"Cooperation and Sacrifice: How Divergent Allied Objectives, Interests, and End States Sowed the Seeds of Failure in the China-Burma-India Theater"

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“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.” (1Chronicles 16:34)
Chapter 1 | A House Divided: An Introduction

Historians often label the China-Burma-India Theater the “Forgotten Theater” of World War II. While many in the West are familiar with the Allies triumphs in the European and Pacific Theater, few know about the grueling three-and-a-half year conflict on the Burmese front, where both the Allies and the Japanese suffered over a hundred thousand fatalities while fighting in malaria-ridden jungles.\(^1\) Despite the fact that the CBI was the largest theater in World War II in terms of land-size, the preponderance of the fighting was waged along small segments of northern and western Burma. The Japanese swiftly toppled the British colonial government and defeated Anglo-Indian forces in the spring of 1942. Japanese forces would subsequently hold Burma for over three years, withstanding several Allied attempts to recapture the British colonial possession and push the Japanese out of region.

After over three years of Japanese occupation, the Allies finally recaptured Burma and subsequently leading them to declare victory on the Burma front in the summer of 1945. But this victory was not marked by the capitulation of Japanese soldiers, but rather by their voluntary withdrawal, for a large portion of Japanese troops in Burma had already redeployed to Southeast Asia before Allied forces in the CBI arrived. Allied political and military leaders never intended the coalition’s offensive in the CBI to be the main effort in the fight against Japan, but they hoped the theater could serve as a “second front” to complement the campaign in the Pacific under the command of General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz. Yet, due to the CBI command’s

inability to retake Burma by 1944, when the Allies were beginning to experience
momentous success in the Pacific, the fighting in the CBI became relegated to a sideshow
in the minds of the Allies top statesmen and military leaders.

A variety of explanations have been offered as to why the Allies in the CBI failed
to realize the same sort of success in combat that was achieved by the coalition in Europe
and the Pacific. The historians who compiled the United States Army’s Official History
of the China-Burma-India Theater argue that the theater lacked a unified command
structure that greatly complicated the planning and execution of a joint campaign in
Burma.² Barbara Tuchman, in her work *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945*, asserts that the coalition’s Chinese partner, led by the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, undermined American efforts to initiate offensive action in Burma because he feared such campaigns would leave his regime in Chongqing vulnerable to a potential attack from the Chinese Communists positioned in northwest China. Others have attested
the Allies in the CBI simply lacked the resources in the theater to wage an effective
campaign in Burma.³

All of these theses certainly identify, in part, why the Allied command in the CBI
struggled to recapture Burma and make a significant contribution in the counteroffensive
against Japan, but they fail to recognize that these “command issues” all result from one
common, underlying factor: each of the primary Allied partners in the CBI, Britain, the
United States, and Nationalist China, made the pursuit of their own particular national

² A discussion of this argument will be covered in chapter four.
³ Some of these arguments will be teased out in chapter five.
interests their top priority in the theater.⁴ Coalitions are most successful when the contributing partners agree on a common unified purpose or objective. This “end,” once established, allows coalition’s to collaboratively determine the “means” that will expectantly guide the group towards it desired end.⁵ In order for the coalition to come to this unified purpose, contributors generally have to subordinate portions of their own interests. Unfortunately for the Allied cause, no such compromise effectively occurred in the CBI. The three primary players, determined to achieve their own individual goals and shape the postwar order in Asia according to their own design, decided that the benefits derived from forming a cohesive coalition were not worth the costs such cooperation necessitated. The Anglo-American wing of the alliance did not perceive the Japanese threaten the core interests of the Allied partners, and, though, leaders in Chongqing found the Japanese to be a major concern, the threat from Japan became secondary when defending itself against the Chinese Communists. Consequently, London, Washington, and Chongqing found it impossible to subordinate wartime objectives in the pursuit of their individual wartime and postwar objectives.

The British sought to restore their empire in South Asia and the Far East in the postwar era, and they advocated that Allied forces and resources be used towards recapturing a series of targets they believed would be important in their reestablished colonial order. British strategists and commanders did not believe that the territory in

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⁴ Broadly, the national interest is a state’s economic, geopolitical, security, or cultural goals as set by its top leaders and policymakers. Classical realist Hans Morgenthau articulated that a state’s pursuit for the national interest is synonymous with their pursuit for power (i.e. relative power compared to other states and its ability to act in a fashion it sees most beneficial to its citizens). In his work In Defense of the National Interest, he declares that it is the “…moral duty for a nation to always follow in its dealing with other nations but one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule for action: The National Interest.” Hans Morgenthau, In Defense of the National Interest (Lanham: University Press of America, 1982), 241-242.

north and central Burma was worth fighting for, and they hesitated to exert any effort to aid their Chinese partner, who they feared would challenge their influence in the region after the war. The United States, on the other hand, made it a top priority to support Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang (GMD) regime. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, believed that the GMD could harness and mobilize China’s massive population to help the Allies in the fight against Japan, or at the very least, force Japan to divert a considerable amount of men and resources away from the Pacific Theater in an effort to stabilize the front in China. Roosevelt also believed that a strong, well-governed China could serve as an important American ally in the postwar era and could act as a “policeman” for the region, which he hoped would undergo a process of decolonization. Chiang Kai-shek and his coterie of GMD leaders possessed one primary objective, their regime’s survival, and, to this end, they hoped that its Allied partners could defeat Japan with minimal Chinese participation so that the GMD could utilize its forces to suppress potential domestic challenges to its rule and to eventually consolidate its governance over China. All three of the primary partners aspired to ultimately force Tokyo to accept terms of unconditional surrender, but they lacked a clear set of mutually agreed upon objectives for the CBI. Subsequently, the partners exerted most of their energies working towards diverging, and oftentimes, conflicting objectives. Without a common purpose or objective, the CBI command spent far more time fighting during strategic meetings in the coalition’s headquarters in New Delhi or Chongqing than on the battlefields of Burma.

This work will first provide a cursory background to the conflict in the CBI Theater in chapter two. Chapter three will present each of the primary partners’ interests
and contextualize them within the theater’s conflict. Chapter four, will subsequently reveal how each partner’s pursuit of their own national interests lead to the creation of a command structure in the CBI that allowed each player to work independently toward their own objectives, such that the command in the CBI neither compelled them to establish a unified purpose nor incentivized them to cooperate. Chapters five and six will demonstrate how the American, British, and GMD quest to realize their respective interests led each partner to adopt divergent courses of action in the CBI, both on the strategic and operational level. Finally, this piece will conclude by discussing some of the lessons that can be learned from the Allied Command’s experience in the CBI.

As already alluded to, a fair amount of scholarship has already examined the Allied efforts in the CBI, primarily seeking to identify their military deficiencies and “command problems,” as the US Army’s official history so aptly calls it. Since this work enters the discussion from the perspective that these “command problems” were a consequence of the partner’s divergent issues, its historiography complements much of the existing research on the CBI with an analysis of the relevant diplomatic and military documents, largely from the *Foreign Relations of the United States* collection, the *Stilwell Papers*, and *Stilwell’s Personal Files*.

A general principle, articulated in early works such as the Gospels of Matthew and Mark and echoed later works such as Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* and even Abraham Lincoln’s rhetoric, vouches that an organization, or a “house,” lacking unity, or

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6 The opening sections of chapters 5 and 6 will define and explain what the strategic and operational levels of war are and how they apply to the CBI.

7 n.b. an acknowledged limitation of this historiography is the lack of original Chinese sources. A number of diplomatic documents that include conversations and messages between Chiang Kai-shek and T.V. Soong with American officials are included in this corpus of research, but due to the author’s language limitations, a certain reliance on the translation and interpreted Chinese sources was necessary.

8 See Mark 3:25 and Matthew 12:25;
“divided,” will struggle and, even, collapse. This principle stands true in the example of the CBI, which demonstrates how a combat command that lacks a unified objective and purpose, and whose participants seek out a variety of diverging and conflicting goals, proves to be ineffective at the task it was originally designed to carry out—engage and defeat the enemy in the given area of operations and contribute to a given coalition’s war effort. Instead, the coalition in the CBI acted more as a confederation of partners with each participant acting to contribute to its own individual objectives, regardless of how it affected the coalition as a whole. The CBI coalition’s “house” did not entirely collapse during the war largely because it had little structure to begin with. Instead, the divided command floundered during most of war, struggling to engineer a joint campaign and contribute to the greater Allied fight in Japan. National interests repeatedly trumped the pursuit for operational effectiveness in Burma. Unwilling to subordinate portions of their national interests for the sake of cooperation, the Allied partners effectively sacrificed the pursuit of operational success for the sake of their own desired end states, sowing the seeds of failure in the China-Burma-India Theater.


9 This point will be articulated most directly in chapter four.
Chapter 2 | A “Hell of a Beating:” A brief background on the China-Burma-India Theater and the Pacific War, 1937-1942.

“Confused Beyond Imagination” joked American GIs stationed in China when asked what “CBI” stood for.10 Bounded to the north by the Sino-Soviet border, to the south by the Indian Ocean, to the east by East and South China Seas, and to the west by the Arabian Sea, the China-Burma-India Theater dwarfed, in terms of land-size, all other theaters in the Second World War.11 Unlike its European counterpart, the CBI Theater lacked a single, all-encompassing Allied command and much of the territory that fell within this domain saw relatively little action throughout the war. The Allies’ main strategic focus within the CBI centered on a relatively small parcel of the theater – namely the northern and western portions of Burma. Due to the fact that the Allies’ devoted nearly all their efforts and attention to this small corner of the CBI Theater, this paper will mostly discuss and analyze the Allied command structure and its operations that occurred within this targeted region.

Examining the Allies’ command “problems” in the CBI from 1942-1945 requires a basic understanding of the political situation in China leading up to and during the Pacific War, the overall progression of the Pacific War from 1937-1942, and the American involvement in the conflict pre-Pearl Harbor.

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11 Sinclair, xvii.
Provincial Politics

At the outbreak of the Pacific War, which began with the commencement of armed conflict between China and Japan in 1937, the Guomindang (GMD), a political-military regime led by the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi), nominally governed China from Nanjing (Nanking). Ruled for over two-and-a-half centuries by the Qing Dynasty, China briefly experimented with a representational government for several years following the abdication of Emperor Puyi in 1912, but this young parliamentary democracy failed to take root and China quickly descended into a countrywide civil war in which several warlords sought to seize swaths of land and establish their own fiefdoms. The GMD, which originally began as a pro-republic political organization during the late dynastic period, played a central role in governing the short-lived republic government (1912-1915) and grew to be a political group with strong support from ex-Qing military officers during the civil war that ensued after the republic’s collapse. Vying with almost a dozen warlords, most of who had long-standing provincial ties to their own regional base, the GMD experienced a string of military successes against neighboring warlords beginning in 1925 under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek.

While Chiang Kai-shek solidified the GMD’s position vis-à-vis rival warlords in southern China, specifically in Guangxi (Kuang-hsi) and Guangdong (Kwangtung)

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12 Literally the “National People’s Party.”
13 n.b. The author has elected to use the Wade Giles transliteration of the Generalissimo’s name (蒋介石).
15 Mosley, 33.
16 n.b. These provincial warlords would continue to play a role in the instability of China even after the GMD consolidated power and in chapter three, I will demonstrate how the continued existence of these warlords, whom the Generalissimo viewed as potential internal rivals, had a significant impact on Chiang Kai-shek’s command decisions during the Pacific War.
province, he also consolidated his own position within the GMD by cracking down on the leftist elements of the party that maintained loose ties with the Comintern.\(^\text{18}\) In March 1926, Chiang Kai-shek, backed by the rightist and military faction of the GMD, assumed top leadership of the party and began to turn his sights outward.\(^\text{19}\) Having subdued his warlord opponents in southern China by the summer of 1926, the Generalissimo mobilized his force in the autumn to wage his Northern Expedition, which resulted in the capture of Nanjing, Shanghai, the Yangtze River Valley, and finally the cities of the north China plain including Beijing (Peking).\(^\text{20}\) By early 1928, the GMD controlled much of the territory that the earlier Qing Dynasty had lay claims to and effectively “reunified” China and brought an end to the decade-long period of widespread warlord rule.\(^\text{21}\)

Unfortunately for those under the GMD’s rule, Chiang Kai-shek and his regime proved to be far more effective at consolidating power than governing a country as populous and vast as China. The GMD’s Nanjing-based government struggled from its onset with several challenges that would plague its governance through the Pacific War and until its fall in the late 1940s. Several of its issues stemmed from the fact that Chiang Kai-shek partially consolidated power by coopting weaker warlords and allowing them to maintain regional rule and semi-autonomy in exchange for their acknowledgement of Nanjing as their suzerain. Consequently, GMD largely lacked the ability to accrue revenue, control the training and activity of the warlord’s personal armies, and in general, govern as a modern state.\(^\text{22}\) Determined to maintain his grasp over power, Chiang Kai-shek ruled through “adroit manipulation of party factions, encouraging them against one

\(^{18}\) Mosley, 51.
\(^{19}\) Mosley, 51.
\(^{20}\) Mosley, 51; Warren Cohen, 98.
\(^{21}\) Mosley, 56.
\(^{22}\) Warren Cohen, 102.
another. This prevented any combination of cliques from becoming strong enough to challenge the center.” Moreover, the Generalissimo was more than willing to turn a blind eye to the endemic corruption carried out by his officials and advisors, as long as they displayed full deference and loyalty to his regime. Two of his own brothers-in-law, T.V. Soong and H.H. Kung, served as his close advisors from the very early days of his rule and both men would play a significant role in shaping his relations with the other Allied powers during the Pacific War. The GMD’s endemic corruption and desire to maintain its delicate governance over China led it, in many respects, to be its own worst enemy. Yet, the Chiang Kai-sheks government in Nanjing continually faced a genuine competing domestic challenger, the communist “guerillas” under the leadership of the charismatic Mao Zedong, who refused to capitulate to the Generalissimo despite facing continuous “extermination” campaigns in the late 1920s and 1930s.

The “centralized” regime in Nanjing on the eve of war in 1937 was merely a façade for a government that truly lacked significant power and influence outside of the capitals’ walls. A far more disciplined, professional, and effective Japanese Army routed Chinese forces in Manchuria in 1931 with relatively little resistance and Chiang Kai-shek’s government and military was hardly anymore prepared in 1937 to face the army that marched under the flag of the “rising sun.” It is important to keep in mind Chiang Kai-sheks interests, namely preservation of his rule, and the nature of his governance

23 Michael Schaller discusses extensively about Chiang Kai-shek’s play on power in his work *The US Crusade in China, 1938-1945.*
24 Warren, 102.
25 Warren, 103.
26 Mosely, 55.
when discussing his role in the Allied command in the CBI, for his participation and cooperation with his fellow allies was almost exclusively guided by these factors.

*The Pacific War (and the Second Sino-Japanese War)*

Europe’s World War II experience began with the Nazi invasion across the Poland in September 1939. East Asia’s experience began over two years earlier with the outbreak of hostilities between China and Japan in July 1937. Japan’s military presence in northeast Asia grew following its capturing of Manchuria in 1931 and its subsequent establishment of the client-puppet Manchukuo. Throughout the mid-1930s, tensions along the Sino-Manchukuo rose as Sino-Japanese relations soured.  

Japanese military officers, whose political clout grew dramatically during the 1930s, began fervently pushing leaders in Tokyo to consider expansionist military operations in the Asia-Pacific in the years leading up to the outbreak of conflict in 1937. The Shōwa Emperor, Emperor Hirohito, initially pursued a fairly harmonious foreign policy, but his government took a far aggressive, nationalist turn with the ascendency of Prince Fumimaro Konoe (Konoye) to the position Prime Minister in 1937. Amidst the calls in Tokyo by top military leaders to demonstrate Japan’s military strength through a decisive strike against China, Chiang Kai-shek’s government expelled Japanese civilians and advisors from Shanghai in the summer of 1937 and reports of abuse of Japanese citizens living in Chinese cities made their way back to Japanese isles. Using these abuses and the spurious claim that the Chinese were actively seeking to ally with the Soviet Union to retake Manchuria as a

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28 Roehrs, 28.
29 Roehers, 28.
pretext to launch a preemptive strike on Nanjing, General Hideki Tojo presented his war plan to the Emperor and Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{31} While leaders in Japan debated war plans, a small skirmish, which would later be known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, between a Japanese company and the 29\textsuperscript{th} Chinese Army on July 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1937 along the Hu River acted as a death knell for peace.\textsuperscript{32}

What began as a small skirmish escalated to a larger regional conflict on July 8\textsuperscript{th}, and Japanese military leaders, eager to prove their efficacy against what they believed to be an inferior Chinese foe, quickly mobilized several divisions to the newly formed Chinese front. Before the end of the month, Japanese bombers began striking northern Chinese cities and the mobilized divisions decisively captured Tientsin.\textsuperscript{33} Almost overnight, Tokyo called up 738,000 reserve forces to reinforce 380,000 active duty soldiers. The number of troops deployed to China would grow to 1.6 million by 1938.\textsuperscript{34} The Chinese military enjoyed numerical superiority vis-à-vis Japan, fielding a two million-man force in July of 1937, but its soldiers sorely lacked weapons, basic equipment, and training.\textsuperscript{35} The disciplined Japanese conducted a series of amphibious assaults along the Chinese coasts in 1937, and backed by naval fire support, air support, and armored vehicles, the Emperor’s army captured Shanghai in August and wrought havoc on the GMD capital of Nanjing, where arguably some of the most heinous crimes committed in the war occurred.\textsuperscript{36} The Japanese had unquestionable operational success

\textsuperscript{31} Hoyt, 143.
\textsuperscript{32} Hoyt, 143.
\textsuperscript{33} Hoyt, 149.
\textsuperscript{34} Hoyt, 149, 181.
\textsuperscript{35} Hoyt, 149.
\textsuperscript{36} Hoyt, 166; Roehrs, 30.

n.b. The figures of those Chinese citizens raped and killed varies greatly, but in the ballpark of 250,000 were killed and tens of thousands were raped. Roehrs, 30
against China’s second-rate military, but they failed to knock out Chiang-Kai-shek’s
government, which fled into China’s interior to the city of Chongqing (Chungking) after
the fall of Nanjing. Furthermore, the Japanese repeatedly found themselves unable to
seize and hold territory in the Chinese hinterlands where the Chinese army used the
terrain to their advantage and remained out of reach of Japan’s air and sea fire support.\textsuperscript{37} This inability to effectively penetrate the China’s vast inland territory continued to
frustrate Tokyo throughout the Pacific war and consequentially gave Chiang Kai-shek’s
government a lifeline.

Across the ocean, the United States remained fairly uninvolved in the happenings
on the Asia continent. Leaders in the State Department, along with the majority of the
American public, largely sympathized with the Chinese, who they saw as victims of
Japanese aggression, but this sympathy was unaccompanied by the will to intervene in a
conflict seen as “not worth fighting for.”\textsuperscript{38} Responding to the outbreak of conflict,
Secretary of State Cordell Hull called for both sides to “adhere to international treaties”
and to commit to “the principles of peace and nonaggression,” but did not move to
sanction Japan, believing that the US would lose leverage on Japan if they cut off trade
with Tokyo.\textsuperscript{39} Furthermore, following the outbreak of hostilities in Europe and the
mounting German military successes, leaders in Washington almost uniformly believed
aiding Allied forces in Europe was the higher priority.\textsuperscript{40} The Tripartite Pact, signed on
September 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1940, nudged Roosevelt and Hull to block exports that Japan could use

\textsuperscript{37} Roehrs, 28
\textsuperscript{38} The words of Secretary of State Cordell Hull when asked about an American intervention in China. Warren Cohen, 120.
\textsuperscript{39} Schaller, \textit{U.S. Crusade…}, 13; Warren Cohen, 122.
\textsuperscript{40} Warren Cohen, 123.
directly for war-making purposes.\textsuperscript{41} Still, the United States continued to ship Japan the petroleum that fueled its war machine and Japan remained a fairly substantial US trading partner up through July 1941.\textsuperscript{42}

Even with the cessation of American petroleum shipments in the summer of 1941, Japan continued along their warpath, invading French Indochina in July 1940 and continuing their advance through Southeast Asia in the summer of 1941.\textsuperscript{43} The United States’ relatively light sanctions did not have a deterrent effect on halting the Japanese war machine, and leaders in Tokyo pointed to the sanctions as an example of how the West was trying to halt their “progress” through economic strangulation.\textsuperscript{44} Japanese leaders stated that their Asian-Pacific conquest as a necessary step in building pan-Asian unity, creating the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” and “liberating” Asians from the clutches of the Western Imperialists.\textsuperscript{45} While tensions with the United States steadily rose between 1937 and 1941, Japanese leaders and strategists did not seriously consider a preventive strike the United States until September 1941, and the decision to attack the newly relocated US Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor was not made until November of that year.\textsuperscript{46} The mastermind of the strike on Pearl Harbor (Codenamed: Operation HAWAII),\textsuperscript{47} Yamamoto Isoroku, convinced the Japanese leadership that the United

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} Warren Cohen, 123-124.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Roehres, 34; Schaller, \textit{U.S. Crusade...} 59; Warren Cohen, 122-123.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Roehrs, 33.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Hoyt, 235.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Roehrs, 30.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Hoyt, 219.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Operation HAWAII, i.e. the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which sought to disable the American Pacific Fleet in order to bide the Japanese time to carry out its offensive in the Asia-Pacific and strike a potentially crushing morale blow on the American people, consisted of three-wave aerial bombardment of the vessels and infrastructure at Pearl Harbor. The Japanese strike force consisted of six aircraft carriers, two battleships, a handful of cruisers and destroyers, as well as a number of submarines to help protect the
\end{itemize}
States would be unable to reconstruct their fleet for several years, thus giving Japan time to seize territories that could provide them vital raw materials and build a formidable buffer against a prospective U.S. counteroffensive.\textsuperscript{48} Yamamoto would later find this to be a grave miscalculation.

Meanwhile, conflict continued in China in 1940-1941 and Japanese military repeatedly scored tactical victories along the Chinese coast, but failed to break the Chinese forces or capture the GMD’s wartime capital at Chongqing. As previously stated, policymakers and leaders in Washington openly shared their sympathy for China, but did very little to try to curb the Japanese onslaught. China’s foreign minister, T.V. Soong, stationed himself in Washington shortly after the beginning of the war and he tirelessly lobbied politicians, policymakers, and influential people in the American capital in order to try to gain significant material and combat aid.\textsuperscript{49} The Japanese signing of the Tripartite Pact and their encroachment on western-held colonial possessions SE Asia and the Pacific greatly helped Soong’s cause,\textsuperscript{50} and starting in 1940, the United States began to help China’s cause, overtly and covertly. Connecting with American businessman William Pawley and retired American Air Corps Colonel Claire Chennault, Soong helped arrange for the creation of the America Volunteer Group (AVG), a “volunteer” militia of American fighter pilots sponsored covertly by the American government and partially by wealthy businessmen.\textsuperscript{51} The 1\textsuperscript{st} AVG, known as the “Flying Tigers,” arrived in China near the end of 1941 and battled Japanese Zeroes over the Chinese skies until the US fleet and block any American ships from escaping the attack. Only two of the three planned aerial waves ended up being utilized.

\textsuperscript{48} Roehrs, 47.
\textsuperscript{49} Schaller, 71.
\textsuperscript{50} Namely British Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaya; French Indochina, the Dutch East Indies; the United States Philippines.
\textsuperscript{51} Schaller, \textit{U.S. Crusade…}, 71.
Army’s 23rd Fighter Group, organized under the China Air Task Force, assumed combat operations in the summer of 1942.\textsuperscript{52} On the ground, Roosevelt arranged for the creation of the American Military Mission to China (AMMISCA), which under the guidance of General John Magruder, organized the logistics behind the supply effort to Chongqing in a “camouflaged” manner starting in July 1941.\textsuperscript{53} The United States overtly began supplying China with material aid in 1941 following Congress’ approval of the Lend Lease Act for China. Shortly after its ratification, millions of dollars worth of weapons, equipment, and food poured into Rangoon to be sent up the Burma Road to Chongqing.\textsuperscript{54}

The December 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor ended the United States’ need to back China surreptitiously. On December 8\textsuperscript{th}, the United States formally declared war on the Empire of Japan. Two weeks later, British and American leaders gathered in Washington for a first joint strategic conference, codenamed ARCADIA.\textsuperscript{55} The decisions made at the ARCADIA conference, in many regards, decided the fate of the Allies success in the CBI. Among the significant decisions made at the meeting was the resolution to defeat Germany in Europe first before turning the bulwark of the military effort to Asia.\textsuperscript{56} Along these lines, the Allies roadmap to victory valued the relative strategic importance of the CBI below Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and the

\textsuperscript{52} Schaller, \textit{U.S. Crusade…}, 70-71.
\textsuperscript{53} Schaller, \textit{U.S. Crusade…}, 55.
\textsuperscript{54} Schaller, \textit{U.S. Crusade…}, 56.
\textsuperscript{55} Tuchman, 234
n.b. The combined Pacific and the CBI Theater were valued as the third most important area of operations (AO), behind Europe and North Africa/the Middle East. A further discussion of ARCADIA will occur in proceeding chapters. Schaller, \textit{U.S. Crusade…}, 90.
Pacific. And while the new allies mapped out the grand strategy of the Allied operation, Chiang Kai-shek and his advisors remained in Chongqing without a seat to the table.\(^{57}\)

Japan achieved tremendous success in the Pacific Theater in late 1941 and the early portion of 1942. Hirohito’s military followed up the attack at Pearl Harbor by hitting US positions at Midway, Wake Island and Guam and defeating the American Asiatic Fleet stationed in Manila.\(^{58}\) Under the command of LTG Yamashita Tomoyuki (known as the “Tiger of Malaya”), Japan captured the strategically important British possession Singapore in February 1942.\(^{59}\) London and The Hague would find their Borneo and Java colonies, respectively, fall into Japanese hands a few weeks later.\(^{60}\) Eying Britain’s crowning colonial jewel, India, the Imperial Army quickly shifted its focus to Burma, which British senior military leaders and strategists viewed as India’s defensive buffer.\(^{61}\) Staring down the Wehrmacht from across the narrow English Channel, London found itself far more concerned with the defense of the British Isles and the happenings in Europe and North Africa than with the growing threat of its Far East colonies a half a world away.\(^{62}\)

Chiang Kai-shek, uninvited to the ARCADIA conference and facing an ever increasingly potent Japanese foe, was wholly unimpressed with the American response to

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\(^{58}\) Roehrs, 70; Hoyt, 240-242.

\(^{59}\) Hoyt, 253.

\(^{60}\) n.b. Due to its petroleum reserves, Borneo became strategic importance for Japan grew tremendously following the US decision to cease petroleum shipments to Japan. Roehrs, 80.

\(^{61}\) The British perceived India to be an important economic asset because it provided the metropole with a wide variety of raw materials as well as cash crops for export, such as sugarcane, tea, and cotton. The colony also served as a large market for British manufacturing products, namely textiles.

\(^{62}\) Schaller, *U.S. Crusade…*, 90.
the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Generalissimo expected Roosevelt to rapidly mobilize combat troops and help China break the effective Japanese stranglehold of China. Instead he received merely a “hold tight” until Germany was defeated and the offer to send a military advisor to aid him in his fight. Chiang Kai-shek readily accepted this offer and asked for a strategic advisor who didn’t need to be “an expert on the Far East.” Army Chief of Staff, skeptical of Chiang Kai-shek’s motives, sent then-LTG Joseph W. Stilwell.

“Vinegar Joe”

At 0630 on December 22nd, 1941, Joseph Stilwell, then a senior tactical commander in California, received a phone call from then-BG Omar Bradley requesting him to come immediately to Washington to be briefed on “some expeditionary force” that he believed he would be asked to command. One week later, Stilwell received the news that he was being reassigned to Chongqing. Mystified by the fact that no one in the War Department had conducted “basic strategic stud[ies]” or possessed any guidance on the United States’ strategic direction in the CBI Theater, Stilwell nonetheless dutifully accepted his task and push off shortly after for the Far East.

