned to use this Expeditionary Force together with CAI to drive the Japanese Army out of northern Burma, thereby restoring support to China via India and Burma and strengthening China's military capabilities.

2. U.S. Military Support to China During the Counteroffensive Operation in Northern Burma and Its Impact

Given the above developments, the Nationalist Government and the United States modernized the Chinese forces in India and Yunnan while awaiting an opportunity for a counteroffensive against Japan. However, considerable time was spent before operations actually began, due to disagreements with Britain over military strategy and Southeast Asia policy, as well as conflicts between the U.S. Forces in China and the Nationalist Government regarding the deployment of the Chinese Forces. Even after parts of the operations commenced in late 1943, these disagreements among the Allies delayed the launch of a full-scale offensive. Finally, in May 1944, U.S. and Chinese Forces launched a full-scale offensive against the Japanese Army in the northern Burma border region. By year's end, the Japanese Army units defending both Yunnan and Burma had been driven out.

Since the Burma counteroffensive operations and their course have already been examined in numerous studies, this paper will not discuss them in detail. On the other hand, it is necessary to examine how the various forms of military support the United States provided to the Chinese Forces for carrying out the counteroffensive in northern Burma were related to the Nationalist Government's military buildup.

As noted in the previous section, by 1943 the U.S. military had been creating and training new-style units based in India and Yunnan. During the 1944 counteroffensive in northern Burma, these units—operating under the command of Stilwell and the local U.S. military leadership—played the central role in recapturing the region from the Japanese Army and reopening the lines of communication leading into China. The restoration of the supply route to China via Burma, together with the improved combat effectiveness demonstrated by the newly organized Chinese forces, can be regarded as one of the achievements of U.S. military assistance to China.

However, recent military-historical studies analyzing the operations of the Chinese Army in India (CAI) have offered skeptical assessments of its combat capabilities.¹² In fact, during the Battle of Myitkyina—the climax of the CAI's Burma counteroffensive—the Japanese forces under Rear

Army (Vol. 1), Taipei: Ministry of National Defense Historical & Political Compilation and Translation Office, Ministry of National Defense Historical / Political Compilation & Translation Office, pp. 213-214.

¹¹ *An Account of the Chinese Army in India*, Zheng Dongguo, in *India-Burma Expeditionary Force Resistance*, p. 72.

¹² Li Junshan, *The Chinese Army in India: The Northern Burma Counteroffensive and Wartime Allied Cooperation* (Taipei: National Chengchi University Press, 2020), pp. 229–230.

Admiral Mizukami, despite being inferior in manpower and equipment, constructed strong defensive positions and repelled repeated Allied assaults, holding out for three months. In this battle, the CAI is said to have revealed shortcomings in training as well as deficiencies in the leadership of U.S. officers. Moreover, when discussing the relationship between achievements such as the defeat of the Japanese Army in northern Burma or the construction of the supply route to China and Sino-American military cooperation, it is insufficient to focus solely on improvements in Chinese military capability. Fundamentally, the advance of Chinese forces in this counteroffensive was supported by extensive U.S. military assistance, both at the front and in the rear.

Foremost among these forms of support was combat assistance at the front. The U.S. military supported the advance of Chinese forces by coordinating reconnaissance and intelligence gathering—conducted through aircraft and small reconnaissance units—with subsequent attacks. A major example of this was the 1944 counteroffensive in northern Burma, in which the U.S. military supported Chinese operations through various means, including air-to-ground support by air units and infiltration missions by long-range reconnaissance forces.

To begin with, we consider the air support. Originally, in the CBI theater, the U.S. and British air units operated in an integrated manner, conducting offensive air operations across the theater. By January 1944, the air forces allocated for operations in northern Burma comprised 141 fighters, 48 heavy bombers, 37 medium bombers, and 51 transport aircraft¹³. Although this strength declined after some units were transferred to the Chinese mainland, by June 1944 the combat power of the Tenth Air Force had been reorganized. To support the northern Burma counteroffensive, the Tenth Air Force was reinforced with two fighter groups and one transport group, becoming a tactical air force with an established rear-area support and administrative structure. Since operations in northern Burma were tactically independent from those in Manipur and Arakan, the Tenth Air Force became the dedicated air force supporting the CAI.¹⁴ It engaged in combined air-ground operations directly supporting the Chinese advance in northern Burma, reportedly flying more than thirty sorties per day on average.¹⁵

The key requirement for such air support was detailed intelligence on Japanese Army defenses and other information necessary to enable precise air-to-ground support. To obtain this intelligence, the CAI Headquarters launched an infiltration operation using a reconnaissance unit known as “Galahad.” This operation was modeled on the infiltration tactics promoted by General Wingate of the British Army, who was also fighting on the Burma front. Inspired by these tactics, Stilwell advocated employing them in the northern Burma counteroffensive operations.¹⁶ The “Galahad” unit comprised approximately 3,000 U.S. Army infantrymen and volunteers gathered from various locations, including the U.S. mainland and South America. Deployed in May 1944, the unit infiltrated behind Japanese Army defense lines, engaging in intelligence gathering and sabotage. The unit was ultimately disbanded following the fall of Myitkyina in August, having suffered heavy casualties. Only about 200 members survived.¹⁷

The significance of the “Galahad” unit from the perspective of U.S. military support to China was that it made possible close coordination between air support and ground operations. During the

¹³ Charles F. Romanus, Riley Sunderland, *Stillwell's Command Problem*, pp. 84—85

¹⁴ Charles F. Romanus, Riley Sunderland, *Stillwell's Command Problem*, pp. 84.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 84.

