

Never Never Land: Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer  
in China, October 1944 to August 1945

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## I: Introduction

The Dutch ship *Jaegersfontaine* left San Francisco bound for Singapore on 10 July 1941. From there her cargo proceeded through Malaya and Burma to China. This was not any ordinary cargo, for the *Jaegersfontaine* was carrying the first contingent of the American Volunteer Group (AVG), which would go down in legend as the Flying Tigers, to China.<sup>1</sup> Once there, the Flying Tiger's mission was to fight the Japanese throughout the skies of China to protect the Chinese Central Government ruled by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang (KMT). The day the men of the first AVG contingent set foot into Chinese territory marked the beginning, months before the Japanese surprise attack against Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, of America's war in China. Because of the political realities of events of China at the time, it also started to set the stage for the series of events which would lead America into a Cold War with the Communist Chinese long before any conscious decisions were made to oppose Communism in China.

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Lieutenant General Albert C. Wedemeyer, Commanding General of U.S. Forces in China Theater and Chiang Kai-shek's U.S. Chief of Staff, informed U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall on 19 August 1945 that he was airlifting two KMT armies to occupy the Nanking-Shanghai region in the wake of Japanese capitulation. Once the Kuomintang forces arrived, Wedemeyer told Marshall, it was "highly probable that within a few days... they may be engaged in combat against the [Chinese] Communists."<sup>2</sup> And so began America's Cold War in China against Communism.

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<sup>1</sup> Chennault, Claire L., *Way of a Fighter* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949) 104.

<sup>2</sup> "The Commanding General, United States Forces, China Theater, (Wedemeyer), to the Chief of Staff (Marshall)," 19 August 1945, in Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, The Far East, China (Washington: GPO, 1969), 531.

Wedemeyer's decision, although independent, was the culmination of the American war effort in China throughout World War Two. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, U.S. military officers and materials started to trickle steadily into China. General Joseph Stilwell was dispatched by President Franklin Roosevelt as the Commanding General of U.S. Forces in the China-Burma-India Theater to aid Chiang in commanding his armies against the Japanese.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Claire Lee Chennault, head of the Flying Tigers, was given a commission as a Major General and eventually became U.S. Air Commander in China. The Navy's answer to the war effort in China was Commodore Milton E. Miles who eventually commanded Navy Group, China.

By 1944 the many different avenues of communication to their superiors in the U.S. had spawned a great deal of competition amongst Americans in China as to their various areas of authority. Stilwell, Chennault, and Miles all retained separate lines of communication back to Washington. Stilwell and Miles used their respective service's radio network to communicate with their superiors. Chennault caught Roosevelt's ear through personal letters. Stilwell and Chennault engaged in epic battles both in Washington and in China. Miles also fought with Stilwell, although in a less confrontational manner.<sup>4</sup> These battles were usually fought in the form of policy recommendations calculated to hurt the other side. As the fighting continued, their respective supporters approved the individual combatants' requests for policy, in turn giving the combatants greater leeway to make decisions concerning policy in China. As a result, top U.S. military officials spent inordinate amounts of time fighting each other instead of the Japanese, which "confused the goals of the war."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Stilwell, Joseph, *The Stilwell Papers*, ed. and comp. Theodore White (New York: W. Sloane Associates, 1948) 36.

<sup>4</sup> Schaller, Michael, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1979) 238-242.

<sup>5</sup> Yu, Maochun, *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1996) 266.

To Stilwell and the War Department, it was the KMT whose goals were confused. Stilwell's diary is peppered with complaints about Chiang refusing to commit his forces against the Japanese.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, internecine warfare between the Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) increased after 1941 throughout the remainder of World War Two. Stilwell, the War Department, the State Department, and the Roosevelt Administration expended a great deal of time and energy trying to settle the dispute. At one point, Roosevelt and Stilwell went so far as to consider assassinating Chiang so that the U.S. could install a Chinese leader more interested in fighting the Japanese.<sup>7</sup> Stilwell went through a variety of sponsors on the Chinese side, including Madame Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang's wife, H.H. Kung, Minister of Finance, and General Ho Ying-chin, Minister of War, while trying to gain more power over the Chinese and U.S. armies. These Chinese also had much to gain from befriending Stilwell, since he controlled all American aid to China.

Stilwell, when he grew tired of fighting Chiang Kai-shek, looked to the Kuomintang's arch-enemies, the Chinese Communists, as a possible ally. U.S. policy began to concentrate on convincing the Communists and the KMT to unite into a coalition government. After his tour of China in June 1944, U.S. Vice President Henry Wallace reported to Roosevelt that the Chiang regime was completely corrupt and used the CCP as scapegoats for all its failures.<sup>8</sup> Roosevelt then pressured Chiang to give Stilwell command of *all* Chinese Armies, including the Communists'. Chiang, in return, suggested Roosevelt send an emissary to handle the final negotiations. In early August 1944, Roosevelt dispatched President Hoover's Secretary of War, Patrick J. Hurley, as his personal representative in China. While Hurley was negotiating with Chiang on 19 September 1944, Stilwell burst into the talks and delivered a message from

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<sup>6</sup> Stilwell.

<sup>7</sup> Schaller 147, 152-153.

President Roosevelt telling Chiang. in Stilwell's words, "Get busy or else." A few days later, Chiang demanded Stilwell's recall. Hurley sent it to Roosevelt with his endorsement. Stilwell was recalled several weeks later. Chiang prevailed by posing one American against the other.<sup>9</sup>

Pitting enemy against enemy was a tactic Chiang used often in many political battles.<sup>10</sup> Chiang found this tactic especially useful in attaining what he wanted from the Americans, mainly aid. For instance, Chiang used Chennault's allegiance to Chiang and his influence with President Roosevelt as a weapon against Stilwell. Chennault urged Roosevelt to send increased monetary and military aid to China while undercutting Stilwell's position. Maochun Yu notes that contrary "to the mainstream interpretation of the war-time Sino-American relation, ideological and political leanings did not play as important a role as did personalities, egos, and, above all, territorial zeal for turf and for control among the allies themselves."<sup>11</sup> The study of World War Two in Europe often concentrates on military strategy and tactics. The history of World War Two in China deals more with political battles between the allies: Miles vs. Stilwell, Stilwell vs. Chennault, Stilwell vs. Chiang, Hurley vs. Stilwell, and so on.

Shortly after Stilwell received word of his recall in October 1944, General Albert C. Wedemeyer was appointed Commanding General of U.S. Forces in China Theater. Wedemeyer remembered in his memoirs, Wedemeyer Reports!, he "had heard many times over that China was a graveyard for American officials."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, when Wedemeyer arrived in China, the American effort was split. The Administration allowed the commanders in the field to set their own course, which was more for personal gain than victory against the Japanese.

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<sup>8</sup> Schaller 163.

<sup>9</sup> Schaller 165-166, 169-170.

<sup>10</sup> Ch'i, Hsi-sheng. China's Bitter Victory (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982) 202; Schaller 171.

<sup>11</sup> Yu 268.

<sup>12</sup> Wedemeyer, Albert C., Wedemeyer Reports! (New York: Henry Holt, 1958) 269.

Wedemeyer's personal papers and records from China Theater during his tenure in China tell a great deal about Wedemeyer's experience and actions. Unfortunately, until recently most were held as classified documents to the U.S. Government, unavailable to the public. As usual, time made these papers less controversial and the secrets they contained no longer had to be kept confidential. China Theater's official records are now available for all to peruse at the Archives II, the National Archives extension in College Park, Maryland. Before his death in 1989, Wedemeyer deposited all of his personal papers, including war-time correspondence and other documents at the Hoover Institution Archives in Palo Alto, California.

In late October 1944, when Wedemeyer arrived in China, Hurley presented him with a complete blueprint on how to unite the KMT and CCP. The plan centered around placing reformers throughout powerful positions in the Central Government, known by many as the Nationalist Government, who would in turn rid the Kuomintang of corruption and refocus the Chinese war effort exclusively on the Japanese. Once these reforms were carried out, the CCP could be slowly integrated into the Central Government. Wedemeyer's acceptance of this plan was extremely important because, the plan recognized, Wedemeyer controlled all U.S. military aid to China.

Wedemeyer wholeheartedly adopted Hurley's blueprint. In implementing the plan, however, Wedemeyer actually deepened the divide between the KMT and the CCP. In letters to the President, Hurley blamed the Army for the failure of his plan instead of investigating other reasons for failure, such as a seriously flawed strategy. Wedemeyer, therefore, decided never again to work closely with Hurley.

From late January to June 1945, Wedemeyer clearly delineated his and Hurley's respective areas of responsibility. Hurley handled all matters pertaining to KMT-CCP talks

whereas Wedemeyer dealt with military matters, entailing revamping the Nationalist Army and offensives against the Japanese. While planning offensives into Japanese territory, however, Wedemeyer had to consider how to deal with any Communist forces encountered. China Theater plans indicate that problems arising from U.S. or U.S. sponsored Nationalist forces meeting Communist troops were to be dealt with as a military matter until the Japanese threat was over. In other words, Wedemeyer, not Hurley, determined U.S. military policy on interaction with the Chinese Communists while advancing into Japanese territory.

When time came to consider Japanese surrender, Wedemeyer was in a perfect position to determine U.S. Army policy concerning the KMT-CCP Civil War. Increasingly hostile relations with the Chinese Communists, Soviet entry into Japanese held Manchuria, his own fears of Soviet imperialism, and deeply held anti-Communist beliefs influenced his decision to support the Kuomintang against the Chinese Communists after the Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945. This decision was only possible because of contradictory orders from the Joint Chiefs that in effect abdicated control of U.S. military policy in China to the field commander.

Historians' views of the American experience in China has been evolving as the U.S. Government releases formerly classified documents for the first time. With almost every newly released document analyzed, historians' interpretations of Americans in China during World War Two and the start of the Cold War, reliance on traditional power structures, such as a general outranking a colonel, has dwindled.

Yu examines in an adaptation from his doctoral dissertation, OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War, the political battles of the Office of Strategic Services in China, the precursor to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and Special forces. Instead of using materials published by the Departments of Defense and State, Yu uses recently declassified documents from all aspects of



the U.S. military in China. In doing so, he concludes that Machiavellian motivations guided individual Americans and Chinese Nationalists throughout World War Two. Furthermore, “most of the major China policies were initiated not in Washington but by low-ranking field officers, and they were announced in Chungking with a rubber stamp from the White House.”<sup>13</sup>

A majority of scholars, however, do not place as much emphasis on individual goals in considering American actions in China during World War Two that lead up to the Cold War. Rather, they concentrate on ideological reasons of Americans first as a group then as individuals. Michael Schaller writes in The U.S. Crusade in China: 1938-1945 about American considerations of “revolutionary social change” in China, which they ultimately tried to shape in an idealized the image of the United States. Schaller uses a combination of newly released primary documents in addition to previously published anthologies assembled by the State Department and Defense Department. He concludes that U.S. policy was misguided and extremely arrogant. America’s bumbling inability to affect the change it desired lead to the Cold War. Although very divided, the Americans in China and in Washington were working for the same goals and somewhat in concert.<sup>14</sup>

Paul Varg, in The Closing of the Door, differs from Schaller insofar as he argues that Americans in positions of power were even more united in their goal to shape China in their image. The U.S. attempted to change China both by trying to force KMT reform and later by trying to assist the Kuomintang defeat the Chinese Communists. American inability to mold a new China resulted in the U.S. turning away from Mainland China, instead of the expulsion of Americans by the Chinese.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Yu 264.

<sup>14</sup> Schaller xi, 304-305.

<sup>15</sup> Varg, Paul, The Closing of the Door: Sino-American Relations, 1936-1946 (Michigan: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1973) ix, 196-200, 205-207, 278,

Still others consider the start of the Cold War against Communism in China as originating in Washington with President Harry Truman and his administration. Robert Messer, for instance, in “American perspectives of the Cold War in East Asia, 1945-1949” argues that Truman’s growing hostility toward the Soviet Union was responsible for the transition to anti-Communism as America’s main mission in China. Truman’s decisions to oppose the Chinese Communists and the Soviets, which he lumped together, were spurred by his frustration with Soviet imperialism in Eastern Europe and his partial resolve not to allow it to be repeated in China.<sup>16</sup>

In contrast, the following study contends that the initial U.S. decision to back the Kuomintang over the Chinese Communist Party after Japanese capitulation was made independently by General Wedemeyer. Wedemeyer’s freedom to make such an important decision evolved throughout his tenure in China. Chapter one examines Wedemeyer’s first few months in China in which time he cooperated extensively with and eventually became alienated from Hurley. Chapter two studies the evolution of Wedemeyer’s area of responsibility to encompass formulating U.S. policy towards Chinese Communists in Japanese held territories. Chapter three probes the chain of events that lead to Wedemeyer’s lone decision after Japanese capitulation to airlift Nationalist troops into formerly Japanese held territory to contend for control with the Chinese Communists, thus beginning America’s large-scale opposition to Chinese Communism.