On paper, Stilwell looked to be the ideal candidate for the position of advisor to the Generalissimo. The wiry, war-hardened infantry officer and West Point graduate

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63 n.b. While members of the State Department, including ambassador to China Nelson T. Johnson, believed Chiang Kai-shek to be an indispensable partner and the figure most likely to keep the country together, he was viewed by American and British leaders as a subordinate partner of sorts and the leaders in Washington and London rarely felt obligated consult or even notify him of their plans. Schaller, 11; Cohen 126.
64 Warren, 125-126.
65 Schaller, U.S. Crusade…, 93.
66 Stilwell Papers, 11, 1.
67 Stilwell Papers, 16.
came from a long military lineage dating back to the founding of the United States.\textsuperscript{68}

Eager for combat experience, he accepted an assignment in the Philippines upon commissioning in 1904.\textsuperscript{69} While stationed in the Philippines, Stilwell traveled throughout the Asian-Pacific and in 1911, he visited China for the first time.\textsuperscript{70} The American entry into World War I brought him to Europe where he served as a staff officer on the Western front.\textsuperscript{71} Stilwell found himself again looking for a new adventure once arriving stateside after the Entente victory and he fatefuly stumbled upon an opportunity to return to China to study Mandarin.\textsuperscript{72} For the next three years, Stilwell toured civil war-torn China, mixing with soldiers and officials alike.\textsuperscript{73} It is also during this time in China that Stilwell first encountered the GMD’s forces, which he initially found to be effective, disciplined soldiers.\textsuperscript{74}

Stilwell’s soldiers and colleagues called him “Vinegar Joe” because he practiced a no-nonsense command-style and spoke with colorful language. The five-foot-nine infantryman preferred to sleep next to his soldiers and command his troops from the frontlines rather than manage the battle from a tactical operations center (TOC) set up out of an enemy’s artillery range.\textsuperscript{75} Joseph Stilwell’s believed that he should always “lead from the front” as a commander and he unabashedly spoke his mind when dealing with soldiers, politicians, and policymakers. Despite being perceived as rough around the edges, his men considered him a man of dedication and integrity.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{68} Tuchmann, 5-16, 9, 4.
\textsuperscript{69} Tuchmann, 18.
\textsuperscript{70} Tuchmann, 25.
\textsuperscript{71} Tuchmann, 49-50.
\textsuperscript{72} Tuchmann, 61.
\textsuperscript{73} Tuchmann, 69-70.
\textsuperscript{74} Tuchmann, 112-114.
\textsuperscript{75} Tuchman, 4.
\textsuperscript{76} Tuchman, 4.
Into the CBI

Stilwell arrived in India on February 25\textsuperscript{th} and promptly met with the British regional command, which he found duly unimpressive and unimpressive about the defensive effort being waged by the forces under British command in neighboring Burma.\textsuperscript{77} Stilwell then caught a plane to the Chongqing and on March 6\textsuperscript{th}, he met with Chiang Kai-shek for the first time. The Generalissimo confirmed what Stilwell had noticed in India, the Allies in the Theater had “no plan” and the British seemed largely uninterested in fighting the Japanese in Burma.\textsuperscript{78} Receiving a telegram from the Chief of Staff General Marshall, Stilwell learned that his initial mission would be threefold: ensure that Chongqing’s main supply route (MSR), the Burma Road, remains available for the purpose of supplying Chongqing with vital resources; take command of Chinese forces (with Chiang Kai-shek’s “permission”) and improve the combat effectiveness of the Chinese soldiers; and serve as the Generalissimo’s Chief of Staff and head military advisor. These objectives, designed by Marshall and Roosevelt himself, were selected believing that completing this missions would work towards the United States primary goal in CBI- keep a well supplied and more effectively run Nationalist government in the war.\textsuperscript{79} While Stilwell was in Chongqing getting up-to-speed on the situation in the theater, Japanese forces in Burma were handily beating the forces under British command, which largely consisted of Burmese and Indian soldiers. Seeking to cut off the Chongqing’s only remaining supply route, the Burma Road, and subsequently knock Chiang Kai-shek’s government out of the war, the Japanese 15\textsuperscript{th} army routed British

\textsuperscript{77} Stilwell Papers, 45.  
\textsuperscript{78} Stilwell Papers, 50.  
\textsuperscript{79} Tuchman 245-246.
forces outside the colonial capital and main port at Rangoon on March 7th and took the strategically vital town the next day.\(^{80}\)

Stilwell departed for the Burmese front on March 11th, believing that Chiang Kai-shek would give him command of two armies. Once arriving in the malaria-filled jungles of northern Burma, he not only discovered that two of the elements he expected to command were revoked by the leaders in Chongqing, but also found British and Indian forces hastily retreating on almost all fronts and doing so without sabotaging infrastructure and resources that the enemy could make use of.\(^{81}\) Radios and communication on the crumbling front were hard to come by and the British positions throughout Burma were taking heavy aerial bombing.\(^{82}\) Unlike his “defeatist” Briton and Indian colleagues, Stilwell remained optimistic that Burma could be salvage.\(^{83}\) Yet, as it became more clear that the Allied line would not be able to hold off the far more motivated and disciplined Japanese army, Stilwell wrote to his wife from his bamboo battle station that his forces were about to “take a beating.”\(^{84}\) In late April, the Allied eastern flank broke and Stilwell, along with the rest of the coalition forces, found themselves trekking across the Burmese jungles in full retreat. The few Chinese troops that Britain allowed to join the fight were surrounded and captured.\(^{85}\) Stilwell would later write from India that the Allies took a “hell of a beating” in Burma and that if the

\(^{80}\) Hoyt, 259.
\(^{81}\) Tuchman 273, 277.
\(^{82}\) Tuchman 271.
\(^{83}\) Tuchman 281.
\(^{84}\) Stilwell Papers, 86.
\(^{85}\) Tuchman, 200.

The British, uncomfortable with the Chinese claim to portions of northern Burma and skeptical of Chinese intentions in the region, resisted the large-scale participation of Chinese forces in the defense of Burma.
Allies were to have operational success in the CBI, drastic changes would need to be implemented.  

*Picking up the Pieces*

In the spring of 1942, the Allied Command in the CBI Theater was nonexistent. The Americans, Britons, and Chinese hardly had a strategy to speak of. The Allies shared the same main objective being the defeat of the Japanese Empire. But none of the Allied leaders or commanders had any idea what the road to victory looked like. At this moment, the War Department and Roosevelt administration only had established but one strategic objective for the CBI Theater—support and preserve the Nationalist Chinese government in order to force tie up Japanese men and resources on the Asian mainland. With no clear command, guidance, or direction, it is unsurprisingly that Allied soldiers in 1942 were “Confused Beyond Imagination.”

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86 Schaller, *U.S. Crusade*…, 103.
87 Schaller, *U.S. Crusade*…, 63.
Chapter 3 | “A Melting Pot of Divergent National Interests:”

End States in the CBI Theater

“You and your outfit have been assigned one of the most important military missions ever given to American soldiers- the task of driving the Japanese back to Tokyo” read the opening line of the GI’s China-Burma-India Theater wartime handbook. Few twenty-something-year-old American young men deployed to the CBI had heard of, much less been to, the jungles of North Burma or the mountainous terrain of southwest China or eastern India, and less than a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, thousands of these soldiers were told they were “spear head[ing]” the “all-important” effort to defeat Japan. The Allied nations unquestionably shared the grand strategic goal of defeating the expansionist Japanese Empire in the Pacific Theater, but beyond sharing this common principal objective, the Allies possessed fundamentally divergent, and even conflicting, secondary military objectives, interests in the Far East, and post-war end states for Asia.

Unlike the coalition’s efforts in Europe, the partners in the CBI, primarily, Britain, the United States, and China, were unable to reconcile fundamental conflicting interests and bring about a unified purpose and plan for their command.

88 Lyman, 194
90 GI Handbook, 47.
91 Stilwell Papers, 107.

n.b. The term “end state” is military jargon for a government or organization’s idealized outcome or vision for a specific mission. In this chapter, the term will mostly be used to describe a particular country’s preferred post-war vision for the economic and political situation in Asia.
Confronted with a “melting pot of divergent national interests,” leaders in Washington, London, and Chongqing sought to find common ground and come to an agreement on the means that should be adopted in order that the coalition accomplish its mutual objective. While the Allied forces ultimately accomplished their mutually agreed upon primary objective, the defeat of Japanese forces in the theater, the coalition failed to meet many of their operational objectives in CBI because each nation concluded that the cost of subordinating its core interests in the pursuit of coming to an agreed upon joint plan and end state was not worth the cost. Leaders uniformly found that the costs of compromise outweighed the perceived benefits a unified, effective command could bring to the CBI and consequently they all determined that the individual pursuit of their own particular national objectives was their most advantageous courses of action. Due to their inability to reconcile their differences, the Allied operational efforts in the CBI were paralyzed until the final months of the war.

The American entry into the Pacific War brought about the genesis of the ABDACOM (American-British-Dutch-Australian Command), which served as the initial, Chinese-less, “Allied” command in the CBI Theater and Southeast Asia in early 1942. After the quick demise of ABDACOM in February 1942, the fight in Burma, which served as the main battlefront in the CBI, was almost entirely carried out by three primary partners- the United States, Great Britain, and Nationalist Chinese. Other members of the Allied coalition, such as the Soviet Union, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Australia, also contributed in some fashion in the fight against Japan, yet these partners

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92 i.e. the Free French under Charles de Gaulle after June of 1940.
played a small role in the CBI. In order to set up the subsequent discussion on how the interests, objectives, and postwar end states of the primary CBI partners, affected the CBI Command, an explanation of these interests, objectives, and foreseen ends states is required.

*A “Friendly Settlement” to Unconditional Surrender*

The vast majority of Americans had no desire to go fight a war on behalf of the Chinese before December 7th, 1941, and President Roosevelt, intent on completing his New Deal agenda, meticulously avoided any policy action that might have entangled the United States in a war in the Far East. Despite the fervent lobbying efforts by a number of pro-China groups advocating for American intervention in the “undeclared war” between China and Japan, Roosevelt and his top policy advisors believed, up until the attack on Pearl Harbor, that involvement in Asia would undoubtedly harm US economic and geopolitical interests and would be politically untenable on the home front. The events of December 7th, however, greatly shifted American national priorities. Still, geopolitical and economic considerations, coupled with Roosevelt’s postwar vision for Asia, continued to guide American policy during the fight against Japan. Archived telegrams and letters reveal that American diplomats, policymakers, and politicians discussed ad nauseam about the United States’ willingness to assist and cooperate with partner nations in the fight against Japan, yet the Roosevelt administration, prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, stood their ground and resisted the idea of taking measures that

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93 In the Appendix, I have included a discussion of each of these partners involvement in the CBI and why their interests and/or capabilities limited their role in the theater.

94 Tuchman, 149.

95 *Stilwell Papers*, 251.
might result in the direct conflict with the Empire of Japan. Contesting Japan’s expansion was not seen at this time to be a vital national interest and the lack of support amongst the American public for the cause made the Roosevelt Administration’s decision whether to response with force a fairly easy.

Leaders in Washington strongly believed that a unified, politically stable China was key to the general peace and economic prosperity in Far East. After investing and trading in China for nearly one hundred years, the American business community had established deep ties and interests in China, primarily in port cities along China’s coast. Business leaders, while facing new domestic legislation and regulation as a result of Roosevelt’s New Deal reforms, enjoyed their longstanding support from Washington in their dealings in the Far East, so much so that American foreign policy in China was largely guided by economic and business considerations in the pre-war period. Seeking new markets for products rolling off the factory lines, business, political, and diplomatic leaders worked in conjunction to ensure that American goods had uninterrupted access to China’s largely untapped market of 500 million people.

Business interests dominated the United States’ China policy in the pre-war era, but Washington’s desire to intervene in China to advance its own business and economic-

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96 Broadly, the national interest is a state’s economic, geopolitical, security, or cultural goals as set by its top leaders and policymakers. Classical realist Hans Morgenthau articulated that a state’s pursuit for the national interest is synonymous with their pursuit for power (i.e. relative power compared to other states and its ability to act in a fashion it sees most beneficial to its citizens). In his work *In Defense of the National Interest*, he declares that it is the “…moral duty for a nation to always follow in its dealing with other nations but one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule for action: The National Interest.” Hans Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1982), 241-242.


related objectives remained limited. Mirroring its general isolationist foreign policy readopted in the 1920s following its expeditionary effort in Europe, the United States sought to avoid meddling in China’s affairs and carried out a fairly non-interventionist, low engagement policy in the Middle Kingdom during the interwar period. This China policy was partially due to the fact that the United States had relatively little experience working with and in China, but it also gained widespread support in Washington due to the belief that China would once again become a powerful, influential player. Thus, US leaders found it prudent to avoid waging a coercive diplomatic strategy as practiced by a number of the European states and kept most of its interactions in the business arena.99

Even as Japanese divisions rolled across the northern Chinese plains, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, in a discussion with the US ambassador to Japan Joseph Grew, declared that the American goals in China were to avoid involvement in the Chinese-Japanese conflict; to protect the lives, property, and rights of US citizens in China and the region; and to maintain neutrality and friendship with all nations in the region, especially Japan.100 Geopolitical considerations still played a relatively minor role in the Secretary Hull and the State department’s policy calculus prior to the United States’ involvement in World War II

As mentioned in the previous chapter, top leaders in Washington, along with the American public as a whole, generally sympathized with the Chinese starting in the early days of the conflict. Nevertheless, these sympathies did not translate into policy that called for an American confrontation of Japan, or even intervention in the conflict, except

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100 Memorandum from the Ambassador to Japan (Grew) to Secretary of State (Hull), May 27th, 1937, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1937, Volume IV: Far East (Washington: GPO 1937), 487.
in instances where America property or commercial interests were greatly threatened or where American citizens experienced “molestation.”\textsuperscript{101} The pre-Pearl Harbor American public still embraced a Washingtonian sense of isolationism and was skeptical of the benefits of being entangled in foreign war.\textsuperscript{102} Catering to the electorate’s isolationist disposition, both Roosevelt and his Republican challenger, Wendell Willkie, who personally considered himself an internationalist, emphasized in the 1940 presidential campaign that they intended to keep the United States out of the wars in Europe and Asia.\textsuperscript{103} While Americans would soon embrace a more interventionist policy in the postwar era, few believed such a policy to be in the national interests prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Japanese aggression in the late 1930s threatened the stability in East Asia that policymakers in Washington desired, yet due to a lack of a significant naval presence in the region and an appetite to intervene in the Chinese-Japanese dispute, these leaders had few policy options to choose from. The United States and Japan served together as allies in World War I, but the relationship became increasingly fraught with tension following the war due to a mutual distrust about each other’s ambitions in the Far East.\textsuperscript{104} These tensions did not escalate into anything resembling armed conflict in the 1920s, but following the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and initiation of increasingly coercive

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{101} Memorandum from the Ambassador to Japan (Grew) to Secretary of State (Hull), July 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1937, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1937, Volume IV: Far East} (Washington: GPO 1937), 166.
\textsuperscript{102} Smith, Gaddis. \textit{American Diplomacy During the Second World War, 1941-1945.} 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (New Haven: Yale University, 1985), 3.
\textsuperscript{103} Smith, 5.
\textsuperscript{104} William L. Neumann, \textit{America Encounters Japan: From Perry to MacArthur} (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), 162.
\end{footnotesize}
policies in the 1930s, the United States, and to a lesser extent, Britain, assumed a more assertive stance vis-à-vis Japan with the intent of deterring further expansionism. The 15th infantry regiment, organized under the US Army Forces in China (USAFC), had been charged with guarding and protecting US diplomatic posts and property in China since the Boxer Rebellion at the beginning of the 19th century, but their limited numbers, equipment, and rules of engagement ruled them out from being a potential deterrent force. Risking an armed engagement in East Asia was not perceived as a viable option by leaders in Washington and London in the 1930s, but several prominent American statesmen, namely Henry Stimson and Stanley Hornbeck, pushed for economic sanctions against the Japan. The Roosevelt administration, hesitant to anger the third largest purchaser of American exports and to potentially incite a war in the Pacific, chose to utilize the League of Nations in the early part of the 1930s. Following Tokyo’s withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933, the administration shifted its engagement to, bilateral talks, thus maintaining a line of contact to prospectively resolve

105 Neumann, 189.
106 Tuchman, 100.

The Boxer Rebellion (1898-1901) was an uprising driven by the peasant-dominant “righteous and harmonious militia” which broadly aimed to expel the foreign presence in China. The phenomena occurred during the late Qing Dynasty, which was marked by a series of partially implemented “modernizing” reforms and by a heavy foreign presence in China. Violence initially broke out in Shandong province where German missionaries were offering special treatment and benefits to Chinese nationals who had converted to Catholicism, much to the chagrin of those who did not convert. In response to the slaying of several missionaries, German forces violently put down the “bandits” allegedly responsible for the attacks. This forceful response only further angered non-Christian Chinese nationals and the anti-foreign, anti-Christian uprising spread beyond Shandong to Henan, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria. When the western powers and Japan demanded that Qing Government suppress the loosely organized mobs that harassed foreigners and their property throughout China, the Beijing government, led by the Empress Dowager, threw their support behind the nationalist mob, which in turn led the powers to resort to the use of military force. The coalition of western powers and Japan not only suppressed the uprising, but also occupied the Chinese capital and forced Chinese leaders to sign the Boxer Protocol, which suspended the civil service exams, banned the importation of arms, and called for an enormous 450 million Tael (333 million in 1901 dollars) indemnity. The Boxer Protocol would continue to be a point of contention between the nationalist government and the Allies during the Pacific War. Schoppa, 118-123.
future points of contention. Some policymakers argued that backing and supporting China would be the best means of checking Japan, but a creation of their own Congress limited their ability to pursue such a policy. The Neutrality Acts, passed by US legislators with the intent of checking efforts that might draw the United States into another foreign war, prevented President Roosevelt and State Department officials from providing China with material aid that could assist them in their war effort. Consulting top diplomatic leaders in China and Japan, President Roosevelt decided that the US policy regarding the Chinese-Japanese conflict would consist of continued noninterference, “support” for negotiations between the warring sides (though not direct mediation), and a surreptitious effort to back the Chinese Nationalist leader, Chiang Kai-shek.

Few in the Roosevelt Administration, even in the early years of the war, believed Chiang Kai-shek to be an ideal partner in combating Japan. State Department personnel in China, namely the Ambassador Nelson Johnson, were fully aware of the fact that the Generalissimo lacked control of large swaths of China and that his coterie of close officials cared far more about personal gain than good governance. Nevertheless, Roosevelt and Johnson jointly agreed that Chiang Kai-shek was the only viable option to lead China through the war, and both believed that if China could survive the war intact, China could potentially become a growing, modernized democracy post bellum.

Roosevelt realized the political dynamic in Asia was shifting. He posited that the British

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107 Neuman 195-196, 212.
108 n.b. Japan withdrew from the League of nations in 1933, largely due to the results of the League of Nations-sponsored Lytton Report that concluded that the Japanese were to blame for the conflict and subsequent capture of Manchuria.
109 Tuchman, 148, 401.
Empire in the Far East was on the decline and that the French and Dutch’s colonial possessions would soon also succumb to indigenous nationalist movements that grew increasingly adamant about home rule in the 1930s. Although he found wartime China to be a backwards nation largely stuck in the 18th century, he believed that it had the potential to be a world power and that it necessarily would play a key role in maintaining the peace and stability in Asia during the second half of the 20th century. Professing his faith in the China’s postwar potential under Chiang Kai-shek to his close advisor Lauchlin Currie, Roosevelt declared:

“We have a unique opportunity to exert a profound influence on the development of China and hence Asia. It appear to me to be profoundly in our national interest to give full support to the Generalissimo, both militarily and diplomatic… we can rely on him so far as lies within his power to go in the direction of our wishes in prosecuting a vigorous war policy and in creating modern, democratic, and powerful state.”

Despite being unable to materially aid Chiang Kai-shek until 1941 due to the Neutrality Act’s restrictions, the Roosevelt administration shaped their China policy with the assumption that Chiang Kai-shek and GMD would act as the regime that would govern China following the conclusion of the war.

As already mentioned, economic interests dominated the United States’ pre-Pearl Harbor Chinese and Far East policy, yet Roosevelt and some like-minded members of his

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110 Tuchman, 240, 90.
111 Tuchman, 239
administration began to prioritize geopolitical objectives and interests in the years leading up to the United States’ entry in the war, consequently recalibrating Washington’s foreign policy. The rise of fascism in Germany, Italy, and Spain, which seemed to parallel the rise of the militaristic leadership in Japan, brought about a growing fear amongst some members in the State department that the world’s democracies might be in danger. In this light, some policymakers, such as long-time Far East Foreign Service officer Stanley Hornbeck, argued that China acted as a force for good facing a fundamentally “evil” Japanese machine and that China ought to be apart of the solution to counter the Japanese aggression that threatened regional stability. The president not only desired to see the dismantlement of the Japanese Empire, but also the European colonial order that predominately guided the Far East’s political and economic affairs. Roosevelt personally believed that the preservation of these far-flung empires was unsustainable and he postulated that self-rule in the Asia would eventually be a source of regional stability. Furthermore, he sought to make it explicitly clear that United States resources and political clout exercised during the conflict in Pacific would not be used in a way that preserved what he saw as crumbling European colonial empires in the Far East.

Along with his Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Roosevelt envisioned that the colonies could transition into becoming sovereign states through a process of gradual trusteeship, where the colonial power would hand over governing power incrementally to

113 Tuchman, 88.
114 Smith, 79.
115 Tuchman, 383.
Roosevelt’s belief in decolonization, however, was not the universal consensus in Washington and was certainly not shared by his ally in London. The president’s exchanges on the topic with U.S., interestingly, largely omitted discussion about the fate of the Philippines, America’s Far East “colony” and home to their only fleet in Asia. Yet, this debate over how American resources and political influence should be exercised in the Far East went from fairly theoretical to practical following Japan’s execution of Operation HAWAII.

The attack on December 7th, 1941, marked a pivotal moment in US Far East policy. Not only did it hand Roosevelt a casus belli to enter the Pacific War, but also because it as served as the watershed moment where geopolitical plainly considerations began exceed economic factors. Protected from the problems of Europe and Asia by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the leaders in Washington could easily afford to pursue an isolationist policy that required minimal balancing or “entanglement” in the affairs of the Eurasian landmass. The Japanese attack on American soil seemingly ended this perception of invulnerability, and the American public finally seemed willing to back a foreign policy that involved a greater focus on geopolitical interests. No longer hindered by the Neutrality Acts or by a public that was unwilling to fight a war abroad, the United States, who had already began supplying the GMD with some Lend Lease materials earlier in 1941, openly allied with Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Chinese


\[117\] See the coming section “Helping to the Best of Her Abilities.”

\[118\] Tuchman, 149.

\[119\] Interestingly, a survey conducted in February 1942 showed that 62% of Americans favored fighting the Japanese over the Germans. Warren Cohen, 120.
government and began to drastically increase the volume of shipped material and military aid to Chongqing.

Believing China to be crucial to the stability of post-war Asia, Roosevelt’s wartime policy prioritized aiding Chiang Kai-shek’s regime, in order to buttress it to the point where it could withstand Japanese offensives major objectives. Roosevelt also carried his interest in decolonizing Asia into the war and at times he pressed his European allies on the topic during strategic talks. Yet, he realized that this personal interest clashed with some of his allies’ principle interests, forcing him to weigh throughout the costs and benefits of pressuring his partners on the subject, which potentially risked losing some of their cooperation on war strategy. Britain, whom Roosevelt called a “time honored ally,” was valued as the most important of ally in the coalition, and the president routinely during the war demonstrated that he was willing to set aside the colonial issue in order to get British for general war decisions, especially ones that dealt with the European Theater.

An in depth look at the United States’ military and geostrategic objectives in the CBI and the Pacific War will occur in Chapter 5. Briefly, the United States, along with its British ally, decided upon a “Europe first” grand strategy at the ARCADIA conference, hoping to defeat the German threat parked across the English Channel from the British homeland before devoting an all-out effort in pursuit of turning back and defeating Japan. Until the United States and Britain could shift their primary focus to the Pacific, they decided, without input from their newly minted Chinese ally, that they would support a Chinese counteroffensive against Japan while also establishing a base of

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120 The United States wartime objectives and strategy will be addressed in detail in Chapter 5.
121 Warren Cohen, 125-126, Tuchman, 360.
operations in Australia where following operations in the South Pacific and Southeast Asia could be carried out.\textsuperscript{122} During ARCADIA, Army Chief of Staff George Marshall laid out two principle objectives for the Allies in the CBI Theater; namely, to keep Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese in the fight against Japan and to maintain open supply lines to China to support the effort against the Japanese on the Asian mainland.\textsuperscript{123} In support of these two objectives, Marshall sent General John Magruder to oversee the supply and distribution of US aid to China and the Allies in the CBI; he sent General Joseph Stilwell to advise Chiang Kai-shek on military matters, train Chinese forces for the tentative counteroffensive, and command assigned Chinese troops in combat.\textsuperscript{124}

Largely deferring to the interests of their British ally, the United States deployed the bulk of their forces and resources to England, to prepare for the eventual invasion of the European continent, and to North Africa, where London insisted the Allied offensive against the Axis begin.\textsuperscript{125} Roosevelt’s geostrategic plan dictated that the United States accommodate British strategy and priorities, and due to the fact that the British effort was almost entirely concentrated on the operations in Europe and North Africa, the American priorities and concentration followed suit. The CBI Theater received relatively little attention throughout the war, and the US sent only 6,000 soldiers to the CBI Theater in 1942, most of whom were engineers deployed to help in the construction of the new main supply route (MSR) to China, the Ledo Road.\textsuperscript{126} Despite being regarded as the senior

\textsuperscript{123} Leo J. Daugherty, \textit{The Allied Resupply Effort in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II} (London: MacFarland & Company, Inc., 2008), 17.
\textsuperscript{124} Tuchman, 246.
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Stilwell Papers}, 163; Warren Cohen, 122.
\textsuperscript{126} Bagby, 98.
partner in the Pacific Theater, the United States relied on the consent of the European-focused British and the conflict-adverse Chinese government in Chongqing when considering any offensive in the CBI because the US lacked the combat forces needed to conduct an independent operation in the theater.\textsuperscript{127}

The CBI GI Handbook told young men in CBI Theater that they were carrying out “one of the most important military missions ever given to American soldiers.” US senior military leaders and policymakers in Washington knew that the GIs mission in the CBI was certainly not the “most important” mission in the war and far from being the most important mission ever assigned. From Roosevelt on down, the post bellum strategic objectives were just as important, if not more important, than the wartime objectives. Consequently the envisioned end state greatly influenced wartime strategy. If the soldier’s mission was truly the “most important ever given to American soldiers,” it is due to the fact that they were working to shape postwar Asia as Washington saw fit.

\textit{Helping to the “best of her ability”}\textsuperscript{128}

With the Luftwaffe’s fighters and bombers soaring above London, German U-boats patrolling of the coasts of the British Isles, and Wehrmacht forces lined on the French side of the narrow English Channel, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the military leaders in the United Kingdom faced an immediate, existential threat on the home front starting in 1940 that arguably lasted until the early months of 1944. Vowing

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\item n.b. Following the loss of the Burma Road in March of 1942, General Stilwell declared that the construction of the Ledo Road would be a top priority. Unlike the Burma Road, which ran through Japanese held southern and central Burma, the Ledo Road ran from Assam through northern Burma to China, thus requiring less Allied fighting in Burma. Sinclair, 210.
\item Lyman, 210.
\item GI Handbook, 50.
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to never surrender, Churchill rallied his nation to fend off the imminent German threat in the Battle of Britain and kept His Majesty’s forces in the war effort. Half a world away, British subjects faced a similarly menacing threat at the hands of the Imperial Japanese Army, which seized nearly all of the King’s Far East possessions by the spring of 1942. The British pursued a strategy of retrenchment, that is, a policy that focuses on the survival of the nation and its core interests. Following the fall of France, Churchill and policymakers in London still regarded Britain’s colonial possessions in Asia as a principle part of the empire. Consequently, the British Chiefs of Staff were assigned the herculean task of winning the war against the German war machine while simultaneously preserving the King’s Far East colonies.