¹⁶ Nathan B. Custer, *Allied special operations and their effects on Japanese strategy: Northern Burma, 1942-1945*, p.16

¹⁷ Charles F. Romanus, Riley Sunderland, *Stillwell's Command Problem*, p. 52.

counteroffensive operations leading up to the fall of Myitkyina, the Chinese forces achieved success by effectively utilizing air support for bombing and supply, and “Galahad” provided the intelligence necessary for that air support. Because the unit’s operation concept called for penetrating enemy territory by air and conducting long-term operations in isolation, it included air support units equipped with fighter aircraft, gliders, and transport aircraft. The air units included officers specialized in communications and intelligence, creating a system that maintained constant contact.¹⁸ As a result, while conducting disruptive operations behind the Japanese Army lines, Galahad was able to transmit intelligence, such as details on Japanese Army defense facilities, gathered through reconnaissance, and request air-raid support directly from the field.

Based on intelligence from “Galahad,” Stilwell and the CAI Headquarters, who commanded the Chinese forces, were able to advance the ground offensive operations under favorable conditions. Furthermore, various measures were undertaken to improve the processing of operational intelligence, including diversifying intelligence sources and the methods of their transmission in order to ensure accurate support. In particular, information on Japanese defensive positions—critical to the success or failure of the offensive—was transmitted by radio to the air units.¹⁹ However, during the assault on Myitkyina, the attacks were not always carried out effectively, as poor coordination among the units hampered their operational performance.²⁰

Even after “Galahad,” the CAI Headquarters maintained its policy of supporting the operations of the Chinese force through U.S. reconnaissance units. By late 1944, U.S. and Chinese forces advanced to secure complete control of northern Burma in order to reopen the Burma Road. “During this period, the U.S. military supported the operations by infiltrating behind Japanese lines a small unit known as the “Mars Task Force.” The “Mars” unit, which was deployed in early 1945, carried out intelligence gathering, reconnaissance, and communications support.²¹ Reflecting on the shortcomings revealed during the assault on Myitkyina, the forces were reportedly able to carry out more effective attacks—combining air units, artillery, and infantry—when they captured Bhamo in late 1944.²²

Another important factor was the work of the U.S. Army engineer units. In 1943, as the United States expanded its military support to China through India and Burma, it dispatched the engineer units to the region to reconstruct the overland transport routes to China. The engineer units were deployed to construct the communication and logistics lines essential for preparing the Allied counteroffensive in Burma. By January 1944, they had completed the first phase of the construction needed to support the operation, making it possible to deploy tanks, artillery units, ammunition, and aircraft to the front lines.²³ From February onward, once this infrastructure was in place, the Service of Supply (SOS) began supplying the ground and reconnaissance units. After 1944, under the command of the CAI Headquarters, the supply capabilities of SOS, deployed in India and Burma, and those of the U.S. 10th Air Force were strengthened, greatly increasing the volume of supplies delivered to troops by air²⁴. In

¹⁸ Nathan B. Custer, *Allied special operations and their effects on Japanese strategy: Northern Burma, 1942-1945*, pp. 19-21.

¹⁹ Nathan B. Custer, *Allied special operations and their effects on Japanese strategy: Northern Burma, 1942-1945*, p.16

²⁰ Li, *The Chinese Army in India*, pp. 202–203.

²¹ Charles F. Romanus, Riley Sunderland, *Stillwell’s Command Problem*, pp. 92-93.

²² Xu Kangming, *A History of the War of Resistance Against Japan on the China–India–Burma Front*, Beijing: Liberation Army Publishing House, p. 368.

²³ War Department, *The History of SOS*, “World War II Operational Documents” collection in Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, call no. N8226.

²⁴ Charles F. Romanus, Riley Sunderland, *Stillwell’s Command Problem*, pp. 102-105.

supporting the Burma counteroffensive operations, the CAI Headquarters assigned SOS the highest possible priority²⁵.

As described above, the U.S. military supported the Burma counteroffensive operations in all domains, including air support, reconnaissance (intelligence), and logistics. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the U.S. military also managed and operated all of this support and the resources behind it. The CAI Headquarters oversaw the necessary reconnaissance activities and incorporated their results into its operations. Under Stilwell's command, the CAI Headquarters supervised all liaison with reconnaissance units, as well as the organization and exploitation of intelligence obtained. The U.S. military officers responsible for the CAI undertook a range of tasks, including providing rear-area support to reconnaissance units, such as managing communications and supplies, as well as exploiting the intelligence obtained, and coordinating air strikes based on that intelligence²⁶. To enable air units to efficiently utilize intelligence obtained from the front lines, the commanders assigned air force officers to accompany ground forces at the front. They also established a "Joint Operations Air Party," staffed with officers skilled in air communications. This party was responsible for issuing operational instructions to air units, such as target selection, thereby achieving close coordination between air and ground forces²⁷. Even in matters of frontline supply, the Supreme Commander Stilwell intervened and increased the support provided to CAI.