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<sup>16</sup> Messer, Robert, “American Perspectives on the Origin of the War in Cold War Asia, 1945-1949,” in China’s Bitter Victory: The War With Japan, 1937-1945, ed. James Hsiung and Steven Levine (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992) 243, 263.

## II: The Wrong Map

On 31 October 1944, Wedemeyer flew into Chungking, the Nationalists' wartime capitol.<sup>17</sup> During World War Two, Chungking's primary airstrip was on an island in the middle of the Yangtze River, far below the steep hills that compose its bank. Even today, Chungking is known for its miserable weather: bone-chilling cold in winter; a summer that becomes one of the "three furnaces" of China. Whatever the season Chungking remains dusty and generally dirty. The streets twist and turn up and down hills. Most people live in older houses accessible only by winding walkway riddled with steps and occasional loose cobblestones. In 1944, Chungking was also full of refugees from the Japanese onslaught, making the formerly sleepy provincial capitol somewhat chaotic. The political situation Wedemeyer entered into that October day among both the Kuomintang government and their American allies was just as complicated as navigating old Chungking, except that Wedemeyer had an obsolete map. From October 1944 to January 1945, Wedemeyer tried other American maps, found that they were based on inaccurate information, and decided to redraw his own.

More specifically, while acquainting himself with China, Wedemeyer not only decided to work closely with Presidential Plenipotentiary in China, Patrick J. Hurley, but also follow Hurley's map. In doing so, Wedemeyer accepted a plan that greatly involved him in diplomatic negotiations and maneuvers with Chiang, and, later, the Chinese Communists. Wedemeyer, despite evidence indicating Hurley's blueprint was seriously flawed, continued to follow the plan until a major debacle threatened his command and alienated him from Hurley.

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<sup>17</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall, 31 October 1944, CFB 25223. Records of China Theater Command with General Wedemeyer. RG 38, Stack Area 290 Row 42, Compartment 1, Shelves 2-5, Boxes 1-28, Archives II, College Park, Md. (hereafter cited as China Theater Papers).

On paper, Wedemeyer seemed to be the ideal general for almost any assignment conceivable; skilled in military diplomacy and strategy, he was a graduate of West Point, the U.S. Army War College, and the *Kriegsakademie*, the German War College. In 1941, Wedemeyer drew up large parts of the Victory Plan, the U.S. Army's estimate of the volume of industrial output required for triumph in the upcoming war.<sup>18</sup> Wedemeyer was one of the two aides U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall took to Britain on a mission with presidential advisor Harry Hopkins in April 1942 to sell the British on a cross-Channel full-scale invasion of France.<sup>19</sup> At the Casablanca conference between President Franklin Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Chinese President Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, Wedemeyer was the sole U.S. Army planning staff member present.<sup>20</sup> While on an observation mission for General Marshall, Wedemeyer earned legendary General George S. Patton's respect by requesting that he be reduced from Brigadier General to Colonel to temporarily take command of a regiment. Patton considered this "outstanding."<sup>21</sup> After attending the Quebec Conference in August 1943 between Roosevelt and Churchill,<sup>22</sup> Wedemeyer was assigned Deputy Chief-of-Staff to British Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten in the newly created Allied Southeast Asian Command (SEAC) located in India.

Nonetheless, Wedemeyer had little experience in Chinese politics and dealing with Chinese since his only prior experience in China was as a junior officer stationed in Tientsin during the 1920s. In his memoirs, published in 1958, Wedemeyer remembered from afar that "at the time of my Tientsin experience, war lords were contending for northern China, and the Kuomintang was just coming to fore as the great force in the South determined to unite,

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<sup>18</sup> Pogue, Forrest, George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope (New York: Viking Press, 1966) 140

<sup>19</sup> George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope 306.

<sup>20</sup> Pogue, Forrest, George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory (New York: Viking Press, 1973) 18

<sup>21</sup> Patton, George S., Was as I Knew it (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975) 58.

modernize, and strengthen the ancient Kingdom of Cathay.” He mentions little about interaction with Chinese, only noting that his language instructor could not speak English and that “it was important to know some spoken Chinese, if only to say to a contending war lord’s soldier, ‘don’t shoot; I’m an American,’ or ‘Come with me and I will give you some food.’”<sup>23</sup> Wedemeyer had little contact with China in the intervening years until his return in 1944.

China changed a great deal since Wedemeyer lived in Tientsin. After the death of the founder of the Kuomintang, Chinese revolutionary Dr. Sun Yat-sen, in 1925, Chiang consolidated his power, in part, by purging the KMT of Communists in 1926. On one day alone, 18 April 1926, Chiang’s forces killed over 2,000 Communists in Canton. From 1926 to 1937, Chiang’s armies conducted “bandit extermination campaigns” against Communists and warlords who refused to comply with Chiang’s dictates. During the “Nanking decade,” according to Ranbir Vohra, author of China’s Path to Modernization, the Nationalists built on prior developments to significantly modernize China. At the same time, however, the regime became increasingly authoritarian and anti-Western.<sup>24</sup>

Whatever advances occurred during this period, they were not enough to prevent continued Japanese advancement into China. At first, Chiang preferred to trade territory for time, while he struggled to unify his power over all Chinese. Some of Chiang’s subordinates, however, did not agree with his tactics. In December 1936 Chiang went to Sian to order warlord Chang Hsueh-liang, otherwise known as the Young Marshal, to stop delaying and attack the Communists. Chang, however, was in league with the Communists, and arrested Chiang.<sup>25</sup> After his release and return to Nanking, Chiang vigorously attacked the Japanese and called a truce

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<sup>22</sup> George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory 249.

<sup>23</sup> Wedemeyer Reports! 48-49, 247, 263.

<sup>24</sup> Vohra, Ranbir, China’s Path to Modernization (Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1992) 129, 149-150.

<sup>25</sup> Snow, Edgar, Red Star Over China (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937) 411-413.

with the Communists, known as the Second United Front. Chiang's army met defeat after defeat in engagements with Japanese forces. The Kuomintang continued to retreat into the interior of China until it settled into a more easily defensible position in central China with its capital in Chungking.

Chiang saw a great possibility, however, in Japanese expansion in the Pacific as the possible savior for China. Chiang Wei-kuo, Chiang Kai-shek's son, revealed in a recent interview that his father predicted the Japanese would attack southward in the Pacific where the predominant power was the United States. Sooner or later, Chiang Wei-kuo remembered in precise English, Japan would have to attack the U.S. to protect her lines of supply in Southeast Asia. Once America entered into the war against Japan, Japan's defeat was almost certain.<sup>26</sup> Thus, after Pearl Harbor, Chiang's expectations for Chinese participation in World War Two were probably very low, especially with the Nationalist Army in tatters. By 1944 Chiang's army was in an even more dreadful condition, hardly able to fight; they had opposed the Japanese for seven years with very little outside aid and chances for rejuvenation.<sup>27</sup> The Chinese Communists' army, however, was growing to its 1945 level of 2.7 million men.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Chiang's classic using barbarian (the U.S.) against barbarian (Japan) strategy caused considerable friction with his U.S. allies and especially the U.S. commander in China, General Joseph Stilwell. Stilwell quickly started to focus on verbal and political battles with Chiang instead of the Japanese.

Presidential Envoy Patrick Hurley was sent in August 1944 to convince Chiang to appoint General Joseph Stilwell, Chiang's U.S. Chief of Staff and Commanding General of U.S.

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<sup>26</sup> Chiang Wei-kuo, interview by author, Taipei, Taiwan, 22 April 1997.

<sup>27</sup> For a description of the Chinese Army towards the end of the Sino-Japanese War, see Ch'i Hsi-sheng. "The Military Dimension, 1937-1945," in *China's Bitter Victory: The War With Japan, 1937-1945*, ed. James Hsiung and Steven Levine (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992) 170-174.

Forces in China, as overall commander of the Chinese Army.<sup>29</sup> Chiang, however, refused to surrender control of his armies over to an American because it would have left him politically impotent. Hurley's solution to the situation after a month of negotiations with Chiang was to replace Stilwell with another American with whom Chiang might work, thus ignoring the root of the disagreement. As the Commander-in-Chief's personal representative, Hurley outranked Wedemeyer and every other American in China. Therefore, Wedemeyer had to deliver whatever Hurley asked of him and the U.S. Army.

Wedemeyer's orders, issued by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff on 24 October 1944, placed Wedemeyer firmly in support of Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists against only the Japanese but not the CCP. His "primary mission with respect to Chinese Forces is to advise and assist the Generalissimo in the conduct of military operations against the Japanese." Wedemeyer was also authorized to become Chiang's U.S. Chief-of-Staff.<sup>30</sup> Romanus and Sunderland, authors of the U.S. Army's official history of China Theater, Time Runs out in CBI, point out that Wedemeyer was Chief-of-Staff to Chiang in his roles as both Allied Supreme Commander and Chinese President of China. Because the "role of a chief of staff is what the commander chooses to make it,"<sup>31</sup> and therefore could become involved with Chiang on *any* issue, so long as it did not violate his other orders. Primarily, Wedemeyer could not "employ United States resources for suppression of civil strife except insofar as necessary to protect United States lives and property." In this sense, Wedemeyer was well positioned to become a staunch supporter and aid

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<sup>28</sup> Wu, Tien-wei, "The Chinese Communist Movement," in China's Bitter Victory: The War With Japan, 1937-1945, ed. James Hsiung and Steven Levine (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992) 79.

<sup>29</sup> Buhite, Russell, Patrick J. Hurley and American Foreign Policy (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973) 148.

<sup>30</sup> "The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commanding Generals, United States Forces, China Theater (Wedemeyer) and India-Burma Theater (Sultan)," 24 October 1944, in Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1944: China (Washington: GPO, 1967) 179.

<sup>31</sup> Romanus, Charles F., and Riley Sunderland, Time Runs Out in CBI (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1959) 16.

to Chiang on highly political issues, supporting Chiang's position to others but could not provide military support.

Additionally, Wedemeyer's directive did little to remedy the infighting among American military men in China that had been so problematic. His "primary mission as to U.S. combat forces under your command," his October orders noted, was "to carry out air operations from China," as well as "support the Chinese Air and Ground Forces in operations, training and in logistical support." Wedemeyer directly controlled only the Army Air Corps, logistical, and headquarters staff other U.S. agencies in China were outside his command, including all of Navy Group, China commanded by Commodore Milton Miles. Because he did not command all U.S. forces in China, Americans in China could evade Wedemeyer's control by playing one side against another to get their way, as many in the intelligence area did. Maochun Yu counts over a dozen independent intelligence agencies operating in China at one time during World War Two.<sup>32</sup> Wedemeyer's October orders gave Wedemeyer the great task of assisting the Nationalists against the Japanese, but gave him few tools or personnel to assist in implementing his orders. Furthermore, whatever power he had over the few U.S. military men in China was seriously weakened by his lack of total command.

By late October when Wedemeyer entered the scene, Hurley was fast at work with negotiations to merge the KMT and CCP into a coalition government. A twelve page poorly written, convoluted, and unsigned memorandum dated 9 November 1944 (hereafter referred to as the 11/9 Memo) described Hurley's plans in China and how he planned to accomplish them.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Yu 267.

<sup>33</sup> This document was not entered into the secret document system in the American headquarters. Rather, someone scribbled in pencil at the top of the first page, "Not to leave the office of CG [Commanding General]." (Untitled, 9 November 1944., Box 81, Folder 1, Albert C. Wedemeyer Papers, Hoover Institution). Michael Schaller credits Joe Alsop, an aid to U.S. Fourteenth Air Force Commander and Flying Tigers legend General Claire Chennault, as the writer. Schaller's copy from Hurley's private papers, however, dates the memorandum as 26 October 1944, prepared in advance for the incoming Commanding General, Wedemeyer (Schaller 194-195, 331).



“The American Commander in China,” the blueprint noted, “in the last analysis” was the only one who could implement the plan. “He may be assisted by Hurley...” Thus, if Hurley wished to succeed, he and the new American Commander in China would have to work closely together. When Wedemeyer was assigned to China, the plan became not just Hurley’s map, but Wedemeyer’s as well.

U.S. aims in China, except for defeating the Japanese, were extremely grandiose and ambitious. At the onset, the 11/9 Memorandum stated the main goals of U.S. policy in China were: to keep the Chinese Government “in being throughout the war; to assist China to emerge from the war as a strong, united and, above all, independent nation, thus redressing the balance of power in the world, and contributing to the stability of the Pacific area...;” and to use “China as a base from which to attack Japan and to organize the employment of Chinese resources to this end.”<sup>34</sup> The United States not only wanted to defeat Japan, but to create a China that would balance power in Asia to favor American interests.

