

## 齊錫生，《劍拔弩張的盟友：太平洋戰爭期間的中美 軍事合作關係(1941-1945)》

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This is a labour of love and an important contribution to a subject that deserves greater attention. The author uses the relationship between Chiang Kai-shek and the American General Joseph Stillwell (and Stillwell's backers in the United States) as the main anchor to reassess the wartime alliance between China and the USA. The choice of the "Stillwell Affair" is justified as it had a defining impact on this wartime alliance and, though Professor Ch'i does not make such a case, on the capacity of Chiang's regime to manage the post-war challenges.

The great strength of this book rests in a fair and perceptive interpretation of Chiang's side of the story in the historic tragedy over the failure of the Stillwell Mission. Ch'i has used effectively newly available Chinese government archives and Chiang's diary to make his interpretation credible. In a sense he succeeds in what he clearly wants to achieve, which is to set the Chinese or Chiang's side of the story straight. This is very much needed. The book's treatment of the American side of this relation is much less satisfactory.

Having consulted most or all of the same recently available Chinese archival

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sources I find Ch'i's revisionist assessment of Chiang as the wartime leader justified and fair. Chiang was not an old fashioned soldier or warlord, a scheming politician focused on promoting factional interests, a selfish and ignorant autocrat, or a dictator in the image of Hitler or Stalin or Mussolini. He also did not seek to rely on the Americans to defeat Japan for China after China's War of Resistance was transformed into part of the Pacific War. Though I would have highlighted more Chiang's ambition to use the wartime alliance to get China accepted as an equal by the Allied Powers, the portrayal of Chiang in this book rings true.

Even though Chiang made many mistakes during the War, he was a nationalist completely committed to resisting Japan and was thinking first and foremost and as best as he could of China's national interests and dignity as he led China to stand fast. Indeed, Chiang was keen to make as great and impressive a contribution to the Allied war efforts as possible. This was why he sent the best trained and equipped field army (his only strategic strike force in reserve) to Burma in early 1942 when the Allied Powers were in retreat everywhere in Eastern Asia. His sincerity to work with the Allied Powers was reflected in his willingness to put this Army of three Corps under the command of his newly appointed China Theatre Chief of Staff from the USA, "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell, in the first Burma Campaign. The most basic constraint to Chiang's ambition and China's war efforts was the lack of capacity for China to mobilize, organize, arm, supply and deploy its armed forces to fight effectively.

Where I part company with Ch'i in the assessment of Chiang was over his competence as the top military leader and the share of responsibilities in transforming an attempt at Sino-American co-operation into a tragic near disaster. There is no question that the many criticisms Ch'i has of Stillwell's personality faults and lack of diplomacy and political sensitivity required to make his Mission successful are

justified. Political and diplomatic ineptitude in a general should not (as it appears in this book) be taken to imply he was an incompetent military commander, however. Stillwell's well known shortcomings undoubtedly made it hard for any Chinese leader occupying Chiang's position to work with him. In this important sense Stillwell was a poor choice for the China assignment. But this was not Stillwell's fault. Above all, Chiang was not only Stillwell's superior officer but also the political leader of China who could have ended this arrangement and pre-empted the eventual crisis in US-China relations once he found he could not work well with Stillwell. He could have asked the Americans to replace Stillwell. Indeed, Ch'i is correct that the US Government was repeatedly insensitive, arrogant, patronizing and overbearing in how it dealt with Chiang, but it did offer Chiang opportunities to replace Stillwell, in 1942 and in 1943. It was Chiang who chose not to do so. Thus it was Chiang (not Stillwell or General George Marshall or President F.D. Roosevelt) who must, in my view and contrary to that of Ch'i, bear the primary responsibility for allowing the Stillwell Affair to fester, and transform into a full blown direct confrontation between the leaders of the two countries, as it did in the run up to the final recall of Stillwell in late 1944.