The strength of the newly organized Chinese forces was largely attributable to the significant increase in firepower made possible by their integration with air support. However, in reality, much of that strength depended on the capabilities of the CAI Headquarters, which demonstrated effective leadership across all aspects, including reconnaissance units, supporting air units, and logistics.

Moreover, underpinning the various forms of U.S. military support for China described above was a rear-area support system in India, constructed by the SOS. The activities of the SOS will be examined in the next section.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 101.

²⁶ Headquarters 10th Air Force, *Development of joint air ground operations in North Burma*, "World War II Operational Documents" collection in Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, call no. N8226.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

3 The Supply Network Supporting Sino-American Military Cooperation

Regarding Sino-American military cooperation over Burma, another crucial element alongside the military operational support discussed in the previous section was the rear-area support system in India. From the moment when the surviving units of the Chinese Army, driven out of Burma in 1942, reached India, the United States began building a rear-area support system while allowing those units to rest and reorganize. This was the first large-scale attempt in U.S. Army history to provide rear-area support for a foreign military force. Moreover, this endeavor, carried out in the territory of British India, a third country, presented even more complex problems for the U.S. military command in India and China.

The supply routes of the Allies that terminated in China formed only one part of a broader global supply network. The air supply route over the Himalayas, known as the “Hump,” and the Ledo Road were the only direct connections to China, but they represented only a small portion of the overall supply lines. When looking at the whole picture, India served as the essential foundation of the supply routes.

For Britain and the Southeast Asian theater, India served as the strategic base for the Burma counteroffensive. For the United States, however, it had consistently functioned as the base camp supporting its supply plan to China since 1942. However, the use of Indian infrastructure, such as ports and railways, was prioritized for the Southeast Asia theater, and their capacity fell short of what the United States required. The only port the U.S. military could use on a preferential basis was Karachi. Bombay, India’s largest port, could only be used for disembarking personnel. Although Calcutta on the east coast was also available, transport activities in the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal had been rendered impossible by the Imperial Japanese Navy.²⁸

Under these circumstances, the only supply route the U.S. military could use was the railway from Karachi, via Delhi, to the Tinsukia Airfield (Dinjan). However, because part of this line passed through a scorching desert region, it was impossible to transport ammunition for half the year. Although Calcutta was the only place in the east that had industrial production capacity, it could hardly be called efficient. Therefore, Stilwell, who, as commander of the U.S. Forces in China, was responsible for support to China, engaged in repeated negotiations with the British and focused on securing transport allocation for supplies to Dinjan and Ramgarh, the key support hubs for support to China in the northeast, as well as on strengthening the infrastructure²⁹.

To address this situation, SOS Headquarters was relocated to New Delhi in 1942, where numerous functions were concentrated, including the Indian government, the British Army headquarters, and the U.S. military command in India. To manage transportation and communications across this vast region, SOS established three Base Sections, stretching from India to Burma and China, encompassing supply hubs such as ports and airfields, as well as two Advance Sections that served as supply bases supporting the operations of U.S. air units and ground forces in the Burma counteroffensive operations³⁰. In accordance with this framework, by the end of 1943, the U.S. military had largely completed the establishment of the rear-area support system underpinning the air supply route over the Himalayas to China.

However, because Stilwell’s efforts had been focused on achieving results on the Burma front, the

²⁸ *History SOS, China-India-Burma*, “World War II Operational Documents” collection in Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, call no. N4428.

²⁹ Charles F. Romanus, Riley Sanders, *Stillwell’s Command Problem*, pp. 259-262.

³⁰ Charles F. Romanus, *Riley Sanders, Time Runs out in CBI*, pp. 29-34.

issues of how to connect supply routes into the Chinese mainland and how to maintain a functioning supply system within China itself were left unresolved. When Stilwell stepped down in October 1944 and the China Theater was formally separated from the India–Burma Theater, the Headquarters of U.S. Army Forces in China still had to coordinate with the India–Burma Theater whenever requesting or transporting materiel support from the United States. In response, Wedemeyer, while establishing China as an independent theater, built a cooperative framework with U.S. military personnel stationed in India and took measures to increase the flow of supplies into China. Together with Sultan, who became commander of U.S. forces in the India–Burma Theater, Wedemeyer worked both to maintain and expand connections with the Indian supply network and to construct a supply system within China.³¹

This reform of the supply-support structure was an essential step for procuring the materiel and equipment required for Wedemeyer's modernization program for Nationalist forces in China and for the counteroffensive operations to be carried out by the elite units formed under that program. After securing the independence of the China Theater, the U.S. Forces China Headquarters strengthened air transport from India to China and began efforts to improve transportation and communications infrastructure within China. From October 1944 onward, the Services of Supply (SOS) devoted its full efforts to securing logistical support inside China, while the U.S. Army Air Forces increased their transport of not only materiel but also personnel.³²

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During this process, the supply system extending from India also changed. As the counteroffensive operations to drive the Japanese Army out of the northern Burma border region progressed, this supply system expanded. Particularly after the Ledo Road, a land route connecting to Yunnan Province in China, opened in late 1944, the whole of India was designated as a Base Section area. Advance Sections were established in Nationalist Government stronghold areas such as Yunnan Province within China, while the regions in southern China under Japanese control were designated as Combat Zones.³⁴ The U.S. Forces in China established a system for fighting the Japanese Army by using India as a rear-area base and Yunnan Province as a supply base via Burma.