Rejuvenating the Chinese war effort, explained the 11/9 Memo, was contingent on “a thorough reconstruction of the Chungking government. There must be a New Deal at Chungking, as there was at Washington in 1932, if morale is to be restored, the government reinvigorated, and a minimum effort made to mobilize China’s remaining resources for the war” (underline in original). Prior American attempts to implement U.S. policy in China failed, in the 11/9 Memo writer’s opinion, because of poor tactics, not flawed strategy. General Stilwell and other Americans failed because they tried “to impose reform from without, which is never practical in any society” (underling in original). Indeed, prior policy, especially under Stilwell, was marked by his heavy handed and abrasive dealings with Chiang. To change China, Americans had to “promote reforms from within, by supporting those Chinese leaders who could be relied upon to

achieve reform”(underline in original). A few pages later, the author notes that alterations to the Chinese government and military “cannot be managed except through a Chinese... They can, in short, reduce [the American Commander’s] difficulties to a minimum, and prevent that constant frustration, the haunting sense of clawing at nothingness, which otherwise tends to afflict any man who deals with the Chinese government for very long” (underline in original). The simple truth was “that any foreigner executing a great political and military plan in China today needs an intervenor with the Chinese.”<sup>35</sup> The author recognized that a Westerner could not directly rule China. Yet, he indicated that the Americans really did not understand the Chinese and required a broker to accomplish anything.

Implementing reforms from within the Kuomintang required middlemen favorably disposed to a New Deal at Chungking. The Nationalist Government was a “congeries of all kinds of cliques and special interests, political, military, and economic, held together by the leadership of the Generalissimo.” Of the “bewildering complexities of ‘Political Science Groups’, ‘C-C Cliques’, etc., it is possible... to observe one *logical* division” (italics added). On one side were the “Modernists” who were

what their name suggests. They know the outer world, understand the need to rebuild China as a modern nation, and wish to get on with the job, even if powerful vested interests must suffer. Their leaders are [Foreign Minister] Dr. [T.V.] Soong in the government; [and high ranking] General Ch’en Ch’eng in the Army.”

Once the brokers of reform were in power, they could purge the Nationalist Government of the “Traditionalists” who were “exponents of things as they are, reactionary, anti-foreign, bitterly anti-Communist, frequently corrupt, and characterized by the inefficiency which reaction and corruption bring in their train.” Most important, however, they wielded power and their rule,

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<sup>34</sup> Memo, untitled, 9 November 1944., Box 81, Folder 1, Wedemeyer Papers.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

combined with the sheer length of the Sino-Japanese war, had left China demoralized and Chinese armies faltering on the field. Their leaders formed a conspiratorial circle around Chiang with “[Finance Minister] Dr. H.H. Kung in the government; [Minister of War and Chief of Staff of the Chinese Army] General Ho Ying-chin in the Army,” as well as Madame Chiang Kai-shek and other officials in the Kuomintang. Fortunately, their long rule also left them so weak that resistance to the Modernists was futile, according to the 11/9 Memo.<sup>36</sup>

The author of the 11/9 Memorandum, however, imposed an understanding of political forces more resembling the one in the United States and China. The Modernists were the equivalent of American liberals, or more accurately, New Dealers. The New Deal radically changed the American political landscape by implementing measures such as Social Security and so on. American conservatives, who opposed Roosevelt’s “progressive” programs, were the Traditionalists’ U.S. counterparts. Yet, China’s political situation was much different. In Nationalist China at War, Hsi-sheng Ch’i describes many pro-Chiang Kai-shek groups vying for power. The Action Society, C.C. Clique, Reorganization Faction, Political Science Faction, and Western Hill Factions all were groups without a great deal of identification with the West. In addition, H.H. Kung and T.V. Soong, despite the fact Soong was Kung and Chiang’s brother-in-law, represented separate factions as well. Chiang ruled by encouraging factionalism and then playing different factions against each other. Ch’i concludes that the great factional struggles revolved more around pursuing power for powers’ sake than for patriotism.<sup>37</sup>

The American Commander in China needed to worry little about difficulty in placing his brokers throughout the Nationalist Government, according to the 11/9 Memorandum, because the Nationalists’ decline in power “proportionally increased [their] dependence on American aid.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ch’i 202-205, 233.

The stage passed in which American aid could be regarded as simple insurance that the Chungking government would achieve all its political and territorial objectives. A new stage had been entered in which American aid was essential to the Chungking government to survive at all.” The top U.S. general, who was in charge of American military aid, “so to speak, the blue-chip of Chinese politics,” would have all the leverage necessary to place his middlemen and implement reforms. Indeed, the Memo boasted that the “opportunities of [Stilwell’s] successor are far greater. He can, if he chooses, obtain from the Generalissimo virtual carte blanche in both the political and military fields.”<sup>38</sup> This claim failed to take into account that Chiang wanted the aid and control thereof, as he had indicated in numerous communications,<sup>39</sup> for his own ambition to rule China free of the Japanese and the Communists.

After satisfying the prerequisite of radically changing Kuomintang policies, the new U.S. Commander in China could focus on unifying the Communists, whose capitol was in Yanan, with the Nationalist Government. Combining the Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party together under one coalition government would fulfill the U.S. goal to unite China. Unification of the KMT and CCP would supposedly preempt Chinese and Russian Communists from forging a strong alliance. A CCP-USSR deal was a distinct possibility because the power of the Chinese Communists alone presented “an almost irresistible temptation to the Russians... to repeat in China what they have done in Jugoslavia [sic] through Tito and elsewhere in Europe through similar agents.” From the author’s perspective, the Chinese Communist Party was a natural ally of the Soviets. He did not, however, take into account many Kuomintang and Chinese Communist armed clashes and even battles throughout the War of Resistance against Japan in

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<sup>38</sup> Memo, untitled, 9 November 1944., Box 81, Folder 1, Wedemeyer Papers.

<sup>39</sup> “Memorandum by the Ambassador in China (Gauss)” in FRUS 1944, 265.

minor and major battles, but had not fully split.<sup>40</sup> The Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party were still fighting a protracted civil war, except that the war against Japan overshadowed it.

Overall, the author of the 11/9 Memo failed to recognize that Americans were only allies to the Chinese in attaining their own goals of power, instead of great Western leaders to guiding them to the international stage, thus saving China from its backwardness. The Kuomintang was, after all, the Nationalist party, not the American or Western party. He based his analysis less on a realistic view of the Chinese political situation than on a simplistic superimposed American model.

New to China, Wedemeyer quickly decided he would cooperate with Hurley. In a letter to General Marshall on 10 November 1944, Wedemeyer explained that he agreed with Hurley “that we must bring about a concerted effort by National and Communist Troops and believe that we should include the special provincial armies and prima donna war lords and governors of provinces.” He added intolerantly, as though already frustrated with political squabbling, that Marshall “may be sure the effort will be made to cut through red tape, circumvent intrigue and bring about the effective and concerted employment of all available means.”<sup>41</sup> Judging from Wedemeyer’s enthusiasm, self-assuredness, and dedication to Hurley’s efforts, he was following the 11/9 Memo’s interpretation of his job in China.

Wedemeyer moved quickly to install his Chinese military broker, General Ch’en Ch’eng, into a position of power from which he could assist Wedemeyer. Ch’en was the top Modernist in the military, according to the 11/9 Memorandum. Official meeting minutes in Wedemeyer’s files indicate on 16 November 1944 Wedemeyer met with Chiang and presented him with phase one

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<sup>40</sup> Wu 98-101.

<sup>41</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall, CFB 25886, 10 November 1944, China Theater Papers.

of his ALPHA plan reorganize the Chinese Army. Wedemeyer was fulfilling his October directive to advise and assist Chiang in the conduct of military operations against the Japanese. As Wedemeyer described to Chiang, under the first phase of ALPHA, a Chinese general would take command of the entire Chinese Army, comparable to the U.S. Army's Chief of Staff. Wedemeyer then strongly recommended Ch'en Ch'eng for the post.<sup>42</sup> Five days later on 21 November, Chiang informed Wedemeyer that he had appointed former Minister of War and "Traditionalist" General Ho Ying-chin, a general the 11/9 Memorandum identified as corrupt and anti-American, to the position. Wedemeyer immediately protested to Chiang and returned to the issue several times throughout the remainder of the meeting.<sup>43</sup> Subsequently he dispatched a vociferous complaint to Washington. To Wedemeyer, this was a "decided blow." Overall he recapitulated his talk with Chiang for one typed double spaced page, recounting all of his protests to Chiang. Wedemeyer even went so far as to write that his advisors informed him that Ho was "justifiably suspected of being pro-Japanese."<sup>44</sup> Incidentally, this was the only time Wedemeyer alleged that any high level Nationalist official, including Ho, collaborated with the Japanese. Chiang's refusal to appoint Ch'en demonstrated that Wedemeyer's initial conception of the weakness of the Traditionalists as described in the 11/9 Memo was inaccurate. Wedemeyer first encounter with an impediment to his plans indicated that he did not have carte blanche to effect "reforms."

As soon as Hurley's talks between the Chinese Communists and the Nationalists broke down, Wedemeyer took the lead from Hurley to convince Chiang to allow U.S. aid to flow to the Communists in Yen-an. On 21 November, Hurley's KMT-CCP negotiations stalled because of

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<sup>42</sup> "Minutes of Meeting No. 2 with Generalissimo," 16 November 1944, China Theater Papers.

<sup>43</sup> "Minutes of Meeting No. 3 with Generalissimo," 21 November 1944, China Theater Papers.

<sup>44</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall and Arnold, CFB unknown, 2 December 1944, China Theater Papers.

Chiang's demand for the Communists to agree to his control of their military.<sup>45</sup> Before 27 November, six days after KMT-CCP talks stalemated, Wedemeyer had never officially discussed the Communists with Chiang. Only at this point did Wedemeyer move to fill the gap. He directly involved himself in securing Nationalist approval to send U.S. materials to the Communists. While records of his first proposal to arm the Communists currently do not exist, minutes of a meeting on 27 November 1944 between Chiang Kai-shek and Wedemeyer record Chiang denying Wedemeyer permission to send "demolition explosives and small arms" to the Communists. Chiang delayed a final decision on the issue until "it became feasible."<sup>46</sup> Wedemeyer attempted to win a lesser concession at a conference on 30 November 1944, where he asked for Chiang's approval to send Red Cross medical supplies to the Communists. Here he was successful.<sup>47</sup> On 2 December 1944, Wedemeyer presented a plan by Colonel David D. Barrett, commanding officer of the Dixie Mission, the U.S. Army's observer group in the Communist capital of Yanan, to have the U.S. train three Communist infantry regiments (about 5,000 men) for use in either Northern or Southwestern China.<sup>48</sup> Two days later, on 4 December 1944, Chiang rejected Barrett's plan that lacked "unity of command." That Communist troops would operate in Nationalist territory rendered the plan "impractical" – "the common people just could not be reconciled to the idea of having Communists among them." Wedemeyer did not pursue the matter. If Hurley, by now U.S. Ambassador to China, and Wedemeyer colluded to either place Modernists in positions of power throughout the Nationalist Government during this time or convince Chiang permit the U.S. Army to deal with the Communists, neither of them ever publicly disclosed it. Nevertheless, circumstances suggest that they were coordinating their

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<sup>45</sup> Schaller 198.

<sup>46</sup> "Minutes of Meeting No. 5 with Generalissimo." 27 November 1944, China Theater Papers.

<sup>47</sup> "Minutes of Meeting No. 8 with Generalissimo." 30 November 1944, China Theater Papers.

<sup>48</sup> "Minutes of Meeting No. 11 with Generalissimo" and attachment, 2 December 1944, China Theater Papers.

efforts to some extent. Wedemeyer and Hurley shared the same residence, a fact that might have allowed for frequent confidential discussions. Both of them were following the same strategy presented in the 11/9 Memo for all of November 1944. Furthermore, the 11/9 Memo even recognized Wedemeyer as the most powerful American in the area and, in the last analysis, the only one able to negotiate a truce between the KMT and CCP. Additionally, Wedemeyer only started his negotiations with Chiang about the Communists after Hurley's broke down. He even yielded to Hurley on political issues. Wedemeyer, a veteran of many high-level diplomatic conferences, hardly would have acted without extensively consulting Hurley so soon after arriving in China with so little experience.

Nevertheless, Major General Robert McClure, Wedemeyer's Chief-of-Staff, evidently felt strongly about the proposal, meeting minutes indicate that he asked Chiang if the Communists could be used behind enemy lines in Northern China. Chiang replied that it was impossible because a settlement had not been made between the Central Government and the CCP. McClure fired back by asking if northbound empty planes could take small arms to the Communists. The Generalissimo said that he "would talk about it later."<sup>49</sup> Later, of course, meant never.

Before leaving for an inspection trip, Wedemeyer gave McClure permission to draw up his own plan for arming the Communists to present to Chiang in the hopes that Chiang might have actually consented. McClure was also instructed to coordinate his efforts with Hurley. McClure had even less experience in China; he arrived in China on 20 November 1944 and officially became Wedemeyer's Chief of Staff on the 28<sup>th</sup>.<sup>50</sup> McClure's plan, detailed in a memorandum from Wedemeyer to the Generalissimo dated 12 December 1944, expressed

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<sup>49</sup> "Minutes of Meeting No. 13 with Generalissimo." 4 December 1944, China Theater Papers.

