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**CONFLICT AND COOPERATION IN CHINA: FDR'S MISMANAGEMENT
OF INDEPARTMENTAL RELATIONS IN WORLD WAR II**

Sally Burt
PhD Candidate
Australian National University

Abstract

Franklin Roosevelt had a clear vision for the post World War II world. China played an important part in that vision. The President, however, lacked the means to achieve his aspirations for China. FDR also lacked a clear and coherent plan of the tactics he should use to help turn his vision into a reality. The relationship between the US Ambassador in China, Clarence Gauss, and the US commander of the China-Burma-India Theatre, General Joseph Stilwell, provides a fascinating case study to show FDR's mismanagement of the relations between the War and State Departments over China. This paper will argue that the mismanagement resulted from the President's failure to develop a clear and coherent plan on how to bring about the conditions in China that would see his vision succeed.

Introduction

Franklin Roosevelt had a clear vision for the post World War II world. China played an important part in that vision. The President, however, lacked the means to achieve his aspirations for China. FDR also lacked a clear and coherent plan of the tactics he should use to help turn his vision into a reality. The President was unable to define clear roles and expectations for the US Ambassador in China, Clarence Gauss, and the US commander of the China-Burma-India Theatre, General Joseph Stilwell. Gauss, in particular, felt undermined by the President and this led to his relationship with General Stilwell to be based on competition instead of cooperation. The two men were eventually able to develop a cooperative plan to achieve their goals in China. The outcome of that collaboration suggests that if it had been brought about sooner, the deeper problems in FDR's plan for China might have been realized and a more realistic China policy developed.

Background

The Japanese invasion of China in the early 1930s did not cause any significant alteration of United States' policy towards China or Japan. Although the Marco Polo Bridge incident in 1937 was of greater concern, it too brought a limited reaction from the United States. The Secretary of State presented a statement to the press and the League of Nations several days later urging peace through increased foreign trade (Roosevelt, 1933-1945, Part 3, Reel 19:439). It was only in November 1940, when the Japanese government announced its policy of the New Order in Asia, which excluded any Western presence in the region (Roosevelt, 1933-1945, Part 3, Reel 16:190), that US interests were affected enough to draw a policy response. The relationship between Japan and the US in the lead up to Pearl Harbor is familiar enough; from the failed negotiations to the oil embargo that finally provoked Japanese action (Iriye, 1981, 1-32). The policy towards China, however, is less familiar. As tension grew in US relations with Japan, US policy towards China became more sympathetic. Loans, credits and financial advisors were sent to assist with the struggle against the Japanese invaders. It is important to note that Britain's policy was to align itself with the US and so it too began giving aid. The Soviet Union was giving substantial aid to China long before this policy shift by the US and Britain (Barnett, 1940, 9-10).

After Pearl Harbor China's ability to continue the fight against Japan grew in significance. The United States' involvement in the war opened up Roosevelt's foreign policy options enormously. Direct intervention in the European war was possible for the first time. Hitler was seen as a greater threat than Japan, and Roosevelt believed that it would be possible to bring about victory with an all out effort against Hitler and then by turning to the Pacific once Europe was secure (Stoler, 2000, 43-4). Therefore, China's military role was to hold Japan as best it could on the mainland so that Japanese troops could not be moved to strengthen their Southward advance. The Allies could then maintain a defensive posture in the Pacific whilst taking the offensive in the European Theatre. To strengthen the Chinese the US used the Lend Lease program, as it had for Britain, to furnish China with the materiel necessary to fight Japan effectively.

Beyond this military role, Roosevelt saw a political role for China after the war, as a counter to Japanese dominance in Asia. Japan's policy was no longer compatible

with American interests in Asia. China was the only other state with the capability of being an Asian Great Power. For a stable peace to be secured, China needed to be bolstered into a position of economic, military and political strength. Roosevelt thought that if the United States provided this bolstering then China would be open to American influence. Churchill was certainly fearful of this outcome. He believed that Roosevelt's push to include China as one of the four policemen of the post-war world was simply a ploy to get the US a "faggot vote" on the Security Council (Hughes, 1974, 181). If he had been given more support on the international scene, Roosevelt may have been more active in his moves to rid the world of imperialism. Roosevelt worked hard diplomatically to get China into the Big Three and thus make it one of the Big Four Policemen of the postwar world.

FDR's Wartime Diplomacy

Literature on Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy has often described him as having a very 'hands on' approach (See for example, Smith, 1965 and Marks, 1988). Gaddis Smith (1965) focused on Roosevelt's style as a leader, specifically in dealing with foreign relations. Smith (1965) argued that FDR liked to handle things personally. Fredrick Marks (1988) supported this view. Marks (1988) examined the President's under utilization of the State Department, and in particular of Cordell Hull, suggesting that the Secretary of State was a figurehead and played little role in the formulation and implementation of FDR's foreign policy. Certainly in Sino-US relations the State Department was ignored. Due to the President's lack of direction the Ambassador and the State Department were unable to work together effectively. There is much evidence that FDR liked conflict between officials within Departments so that the President could resolve the disagreement and take control (Emerson, 1958-9, 185). Roosevelt wanted to handle international relations himself.