Furthermore, in February 1945, Wedemeyer submitted a plan to Chiang Kai-shek to develop roads and communication lines extending from Kunming to various areas, including Guizhou, Sichuan, and Guangxi provinces. This plan aimed to secure transportation and communication lines from Kunming in order to ensure adequate rear-area support for the construction of the "Alpha" units within China and for the subsequent military operations³⁵.

The Chinese side also built a logistics system, along with a military organization to manage it, in a manner integrated with U.S. rear-area support. In fact, this was essentially the first opportunity for the

³¹ War Department, *History SOS, China-India-Burma*.

³² Charles F. Romanus, *Riley Sanders, Time Runs out in CBI*, pp. 29-34.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-42.

³⁴ War Department, *History SOS, China-India-Burma*.

³⁵ Su Shengxiong, "Reform and Predicament: Changes in the Nationalist Army's Rear-Area Supply System," *Bulletin of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica*, no. 107 (March 2020): 107–108.

Nationalist Government forces to build a full-fledged rear-area support system. On February 1, the Rear-Area Command of the Army General Headquarters was established, and in coordination with the SOS of the U.S. military command, it strengthened the rear-area support framework for operations under the Army General HQ³⁶. By building a close cooperative framework with the U.S. military, the Army General HQ became a military organization that, together with the United States, directed everything from rear-area support and employment of airpower to frontline ground combat by ground forces.

It was believed that the capabilities of the Army General Headquarters would be fully realized through the comprehensive support of the U.S. military and the stable rear-area base provided by India. This was made possible only through the cooperation between the U.S. Forces China Headquarters and the India-Burma theater command. The Nationalist Government forces had not yet become capable of operating units equipped with modern weaponry independently. A February 1945 report prepared by the U.S. Forces in China also pointed out the low level of the logistical, mobilization, and operational capabilities of the Nationalist Government forces. Therefore, Wedemeyer and others had believed that, in the event of a full-scale counteroffensive against Japan, not only the Chinese rear-area services but also SOS of the U.S. Forces in China would directly support the Nationalist Government forces³⁷.

After February 1945, ground transport to China via India and Burma gradually increased. Cargo shipments to China, which were around 5,200 tons in February, exceeded 15,000 tons in April and reached nearly 33,000 tons by June. Pipeline fuel transport also increased, with a total of 15,000 tons sent to China between February and June³⁸. According to U.S. military reports, all construction work on the Ledo Road was completed in May 1945. Therefore, it may be inferred that full-scale overland transport of heavy cargo began in April, when transport volumes surged³⁹. Ultimately, U.S. military transport to China came fully on track less than half a year before the war ended.

³⁶ Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs out in CBI*, p. 345.

³⁷ Su, "Reform and Predicament," 107–108.

³⁸ Headquarters of US India-Burma office, *Stilwell Road report, overland lines of communication*, "World War II Operational Documents" collection in Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, cal

³⁹ *Ibid.*

4. The Impact of Operation Ichi-Go

Thus far, this study has examined the military assistance relationship between the United States and China up to the recapture of northern Burma at the end of 1944. Sino-American military cooperation was pursued within the framework of the Nationalist Government, U.S. Forces in China, and the China-Burma-India theater established by the Allies. It was driven primarily by the objective of achieving success in the Burma counteroffensive. In particular, the initiative in building the Chinese Forces lay largely with General Stilwell, who commanded the CAI. However, the Sino-American military cooperation independently pursued by Stilwell and others underwent significant changes under his successor, Wedemeyer, commander of U.S. Forces in China, from late 1944 to early 1945. To examine these changes, it is first necessary to return to the spring of 1944.

In the spring of 1944, the Japanese Army launched a large-scale offensive on the Chinese mainland. This offensive, known as Operation Ichi-Go, or the Continental Breakthrough Operation, was conducted roughly over a year across the entire front from North China to South China. From the perspective of Sino-American military cooperation, the individual most severely affected by this battle was Stilwell, who, as commander of the U.S. Forces in China, was responsible for all aspects of military cooperation, including the training of CAI. Stilwell's vision for military cooperation with China ultimately failed for two reasons: the exposure of the weakness of the Nationalist Government forces during Operation Ichi-Go by the Japanese Army in late 1944, particularly along the defense line in Hunan and Guangxi provinces, and the subsequent breakdown of his relationship with Chiang Kai-shek. Frustrated by the outcome of Operation Ichi-Go, Stilwell demanded command of the entire Chinese force, a move that ultimately led to the breakdown of his relationship with Chiang Kai-shek. When Chiang Kai-shek demanded Stilwell's dismissal, the Roosevelt Administration removed him from his post⁴⁰.

With Stilwell's dismissal, the nature of U.S. military aid to China was also reviewed. Stilwell's insistence on training the Chinese Forces in India was driven by two aims: to expel the Japanese Army from northern Burma and reopen the supply routes to Chiang Kai-shek's China, and to build CAI under his own control. However, when Operation Ichi-Go plunged China's military system into temporary chaos, this approach of limited modernization in northern Burma and India under Stilwell's direction was completely abandoned⁴¹.