<sup>50</sup> McClure, Robert B., "Plans for Operations in Communist Territories," ND January 1945, China Theater Papers.



American frustration with internecine Chinese warfare and Chiang's complicity therein. General McClure wrote that in the emergency "brought about by [Japanese] conquests in Southeast China, the United States feels that every means should be used to halt this advance and to drive the Japanese forces back." On one hand, America's "rights of self-preservation demand that we do everything possible to protect that which has been acquired through such a great expenditure in men, time, and money." The few U.S. forces expected to arrive in China had to be deployed "in the area in which the most effective results may be obtained" which a "careful study" revealed was Communist held territory. Attacking the Japanese from Communist areas permitted "destruction of the north-south railroads which the Japanese are using to bring supplies into south China" and would cause "the Japanese to reinforce their troops in that area thus reducing their strength in South China." The U.S. did not desire "to interfere with the internal politics of China," McClure wrote. After stating that the "present Government (was) the only one recognized by my government," McClure insisted that both America and China "would be derelict in our duty to the United Nations if we did not use every means at our disposal to defeat our common enemy, Japan."<sup>51</sup> He presented a strong argument for arming the Communists that did not require Chiang's consent. America, according to McClure, had the "right" to engage the Japanese wherever and whenever it pleased. Despite restating U.S. recognition of Chiang's government, McClure hinted that Chiang had no choice but to consent because the military situation was so dangerous that America might aid the Communists anyway.

On 15 December 1944, McClure authorized a radical step to implement his plan by verbally ordering Colonel David D. Barrett, head of the U.S. Army's mission to Yen-an known as Dixie, Lieutenant Colonel Willis Bird of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor to the U.S. Army Special Forces and CIA, and John Davies, a career State Department employee

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<sup>51</sup> "Memorandum to the Generalissimo," 12 December 1944, China Theater Papers.

on Wedemeyer's staff, to Yen-an to survey possible Communist cooperation and support of U.S. forces as envisioned in McClure's plan. While there, the three negotiated with the Communists for extensive cooperation, including U.S. commitments to train and arm over 25,000 guerillas.<sup>52</sup> McClure again vocally ordered Barrett to return to Yen-an on 27 December to finalize the agreement for collaboration.<sup>53</sup> The Communists viewed McClure's initiative as a sign that Wedemeyer was using his own direct communication channel to Washington to circumvent Hurley, who had been increasingly siding with the KMT during talks. Therefore, the Communists' de-facto foreign minister, Chou En-lai, withdrew from negotiations with the Kuomintang over reunification until far-fetched demands such as freeing political prisoners, lifting the Nationalist blockade of Yen-an, and so on were met.<sup>54</sup>

Wedemeyer received a top secret radio message from the Dixie Mission dated 9 January 1945 that must have surprised him. Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai "strictly off [the] record" proposed to travel to America, where they would "be immediately available either singly or together for exploratory conference in Washington should President Roosevelt express desire to receive them as leaders of a primary Chinese political party." Mao and Chou were under the impression not that only Wedemeyer and Hurley had split, but that Wedemeyer and Chiang Kai shek were also at significant odds with each other. Mao and Chou trusted Wedemeyer enough to request "that it be unknown [repeat] not known that they are willing to go to Washington... to protect their political [position] vis a vis Chiang."<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps the Chinese Communists perceived Wedemeyer to be a more sympathetic audience. A member of Dixie, sent another message a day later, on 10 January 1945, to

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<sup>52</sup> Bird to McClure, 24 January 1945, China Theater Papers.

<sup>53</sup> Barrett, David D., Dixie Mission: The United States Army observer Group In Yen-an, 1944 (Berkeley: Center for Chinese Studies, 1970) 76-77.

<sup>54</sup> Buhite 179; Schaller 203-204; for another perspective of the McClure debacle, see Yu 186-190.

Wedemeyer concerning a conversation with Chou En-lai about a “precise, definite, story of negotiations between our allies [the KMT] and our enemy [Japan] for sell out of American interest in China. Part of this story is story is documented by copied correspondence of high authority. Negotiations involve most exalted personages military and civilian in Asia.” The message noted that “Chou specifically stated that the information he gave me should be restricted to Wedemeyer, that Wedemeyer alone should decide disposition stateside. Chou specifically stated that ‘General Hurley must not get this information as I don’t trust his discretion.’”<sup>56</sup> Chou attempted to deepen the supposed divide between Chiang Kai-shek and Wedemeyer with information of the alleged collusion between the Kuomintang and Japanese. If Wedemeyer was ready to arm the Communists without the Central Government’s consent, then the discord between the KMT and Wedemeyer only needed to be cemented. Mao and Chou, however, completely misread the situation. Of all the complaints about the Kuomintang and China in general, Again, Wedemeyer only once, to this author’s knowledge, mentioned the possibility of a high KMT official collaborating with the Japanese. Wedemeyer, as per prior a agreement with Hurley not to send messages to Washington without the other’s prior perusal, showed Hurley the Communists’ messages complete with the statement on discouraging Hurley. As he read the dispatches, Hurley became extremely insulted and flew into a rage.<sup>57</sup>

While at Chiang’s house for the weekend of 13 January 1945, Hurley learned from Chiang of the Army’s negotiations with the Communists and turned his anger towards Wedemeyer’s staff, but not directly at Wedemeyer. In a letter to Colonel Barrett dated 15 January 1945, McClure wrote that Hurley had “information from U.S. Navy sources that the boys in Dixie have a plan or a proposal of U.S. aid and assistance without the concurrence of the

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<sup>55</sup> “To Wedemeyer for Dickey from Evans sgd Dickey,” 322, 9 January 1945, China Theater Papers.

<sup>56</sup> Memo. to Wedemeyer for Dickey from Evans sgd Cromley, 324, 10 January 1945, National Archives.

hometown government [the Chinese Central Government].”<sup>58</sup> One American military unit, Navy Group, China, deliberately leaked information to the Nationalists to undermine the Army’s efforts.

Wedemeyer, however, was not in Chungking to deal with Hurley after the weekend at Chiang’s. Instead, on 16 January 1945, Wedemeyer was in Kunming and received a top-secret personal message from Marshall. Marshall wrote that the President had received a message from Hurley complaining about McClure and Barrett’s actions regarding the Communists. Hurley noted the plan “offered [the Communists] what they wanted exactly, destruction of the National Government and for themselves Lend Lease supplies.” Marshall asked Wedemeyer to furnish “at once a report on this incident together with your recommendations as to appropriate actions.”<sup>59</sup> Direct cooperation between Wedemeyer and Hurley was over. Hurley had violated his agreement with Wedemeyer not to send Washington without showing them first to Wedemeyer.

Wedemeyer did not reply to Marshall until 22 January 1945. Wedemeyer, insisting that his command fully obeyed standing orders, stated that his “instructions to all officers in China Theater are most explicit and emphasize that we must support Chinese National Government and that we must not negotiate with or assist in any way other Chinese activities or persons not recognized or approved by the Generalissimo.” His officers knew his instructions and would not disobey them. He then blamed T. V. Soong or Ch’en Ch’eng, who were Modernists and had engaged in their own negotiations with the Communists, for CCP knowledge of McClure’s plan. Wedemeyer ended the message by noting that he and Hurley were unable to agree on the facts.<sup>60</sup> Wedemeyer’s willingness to disagree with Hurley openly indicated their distance.

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<sup>57</sup> Yu 189-190; Tuchman, Barbara W., *Practicing History* (New York: Knopf, 1981) 189.

<sup>58</sup> McClure to Barrett, 15 December 1944, China Theater Papers.

<sup>59</sup> Marshall to Wedemeyer, WAR 21084, 15 January 1945, China Theater Papers.

<sup>60</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall, 22 January 1945, CFB 31726, China Theater Papers.

Marshall fired back the next day, 23 January 1945, that Wedemeyer's explanation was not explicit enough. Marshall wanted to know if there was "any plan prepared by U.S. personnel of your headquarters regarding employment of Communist troops which contemplated bypassing the Generalissimo? If the above is true who formulated the plan and what was its status?" Secondly, what did Hurley and Wedemeyer disagree about? Thirdly, should "the President... contact the Generalissimo on this matter?"<sup>61</sup> Maochun Yu notes that by mentioning the President in his message, Marshall made the disagreement a very serious situation for Wedemeyer. The last time Hurley did not get along with the U.S. Theater Commander, Stilwell, the American Commander in China was fired.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, after further investigation and several draft replies to Marshall, Wedemeyer uncovered McClure's initiative and described it in the reply sent to Washington on 27 January 1945. Wedemeyer categorically denied any involvement. Wedemeyer outlined Bird's talks with the Communists and then apologized for the entire fiasco. Hurley concurred with this version.<sup>63</sup>

Yu argues that Wedemeyer was actually behind the McClure initiative and subsequently tried to cover it up. Yet, whether or not McClure acted on Wedemeyer's orders or not is immaterial to a large extent because of the result: Wedemeyer walked out of his first experience in Chinese politics badly burned. After trying desperately to aid Hurley, Wedemeyer did not win any accolades from the Ambassador for even a good attempt. On the contrary, Hurley blamed Wedemeyer's men for sabotaging his negotiations. Wedemeyer did not forget the lesson; until Japanese capitulated, he steadfastly refused to become involved in Hurley's KMT-CCP negotiations again, choosing instead to emphasize his orders to advise Chiang on building and deploying a modern military. Hurley's map was not only flawed, but it led him directly into a

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<sup>61</sup> Marshall to Wedemeyer, 23 January 1945, WAR 25246. China Theater Papers.

<sup>62</sup> Yu 192.

well-saturated minefield. On 5 July 1945, Wedemeyer expressed this reluctance to get involved in CCP-KMT negotiations again, stating in a memo to his friend and peer, General Ed Hull, the Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, in July 1945 that after “my experience last December with Hurley concerning McClure and Barrett in which he blamed the Army for breakdown in his negotiations, I am very wary... you have sufficient background now I am sure to understand that I must tread very carefully not only with the Chinese but with some of our diplomatic folk.”<sup>64</sup> Not only were some of the Chinese hazardous to deal with, but some of his own countrymen, including Hurley, were as well.

Wedemeyer entered China very ignorant of the political landscape. After quickly realizing that he was involved in a very complex situation, Wedemeyer decided to follow Hurley’s complex map. Despite early warnings, such as Chiang’s refusal to install Ch’en Ch’eng as overall commander of the Chinese Army, Wedemeyer continued to rely on Hurley’s map and took the lead. Ultimately, he found Hurley’s map lead him into a dangerous location rather than to a safe area. Hurley then blamed Wedemeyer for the predicament, not only to his face, but also to his superiors. Whatever course Wedemeyer would ultimately chart in China, it would not be the same as Hurley’s.

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<sup>63</sup> Memo, Wedemeyer to Marshall, 27 January 1945, China Theater Papers.

<sup>64</sup> Letter, Wedemeyer to Hull, 5 July 1945, Box 81, Folder 35, Wedemeyer Papers.

### III: Power Shift

After the McClure debacle in January 1945, documents from China Theater and Wedemeyer's personal papers indicate that Wedemeyer clearly defined his and Hurley's areas of responsibility. Hurley handled negotiations with the Chinese Communists. Wedemeyer was in charge of the military dimension, which involved working with the Nationalists. In his dealings with the KMT, Wedemeyer ignored the repercussions on Nationalist-CCP relations brought about by the stronger Kuomintang Army he was building. Instead, he blamed the Communists for aggressive behavior against the more powerful KMT forces. More importantly, plans from Wedemeyer's headquarters reveal that when U.S. or Nationalist troops advanced into Japanese held territory, Wedemeyer, not Hurley, would determine U.S. policy towards any Communist forces encountered. Although Hurley retained control over U.S. diplomatic relations with the Chinese Communists, Wedemeyer took command of formulating U.S. policy toward Communists in territory liberated from the Japanese.

From February to April 1945, State Department officials in Washington and China had robust disagreements over China policy. These disputes invariably involved Hurley as the protagonist. For instance, on 29 January 1945, the State Department issued a memorandum arguing for America's continued support of Chiang throughout the war while remaining "flexible" after the war was over.<sup>65</sup> As Russel Buhite points out in Patrick J. Hurley and American Foreign Policy, Hurley was furious about the lack of complete support for Chiang in the policy memorandum.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, Hurley's return to Washington for consultation in March 1945 Washington was marked by the arrival of a memorandum from his staff at the U.S.

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<sup>65</sup> Untitled, 29 January 1945, China Theater Papers.

<sup>66</sup> Buhite 213; Luo 283; Untitled, 29 January 1945, China Theater Papers.