The President often chose to meet other leaders personally. The many wartime conferences between the Allied leaders are evidence of this. FDR had as much personal contact with Stalin and with Churchill as distance, the obvious difficulties and dangers of travel during wartime and of having each of the leaders of the Allied states in one place at one time allowed. Roosevelt preferred personal conferences because did not trust the professional diplomats: 'the men in the State Department, those career diplomats....half the time I can't tell whether to believe them or not.'(Schaller, 1979, 147) FDR once told a member of the Federal Reserve Board that, 'You should go through the experience of trying to get any changes in the thinking, policy and actions of the career diplomats and then you'd know what a real problem was.'(Dallek, 1979, 532) He once said of Anthony Eden, 'an awfully nice fellow, notwithstanding the fact that he was brought up in the Foreign Office'(La Feber, 1975, 1292). Roosevelt had reason to like Eden. The British Foreign Minister was very aware and sensitive to the needs of and pressures on the Roosevelt administration and worked hard to accommodate US policy. This is clearly displayed in his support for Roosevelt's vision of the United Nations Organization and for the promotion of China as a post war Great Power against the position of his Prime Minister (Hughes, 1974, 191). Eden, though, was the exception to the rule.

Roosevelt did not see the need for professional diplomats in China because he believed he knew and understood China and the Chinese people. A sense of American paternalism can be seen in the United States view of China in the late 1930s and in the lead up to Pearl Harbor (American Institute of Public Opinion Surveys, 1939, 599). As a disciple of the Wilsonian vision of the world, Franklin Roosevelt, fervently believed in the greatness of what Warren Kimball (1991) labeled 'Americanism'. China, by fighting the oppression of the Japanese invaders against great odds was representing the values of that 'Americanism'. For Roosevelt, the connection to China was particularly close because of his grandfather's success in the tea and opium trades in China throughout the Nineteenth Century (Roberts, 1990). Tang Tsou (1963) contended that FDR felt guilty at continuing to trade with Japan and supply its gasoline throughout the crisis. This guilt extended to the public and created an exaggerated sympathy for China amongst Americans and this influenced policy decisions during the Second World War. On top of this, FDR had success using his charm and personality, not only on Churchill but in politics generally, to give him confidence that he could build the relationship without the help of others. All of this helps explain FDR's discount of the State Department representatives in China.

Fredrick Marks (1988) was one among many scholars who claimed Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy as incoherent. He accounted for the inconsistency of Roosevelt's policies with the lack of attention the President gave to his advisors in the State Department. Mark Lowenthal (1981) looks more closely at the inconsistent nature of Roosevelt's foreign policy. His article, "Roosevelt and the Coming of the War: the Search for United States Policy 1937-1942" examines three periods of policy, which he calls the Search for Influence, the Search for Alternatives and the Search for Strategy, in the lead up to America's entry into the war. He shows that in each of these three periods Roosevelt was unable to decide on, or make clear to those in the State Department, the goals which he wanted to pursue. The President was therefore, unable to achieve those goals. External events dictated the direction that US foreign policy took rather than Roosevelt leading the way.(Lowenthal, 1981) This is how Lowenthal accounts for the inconsistency, because policy had to change to meet the situation the US found itself in, not the other way around. Warren Kimball (1991) opposes this view and claims that when looking more broadly at Roosevelt's foreign policy there is a consistency in the underlying ideals he was directing the United States and the postwar world towards. There is no doubt that FDR had a set of broad and high ideals which he used to create his vision of the postwar world. The lack of a tactical plan to bring about that vision led to the inconsistency in the policy he adopted because it led the President to see the expediency of short term military goals and policies at the expense of the broader political picture.

The Ambassador and the State Department

Ambassador Gauss is an elusive figure in the literature. He is mentioned just enough to assure readers he exists, but beyond this there is little discussion of his role in China, his relationship with FDR, his relationship with Stilwell, or his advice to Roosevelt regarding Sino-US relations (See for example Kahn Jr., 1975, 64-7 or White, 1948, 45, 50 and 340-6). This is a curious oversight in the literature to date. The story of Ambassador Gauss in China fits into the larger issue of Roosevelt's leadership, and relates directly to FDR's personal handling of foreign policy matters.

It shows that in China the President followed his usual pattern of conducting foreign relations which displayed his distrust of professional diplomats.

Clarence E Gauss was a career Foreign Service officer. He had a great deal of experience in China by the time of the outbreak of the Pacific War, having been a consul in Shanghai under Nelson Johnson's Ambassadorship of China. Gauss received high praise for his work in China during the 1930s. The decorated war veteran Admiral Harry E. Yarnell, after visiting China, stated that Gauss 'was one of the ablest and most effective officers that he had ever encountered' (Hornbeck Papers, 1939). This view was supported by many American nationals fleeing China in the late 1930s who found Gauss's assistance invaluable. It was suggested that Gauss be offered a promotion, based on the fact that his posting in Shanghai was one of the most difficult anywhere and that he was doing so well at it (Hornbeck Papers, 1939). It is clear, then, that Gauss was a well respected diplomat with some talent for his profession. Although the promotion was not immediate, Gauss was eventually appointed the first US Minister to Australia in 1940 (Shavit, 1990, 184). Gauss's success and renown in this earlier period makes his obscurity as Ambassador in China surprising.