It was General Albert C. Wedemeyer who sought a new form of military cooperation in the wake of Operation Ichi-Go. Wedemeyer, who had been involved in negotiations with the British Army and Stilwell at the Southeast Asia Theater Command, was dispatched as a new staff officer to Chiang Kai-shek, the Commander-in-Chief of the China theater, after Stilwell's dismissal. Shortly after his arrival in November 1944, Japanese Army units penetrated Guizhou Province, an event that had an even greater impact on the Nationalist Government and U.S. military personnel in China than the fall of Guilin or Hengyang. Chiang Kai-shek and Wedemeyer recognized this as a sign that the Japanese were preparing a full-scale offensive against the rear areas in the southwest and regarded the situation, particularly in Chongqing, as extremely grave. Chiang Kai-shek requested that the United States and Britain move CAI units deployed in Burma to Yunnan Province, and he resolved to make Chongqing

⁴⁰ Hsi-sheng Ch'i, *The Much Troubled Alliance: US-China Military Cooperation During the Pacific War, 1941-1945*, Academia Sinica, 2011, p. 553-554.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp. 563-568.

his last stand should Guizhou fall⁴². Meanwhile, Wedemeyer advised Chiang Kai-shek to relocate the capital to Kunming and proposed defense plans for Sichuan, Guizhou, and Yunnan. However, he believed that defending Kunming, the terminus of the materiel transport routes to China, should be the top priority⁴³.

As the Japanese Army's withdrawal improved the situation in Guizhou, the Nationalist Government and Wedemeyer moved to restore and strengthen China's military capabilities. At this time, Wedemeyer sought to make maximum use of Operation Ichi-Go's political impact in every respect. Wedemeyer met with Chiang Kai-shek in early December and advised him to redeploy troops and materiel to defend Kunming and halt the Japanese Army offensive. Furthermore, citing the danger that Operation Ichi-Go posed to the Nationalist Government's southwestern stronghold, he requested that the Southeast Asia theater return to China all CAI units that had been preparing to expand the Burma front. This was an attempt to reactivate U.S. and British military aid based in Kunming.

5. Military Buildup under the Alpha Plan

Wedemeyer also pressed Chiang Kai-shek on the need for military reform, aiming to improve the organizational and operational efficiency of the Nationalist Government forces through troop reductions and enhancements to the rear-area support structure⁴⁴. He consolidated these requirements and presented a new military program, the "Alpha Plan." The core elements of the plan were to block the Japanese Army's offensive against Kunming (and Chongqing), cultivate military strength under Sino-American cooperation, recapture the coastal regions of South China to secure port facilities, and subsequently execute full-scale counteroffensive operations against the Japanese Army⁴⁵. The Nationalist Government and the U.S. Forces China Headquarters adopted the Alpha Plan as their basic strategy. They proceeded to formulate and prepare counteroffensive operations against Japan, including "Rashness" and "CARBONARD".

What, then, did Wedemeyer and other U.S. personnel in China envision as the concrete steps for military buildup under the Alpha Plan? On December 28, 1944, Wedemeyer formally requested that Chiang Kai-shek provide approximately 270,000 troops for the Alpha Plan by March 1⁴⁶. The reorganization targeted 36 divisions selected from units deployed in Central China and Yunnan. These "Alpha divisions" were to receive training in Kunming, be equipped with American weapons, and have U.S. liaison officers assigned to them under the authority of the U.S. Forces China Headquarters. Subsequently, with the addition of the New 1st Army, then stationed in India and engaged in the Burma counteroffensive operations, the number of "Alpha" divisions increased to 39.

As activities of U.S. forces in China expanded, the Nationalist Government forces strengthened the corresponding organizational posture of its forces. At the end of December 1944, the Nationalist leadership formally established the Chinese Army General Headquarters (hereinafter referred to as the "Army General HQ") to command the units assembled in the southwestern region for the Alpha operation, in cooperation with U.S. forces⁴⁷. The United States, seeking to shape the Alpha forces

⁴²"A Chronicle of Chiang Kai-shek (Vol. 7)", p.790.

⁴³ Wedemeyer to Marshall (December 10, 1945), *Albert C. Wedemeyer Papers*, Box82, Folder23.

⁴⁴ Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Time Runs out in CBI*, Washington, D.C.: Department of Army, 1959,

⁴⁵ "Report of the China Theater", *Albert C. Wedemeyer Papers*, Box82, File 22.

⁴⁶ Wedemeyer to Chiang Kai-shek, Memorandum No. 327 (December 28, 1944), *Albert C. Wedemeyer Papers*, Box84, File5.

⁴⁷ Su, Sheng-xiong "The National Army's Counteroffensive in the Late Stage of the War of Resistance." *Guoshiguan Guankan* 51 (March 2017): p. 103-104.

along the lines of the CAI, sought to intervene not only in training but also in operational guidance through the Army General HQ⁴⁸. In response, the Army General HQ indicated a readiness to expand the framework of military assistance and proposed to the U.S. side the creation of 36 divisions for offensive operations and 9 divisions for defensive roles as the main force for counteroffensive operations against Japan. Hé Yīngqīn established the 3rd Front Army for operations against Guizhou and Guangxi and the 4th Front Army for operations against Hunan, prioritizing the strengthening of these forces⁴⁹. However, the transport capacity of the U.S. forces was limited, and even by April 1945, modernization under the Alpha Plan, when viewed as a whole, remained modest⁵⁰. In particular, the expansion of artillery units was conspicuously delayed, and while the U.S. Forces China Headquarters promoted the distribution of infantry equipment, the enhancement of artillery firepower was deferred⁵¹. Nevertheless, by late February, a total of 32 howitzer battalions had become available for deployment.