Embassy in China to the State Department describing him as completely incompetent.<sup>67</sup> After denouncing his subordinates, he returned to China via London to consult with Churchill and Moscow to talk with Stalin about the Yalta agreements.

Agreements between Roosevelt, Soviet dictator Generalissimo Joseph Stalin, and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill reached at the Yalta Conference in early February 1945 greatly changed the diplomatic situation. According to the protocol signed on 11 February 1945, the Soviets would enter the war “two to three months after Germany has surrendered and the war in Europe has terminated... on the condition that” Outer Mongolia would remain within the Soviet sphere of influence and “former rights violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904 shall be restored.” Among these “rights” were Soviet control of Port Arthur and control of the Chinese-Eastern and South-Manchurian Railroads. Without even consulting Chiang or one of his representatives, Roosevelt signed away territory of a sovereign nation to a third party. Such an action reveals the extreme proprietary attitude Roosevelt held towards China; Chiang was not to be informed of the Soviet gains until Stalin signaled it was time.<sup>68</sup> While in the Soviet Union, Stalin gave Hurley approval to tell Chiang about the secret protocols whenever he felt was appropriate. He also told Hurley that he agreed with U.S. policy on a united KMT-CCP government. Hurley returned to China in April to continue his negotiations to unite the Nationalists and Kuomintang.<sup>69</sup>

Wedemeyer, however, no longer worked in concert with Ambassador Hurley. Rather, Wedemeyer definitely delineated his and Hurley’s respective areas of responsibility. In a 9 March 1945 official memorandum to his friend, Ed Hull, Wedemeyer described his barrier.

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<sup>67</sup> Buhite 192-194.

<sup>68</sup> “Agreement Regarding Entry of the Soviet Union Into the War Against Japan,” Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta (Washington: GPO, 1955) 984.

<sup>69</sup> For a complete discussion of Hurley’s actions, see Buhite 202-238.



“Hurley,” wrote Wedemeyer, “conducted all political negotiations with the Chinese officials and... occasionally discussed their status with me. However, I have not officially participated and do not feel qualified to comment intelligently on the relative merits of the cases presented by the Central Government and the Communists.” All negotiations with the Chinese Communists were “political.” His October directive stated that he was to only aid and assist Chiang Kai-shek. Anything else was outside of his sphere of responsibility. In Wedemeyer’s personal view, according to his memorandum, “which I have expressed to all officers in China Theater, ... we are present in China to implement U.S. policy, not to formulate or discuss policy.”<sup>70</sup> Since the Nationalists were militarily allied with the United States, arming and training the Nationalist Army was, therefore, a “military” matter as long as they were used to fight Japan. The real effect of differentiating between “political” and “military” affairs was that it removed him from distracting catastrophes, such as the McClure debacle in January, and it allowed him to focus on the Nationalist military without worrying about negatively affecting Hurley’s negotiations. Any failure on Hurley’s part brought about by Wedemeyer fulfilling his written orders was not Wedemeyer’s concern.

Wedemeyer did not want to come into contact with the Communists. In his March memorandum to Hull, Wedemeyer even noted the Communists in their March 1945 position could only be used effectively as guerillas and not as a proper army. Therefore he could not be of much assistance. Wedemeyer wrote that he had not “negotiated with any of their [the Communists’] representatives... nor have I permitted my officers to do so. Further I have not given them assistance of any kind nor have I given them any hope or promise of the same. The above approach will be continued firmly and tactfully until I receive contrary instructions from

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<sup>70</sup> Wedemeyer to Hull, 29 March 1945, China Theater Papers.

the War Department.”<sup>71</sup> In other words, short of a major policy change initiated by his superiors, Wedemeyer’s course was set. If Hurley or the State Department wished to change U.S. policy and involve the Army with the Chinese Communists, they would have to go through the chain of command.

Wedemeyer also made his position on political matters clear to the State Department. According to a memorandum dated 12 March 1945 written by the State Department Chief of Division for Chinese Affairs, John Carter Vincent, that recounts a conversation between himself and Wedemeyer, Wedemeyer “explained that he was staying out of Chinese politics and that he had directed officers under him to do likewise.” Wedemeyer “was awaiting a ‘green light’ from the [State] Department” to aid the Chinese Communists. Any decisions concerning the Chinese Communists were, of course, “political.” Nevertheless, Wedemeyer “intimated that he did not favor our building up a Communist Army in China.” Aiding CCP forces would have required the type of extensive contact with the Communists Wedemeyer was trying to avoid. Vincent replied to Wedemeyer that the State Department was not even pondering giving the “green light” to aid the Communists without Chiang’s approval and would consider such a move only if the Army requested permission. Wedemeyer stated that in light of the State Department’s position, he would have to further study the issue.<sup>72</sup> Wedemeyer’s personal papers and China Theater files, however, do not contain any such studies.

Wedemeyer reiterated this position again on 7 June 1945. In a personal letter to Hull, Wedemeyer disclosed that in his opinion U.S. policy in China was not based on reality. Rather, sometimes he felt “like I am living in a world of fantasy, a never never land, but we are going to continue our efforts to attain the goal despite discouraging experiences along the way.”

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Additionally, according to Wedemeyer, at “times Pat [Hurley] can be very difficult and between him, the Generalissimo and all other interesting and strenuous characters, who contribute to my life in this community, I am fast acquiring a hide as tough as leather, impervious to machinations, flattery, cajoleries and criticisms. This job is certainly one for the books...”<sup>73</sup> The ranking American commander in China, Wedemeyer, considered Hurley to be another one of the players, albeit very important, trying to influence him for less than honest reasons.

Nevertheless, Wedemeyer tried to accommodate Hurley as best he could. Wedemeyer and Hurley had little reason for any disagreements because Wedemeyer avoided interfering in Hurley’s work; their fields no longer overlapped. When Hurley went back to Washington, Wedemeyer followed and supported Hurley while Hurley’s embassy staff in China revolted.<sup>74</sup> Wedemeyer consented, despite his own objections, to Hurley’s demand that “disloyal, pro-Communist” State Department officials on Wedemeyer’s staff as advisors, such as John Davies, be removed from China. Even during the politically charged late 1950s, Wedemeyer wrote in his memoirs about his attempt to moderate the final confrontation between Davies and Hurley. Wedemeyer even tried to “soften Hurley’s attitude toward [Davies].”<sup>75</sup> Indeed, letters in Wedemeyer’s personal papers from 1945 support this claim. Wedemeyer even kept a watchful eye throughout 1945 over his banished State Department advisors.<sup>76</sup>

One of the largest threats to Wedemeyer’s strategy of avoiding political problems was Navy Group, China, commanded by Commodore Milton Miles. Miles answered directly to Admiral Ernest King, Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet. In 1942, Miles established an alliance, known as the Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO) with Nationalist

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<sup>72</sup> Vincent, John, “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Chinese Affairs (Vincent),” in *FRUS, 1945: The Far East, China* 270-272.

<sup>73</sup> Wedemeyer to Hull, 7 June 1945, Box 81, Folder 35, Wedemeyer Papers.

<sup>74</sup> Schaller 216.

General Tai Li. Barbara Tuchman describes Tai as “China’s combination of Himmler and J. Edgar Hoover.”<sup>77</sup> Maochun Yu notes that Tai was fanatically loyal to Chiang and handled intelligence operations against not only the Japanese, but the Chinese Communists as well.<sup>78</sup> Others, such as John Service and Raymond Ludden, two of the State Department officers on Wedemeyer’s staff at the time, described in a February 1945 memorandum found in China Theater’s files an extremely political stand by Miles in his relations with Tai. Davies and Ludden wrote that the activities “of the Tai Li organization are well known in political policing. And substantiated by numerous sources.” Furthermore, according to Ludden and Davies, Tai confined political prisoners to concentration camps and often either tortured them or killed them. “Miles at a meeting at the American Embassy” noted Davies and Ludden, “openly defended Tai’s ‘justice’ and openly admitted he himself attended some 300 of these trials and approved the verdict... He stated vehemently that he personally hated all Communists, that in China they should be ‘eliminated,’ and that he would be glad to assist therein.”<sup>79</sup> Miles’ own reports to his liaison in with the Navy Department, Captain J.C. Metzger, cryptically boasted that the opening of a new school for secret police work had “a political involvement that cannot be put on paper. It has a tremendous far reaching field both in China and in the United States, both during the present war and in the post-war development period.”<sup>80</sup> Miles’ extreme pro-KMT efforts, as Michael Schaller notes, could have triggered U.S.-CCP hostilities and required Army forces to

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<sup>75</sup> Wedemeyer Reports! 319.

<sup>76</sup> Wedemeyer to Hull, 5 July 1945, Box 81, Folder 35, Wedemeyer Papers.

<sup>77</sup> Tuchman, Barbara, Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45 (New York: Macmillan, 1971) 261; Yu 31.

<sup>78</sup> Yu 30-31, 36, 40-44.

<sup>79</sup> Service, John, and Raymond Ludden. untitled, ND February 1945, China Theater Papers.

<sup>80</sup> Miles to Metzger, 1 September 1943, quoted in Schaller 240.

intervene, which would have directly violated Wedemeyer's October orders not to become involved in the KMT-CCP civil conflict.<sup>81</sup>

Wedemeyer fought vigorously to take control of Miles' organization. In a message to Marshall dated 13 January 1945, requested command of Navy Group, China. This was imperative because, according to Wedemeyer, "Miles is sponsoring all types of guerilla activities... [such as] training of police officers for Tai Li; impounding political prisoners in the Naval Compound near Chungking..." Even worse, "Tai Li is using the Miles organization as a supply agency for his own secret service and Gestapo."<sup>82</sup> Wedemeyer finally took the matter to the Joint Chiefs of Staff who gave him operational control over Miles and Navy Group, China.<sup>83</sup> By gaining command over Miles and his operation, Wedemeyer was able to remove the one military factor in China that was out of his control and could ensnare him in dealings with the Communists.

In his dealings with the Nationalists, Wedemeyer rarely considered the political consequences. As noted above, Wedemeyer's October orders directed him to aid and assist Chiang, not the Communists. For instance, upon arrival in China he found the Nationalist Army in a pathetic state. Wedemeyer wrote to Marshall early on that able-bodied recruits available for military service did not remain so for long because of malnutrition, "lack of hygiene, and poor sanitation, and deplorable medical service." Once troops were incapacitated, they were not replaced [with able-bodied men] because a replacement system simply did not exist.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, according to Hsi-sheng Ch'i, Nationalist troops spent the majority of their time scavenging for

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<sup>81</sup> Schaller 242.

<sup>82</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall, 13 January 1945. CFB 31171, China Theater Papers.

<sup>83</sup> Miles, Milton E., A Different Kind of War (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967) 451-454; Schaller 244-245.

<sup>84</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall. CFB 25886. 10 November 1944.

food.<sup>85</sup> In November, Wedemeyer convinced Chiang to establish central command over the Chinese Army under a single general, Ho Ying-chin. In February, Wedemeyer turned his attention to the soldiers who would take Ho's orders. Under phase two of Wedemeyer's ALPHA Plan, as agreed upon in early February 1945<sup>86</sup>, the U.S. Army would train and equip 36 Chinese divisions of approximately 5,000 men each.<sup>87</sup> By the time the 36 divisions were trained, Chiang would possess a loyal Army of over 180,000 American taught and equipped men. Although these troops could be used against the Japanese, they could just as easily be sent against the CCP. Yet this author did not find any record of immediate concern in Wedemeyer's personal papers or in China Theater's files. Either Wedemeyer did not take this into account, which is unlikely given his meticulous planning methods, or he thought Chiang would indeed use the divisions against the Japanese, at least until the end of the war. Any move Wedemeyer made had serious repercussions in the political realm between the KMT and CCP. By separating himself from Hurley, however, Wedemeyer did not have to compromise between his October orders that stipulated he was to aid Chiang in his fight against the Japanese, and Hurley's goal to unite the KMT and CCP.

China Theater's overall strategy in China revolved around both the civil conflict between the KMT and CCP, which fell under "political affairs" in Wedemeyer's terms, and the war against Japan. An unattributed memorandum titled "Far East Strategy 1945" on "Headquarters, United States Forces, China Theater" letterhead dated 1 March 1945, spelled out the United States' overall plan for victory in Asia. Since this document provided the blueprint for all American military maneuvers in the Far East, Wedemeyer, as theater commander, had to have

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<sup>85</sup> "The Military Dimension, 1942-1945" 171

<sup>86</sup> Romanus and Sunderland 236.