Britain possessed two primary interests in the Far East: the preservation of both their colonial possessions in the region and the continuation of favorable trade with the colonies and people in the Asian-Pacific region. Like their American counterparts, the British business community had extensive trade ties in China and throughout Asia, and the country’s domestic manufacturing industry largely depended on the region’s raw materials and markets. But unlike their American ally, whom British diplomats and political leaders believed were naïve on the subject, Churchill and British leaders rejected the idea that Europe should relinquish her colonies. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, and later Churchill and Anthony Eden, who served as Foreign Secretary during the war years, dismissed the notion that the colonies were capable of self-rule and

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129 Winston Churchill, “Speech before the Commons” (June 4th, 1940). [http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111chur.html](http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/111chur.html).

130 See the previous chapter about the Japanese campaign in Southeast Asia and Burma.

131 The British Chiefs of Staff comprise of the country’s senior military leaders and serve as the cabinets top military advisors and strategists.

132 Smith, 98.
asserted that colonial rule was mutually beneficial for Britain and the colonies.\textsuperscript{133} Acknowledging Roosevelt’s sensitivity to the use of precious war resources for maintaining overseas colonial possessions, the British, in their communications with their ally in Washington, began to speak in more general terms about the “security” of the region rather than frankly discussing the defense of specific colonial possessions such as Hong Kong or Singapore. Yet, American leaders and policymakers were fully aware that the British desired to maintain an “open door” in China in order to preserve the British Empire into the postwar era.\textsuperscript{134}

Unlike the United States, which showed a genuine interest in supporting a unified, self-sustaining China, Britain openly voiced little interest in supporting the state-building efforts in China.\textsuperscript{135} Britain rejected Roosevelt’s notion that China could adequately serve as one of the four “policemen” of the postwar world and argued that the Middle Kingdom possessed imperialistic aims of their own. Pointing to China’s claims on Tibet, North Burma, and Outer Mongolia, Churchill asserted that the Chinese shared many of the same expansionist desires as the Japanese.\textsuperscript{136} Furthermore, the Prime Minister had doubts whether a centralized government would survive in post bellum China and he, along with many traders and policy advisors in China, believed that a divided, weak China might even be beneficial for British trade.\textsuperscript{137}

Prior to the American entry into the war, Britain sought to appease an increasingly aggressive Japan in an attempt to maintain their Asian colonies without having to engage

\textsuperscript{133} Smith, 81.
\textsuperscript{135} Memorandum by the Advisor of Political Relations (Hornbeck), May 11\textsuperscript{st}, 1939, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1939, Volume III} (Washington: GPO, 1939), 36.
\textsuperscript{136} Tuchman, 369.
\textsuperscript{137} Tuchman, 370
Japan in the Pacific. In July 1940, Britain acquiesced to the Japanese demand to cut off aid to China and to close the Burma Road. Chamberlain also directed the Bank of England to help Japan stabilize the Yen, which experienced rapid devaluation during the early part of the Pacific War. Britain would later reopen the Burma Road late in 1940 at Roosevelt’s insistence. The aid it leant to China, however, was meager at best, largely due to the fact that most of Britain’s available materials were allocated for the European war effort, but also partially due to the fact that London had very little interest in supporting the GMD.

The British were also far more pessimistic than the United States concerning the capabilities and the general efficacy of Chiang Kai-shek’s government and his piecemeal military. British commanders repeatedly resisted the American call to coordinate operations during the war with the Chinese in the CBI and opposed any major land-based campaign in Burma and China. As the war progressed, British commanders realized their junior position in the Allied effort gave them less sway over strategic and operational planning, yet they still advocated for a maritime-centered strategy that focused on putting pressure on the Japanese islands and protested any campaign that bogged Allied forces down in the Asian mainland and forced them to fight alongside the Chinese.

139 Yu, 49.
140 Tuchman, 235.
141 Lyman 206;
142 Van der vat, 254; Lyman, 206.
“...To reform the System, it must be torn to pieces.”143

Barbara Tuchman, in her work Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-1945, argues that the Stilwell-led American war effort in China failed because the United States’ partner in China, the Chiang Kai-shek-led Nationalist government, proved to be a wholly uncooperative, self-interested ally. The primary objective of Chiang Kai-shek’s government, according to Tuchman and numerous scholars that have written on the GMD during the war, was to retain power during and after hostilities, even if it meant that Chinese forces would attain limited operational success against Japan. Beyond his desire to consolidate power within China, Chiang Kai-shek also sought to regain surrounding territory, such as Manchuria, Taiwan, and Outer Mongolia, that he believed rightfully belonged to China and that would strengthen China’s position as a power in Asia.144 This work concurs with Tuchman’s general finding that Chiang Kai-shek and his regime generally sought policies which they believed best ensured their government’s survival; subsequently, it was this primary objective that led the Americans in the CBI Theater to have a troubled relationship with their Chinese allies. Yet, it also, in part, seeks to show how Chinese interests clashed with the interests of their supposed British ally and how this clash of interests soured the Anglo-Chinese relationship and hindered wartime cooperation in the CBI.

Ambassador Grew, writing to Secretary of State Hull days after the outbreak of hostilities in China, commented that Chiang Kai-shek desired a “peaceful solution” that would end the conflict with Japan, but that any solution that “amounted to a complete

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143 Stilwell’s words in 1944 commenting on the Nationalist regime. Stilwell Papers, 320.
144 Tuchman, 227; Bagby, 92.
surrender to the present Japanese demands” would inevitably bring his downfall. The Generalissimo quickly lost control of China’s east coast in late 1937-early 1938 and he quickly found his government on the run, retreating to his wartime capital at Chongqing. On paper, Chiang Kai-shek had a five million-man force organized into 300 divisions. In reality, he had a relatively small loyal professional force that acted as his praetorian guard with the rest of his force comprised of poorly armed, untrained soldiers organized under the various commands of either his appointed provincial governor-generals or unreliable coopted warlords. Chiang-Kai-shek’s most competent forces put up very little fight against the Japanese, deciding to “strategically” retreat rather than risk annihilation in battle against the superior Imperial Army. General Stilwell found the Chinese inclination to retreat rather than risk losses in an engagement “one of [China’s] gravest military faults,” but others, such the American Counsel General in Hankou (Hankow), understood this strategy to be one of survival, even if it meant risking tactical success. Throughout the war, defeating Japan would remain a secondary objective for Chiang Kai-shek.

Chiang Kai-shek, as already mentioned, consolidated his rule over most of China through a campaign that both conquered and coopted provincial warlords throughout the country. During the war, the Generalissimo granted many of the coopted warlords a command position within his loosely organized military with the hope that this would continue to ensure their loyalty to his government in Chongqing. Unfortunately for the

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145 Telegram from the Ambassador to Japan (Grew) to Secretary of State (Hull), July 14th, 1937, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1937, Volume IV: Far East (Washington: GPO 1937), 166.
146 Tuchman, 288.
147 Tuchman, 153.
148 Tuchman, 172; Warren Cohen, 127.
149 Smith, 11.
Generalissimo, this devolution of command and control to these nearly autonomous warlords led to his inability to manage much of his vast army purportedly under the control of his government. The strategically important army in Yunnan, that Stilwell believed would be crucial in any attempt to retake Burma, remained “virtually independent” throughout the war, and others, such as the armies in Guizhou (Kweichow) and Szechwan, repeatedly threatened to rebel. Despite lacking de facto control of the majority of his force, Chiang Kai-shek’s decentralized force still allowed him preserve his regime for it not only kept the provincial warlords nominally loyal to the GMD regime, but it also led to a situation where the Chinese Army remained too factionalized to execute a coup d’état.

Like Chiang-Kai-shek and his coterie in Chongqing, the co-opted warlords largely lacked a defined economic or ideological agenda and they similarly sought to maintain their own spheres of rule. Some of the factions or cliques had the support of certain groups (for example the “CC Clique,” headed by the brothers Chen Li-Fu and Chen Ku-Fu, had the support of many Chinese citizens who considered themselves traditionalists and vehemently anti-Communist), but in general, the factions remained organized along geographic or provincial lines. Chiang Kai-shek’s most loyal followers primarily came from the Whampoa Clique, a group which consisted largely of young Chinese offices that

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150 Stilwell Papers, 157.
151 The Chinese army in Yunnan, known as the “Y force” was strategically important because Yunnan province lies directly east of Burma.
152 Tuchman, 399.
153 Bagby, 47.
154 Bagby, 46.

Interestingly, one of the few ideologically-driven groups in China were Blue Shirts, who believed that China could modernize and return to national prominence if they implemented a Fascist regime. Chiang Kai-shek coopted the Blue Shirts, along with a number of militias and groups in order to consolidate his rule over China and neutralize potential rivals, regardless of their ideology or geographic base. AF207.
studied under Chiang Kai-shek at the Whampoa military institute.\textsuperscript{155} Stilwell, in his attempt to reform the Chinese Army, sought to break down the force’s factional organization and replace the nepotistic-based promotion and leadership system with a more meritocratic one.\textsuperscript{156} Much to Stilwell’s chagrin, factional and personal interests ultimately prevailed and Chiang Kai-shek made little effort to put his limited authority behind the reform effort.\textsuperscript{157}

Despite the fact that Tokyo waged several offensives in an attempt to topple the GMD regime, Chiang Kai-shek did not consider Japan to be his regime’s greatest threat. Believing that the United States and Britain would eventually protect his eastern and southern flank and defeat Japan, the Generalissimo positioned 500,000 relatively well-equipped and well-trained soldiers in central China facing north towards the Mao Zedong and the Communist regime based in Yen’an.\textsuperscript{158} This strategy of prioritizing the defense of Chongqing from the Communist “threat” above engaging the Japanese was implemented in accordance with Chiang Kai-shek and the GMD’s interests; survival could be achieved if Chongqing could simply fend off domestic threats and avoid being defeated by Japan.\textsuperscript{159} Chiang Kai-shek had little incentive to change his strategy because his government remained the sole Chinese receipt of US aid and material support throughout the war.\textsuperscript{160}

This work focuses primarily on the role of Chiang Kai-shek’s Chinese government in the CBI Theater because the Allies formally recognized his regime as the

\textsuperscript{156} Tuchman, 206.
\textsuperscript{157} Tuchman, 315.
\textsuperscript{158} Tuchman, 212.
\textsuperscript{159} Smith, 11.
\textsuperscript{160} Yu, 98.
sole legitimate government in China. It would be, however, unfitting not to acknowledge that another functioning regime existed in China and competed for the governance of the Middle Kingdom. The Communist government in the Northwest under the leadership of Mao Zedong governed one-fourth of all of the land in China and successfully implemented programs in this territory, such as an extensive land reform plan. Compared to its Nationalist rival, the Communist government demonstrated that they could govern in a fairly coordinated and effective manner.\footnote{Schaller, “FDR and the ‘China Question….,”149; Conrad Brandt, \textit{Stalin’s Failure in China} (New York: W & W Norton & Company Inc., 1958), 45.} Mao and the Communist leaders were committed to fighting the Japanese, and despite the fact they received no official aid from the United States and barely any aid from the Soviet Union, they more frequently and vigorously engaged the Japanese and the Japanese-backed Chinese government compared to their GMD counterpart.\footnote{Beyond the fact that the United States only recognized Chiang Kai-shek’s government, anti-Communist sentiment on the home front and continuous protests from the GMD made it politically untenable the Roosevelt administration from being able to openly help the Communist government. The Communist’s acquired the bulk of their weapons from sympathetic players within the Chinese puppet government. The United States, in a one time only deal, gave Yen’an a one time lump sum of $20 million to buy weapons from the puppet force in exchange for some intelligence on the Japanese troop strength in northern China. The Soviet Union maintained military advisors in Yen’an throughout the war, but contributed relatively little aid to the Communists. Yu, 99; Brandt, 142.} Mao and the Communists genuinely wanted to defeat the Japanese, and their operational efforts won them further good will in China and even caught the attention of the other Allies in the Theater. Nevertheless, in addition to pursuing victory over the Japanese, Yen’an also desired to subvert and replace the government in Chongqing, just as Chiang Kai-shek feared.\footnote{Yu, 182.} During the war years, the Communists spent most of their efforts fighting the Japanese instead of their GMD rivals,
though they did keep an eye to the south, if only out of fear that the Nationalists might unexpectedly reignite an “extermination” campaign.\textsuperscript{164}

With the bulk of his force orientated northwards, it should come to little surprise that the Nationalist contribution towards the Allied effort in Burma was paltry at best. Rather than utilizing his troops in the coordinated coalition effort to dislodge Japan from their dug-in positions in China and Burma, the GMD, in a Clausewitzean-fashion, calibrated their strategy to supported their political objectives. Moreover, the Generalissimo’s desire to discredit the Communist regime, combined with Roosevelt and the near consensus among American statesmen that it was inappropriate to involve Mao’s soldiers in the Allied effort, prevented perhaps the most effective Chinese force from coordinating with the Allies. The interests of key leaders in Chongqing, above all other factors, paralyzed operations against Japan in the CBI throughout the vast majority of the war.

\textit{War as an Instrument of Policy}

In the midst of crucial war planning efforts in 1942, Chief of the British Imperial General Staff Alan Brooke stood up and declared to his colleagues, “My God, how difficult it is to run a war and to keep military considerations clear of all the vested interests and political foolery attached to it.”\textsuperscript{165} Each member of the Allies certainly had their own national interests, with some having interests that dealt more directly with the CBI than others. By virtue of some of these interests being “vested,” most of the Allied partners were resistant to part with their objectives, even if it meant impeding the group’s

\textsuperscript{165} Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, \textit{The Allies against Rising Sun: The United States, the British Nations, and the Defeat of Imperial Japan} (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 83.
operations. Coalitions require a certain type of cooperation where partners dilute or even relinquish some of their objectives in hope that they rally under a common, consensual set of objectives and strategies. The following chapters will demonstrate how the clashing interests mention in this chapter crippled the Allied command in the CBI and prevented it from waging a coherent, sustained, and effective campaign against the Japanese.
Chapter 4| Disunity of Command: How Divergent Allied Interests, Objectives, and End States led to the Creation and Sustainment of an Ineffective Command in the CBI

The authors of the United States Army’s official history of the China-Burma-India Theater entitled the second volume of their series on the theater “Stilwell’s Command Problems. In this volume they argue that General Stilwell and the leaders in the CBI failed to wage an effective, joint military operation primarily due to the fact that the Allied command structure in the CBI lacked a well-defined unity of command.166 They state that the coalition’s command issues started at the ARCADIA conference: the Allied strategic leaders did little to improve the command and at times, even made decisions that made it even more disjointed.167 The US Army official history is correct in identifying the Allied command in the CBI to be one of the primary reasons that the coalition failed to plan, organize, and carry out an effective campaign against the Japanese in the CBI. Yet, “Stilwell’s Command Problems” American-centric analysis does not due fair justice describing the coalition’s command problems as a whole. Furthermore, the account does not explain why the Allied leaders allowed for and continued to permit a dysfunctional command structure in the CBI.

Without a unified command, the Allies in the CBI lacked an organizational structure that could have harnessed the coalition’s available assets to wage a focused and potentially effective campaign in Burma. The creation and perpetuation of the CBI’s

166 The US Army Center of Military History, which is organized within the office of the Administrative to the Secretary of the Army, produced the Army’s official history of World War II in a 79 volume set commonly referred to as the “Green Books” (due to their green covers). In 1953, Army historians Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland published the CBI three-volume set to contribute to the collection.

non-unified command structure came about as a result of diverging and uncompromised American, British, and Nationalist Chinese interests. Individual national interests affected the command structure in two different respects. First, Allied leaders allowed intra-coalition politics, rather than operational effectiveness, to dictate the command structure. Per the Anglo-American grand strategy, the CBI was assigned a relatively low priority and consequently, Allied leaders believed that intra-political points could be afforded and scored by giving certain partners positions within the command, even if it made poor operational sense. As a corollary to this point, the top leaders and strategists interests drew their focus to other theaters and away from the CBI and, consequently, failed to recognize and then make the necessary adjustments to correct the blatant issues within the command structure. Along with their use of the CBI command to further political aims and motives, the main Allied players each pursued distinct objectives and end states in the region and therefore sought to maintain either partial or complete autonomy over their forces in the CBI so that they could direct them towards their individual ends. Furthermore, the fact that each partner effectively controlled a command of its own meant that each one could withdraw its forces from a proposed campaign if it did not agree with an aspect of that operation, thus effectively rendering each ally as veto player. This unwillingness to yield command of men, resources, and equipment under one commander prevented the CBI from having a unified command and hindered CBI commanders from effectively mobilizing the coalition’s assets in one concerted direction. Rather than acting as a collaborative and effective war machine, the CBI command subsisted as a confederation of loosely organized micro-commands that rarely worked in unison for a common objective.
Before delving into the discussion about the CBI command structure, a short commentary of command structure doctrine and theory is merited. Unity of command, widely accepted by military scholars and practitioners as a principle of war, states that a state or coalition’s combat force ought to be structured in a hierarchical fashion with one commander responsible for directing and coordinating the organization’s forces toward a common objective. Unity of command does not dictate that the commander micromanage each of the moving parts of his organization, but rather suggests that he (or she) have an element of control over all his coalition’s combat assets,\(^\text{168}\) including non-military agencies attached to the units mission, and operating in his Area of Operations.\(^\text{169}\) The principle’s theoretical and practical lineage dates back nearly two and a half millennia to the time of Sun Tzu, additionally, Clausewitz, perhaps the most influential western war theorist in the modern era, insists that a “commander-in-chief control operations in person.”\(^\text{170}\) Along with establishing unified command structure, effective military organizations need to establish unity of purpose, that is, a shared objective that the group is, as a whole, working towards. Unity of purpose is oftentimes difficult to achieve because different members of the organization will perceive the objective differently and/or want to pursue that objective in a different way. A good commander with a unified command will shepherd the group’s men and assets in a coordinated fashion that cuts down on redundancies, eliminates the diversion of resources

\(^{168}\) Combat assets being aerial (e.g. planes, balloons) and maritime (submarine, cruisers, destroyers, carriers, submarines) platforms as well as land based weapon systems (e.g. field artillery pieces) or attached civilian agencies (e.g. SACO).


to the pursuit of separate tasks, and can call the group’s full range of capability without significant defiance.\textsuperscript{171}

This requirement of a unity of command with a unified purpose is even more crucial in coalitions. British officer and military scholar, Lieutenant General Andrew Graham, states that having a joint purpose carried out by a unified command is the “vital ingredient in the success of a coalition at war.”\textsuperscript{172} “Friction,” or points of disharmonization in a command, frequently occurs whenever units or groups not accustomed to working together are lumped in a command, and friction is typically further exacerbated when units from different countries operate in a multi-national command because the differences in standards or interests are normally wider. Nonetheless, diversity of nationality can be a coalition’s greatest strength since it brings in a wider range of capabilities. But it can also be the coalition’s greatest weakness if not harnessed by a strong unified command. To his point on a unified command, LTG Graham attests that independent or autonomous subordinate commands are cancerous to any military effort, in particular a multinational one, for it undermines the commander’s strategy and ability to utilize the coalition’s available resources.\textsuperscript{173}

British General Sir Richard Shirreff cites Operation OVERLORD and the Allied offensive in Western Europe in 1944 as an exemplar model of unity of command because the coalition, despite drawing men and assets from different services (e.g. Army, Navy, Air Corps/Force) and partner states, fought under one chain of command with one commander, and the command could trust that all the Allies’ available capabilities would

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{172} Graham, 325.
\item \textsuperscript{173} Graham, 326.
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respond to the direction the commander ordered.174 In the CBI, no unified Allied command existed. In fact, five separate commands, the Southeast Asian Command (SEAC), US Armed Forces in the CBI (USAF CBI), the Supreme Allied Command China Theater (SAC China), Supreme Commander of India, and the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC), operated simultaneously and were loosely organized under the Allies’ CBI chain of command. The fact that each of these command structures reported to a separate authority further fragmented the CBI command, leading it to act as a confederation of several commands rather than a hierarchy of coordinated organizations. Within these separate commands, particularly SEAC, the commander did not have the sole authority over the units, boats, and planes that fell under his command and could not rely on their deference to his position. Moreover, Strategic leaders in London and Washington permitted and even assigned officers in the CBI multiple positions, consequently undermining several links in these organizations’ chains of command. In other words, the Allied coalition in the CBI essentially existed in name only and consisted of a set of micro-command structures, many of which in turn lacked unity of command within their very own organization.

The fragmented command protected each individual partner’s interests in the region, and none of the primary players possessed the willingness to compromise their objectives in the pursuit of creating a more effective command that would have likely been more effective in combating the Japanese in the CBI. As already stated, successful coalitions must have a strong unity of command; it is necessarily a product of

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compromise and common purpose. With these foundational ingredients missing, the Allies found their greatest enemy in the CBI to be each other.

No Command Should be an Island

The Anglo-American ARCADIA conference in December 1941-January 1942 made several fateful decisions that not only created a disjointed CBI command from the onset, but also made unifying the command later nearly impossible. Unlike its European and Pacific counterparts, the CBI lacked an overall operational command structure with a Supreme Allied Commander to manage the coalition’s forces in the theater. Rather than establishing a singular, unified command, the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the conference created multiple commands, giving each major partner in the coalition control over at least one of them. In addition to their failure to establish a unified command, the leaders at ARCADIA failed to come together and lay down an agreed upon purpose for the coalition’s forces in the CBI. Thus, from the very beginning, the CBI command structure existed as merely a shell for the individual military efforts of the United States, Britain, and Nationalist China.

The Americans wanted to “contain” Japan in China and buttress the GMD with support and aid with the intent of keeping it in the fight against Japan and bolstering it in becoming a regional power in the postwar era. Accordingly, Roosevelt insisted that Chiang Kai-shek be named the Supreme Allied Commander of the China Theater, which would give him control over all the coalition’s forces within China proper. The president hoped that this move would boost the Chinese leader’s confidence and signal
Washington’s genuine interest in having China as a partner. Despite his eagerness to work with both his British and Chinese partner, Roosevelt made no move to bring the American Military Mission to China (AMMISCA) under a non-American controlled authority. The president’s British partner, Churchill, believed the CBI to be “an area of British strategic responsibility” and was heavily invested in protecting the empire’s prized Indian colony and thus uninterested in expending resources to help the Nationalist government in China, who he perceived as being a potential threat to British interests in the Far East after the war. To this end, he insisted that the British take a lead role in the CBI and that the Allies’ headquarters for the theater be situated in New Delhi. Moreover, he resisted, with only partial success, the plan to limit the role the Chinese would play in the coalition’s decision-making and fighting beyond China’s own borders. Unlike his American counterpart, Churchill was less concerned about establishing unity of command for the coalition’s forces. The prime minister drew upon his experience in World War I, where Britain conducted the war in a committee-like fashion with its French ally, and believed that fighting by committee was not only an effective method of fighting, but also hedged against the possibility of the United States edging Britain out of the decision-making process.

175 Memorandum from the Ambassador to China (Gauss) to the Secretary of State (Hull), January 17th, 1942, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, Volume V: China (Washington: GPO, 1942), 4. n.b. Roosevelt considered Chinese territory to include all the territory China claimed under the Qing Dynasty and not the territory is effectively held during the war. Schaller, U.S Crusade, 96.
176 See The Pacific War (and the Second Sino-Japanese War) in Chapter 2 for more on AMMISCA.
178 Stilwell Papers, 32.
While Chiang Kai-shek was not present in Washington for the conference, he nonetheless sent his own proposal for the coalitions structure in the CBI, which called for the CBI to be commanded by committee, with Britain, the United States, and China all having equal voice over the theater’s operations. Midway through the conference, Roosevelt succeeding in getting Churchill to acquiesce to the president’s proposal to have Chiang Kai-shek serve as the Supreme Commander of the Allies’ forces in China and the Generalissimo soon after received the invitation via telegram. Happy to be given a sphere of responsibility, even if it did not extend beyond his own borders, Chiang Kai-shek quickly accepted the position and voiced his eagerness to serve in the a joint staff that would coordinate the region’s efforts.

The Americans and Britons soon agreed on establishing a “Joint Headquarters Planning Staff” that would nominally organize and strategize each partner’s efforts on the Burmese and Chinese fronts. This staff would serve as a forum to discuss potential operations of the three allied commands in the theater, which at the time comprised of SAC China, USAF CBI, and the Supreme Commander in India. Yet it was given no command authority to direct these largely autonomous commands. The Roosevelt administration also consented to the British request of being the primus inter pares in the CBI in exchange for the British agreement to allow for a unified chain of command, with a Supreme Allied Commander in the European Theater and an American-led campaign in the Pacific. ARCADIA actually established a unified command in ABDACOM, which

180 Stilwell’s Personal File, 335
181 n.b. Chiang Kai-shek’s official title was “Supreme Commander of Allied Forces, China.”
183 Telegram from the Generalissimo to Roosevelt, 1; Stilwell’s Personal File, 335.
184 Perry, 55.
was tasked to defend the Southeast Asia, the India Ocean, and Burma. While ABDACOM had the benefit of a unified command, the Allies at ARCADIA did not give it explicit direction or the resources and support to give the ad hoc coalition a legitimate shot at success.

At the conclusion of ARCADIA, each of the primary partners in the CBI walked away with a command that allowed them to potentially pursue their own individual interests and objectives. Consequently, this agreed upon confederation of commands in the CBI created a command structure that would make it difficult for the coalition to achieve joint success. The United States, in accordance with their objectives, proved to their Chinese partner a devotion to their cause by granting Chiang Kai-shek the position of Supreme Commander of Allied Forces, China, while still maintaining command and control over the resupply effort to Chongqing. The British became the stated lead partner in the CBI and was given the responsibility over operations in Burma in addition to controlling the operations as it pertained to the Asian rim along the Indian Ocean, a region British leaders and commanders viewed as their sphere of influence. Chiang Kai-shek and the GMD realized de iure control over all coalition forces in China, thus symbolically casting off the yoke of western imperialistic extraterritoriality, and

n.b. the agreement also called for that Supreme Allied Commander in Europe to be an American, and General Dwight D. Eisenhower would soon assume that position.

n.b its area of operations did not include China.

See the subsection The First Coalition Attempt in Chapter 5.

n.b. ABDACOM, while being a CBI command in the sense that its area of operations encompassed Burma and worked with British forces stationed in India, its jurisdiction extended well beyond the CBI’s borders and the leaders at ARCADIA saw it as acting in conjunction, but separate from the CBI’s command. Knocked out before the end of February 1942, ABDACOM had a small impact on the CBI’s operations, but shared the common plight with the CBI macro- and micro-commands in that it would receive vague, largely uniformed mandates from strategic leaders and generally received little attention from top political leaders and even less material support. Morton, 169; Lyman, 55-56.

The United States and Britain would formally shed their “right” to extraterritoriality in China during the war.
secured a commitment from the United States that promised the GMD the supplies and aid they badly needed.