Thus, under Wedemeyer's direction, U.S. military personnel further expanded their activities in preparation for counteroffensive operations on the Chinese mainland. The number of U.S. military personnel operating in China continued to increase. Nearly 4,000 American officers and enlisted men were assigned to Chinese command echelons at various levels receiving U.S. assistance, where they undertook liaison duties and participated in joint land-air operations⁵². According to the pamphlet *Zhongmei Junguan Hezuo Xuzhi* (Guidelines for Sino-American Military Cooperation), distributed by the Military Affairs Commission to its military personnel in February 1945, U.S. forces were to assign officers, enlisted personnel, and liaison officers to the headquarters of Chinese group armies, armies, divisions, and regiments under the authority of the U.S. Military Liaison Headquarters⁵³. The U.S. military personnel dispatched were to serve as advisers to the headquarters and provide assistance or guidance on matters related to equipment, training, transportation, communications, logistics, medical services, and engineering, as well as on the materiel supplied for these functions. They were also to conduct consultations with their Chinese counterparts in each area⁵⁴.

6. The Limitations of the War Against Japan and Transition to the Postwar Period

The Nationalist Government's war efforts, centered on the support of U.S. forces in China, reached their peak in the spring of 1945. In April 1945, the Japanese Army attacked Zhijiang in Hunan Province, aiming to destroy the U.S. air bases in China. The Nationalist Government, having detected Japan's preparations for an offensive in Hunan Province, assembled the 3rd and 4th Front Armies under the Army General HQ around Zhijiang and made meticulous preparations, including constructing deep defensive positions in the mountainous terrain, in anticipation of the Japanese attack⁵⁵. In the ensuing battle, Chinese forces, supported by U.S. airstrikes, launched a series of counterattacks that successfully brought the Japanese offensive to a halt. The Japanese forces were forced to withdraw without achieving their operational objectives.⁵⁶ This marked Japan's final offensive operation on the

⁴⁸ Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs out in CBI*, p. 233.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁵⁰ Su, "The National Army's Counteroffensive", p. 111.

⁵¹ Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs out in CBI*, p. 238.

⁵² "History of the Founding of the National Revolutionary Army, Vol. III (2)", p. 1551.

⁵³ Ministry of National Defense Archives, Sino-American Military Cooperation, file no. 31/541.3/5000.4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Diary of Xu Yongchang, April 4, 1945.

⁵⁶ Military History Department (formerly the War History Office), National Institute for Defense Studies, Shōwa 20-nen no Shina Hakengun (The China Expeditionary Army in 1945), Vol. 2, pp. 243-255

China front.

The course of the Zhijiang campaign had a significant impact on the decision-making of the Nationalist Government forces' leadership. The Army General HQ, having halted the Japanese offensive, ordered the 3rd and 4th Front Armies, in the final phase of the operation, to "shift to a counterattack along the entire front and make Hengyang the target of the pursuit operation⁵⁷." The recapture of Hengyang, which was the first-phase objective of Operation "RASHNESS," meant that the full-scale counteroffensive operation was being launched ahead of schedule. At the same time, the 3rd Front Army also advanced toward Guilin and Liuzhou under Operation "CARBONARD," which sought to advance into and retake the Guangxi and Guangdong regions. Ultimately, the Zhijiang campaign impressed upon the Chinese that the military capabilities of the Japanese Army had declined and prompted them to shift to a full-scale counteroffensive operation.⁵⁸

It was Wedemeyer and other U.S. military personnel in China who strongly encouraged the Nationalist Government's shift to the offensive. The U.S. Forces in China pressed the Nationalist Government to undertake an early counteroffensive operation in South China, contending that control of the South China coast would make it possible to secure coordinated support and assistance from the U.S. Navy. Wedemeyer and other U.S. personnel in China regarded the Nationalist Government's ineffective governance as a serious issue and doubted its ability to govern the country after the war. Therefore, they sought to reconsider the wartime system centered on Chongqing and Kunming, which was dependent on the India-Burma Theater, and instead secure direct support from the U.S. Navy, which controlled the Pacific.⁵⁹

However, the offensive by the Nationalist Government forces failed to produce the anticipated results. On the Hunan front, the supply lines reached their limit beyond Zhijiang, forcing the offensive toward Hengyang to a standstill. In South China, the offensives aimed at the Leizhou Peninsula and Guangzhou were also repeatedly delayed due to ammunition shortages caused by logistical constraints, as well as counterattacks by the Japanese Army in various areas. Ultimately, by the time of Japan's surrender on August 15, the Nationalist Government forces had accomplished only the first phase of Operation "CARBONARD," namely the recapture of Nanning and Guilin, failing to reach their principal objectives, Guangzhou and the Leizhou Peninsula, that is, the South China coast. This also meant that U.S. forces in China abandoned their hope of enabling China to receive direct U.S. military support within the framework of the war against Japan.⁶⁰