Having chosen Clarence Gauss to replace Nelson Johnson at Chungking, it appears the President was either unhappy, or at least not convinced, about his choice. When Gauss took over the ambassadorship in China he had trouble in living up to the expectations his previous good work had given officials in Washington. The President investigated replacing Gauss not long into his tenure as Ambassador. In a memorandum to Cordell Hull in November 1942 the President wrote;

I really think we must replace him [Gauss] and I think it would be simpler to find his successor and then bring him back to the State Department to work for awhile in the Far Eastern Division as a consultant. In my judgment, the sole question is the selection of his successor followed by letting him down easy and easing him out of his post via the State Department.¹

The fact that Gauss was not getting along with the Generalissimo and seemed too timid in his advice played a part in considering Gauss's recall.

Strangely though, the President never followed through with his decision and Gauss remained in China, much to the detriment of the situation there. Without the confidence of the President the Ambassador's services were of little use. From late October 1942 several lists of names of replacements for Gauss were compiled for the President. Nobody with particular affiliation or expertise on China was named on these several lists. (Roosevelt, 1942, Official File #150b China Endorsements Box 3) There was, at the end of November, another handwritten note suggesting that Stanley K Hornbeck would be willing to accept the post, although reluctantly. (Roosevelt, 1942, Official File #150b China Endorsements Box 3) Hornbeck certainly knew and

¹ Memorandum for the Secretary of State from the President, 19 November, 1942, "Presidential Safe Files: Departmental", (Franklin D Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park) Box 74, Folder: State: Hull, Cordell 1941-42

understood China but may have felt he was having greater influence over America's China policy from the United States. Several other candidates were investigated to take over the role including Francis Sayre again,² and Lauchlin Currie, the President's Administrative Assistant who was also on good terms with Chiang Kai-shek. It is unclear how much Gauss knew about all this but one could assume he at least heard rumours and that could not have had a positive impact on the Ambassador's morale. The Ambassador changed his behaviour and became a more active participant in the diplomacy between China and the US after this point which may have negated the need for FDR to replace him. This episode indicates the President's lack of a clear vision of how to achieve his ambitions for China. FDR did not have a set of criteria upon which to judge any possible replacements for Gauss and this would have made replacing him more difficult.

Evidence of Gauss's more vocal approach can be found in his interventions regarding US financial aid to China. On the issue of the loans to China in late 1943, Gauss advocated a strong stance against Chiang's wishes for further financial aid. The Ambassador's advice was that another loan to Chiang would not be in the United States' immediate interests because it would do little to sustain the Chinese economy (Department, 1957, 476-9). It was, therefore, merely a gift to Chiang which he did not deserve, given his lack of effort in fighting the Japanese. Another loan, in Gauss's view, would only serve to undermine Stilwell's policy of subtly pressuring Chiang into using his forces for greater action (Department, 1957, 476-9). The Treasury Department's agreed that making the loan would not be a sound economic move, as it would not help the Chinese economy at all. The Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau Jr., expressed his sympathy for the President's position that every effort possible be made to assist China's financial situation, however, he believed that the loan was not the way to help (Department, 1957, 480-2). The State Department's response was to draft a document in response to both Gauss's and Morgenthau's views. That document stated that there were many issues at stake which included the political and psychological impacts as well as economic and military ones (Department, 1957, 485). There were some inconsistencies between what Gauss was advising and the arguments that the State Department was making. According to the State Department the loan was discussed by Chiang and the President at the Cairo Conference, and the Generalissimo was led to believe that there would be a positive response to the loan request. Chiang was also promised that there would be a mission to open the Burma Road. That promise was broken. In light of that disappointment there was more at stake politically than Gauss realized (Department, 1957, 485-6).

Gauss was unaware of some of the political implications of the loan, as he was not informed of the President's promises made at Cairo. His lack of understanding on the issue, then, was not his fault. The President preferred to negotiate privately with other heads of state. FDR often did not inform his subordinates of the contents of these conversations, even when the issues discussed were fundamental to a Department's authority. Secretary Hull was rarely given direction on the President's thinking or kept abreast of his negotiations. Ambassador Gauss, at his level in the bureaucracy, was even less likely to access such information. Without a clear knowledge of events

² Letter to President Roosevelt from Francis Sayre, 8 October, 1941, "Presidential Safe Files: Departmental", (Franklin D Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park) Box 74, Folder: State: Hull, Cordell 1941-42

that were impacting Sino-US relations the Ambassador's ability to effectively fulfill his role was severely constrained. This was a problematic aspect of the President's diplomacy especially as the significance and complexities of the relationship with China warranted much more input from, and communication with, professionally trained diplomats.