General Stilwell and the US commanders in China would soon curse the decision to freely grant the Generalissimo the position of Supreme Commander in China since it granted him the capability to essentially veto most Allied campaign proposals by threatening not to use any of the coalition’s forces in China for the cause. In actuality, most of the troops in China were Chinese and thus under Chiang Kai-shek’s leadership regardless of the decisions made at ARCADIA, but this command arrangement created no mechanism that obliged him to commit any troops to the Burmese front. It consequently created a totally separate command with the CBI confederation of commands. Chiang Kai-shek had little interest investing his men and limited resources in Burma, and, taking into account his obsessive fear of Communist encroachment from the north, the Generalissimo had very little reason to agree to a major offensive unless his inaction somehow prompted the United States to pull his supply lifeline. The British celebrated gaining the upper hand in the decision-making with regards to retaking Burma and the managing of naval assets that essentially allowed them to approve, and, as more often proved the case, disapprove or call off any overland campaign into Burma. Just as Chiang Kai-shek could effectively block or alter most campaigns into Burma by threatening to pull Chinese forces out of the campaign, the British, who saw fight in Central and Northern Burma as a waste of both time and resources as well as incompatible with their interests, could block or reformulate campaigns to their liking by

Tuchman, 498.
189 Lyman, 205.
threatening to pull the naval, air, or amphibious support from the south. With the exception of Colonel Chennault and the pure strategic bombing advocates,\textsuperscript{190} commanders and leaders on all side believed that Burma could not be retaken without a combined overland assault coordinated with an amphibious assault along the coast to cut off Japanese supply lines and force Japan to fight on multiple fronts.\textsuperscript{191} Hence, both the British and GMD were veto players in the coalition and both possessed different wartime and postwar objectives.

The United States possessed by far the most resources and planes in the theater, and by maintaining control over the coalition’s aerial assets, the United States maintained the capability to carry out their own strategic bombing and supply campaigns without input or direction from a coalition command.\textsuperscript{192} Moreover, the separate supply command allowed the US, who provided most of the resources for the fight, to distribute the resources however the leaders in Washington, and not those in New Delhi or Chongqing, saw fit. Due to the lack of US combat soldiers in the CBI, the United States was not directly a veto player when it came to deciding campaigns in the same way as the British and Generalissimo, who could simply pull support of forces from a proposed campaign.\textsuperscript{193} Instead, the United States wielded its autonomous arm in the region, its supply chain, to indirectly compel the GMD and British into considering and even executing operations that Roosevelt and leaders far away in Washington saw

\textsuperscript{190} These strategic bombing proponents will be discussed in Chapter 6.
\textsuperscript{192} Daughterty, 17.
\textsuperscript{193} Most of the American forces in the region operated the supply effort, engineered the main supply routes into China, served as medical personnel, or advised Chinese military leaders. Stilwell’s Personal File, xv.
Roosevelt on multiple occasions attempted to coerce the Nationalist leader into committing troops to offensives in Burma by threatening to cease supply drops into Chongqing, a move that would almost certainly lead to the GMD regime’s overthrow or defeat. At times, this tactic was marginally successful, but its effect was tempered by a threat of Chiang Kai-shek’s own: without the American supplies, the Nationalists would have no choice but sue for a separate peace with Japan and exit the war. Rarely was Roosevelt willing to call Chiang Kai-shek’s bluff.

If coalitions require a unity of purpose and a unified command to guide that joint purpose, the Allied command, as established at ARCADIA did not accomplish this task. The CBI coalition’s confederation of commands supported each partner’s pursuit of their own national objectives and had no means of leveraging members to go along with an operation that even slightly went against their interests. The ARCADIA conference created a regional coalition that was built on a foundation that required of the Allies no sacrifice of their interests and no compromise of their interests. As a result, the command lacked both unity of purpose and a command structure that pushed each player to water down or even forego some of their regional goals. Like Ulysses’ act of tying his hands to the mast of his ship, partners, when they enter a coalition, must be willing to curtail their own ability to influence the group, giving up some of their control over the decision-making and execution process with full knowledge that they will, at some point, desire to act separately from the group in a way that benefits, solely their own interests. The CBI command did not coalesce the US, British, and Nationalist forces together under one

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194 Tuchman, 413.
hierarchical command, but rather allowed them to operate independently as islands in a
sea called the China-Burma-India Theater.

The CBI Command’s Stilwell Problem

Many histories written in the English language about the China-Burma-India
Theater give the following illustration of the Sino-American relationship during the
war: the American military “mission,” or attempt at transforming the GMD regime into
a dependable ally with an effective fighting force, failed largely due to the antagonistic
relationship between Chiang Kai-shek and his American advisor, General Stilwell.
Without a doubt, the Stilwell-Chiang Kai-shek relationship was fraught with
animosity and distrust, and the hostile relationship between Roosevelt’s top military
emissary in Chongqing and the Nationalist leader certainly did not further the joint cause
in putting together a competent Chinese Army capable of joining the United States in the
offensive against Japan. Yet, even a more diplomatic replacement for Stilwell would
have been unlikely to convince Chiang Kai-shek to devote the attention and effort
Washington hoped he would pour into professionalizing his army and government. In
fact, other diplomats and advisors were sent to Chongqing to try to complete this feat,

196 The observation of “many” is based on the author’s personal reading of over fifty different histories on
the CBI or on aspects of the CBI. A historiography of the perception of the Stilwell-Chiang Kai-shek
relationship or of the Sino-American relationship is outside the limits of this work. Kenneth Scott
Latourette’s The American Record in the Far East, 1945-1951 or Leo Daugherty’s The Allied Resupply
Effort in the China-Burma-India Theater during World War II follows the more “traditional” narrative of
the United States’ failing to achieve their military goals in China largely due to a result of the antagonistic
relationship between Stilwell and Chiang Kai-shek, while Barbara Tuchman’s Stilwell and the American
Experience in China, 1911-1945 depicts the relationship as being a lost cause from the start because Chiang
Kai-shek was determined to do as little as possible to the Burma effort and there was little
Stilwell could do.
Company, 1952).
repeatedly without success. A small minority of scholars of the CBI Theater realize that the true “Stilwell Problem” in the CBI resided in the fact that Stilwell simultaneously held at least five different positions in CBI Theater, each one carrying a different mission and objective. These multiple roles put him in leadership positions in different CBI commands, some of which caused him to work towards conflicting goals and even one that put him as both a superior and subordinate to another officer in SEAC, thus undermining the integrity of SEAC’s chain of command. Stilwell’s various positions alone did not alone cause the CBI command to be ineffective, but serves as an exemplar case study of how Allied, and particularly, American, interests affected the organization of the CBI chain of command.

Roosevelt and General Marshall originally sent Stilwell to China in February of 1942 to fill two positions, the first being to serve as Chiang Kai-shek’s chief military advisor and chief of staff, and the second being the commander of the small contingent of US forces in the CBI. As Chiang Kai-shek’s chief of staff, Stilwell’s stated mission was to provide the leader with the best military advice he could offer, but as an officer of the United States Army loyal to the American Commander-in-Chief and as the commander of USAF CBI, he had a responsible to carry out the mission Roosevelt commissioned him with; namely, to improve the combat efficiency of the Chinese Army in order to make them a productive asset in the fight after the Japanese. Unfortunately

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197 Webster, 283.
198 The ARCADIA arrangement to have Chiang Kai-shek serve as the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces, China, came along with a corollary that the United States would send the him a general officer to advise him on military matters. Chiang Kai-shek and T.V. Soong actually viewed Stilwell’s file and approved of the Roosevelt and Marshall’s choice before Roosevelt confirmed Stilwell for the position. Romanus and Sunderland, Stilwell’s Command..., 3; Stilwell Papers, 30.
199 Romanus and Sunderland, Stilwell’s Command..., 3.
200 Romanus and Sunderland, Stilwell’s Command..., 3-4.
for Stilwell, Chiang Kai-shek had little interest pursuing Roosevelt’s goal because he wanted to keep the number of competent divisions relative small and under his control in order to prevent an internal challenge to his regime. Stilwell was caught in a position where he was asked to serve two masters, and his personal loyalty to the US mission above all else compelled him to serve one at the expense of the other. Yet Stilwell’s dilemma was one Roosevelt and Marshall concocted. They wanted to place an advisor in a position of influence in Chongqing partially because they wanted to genuinely help improve the Chinese, but they also wanted to improve the Chinese military in a way that they saw fit and that ultimately helped them further their own objectives.

Chiang Kai-shek naturally shared Roosevelt’s and the Joint Chief’s aim of preserving his regime during the war, but he did not share the same vision for how the Chinese Army could be reformed. His orders for Stilwell diverged from the president’s in that he wanted economic and military aid to prop up his government and his own regime. To this end, he wanted Stilwell to act more as an emissary, or as Stilwell describes it, a “transmitting agency,” to lobby Washington on Chiang Kai-shek’s behalf. As Chiang Kai-shek’s chief of staff, Stilwell technically reported to and worked for the Generalissimo, even though he also reported to the Joint Chiefs by virtue of his position as the commander of USAF CBI. Stilwell’s role was very much politicized by his bosses: both used him as a pawn to further their own objectives.

n.b. As a sworn officer in the United States Army, he had a duty to carry out the orders of the President of the United States, as well as the officers appointed over him. His position as an officer required him to report to Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President and execute any orders they issued him.

201 Stilwell Papers, 324.
202 Romanus and Sunderland, Stilwell’s Command…, 4.
203 Stilwell Papers, 122.
In August of 1943 at the QUADRANT conference in Quebec, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang-Kai-shek, agreed to form the Southeast Asian Command (SEAC) with the intent of creating a more unified command in the CBI and to tie the CBI’s operations in with Southeast Asia, which was seen as the logical the next stage of the overall offensive in Asia. Unlike the USAF CBI, the British forces in India, or the Allied forces in China under Chiang Kai-shek, SEAC accompanied the European and Pacific commands in reporting to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Following the arrangement at ARCADIA that called for a British Commander in charge of the CBI, the Allies in Quebec appointed Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, a charismatic and handsome naval officer who had already proven to be a skillful tactician and competent combat leader in the North Atlantic and North Africa earlier in the war.

Although SEAC would be given a hierarchical command structure, bringing in the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) under its control, it did not subsume Chiang’s force in China nor the USAF CBI, hence, allowing the United States and GMD to maintain a “rogue” command under their own personal direction; thus SEAC’s creation did not truly fix the issue of having multiple commands in the CBI. Also, due to the American insistence that an American commander serve as the deputy commander of SEAC in order to provide some form of oversight of the command’s decisions, General Stilwell, who was the only American four-star general in CBI, received the appointment to the position, doing so without forgoing any of his other roles.

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204 The Generalissimo was not present for the conference, but he communicated with his partners daily via telegram.
205 Daughtery, 5.
206 Van der Vat, XVII.
207 Tuchman, 383; Lyman, 63, 190, 193.
208 Stilwell’s Personal File, xviii.
209 Tuchman, 383.
Occupied with the planning and strategizing of the more highly valued European Theater, it took Allied leaders over a year and a half to even take note of the CBI Command’s problematic structure and take action to create a more effective, hierarchical command. Even while these leaders finally established this command, they haphazardly forged a coalition with little attention to the organizational structure and leadership and, even more importantly, they did not eliminate the other competing commands already in place that each served to further the particular regional interests of each partner. The SEAC command was, indeed, the first truly multinational command in the CBI since the collapse of ABDACOM. In essence, it combined many of the British and Indian land and sea forces with the NCAC, which largely consisted of Chinese soldiers, but also had a sizeable cadre of American advisors.\footnote{Lyman, 210.} Allied leaders placed the NCAC and its commander, Stilwell, under SEAC’s 11\textsuperscript{th} Army Group lead by British General George Giffards, who along with General Bill Slim led most of the coalition’s ground presence.

As stated above, Roosevelt and the American Joint Chiefs were willing to allow the British to take a lead in the CBI with SEAC, but they also wanted their highest-ranking officer to serve as the deputy commander in order to prevent the British from using SEAC as a vehicle to simply recapture the British colonies in the region.\footnote{American officers in the CBI joked that SEAC stood for “Save England’s Asian Colonies.” Lyman, 202} This American interest in having oversight over the SEAC and having Stilwell be that ombudsman consequently partially undermined the integrity of SEAC’s chain of command because Stilwell, as deputy commander, served as Giffard’s superior while simultaneously serving under him as commander of the NCAC. To make matters worse, Stilwell and Giffards shared a mutual distain for each other, and Stilwell believed that

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Giffards would never approve of the use of NCAC troops to retake north Burma, a US objective that the British saw as a waste of resources. Stilwell, determined to accomplish the mission as laid out by his superiors in Washington, used his position as deputy commander to either force Giffards’ hand with regards to the use of NCAC troops in the CBI or simply ignore his “subordinate’s” orders. Interestingly, Washington’s interest in having oversight over the coalition’s operations in the CBI and its simultaneous neglect to ensure that the command structure was organized in a fashion that minimized potential “friction points” in SEAC’s chain of command speaks to both their concern for how the coalition would shape their interests in the region and the lack of attention they gave to one of the organizations responsible for operating in CBI.

Veritably, Washington’s transatlantic partner, who found itself perhaps more consumed in the European effort and less focused on the fight in Asia, dedicated equally little attention to SEAC’s command and similarly overlooked significant “friction points” in the SEAC chain of command. At QUADRANT, the British Chiefs of Staff, after consultation with their American ally, decided to place the naval arm of SEAC under the command of British Admiral Sir James Somerville, a well-regarded naval officer who had served with distinction during World War I and the Battle of the Atlantic. Sir Somerville’s naval element naturally fell under the command of the coalition’s Supreme Commander, Vice Admiral Mountbatten. The political and military leaders, when selecting Somerville for the role, did not consider that he would be reporting to a lower ranking officer, an unthinkable restriction in the armed services and especially in the Royal Navy who prided themselves on being particularly attuned to military customs.

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212 Lyman, 210.
213 Callahan, 126.
Moreover, Somerville’s seniority in the Royal Navy allowed him to ignore Mountbatten’s orders or receive separate orders from London.

Unfortunately for Mountbatten, Somerville was not one to treat rank and customs lightly, and he fundamentally disagreed with Mountbatten’s plans to use amphibious assaults along the South and Southeast Asian coast, believing that the British should sit back and be more cautious in their engagements with the Japanese.\textsuperscript{214} British leaders could have promoted Mountbatten, replaced Somerville, or issued special orders to Somerville to subordinate himself to the SEAC commander. Instead the British leaders placed the complaints sent from Mountbatten’s staff on the issue at the bottom of the priority list, never taking action to correct what became an essentially a defunct naval arm of SEAC.\textsuperscript{215} Mountbatten, dealing with independent commands both inside the organization, such as Stilwell’s NCAC and Somerville’s naval group, and outside his immediate control, such as the USAF CBI and the command under Chiang Kai-shek, found himself unable to carry out the very mission SEAC was created to complete: integrate the Allied forces in the CBI and direct their unity of purpose towards defeating the Japanese in the area of operations. Frustrated by these rogue elements in his command and the CBI, Mountbatten complained:

“The real trouble is that various Commanders-in-Chief and the Americans were having a very happy time without anyone to integrate their efforts; each going their own way, and they vary naturally resist efforts of

\textsuperscript{214} Lyman, 200.
\textsuperscript{215} Callahan, 125.
integration and unification; and, unless I am firm, I might as well throw up
the job.”

Stilwell’s multiple roles and commands certainly complicated the efforts in the
CBI, and in short, he used his position as commander of the USAF CBI and NCAC both
to undermine Chiang Kai-shek’s autonomy over Allied forces in China and to ignore the
orders of the man he was suppose to be serving as the lead advisor for. Moreover, his
position as commander of NCAC and Deputy commander of SEAC allowed him to
essentially wield his NCAC ground force independent of SEAC. Stilwell’s multiple
positions serves as the more egregious, but certainly not only example, of the Allies’
failure to effectively organize and vet the command structures they put into existence, as
the Mountbatten-Somerville case demonstrates. Identifying why the CBI’s command
proved dysfunctional is a fairly simple task. Both Washington and London, and to a
lesser extent, Chongqing, assigned officers to leadership roles in the CBI in an ad hoc
manner and without putting much thought or foresight into their decision-making. The
Allies interests in the CBI were low and the Anglo-American portion of the coalition
subsequently prioritized the CBI relatively low. The CBI command was an afterthought
for the Combined Chiefs and top leaders, as demonstrated by action, and even more so,
their inaction with regards to the theater’s command.

Stilwell maintained his various roles and commands until his dismissal as Chiang
Kai-shek’s chief of staff in October 1944. For over two and a half years, Allied
leaders did nothing to deconflict Stilwell’s positions or relieve him of any of his

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216 Lyman, 197.
217 Stilwell Papers, 37.
218 Stilwell Papers, 349.
responsibilities. Stilwell’s departure from the CBI forced Allied leaders to finally act on the CBI command’s “Stilwell problem,” and they divvied his position to a number of different officers. The former CBI logistics commander, Lieutenant General Raymond Wheeler assumed his position as Deputy Commander of SEAC. General Wedemeyer, who went on to successfully consolidate the various American units and agencies operating in the CBI, took up his role Chief of Staff to Chiang Kai-shek and as commander of USAF CBI. General Daniel Sultan, an infantry officer close to Stilwell, took up the command of the NCAC.219 Had Stilwell not been recalled by Roosevelt and Marshall as a result of Chiang Kai-shek’s desperate pleas and accusation of insubordination (i.e. against his own authority), the Allies might have never taken action to correct one of the basic command problems in the CBI. The “Stilwell Problem” is undoubtedly one of the “whys” that explains the Allies interest in the CBI. The Allies lack of interest in the theater and their decision to forego compromise and create a command structure that pursued their own individual national interests is the “how” that explains the “whys.”

_A Marriage without Commitment and Compromise_

The Allies’ command problem in the CBI began with the decisions made at ARCADIA and went uncorrected throughout the duration of the war. The main partners in the CBI had little interest in dedicating time to solving the command issues in the theater: it was, in fact, not even in their interest to make changes. The arrangement at ARCADIA that led to the creation of the nominal CBI command, or the confederation that acted as an umbrella for a series of independent commands, allowed the leaders to

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219 Lyman, 210; _Stilwell Papers_, 345.
establish a loose military presence in the region without having to commit to a joint effort or sacrifice any of their own national interests. Little commitment or compromise was put into the coalition at ARCADIA or thereafter, and unsurprisingly little collaborative occurred in the CBI. The Allies, primarily the Americans and British, were reluctant to offer any real commitment and sacrifice, which was partially due to the fact that unlike the European theater, which was seen to be in a state of emergency during the time of the ARCADIA conference, the CBI was not seen to be in a similar state at the time. States tend to be most willing to compromise and work collaboratively for a unified purpose when put under extreme duress. In the CBI, the partners, even Nationalist China, at times, did not feel as if the Japanese threat was existential or worth giving up significant interests to combat.\(^\text{220}\) It was felt that politics and minimal attention could thus be afforded in the CBI, with each partners making use of this perceived liberty to the fullest extent possible.

Without a guiding strategy from their superiors or an effective, unified command structure, the leaders in the CBI were stuck between a rock and a hard place. Their mission was to expel the Japanese from the CBI, but lacked what has repeatedly proved to be a prerequisite to combat success- a unified command structure

\(^{220}\text{Graham, 320.}\)
Chapter 5 | “No plan, no security, no intelligence, no prisoners.”\textsuperscript{221} How divergent Allied Interests, Objectives, and End States Translated to Poor Strategy in the CBI Theater

Strategy, at its very essence, is a concept relating means and ends. For the Allies in World War II, the “grand strategy” for victory against the Axis powers called for a concentration of resources in Europe to defeat Germany, and then a shift to the Pacific to defeat Japan.\textsuperscript{222} All the commanders in the CBI Theater aimed for the same primary end; namely, to drive Japan from the region and assist in the overall Pacific Theater effort of bringing Japan to the terms of unconditional surrender.\textsuperscript{223} But beyond agreeing to this overlying objective, those responsible for the theater failed to agree on a common, collaborated set of means to reach the coalition’s end. In order for military coalitions to succeed, partner states must come to a consensus on both its shared means and ends. To accomplish this, states have to dialectically compromise their individual interests in order to bring about a joint strategy. For the Allies in the CBI, none of the partner states were willing to subordinate their individual interests in order to come to a joint purpose. Since the Allies lacked a mutual understanding of role of coalition in the CBI, each partner had a diverging conception and opinion of how the CBI fit into the overall war strategy. With three different “ends,” or objectives, and accordingly three different corresponding strategies, it is little surprise that the CBI command did little to contribute to the Allies’ overall victory.\textsuperscript{224}

\textsuperscript{221} The words of Frank Merrill, leader of the 5307\textsuperscript{th} Composite Unit journaling on March 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1942 upon arriving in the Burma.
\textsuperscript{222} Perry, 75.
\textsuperscript{223} Stilwell Papers, 107.
\textsuperscript{224} Strategy in this paper will refer to the Allies overall war plan for mobilization and utilizing resources against their Axis foes. The concept of the operational level of warfare, as employed by the American and British militaries (borrowed from earlier 19\textsuperscript{th} century German and Russia concepts), fits in between the
The Allied failure to establish a unity of purpose for CBI can primarily be pinned on the coalition’s leadership at the strategic level. The top political and military leaders from each partner state had the responsibility of jointly agreeing to a common set of means and ends, or in other words, to devise a joint strategy, and they were fairly successful at doing so in the European/North Africa and Pacific Theaters. However, Allied leaders, with the exception of Nationalist China, considered the CBI to be strategically less valuable than its European and Pacific counterparts, and subsequently the theater received significantly less attention during coalition conferences. Moreover, leaders in London, Washington, and Chongqing, calculating the costs (subordinating particular interests) and benefits (a more effective command) of cooperation, all perceived that it was more beneficial for their state in short-, and even more so, in the long-term, to hold on to their particular interests, regardless of the consequences on the battlefield. Without an agreed upon strategy formulated by these senior leaders, the commanders in the CBI lacked the direction crucial to carry out an effective campaign in Burma, and the failure to compromise their interests and objectives on the strategic level subsequently trickled down to adversely affect the coalition at the operational level in the theater, further sowing divisions in an already fragmented command. The partners unwillingness to reconcile their divergent interests in order to form cohesive strategy for the coalition created a self-imposed barrier to success in Burma, and the grand strategy of the Anglo-American wing, which called for a concentration assets and war materials in

Europe, left the CBI sorely under-resourced. Thus, Allied command in the CBI suffered from both the neglect the joint Anglo-American strategy demanded in order to prioritize other regions, such as Europe, and the failure of the Allied leaders in the CBI to submit their own particular interests to establish clear means and ends for the CBI. Ideally, strategy serves as a coalition’s roadmap for success and unfortunately for the commanders in the CBI, no such roadmap existed to provide the guidance and the corresponding resources to direct them to victory.

Roots of the American Strategy

In coalitions, a partner’s clout and influence is often earned through the contribution of soldiers, munitions, and resources. While the GMD commanded the most soldiers in the CBI, the United States unquestionably had the most available munitions and resources and essentially bankrolled the Allied coalition. Consequently, the United States commanded an enormous amount of influence during the coalition’s strategic meetings. Even prior to the American entry in the Pacific War, Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and many members of the State Department, such as Stanley Hornbeck, believed that it would be ultimately be in the United States interests to support and perhaps eventually, to join, China, Britain, and other players in Asia to balance Japan’s growing empire. Fearing Japan’s expansionist aims in the Pacific, leaders in Washington beginning in the late 1930’s decided that it would be prudent to buttress Chiang’s Chinese government, who struggled both in finding success on the battlefield and

balancing his fiscal books.\textsuperscript{226} In 1939, the United States Export-Import bank authorized forty-five million dollar loan in two installments, as well as allowing for an additional loan of twenty-five million dollars the succeeding year to be used for the purchase of “civilian supplies.”\textsuperscript{227} The Lend-Lease Act, signed by the American president on March 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1941, permitted the Roosevelt Administration to openly assist China and other nations, such as Britain, the Soviet Union, and Free France, deemed “vital to the defense of the United States.” The Lend-Lease administrators awarded the GMD forty-five million dollars worth aid in 1941, which carried a value chiefly consisting of vehicles, transportation equipment and the corresponding resources to operate them (e.g. diesel, gasoline, lubricants).\textsuperscript{228} While these early materials did not provide China with the guns and rounds needed to combat Japan, it provided the GMD with the support equipment and financial backing crucial to keeping its GMD ally in the fight.

To this end, the United States allocated Lend-Lease aid and other assistance to China. Consequently, Lend-Lease officials and representatives from the War Department, at least in the early portion of the US’ involvement, seriously considered GMD requests and worked diligently at accommodating them, doing so both out of respect for their new ally and out of a belief that the Generalissimo knew his battlespace and combat needs.\textsuperscript{229} Ensuring that the GMD did not capitulate to Japan or lose its

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{226}Tuchman, 456.
\textsuperscript{227}Romanus and Sunderland, \textit{Stilwell’s Mission...}, 7-8.
\textsuperscript{228}Romanus and Sunderland, \textit{Stilwell’s Mission...}, 16.
\textsuperscript{229}Upon analyzing some of the items on the list submitted by Chinese diplomat T.V. Soong in 1941 and 1942, officials and military personnel in the U.S. War Department came to the conclusion that the Nationalists did not have a good picture of what materials would be most productive to their cause.\textsuperscript{229} For example, the Chinese requested 100 light tanks, which would have little use in the Burmese jungles and could not be supported by nearly all the bridges in China and Burma.\textsuperscript{229} Once coming to the conclusion that Chongqing did not have a well-informed understanding of their needs, the War Department created the American Military Mission to China in July of 1941 with the intent that it would advise Washington concerning what materials it should deliver to China.
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position of governance in China became the major US objective in the CBI. But this objective, when ordered among Washington’s complete list of global war priorities, ranked relatively low. The Chinese package, in terms of monetary value, was the smallest package distributed in 1941, and especially paled in comparison to the British package, whose package was nearly twenty times the size of China’s.\(^\text{230}\) Lend-Lease executive Edward Stenttinus and the Administration did not allocate China the smallest package because they believed China’s faced a comparatively less menacing threat, per se. Instead, their decision came as a result of a general notion, and perhaps prejudice, that “saving” Britain and Europe from Nazism was more important than preserving China and the status quo ante in Asia.\(^\text{231}\) Roosevelt and Hull believed China could serve as an important future ally, but Britain at the time was already considered one of the most important, if not the most important, American ally. The approval and implementation of the Lend-Lease Act proceeded the United States entry into the war and its subsequent concoction of a global war strategy with its British ally, thus indicating that leaders in Washington already conceived as China as an ally worth supporting, but not in the same manner as Britain. The unanimous consensus among policymakers and statesmen in Washington called for victory in Europe first, while forces in Asia would merely forestalled the Japanese advance until forces from the victorious European Theater could shift eastward.\(^\text{232}\) Even before its entry into the war, American interests already were

\(^{230}\) Congress passed the Lend Lease Acts in the early part of 1941, despite the fact that the Neutrality Acts were still in effective.

\(^{231}\) Perry, 33-34, 61.

\(^{232}\) Schaller, *U.S. Crusade..., 90.*

Britain would receive over $31 billion of Lend Lease aid during the course of the war, a figure that would dwarf the $1.6 billion China received.

driving its strategy and priorities. Accordingly, the CBI’s role in American strategy was largely determined prior to signing of the declaration of war on December 8th, 1941.