<sup>87</sup> "Report of China Theater 24 October 1944 to 15 February 1946 (to Include the Kuomintang-Communist Truce) to the Chief of Staff of the Army" Box 86 Folder 3, Wedemeyer Papers; Romanus and Sunderland 236.

approved it. The memorandum states that operations in the Far East “should be conducted with a view to eliminating the dynamo of the enemy war effort, located in the Japanese Archipelago. Large scale operations in the interior of China with American ground forces should be avoided.” If the Japanese elected to continue the war in China, after U.S. pacification of the main Japanese islands, Chiang Kai-shek had the “opportunity, in time and resources, to create Chinese land forces that can and will carry the burden or at least a proportionate share of the fighting on the continent.” This strategy recommended itself because it would probably “prevent, certainly restrict, the movement of [Japanese] personnel, war making equipment and supplies to the Mainland of Asia for continued resistance there.” Finishing the war against Japan in China would be especially difficult because of restricted military maneuverability brought about by political factors. For instance, if the Allies tried to gain lodgments on the China coast between the Shantung Peninsula and Shanghai, a “Chinese political crisis may be precipitated... because that area is more under Communistic than Central Government influence.” American planners sought to avoid the political complications of large-scale operations in China. By keeping American soldiers en masse out of China, they statistically lowered the chances of Communist-U.S. troop interaction and the Army’s involvement in political affairs. Nevertheless, the strategy called for “China Theater [to] conduct operations, air and ground in China and Indo-China to contain, divert, and destroy maximum enemy forces and resources.”<sup>88</sup> Since the U.S. military was not going to commit large ground forces to China, Wedemeyer had to use Nationalist troops to fight the Japanese.

All of Wedemeyer’s plans and actions using Nationalist troops had to benefit Chiang politically in some fashion because they required Chiang’s approval. Chiang’s goal, of course, was to consolidate his own power against the Japanese as well as the Chinese Communists.

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<sup>88</sup> “Far East Strategy,” ND February 1945, Box 89, Folder 5, Wedemeyer Papers.

Chiang stood to gain a great deal from Wedemeyer's planned offensive, ultimately known as CARBONADO. According to Wedemeyer's official post war report filed in 1946, he planned to use Nationalist armies to attack southward and recapture the ports of Canton and Hong Kong commencing as early as May 1945 (it actually started in June 1945 with little Japanese resistance). The ports were to be supply bases for expanded northward operations.<sup>89</sup> CARBONADO offered Chiang several advantages. First of all, opening a port cleared the way for a massive influx of U.S. aid that was then only trickling through the aerial supply line from India over the Himalayas and the arduous Stilwell Road between China and India. Second, it would re-establish Nationalist authority in captured areas and thus a larger power base for the Kuomintang. Southern China was the KMT's stronghold and recapturing it greatly strengthened Chiang. If he could consolidate power in the newly liberated areas, he could then use them as a base to strike north against the Communists or the Japanese. Third, it would give his newly trained divisions battle experience, making them more effective in later actions wherever he decided to send them. Chiang's increased strength was also essential to implementing U.S. strategy in the Far East since the more powerful Chiang became, the less American troops would have to enter China.

Wedemeyer still feared the partially dormant Chinese civil war would again erupt into wide-spread warfare. In his letter to Hull on 7 June 1945, Wedemeyer remarked that if a civil conflict developed, "our planned military effort against the Japanese might be unacceptably restricted. I made this crystal clear... with the Minister of War [Ch'en Ch'eng] recently. He assured me that CARBONADO remained his primary interest..." Additionally, Wedemeyer tried to keep U.S. aid focused against the Japanese. Some material naturally was diverted, but "when one considers the fact that we Americans are doing our utmost to insure that lend lease equipment is

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<sup>89</sup> "Report of China Theater 24 October 1944 to 15 February 1946 (to Include the Kuomintang-Communist Truce) to the Chief of Staff of the Army" Box 86, Folder3, Wedemeyer Papers; Romanus and Sunderland 333-334.



issued to and used by Chinese units that are best employed against the Japanese, it should be readily apparent that only small quantities could be used for fratricidal warfare within China.” Besides, Wedemeyer was “sure that the British used lend lease materials in General Scobies' campaign against the [Communist] Greeks” and in other areas.<sup>90</sup> To Wedemeyer, his policies contributed to at least delaying a full-scale civil war.

Wedemeyer blamed the CCP for any minor eruptions in the civil war. He even wrote to Hull that the “increasingly delicate situation [that] exists between the Central Government and the Communists... is now being aggravated by the Communists themselves because they are cognizant that a stronger Army is in the process of creation under the Generalissimo.” For instance, “as Jap withdrawals continue the Communists follow up in areas evacuated with alacrity and aplomb so that they can exclude Central Government Forces.”<sup>91</sup> Wedemeyer considered Communist competition with the Nationalists for Japanese territory as potentially hostile

Wedemeyer, however, found the line separating political and military affairs especially blurred while planning any offensive moves out of Nationalist held territory. Communists could have been directly encountered while capturing new territory by Wedemeyer's men either in the form of U.S. Army forces or as advisors to Nationalist units. A message from U.S. Fourteenth Air Force headquarters to Wedemeyer and the Pentagon on 15 March 1945 described Communist efforts to gain control of local governments in Japanese territory and the problem presented therein. In response, Wedemeyer ordered his planning section to create a study and recommend a policy.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Wedemeyer to Hull, 7 June 1945, Box 81, Folder 35, Wedemeyer Paper

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> “Policy of U.S. Forces Towards Chinese Communists in Liberated Areas,” 3 April 1945, Box 87, Folder 7, Wedemeyer Papers.

A China Theater staff study dated 3 April 1945, which was approved by Wedemeyer, determined U.S. policy towards Communists encountered in areas liberated from the Japanese. It described a very complicated situation in which Wedemeyer's staff did not know all of the variables. The U.S. Army's exclusive dealings with the Nationalists under Wedemeyer isolated the Army from contact with the Communists. At the onset, the study stated it was "impossible on the basis of information available to present an adequate analysis of the Chinese Communist, their armed forces, and their intentions. Our information on the subject, although volumunous [sic], is very meager and *based in general on statements and information by the Communist leaders themselves*" (italics added). As was the case with the 11/9 Memorandum, American policy makers did not have accurate information available to them. Nonetheless, this time they realized their data was questionable. Overall, according to the study, the U.S. was "faced with a powerful force which cannot be easily analyzed and placed in its niche as a part of the military picture."<sup>93</sup> In seven typed legal-sized pages, the author(s) determined that the real strength of the Chinese Communists was "their control of the Chinese people [behind Japanese lines] and in the cooperation they receive from these people."<sup>94</sup> Wedemeyer's staff was forced to rely on Communist propaganda in evaluating the Communists' strengths and weaknesses.

Despite the optimistic assessment of the Communists, China Theater planners did not emphasize collaborating with CCP forces encountered when Nationalist troops captured Japanese held territory. Prior to commencing the offensive, the April study explained, the State Department was to attempt to "bring about reconciliation," between Chiang and the leader of the Communist Party, thereby avoiding "dissipation of resources by internal conflict and... produce a united and harmonious Chinese national effort." The "treatment accorded to local Communist

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Party representatives will be important in its ultimate effect on the emergence of a united China...” and its immediate effects on the “Nipponese enemy...” Nonetheless, the author(s) noted that final “action will be in the hands of the Generalissimo and his representatives.” In this situation, Wedemeyer and other U.S. Army officers had very little influence over Chiang’s actions. All they could do was react and hope that the State Department had negotiated a truce between the KMT and CCP.

The April policy study did not envisage the State Department’s success in arranging KMT-CCP rapprochement. On the contrary, the planners formulated their own policy if the State Department failed in its mission. The study envisioned American forces continuing to “exclusively” deal “with and through the... victorious Central Government forces.”<sup>95</sup> If the Communists resisted Chiang’s troops before the Japanese were driven from the area,

they will be directly cooperating with the Japanese, and must expect to be dealt with accordingly. If conflict takes the form of civil disobedience, non-cooperation, sabotage, or organized military offensive action by Communist forces following expulsion of the enemy from the area, it is considered that the U.S. Theater Commander will still be obligated to lend every practicable assistance to the Generalissimo’s forces in holding the area they have occupied, and preserving order. *Our military assistance should be withheld only if, after expulsion of the enemy from a given area, the Central Government forces embark on offensive operations against organized armed forces of the Communist Party which may be in the vicinity, assuming a static or defensive attitude.* (italics added)

Of course, this was a worst-case scenario. Yet, any Communist instigated fighting or resistance to Nationalist troops would be dealt with harshly not by the KMT alone, but also with the backing of Wedemeyer and the U.S. Army. This shift was a result of the realization that the KMT-CCP conflict was a “problem that cannot be solved by the U.S. Military. This event might lead to Civil War in China if no agreement has been reached. However, we cannot ignore the fact

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

that civil war is ongoing already.”<sup>96</sup> Thus, the U.S. Army developed its own policy dealing with the Communists in Japanese held territories. Wedemeyer, despite his protests, started to shape U.S. foreign policy. Nevertheless, the goal was not to further split the Kuomintang and Chinese Communists, but to deal with the situation in a way that would allow for continued pushes against the Japanese using Nationalist troops as prescribed by U.S. policy.

From January to June 1945, Wedemeyer concentrated on preparing the Chinese to fight the Japanese. To do so, he removed himself from the hyper-political KMT-CCP negotiations. No longer a target, he was able to start an offensive against the Japanese with an Army that was in shambles as late as November 1944. To do so, however, required the development of military-diplomatic strategies that were made without the State Department’s guidance. By the end of this period, Wedemeyer held sway over U.S. policy dealing with the Communists when met by U.S. or Nationalist forces in Japanese territory.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

#### IV: From World War to Cold War

On 19 August 1945, four days after Japanese capitulation on 15 August,<sup>97</sup> General Wedemeyer notified General Marshall that he was airlifting two U.S. sponsored Nationalist Armies to the Nanking-Shanghai area where Wedemeyer estimated they would encounter 50,000 to 80,000 Chinese Communist troops. In doing so, Wedemeyer sent a clear, although supposedly “inadvertent” message to all in China.<sup>98</sup> The United States backed the Kuomintang over the Chinese Communist Party in upcoming military confrontations between the two Chinese political parties. The World War Two was over and the Cold War was beginning to heat up.

As early as July 1945 the specter of Soviet Communism haunted Wedemeyer. The Yalta protocol in which the Soviets promised to declare war against Japan two to three months after German surrender gained importance when the final German forces capitulated in early May 1945. Documents from Wedemeyer’s headquarters reveal that from Wedemeyer’s perspective, Soviet entry into China represented an awesome opportunity for the Chinese Communist Party to equip itself with Japanese arms captured by the Russians in Manchuria. The ultimate effect of this was the spread of Communism from the Soviet Far East down throughout all of China. At the same time, CCP-U.S. Army relations were plummeting to new lows. Wedemeyer also held a strong belief that Communism was the equivalent of Nazism and that the Soviet entry into China meant that the United States could lose at the peace table what it had defeated in battle. During conferences with Chiang Kai-shek, Wedemeyer made it clear that the U.S. Army in China would back Chiang against the Communists after Japanese capitulation up to, but not including, U.S. offensive operations against the Communists. Wedemeyer’s messages to Marshall, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the War Department Chiefs of Staff reflect Wedemeyer operating with little

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<sup>97</sup> Kcegan, John, The Second World War (New York: Viking, 1989) 584.

guidance from Washington and often having to make assumptions based on contradictory messages from his superiors. Wedemeyer independently decided to back the Nationalists over the Communists upon Japanese capitulation.

The final German surrender at Heligoland on 11 May 1945<sup>99</sup> was one of the few events outside of China that seriously impacted China Theater during World War Two. The end of the war in Europe freed many American troops and resources for the war against Japan. Wedemeyer began to plan expanded operations against the Japanese using U.S. material and generals from Europe.<sup>100</sup> Had that been the only effect of Allied victory over Germany, the Communist dilemma may not have come to fore until Nationalist troops entered the Communist stronghold of Northern China after sweeping through Southern China. The Yalta agreement, however, suddenly became relevant as the three month after German surrender deadline for Soviet entry into the War against Japan approached.

In Wedemeyer's view the Chinese Communists were natural allies with the Soviets. In his 12 March 1945 report of a conversation between himself and Wedemeyer, John Carter Vincent wrote that "Wedemeyer seemed convinced that the Russians would work independently with the Chinese Communists... irrespective of the military command or political situation in China at the time."<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, Vincent did not mention any reasons for Wedemeyer's opinion or his prediction for Soviet intentions in China.

Wedemeyer equated Communism with Nazism. In his memoirs, which reflect fervent anti-Communism at the height of the Cold War, Wedemeyer explained that during the late 1930s while in Germany attending the German War College, he was "exposed to constant propaganda

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<sup>98</sup> "The Commanding General, United States Forces, China Theater (Wedemeyer), to the Chief of Staff (Marshall)," 19 August 1945, in FRUS 1945: The Far East, China 531-534.

<sup>99</sup> Keegan 533.