In terms of competence as the supreme commander, Ch'i has confused this role of Chiang with his other role, as the leader of China. The fact that Chiang was one of the most competent and forward looking Chinese generals of his generation did not mean he was an able supreme commander. Indeed, the requirements of being the political leader, who had to take wider political/national interests into account, conflicted with the basic requirements inherent in the job of supreme military commander. Unlike Stillwell who had no choice but live with the multiple and inherently contradictory roles to which he was appointed Chiang was in a position to not require himself play these two contradictory roles. As it was Ch'i is right that

there were many highly complex constraints on Chiang in what he could do during the War, but that did not change the fact that as the top military commander he utterly failed in his most basic duty, which was to rebuild the Chinese armed forces into an effective combat force that could deliver victory. At the end of the War, the only Chinese units that were as combat effective as that of the other great powers were the five divisions raised in India by Stillwell or following the model set up by Stillwell, a fact that is acknowledged only in passing in this book. In dismissing Stillwell's proposal to reorganize the Chinese armed forces as naïve and impractical, Ch'i ignores the part of Stillwell's plan to arm, train and supply regional/static defence forces and to make arrangements for regional military leaders to retain many privileges as the incentive to join this scheme to rebuild a national army for national salvation. Being a counter-factual question whether Stillwell's plan would have worked is anyone's guess but not acknowledging it for what it was does not do justice to Stillwell. As explained below Ch'i conclusion that Chiang was militarily more competent than Stillwell as a modern professional military commander is not convincing or well supported.

In seeking to counter what Ch'i sees as biased long standing American works on the Stillwell Affair, Ch'i has focused on Stillwell's weaknesses and failings and sometimes overlooked the failings of Chiang himself. This manifests itself in his analysis of the failure and responsibility for the calamitous outcome of the First Burma Campaign. The Chinese forces suffered horrendous losses and Ch'i pinned the blame squarely on Stillwell. At first look this appears reasonable as Stillwell was the Commander of this Army. What Ch'i has ignored are two key facts. First, the Chinese expeditionary Army actually performed very well in combat, with the 200<sup>th</sup> Division giving an account that would have been deemed a proud achievement in any army of that era. It showed that Stillwell was not far off the mark in assessing the

combat capacity of the Chinese forces under his command, contrary to the assessment of Ch'i. The second critical fact, is that at the time when the Chinese forces in Burma were cut off from China by a flank Japanese attack (the threat of which was detected by the British air force and a warning sent to Chiang, who distrusted the British and chose not to pass this critical piece of intelligence to Stillwell), the combat casualties suffered hitherto were not high enough to turn the elite 5<sup>th</sup> Corps and 6<sup>th</sup> Corps combat ineffective. Once cut off from China Stillwell gave the order for the Army under his command to retreat in small formations to India in order to regroup, re-arm and counter-attack. Stillwell himself walked to India with the headquarters unit ahead of others in order to ensure the British authorities would allow the rest of the Chinese forces enter colonial India. Since their units had suffered relatively light losses and were still in combat effective formation, most Chinese generals disobeyed Stillwell's order to retreat to India and requested Chiang to countermand Stillwell's order. It was this fateful decision to stay in the Burmese jungles that subsequently killed many more Chinese soldiers (mainly by starvation and jungle diseases) than the earlier combat operations. Indeed, the only division (the New 38<sup>th</sup> from the non-elite 66<sup>th</sup> Corps) that followed Stillwell's order reached India safely with minimal losses. It was this non-elite unit that formed the core of the New 1<sup>st</sup> Corps which subsequently emerged as the most combat effective unit in the entire Chinese Army. Sharing Chiang's assessment or perspective, Ch'i blamed Stillwell for the heavy losses of the Chinese forces in Burma, omitted any reference to the New 38<sup>th</sup> Division's successful retreat, and concluded that the campaign demonstrated Stillwell was incompetent. While Chinese soldiers and officers, Stillwell and Chiang should all share credit for the early heroic performance of the Chinese forces in Burma, the incredibly heavy post combat losses were the result of orders issued by Chiang and the Chinese unit commanders, not Stillwell. Why is it fair to hold Stillwell responsible for his order

being disobeyed and over-ruled? Why is this conclusive evidence of Stillwell's incompetence as a general and Chiang's competence as a commander?

Reading through this thick volume I cannot but sense that there is an, perhaps unconscious, attempt to over compensate Barbara Tuchman's book on the Stillwell Affair. This book puts Chiang's perspective across in the way that Tuchman's book does regarding Stillwell's. As Tuchman looked at the issues mainly from Stillwell's perspective, Ch'i does so through Chiang's prism. Thus, in making the case that Stillwell was militarily incompetent, this book ignores also the fact that after the China assignment, Stillwell methodically led the US Tenth Army to victory in the fierce and difficult Okinawa Campaign after his predecessor was killed in combat, and instead presents a picture of Stillwell languishing in forced retirement. Stillwell was not a brilliant general – and the US Army produced no brilliant general comparable to, say, Erwin Rommel during the War – but he was a highly competent and professional one by the measure of his peers and the time. Acknowledging this is not inconsistent with giving Chiang credit where it was due – a perspective not taken in this book.