The Blueprint

The Allies’ global strategy that ultimately guided them to victory largely drew from a war plan drawn up, in a matter of a few days, by a one-star general in the US War Planning Division (WPD). This young general, Dwight D. Eisenhower, would soon take up his most notable military role as the Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces, but his often overlooked work with the WPD considerably shaped the Allied strategy until the end of the war. His plan called for a shifting US military forces to defend England, as well as securing Russia as an ally and preventing the Axis from exploiting the Middle East’s “productive potential.” The “blueprint” directed the Allies to concentrate its attention and resources in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, and aim to merely halt the Japanese advance until the coalition attained victory in Europe. The eventual assault from the Pacific, according to Eisenhower’s plan, should involve a multi-prong counteroffensive with the main effort coming from South Pacific moving in the direction of the Japan. Fortuitously for Roosevelt, his new British ally’s envisioned strategy resembled Eisenhower’s, and both sides came to an agreement to begin the stockpiling of men and armaments in Europe in order to establish a “second front.” Amorphous plans drawn up by Churchill, Roosevelt, and a number of officers

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233 Perry, 74.
234 With the Soviet front in the east being the “first front.” The greatest strategic debate between American and British generals at ARCADIA, and many of the subsequent conferences in 1942 and 1943, surrounded how the Allies would go about opening a second front. The British preferred to take a more peripheral approach, attacking North Africa and the outer edges of German-held territory to give the Anglo-American side of the coalition more time to build up and prepare an attack on Germany’s west flank. The American generals, lead by Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall, called for a more direct strike on the
from both nations suggested a counteroffensive sometime in 1942 in the Pacific, but the only mutually agreed upon strategy, if it can be called one, called for a “minimal force” to be used in order to stall the Japanese southward advance in Asia and the Pacific. Neither side went so far as to suggest a comprehensive strategy on how to defeat Japan, much less one that provided explicit direction for the CBI.235

A few senior military leaders, namely Admiral Ernest King, voiced opposition to such a Europe-heavy strategy in 1942, but these players were initially marginalized in the war planning process during the early years of US involvement in the war, and the two shot-callers of the coalition, the United States and Great Britain, during the ARCADIA conference, adopted the “Europe First” strategy as their guiding roadmap to victory.236 Germany was on the offensive in Russia and Wehrmacht forces in France could see shores of England on a clear day. War in Asia could wait. At this junction, the concept of a China-Burma-India Theater was still in its infancy, and thoughts of fighting in Burma and India hardly registered on Churchill or Roosevelt’s radars. The absence of discussion or concern about this part of the world conveyed a clear message—Washington’s and London’s interests in the CBI region were weak, especially compared to their interests on the European continent.

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235 Perry, 32-33, 36.
236 Perry, 75.

Admiral King’s argument for more resources, particularly naval assets, in the Pacific was two-fold: 1) The United States had “vital interests” and territory, such as the Philippines and Guam, that it ought to defend before it defended others territory and 2) Land forces could quickly be raised to fight in Europe, but naval forces would take a longer time build, raise, and train.

Morton, 159.
On the seventh of December, Chiang Kai-shek greeted the news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor with delight, believing that this attack would bring the United States and the Soviet Union into the fight against Japan. On the eighth, the Generalissimo drew up a tentative plan that called for a strategy of steady pressure on Japan and a pact of mutual assistance involving the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, Dutch forces in the East Indies, and China. Chiang Kai-shek did not, at the time, have immediate access to Roosevelt, Churchill, or any of the top leaders Allied leaders, so he presented his proposal to the only accessible American general officer in China, General John Magruder. Unfortunately for Chiang Kai-shek, the Soviet Union had little interest in joining the war in Asia and neither his proposal nor any of his personal representatives made it to the ARCADIA conference in Washington held weeks later.  

Contrary to his new British and American counterparts, Chiang Kai-shek believed that the war in Asia had tremendous value and should be allotted adequate resources to carry on the fight against Japan. Furthermore, the Nationalist leader believed that China ought to be treated as an equal partner in the alliance and ought to have a seat at the decision-making table. The Generalissimo faced one major obstacle to truly realizing his aspirations - he lacked the resources or military capacity to earn him that seat. In the years leading up to Pearl Harbor, Chiang Kai-shek, T.V. Soong, and diplomats from Chongqing lobbied friendly governments in Europe and North America to take action against Japan and support the GMD with military aid and assistance. These pleas fell largely on deaf ears, not because they failed to elicit sympathy, but by as a consequence of the belief shared by Washington, London, Paris, and other sympathetic government’s

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238 Smith, 38.
believed that their interests in China were not worth the perceived costs. Pearl Harbor
did little to change this calculus, and throughout the remainder of the war, a distinct
asymmetry of interest in Asia would persist.

It is important not to equate Chiang Kai-Shek’s advocacy for the coalition’s
attention and effort in Asia with his own personal interests and willingness to devote
Chinese troops to the fight. He believed that fighting and defeating Japan was a worthy
objective for his government, but a secondary one nonetheless. His primary interest, as
already mentioned, was to preserve his regime’s nominal governance of China.\(^{239}\)
Perceiving the Communists led by Mao Zedong to be the more menacing foe, Chiang
Kai-shek continued to focus his attention northward and position his most competent
forces north of Chongqing. This is not to say that he did not believe the Japanese
offensives in China and SE Asia threatened his regime. Chiang Kai-shek truly did fear
the Imperial Army and he believed that surrender to Japan would surely mark the end of
his rule. Yet, he was also confident that the United States and Britain would not allow
Japan to defeat his government and he calculated that as long as he could starve off
internal challenges in China, the external one would be taken care of.\(^{240}\)

Churchill and Roosevelt walked away from ARCADIA with a general
understanding of how they would fighting they would wage the war against the Axis, but
with few details on how the fight should progress in China and South Asia. Rather than
spend time strategizing for a theater that had, with the exception of the Chinese
coastlands, hardly seen any conflict to date, the conveners at ARCADIA created a
somewhat ad hoc regional coalition dubbed ABDACOM (the American-British-Dutch-

\(^{239}\) Smith, 10.
\(^{240}\) Perry, 55.
Australian Command) and subsequently delegated strategizing to ABDACOM’s new commander. Unlike the preceding commands in the CBI, ABDACOM possessed a unified command structure, yet, like to its predecessors, ABDACOM still lacked strategic guidance from the coalition’s top policymakers.

*The First Coalition Attempt*

Per the gentleman’s agreement concerning the election of top commanders for each theater adopted at ARCADIA, Churchill and his Chief of the General Imperial Staff, Alan Brooke, had the honor of choosing the top commander for the coalition in the Far East. They decided upon a senior combat officer, British Field Marshall Archibald Wavell.241 Returning from a command in the Middle East and North Africa, Wavell resented his superiors in London for sending him to a horribly under-resourced and low-prioritized conflict far from the main action in Europe.242 With a mandate to defend “key interests” in the Asian-Pacific “under Japan,” which, roughly encompassed the waters from Burma to the Philippines, and, Australia to China, Wavell and his command group, which overwhelmingly consisted of American and British officers, initially planned to establish a broad defensive barrier to halt the Japanese advance. Wavell’s planned defensive barrier stretched from Malaya to Java to North Australia and sought to involve General MacArthur’s forces in the Philippines.243 The planners at ARCADIA, who spent just a small faction of their time mulling over ABDACOM’s herculean task, added an additional burden towards the end of the conference that further complicated Wavell’s mission: ABDACOM was to hold all “key positions” (namely the Malay Barrier, Burma,

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241 van der Vat, 129.
242 Perry, 56.
243 van der Vat, 128; *Stilwell Papers*, 32.
Australia) while seeking also to gain air superiority and take the offensive “at the earliest possible moment.” ABDACOM’s mission, the first mission the top Allied strategic leaders and Combined Chiefs of Staff assigned to the command in Asia, exemplifies the sort of direction follow-on commanders in the CBI would receive from the top: direction that was often vague, uninformed, and nearly impossible to carry out given the available resources.

Before Wavell could assume the reins of ABDACOM, Japanese forces under General Yamashita rolled back British forces in Malaya while simultaneously maneuvering to capture Singapore. By mid-January, American forces in the Philippines, Dutch forces in Java, and British forces in Malaya found themselves quickly succumbing to superior Japanese firepower. The American Asiatic Fleet (predecessor to the 7th Fleet), the Dutch Naval Forces from the East Indies, and elements of the British and Australian navy, under the commander of American Admiral Thomas Hart, met the Japanese foe in a series of engagements in the waters of the East Indies, each time finding themselves outmanned and outgunned. By the end of February, Wavell found his naval forces decimated to the point of being combat ineffective. Half of the American fleet under Admiral Hart’s command rested at the bottom of the sea, with the other half in full retreat towards Australia with the remaining Australian and British vessels. The Dutch fleet was nearly utterly annihilated and Dutch land forces in the East Indies had capitulated to the Japanese Imperial Army. Washington, observing the heavy losses from afar and maneuvering around the ABDCOM chain of command, ordered remaining

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244 Morton, 163.  
245 Morton, 166.  
246 Morton, 168.  
247 van der Vat, 128.
American forces and boats in the region to pull back from the fight.\textsuperscript{248} Wavell, seeing the fight to be a lost cause, asked London for permission to pull back from Java and regroup, only to have uninformed superiors deny his request.\textsuperscript{249}

With ABDACOM forces crumbling to its east, south, and west, Wavell ordered Arthur Percival, the commander of British forces in Singapore, to hold the strategically and economically important entrepôt.\textsuperscript{250} Percival’s forces, expecting an assault from the sea, were surprised by Yamashita’s forces who attacked Singapore from the north. On February 15\textsuperscript{th}, the Singapore fell, and so with it came the last vestiges of British military presence east of Burma. By the end of February, ABDACOM raison d’être was fully spent. Britain lost its prized possession in Southeast Asia, Singapore, and was preparing to make a stand in Burma to block a Japanese invasion of its imperial jewel, India.\textsuperscript{251} American commanders had no interest in carrying on a losing battle that, after all, seemed to simply protect European colonial interests.\textsuperscript{252} Dutch forces were nearly nonexistent and Australia had little choice but to retreat to its home island. America and Britain’s first joint attempt to combat an enemy in World War II had failed miserably.

ABDACOM’s inadequate defense of its area of operations in the January and February of 1942 ominously foreshadowed many of the shortcomings of the future CBI command. As mentioned above, American and British leaders at the ARCADIA conference assigned the coalition’s leadership a vast territory to defend against a formidable foe without supplying it with the assets and resources necessary for it to have a reasonable shot at achieving its objective. This is not to say that the partners, namely

\textsuperscript{248} van der Vat, 128.
\textsuperscript{249} van der Vat, 129.
\textsuperscript{250} van der Vat, 125.
\textsuperscript{251} Bell, 39-40.
\textsuperscript{252} van der Vat, 132.
the Americans and Britons, did not care about ABDACOM’s mission or the territory in its area of operations, but rather that their interests led them to allocate their limited men and resources to more highly prioritized regions, namely Europe where Allied forces were building up men and resources under the codename BOLERO. Unlike the later CBI Command, ABDACOM actually had a coherent chain of command and its failure to stem Japan’s advances came primarily as a result of the Allies leaders assigning low strategic value to the theater. Discussion of the security of Singapore and India, Britain’s most prizes possessions in the region, only briefly came up during strategic talks. Moreover, the Allies’ strategic leaders worked with scant intelligence on the events in the CBI, a consequence of their haphazard effort to collect intelligence in this region. In fact, they firmly believed in the early days of 1942 that the Japanese could not possibly overcome Singapore’s harbor defense or reach as far west as India. Seeing that the strategy established at ARCADIA was set almost exclusively by American and British leaders, it is unsurprisingly that the coalition’s strategy reflected the shared Anglo-American belief that the British Isles must first be preserved and that Germany must be first defeated before significant attention could be devoted to the Pacific.

The ARCADIA conference and ABDACOM, ARCADIA’s “solution” to the Japanese offensive in the Far East, would be the first of many landmark moments for the Allied effort in this region. The only players that could realistically put forth an effort against Japan in the theater, the United States and to a lesser extent the United Kingdom, exerted little strategic planning for this geographically large region and preferred to leave such “trivial” matters to a handful of general officers assigned to the theater. Roosevelt

253 Perry, 77.
254 Smith, 83.86; Tuchman, 272.
255 Bell, 68-69.
and Churchill’s expectations for this region were low and, in truth, would remained fairly low throughout the war. Considering the paltry amount of resources and effort the planners at ARCADIA put into the theater, ABDACOM’s result should not have come as a surprise.

*Three Allies, Three Interests, Three Objectives*

Aside from a series of intermittent Japanese naval and air raids on British assets in India, the battle lines in the CBI remained nearly static following the Japanese capture of Burma in May of 1942. The ARCADIA conference casted a general vision of victory in Europe and the Pacific, and the ensuing strategic meetings began to refine and define that vision. And while the coalition’s overall war strategy began to take shape in 1943 and 1944, the CBI’s place in it remained vague and undefined, thus allowing each partner to craft their own individual strategies for the theater that would help them pursue their respective national objectives. Unfortunately for the Allied cause in the CBI, the three major players, the United States, Britain, and Nationalist China, differed in their interests; as a result, each nation’s objectives and corresponding strategic recommendation diverged.

The American strategists formulated the American war plan for the CBI with the wartime and postwar objectives laid out by Roosevelt and his Secretary of State Cordell Hull in mind. While the president and his administration’s goals for the region remained somewhat nebulous and erratic throughout the course of the war, the White House dictated that the United States’ postwar national interest in the region necessitated that the US should not only underwrite preservation of Nationalist China, but also work to

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256 Lyman, 332; Callahan, 43.
strengthen the GMD so that it could assume the role of regional “policeman.”

Furthermore, the administration wanted the immediate postwar order to involve a gradual, but steady decolonization of Asia and the projection of US influence in the region for the foreseeable future.\textsuperscript{257} To meet these ends, the American Joint Chiefs of Staff and their civilian colleagues determined that Chiang Kai-shek’s regime had to be politically backed and materially supported by the United States.

Keeping Chiang Kai-shek’s regime in the war was key to Roosevelt’s postwar aims, but also forced Tokyo during the war to maintain the million men plus expeditionary force on the Chinese mainland and preventing the Japanese from redeploying it armies to a front that would directly engage American troops.\textsuperscript{258} To keep China in the war, planners stated that the United States should provide military and material aid as well as technical assistance to Chongqing in order to more efficiently utilize China’s enormous reserve of manpower to carry out the fighting.\textsuperscript{259} Consequently, US military personnel in theater would have a limited role, mostly consisting of advising the Chinese force and running the logistics of the supply operation.\textsuperscript{260} The fighting, the designers argued, ought to be done by the Chinese forces because they were ultimately fighting for their own homeland, and US sailors, soldiers, and marines were needed in the more strategically significant European Theater. Moreover, they insisted that the US

\textsuperscript{257} Schaller, \textit{U.S. Crusade…}, 90-91; Memorandum by the Ambassador to the Soviet Union (Davies) concerning SEAC, September 28\textsuperscript{th}, 1943, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, Volume V: China} (Washington: GPO, 1943), 188.

\textsuperscript{258} Romanus and Sunderland, \textit{Stilwell’s Mission…}, 67-68; Schaller, 98.

\textsuperscript{259} Callahan, 46.

military personnel not sent to the west should first be sent to Australia, where coalition
forces under General MacArthur were preparing their counteroffensive.261

In sum, the United States overarching strategy for the CBI called for the United
States to act, albeit without sending combat forces, to keep China in the war. This
strategy, set in the spring of 1942, left most of the details up to the Chinese leaders and
the American commanders in the theater and served as the general guidance for US
wartime policy in the CBI until the conclusion of the war.262 Beyond this vague mandate
to prevent China’s capitulation, the only additional order Stilwell and American officers
in China received directed them to focus on coalescing Chinese regional “factions” into
one, united fighting force.263

General Marshall and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, largely adhering to the concept of
the pre-war ORANGE plan, which called for a direct blue-water naval confrontation with
the Japanese in the Pacific, to be followed by an assault on the Japanese home islands,264

261 Perry, 12.
262 Tuchman, 301; Stilwell’s Personal File, 266.
263 Schaller, U.S. Crusade…, 95.
264 During the interwar period, the US Department of War, Army, and Navy collaborated to devise a series
of color-coded war plans often referred to as the “rainbow plans.” The contingency plan for war with Japan
bore the name “ORANGE” and the last updated plan prior to the United States entry into World War II,
adopted in 1938, called for the United States to drive directly across the Pacific towards the Japanese Isles,
meet the Japanese navy in a decisive open ocean naval battle, and then continue on to the Japanese
homeland to force Tokyo to caputulate. Acknowledging the rise of Fascism and a more militant Germany
in Europe, the war planners also forged the RED-ORANGE Plan that laid out a plan for a two-ocean
(Atlantic and Pacific) war. The RED-ORANGE, in keeping with the notion that Europe and the Atlantic
were vital to US interests, directed the US naval assets in the Pacific to hold off the Japanese in the Pacific
while the majority of the force maneuvers to defeat Germany in the Atlantic. Once achieving victory over
Germany, naval forces would move to the Pacific to aid the engaged Pacific fleet in their effort to defeat
Japan. Morton, 67-68, 70.
believed that Allied operations in the CBI should draw Japanese assets and resources away from the main fight in the Pacific. Moreover, their plan proposed that the British, who had operational jurisdiction of the Indian Ocean, as well as the Chinese should bear the brunt of the fighting in this theater. 265 Moreover, Roosevelt insisted that Allied, and especially American, men and resources must not be expended to preserve colonialism in Asia, a demand that aggravated his British and French allies who believed that these possessions were fundamental to the economic interests of their empires. 266 Roosevelt, being a good politician and diplomat, at times made concessions to Churchill in order to gain British cooperation in other areas of the war, 267 much to the chagrin of American generals such as Stilwell who found the president “too subservient” to London. 268 However, Roosevelt, Hull, and several important players in the administration contended that any military strategy in the theater ought to work towards creating a more sustainable post-war environment which, in their minds, could be realized through decolonization and a strong, US-friendly China. 269

Contrary to the United States strategy, which perceived the CBI as an accessory theater that served to coordinate and support the US-led operations in the Pacific, the British strategy called for Allied operations in the theater to play a more fundamental part in the coalition’s general plan in the war against Japan. The majority of political and military leaders in London, including Churchill, flatly rejected Roosevelt’s “naïve” assumption that the days of the British Empire had passed and argued that a major thrust

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265 Morton, 67-68; Memorandum by Embassy Counselor in Chongqing (Atcheson) to Secretary of State (Hull), September 10th, 1943, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, Volume V; China (Washington, GPO, 1943), 114-115. 
266 Smith, 79-80.
267 Most concessions involved pushing back the target date for the offensive in Burma or lightened the expected British contribution to the offensive. 
268 Stilwell Papers, 16.
269 Gardner, 124.
of the Allied counteroffensive should be launched from India with the aim of recapturing a number of “strategic” colonies en route to Japan.\textsuperscript{270} The defense of India, the empire’s most profitable and prized colony, was the British chiefs of staff top concern in CBI.\textsuperscript{271} Churchill, who often made strategic or operational decisions based on gut feelings and little intelligence, ordered Wavell, who had assumed the position of Commander-in-Chief of the British forces following the collapse of ABDACOM, to prepare a counterattack to be executed in the summer of autumn of 1942.\textsuperscript{272} Respecting the prime minister’s order, Wavell reported that a limited offensive in North Burma could be waged during the dry season in late 1942-early 1943,\textsuperscript{273} even though the seasoned commander understood that British and Indian forces lacked the capacity to carry out an effective counteroffensive in the near future. Lieutenant General William “Bill” Slim’s Burma Corps, organized under the 17\textsuperscript{th} Indian Division, had just retreated in piecemeal fashion to India after being routed by Japanese forces. The Japanese navy, in fact, appeared to be on its way to gaining complete control of the Bay of Bengal.\textsuperscript{274} The Indian Army, despite growing to nearly six-fold its original size in the first two years of the war, was untrained and inexperienced.\textsuperscript{275} Furthermore, Indian nationalism was on the rise and Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Party protested the use of Indian forces to preserve the British

\textsuperscript{270} Sarantakes, 30, 34.
\textsuperscript{271} Tuchman, 285.
\textsuperscript{272} Callahan, 43.
\textsuperscript{273} A discussion of Wavell’s counteroffensive will be included in Chapter 6.
\textsuperscript{274} The weather in Burma greatly influenced military plans and operations in the theater. Most of the fighting in Burma had to be conducted during the dry season that extended from October to May, but was most reliably Monsoon-free between November and February. Operations occurring outside this period risked being bogged down by the late spring and summer monsoons, which dumps on average 200 inches of rain and make convention campaigns nearly impossible. Romanus and Sunderland, \textit{Stilwell’s Mission}, 80.
\textsuperscript{275} Callahan, 43.
\textsuperscript{275} Lyman, 107.
Empire. Wavell could not trust his Indian forces to carry a heavy load in Burma and he, as well as many of the members of the chiefs of staff, knew His Majesty’s Army in India lacked offensive capability in 1942.

Even though protecting India was of great concern to London in 1942, the defense of the British Isles and the build up for the North African and eventual European campaigns unquestionably surpassed any CBI-related objective, and consequently Britain could hardly afford to divert vital men, ships, and guns to Wavell’s cause. Challenged by a persistent Churchill on April 4th, 1942, to produce a roadmap victory in the CBI and Southeast Asia, the British Chiefs of Staff sought to produce a broad plan that would go on to shape British strategic and operational thought in the CBI until the end of the war. In keeping with creation of any good strategy, the chiefs first considered the UK’s national interests as it pertained to the CBI and the surrounding region. Reclaiming the empire would likely involve Britain retaking portions of Burma, which would served as a buffer that guarded India’s eastern flank; in addition to this, an offensive would certainly require British forces to recapture the resource-rich lands of Sumatra and Malaya and the economically significant city of Singapore. Further clashing with Roosevelt’s postwar order in Asia, British leaders and strategists believed it unfavorable to their interests to promote a stable, unified China; thus they did not particularly care if Chiang Kai-shek’s regime survived the war. Leaders in London felt unsettled by

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277 Tuchman, 382.
278 Perry, 77.
279 n.b. Keep this strategic direction in mind during Chapter 6, which will discuss the Allies’ attempts at planning and carrying out campaigns in the CBI.
280 Daughtery, 18; Sarantakes, 30.
281 Yu, 180.
China’s loose claims to portions of north Burma and they feared a strong China might eventually try to repossess Hong Kong and restrict commerce in the Far East.\footnote{Yu, 180-181, Callahan, 44.}

While the British Chiefs of Staff mulled their national interests in the region, one member of the group raised a pivotal question: what profitable outcome would result from a land campaign in Burma? Wavell had sent a telegraphed detailing a general plan to launch a low-intensive campaign in north Burma, but the Chiefs of Staff questioned how this offensive would further British national interest. A campaign in north Burma, the British chiefs concluded, would logically seek to retake territory necessary to reestablish an overland supply route to Chongqing, which had been effectively cut off since the fall of Burma earlier that spring.\footnote{Callahan, 44.} General Marshall and the American Joint Chiefs across the Atlantic, in accordance with their mission to supply and support China, were calling for a limited offensive in Burma, but Field Marshal Brooke and the British Chiefs of Staff had little interest in buttressing the GMD regime, especially if it meant exhausting British resources and potentially weakening India’s defense.\footnote{Daughtery, 17.} What about South Burma and the former colonial capital Rangoon that sat on the Burmese coast? Any effort to retake Burma would inevitably require Britain to retake Rangoon and the Burmese coast, but this territory had little strategic value in itself and could very well be bypassed for more important targets such as Sumatra and Malaya.\footnote{Lyman, 205, Callahan, 44.} The meeting on April 4\textsuperscript{th} did not produce a definitive strategy, but the British senior military leadership from that point on embraced the general idea that any offensive should seek to regain naval superiority in the Indian Ocean, recapture “vital” colonies (namely Sumatra,
Malaya, and Singapore), and only conduct limited amphibious assaults along the Burmese coast if the conditions were favorable.\textsuperscript{286} A ground offensive, it was thought, in north or central Burma would not further his British interests in the region and would only exhaust its already stretched resources.

The British brass later presented their thoughts to Churchill, and while Churchill still insisted on an eventual overland offensive in Burma, he concurred with their guidance. In turn, he ordered the British Joint Staff mission in Washington to begin championing what would later be referred to as the “Middle” or “Tip of Sumatra” strategy. Opposed to the American “Pacific Strategy,” that called for both a more direct naval offensive along the lines of ORANGE and for a gradual recapturing of select islands in the Pacific, the “Middle” strategy entailed a British-led drive from India that included the capturing of portions of the Burmese, Thai, and Malayan coast, in addition to requiring Singapore to complement an American-led drive from Australia.\textsuperscript{287} In the “Pacific Strategy,” the CBI would serve as a second-front to pull Japanese forces from the main naval effort. In the “Middle Strategy,” the limited use of amphibious assaults would not only act as a second front, but also would aim at retaking a selective list of targets chosen by British political and military leaders. The British plan also hoped that China in its own war-waging would tie up as many Japanese forces as possible, without receiving significant Allied backing. In truth, the British did not have the assets or resources in the CBI to carry out their preferred campaign since Churchill was unwilling to divert forces from the main effort in Europe and North Africa. Still, the British prime minister and other leaders in London believed that in order to reassert authority over their

\textsuperscript{286} Sarantakes, 80.
\textsuperscript{287} Saranatakes, 80.
colonies in the postwar period, they could not merely rely on the collapse of the Japanese Empire. They had to, in some manner, have to “reconquer” them. The American “Pacific Strategy” principally advanced American interest in the CBI, the preservation of Chiang Kai-shek’s rule of China, while not expending resources to institute European imperialism in Asia. The “Middle Strategy” furthered British interests in the CBI by capturing only limited objectives in Burma, thus allowing it to conserve its forces to “reassert” its colonial rule over more highly prized colonies in Southeast Asia. However, the US would ultimately see their preferred strategy adopted by the coalition in the end. The Anglo-American agreement at ARCADIA placed the United States as the head of the coalition in the Pacific and, since the Americans took on most of the fighting against the Japanese, consequentially gave Marshall and the leaders in Washington the green light to implement the “Pacific Strategy.”

Knowing that the United States effectively controlled the coalition’s direction at the strategic level, British commanders conceded much of the strategic planning to the United States and shifted their focus to the operational level, where they could craft an operational approach in the CBI that could help them preserve their empire.