The State Department's memorandum on the loan to China went on to outline the political necessity of having China as a strong postwar influence in Asia and stated that nothing should be done to push the Chinese toward the Japanese or Russians. The State Department then noted that the highest priority in decisions regarding China should be given to military issues and then to political and psychological impacts. Economic issues should have played the smallest part when considering policy for the theatre (Department, 1957, 487). This order of priorities, however, did not reflect the military reality in China. Militarily China underperformed in the war. The army kept Japanese troops occupied on mainland China but little offensive action was undertaken. The diplomatic relations between the US and China were much more significant, as they impacted on the post war world which was FDR's greater focus.

The divergence of views between Gauss and the State Department shows how inconsistent advice and recommendations even on political considerations were fed to the President. It would have been difficult, then, for Roosevelt to understand what the true situation was in China and what course to follow. The problem was, in large part, of the President's own making. Part of the problem was that the President had not provided the State Department, or the Ambassador, with a clear understand of what he wanted them to achieve in China. If a clear direction has been provided, then a more unified approach to their mission might have been forthcoming. The other aspect of the problem was that the President had appointed Gauss as the Ambassador to China. If the inconsistency of views and advice was a problem, then the Ambassador's mission and instructions should have been made clearer, or he should have been replaced. Instead, FDR's decided to reconcile the matter by sending his own trusted friends as representatives to China. These representatives only made matters worse. The President's relationship with the Ambassador and reaction he had to Gauss's advice, then, can provide evidence as to the President's thinking in relation to China. It is worthy, therefore, of further examination.

Ambassador Gauss was not in close contact with the President and his views seemed to be drowned out by the more frequent memoranda from more opinionated staff of the Far Eastern Division of the State Department in Washington. This may have been the reason for Roosevelt's use of personal representatives and other channels to communicate with Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese government. The Ambassador felt that his role was secondary to all the other representatives and channels that the President had in place. Gauss's efforts to add to the plethora of communications that were being passed between Chungking and Washington would have been futile. Gauss was not in his role long before the first of the President's representatives arrived. From then until 1944, the few recommendations Gauss did make seemed to have had no impact on the President's policy at all. An example of this can be seen in the abolition of the extraterritorial rights the US enjoyed in China in late 1942. Gauss disapproved of the timing of the abolition and suggested it would be detrimental to Sino-US relations (Department, 1956, 289-90). The Ambassador's advice was ignored and the abolition went ahead. The President also ignored Gauss's complaints

about the President's methods of conducting diplomacy with China (Lattimore and Isono, 1990, 108), so to Gauss it would have been clear that his advice was worth very little. During 1944 when the President asked the Ambassador for his advice and recommendations he was more than forthcoming (Department, 1957, 201-5), so had FDR sought his advice at an earlier stage it would no doubt have been received. By 1944, however, the pattern of communications between Chiang and FDR was too well established and had given rise to many problems which were unlikely to be resolved.

The State Department recognized that the military was given greater priority in decision making. This was inconsistent with the priority the President should have been giving primacy to in the relationship with China. The President lacked a clear understanding of the dynamic between the military and political issues in wartime China. In other theatres of the war, the President seemed to have a much clearer understanding of this dynamic. At the beginning of hostilities, the major strategic decision to fight Europe first and Japan second, was based on political considerations. The US military was in favour of winning in the Pacific first and then turning to face Hitler afterwards. Roosevelt, though, put his relationship with Churchill and the British above his own military's advice (Emerson, 1958-9, 187). In China, the War Department, General Marshall and the theatre commander, General Stilwell, dominated the decision-making. The War Department had a more cohesive relationship with General Stilwell and was more effective at presenting the President with solid recommendations.

General Stilwell and the War Department

Stilwell led a military mission to China in early 1942. The instructions given to Stilwell regarding his mission in China were vague and open to misinterpretation. There was controversy throughout his time in China about exactly what he could and could not command and control. The Generalissimo had his own ideas about how much power Stilwell had to control the allocation of Lend Lease, to command operations and to engage in planning. It was over Stilwell's role as Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo that the greatest problems arose.³ Chiang Kai-shek saw Stilwell, as his Chief of Staff, as subordinate to him, the theatre's Supreme Commander. Stilwell's other roles, as commander of American forces in China and his control over the allocation and distribution of Lend Lease, made him responsible to the President of the United States. This issue of dual loyalty was a source of the greatest disharmony between Stilwell and the Generalissimo, yet was never satisfactorily resolved. Later, Stilwell was also made Deputy Supreme Commander of the South East Asia Command (SEAC) led by British Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten. Although this was an Allied command, it was very much the responsibility of the British giving Stilwell not only another role but also another state to work with (Sbrega, 1982, 144). The British did not respect Stilwell, and so his involvement in SEAC was not ideal for the smooth running of the command or for individual relationships (Sbrega, 1982, 142). Stilwell recognized that if his mission in China was to be successful he needed full command of the Chinese troops, but he also recognized that this would be quite a challenge (Davies Jr., 1972, 222).