Upon receiving news of Japan's surrender, the Nationalist Government and Wedemeyer began shifting their counteroffensive structure into a reception system for taking over Japanese-held areas, with the aim of establishing nationwide governance in the postwar period. Signs of civil war were already emerging, as the Nationalists and Communists had begun engaging in armed clashes in some regions over Japanese-controlled territories and their military assets. This created an urgent need to occupy these territories without delay. In October 1945, the Truman administration decided to transport four Nationalist divisions by air and five divisions by sea to northern China, and informed

⁵⁷ Bureau of Compilation and Translation of History and Politics, Ministry of National Defense, *Anti-Japanese War History: The Battle of West Hunan*, Taipei: Bureau of Compilation and Translation of History and Politics, Ministry of National Defense, 1982, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁸ Fujii, Motohiro, "A Lost Opportunity: The Nationalist Government's Counteroffensive Operations in 1945", *NIDS Briefing Memo*, May 2021, p. 3.

⁵⁹ Su Shengxiong, "The Nationalist Army's Counteroffensive in the Final Stage of the War of Resistance (1945)", *Bulletin of the Academia Historica*, no. 51 (2017).

⁶⁰ Fujii, "A Lost Opportunity", p. 4.

Wedemeyer of its decision to continue full support for the Chiang Kai-shek government and to strengthen its anti-Soviet policy in the Far East.⁶¹

At the same time, the U.S. government continued to deliberate over how to shape the postwar order in China and what role the United States should play. The government faced strong pressure for the early repatriation of American soldiers. China was already showing signs of instability due to the intensifying Nationalist–Communist confrontation, and the United States sought to avoid becoming entangled in a Chinese civil war.

As a result, debates and hesitation continued within the U.S. government over the appropriate form of American involvement in China. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and Wedemeyer judged that the risk of being drawn into a civil war was increasing, and by October 1945 they had already begun moving toward abolishing the China Theater and withdrawing the Marine Corps. Meanwhile, the State Department and the U.S. Navy argued that it was necessary to support the Nationalist Government's takeover of North China. Their concerns extended not only to assisting China but also to the large number of Japanese military and civilians who still remained in North China and other parts of the mainland. Both the State Department and Wedemeyer feared that these Japanese might become entangled with the Soviet Union or the Chinese Communists and contribute to further instability.⁶²

Although Washington considered stable Nationalist rule desirable, it could not commit to a clear policy due to the growing risk of civil war and doubts about Chiang Kai-shek's ability to manage the struggle with the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communists over Manchuria and North China. Consequently, the United States decided to support the transportation of Nationalist forces only under the justification of facilitating the early repatriation of Japanese personnel remaining in China.⁶³ In this context, U.S. Marines were deployed to coastal areas and major locations in North China to maintain public order until Nationalist forces arrived. Through these efforts, the Nationalist Government succeeded in advancing postwar settlement in regions outside Manchuria with a degree of stability.⁶⁴

However, as Wedemeyer had feared, the end of the war at this stage clearly had negative repercussions for the military cooperation between the Nationalist Government and the United States. As is evident from the fact that the Nationalist Government's reception system was essentially an extension of its counteroffensive operations against Japan, the cooperation between the Nationalist Government and the United States existed solely within the framework of the war with Japan. In short, the Nationalist Government entered the postwar era without having identified any alternative basis for military cooperation with the United States.

The limitations brought about by the end of the war were most evident in the supply networks that sustained the Nationalist Government's military buildup. With the dissolution of the Allied theaters established during the war, the logistical link between the China Theater and the India–Burma Theater was inevitably brought to an end. By late 1945, both the Burma supply route and the support for Yunnan Province provided by personnel from the India–Burma Theater had ceased, and remaining materiel was instead transported by sea to Shanghai.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Schnabel, James F., *JCS and National Policy, Vol. I, 1945-1947*, 1996, p. 186.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.

⁶³ Schnabel, James F., *JCS and National Policy, Vol. I, 1945-1947*, 1996, p.188.

⁶⁴ Fujii, Motohiro, *The Kuomintang Army in the War Termination Process of 1945: From Counterattack against Japan to Restoration of Authority, Security and Strategy*, vol. 2, 2020.

⁶⁵ Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, *History of the India-Burma Theater, 1 March 1944 - 31 June 1946, Text 24 June 1945 - 31 May 1946*, Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, call no.

These developments had important implications for both the Chinese side and for Wedemeyer and other U.S. military personnel in China, particularly regarding their conception of U.S. military assistance to China. Two major issues emerged. One concerned the postwar political settlement confronting the Nationalist Government—namely, how a government based in the remote southwest could restore its authority over all of China. Taking over territories formerly under Japanese control required deploying large numbers of troops, which in turn demanded extensive logistical support. As noted above, this issue was partially resolved because U.S. forces in China supported the movement of Nationalist troops through both air and maritime transport.