Just days after the raid on Pearl Harbor, Chiang Kai-shek held an “emergency” conference in Chongqing with his new American and British allies to map out a joint strategy for victory. This meeting, referred to as the “Chongqing Conference” and attended by only a handful of British and American officials and officers in China, slight preceded the ARCADIA, technically making it the first Allied war conference. The

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288 Sarantakes, 37.
289 Romanus and Sunderland, Stillwell’s Mission..., 51.
290 Chapter 6 will discuss how each partner’s interests affected the coalition’s efforts on the operational level.
Generalissimo wanted to talk global strategy, yet Wavell, Magruder, and a hand full of British field grade officers also in attendance wanted to purely focus on the Japanese threat in Asia.\textsuperscript{291} Chiang Kai-shek called for a coordinated attack in the Pacific where the Allies would regain naval supremacy and beat back Japan on the Asian mainland.\textsuperscript{292} He wanted to maintain the supply lines through Burma to Chongqing, and to this end he offered the British his Fifth and Sixth Army to aid Britain in their defense of Burma, an offer Wavell would reject.\textsuperscript{293} The British, anxious of Chinese claims over North Burma and doubting the efficacy of Chinese forces, wanted to minimize Chinese involvement in the Burma Theater. This refusal to cooperate with the Nationalists in Burma soured the new Anglo-Chinese partnership, already stained from Britain’s colonial past in China.\textsuperscript{294} Wavell, whose force in Burma was comprised almost entirely of Indian forces and a contingent of Burmese soldiers, ultimately accepted one division of the Sixth Army, the 93\textsuperscript{rd} division, to support his defense of Burma, but the sides agreed on no other future cooperation or strategy for the theater in Chongqing.\textsuperscript{295}

Washington and London rarely turned to their Chinese partner for input on strategy in the Asian conflict and they effectively ignored his call for a more balanced Europe-Asia force structure.\textsuperscript{296} Chiang Kai-shek’s primary interest was to survive and preserve his regime’s governance of China. The Japanese, who after their successful conquest of Burma in the spring of 1942 effectively cut off China’s external communication and supply lines, was not perceived by Chiang Kai-shek’s to be

\textsuperscript{291} Callahan, 38.  
\textsuperscript{292} Memorandum from Ambassador to China (Gauss) to Secretary of State (Hull), January 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1943, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, Volume VI: China} (Washington: GPO, 1943), 843.  
\textsuperscript{293} Each of these Chinese Armies had six divisions, albeit understrength ones.  
\textsuperscript{294} Callahan, 38.  
\textsuperscript{295} Stilwell’s Personal File, 213.  
\textsuperscript{296} i.e. having a less Europe-heavy focus.
Chongqing’s primary threat. The Generalissimo believed that the Communists in Northwest China, stood as the force most likely and able to undermine his governance, and his he crafted his wartime strategy accordingly.297 As early as 1938, American military observers in China noted that Nationalist forces were already being pulled from the front in eastern China and to be maneuvered into central China in order to defend the new wartime capital from Mao’s Red Army.298 Even before the United States began to openly assist China with Lend-Lease aid in 1941, policymakers in Washington discerned Chiang Kai-shek’s wartime strategy: namely, that of using the bulk of Nationalists forces to block any potential Communist campaign against Chongqing, as well as maintaining as minimal a force as possible in the effort against Japan. To this end, the Generalissimo solicited the United States for military and material aid to prevent any one faction in China from being able of challenging the government in Chongqing. Chiang Kai-shek, effectively, hoped to simply wait for the United States and Britain to defeat Japan.299

Beyond objective of self-preservation, Chiang did have a number of secondary interests that led him to formulate a fairly detailed and comprehensive strategy. In the interests of reasserting China’s role as the Middle Kingdom, the GMD wanted to retake Formosa, the Ryukyu Islands, the Japanese-occupied Northeastern provinces, and Manchuria.300 He wanted Soviet help fighting Japan in Northeast Asia, but he feared Soviet incursion into North China and support for the Communists. He consequently

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297 *Stillwell Papers*, 284.
298 Warren Cohen, 126.
300 Memorandum from Ambassador to China (Gauss) to Secretary of State (Hull), January 7th, 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, Volume VI: China* (Washington: GPO, 1943), 843.
wanted to keep the Soviet’s at arms length.\textsuperscript{301} He argued that aerial superiority and the complete destruction of the Japanese navy was a prerequisite to victory, largely due to the fact that such efforts would lean on American and British forces and require little of his own.\textsuperscript{302} He repeatedly offered the services of Nationalist troops for an Allied counteroffensive in Burma, but his proposal was always half-hearted since he did not want to over-commit his forces in Burma, which would weaken his blocking position in central China established to fend off any offensive from Mao’s armies in the north.\textsuperscript{303} Due to the fact that the Generalissimo wanted to keep the supplies flowing into Chongqing, he believed that any Allied strategy likely needed to include a ground offensive in Burma that could reopen an overland supply route. Yet he preferred and advocated for an aerial-centric supply effort so that he could avoid having to potentially use his own forces in Burma.\textsuperscript{304} Through his chief diplomat, T.V. Soong, Chiang Kai-shek pushed his strategic proposals across Roosevelt’s desk.\textsuperscript{305} The Generalissimo rarely prodded his American and British allies to pursue his strategy, and when elements of his strategy were implemented by coalition, it was almost always due to the fact that an element of his strategy simply happened to align with the United States own decisions.

The United States, and to a lesser extent, Britain, supplied the guns, boats, and planes for the coalition and, therefore, they believed they had the right to call most of the shots, despite the fact that almost all of the fighting occurred in Chiang Kai-shek’s backyard. The Chinese leader, unsurprisingly, felt that his English-speaking allies treated

\textsuperscript{301} Memorandum from the Charge d'Affaires in China (Vincent) to Secretary of State (Hull), April 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1943, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, Volume VI: China} (Washington: GPO, 1943), 849.

\textsuperscript{302} Memorandum from Ambassador to China (Gauss) to Secretary of State (Hull), January 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1943, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, Volume VI: China} (Washington: GPO, 1943), 843.

\textsuperscript{303} Stilwell Papers, 284.

\textsuperscript{304} Daughtery, 16.

\textsuperscript{305} Memorandum by Ambassador to China (Gauss), July 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1942, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, Volume V: China} (Washington: GPO, 1942), 109.
him as an inferior partner, and he had no qualms about letting Roosevelt and Churchill know his sentiments. But unwilling to commit a significant portion of his forces to the fight in the CBI and unable to contribute in any substantial way to the naval and aerial facets of the coalition’s campaign, Chongqing had but one card to play during strategic negotiations- the threat of suing for a separate peace with Japan. Keeping China in the fight was a key part of the American strategy; hence, Washington was unwilling to risk losing their Chinese ally, even if the odds that Chiang Kai-shek would follow through with such a settlement was unlikely. Thus, Roosevelt and several key members of his administration, such as economic advisor Lauchlin Currie, ensured that China would continue to get their requested aid and support regardless of their effort in battle.

In many ways, the US and GMD interests and strategy in Asia were not all that different. The United States wanted to keep China in the war and have Chiang Kai-shek’s government rule China as a regional power in the postwar era. Chiang Kai-shek sought self-preservation and a strengthened postwar position. He preferred to have a more Asian-focused Allied grand strategy, but ultimately gave his unsolicited blessing to ARCADIA’s decision to adopt a “Europe-first” road map, as long as China would be guaranteed the supplies “necessary” to carry on the war. Resources, especially during the early part of the war, were in short supply and GMD leaders were rarely satisfied with their Lend-Lease allotments. “Peanut [Chiang Kai-shek] wants the world and nothing in return” complained Stilwell in his June 6th, 1944 journal entry. The general had a

307 Tuchman, 237.
308 Schaller, America’s Crusade, 113-114.
310 Stillwell Papers, 302
legitimate complaint. Yet Chiang Kai-shek, or Peanut, as Stilwell scornfully labeled the Generalissimo, benefitted from the fact that his primary interest, self-preservation, aligned with the U.S. interest of preserving Nationalist rule in China during and after the war. The details of the American and Nationalist strategy diverged, but they nonetheless shared the same principle plan. Had London taken the lead role in place of Washington, the coalition’s plan would have almost certainly been different and China would have likely received an even smaller aid allotment and would have been even more isolated from the decision-making process.

But as it stood, London prudently let the Chinese-endorsed American strategy stand. While the Americans dominated the Allies strategy in the Pacific War, the Britons were given the lead role over planning the CBI’s operations. This split leadership over the coalition’s strategy versus coalition’s operational planning for the CBI created a situation where the Allies would have had to truly compromise to arrive at mutually agreed on unity of purpose. No such compromise would take place. The United States pursued operations in accordance with the Allies’ “Pacific Strategy,” Britain manipulated operational plans in the CBI pending on whether they furthered their own interests and priorities, and the Nationalists pushed for whatever strategy required them to do the least amount of fighting. The strategic leaders were derelict in their duty to provide for their commanders in the CBI a joint purpose and direction. Rather than settle these important matters themselves, the strategic leaders decided to make no decision with regards to the CBI, effectively, shifting the debate to the theater’s multi-national command. 311

311 The clash over operational strategy will be the discussion of Chapter 6.
Burma on the Backburner

By the end of 1942, the United States, Great Britain, and Nationalist China had internally produced their own preferred strategy for the CBI based on their own national objectives and preferred postwar vision for the region, but the three primary Allied partners in the CBI failed to produce a mutually agreed upon strategy. In fact, the three players never truly produced a joint strategy for the CBI during the whole course of the Pacific War.\textsuperscript{312} During the Second Washington Conference and the joint Anglo-American military meetings in 1942, the American Joint chiefs repeatedly insisted on a campaign to take northern Burma, increase the communication and supply access to Chongqing, and include China in the coalition’s effort, even if its role remained limited. The British Chiefs, on the other hand, continued to push for a limited effort in Burma that sought to capture key targets along Burma’s southern coast and allowed coalition forces to move towards recapturing Sumatra, Malaya, Singapore, and other British colonies en route to Japan. The Nationalist government, despite the Generalissimo’s complaints, did not truly have a voice at the Combined Chiefs of Staff table.\textsuperscript{313} Both Washington and London both believed that success in the CBI was not worth compromising their medium-to-long term interests in the region, as long as Japan did not make further advances.\textsuperscript{314}

Where strategic leaders in Washington and London did agree, however, on the Allies global priorities and at best, these shot-callers saw the CBI as a sideshow to the Pacific War, which in turn they saw as a secondary theater to its European counterpart.

\textsuperscript{312} Callahan, 140.
\textsuperscript{314} Callahan, 69.
The coalition’s inability to agree on a common strategy for the CBI inevitably hurt its ability to carry out operations in the region, but the American and British near disregard for the events in this theater was, perhaps, even more detrimental to the CBI command’s success in fighting off the advances of the Imperial Army. The endless debates over strategy and the relative apathy shown by the Anglo-American partners for the CBI continued, with a few brief exceptions, until the end of the war. No compromise over national objectives in the interest of joint strategy came about. As a result, the matter of an offensive campaign was repeatedly shoved to the backburner during Allied conferences.

SYMBOL (commonly referred to as the Casablanca Conference), the first major Allied conference of 1943, primarily sought to discuss ongoing operations in North Africa, the opening of a second front in Europe, and the “Grand Alliance’s” ultimate statement of purpose for the war, which the attendees decided would be nothing short of accepting the Axis capitulation along the terms of “unconditional surrender.” Roosevelt and his top military advisors, Marshall and King, briefly brought up the war effort in the CBI and proposed an offensive in north Burma during the 1943-1944 dry season to try to reopen the old Burma Road and give it a defensive buffer zone from Japanese forces in Burma. The British, who were still reeling from an embarrassing failed offensive in 1942, realized that the Indian forces were far from combat ready and that they lacked the assets to make a sustained campaign in Burma a success. Taking

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315 Meeting took place from January 14th to 24th, 1943.
316 The attendees tentatively decided on a campaign from the Mediterranean up the Italian peninsula in order to take Italy out of the war and force Germany to divert their attention away from France, where an eventual invasion was in the early planning stages.
317 van der Vat, 254.
318 Daughtery, 17.
319 Reference to as the Arakan Offensive; see Chapter 6.
these factors into consideration, Churchill and the British Chiefs urged Roosevelt to push any offensive in Burma back at least one year, arguing that the European campaign needed to first mature and that, consequently, all available resources were needed to be channeled toward the invasion of the European continent.\(^{320}\) Churchill also offered a counter-proposal that involved a more up-tempo strategic bombing campaign on Japanese units in Burma and on the Japanese homeland itself, as well as the use of Long Range Penetration groups in Burma, who earlier experienced some success in Burma during their 1942 expedition.\(^{321}\) The American president at Casablanca acceded to the idea of a limited campaign in Burma in 1943 as well as a more involved offensive during the following fighting season because he too believed that the Allies resources in 1943 were best served in Europe.\(^{322}\)

The following TRIDENT (May 12\(^{th}\)-25\(^{th}\)) and QUADRANT (August 17\(^{th}\)-24\(^{th}\)) conferences further developed the Allies plans in Europe and tabled any offensive in the CBI for the time being, again reiterating that any campaign in the theater was contingent upon success in Europe. These conferences, in particular the QUADRANT, did agree to augment the tonnage of resources flown over the hump to Chongqing and devote the necessary effort to constructing the Ledo Road.\(^{323}\) This decision partially satisfied

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\(^{320}\) Callahan, 68.

\(^{321}\) Schaller, *America’s Crusade…*, 121; Callahan, 66.

British Lt. Colonel Orde Wingate and his Long Range Penetration special operations unit conducted a brief campaign in central Burma in 1942, operating behind the Japanese front lines. Wingate’s force in actuality did very little to set the Japanese back in Burma, but his force’s ability to penetrate Japanese lines, operate without being drawn into a decisive confrontation, and return to India gave Britain its first notable morale boast in the CBI. Daughtery, 15; Callahan, 66.

\(^{322}\) Daughtery, 17.

\(^{323}\) The Ledo Road was an alternative main supply route to the planned Burma Road and ran from Assam to Chongqing. The road would be completed in early 1945 around the time of the reopening of the old Burma Road. Reminder that flying resources “over the hump” is an expression describing the United States airlift supply mission to China, which involved flying goods and war materials from India and over the Himalayas to Chongqing.
American generals who believed it a priority to support China, though did little to appease Chiang Kai-shek, who still plead for more Lend-Lease resources from Chongqing, thousands of miles away from the QUADRANT conference in Quebec.\textsuperscript{324} The American president, over Churchill’s protest, reserved a spot for the Generalissimo at the November 1943 SEXTANT conference,\textsuperscript{325} which unprecedentedly put Pacific War strategy at the top of the agenda. With Stilwell and a number of the officers deployed in the CBI present at the conference, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, top leaders, and CBI theater commanders for the first time came to produce concrete plans of action for the severely neglected theater.\textsuperscript{326} By the end of the conference, the participants put together the “Overall Plan for the Defeat of Japan” that largely resembled the American-favored “Pacific Strategy” and that called for an eventual coordinated offensive in Burma.\textsuperscript{327} Debate over the nature of the Burmese offensive was highly contentious with each of the players recalcitrantly reiterating their preferred strategies. After almost a week of negotiations, Roosevelt, flexing his muscle, broke the stalemate. A “major” overland two-pronged offensive labeled ANAKIM involving Chinese forces would take place in the north and a “heavy” coordinated amphibious assault along the Burmese coast.\textsuperscript{328} Chiang Kai-shek, for the reasons already mentioned, had been reluctant to devote a large number forces to a Burmese offensive, but realizing that his lack of commitment strengthened the claims of his British detractors and risked worsening his already subordinate position in the coalition, agreed to allow the Chinese “Y-Force” stationed in

\textsuperscript{324} Romanus and Sunderland, \textit{Stilwell’s Command}…, 11.
\textsuperscript{325} Commonly referred to as the Cairo Conference.
\textsuperscript{326} Stilwell Papers, 242.
\textsuperscript{327} van der Vat, 294.
\textsuperscript{328} Stilwell Papers, 242.
Yunnan to serve under Stilwell’s. Walking away from Cairo, the Allies appeared to have finally come to a consensus on CBI Theater strategy.

This accomplishment, however, was short-lived. The Generalissimo and his delegates flew home to Chongqing and the British, American, and Free French traveled to Tehran to meet with Stalin to plan and review the war plans for the European theater. The EUREKA conference (commonly referred to as the Tehran Conference) primarily sought to refined the details of OVERLORD, the Anglo-American answer to Stalin’s plead to open a “real” second-front in Western Europe. Operation OVERLORD, or “D-Day,” was undeniably the largest Allied offensive action on the Western front to-date and required the utilization of an unprecedented number of planes, amphibious landing crafts, and vessels. Stalin demanded that the operation needed to be undertaken as soon as possible. The Combined Chiefs of Staff reviewed their available assets and projected troop strength and stated they would aim for May 1st, 1944.

The British Chiefs of Staff approached Churchill toward the end of EUREKA to alert the prime minister that the plans for Operation OVERLORD would have to come at the expense of the plans made days earlier in Cairo. The British Empire, even with the Americans carrying a heavy portion of the assault, simply didn’t have enough vessels, planes, and landing crafts to carry out both the cross-channel assault and the assaults along the Burmese first. Churchill understood this and soon communicated to Roosevelt that the best he could offer towards CBI was a highly scaled-down offensive in Burma for the spring of 1944. Roosevelt, in keeping with the “Europe-first strategy,”

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329 Schaller, America’s Crusade…, 149; Stillwell Papers, 242.
330 Romanus and Sunderland, Stilwell’s Command…, 10.
331 Callahan, 112-113.
332 Callahan, 116; Schaller, 150.
concurred and tapped Stilwell to inform Chiang Kai-shek of the change of plan.\textsuperscript{333} “Old Vinegar,” the most adamant proponent of the offensive in Burma, irately confronted his Commander-in-Chief about the decision to downsize ANAKIM, arguing that the offensive could not be put off and that the Chinese were losing confidence in the coalition. Britain just didn’t have the equipment to carry out their portion of the plan Roosevelt shot back, and the European theater ultimately took precedence. Stilwell eventually gave in and returned to Chiang Kai-shek to deliver the bad news.\textsuperscript{334} The news did not sit well with the Generalissimo. He believed that the British agreed to the offensive in Cairo in bad faith and felt if they were avoiding responsibility in the CBI and trying to shift more of the fighting burden on China.\textsuperscript{335} The British certainly had little interest in helping China fight in north Burma, but in this instance, their backtracking on their initial commitment was truly more of a result of their adherence to the “Europe-first” strategy. Regardless of the precise reasoning behind the change of plans, the collapse of operation ANAKIM again illustrated how strategy, and ultimately, progress, in the CBI operations of the Allies remained contingent on campaign in Europe and the global Anglo-American priorities.

\textit{Victory Without Strategy?}

The American leaders had not given up on the offense in Burma after the Tehran Conference. A report by General Wedemeyer provided the Joint Chiefs of Staff an updated assessment of the CBI that still recommended that Burma be “purged” of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{333} \textit{Stilwell Papers}, 251.
\textsuperscript{334} \textit{Stilwell Papers}, 251.
\textsuperscript{335} Memorandum by Counsel General in Chongqing (Atcheson) to Secretary of State (Hull), September 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1943, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, Volume V: China} (Washington: GPO, 1943), 118.
\end{footnotesize}
Japanese and that an overland assault be combined with a naval, amphibious, and air attack along the Burmese coast. The report further stated that operations in Burma would help the coalition in their follow-on campaign in Indochina and Southeast Asia and that the operation, codenamed AXOIM, could be carried out as soon as November 1945.\footnote{Callahan, 117.} Other American and British commanders in the CBI, along with Chiang Kai-shek, submitted to the Combined Chiefs in Washington suggested recommendations in 1944,\footnote{Chapter 6 will discuss some of these competing plans.} but the top military leaders made little use of the plans. Their focus was drawn to Europe and the mounting naval operations in the Pacific. Moreover, the plans submitted always ran into the same problem experienced in the wake of EUREKA; Britain, and to a lesser extent, the United States, were unwilling to commit the necessary resources to put these plans into action.\footnote{Callahan, 123.}

The war would end before the United States, Britain, and the GMD leaders would again meet and agree to a joint strategy that could provide operational direction to commanders in the CBI. Allied strategists paid little attention to the CBI in the fall of 1944 due to the fact that the US-led assault across the Pacific was succeeding at an impressive rate.\footnote{Callahan, 140.} Even the American strategists who earlier believed that the CBI could play an important role in the Pacific War began viewing it as a mere sideshow to the main effort in the Pacific. By 1945, planning for the CBI at the strategic level was still nonexistent. The Allies soon captured Rangoon, a later, the rest of Burma, largely due to the withdrawal of Japanese forces from Burma. The CBI recaptured Burma despite the fact that its leaders failed to provide strategic direction. Without the crucial guidance
from its strategic leaders, operations in Burma were waged without a much of a plan and victory was realized without the capture of more than a handful of enemy prisoners.
Chapter 6 | “Obstruction and Difficulties:”

How Divergent Allied Interests, Objectives, and End States hindered the Allied Coalition from Waging an Effective Campaign in the CBI

Strategy provides a roadmap for victory, but the planning and execution on the operational level is where strategic guidance translates into success or failure on the battlefield. As Edward Luttwak states in *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, the operational level is difficult to define in abstract, but becomes rather self-evident when examining a “real-life case.” Within the hierarchy of the “levels of war,” the operational level, or the *operational art*, fits between strategy and battlefield tactics. The operational, in short, deals with the planning and executions of campaigns in a given theater of battle. The top Allied political and military leaders set the guiding coalition strategy during a series of wartime conferences, but they largely turned over the operational planning and execution to the theater commanders. Coalition commanders in the CBI had more autonomy over the operational plans in their assigned area of operations and less “interference” from top strategic leaders in comparison to their

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340 Stilwell, following a meeting in New Delhi with his British counterparts, complained in an undated journal entry from Autumn of 1942 that the negotiations over operational strategy in Burma was characterized by “obstruction and difficulties.” *Stillwell Papers*, 164.

341 Luttwak, 91.

342 As stated in chapter five, the strategic level concerns itself with a nation or coalition’s broad plan for conducting a war and deals with how to allocate resources, men, and attention. The tactical level, on the other hand, deals with how a nation or coalition’s forces implement the use of weapon systems and techniques on the battlefield. An example of Allied strategy in the World War II would be Allies’ strategy to open a “second-front” in Europe in 1944, forcing Germany to fight a two-front war. An example of tactics would be the American tactic of using one unit to lay down a base of suppressing fire on an enemy in order to occupy the attention of the foe and impede its movement, while simultaneously using another unit to flank the pinned down enemy. To use a well-known example of tactics on the Axis side, the Germans during the war utilized the 88 mm anti-aircraft gun as an anti-tank weapon in Europe and emplaced the gun along routes the Allied forces would likely use tanks. Tactics, in many respects, act as a unit, military, or coalition’s battlefield standard operating procedures.
European and Pacific counterparts. This autonomy over the theater’s area of operations was not a result of the coalition’s top leaders having more confidence in the CBI command’s capabilities. Rather, the CBI commanders’ liberty to craft their campaigns as they saw fit came as a consequence of the top leadership’s attention being diverted to the other more highly prioritized theaters.\textsuperscript{343} Despite the fact that the theater’s commanders predominantly operated independently and without much outside guidance, these commanders still constructed and championed campaign plans that furthered their respective countries’ national interests.

The CBI command’s lack of unity of purpose resulted in the coalition fighting for three different ends. The British, desiring to maintain their empire and commercial influence in the Far East, sought to reclaim key ports and territory without becoming bogged down on the Asian mainland. The Americans hoped to open up overland supply routes to Chongqing to support their Chinese ally and bolster the GMD’s government. The Nationalist Chinese regime wanted to preserve its nominal governance over China and exert the minimal amount of forces and resources to any offensive campaign. Each player’s interest and postwar vision, or end state, for the region prescribed a distinct campaign or operational strategy. The command’s inability resolve these divergent interests and rally the coalition’s forces under their common macro-objective, the defeat of Japan, led to a situation where most of the fighting in the theater occurred in the Allies’ military headquarters’ in New Delhi and Chongqing and not on the battlefield.

The dysfunctionality of the Allied command becomes blatantly apparent when examining the coalition’s attempts to construct a joint strategy at the operational level. The CBI’s non-unified command allowed for each nation’s forces to act as a veto player

\textsuperscript{343} As was demonstrated in Chapter 5.
and thus effectively block any campaign that did not benefit their individual national interests. Furthermore, the “confederation” of CBI commands allowed American, British, and Chinese forces to act independently towards their own respective objectives and did not oblige components of each nation’s force to work in cooperation. Chapters four and five demonstrated how the coalition’s failure to fight for a unified purpose and compromise of individual national interests created a command situation unlikely to yield success. This chapter will exhibit exactly how this unfavorable command climate translated to the Allies’ failure to implement a concerted, joint offensive campaign until the spring of 1945, a time that fatefully also marked the Japanese withdrawal from Burma.

*ANAKIM: British Strategy Applied*

Benefiting from extensive military experience in the region and a generally agreed upon vision of postwar Asia, British military commanders and strategists in the CBI, from the genesis of the coalition, proposed the most detailed and concrete plan for retaking Burma. The proposed operations drawn up by General Wavell’s and Vice Admiral Mountbatten’s staffs serve as exemplar models of theater commanders translating strategic guidance from their civilian and senior military leaders into viable campaign plans. Wavell and Mountbatten understood that leaders in London wanted to retake key ports and portions of the Asia coast, reestablish British “prestige” and imperial power in the region, and avoid getting bogged down in a overland campaign on the Asian mainland that would do little to further their colonial ambitions and could potentially aid
Nationalist China, whom the British greatly mistrusted. Consequently, both commanders devised and advocated for operations that concentrated coalition assets on recapturing a series of targets along the coastline and resisted any plans that called for the use of Allied resources to retake Burma, China, and Southeast Asia. The initial war planning in 1942, along with the ill-fated Arakan Campaign, significantly impacted British operational strategy and morale psyche in the CBI throughout the duration of the war.

Hardly settled from his ignominious redraw from Burma, Wavell received orders in May of 1942 from Churchill to prepare a counteroffensive in order to retake Burma, which the prime minister and British strategists valued as a military buffer protecting their prized Indian colony. Wavell knew Churchill’s request was not feasible. He had very few British regulars available and he had only a handful of ships, planes, and landing crafts on hand. Newly conscripted Indian forces were not trained to fight against a confident Japanese foe and the general had little confidence that Indian forces would fight in the mosquito-ridden jungles of Burma to reclaim a British colonial possession. Nevertheless, Wavell, a good soldier loyal to his government’s cause, submitted an initial plan to retake portions of “strategic interests” in Burma. The operation, which would serve as a general blueprint for all subsequent British offensive plans in the CBI, called for the reestablishment of naval superiority in the Bay of Bengal and air superiority over southern Burma, followed by an amphibious assault along

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345 Discussion of the Arakan campaign to follow.
346 Callahan, 43; Tuchman, 342.
347 Sarantakes, 100
348 Lyman, 107; Schaller, *America’s Crusade…*, 103.
the Burmese coast to retake Akyab, Rangoon, and Arakan. A small overland force would simultaneously be launched from Assam into northern Burma to prevent Japanese from concentrating the bulwark of their forces in the south. This counteroffensive, once capturing key objectives in Burma, would continue onwards into the Southeast where Allied forces would close on Bangkok and a number of key ports in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{349}

Field Marshall Harold Alexander, the former commander of British forces in Burma, traveled to London in July of 1942 to present a plan to Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff on behalf of Wavell. Understanding that their forces in India lacked experience and the necessary air and naval support to wage any counteroffensive, the British Chiefs used the meetings to discuss British operations in the CBI to point out the offensive-minded Churchill that the campaign the prime minister desired could not be carried out with the current capabilities and assets available to Wavell. Furthermore, the British Chiefs argued that any establishment of air superiority would require American assistance.\textsuperscript{350} Churchill agreed to table the offensive in Burma and directed the CBI command to tentatively set the new target date of the offensive for the 1943-1944 dry season. Churchill, always putting the operations in Europe first, understood that shifting of resources to the CBI was predicated on the Allied success in Europe. He informed his senior military leaders that they would reconsider the campaign a year later.\textsuperscript{351}

Wavell was under little illusion that his available forces could make a full-fledge counteroffensive in 1942 and he did not protest London’s decision to launch his two-prong offense during the 1942-1943 dry season. Yet, Wavell’s position as Commander-in-Chief of India, coupled with his failure to realize the true extent of his forces’

\textsuperscript{349} Callahan, 44-45.
\textsuperscript{350} Callahan, 45.
\textsuperscript{351} Perry, 77, Callahan, 45.
impotency, led him to launch a scaled down version of his plan in the later part of 1942, albeit with disastrous results.\textsuperscript{352} The series of British military defeats in the Far East in 1942 and the commencement of Japanese bombing raids on the subcontinent starting in the summer of 1942 emboldened the leadership of the Congress Party in India and lead them to threaten to make a British commitment to Indian independence a condition of any use of Indians in the war.\textsuperscript{353} Wavell believed that the recent events had demoralized the Indian Army and led the Raj and the British military to significantly lose face in India.\textsuperscript{354} Consequently, Wavell decided to launch a truncated version of his original Burmese offensive that cut the overland assault in northern Burma and limited the amphibious assault to recapturing only Aykab, an island off the western Burmese coast that the Japanese used to spearhead their aerial raids on the subcontinent.\textsuperscript{355} Wavell’s revised plan sent Major General W.T. Lloyd’s 14\textsuperscript{th} Division down the Burmese coast to challenge Japanese land forces around Aykab and RAF pilots in overhead to gain air superiority. This land and air assault was to be complemented by an amphibious assault, but British commanders in India called off the amphibious element due to the unavailability of landing crafts.\textsuperscript{356}

The Arakan campaign, as the Dec 1942-March 1943 operation to retake Aykab was later labelled, started well for the British, who enjoyed numerical superiority and an early lead in the air battle. In late December, Lloyd’s 14\textsuperscript{th} Division drove the Japanese from their westernmost defensive line. Unfortunately for General Noel Irwin, whom

\textsuperscript{353} Schaller, \textit{U.S. Crusade...}, 101; Smith, 82.
\textsuperscript{354} Daughtery, 8.
\textsuperscript{355} McLynn, 98.
\textsuperscript{356} Callahan, 58, 62.
Wavell put in charge of the campaign, the Japanese fell back into heavily fortified bunkers, which proved effective in stemming the 14th Division’s advance, and RAF pilots, flying obsolete F2A Buffalos’s, quickly lost their edge against Japanese pilots who flew vastly superior Mitsubishi A6Ms, commonly known as the “Zero.” Repeated frontal assaults against Japanese entrenchments in February-March 1943 only resulted in mounting causalities and a large Japanese counteroffensive drove Lloyd’s forces out of Burma, sending Wavell and veterans of the previous defeat into déjà vu.