³ Telegram to Chungking for Madame Chiang , #8, 26 June, 1942, "T.V. Soong Papers" (Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace Archives) Box 11, Folder: 11.1 Telegrams Chungking-Washington June 2, 1942 - October 5, 1942

Shortly after his arrival, Stilwell was sent to command the Chinese army in Burma and to defend that territory from the Japanese invasion. The mission was a failure for the Chinese, and Stilwell was forced to withdraw from Burma into India. Chiang blamed Stilwell for incompetence and for losing his best divisions in the battle (Denning, 1986, 66-74). As a result, Chiang lost confidence in Stilwell, and the US, for sending an incompetent General. From that point his conflict with Chiang made Stilwell's mission nearly impossible.

Stilwell's behaviour in Burma shows that his focus was much more on the military objectives he had decided to achieve in the China Burma India (CBI) Theatre. Stilwell ignored the political aspects of his role at his own peril. As the General continued to clash with Chiang over his authority, the issue came to a head. In 1942, Stilwell based his plans for the reorganization of the Chinese army and the provisions of Lend Lease toward an attack to retake Burma. The Combined Chiefs of Staff eventually supported Stilwell in this endeavour (Sainsbury, 1985, 179). Disagreements arose over the Burma operation. Stilwell apparently disobeyed the Generalissimo by planning for a limited North Burma campaign whilst Chiang refused to engage in anything less than a full blown plan to retake all of Burma. The Generalissimo saw this as insubordination by General Stilwell.⁴ Chiang also believed that he, as the Generalissimo in China, had the right to allocate the aid being brought into China by airlift from India.

In early 1943, Chiang made three demands of the US about the Lend Lease program and threatened to make a separate peace with Japan if the US did not comply (Sainsbury, 1985, 197). These three demands were; the dispatch of American troops to China, the immediate creation of a separate Chinese air force of five hundred planes and an increase of tonnage being transported over 'the Hump' (a treacherous flight path over the Himalayas) to five thousand tons a month which was a substantial increase. These demands were impossible to meet as Chiang had stipulated that no planes could be diverted from the supply route for air operations over Burma to make up the air force, as this would have decreased hump tonnage, not increased it. Chiang Kai-shek also demanded a simultaneous amphibious and ground assault in Burma at the same time the Allies were trying to gather amphibious craft for the D-Day landings (Sainsbury, 1985, 197). Eventually some of the conditions of the three demands were met but crucially not the demand for US ground combat troops (Romanus and Sunderland, 1953, 173-5).

Stilwell, however, raised serious objections to Chiang's allocation of the entire supply to the air force which left none for the ground forces. According to TV Soong, Chiang's representative in Washington, the 'President and Secretary of War have told me repeatedly that Stilwell is Generalissimo[']s Chief of Staff to whom he could give orders.'⁵ In mid 1943, after Chiang had resisted Stilwell's plan for 12 months, Stilwell appealed to Washington for assistance. Henry Stimson, in an attempt to give

⁴ Telegram from Dr Rajchman from T.V. Soong, #834, 28 December, 1942, "T.V. Soong Papers" (Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace Archives) Box 11, Folder: 11.3 Telegrams Incoming October 22, 1942 - March 1, 1942

⁵ Telegram to Chungking for Madame Chiang, #8, 26 June, 1942, "T.V. Soong Papers" (Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace Archives) Box 11, Folder: 11.1 Telegrams Chungking-Washington June 2, 1942 - October 5, 1942

Stilwell his full support, had a meeting with TV Soong. At that meeting the Secretary of War made it clear that he agreed with Stilwell's view, that the ground forces could not be neglected. He went so far as to state that if Chiang was 'adamant in this opinion, then the only thing left for me is to withdraw Stilwell.'⁶ Meant as a show of support for the General, the tactic backfired as Soong called the Secretary's bluff; 'It will be extremely regrettable if Stilwell has to be withdrawn, but I must say that I agree fully with the Generalissimo that the situation cannot be held without air support.'⁷ Stilwell was not recalled at this point, however, it set a precedent for the Chinese, that when they held firm Washington would give in to their demands. It also showed Chiang that there was the possibility of having Stilwell removed from China. This was a very damaging episode for Stilwell's role and credibility with the Chinese, yet it has largely been ignored by the literature.

Stilwell was still not recalled on this occasion, mostly due to his favour with Madame Chiang and other respected US military figures (Romanus and Sunderland, 1953, 389). Stilwell for the first time pretended to be humble and so relations were smoothed (Bagby, 1992, 81-2). This is an interesting episode because the literature makes so much of Stilwell's lack of tact and poor diplomatic skills and yet this event shows otherwise. Although this is a seemingly minor episode in the overall encounter of the US and China regarding Lend Lease, it represented a crucial point in the relationship between Stilwell and Chiang. It also mirrors that experience of Ambassador Gauss early in his appointment and had some of the same implications. The episode also detracts from the arguments about the personality clash between the two men as the main reason for Stilwell's failure in China.