On the wider central issue of the tension and difficulties of the US-China war-time alliance, which is the basis for the title of this book, most of the points Ch'i has made are valid. The Americans did benefit from the alliance, as Chiang and China did, since the alliance had the effect of tying down a million Japanese troops in the China Theatre that could have been deployed elsewhere and caused much greater US casualties, if Chiang had surrendered China to Japan. The USA did not help China entirely out of altruism and good will. But why should that be surprising? Is that not normal in war-time alliances? Has earlier scholarship, such as Christopher Thorne's seminal work *Allies of a Kind* (1978) not revealed that it would have been naïve for anyone to have assumed the war-time alliance was anything but extremely difficult to maintain, as everyone pursued their own national agendas while they

struggled to find sufficient common ground to hold the alliance together?

In criticising the US government and in particular Marshall's management of the US-China alliance, Ch'i takes the view that Marshall simply did not understand and/or could not be bothered to understand the complexities of the issues in the China Theatre. This is closely linked to a depiction of how stingy the USA was in treating China as a wartime ally, and how harshly the Americans treated their Chinese ally compared in particular to their British ally. This is both at the same time true and misleading. Indeed, Marshall and the USA did not devote much resources and attention to the war in China. The US priority was Europe. But this was not, as the book makes it out to be, entirely because of the racist, paternalistic and arrogant attitude the Americans had towards the Chinese, though such an attitude unquestionably existed and mattered. What Ch'i has ignored are the facts that the USA could be just as harsh on the British in asking for its pound of flesh – naval bases in exchange for retired US destroyers in the battles for the Atlantic for example – and the British could always get priority in supplies as they were constantly fighting and attacking their common enemies fiercely. Like Chiang, Ch'i has failed to see that once the USA entered the War, a British (or, for that matter, Soviet) defeat did not usually result in the cutting off of US supplies and help. Instead it led to increased re-supply if an aggressive spirit had been demonstrated by the ally concerned. Stillwell was strongly disapproved of by Chiang and castigated in this book for failing to deliver promised US lend-lease materiel. The amount actually delivered under Stillwell was indeed pitifully small, but the Chinese Army practically made no meaningful assault against the Japanese for two years after the First Burma Campaign. Both Chiang and Ch'i fail to acknowledge that from the US perspective, why it should allocate more arms to China if the Chinese Army would not take the offensive, and would not even send enough men to take up US arms earmarked for China and

stockpiled in India. Some of this US materiel was diverted to North Africa as it was not used and could not be delivered to Chinese forces, just as Tobrouk fell to Rommel's Afrika Korps. In fact, notwithstanding the "Europe first" policy, no major shipment of arms for China was diverted to the European front, in contrast to North Africa or British imperial possessions to which the anti-imperialist Americans were not particularly committed. This book also ignores the fact that by the summer of 1942, the Americans delivered what Stillwell originally promised Chiang and stockpiled enough materiel to arm a Chinese Army of 100,000, a number Chiang promised Stillwell but never sent to India. With battles raging elsewhere and Marshall being responsible for the War globally, why was it unreasonable for him to not increase the stockpile in India when the Chinese supreme commander did not send enough troops to take up the arms in place or start a counter-offensive against the Japanese? Ch'i has provided a good explanation of why Chiang did not do what the Americans expected, but he does not do justice to US position (which comes across in this book as unreasonable) and Stillwell (portrayed as dishonest, mischievous, incompetent and irresponsible).

Despite significant reservations or disagreements, only a few of which I have outlined briefly above, I very much welcome the publication of this book. It is an important step forward in improving our overall understanding of the many highly complex historical issues involved. Examining and putting forward Chiang's perspective is an important contribution. Encouraging, supporting and welcoming the publication of high quality research that disagrees with one's own analysis and findings is a good way to advance scholarship. There is much more that needs to be done for a truly fair and balanced assessment of this important alliance and its implications.