<sup>100</sup> Wedemeyer to Handy, 13 July 1945, Box 81, Folder 23, Wedemeyer Papers.

about the Bolshevik menace. Beneath the propaganda I discerned a great deal of truth about Communist aims, practices, and methods unknown or ignored in America...<sup>102</sup> In Wedemeyer on War and Peace, his former aid-de-camp, Keith Eiler, writes that Wedemeyer confided to his diary on New Years Day, 1942 that “We Americans are committing ourselves to the defeat of one ‘ism’ with the clear prospect of strengthening a similar ‘ism’ under another cloak. Our fine country... must be victorious in battle *and* at the peace table.”<sup>103</sup> Wedemeyer’s war was against totalitarianism in the guises of both Hitler and of Stalin. As Japanese strength dwindled, the battle of the peace table approached.

Wedemeyer reiterated and expanded upon these sentiments in a paragraph he “contemplated” but did not send to the Joint Chiefs of Staff as part of a memorandum transmitted on 14 August 1945, the day before the Japanese capitulated. Both Communism and Nazism, according to Wedemeyer, were “equally abhorrent to Americans and diametrically opposed to ideologies of democracy; both forms of ism abrogate the very principles for which we have made unstinted, astronomical sacrifices in lives and resources.” Moreover, according to Wedemeyer, “America has unwittingly contributed to the trends of events in Europe which facilitate the substitution of Communism for Nazism...” One “ism” had supplanted another, as he had predicted only three years before. Wedemeyer viewed Asia as “an enormous pot seething and boiling, the fumes of which may readily snuff out the advantages gained by the Allied sacrifices [of] the past several years...” “The situation in Europe is a fait accompli” Wedemeyer wrote in his proposed paragraph of August 1945, “however we may still provide a framework for

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<sup>101</sup> Vincent 272.

<sup>102</sup> Wedemeyer Reports! 10.

<sup>103</sup> Wedemeyer, Albert, diary entry, 1 January 1942, quoted in Eiler, Keith E., introduction to Wedemeyer on War and Peace (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987) xvii.

realization” of the goals for which America fought.<sup>104</sup> The battle of the peace table had arrived and, in Wedemeyer’s opinion, America had already lost in Europe. Wedemeyer’s actions and messages must be analyzed taking into account Wedemeyer’s fierce hatred of Bolshevism, which he transferred to the Chinese Communists. He was not only fighting to win battles against Japan; he was also preparing the peace table at which America could still lose the war to the “other ‘ism.’”

Beginning in May 1945, U.S. Army relations with the Communists went in a downward spiral, according to Maochun Yu. Yu tells the story of an OSS team accompanied by a Nationalist intelligence officer that parachuted into an area they believed to be held by Japanese puppet troops. In reality, the Communists were cooperating with the puppets and did not want the Americans or Nationalists to find out about it. Thus, the Communists detained the team before they could uncover the CCP-Japanese collusion and held them without contacting U.S. headquarters. As a result, Wedemeyer sent protest letters to Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse-tung and challenged Mao at a meeting in June 1945. According to Yu, after this incident, the Chinese Communists looked upon the U.S. as agents of the Kuomintang in China.<sup>105</sup>

Wedemeyer also worked with Chiang to prevent Communist expansion when the Japanese capitulated. Only three days later, on 31 July 1945, Wedemeyer met with Chiang on how to handle possible Japanese surrender. According to the meeting minutes, after talking about how to “mop up” pockets up Japanese resistance, Wedemeyer noted that Chiang had “other problems on his hands in the event of a Japanese surrender and that military dispositions made by the Generalissimo should have particular reference to: (1) Communists, (2) recalcitrant

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<sup>104</sup> Wedemeyer to WARCOS for Joint Chiefs of Staff, 14 August 1945, CFBX 4580, not yet filed, Wedemeyer Papers.



provincial war lords...” The U.S. Joint Chiefs (JCS) were considering securing certain ports in the event of Japanese capitulation to contain lingering resistance, including in order of priority, Shanghai, Fusan, Chefoo, and others. According to Wedemeyer, “critical points to be occupied and held and held should be, first Shanghai, then Canton... the Joint Chiefs of Staff might have failed to realize the Communist problem and the economic value of Shanghai and Canton.” The conference, however, concluded on an interesting note. Wedemeyer agreed to occupy the city of Fusan second, instead of Shanghai, at the insistence of Chiang. When pressed for his reason, Chiang admitted that his reasons were political and twofold: to “forestall the setting up of a Communist Korean Government... [and to] establish Chinese control of Korea before the Russians.”<sup>106</sup> Wedemeyer placed American troops in a strong position to support the Nationalist Government with the motivation of establishing general order in China, which the Communists were a threat to. Yet, he would not directly oppose CCP troops, hoping more to intimidate them.

Later on that day, according to meeting minutes, Wedemeyer told Chiang that U.S. forces occupying Chinese cities “would remain in position until Chinese Government forces could be brought to relieve them. United States forces landing in the China coast would refrain insofar as collaborating with any forces opposing the Central Government.” Further on in the discussion, Wedemeyer stated that “he anticipated the finding of two or three Communist divisions in the Shanghai area when United States forces land there.” Wedemeyer even added that the Communists “were getting more arrogant.” Yet, Wedemeyer did not say what U.S. troops would do if Communist troops challenged them for control of the area. Additionally, when Chiang told

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<sup>105</sup> Yu 221-223, 224.

<sup>106</sup> “Minutes of Meeting No. 68A with Generalissimo.” 31 July 1945, China Theater Papers.

Wedemeyer a “firm United States attitude would deter the Communists,”<sup>107</sup> Wedemeyer changed the subject.

Wedemeyer’s messages to Marshall, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the War Department Chiefs of Staff increasingly dealt with the KMT-CCP conflict and the Soviet factor in the post-war era. Until late August, Wedemeyer tried to maintain an image of neutrality in the Chinese civil war. His arguments for action, however, blamed the Communists for initiating aggression and proposed actions that while they seemed neutral, could have only helped the Nationalists. Wedemeyer argued for outright support of the Kuomintang only after Washington failed to take his prescribed actions.

Wedemeyer’s first message to Washington about Soviet influence in China was prompted by War Department preparations for the upcoming Allied conference at Potsdam, Germany to discuss, among other issues, the war against Japan. On the Fourth of July 1945, General Marshall sent Wedemeyer a message stating that at the “forthcoming conference” the heads of governments were going to decide “on a number of subjects with important military implications.” Among the issues, Marshall wrote, were the “unification of China, ... use of Chinese forces in occupation of Japan, ... [and] coordination of US-Chinese-Russian operations in North China and Manchuria.” Marshall wanted Wedemeyer’s comments “with the view of preparation of military implications for presentation to the President.”<sup>108</sup> It was especially strange that Chiang was not invited to participate at Potsdam considering the shift of the war effort to oppose Japan and his position as Supreme Allied Commander in China. Even stranger was an American general being invited to comment on the unification of China for a conference of foreigners, when the matter was an internal Chinese matter. Marshall, however, presented

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Marshall to Wedemeyer, 4 July 1945, WAR 26601, China Theater Papers.

Wedemeyer with the opportunity to shape American military expectations of the Soviets, including Soviet intentions.

In his reply to Marshall on 10 July 1945, Wedemeyer predicted Soviet involvement in China would counter U.S. goals in China. Furthermore, he revealed that he viewed the Russians as upsetting the balance of power between the Nationalists and Communists. Wedemeyer wrote that the “potentialities of the Communists from a military standpoint are limited and would only be improved materially if Russia chose to support them.” Russia, according to Wedemeyer, “may feel that she has no alternative but to support the Communists in order to establish order in Manchuria and to acquire special privileges and the bases she desires in that area.” Again, Wedemeyer did not view the Chinese Communists as nationalists, but as dedicated International Communists willing to aid the mother country of Communism, the Soviet Union. This was especially serious insofar as U.S. support for the Nationalists “might become involved with the Chinese Communists initially and finally the situation may develop in such a manner as to bring American and Russian interests in sharp conflict.”<sup>109</sup> Wedemeyer’s prediction indicated that he did not regard the Soviet Union as a trusted ally, but rather as a potential competitor with the United States for influence in China. Furthermore in this hostile climate, the United States would back the Kuomintang against the Soviets and the CCP. Wedemeyer was preparing more for the start of the Cold war than the end of World War Two.

Additionally, in his 10 July 1945 reply to Marshall, Wedemeyer recommended Russia, America, and Britain “united strongly in the endeavor to bring about coalition of [the CCP and KMT] by coercing both sides to make realistic concessions, serious post-war disturbance may be avoided... I use the term coerce because it is my conviction that continued appeals to both sides

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<sup>109</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall, 10 July 1945, China Theater Papers; Romanus and Sunderland 383.

couched in polite diplomatic terms will not accomplish unification.”<sup>110</sup> Since the USSR and the Chinese Communist Party were linked by their shared International Communist goals, this would not have been a problem for the Soviets if they agreed, at least according to Wedemeyer’s statements. Wedemeyer, however, was personally not convinced that the U.S. was very influential in internal Chinese political affairs. On the contrary, he earlier expressed the view, as noted in the previous chapter, that he felt like he lived in a “never never land” because Hurley continued his attempts to overly influence Chiang Kai-shek. If Hurley failed after many months in China as the President’s plenipotentiary and then U.S. Ambassador, then wouldn’t another American effort be just as irrelevant? Furthermore, if Soviet goals in China were counter to American goals, why would the Russians participate in such a conference?

Wedemeyer started to phrase his arguments to Washington for U.S.-Soviet brokering of KMT-CCP rapprochement in terms of mutual benefit for both America and Russia. According to a personal letter Wedemeyer wrote to Marshall dated 1 August 1945, widespread internecine warfare in China would “reduce the advantages gained by military victory over Japan and destroy economic and political equilibrium in the Far East... Such an unfortunate sequel would certainly not be to the best interests of either Russia or America.” To secure peace Wedemeyer reiterated his hope that “realistic outside pressure be brought to bear against both factions, the Communists and the Central Government, by President Truman and Generalissimo Stalin.”<sup>111</sup> In another letter dated the same day, Wedemeyer restated his plea for stronger Allied pressure to force KMT-CCP rapprochement, fearing that over two million Japanese soldiers in China “may become a menace to world peace and the situation may require intervention in China by outside

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<sup>110</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall, 10 July 1945, China Theater Papers.

<sup>111</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall, 1 August 1945, Box 82, Folder 23, Wedemeyer Papers.

powers.”<sup>112</sup> Yet, only one day earlier, instead of telling Chiang that he should just try to negotiate with the “arrogant” CCP, Wedemeyer took an extremely pro-KMT and anti-CCP position while talking with Chiang Kai-shek.

Wedemeyer also portrayed the Nationalists as America’s democratic proteges in his personal letter to Marshall. Wedemeyer noted that everyone “who comes to China, military or civilian, tries to speak volubly and authoritatively upon return to the States.” Nonetheless, Wedemeyer, although “still far from an authority,” offered information “which may help you and the President in your considerations and decisions concerning China.” On the political side, Wedemeyer wrote that he found “an embryonic nation, a great entity about to be born... Only a few decades ago the corrupt and arbitrary rule of war lords was overthrown.” The war lords were replaced by a government based on Sun Yat-sen’s three principles, which, according to Wedemeyer, “in reality epitomize America’s basic principles of democracy.”<sup>113</sup> Although Wedemeyer urged KMT-CCP rapprochement, he also presented the KMT in the best terms possible to Washington, implying that the Nationalists should receive continued U.S. support.

The explosion of atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan on 6 August 1945 and 9 August 1945, respectively, coupled with the Soviet invasion of Manchuria on 9 August<sup>114</sup> effectively spelled the end of the war against Japan. Cooperation with the Soviets and CCP was no longer necessary for war purposes. On 9 August 1945, the day a B-29 dropped the second atom bomb over Nagasaki and the Russians rolled into Manchuria, Wedemeyer sent an Eyes Alone message to the War Department Chiefs of Staff. In it he requested direction in several policy areas, including what Americans should do if Communist forces demanded territory, such

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<sup>112</sup> Wedemeyer to WARCOS, 1 August 1945, CFB 2320, not yet filed, Wedemeyer Papers.

<sup>113</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall, 1 August 1945, Box 82, Folder 23, Wedemeyer Papers.

<sup>114</sup> Keegan 584.

as Shanghai, held temporarily by American forces.<sup>115</sup> According to his October directive, Wedemeyer could do nothing but retreat if Communist troops demanded American held position in China devoid of U.S. material and threat of Japanese attack removed by surrender. Fighting the Communists for control would involve American troops in fratricidal warfare.

The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) sent a contradictory reply next day, 10 August 1945, in the form of supplementary orders to his initial October directive. The new directives became effective upon Japanese capitulation. The JCS wrote in the first paragraph, subparagraph (a) that “all provisions apply only in so far as action in accordance therewith does not prejudice the basic U.S. principle that the United States will not support the Central Government of China in fratricidal warfare.” Yet, in the fourth paragraph of the message, the JCS ordered U.S. forces to “turn over points in China liberated by them to agencies and forces accredited by the Central Government of China.” This directive violated the premise that the U.S. was neutral in the KMT-CCP conflict because the Communists and Kuomintang were vying for the same positions. By only handing over territory to Nationalist forces, the U.S. indeed prejudiced to the Communists. Furthermore, in the sixth paragraph, Wedemeyer was ordered to “assisted the Central Government in the rapid transport of Chinese Central Government forces to key areas in China.”<sup>116</sup> If these areas were important to the Nationalists, they were also essential to the Communists. In this sense, Wedemeyer was ordered to assist in deploying KMT troops against the Chinese Communists. The JCS gave Wedemeyer an impossible assignment: to maintain neutrality yet greatly assist Chiang in recapturing contested territory.