The Arakan campaign left an indelible impression on British operational thought in the CBI until the completion of the Burma Campaign in the spring of 1945. The campaign was under-resourced, conducted without firmly gaining air and naval superiority, and lacked an amphibious assault and “second front” element. Even though the failed campaign’s strategy hardly resembled Wavell’s original plan that called for an amphibious-centric campaign complemented by an aerial, naval, and multi-pronged overland offensive, the Commander-in-Chief lost confidence and interest in his own creation, which was later assigned the codename ANAKIM and became one of the most discussed Allied plan for the CBI in 1943 and 1944. Beyond simply battering Wavell’s resolution in British offensive capabilities in the theater, the British officer corps in the CBI, following the Arakan campaign, grew even more opposed to any land campaign in Burma, believing that amphibious operations, paired with “Long Range Penetration” commandos, was the only viable approach to operating in Burma, that is, if Burma was even worth fighting for at all. This aversion to land-based operations,

357 These single-pilot fighters were replaced by P-40s and P-51s starting in 1943.
358 McLynn, 100-101; Callahan, 62.
359 Callahan, 57; Daugherty, 16.
360 Lyman, 205.
especially in light of the general belief among British officers that any land campaign in Burma waged to reopen supply to Chongqing was a futile cause attempting to help an uncooperative Chinese ally, would later greatly complicate planning and coordinating joint operations with their American and Chinese partners who had a vested interest in opening a main supply route through Burma.\textsuperscript{361}

British commanders in the CBI, starting in 1942 and continuing until the end of the war, crafted operational plans in the CBI in accordance with their nation’s interest which hoped to reclaim their empire in the Far East and thus assigned little value to seizing territory in central or north Burma or helping a Chinese ally that they viewed to be a potential adversary in the postwar era. The calamitous results of the Arakan campaign reinforced British reluctance to fight land battles in Burma. Conventional land forces had failed to block Japan’s advance in the spring of 1942 and failed to capture a relatively vulnerable target during the Arakan campaign during the dry season of 1942-1943. The only nominal success British forces realized during this period were accomplished by Orde Wingate’s Long Range Penetration group, known as the Chindits, that fought in small, unsupported fighting groups that sought to carry out guerrilla attacks behind Japanese lines.\textsuperscript{362} The Chindits’ success and the ground commander’s failures in 1942 and the early part of 1943 convinced Wavell and the British commanders in New Delhi that any ground operation in Burma would have to be waged by small, “light”

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\textsuperscript{361} Schaller, \textit{U.S. Crusade...}, 101.

\textsuperscript{362} The term “unsupported” refers to the notion that these Long Range Penetration forces, akin to commandos or special operations forces, operated alone and without the assistance of field artillery, armored tanks, or other military units. The term light “footprint” involves the concept of using minimal troops and resources to accomplish the mission.
units. Internally, the British military leadership in the CBI did have the benefit of the officer corps almost unanimously supporting the same general plan for the theater. The CBI coalition, however, had the misfortune that the British officer corps was uniformly against the operational concept as promoted by the leading American commander in the theater, General Stilwell.

*Ground Heavy versus “Bombing to Win:”* The Coalition’s Debate over the American Strategy

Unlike the British, whose officers were generally of one mind on the subject of the theater's operational concept, American officers in the theater were largely divided between two operational approaches: one that called for a land-centric campaign in Burma and later on in Southeast Asia and eastern China; and an air-centric strategy that called for the use of bombers in the CBI to hit Japanese targets in Burma, Japanese-occupied China, and even the Japanese islands. The leading advocate of the former approach was General Stilwell, the highest-ranking American officer in the CBI and the commander of the USAF and the NCAC and starting in the autumn of 1943, the Deputy Commander of SEAC. The latter approach was most ardently championed in the CBI by Colonel Claire Chennault, who commanded the American Volunteer Group (AVG) and later the 14th Air Force. Both camps shared the same objectives of continuing to

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364 In order to assume command of the American Volunteer Group, a semi-covert organization that officially did not have ties to the United States government, Chennault had to retire as a full Colonel. Chennault would later reenlist the United States Army in 1942 after the United States entered the war. Chennault would eventually retire as a Lieutenant General in the newly created United States Air Force after the war.
supply China with material aid, preventing Nationalist China from having to capitulate, pushing the Japanese from Burma, and ultimately, defeating Japan. Their preferred plans, however, competed for the same pool of precious resources, making the debate over which approach to pursue a zero sum game.

This schism within the American camp over the best approach to defeating Japan certainly complicated the coalition’s overall planning. Roosevelt and the Joint Chiefs, who nearly neglecting the CBI’s operations for most of the war, made little effort to reconcile the differences between Stilwell and Chennault or to firmly place their support behind one of the concepts. Hence, Washington’s relative lack of engagement in the theater contributed to the CBI command’s already troublesome planning issues. Yet, divergent British and Nationalist Chinese interests in the region exacerbated this internal American ground-versus-air debate and played a role in delaying a joint coalition campaign in the CBI. General Stilwell found his ground-heavy strategy, which had the support of American Army Chief of Staff George Marshall, to be repeatedly “vetoed” by his British and Chinese partners because it required both of these allies to commit forces to Burma in a manner that they found antithetical their own interests in the CBI.

On the other hand, Chennault’s air-centric plan, which could not realistically be employed as envisioned due to the lack of planes and resources allocated by the Allies to the CBI, repeatedly won the support of British and more fervently, the GMD, because it seemingly took the fight to Japan without requiring the involvement of many British or Chinese men and resources.365 Chennault’s aerial campaign, which in essence was the main coalition offensive effort until the summer of 1944, failed to produce significant results or bring about notable progress in the Allies’ fight against the Japanese in the CBI.

365 Warren Cohen, 130.
Meanwhile Stilwell’s alternative plan, which had the confidence of several senior military leaders in Washington, struggled to gain traction largely due to roadblocks put up by his counterparts in New Delhi and Chongqing. Unquestionably, the Stilwell-Chennault dispute created an added barrier to coordinating a joint coalition campaign in the CBI, but uncompromised Allied interests made this barrier impassable for most of the war.

Stilwell arrived in the CBI in late February 1942 with two primary missions. The first, was to advise Chiang Kai-shek and the GMD in order to help the Nationalist Army become an effective fighting force able to uproot Japan from Burma, China, and ultimately, Asia altogether. The second was to reopen overland supply and communication lines to China through Burma and India. Roosevelt wanted a competent Chinese partner, at least in terms of military prowess and effective governance, which the United States could resupply via the Old Burma Road or a similar overland route. Stilwell’s answer was to better equip and train Chinese forces and lead them in an overland campaign to retake north and parts of central Burma to reclaim the territory necessary to reopen the Burmese main supply route. Once this route could be opened and defended, Stilwell hoped to use the American-trained Chinese forces to go on the offensive in China and Southeast Asia.

Disagreement among the Allied strategic leaders over the purpose and direction of the CBI left Stilwell with only two broad mandates from the president and his military superiors. It was generally accepted among Allied strategists that the main counteroffensive against the Japanese would come through the Pacific, and the CBI

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366 Romanus and Sunderland, Stilwell’s Command…, 3.
367 Sarantakes, 126.
would be playing a supportive role in the march to Tokyo, but the Allies’ failure to come to an agreement on the joint purpose for the CBI gave Stilwell some liberty when he drafted his war plans.\textsuperscript{368} Also, as commander of the USAF CBI and starting in 1943,\textsuperscript{369} the NCAC, Stilwell had direct control over a body of forces and the logistical backbone to make an army work.\textsuperscript{370} Stilwell often met with his British allies in New Delhi to craft a joint plan to retake Burma, but these meetings repeatedly ended in failure.

Stilwell never quite succeeded in convincing his allies that reopening the Burma Road was an objective worth fighting for. The British had no interest in fighting in north Burma, as they saw intense jungle fighting aimed at reopening a 30-foot wide supply route that snaked through mountains and dense forests as a complete waste of resources.\textsuperscript{371} Frustrated by his British counterparts, who he derided as “defeatists” that “tub[ed] regularly,”\textsuperscript{372} Stilwell sent a telegram to his superior, General George Marshall, in September 1942 reporting:

“I believe the following are facts: The British, with their attention turned to the Middle East and no immediate Jap threat against India, are not vitally interested in Burma. Wavell talks in general terms of an offensive in Burma, but cannot be pinned down to dates or forces.”\textsuperscript{373}

\textsuperscript{368} Stilwell’s Personal File, 266.
\textsuperscript{369} n.b. USAF CBI is the name of the organization that commanded most of the American forces in the CBI. See Chapter four for more on the USAF CBI.
\textsuperscript{370} Recalling the discussion in Chapter 4, Stilwell held five different roles in the CBI by 1943: he served as Chiang Kai-shek’s Chief of Staff (top military advisor), Commander of USAF CBI, Commander of NCAC, Deputy Commander of SEAC, and served more unofficially as the top US commander in the theater and a collector of information for General Marshall and the president.
\textsuperscript{371} Webster, 4; Daughtery, 16.
\textsuperscript{372} The supply route being the Burma Road.
\textsuperscript{373} Stilwell Papers, 294.
\textsuperscript{373} Stilwell’s Personal File, 339.
The British, as already mentioned, had drawn up plans for retaking Burma, but they lacked the assets and the will to do so and no incentive within the CBI command structure put Wavell in a position where he had to stray from his amphibious-centric plan and assist Stilwell in his north Burma campaign. Stilwell’s joint planning sessions with Chiang Kai-shek were not much more fruitful. The Generalissimo highly valued the continuous stream of American supplies, but he did not want to use his own forces in Burma to reopen the Burma Road. He much preferred that supplies be pushed over the “the Aluminum Trail,” the difficult and dangerous American effort to fly supplies from India over the Himalayas and into Chongqing.374 Getting the cooperation of Chinese regulars would be a herculean task for the American general.

Stilwell was determined to get this mission accomplished, and he possessed de facto autonomy over operational planning in the CBI as a result of the Allied leaders lack of strategic plans for the theater and the lack of viable counterproposals by his partner commanders.375 Within this relative “autonomy” and enjoying reins of two commands, the USAF CBI and NCAC, Stilwell was willing to wage his plan, regardless of whether he could secure the participation of his partners. Stilwell’s plan involved a ground-centric campaign that involved a multi-prong attack in North Burma to recapture territory that would be essential to reopening and protecting his envisioned supply route.376 One prong, labeled the “X-force,” compromised of Chinese forces under the direct command of Stilwell’s NCAC.377 would mobilize from their base in Assam and enter north Burma

374 Daughtery, 14.
375 Romanus and Sunderland, Stilwell’s Command…, 4.
376 Schaller, U.S. Crusade…, 127.
377 An earlier agreement between Chiang Kai-shek and Roosevelt gave Stilwell 53,000 Chinese soldiers to be trained under American supervision in India. Stilwell intended to remold these soldiers into an “elite force of full-strength, well-fed, competently-led and well-trained divisions” that could be effective in uprooting Japan from Burma and eventually all of Asia.
from the west. Another force, the “Y-force,” stationed in Yunnan and under the command of Chinese commander Ch’en Ch’eng, would enter north Burma from the east. In 1943, Stilwell would integrate the new American Long Range Penetration commandos, 5307th Composite Unit (Codenamed: GALAHAD) into his plan, believing that they could get behind Japanese lines and “soften” their defenses. Stilwell showed some willingness to add elements to his plan, such as simultaneous amphibious assaults and air support, but he refused to detract from the X-Y two-pronged assault. As the top American commander in the theater and a soldier loyal to his superior’s mission, he was determined to recapture north Burma and he remained convinced throughout the war that his plan was the only plan that could accomplish this objective.

The “X-Y Plan,” first proposed by Stilwell in the summer of 1942, became the foundational American-ground force plan that Stilwell and ground-proponents never deviated from through the end of war. For over two years, Stilwell’s crusade to implement his X-Y plan failed to gain any traction. Marshall supported Stilwell’s ground campaign and was Stilwell’s main advocate in Washington and at the Allied strategic

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378 Tuchman, 286.
379 Ch’en Ch’eng was one of the few Chinese military leaders that Stilwell found relatively competent and reliable and he went so far to call the Chinese commander a “Man of Genius,” Chiang Kai-shek remained skeptical of giving Ch’en American materials and a significant role in the fighting because although Ch’en swore his loyalty to Chongqing, the Generalissimo still perceived Yunnan warlord as a potential internal rival.
380 Tuchman, 398.
381 Commonly referred to as Merrill’s Marauders. Originally, these forces were put under the command of the British Chindit commander Wingate and were to be integrated with the British Long Range Penetration group, but Stilwell eventually convinced the US Army’s senior leadership to reassign GALAHAD under his USAF CBI command.
382 McLynn, 228.
383 McLynn, 199.
384 Tuchman, 287.
conferences, but the Army Chief’s clout was not enough to decisively sway the Combined Chiefs of Staff to back the X-Y plan. The British leaders in the CBI and in London were intent on stonewalling Stilwell’s plan and they proved to be very effective at doing so. While Churchill, Brooke, and top strategists in England paid little attention to the operational activities in the CBI, they knew that any major land campaign, even if it did not require a great deal of British participation, would draw already scarce coalition resources, such as American Lend-Lease materials, away from Wavell’s forces, and potentially, the European front. Marshall, and even Stilwell himself, presented the ground campaign at the strategic coalition conferences throughout 1943 and 1944 but with little avail. On the rare occasions that Churchill and Roosevelt discussed the CBI, Churchill repeatedly convinced the president that a land invasion would be impractical and would come at the expense of the European effort. Roosevelt, partially in the interest of gaining the prime minister’s support for a number of operations in Europe, withdrew his support for the invasion time and time again, most notably after the Cairo Conference where he had promised Stilwell and the Generalissimo his support. What little energy Churchill and top British leaders spent on the CBI, they spent ensuring the ground campaign would not proceed.

Stilwell spent much of his time shuttling between Chongqing and New Delhi lobbying Chiang Kai-shek, Wavell, and, starting in 1943, Mountbatten. His lack of diplomatic tact and slight Anglophobic inclinations certainly did not help Stilwell’s cause, but even the most polished negotiator would have had a very difficult time

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384 Daughtery, 18.
385 Daughtery, 16; Stillwell’s Personal File, 330.
386 Schaller, U.S. Crusade..., 150.
387 Tuchman, 4.
persuading these key leaders to agree to the X-Y Plan. Wavell and Mountbatten simply had no interest in launching an offensive in North Burma. During the 1942-1943 winter, Stilwell and Wavell met in New Delhi to try to hash out a joint campaign that would use concepts from both Stilwell’s X-Y and Wavell’s ANAKIM plan. Stilwell proposed that the British could execute their amphibious assaults along the coast and neutralize Japanese targets in south Burma while Stilwell and the Chinese forces in the north carried out the two-prong assault in accordance with the X-Y plan. Wavell’s original plan called for a diversionary ground assault in north Burma, and Stilwell believed that this NCAC and USAF CBI campaign in north Burma could act as that ground force. Wavell in December 1942 tentatively signed on to this plan, which appeared to be a reasonable amalgamation of the ANAKIM and X-Y plan. Even Chiang Kai-shek, who had strongly resisted using Chinese forces in Burma, tentatively also agreed to the plan largely to signal to Washington that he was willing to put some of his own in the fight.

This grand plan, however, fell apart in January 1943, just weeks after the three sides had come to an agreement. Realizing that he simply did not have the naval power or land crafts necessary to secure the Bay of Bengal and conduct amphibious operations along the Burmese coast, Wavell informed Stilwell and Chiang Kai-shek that the British could not move forward with their part. Moreover, Wavell’s support for an offensive action in Burma was quickly souring due to the stalling Arakan Campaign, which by January was locked in a costly stalemate. Seeing the British withdraw of naval and amphibious support as political cover to withdraw his own forces, Chiang Kai-shek also

388 Though he believed his ground force would be the main, not secondary, effort.
389 Callahan, 58.
390 Lyman, 243.
391 Callahan, 58.
392 Callahan, 59.
retracted his offer to use Chinese forces in the offensive, arguing that naval superiority in the Bay of Bengal was vital to any effort to retake Burma, a belief the Generalissimo only notionally held. Wavell half-heartedly promised to take up the plan late in 1943 on the condition that he received more landing crafts. With the BOLERO build-up in Europe and the preparations for OVERLORD in full swing, Wavell knew these chances of attaining these vehicles were slim.

“Peanut says he won’t fight” and the British are “SOBs…and won’t take orders” complained Stilwell in a journal entry on January 8th, a day he labeled “Black Friday.”

“What a break for the Limeys [British]. Just what they wanted. Now they will quit, and the Chinese will quit, and the goddam Americans can go ahead and fight.” Both American allies reneged on Stilwell just weeks before the target date and as a result terminated the campaign. The USAF CBI command primarily consisted of combat support soldiers, namely engineers and military advisors, and combat service support soldiers, primarily logisticians that operated the aerial supply chain. Consequently, the USAF CBI force served largely as a logistic, not combat, organization. Stilwell never got the American infantry corps he desired and the Chinese forces under his command would not be ready for combat until 1944. In short, Stilwell could not take Burma alone in 1943 and Wavell and Chiang Kai-shek knew it. Consequently, the Burmese front remained quiet in 1943 and the spring of 1944.

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393 Tuchman, 346.
394 As discussed in Chapter 5, BOLERO sought to raise large, well-resourced force in England for a large invasion of the European continent. The invasion, which operation OVERLORD played a principle role, sought to open a “second front” in Europe and aimed at driving to eastward to Germany.
395 Stilwell Papers, 176.
396 Stilwell Papers, 183.
397 Romanus and Sunderland, Stilwell’s Command…, 34.
398 Stilwell Papers, 187.
While Stilwell’s plan was put on hold indefinitely by virtue of British and Chinese “obstruction,” Colonel Chennault’s aerial campaign, which went into operation starting in the spring of 1942, served as the primary Allied offensive until the summer of 1944. Chennault, who initially served as the commander of the AVG and later as the commander of the 14th Army Air Force, believed that the Allies could push the Japanese out of China and Burma and deal a heavy blow to Japan itself through the use of aerial bombings. Arguing that he could cut off Japanese supply lines, hit nodes vital to Japanese military success, and set back Japanese industrial production with only 500 planes, Chennault, backed by U.S. Army Air Corps Commander Henry “Hap” Arnold, won the support of a wide array of important players including Chiang Kai-shek, Wavell, US naval attaché to China James McHugh, Roosevelt’s personal advisor Lauchlin Currie, Wavell, and at times, Roosevelt himself.

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400 Stilwell frequently used the term “obstruct” in his journal entries to describe the British and GMD’s efforts to delay his plan. Stilwell’s Personal File, 274.
401 n.b. The AVG (the “Flying Tigers”) initially became the China Air Task Force in 1942 before it was reassigned as the 14th Air Force. The 14th Air Force effectively served as the CBI’s air command from late 1942 to the end of the war. As noted in Chapter 2, the AVG was a voluntary air corps unofficially sponsored by the United States government with the help of a few private benefactors. McLynn, 117.
402 Stilwell’s Personal File, 5.
403 Chennault, along with Hap Arnold, was a protégé of Billy Mitchell, the first prominent American air power theorist. Mitchell argued that air power, that is, the use of fighter planes and strategic bombing, render traditional land and naval battle obsolete because planes could hit targets and sink ships with impunity. Unlike his Italian contemporary Giulio Douhet, whose theory primarily focused on the necessity of a country to use bombers to destroy a foe’s industrial base and break the morale of the foe’s citizen’s by bombing population centers, Mitchell argued that fighter planes, in addition to bombers, had a key role in modern warfare. Also contrary to Douhet’s theory, Mitchell insisted that bombers should target “critical nodes” that powered the enemy’s war machine, including factories, bridges, and railroads, rather than simply blinding bombing population centers. Mitchell’s theory gained major traction within the US Army in the 1930s.
404 McLynn, 116; 128.
It is easy to understand why so many found his proposal tantalizing. The air campaign promised not only victory in the CBI, but potentially in the Pacific, without the need to commit ground forces or naval assets to a costly operation. The required amount of resources and estimated causality count was low. This strategy, which relied on the United States to provide all planes and most of the pilots and essentially called for no Anglo-Chinese contribution, understandably won the support of Chiang Kai-shek and the British commanders in the CBI.\textsuperscript{405} By supporting the air campaign, albeit without devoting planes and pilots, the Generalissimo and Wavell could claim to be backing an offensive effort against the Japanese that was far more economical than Stilwell’s plan. Moreover, they pointed out that Chennault’s “Fighting Tigers” had a remarkable 15:1 kill ratio and could prospectively regain the skies from the Japanese zero if only more P-40s could make it to the theater.\textsuperscript{406}

The air campaign was Chiang Kai-shek’s ideal strategy because it asked him to merely use his forces to defensively protect the Allied airfields in China, a measure that allowed him to simultaneously protect his own position, and it allowed him to conserve his men and resources for a potential postwar civil war.\textsuperscript{407} US officials in China, namely US Embassy counselor in Chongqing George Atcheson Jr., were fully aware that Chiang Kai-shek hoped to sit back and let the Allies liberate all of China and win the war. Some went so far as to call for any further aid to be conditionally based on China’s participation in the Allied offensive campaigns.\textsuperscript{408} Roosevelt, however, was generally unwilling to cut

\textsuperscript{405} McLynn, 116.  
\textsuperscript{406} Sinclair, 4.  
\textsuperscript{407} McLynn, 116-117.  
\textsuperscript{408} Memorandum by Embassy Counsel General in Chongqing (Atcheson) to Secretary of State (Hull), September 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1943, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, Volume V: China} (Washington: GPO, 1943), 111.
off the air resupply effort, especially considering the stream of telegrams from the Chongqing that insisted the United States escalate the air campaign to both prove its commitment to winning in the CBI and prevent China’s capitulation.\(^{409}\)

Until the summer of 1944, Roosevelt felt inclined to favor the air campaign partially due to his belief that it was the more efficient option given the limited resources in the CBI, but it was Chiang Kai-shek’s personal complaints, along with the British insistence that any non-air option would necessitate the redistribution of resources away from Europe, that persuaded the president to back Chennault at Stilwell’s expense.\(^{410}\) The air campaign indirectly served British and the GMD’s interests because it nominally put pressure on the Japanese in the CBI and allowed both to conserve their forces so that they could later wage military actions that could help both actors attain their primary objectives in the region. For the British, an aerial campaign would allow them to build up their forces for an eventual coastal and maritime assault in South and Southeast Asia in a bid to reclaim its colonial possessions and imperial glory. For Nationalist China, the bombing campaigns gave the Generalissimo the liberty to save his limited resources and few competent divisions for a renewed effort against his Communist foes to the north.\(^{411}\) Despite the fact that Chennault’s campaign did little to weaken the Japanese in the CBI or help the Allies advance in the theater, New Delhi and Chongqing firmly backed air plan. For these Allied partners’ postwar interests, not wartime effectiveness, were the priority in the region.

\(^{409}\) Memorandum by Embassy Counsel General in Chongqing (Atcheson) to Secretary of State (Hull), September 7th, 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1943, Volume V: China* (Washington: GPO, 1943), 111.

\(^{410}\) Daughtery, 17; Lyman, 243.

\(^{411}\) Warren Cohen, 126.
Undeterred by the fact that his plan had been repeatedly vetoed by his coalition partners and effectively dismissed in favor of Chennault’s, Stilwell continued to train his X-Force in Ramgarh and do what he could to prepare for the ground invasion of Burma, which he saw as the only way to truly accomplish the United States’ twin objectives of reopening an overland supply route and preserving Nationalist China.412 Fortunately for Stilwell, his plan received renewed attention from the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1944, almost entirely for reasons outside his control. Slight progress in Europe allowed strategists in Washington to devote some attention to assessing Chennault’s campaign in the CBI. Upon examining the results, reports concluded that the air campaign had done little, if anything, to further U.S. objectives in the CBI and portrayed the effort in the theater as one where Americans were carrying the brunt of the burden while the British and Chinese sat back and watched.413 By the summer of 1944, Roosevelt and most senior American military leaders finally began to realize that the air campaign was not an acceptable alternative to Stilwell’s ground offensive. The tide swayed further against Chennault with the launch of the Japanese offensive ICHIGO in the late spring and summer of 1944, which succeed in overrunning a number of the American airfields in China and resulted in the loss of a sizeable portion of Allied plans.414 Roosevelt felt he could no longer ignore assessments of Chennault’s campaign that revealed its ineffectiveness. Furthermore, the Allied success in the Pacific gave him the ability to flex his muscle in the CBI and pursue American interests despite his partners’ complaints.

412 Stilwell Papers, 124.
413 McLynn, 393.
414 Schaller, U.S. Crusade, 159-160.
Responding to one of Chiang Kai-shek’s routine complaints about Stilwell and the American effort in China, Roosevelt informed his Chinese ally that he had full confidence in Stilwell’s plan and that the air campaign would no longer be the primary offensive in the CBI. Roosevelt signaled his confidence in Stilwell by relating to the Generalissimo that he was promoting Stilwell to the rank of full general (O-10) and he insisted that Stilwell be given command of Chinese forces so that a ground campaign in Burma could be initiated. Signaling the death knell to the primacy of Chiang Kai-shek’s much favored air campaign, Roosevelt penned, “Please have in mind that it has clearly been demonstrated in Italy, in France, and in the Pacific that airpower alone cannot stop a determined enemy.”

Roosevelt mandated that Stilwell’s ground campaign go forward. The British, despite the fact that they served as the primus inter pares in the CBI, could do little block the president’s firm order due to the fact that they had up to this point shown little indication that they would use their leadership role to take action against Japan and that it was increasingly clear that by 1944, the United States had assumed the role of primus inter pares in the Allied coalition.

Roosevelt’s unwavering support for Stilwell’s plan served as the mechanism that allowed the general to override the British and GMD’s operational veto. If Mountbatten and the British commanders refused to provide the amphibious and naval support in south Burma, they risked losing Britain’s chance to influence and shape the region in the postwar period, which would be fatal for any hope of maintaining her colonial possessions in the Far East. If Chiang Kai-shek refused to provide Stilwell with the requested Chinese forces, the generalissimo risked losing support from his American

415 Tuchman, 470.
416 Smith, 93.
417 Sarantakes, 37
patron, a move that Roosevelt was now willing to stand behind. Stilwell’s X-Y plan finally went into effect in the summer and autumn of 1944, and resulted in a number of key victories at Hukawang, the Mogaung Valley, Myitkyina, Imphal, and Kohima. This string of victories ensured that construction on the Ledo Road, an alternative to the Burma Road, could move forward.