Stilwell understood his 'glaring deficiencies' as a diplomat (Romanus, 1976, 2537). He was aware of his own caustic nature and the way he was perceived by others. He was very aware and proud of his nickname 'Vinegar Joe'. Stilwell also did not make secret his contempt for Chiang openly calling him 'Peanut' and just as often referring to FDR as 'rubber legs' (Bagby, 1992, 28-9). This personality trait of forthrightness would not suit his mission in China. Stilwell did seem to connect with some Chinese high officials in both the military and government, though, as the number, and the heartfelt content, of personal farewell letters sent by Stilwell upon his departure from China show (Romanus, 1976, 2522-73). Stilwell was also able to gain the utmost loyalty and support from his subordinates, despite his hard nature. Upon being informed of General Stilwell's recall, his Chief of Staff, General Hearn wrote to General Handy in the War Department and asked for reassignment (Romanus, 1976, 2531). Hearn stated that after having worked for Stilwell for 31 months, he had come to have complete faith in the General's views and policies and could not respect a new commander who might change those policies (Romanus, 1976, 2531). This letter had a tone that suggested Hearn genuinely believed this and it was not merely a formality conducted out of surface loyalty to General Stilwell. Presumably, then, the General's personality and his bluntness did not prevent everyone from getting along with Stilwell, or many from also respecting and admiring him.

⁶ Conversation notes between Stimson and Soong 11:30am, 18 May, 1943, "T.V. Soong Papers" (Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace Archives) Box 33, Folder: 33.7 Stimson, Henry, Subject File

⁷ Conversation notes between Stimson and Soong 11:30am, 18 May, 1943, "T.V. Soong Papers" (Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace Archives) Box 33, Folder: 33.7 Stimson, Henry, Subject File

Chiang Kai-shek was not among the Chinese who were able to accept Stilwell's blunt nature. This may have been because Stilwell would not kowtow to Chiang's wishes or that Chiang was more sensitive than others. Whatever the reason, Chiang's reaction suggested that a more diplomatic character was needed to deal with the Generalissimo. As a professional diplomat who had been successful in China over many years (Roosevelt, 1933-1945, Part 3, Reel 23:299), Gauss should have been the one to deal primarily with Chiang. Stilwell's contact with the Generalissimo should have been limited. The problem with this argument is that Gauss did not get along with the Generalissimo either. The President even considered replacing Gauss as a result (Roosevelt, 1933-1945, Part 3, Reel 20:690). The fact that the Generalissimo did not get along with either of these men may have been an indication to the President of the trouble he was to encounter, and it spoke more to Chiang's motives rather than either the Ambassador's or of General Stilwell's professional ability.

The core literature on the experience of the US in China focuses heavily on Stilwell's role (Feis, 1953; Cohen, 1990; Tsou, 1963). Wesley Bagby's (1992) writing is significant not only for its relatively recent study of the matter but also for its movement beyond defence of Stilwell into a more critical exploration of the broader issues of the relationship between the US and China. As Bagby (1992) points out, Chiang and indeed Stilwell, were merely men within a broader system and set of institutions, traditions. There is a need for an examination of the institutions these men were a part of, the relationships between these institutions and the context they operated in.

Stilwell eventually recognized the need for political advisors on his staff. In May 1943 he requested members of the State Department to be assigned to his mission for dealing with the American embassy in China, the Chinese and British associated with the work of his mission (General Joseph Stilwell Papers, No Date). In fact, Stilwell gathered quite an entourage of experts to assist him, including members of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Board of Economic Warfare (BEW)(Department, 1957, 60-1). Stilwell's request for four Foreign Service officers, then, seemed the next logical step for dealing with the political aspects of the relationship. The complexities of Sino-US relations had led to mess of agencies and organizations being represented in China during the war. Their organization and division of roles presented major confusion. John Davies, the Second Secretary of the Embassy in Chungking, in 1943, described the problem which the appointment of four Foreign Service officers was supposed to relieve:

As a Foreign Service officer somewhat anxious over the encroachment of new government agencies in the field of foreign affairs, I feel not only as the General does – that the detail of four officers requested will be of very real assistance to him in his tremendously difficult and delicate task – but also that the five of us working in close coordination under the guidance of the ambassador at Chungking and Chief of Mission at New Delhi can give some political direction to this program and forestall errors which representatives of the new agencies might otherwise commit. The five of us would of course keep the embassy or mission informed regarding the progress of the program and report intelligence of interest (Department, 1957, 60-1).

The request for the Foreign Service officers was a reflection of Stilwell's perception that the politics in China was hampering his military mission and that he needed greater understanding of the political aspects of the relationship to achieve any of his military goals. When looking at the broader relationship between the US and China throughout the war it becomes clear, however, that the military mission in China was not, or at least should never have been, more important than the political aspects. Ambassador Gauss clearly perceived that there was a division between the two roles. In a 1943 memo to Stanley Hornbeck in the State Department Gauss wrote, 'I have carefully refrained in China from mixing into our military affairs; they are the duty and responsibility of General Stilwell' (Department, 1957, 41). Had Stilwell's role in China been a more conventionally military one, Gauss's distinction may have been appropriate. The Ambassador had still not come to an understanding of the connection between his role and Stilwell's, the General, however, began to develop that understanding.