Wedemeyer was flabbergasted by the Joint Chiefs’ addendum to his October orders. Two days later, on 12 August 1945. Wedemeyer angrily wrote to Marshall that he was deeply

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<sup>115</sup> Wedemeyer to WARCOS, 9 August 1945, CFB 4082, not yet filed, Wedemeyer Papers.

“concerned... relative possible lack of appreciation in Washington of explosive and portentous possibilities in China when Japan surrenders.” “Instructions emanating from Washington,” Wedemeyer noted while citing the addendum to his October orders, “indicate that I have failed to impress the implications of the Chinese Communist movement and effect upon realization of U.S. objectives in this area.” Indeed, the contradictory nature of the Joint Chiefs’ message indicated a fundamental misunderstanding of the Chinese political situation.

The Communists were instigating the fight between themselves and the Kuomintang, Wedemeyer warned in his 12 October message to Marshall. “Chinese Communist forces,” according to Wedemeyer, “may precipitate civil war in China... The primary object of the Chinese Communists is to obtain Japanese arms and equipment and thus further strengthen their abilities.” The geographical objectives of the Chinese Communists are and continue to be the very same, repeat, the very same strategic points and areas recognized as vital by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff...” Wedemeyer disregarded the appearance of neutrality by stating that he would do “utmost to... localize Chinese Communist efforts in consonance with new China Theater directive referring particularly to paragraph 4,” which specified U.S. forces would only surrender territory to the Nationalists. Wedemeyer then requested a total of five American divisions to occupy strategic Chinese cities, such as Shanghai.<sup>117</sup> His interpretation of his new directive reflects the growing winds of the Cold War in the field.

In a message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff dated 14 August 1945, Wedemeyer connected the Chinese Communists with the Soviets. Under Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers General Douglas MacArthur’s proposed General Order No. 1 to the Japanese High Command, Japanese troops in Manchuria were to surrender to the Soviets while those in China surrendered

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<sup>116</sup> “The Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Commanding General, United States Forces, China Theater (Wedemeyer),” 10 August 1945, WARX 47513, in FRUS 1945: The Far East, China 527-528.

to Chiang Kai-shek. The CCP and USSR would probably cooperate with each other since it was not, according to Wedemeyer, “unreasonable to expect penetration of Soviet Communist ideologies in Manchuria with cooperation of Chinese Communists.” Wedemeyer continued, noting that there was an “extreme danger that the Japanese equipment will become available surreptitiously or openly to the Chinese Communists in Manchuria.” Thus, he pleaded, General MacArthur had to order Japanese troops in Manchuria to surrender to either the Nationalists or the Soviets, which would allow the Nationalists to compete for power in Manchuria. But wasn’t Wedemeyer unfairly criticizing the CCP for trying to expand when it was locked in a civil war with the Kuomintang? Wedemeyer acknowledged that the “ideas in this message and in messages I have sent to you the past several days might suggest partisan leaning on my part. This is not the case... the United States policy has been and continues to be full support of the Generalissimo who heads the only universally and officially recognized constituted government in China.” Therefore, to Wedemeyer it appeared “sound to create conditions by continued U.S. political, economic and military support (short of involvement in fratricidal war) which would strengthen the existing Central Government’s position.”<sup>118</sup> Wedemeyer’s backing of Chiang fully implemented Washington’s policy of supporting the Nationalists. Unfortunately for Washington, it was not fully prepared to accept the fact that the war in China not yet over.

In a striking turn at the end of the memorandum to the Joint Chiefs, Wedemeyer admitted that he really did not know what was going on in terms of international negotiations outside of China because he was “so remote.” He submitted “with some misgivings” two variations on the suggestion that urged Big Three (U.S.A., U.K., and USSR) action to preclude a civil war.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Wedemeyer to Marshall, 12 August 1945, CFBX 4352, not yet filed, Wedemeyer Papers.

<sup>118</sup> Wedemeyer to WARCOS for Joint Chiefs of Staff, 14 August 1945, CFBX 4580, not yet filed, Wedemeyer Papers.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.



China was Wedemeyer's microcosm. With little outside direction, especially evident in his continued cries for direction, or even direction from the U.S. Ambassador in China, Hurley, Wedemeyer had great power to shape U.S. policy.

Wedemeyer's pleadings to the Joint Chiefs were too late or fell on deaf ears. On 15 January, the Japanese capitulated. MacArthur's General Order No. 1 was issued without change. Japanese troops in Manchuria were to surrender to Soviet authorities.<sup>120</sup>

Wedemeyer, who still sought orders to actively support Chiang, emphasized a more missionary argument for backing the Nationalists over the Communists. In a 17 August 1945 memorandum to the War Department Chiefs of Staff, Wedemeyer offered a very different picture of China from his 1 August 1945 letter to Marshall in which he talked about the "embryonic nation" of China. Wedemeyer portrayed average Chinese as unable to grasp complex issues, an extremely Orientalist image. The "inarticulate masses of China desire peace and are not particularly interested in or aware of the various ideologies represented" by the KMT and CCP. All the common people want are an "opportunity to work, to obtain food and clothing for their families and a happy peaceful environment." In short, they desired stability, not some Western liberal freedom. Besides, "China is not repeat not prepared for a democratic form of government with 95% of her population illiterate and for many other cogent reasons." Wedemeyer observed that conditions in China "could best be handled by a benevolent despot or military dictator, whether such dictator be a Communist or a Kuomintang matters very little." He, however, retained "the impression that the Generalissimo offers [the] best opportunity at this time for stabilization in the area, political and economic."<sup>121</sup> By supporting Chiang, the U.S.

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<sup>120</sup> "Directive by President Truman to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (MacArthur)." 15 August 1945, *FRUS 1945: The Far East, China* 530-531.

<sup>121</sup> Wedemeyer to WARCOS, 17 August 1945, CFB 4880, Box 89, Folder 1, Wedemeyer Papers.

would help the plight of the poor Chinese peasant, unable to decipher complex political ideologies for himself.

Four days after the Japanese capitulated, 19 August 1945, Wedemeyer further dissected the contradictions in his orders in a message to the Joint Chiefs. Wedemeyer could not remain neutral, despite orders to do so. He noted that if he “literally construed and adhered to” his orders not violate the principle that the U.S. would not promote fratricidal Chinese warfare, “this stipulation might eliminate support now being given the Generalissimo’s forces.” Moving Nationalist troops, explained Wedemeyer, to key areas may have been “construed as a deceptive maneuver to deal primarily with the Communists... in effect and concomitantly we are making an important contribution to preclude successful operations by Communist forces.” Yet, this was necessary “to carry out the mission of assisting the Chinese the Chinese in handling Japanese military forces in China.”<sup>122</sup>

Wedemeyer decided to take a stand. In his 19 August message to Marshall, Wedemeyer concluded that he considered that his mission required “that I give full support, including extensive air transport lift, to Chinese Central Government forces in carrying out their occupational responsibilities... to facilitate surrender, repatriation, and deportation” of Japanese forces.” Therefore, Wedemeyer wrote that “movement by air of two U.S.-sponsored armies to the Nanking-Shanghai area will be initiated in two days.” As a result, Wedemeyer predicted that “it is highly probable that within a few days after Central Government forces arrive in the area they will be engaged not only in coping with [the] Japanese situation but they may also be engaged in active combat against the Communists.” Wedemeyer made a policy decision that firmly pitted the U.S. on the Nationalists’ side against the Chinese Communists.

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<sup>122</sup> “The Commanding General, United States Forces, China Theater, (Wedemeyer), to the Chief of Staff (Marshall).” 19 August 1945, in FRUS 1945: The Far East, China 531.

Wedemeyer's decision, however, was not a radical departure from past China Theater policy. The April 1945 policy study recommended that if Communist troops took any actions more than assuming defensive positions, Wedemeyer would assume they were cooperating with the Japanese and would support the Nationalists over them. His perception of Communist aggression as evidenced by CCP territorial claims, Soviet imperialism, and CCP-USSR collusion allowed Wedemeyer to support the Nationalists U.S. policy from the highest levels, after all, recognized the Nationalists as America's allies in China.

Many historians, however, view Wedemeyer's actions as somewhat in line with the Truman Administration's growing anti-Communism. Michael Schaller portrayed Wedemeyer's actions in China against the Communists as partially in concert with the Administration. Wedemeyer implemented a policy to assuage Truman's fears that the Soviets were trying to take over a large part of China.<sup>123</sup> In The Closing of the Door (1973) Paul Varg credits Wedemeyer with sounding "the warning of a Communist takeover." Furthermore, Varg notes Wedemeyer's "initiative" greatly contributed to the course of U.S. policy as decided by the Joint Chiefs.<sup>124</sup> Robert Messer in "American Perspectives on the Origin of the War in Cold War Asia, 1945-1949" (1990) focuses on the Truman Administration's increasing fear of Soviet imperialism as the reason America backed the Nationalists after the Japanese capitulated.<sup>125</sup> Indeed, while these arguments are valid, they ignore the fact that Wedemeyer was very isolated from his superiors in the States and even other Americans in China. While Wedemeyer was debating his orders with the Joint Chiefs, he was also acting upon his interpretation of them.

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<sup>123</sup> Schaller 264-266.

<sup>124</sup> Varg 209.

<sup>125</sup> For a description of the Truman Administration's reaction to Communism in China around the time of the Japanese surrender, see Messer 247-254.

In July and August 1945, Wedemeyer made the transition from World War to Cold War. His transition was spurred by events in China and Europe, but not by superiors in the United States. By issuing contradictory orders to Wedemeyer, The Joint Chiefs' abdicated to Wedemeyer the power to decide America's first moves in post-war era.

## V: Conclusion

General Wedemeyer's tenure in China from October 1944 to August 1945 was marked mostly by the infighting that was predominant among Americans in China during World War Two. Yet, unlike his predecessor, Stilwell who eventually was sent home, Wedemeyer gained great power and autonomy in this environment after his initial setback with Hurley's plan as detailed in the 11/9 Memorandum. After getting acquainted with political situation among the Americans and the Chinese, Wedemeyer focused on charting his own course away from conflicts that might have temporarily boosted his power, but in the long run would have involved him in many battles that would have slowly sapped his power. By August 1945, Wedemeyer was firmly in charge of the U.S. military and could formulate a great deal of United States policy under the guise of military necessity. No wonder Roosevelt's Chief of Staff, Admiral William Leahy remarked in his memoirs that "Wedemeyer is a resourceful soldier of high ability and he should have succeeded in China if success were possible by any Occidental in that confused Oriental environment."<sup>126</sup> Contrary to Leahy's belief, Wedemeyer accomplished a great deal given the circumstances.

Wedemeyer reflects in his memoirs that his orders to China in October 1944 "came as a bombshell."<sup>127</sup> Yet by July 1945, Wedemeyer was preparing for the event he had anticipated in his diary on New Year's Day 1942: the coming of the peace table. For Wedemeyer the strategist, his autonomy afforded him the opportunity to prepare, shape, and locate the peace table in a place most advantageous to his country. For Wedemeyer the anti-Communist, his operational independence allowed him to direct the peace. Instead relaxing after one "ism" was defeated, he

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<sup>126</sup> Leahy, William D., I Was There (New York: Whittlesey House, 1950) 338; Yu266.

<sup>127</sup> Wedemeyer Reports! 271.

guided the U.S. into opposing the other “ism,” Communism, which he believed to be as much a threat as Fascism was to the United States.

Wedemeyer’s experiences in China also allow for a unique perspective on the U.S. effort to transform China into an Oriental America. The plan for American success in China as set forth by the 11/9 Memorandum was extremely idealistic and unrealistic. By interpreting China as if it were America, the author forgot that he was no longer in America. This plan quickly failed Wedemeyer by leading him into great controversy. From late January to June, Wedemeyer ignored the American campaign to change China, focusing instead on implementing U.S. policy to use Chinese troops against Japan. During this time he assembled a mangled combination Western and Chinese military techniques to improve the effectiveness of the Nationalist Army. Wedemeyer then embarked on his own crusade against Communism that dealt less with changing China than fighting Bolshevism, which he considered to be a threat to American notions of capitalism and democracy anywhere it existed.

In the long run, was Wedemeyer successful? His airlift was the first action in a series of American steps to prevent the spread of Communism in China. Nevertheless, the overall campaign failed. Communism prevailed in Mainland China while Chiang and his regime went into exile on Taiwan, never to return.

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