The second issue—the continuation of U.S. military assistance to China—was even more serious. After the war, the Nationalist Government required a steady supply of weapons and ammunition in order to restore nationwide control and prevail over the Communists. However, the U.S. government, under pressure to dismantle wartime theaters, planned to dissolve the China, India, and Burma theaters as early as October 1945. The India–Burma Theater sought to complete its pipeline and airlift operations for China-bound materiel by October 1945.⁶⁶

Yet, as noted earlier, the instability of the Chinese situation forced the U.S. government to reverse its plan for the early dissolution of the China Theater and to reconsider its assistance program. Washington therefore decided to continue the “Chinese Army Program (CAP),” and the China Theater requested that the India–Burma Theater supply all materiel intended for China that had been stockpiled in the region.⁶⁷ The U.S. government also negotiated with the Government of India to secure additional support from surplus assets remaining in India.⁶⁸ The postwar U.S. assistance program thus relied on the wartime framework established by the Allies, which had procured materiel through the India–Burma Theater.

The greatest problem with this U.S. assistance program was that the very framework that had sustained wartime support for China was being dismantled with the end of the war. The support provided by the India–Burma Theater for the CAP was limited to activities related to postwar reception operations in China. Moreover, the India–Burma Theater had already begun disbanding its logistical organizations and repatriating personnel, making it impossible to maintain the wartime supply routes. As a result, the provision of materiel came to depend on maritime transport to Shanghai.⁶⁹

Thus, even though the end of the war made it increasingly difficult to rely on the CBI Theater framework, both the Nationalist Government and the U.S. forces in China nonetheless sought to continue using that framework after 1946 in order to sustain military assistance. However, neither the Government of India nor the Government of Burma saw any further value in supporting U.S. military transport operations in unstable border regions for the purpose of aiding China.⁷⁰ The Nationalist Government needed a new system of U.S. support to replace the wartime CBI structure, but it proved unable to find one. Lacking direct U.S. military assistance, the Nationalist Government was ultimately defeated by Communist forces on the Manchurian battlefield.

8-6.2 AC v. 2 cy. 2.

⁶⁶ Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, *History of India-Burma theater, volume III, 24 June 1945 - 31 May 1946*, Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, call no. 8-6.2 AC v.3 cy. 2.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Office of the Chief of Military History, *History of India-Burma theater, volume III, 24 June 1945 - 31 May 1946*.

⁶⁹ Office of the Chief of Military History, *History of the India-Burma Theater, 1 March 1944 - 31 June 1946, Text 24 June 1945 - 31 May 1946*.

⁷⁰ Office of the Chief of Military History, *History of India-Burma theater, volume III, 24 June 1945 - 31 May 1946*.

Conclusion

This study has examined the military buildup of the Nationalist Government forces during the later stages of the Sino-Japanese War, focusing on the support provided by the U.S. military. It has provided an overview of this process while analyzing, in particular, the training and organization of the new-style units created in India after 1943. The analysis demonstrates that the Chinese Army in India (CAI)—which is often described as having received the most concentrated American assistance and as having made the greatest progress toward modernization—was developed in a manner fundamentally isolated from the broader Nationalist military establishment, especially in terms of organization and command structure. After the war, these units were deployed to Manchuria and became the core of the Nationalist forces during the initial phase of the Chinese Civil War. Any military analysis of the Civil War must therefore begin by understanding what kind of military organization these units—regarded as the Nationalist Government’s “elite”—actually were. By tracing their origins, this study has shown that their organizational structure and combat capabilities were shaped under the strong and autonomous leadership of U.S. forces in China and sustained by the extensive rear-area support provided from India, and that the Nationalist Government sought to maintain this support even after the war. Taken together, these findings clarify that the Nationalist Government’s postwar military buildup was deeply rooted in the distinctive conditions of Sino-American cooperation forged during the Sino-Japanese War.

At the same time, it remains debatable whether Sino-American military cooperation was truly carried out on the basis of shared objectives or a common understanding. On the American side, both Stilwell and Wedemeyer—despite differences in emphasis and degree—perceived a substantial gap between American and Chinese expectations regarding military modernization. The United States believed that modernizing the Chinese military required not only the provision of equipment and training but also fundamental reforms to the military organization and the broader state structure that supported it. American officials were concerned that the Chinese side showed little interest in such reforms.

By contrast, the Nationalist Government approached military cooperation from a different perspective. Chiang Kai-shek and his government sought to advance China’s military development through American assistance, working through U.S. military advisors such as Stilwell and Wedemeyer. Yet they did not regard the creation of the new U.S.-supported units merely as a means of acquiring equipment. For example, when requesting an additional 20,000 troops from the Ministry of War, the CAI emphasized that it constituted the “foundation for building the national army.” For Chiang Kai-shek and his government, the CAI—rigorously trained by U.S. personnel and equipped with the skills necessary to operate tanks, artillery, and other modern weapons—was indispensable for “building the national army.”

Nevertheless, what this study ultimately reveals is that the limitations of wartime Sino-American military cooperation cannot be explained solely by these differences in direction or emphasis. The cooperative relationship between the two sides was fundamentally designed to defeat the Japanese Army on the battlefields of Burma and China, and the support system that sustained it was rooted in the wartime framework of the China–Burma–India Theater established by the Allies. After the end of the Second World War, both China and the United States attempted to continue their military cooperation, but the powerful support structure that had been possible only under the exceptional

conditions of wartime could not be maintained in the postwar environment.