In early December 1943 Stilwell wrote a memo in his diary entitled "Deckhand Diplomat". The memo revealed his perspectives on the political side of his mission and the great assistance the Foreign Service officers had been to him. Presumably commenting on his time at the Cairo Conference, Stilwell wrote, '[a] brief experience with international politics confirms me in my preference for driving a garbage truck.' (White, 1948, 256) The General recognized that the diplomats were trained to fulfill their task of making deals and as professionals they were bound to be frustrated by adding a "military deckhand" such as Stilwell to the negotiations (White, 1948, 256). Stilwell then went on to reflect that an army officer's interest is always to start a war so that he can further his career. When conflict was to be avoided, professional diplomats were required. Stilwell then acknowledged that he was fortunate to have assistance from those in the Embassy. Commenting on the situation of the Foreign Service, Stilwell went on to write, '[w]e have a lot of good boys in our Foreign Service: if they could only make themselves heard and get to positions of responsibility a little more quickly, we'd be alright, but as long as we go on paying off political debts with the top posts, we handicap ourselves out of the race.' (White, 1948, 257) For General Stilwell to have come to this position says a great deal about his experience not only at Cairo but in the China theatre more generally. The President would have done well to read that memorandum and to heed Stilwell's advice.

Stilwell and Gauss' Cooperation

By the end of 1943 Stilwell had developed an appreciation for the fact that his role was far more political than military. In mid 1944 Stilwell's realization had led to Gauss and he finding a way to cooperate and coordinate the messages that they sent back to Washington. It is interesting to note that this period of cooperation coincided with the period when Roosevelt did not send any personal representatives to China. The Cairo Conference between Chiang Kai-shek, Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt in December 1943 gave Roosevelt his first experience of dealing with Chiang firsthand. Throughout the Conference Chiang Kai-shek switched between showing active cooperation with the planners and Combined Chiefs of Staff and creating obstacles for the Burma plans. This frustrated everyone, including

Marshall, Churchill and even Roosevelt, much to Stilwell's glee (Sainsbury, 1985, 197-200).

FDR seems to have found a new appreciation for the work of the Foreign Service officers and military men in China. Roosevelt began to acknowledge that simply giving Chiang everything he requested may not have been the most effective way to deal with the Chinese. Having been at Cairo with the President, Stilwell may have had an insight into the President's shift in mindset and may have seen the impact that he and Gauss were having towards changing the direction of US policy. At the Cairo Conference Stilwell told the President '[w]e need guidance on political policy on China.' (White, 1948, 253) The President's response was that the Chinese would want a lot of assistance, particularly in the form of loans. Beyond this Roosevelt seemed to have no clear idea on a policy (White, 1948, 251-4). The President finished the conversation by telling Stilwell he was Roosevelt's ambassador (White, 1948, 254). As a result of this lack of policy direction, the Ambassador and the General began to consult more frequently and their advice sent back to Washington became much more cohesive. Stilwell could obviously see the need to provide direction for US policy. The issues of how to pressure Chiang to fight more actively and the role the Chinese Communists should play in US policy towards China were two areas where this merger of opinion and advice was most evident.

Both Stilwell and Gauss held the view that the best way to deal with the Generalissimo was not to give in to his demands unconditionally, as the President seemed to have been doing since US entry into the war. Stilwell was clearly of the opinion, after dealing with Chiang for some time, that the Generalissimo would not fight the Japanese unless he was forced into it by the President (Harry Hopkins Papers, 1943). Stilwell recommended that Lend Lease only be provided on a quid pro quo basis for reforms within the Chinese army and their use in battle (White, 1948, 183-4). In early 1943 FDR was not convinced, stating that Stilwell took 'exactly the wrong approach with Generalissimo Chiang...' (Harry Hopkins Papers, 1943) Ambassador Gauss, though, also eventually advocated taking a firmer stand with Chiang (Department, 1957, 484). It is hard to determine whether the unified view of the Ambassador and the General, or the President's first direct experience of Chiang at the Cairo Conference, had the greater impact in the President's thinking. Perhaps the convergence of these views did have some influence. The President's hesitancy to push Chiang can be explained by the Generalissimo's constant threats of making a separate peace with Japan. This was FDR's biggest fear. Neither Stilwell nor Gauss, however, ever believed that the Chinese would stop fighting and make peace with the Japanese, and so they wanted to take a firmer stand.

Stilwell saw his aim and mission to be, as stated in his instructions, to ensure that Lend Lease aid was administered and distributed most efficiently, to ensure war was waged effectively against the Japanese and to improve the efficiency of the Chinese army. He saw distribution of aid to the Chinese Communist troops as fulfilling his mission's objectives (Tuchman, 1970, 485). He also explained the need for an observer mission to be sent to Yen-an to evaluate the strength of the Chinese Communists and to gather information about the Japanese from them (Department, 1957, 260-6). This issue clearly shows the confusion between the political and military side of the relationship. Stilwell, when advocating a military observer mission to Yen-an, would have been focused on the military benefits of such a move.

The mission, to the General, represented a chance to work towards arming the Chinese Communists with Lend Lease materials to fight the Japanese when Chiang Kai-shek was not using his Nationalist troops for this purpose. Davies and the Embassy would have viewed the same act from the political side and concentrated on the political benefits of obtaining information on how viable an alternative the Communist leadership would have been to Chiang's leadership. The President eventually supported the mission, despite Chiang's objections, using the military value of the mission to avoid the sensitive political objective of such a mission. Roosevelt, then, did little to assist in the clarification of the roles and divisions of responsibility between the military and political sides. By late 1944, when all this was taking place, it mattered little, as the issue led directly to Stilwell's recall and the Ambassador's resignation. The fact that when these two men were replaced their successors were given a very clear separation of roles and definitions of their positions shows that the problem was recognized.

Although the issues the Ambassador and General collaborated on were the triggers for Chiang's demand that Stilwell be recalled, this does not mean that the collaboration itself was a mistake. The opposite was the case. The effectiveness of the cooperative approach threatened Chiang so much that he had to change the situation. The fact that the relationship had been allowed to work so much in Chiang's favour was a result of the delay in coming to the point of collaboration. This delay was not the fault of Stilwell and Gauss but of the President's mismanagement of the situation.

Failure in China

General Stilwell was formally recalled to the United States in late October 1944. Stilwell was not the only important figure to leave China in 1944. Ambassador Gauss also submitted his resignation in October. Gauss reported that the Generalissimo had seen the recall of General Stilwell as a diplomatic victory over the United States,⁸ and doubtless he was greatly concerned. Both Gauss and Stilwell had seemed to fail to achieve their objectives in China, but it is unclear exactly what those objectives were. The President never articulated a clear set of instructions for either Gauss or Stilwell. Both had acted as they had seen best, given this lack of direction and the confusion between the military and political divide in Sino-US relations. Stilwell and Gauss felt they had not succeeded in China, yet it was the President who had really failed.

The President and his Role

The President's natural reaction was to rely on the War Department in the relationship with China. He did not trust the career diplomats, but he did trust General Marshall and, by extension, General Stilwell. It would have followed that FDR's natural inclination would be towards the military side of the relationship. General Marshall was not Stilwell's only supporter in Washington. Secretary of War Henry Stimson also backed Stilwell. Stimson met Stilwell during the selection process for the mission to China. From that meeting Stimson admired Stilwell and thought he was the right man for the job in China (White, 1948, 25-7). After the first Burma campaign, when the Japanese forced the retreat of Stilwell and his men, the Secretary of War radioed Stilwell through Marshall to encourage him. Stimson told him there was no cause for humiliation and that the great achievement of his march out of

⁸ Special Information for the President from Edward Stettinius (Under Secretary of State), 31 October, 1944, "Presidential Safe Files: Departmental" Box 75, Folder: State: Stettinius, Edward R., Jan-Nov, 1944

Burma with his troops was recognized by the government, the military and the American public (Romanus, 1976, 232). He assured Stilwell that he had the full support of the War Department and the public for his mission (Romanus, 1976, 232). This radio message was followed a few weeks later by another conveying the same sentiments but with a stronger tone. This time Stimson assured Stilwell that the US government fully supported him and that he had nothing to fear. He also praised Stilwell for taking a post that a lesser man would have avoided. 'Marshall and I think more highly of you than ever. We are seeking to make this clear to the Generalissimo and thus obtain an acceptance by him of the conditions necessary to make your future mission in China successful.'(Romanus, 1976, 233) The Secretary did not mention how they were going to convey this level of support for Stilwell to the Generalissimo, and there was little evidence of their success.

Stimson and Marshall's support was not echoed by the President or his policy towards China. Although the US Chief of Staff's support did not translate into visible results for Stilwell in China, it may have had a greater impact for Stilwell behind the scenes in Washington when there was pressure to pull Stilwell from China. It was only once the President had seen for himself the difficulty that he faced in bringing China into Great Power status that he was willing to alter US policy towards China. By the time that occurred, however, the Chinese knew how to maneuver through different channels of the Roosevelt administration to achieve their aims.

Conclusion

By examining the President's misunderstanding of the interaction between the War Department and the State Department advisors in China, it can be seen that Roosevelt was not able to articulate a clear military strategy for China. Nor was he able to make clear the role that the military effort could play in his overall political strategy of making China a Great Power. China was of far greater political than military significance. As a result, General Stilwell and his mission were used to implement political aspects of the relationship, and any opportunity for China to provide effective assistance to advance the Allies cause in the Pacific was wasted.

Gauss and Stilwell's talents were also wasted, as neither could understand the objectives of their mission and so no real objectives could be achieved. Had Gauss and Stilwell provided a more coherent and unified policy sooner, the greater problems with the President's ambitions might have come to the fore. For that outcome to occur, Roosevelt needed to understand the military and political roles required in wartime China, and to have articulated his policy accordingly. When the Ambassador and the General did manage to find a way to cooperate and relay a unified and coherent message back to the President, it was effective in shaping US policy. The effectiveness of the collaboration can be measured by the threat that Chiang perceived Stilwell and Gauss' partnership posed to his agenda. Unfortunately, the collaboration occurred too late, and Roosevelt's methods had allowed Chiang to gain the upper hand in Sino-US relations.

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