After 32 months in theater, Stilwell finally began to realize success on the battlefield. His political fortunes, however, did not parallel his combat success and on October 19th, Stilwell got the word that he was being recalled to the United States as a result of a deal struck between Roosevelt and Chiang Kai-shek. Although furious that Roosevelt did not “stand up to the Peanut,” Stilwell, being the faithful soldier that he was, simply responded to the news by stating “The War is more important than the individual.” A week later, Stilwell would be on his way back to the United States. Prior to his departure from Chongqing, the Generalissimo offered Stilwell China’s “highest decoration.” Stillwell, in reply, told him to “stick it up his ass.”

Even after Stilwell’s exit from the CBI, the success of the ground offensive in the north continued and the Sino-American gains subsequently compelled Churchill, who feared the loss of British influence in Burma, to direct Mountbatten to move forward with DRACULA, the SEAC plan to recapture Rangoon and parts of the Burmese coast, and

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418 McLynn, 394.
419 Webster, 271.
420 Stilwell Papers, 345
421 Stilwell Papers, 346.
422 Stilwell Papers, 346.
423 As discussed in Chapter 4, Stilwell’s positions were divided up and given to three separate American officers. The former CBI logistics commander, Lieutenant General Raymond Wheeler assumed his position as Deputy Commander of SEAC. General Wedemeyer, who went on to successfully consolidate the various American units and agencies operating in the CBI, took up his role Chief of Staff to Chiang Kai-shek and as commander of USAF CBI. General Daniel Sultan, an infantry officer close to Stilwell, took up the command of the NCAC.
thereby contributing to the fight in central Burma. British Lieutenant General Bill Slim’s success in west Burma gave Mountbatten and Churchill enough confidence to give his 14th Division the approval to launch an offensive in central Burma in the early months of 1945. His forces broke into the plains of central Burma, nearly outpacing his supply lines, and captured the middle part of the country while American and Chinese forces consolidated their gains in the north. On January 12th, the first American supply convoy set out from Assam on the Ledo Road, carrying war material to Chongqing via a land route for the first time in over two and a half years. With north Burma secured by Stilwell’s X-Y plan and supplies flowing into China, American leaders in the theater could finally celebrate the fulfillment of several principle objectives. SEAC Supreme Commander Mountbatten, still determined to capture the coast and reclaim traditional British territory for His Majesty, ordered Slim to initiate the “SOB (Sea-Or-Bust) plan.” Slim drove south from central Burma, racing against the clock because he had just weeks before the end of the dry season and the beginning of the debilitating monsoon season.

The British’s 17th Division was caught along the west Burmese coast and Mountbatten lacked the landing crafts to carry out the DRACULA amphibious assault from the coast. Slim’s 14th Division was not only the main effort in south Burma, his force was the only effort in the theater outside north Burma in late March, 1945.

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424 Callahan, 144-145.
425 Callahan, 148.
426 McLynn, 434.
427 Callahan, 158-159.

n.b. There were some attempts at moving material through central Asia and from Northeast Asia and through Soviet Russia, but these efforts brought a minute amount of material and the United States did not find these to be remotely efficient supply routes. See “The Wild Card” in Chapter 3 for further detail. Memorandum by Standley to Secretary of State (Hull), May 22nd, 1942, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, Volume V: China (Washington: GPO, 1942), 594.
Mountbatten, after successive attempts to secure American airlift to launch airborne assault on Rangoon, finally received word in early April from new SEAC Deputy Commander Lieutenant General Daniel Sultan that Indian Gurkha paratroopers were cleared to utilize American cargo plans to jump into Rangoon. On May 1st, Indian paratroopers dotted the skies above Rangoon while Slim’s 14th Division remained 300 miles north of the colonial capital. Upon touching down, the Gurkha forces found a Rangoon deserted by the Japanese. The orders from Tokyo had already recalled Japanese forces in Burma to pull out of Burma. Rangoon was captured without firing a shot.

Victory without Compromise

British and Indian forces spent the next few months during the raining season chasing retreating Japanese forces from Burma. Although Slim could not claim the credit for liberating Rangoon, he effectively and efficiently cleared the remaining forces from Burma. The X-Y plan in the north, coupled with Slim’s offensive in central Burma and his SOB plan, proved to be the decisive course of action in Burma, but Allies certainly benefited from the fact that Tokyo ordered forces in Burma to begin withdrawing from the front, a move that fit into a larger strategy to retrench Japanese forces closer to the homeland. The Allied victory in Burma came about more so as a result of the partner’s success in the Pacific than its success in the CBI. Victory against Japan occurred in spite of the efforts of the CBI command’s efforts in Burma.

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428 Airborne assault being an operation where paratroopers jump from transport plans and drop into combat.
429 Callahan, 159.
430 Callahan, 160.
431 McLynn, 444-445.
432 Webster, 308.
Still, the implementation of the X-Y plan from the summer of 1944 to the early part of 1945 did prove effective, and its success served as a catalyst that finally induced the United States’ partners to enter the fight in Burma. The ground campaign did not go forth as a result of genuine compromise of interests and operational plans. Instead, the decisive ground campaign finally proceeded due to Roosevelt’s unilateral action to launch of X-Y primarily with USAF CBI and NCAC forces and along with the cooperation of the Y-force in Yunnan. Nationalist Chinese forces fought in Burma because Roosevelt demanded they fight, lest Chongqing lose America material assist and general support, and British forces invaded Burma after it was clear that the X-Y plan was going to succeed in the north and that inaction would risk their ability to retake south Burma. Interests, not joint agreement on operational strategy, both kept Nationalist China and Britain out of the fight until the latter half of 1944, and then eventually brought them into the fight. Roosevelt’s unilateral decision to push for the land campaign broke the CBI command’s operational stalemate.

By the summer of 1944, the United States and its allies in the Pacific dismissed the CBI’s utility in the general counteroffensive against the Japanese. The maritime drive through the Pacific’s blue waters and the successful “island hopping” campaign seemed to promise victory without having to devote men and resources to what was forecasted to be an brutal, costly fight in Burma and China. The CBI command had few gains to point

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433 Stillwell and US commanders in the CBI struggled initially to gain the participation of the Y-force, notionally under Chiang Kai-shek’s control but directly under the command of warlord-general Ch’en Ch’eng, in the X-Y plan in 1944. Chiang Kai-shek put forth a hard fought effort to prevent the use of Y-force, also known as the “Yoke Force,” and Ch’en Ch’eng, although well respected by Stilwell, was not always the most dependable and cooperative ally. It took the intervention of Roosevelt to finally force Chiang Kai-shek to back down on the use of the Y-Force and secure their participation in the ground offensive. Stilwell Papers, 197; Schaller, America’s Crusade…, 155.
to in its over two-year existence. Both the American success in the Pacific and the CBI command’s lack of success led to the CBI becoming a nearly irreverent theater by late 1944. As discussed in the previous chapter, the original American plans envisioned the CBI to play a supportive role in the counteroffensive, not only drawing Japanese troops from the main effort in the Pacific, but also providing a legitimate second front that could join up with MacArthur’s forces in Southeast Asia. Britain similarly believed the CBI to have an important role in the war in Asia, and their “Middle” or “Trip of Sumatra” strategy called for an offensive in Burma. But the CBI command’s failure to agree upon and conduct offensive operations in the theater dashed these plans. Fortunately for the Pacific command, the CBI “second front” was not crucial to their victory.

The individual interests of each Allied partner in the coalition prevented the waging of offensive campaigns in the CBI for most of the war, and allowed for only an under-resourced aerial campaign that few outside of Chennault’s staff truly believed would accomplish any of the Allies objectives. Each player, primarily the British and the GMD, believed that cooperating in an offensive that would likely jeopardize their long-term goals in the region was not worth victory in the CBI. For them, the best course of action was merely to wait and conserve resources. Discussions of operational strategy in the CBI were characterized by “obstruction and difficulties,” as Stilwell described it. Within the CBI command, the most advantageous option for each partner was to not cooperate in an offensive. Thus it should come to little surprise that the coalition

434 Smith, 93.
435 Stilwell’s Personal File, 266.
436 Saranatakes, 30.
437 Stilwell Papers, 164.
struggled to collaboratively plan and execute the campaign in Burma. Where multi-
lateralism failed, unilateralism, backed by the most important man in the Allied 
coalition, Roosevelt, brought about the “coalition’s” success. These victories simply 
came too late to be particularly helpful to the Allied cause; by the time any progress had 
been made, strategic leaders in Tokyo and Washington alike had given up on Burma.
CBI forces succeeded in retaking Burma, but by the time they rolled into Burma in 1945,
the Imperial Japanese Army’s retreat made had made victory *fait accompli*. 
While the X-Y Plan was just getting under way, the Allied forces under the commands of General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz had the Japanese reeling in the Pacific. Allied leaders in the Pacific continued to respect the determination and fighting capability of their foe, but they grew increasingly confident by the summer of 1944 that attaining victory over the Japanese was less of a question of if and more of a question of when. The occasional clashing between the theater’s two five-star commanders, MacArthur and Nimitz, at times created tension within the Pacific’s command, but it never led to the same sort of debilitating command issues that occurred in the China-Burma-India Theater. MacArthur and Nimitz, though competing for recognition from audiences back home, fervently fought for the same objective; consequently their most effective fighting occurred on the battlefields and seas of the Pacific and not in the theater’s smoke-filled command center. Their competitiveness, striving for a single unified purpose, pushed the coalition forward, and the other partners in the Pacific dutifully fell in line. Their success, by October of 1944, convinced Allied leaders that victory in the Pacific no longer hinged on the establishment of a “second front” in the CBI.

The CBI Theater, which at best served as a sideshow in the war against Japan, slipped into further irrelevancy in the final year of the Pacific War, partially due to the efficacy of the Pacific coalition’s fighting machine and partially due to the CBI

439 Van der dat, 294.
440 van der dat, 164.
command’s utter lack of progress on the Burma front in the summer of 1944. It is impossible to say with certainty whether Chiang Kai-shek’s regime would have fallen soldiers following a capitulation of China would have prolonged the war, or whether the coalition in the CBI would have been as successful in Burma had Tokyo not made the decision to begin withdrawing forces in 1945. Yet, as history occurred, it is evident that the Allied reclamation of Burma was not a decisive moment in the coalition’s effort against Japan. This perceived inconsequentiality of the CBI is likely the reason it has been labeled the “forgotten theater” in World War II and is commonly relegated to the footnotes in many surveys on the Pacific War.

This work has not tried to challenge this commonly held notion nor has it tried to make a case arguing that the Allies actions in the CBI influenced the overall war effort in “X” manner, though it has alluded to how Allied actions in the CBI were affected by the coalition’s considerations in other theaters, and to a lesser extent, how the CBI’s actions affected operations in other theaters. Instead, the focus of the paper has examined how the particular national interests of different coalition partners, namely Britain, Nationalist China, and the United States, affected their wartime decision-making in the CBI. This work’s examination of the subject is by no means conclusive, but what is apparent is that the Allies in the CBI lacked the same willingness to subordinate certain particular national objectives for the sake of coming to a shared unity of purpose and a joint course

\[441\] Smith, 93.

n.b. the Allies success in the Pacific, the United States use of the atomic bombs, the Soviet Union’s entry into the Pacific War on August 9th, and the near exhaustion of Japanese resources served as the Japanese leaders primary justifications for the decision to surrender. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman and the Surrender of Japan (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University press, 2005), 1-6.
of action that was present in Europe.\textsuperscript{442} Lacking the luxury of being able to rally under the sole leadership of one partner as was seen in the Pacific, the Allies in the CBI needed to truly come together, pool resources, and work as partners towards a unified purpose. This partnership arguably never truly bore to fruition, and the pursuit of particular national interests continued to obstruct crucial compromises that the coalition needed to arrive at in order to work collectively. This is partially due to the fact that out of the three major players in the CBI, only the GMD regime could attest that the Japanese posed an existential threat, and even so, GMD leader Chiang Kai-shek perceived Japan to be an ancillary threat in comparison to the Communists in North China.\textsuperscript{443} London and Washington believed the war was to be won or lost on the battlefields of Europe or the islands and waters of Pacific. The CBI became, consequentially, an arena for politically bargaining and the pursuit of postwar interests.

Effective coalitions require unity of purpose, a unified multi-national chain of command, and a joint operational strategy, and for a coalition to meet each of their requirements, each partner must subordinate at least some of their personal interests.\textsuperscript{444} This compromise is easier when the threat is existential, but nothing forces a state to join a coalition, per se.\textsuperscript{445} Joining a coalition is a cold calculation weighing interests versus the potential for greater success in battle. Britain, Nationalist China, and the United

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{442} Graham, 322. \\
\textsuperscript{443} Warren Cohen, 126. \\
\textsuperscript{444} An exception might be in the instance that one partner has the capacity to fight the war on its own and other allies serve in of a supplementary role in coalition. For example, the Allied in the effort in the Pacific was largely a United States-led and fought effort, with other players such as Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Dutch, and Free French playing a secondary role, at best. American commanders could largely make decisions on strategy and operations with little opposition, and to a great extent, they did. Whenever another ally took command over a portion of the counteroffensive or operation, it occurred because U.S. Pacific commanders willingly relinquished and delegated it a partner. van der Vat, 164. \\
\textsuperscript{445} Graham, 322. 
\end{flushright}
States attempted to avoid this dilemma and choose both their interests and the benefits of a coalition. As a result, they unquestionably failed to accrue returns on their coalition.

If the CBI can correctly be understood as a theater relatively inconsequential to the outcome of the Pacific War, why does it matter whether the Allied coalition in this theater coalesced to become an effective fighting force or not? First, the CBI serves as an intriguing case study on how states in the past made decisions concerning to joining and participate in coalitions; as such, the CBI Theater provides an interesting example of how failure to establish unity of purpose can result in poor operational success. The need for unity of purpose certainly has a direct and nearly universal application to wartime coalitions, but unity of purpose can also be applied to peacetime alliances, where different states or actors need to compromise on their peripheral interests to ensure efficient pooling of their capabilities for accomplishing their shared primary objective. The CBI demonstrates how failure to establish unity of purpose can cripple an operation in multiple ways. It can prevent an effective command structure from taking form. Or it can prevent partners from prioritizing strategy in congruous ways. Or it can result in the simple failure to agree on the best operational course of action. If the Anglo-American alliance in Europe is the paradigm for cooperation in a military coalition, the coalition in the CBI can be its foil.

Second, the Allied coalition in the CBI serves as a fascinating case for historians to study the perceptions, interests, and actions of three important players during a critical moment in Asian, and to a certain extent, world history. The Pacific War brought the colonial order in Asia, which was surely on the steady decline leading up to the war, to a crashing halt in 1942 when the Japanese military toppled the colonial governments in the
Far East. The future of the political order in Asia, for the first time in a hundred years, was uncertain. Would Britain, France, and the Netherlands reinstitute colonial rule? Or would the indigenous nationalist movements, which now had the support, at least in rhetoric, of the most powerful nation in the world achieve home rule and begin an era of self-determination in Asia? Would China under Chiang Kai-shek’s leadership resume its traditional role as the “Middle Kingdom” in Asia? Or would the Communists, indigenous or foreign, topple his regime and attempt to reconstruct Asia along the lines of a Marxist utopia? Leaders in London, Washington, and Chongqing pondered these questions, and all decided that taking wartime measures to help shape and influence the postwar order was a priority in the CBI region, even if it came at the expense of progress against the Japanese. In this case, bypassing short-term goals could be afforded and achieving medium- and long-term goals were valued as far more important.

This is not to say that the measures each of these players took allowed them to realize their desired end-states. Britain failed to fully restore its colonial glory in the Far East, instead only holding on to small, though valuable, possessions such as Hong Kong and Singapore, but reluctantly relinquishing others such as India, Burma, and Malaya. Chiang Kai-shek failed to suppress the Communist regime in the north and even found himself retreating to the island province of Taiwan only a few years after the end of the war. The Americans gained influence in Asia after the war, but by no means were able to

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447 As already mentioned, Roosevelt, along with a number of key figures in Washington such as Secretary Cordell Hull, believed that colonial rule in Asia was unsustainable and they believed that moderate nationalists groups could bring about a more stable rule in the region. Roosevelt on a number of occasions pressed Churchill, De Gaulle, and Queen Wilhelmina on the issue of granting their colonies home rule, but his desire to see the Asian colonies realize independence never trumped his desire to keep the wartime alliance together. For Roosevelt, the interest of maintaining the good will with his European partners was more important that getting them to commit to their colonies independence. McMahon 10,12.
shape the region or manipulate the growing nationalist movements, partially due to their inconsistent policy with regards to decolonization in Asia. Moreover, Roosevelt’s vision for a US-friendly China serving as the region’s “policeman” never came to fruition, and a far more hostile Mao-led regime came to power. Still, there is value in examining these leaders perceptions and decisions because it both gives historians a window into the outlook of these leaders who were forced to make decisions in a pervasively uncertain world. Also, if historians only studied the “correct” decisions or perceptions of past leaders, there would be very few cases to scrutinize. The Allied Command in the CBI Theater serves as an exemplary didactic case study of how leaders in a coalition, making decisions they believe are optimal for their own nation’s interests, can make suboptimal decisions for the coalition as a whole.

Further study on the topic might include a comparative analysis of the Allied coalition in the CBI against the more successful command in the European theater. Much research has been undertaken about the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers in postwar Japan, but an in-depth study of the SEAC in postwar Burma merits further attention. This work does not intend to be a conclusive account of the Allies conflicting interests in the CBI and the subsequent effects of this divergence, but it does seek to reveal how the unreconciled interests of the primary partners in the theater acted as the primary driver behind the coalition’s operational troubles.

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Assessing the CBI command’s ultimate performance in the CBI is a peculiar task. A critical evaluation of the coalition’s effort should examine the coalition’s identified objectives and determine to what extent those objectives were accomplished. The coalition truly only had one mutually agreed upon objective, that is, the coalition’s macro-objective of bringing Japan to the terms of unconditional surrender, and that objective was accomplished by the Allied coalition, but hardly as a consequence of the CBI Command’s contribution. The CBI command succeeded in reoccupying Burma by the summer of 1945, but the reoccupation of Burma was never a jointly held objective and came about in large part as a result of the Japanese withdrawal from Burma in the spring of that year. Other objectives, such as the reopening of the main supply route through Burma or the recapturing of Rangoon, were realized in 1945, but these objectives remained the goals of particular partners and can not truthfully be labeled as Allied objectives. Thus the predicament that plagued the coalition in the CBI also problematizes the evaluation of the coalition’s success- each major partner had their own objectives and desired end states. Consequently, the coalition failed to establish a unity of purpose and so each partner largely strove to accomplish their own particular ends.

The CBI Command existed less as a coalition and more as an affiliated group of states joined by a common goal. Each partner operated independently pursuing, their own interests. With this being case, all three primary partners largely accomplished their short-term goals at the end of the war, but they generally failed to realize their long-

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450 Recalling the previous discussion in chapters five and six, the United States sought to recapture the northern portions of Burma in order to regain land necessary to reopen the Burma Road. The British hoped to retake portions of the Burmese coast that they believed would be economically and strategically valuable in His Majesty’s reconstructed Far East Empire. The GMD maintained loose claims over north Burma, but indicated little interest in putting forth the effort to assert those claims.

451 i.e. The United States kept Nationalist China in the war and reopened the Burma road, but did not secure a long-term ally in China and had limited influence in the new, self-determined governments in Asia. The
term objectives and desired end states. While there is certainly no guarantee that a more cohesive coalition would have helped these partners accomplish their end goals, it does appear that their individual wartime efforts that sought to shape the region in a manner that would best align with their desired postwar vision were in vain. Perhaps the partners desire to shape the future of the region was unattainable due to the plethora of outside factors such as the explosion of independence movements in Asia following the war and the commencement of the Cold War. The Allied Command, considering the historical events of the postwar period, serves as a cautionary tale for future partners in wartime coalitions of the risk, or more appropriately, the hazard bypassing joint, quantifiable wartime objectives for the sake of individually pursuing diverging, and somewhat nebulous, long-term objectives. Fortunately for the CBI, the partners gamble to pursue their own particular interests did not result in a catastrophic wartime loss. They can chiefly thank the Pacific Command, who unlike the CBI, directed its whole capacity towards a common, but also clearly defined wartime goal. The Allies in the Pacific achieved clear-cut success. The Allies in success in the CBI is debatable.

Winston Churchill is commonly credited with coining the phrase “History is written by the victors.” Churchill’s hypothesis seems to ring true for the European and Pacific Theaters, for the background and stories are relatively well known to the American audience. The hypothesis also seems to apply to the CBI, for although the Allies avoided defeat in Burma, few have written about the CBI command as victors,

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British, reasserted colonial rule of Burma as well as a number of its other colonies in Southeast Asia immediately after the war, but the Empire in South Asia and the Far East quickly disintegrated short after. Britain would lose its control over India in 1947 and Burma in 1948. Chiang Kai-shek and the GMD maintained their nominal governance of China in the immediate postwar period, but soon found themselves forced to retreat to the island province of Taiwan and thus stripped of governing mainland China.
especially in the same exalted-fashion the European and Pacific campaigns are so often illustrated. Taking into account how it achieved “victory” in Burma, the CBI command seems to have earned the China-Burma-India Theater the label “the Forgotten Theater.” The partners in the CBI rode the Pacific Command’s wave of success to V-J day, but unfortunately not into the history books.

452 i.e. Victory in Japan day. In the United States, V-J is celebrated on September 2nd, the day Japan signed the terms of surrender, while Britain celebrates it on August 15th, the day the Japan made the initial announcement it intended to surrender.
Appendix | The Interests and Involvement of the “Secondary” Allied members in the CBI

This work has demonstrated how the national interests, objectives, and end states of the United States, Great Britain, and Nationalist China impacted the Allies’ effort in the CBI. The discussion addressed the roles of these three “primary” partners because the coalition’s progress, action, or inaction depended on the decisions made by these states’ leaders and commanders. Other members of the Allied coalition, namely the Soviet Union, France, the Netherlands, Australia, and New Zealand, played a very limited role in the CBI, either due to the fact that their interests directed their focus elsewhere or that they lacked resources or military capacity to contribute to the coalition’s effort in the CBI. While their role in the CBI was ancillary at best, a brief discussion of their involvement and interests in the theater is warranted because they all, to some extent, played a part in the Allies’ effort against Japan.

Willing, but Unable

France, like its British ally, aspired to retain its Asian colonies and access markets and raw materials in the post-war era. Responding to the outbreak of conflict in 1937, leaders in Paris quickly realized that the Japanese war effort would likely threaten their trade and interests in the region. Furthermore, they feared that the Japanese were taking advantage of Europe’s concern with the political shifts occurring on its own continent. French leaders, plagued by political polarization in Paris and tumultuous economic conditions, while also feeling increasingly insecure geopolitically due to the rise of

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fascist regimes in Germany, Italy, and Spain, reluctantly expended few resources and little political clout to support their interests in the Far East. Like their British allies, the French had few policy options to deal with Japan and consequently French leaders decided their best available option was to join the British in the diplomatic appeasement of Tokyo. The French, in response to Japanese demands, closed the routes in Indochina used to supply the GMD, leaving the Burma Road and intensive overland routes through central Asia as the only remaining options.

Any French effort to assist China in the fight against Japan and to protect its colonial possession in Southeast Asia ended in the summer of 1940 with the collapse of the Third Republic and the subsequent establishment of the Vichy government. The Japanese soon engaged Vichy leaders in the autumn of 1940 and gained “French” permission to utilize Indochina for military operations in Southeast Asia. Roosevelt and American diplomats were outraged by the Vichy government’s perceived collaboration with Japan, which should have hardly surprised leaders in Washington considering the relationship between the Japanese and Germans. Nevertheless, the United States, much to Churchill’s puzzlement, maintained diplomatic relations with the Vichy regime until its demise in 1944.

Following the capture of Paris in June 1940, French interests in the Allied coalition were largely represented by the Charles de Gaulle-led French Forces. Despite France’s swift defeat at the hands of the Wehrmacht, de Gaulle still believed that France

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455 Yu, 5.
456 The Vichy regime nominally controlled France from July 1940 to 1944, largely under the auspices of the Nazi government. The name “Vichy” derives from the town which headquartered the government.
457 Smith, 35.
was a great power on par with the other allies and that it should be an Allied priority to preserve and restore the French empire.\textsuperscript{458} Leaders in London largely sympathized with de Gaulle’s desire to reclaim French colonial territory in Asia and elsewhere, but they knew that he lacked the manpower and resources to take part in any campaign to seize French possessions such as Indochina. Moreover, Churchill did not believe it worth his limited political clout with his now stronger American partner to vigorously advocate for this Free-French objective to be integrated into the Allied war effort in the Pacific. As a result, the British Prime Minister believed the best policy he could offer de Gaulle was one that openly “allowed” Free French forces to retake Indochina, as long as they could so without the support of the United States and Great Britain.\textsuperscript{459}

Roosevelt and the American leadership were far less sympathetic than the British to de Gaulle’s plight and interests. The American president quickly dismissed any prospect of using Allied forces in China and Asia to reclaim Indochina from the de facto Japanese occupation, stating that the French “weakness” lead them to lose the colony and that they demonstrated little capability for properly governing a territory halfway across the world. Hence, he believed that it was better that they allow indigenous leaders take the reins of government after the war.\textsuperscript{460} In response to de Gaulle’s belief that France was still a great empire worth preserving, Roosevelt remarked that the France was in fact “in the position of a little child unable to look out and fend for itself.”\textsuperscript{461} The vaguely defined American strategy called for France to work with the people of Indochina after the war in a sort of “trusteeship” relationship where it would slowly hand over power and

\textsuperscript{458} Smith, 15, 80
\textsuperscript{459} Gardner, 132.
\textsuperscript{460} Gardner, 131.
\textsuperscript{461} Gardner, 130.
governance according to a set timetable.\textsuperscript{462} De Gaulle deplored what he believed to be American “meddling” in French, but also British and Dutch, colonial matters and he disregarded the notion that the French needed “guidance” from the United States. Yet, his complaints did little to influence leaders in Washington and his conceited insistence that the US ought to fight for French colonial interests only further alienated the most powerful player in the Allied coalition.\textsuperscript{463}

While Free French forces did retake Indochina from the retreating Japanese Army in the spring of 1945, the Free and Vichy French interests played a minute role in the Allied effort in the CBI and will receive little attention in upcoming chapters. Still, de Gaulle’s exchanges with the Roosevelt and Churchill further highlight the interests of the United States and Britain, respectively. De Gaulle’s men generally showed a willingness to engage the enemy in combat and fight to oust it from French-claimed territory, but their lack of independent resources and support made them a non-factor in the Allied strategic planning in the CBI and the Pacific.

\textit{The Wild Card}

Surprised by the Wehrmacht’s Operation BARBAROSSA, which drove German forces deep into Russian territory, the Soviet Union entered the war on the side of the Allied coalition in 1941. The Red Army struggled early on against the German blitzkrieg, but eventually they stemmed the Wehrmacht advance and began pushing the line westward, avenging the millions of Russian lives lost during the German invasion of the motherland. The Soviet Union would not formally enter the war in the east until

\textsuperscript{462} Smith, 89.
\textsuperscript{463} Schoppa, 129.
August 1945, just days before the Japanese accepted the Allied terms for unconditional surrender, but Moscow maintain an interest in the Pacific War from its onset and took cautious measures to ensure its interests in the region were preserved and if possible, strengthened. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin did not particular care about the general welfare of the Chinese people or about the Chinese national interest, but he believed that the Soviet Union could accomplish its own objectives in Northeast Asia by furtively supporting China in the war. Stalin and the Soviet leaders hoped to maintain access to ports on their Pacific coast, secure Russia’s resource-rich “frontier territories,” and prevent a rise of a major Asian power on their eastern flank. Battling a confident and highly competent Axis force on its European front, the Kremlin’s primary interest throughout most of the war was to avoid being entangled in the Pacific war, while both seeking to improve its geopolitical and economic position in Asia and maintain a working relationship with the Allied forces in the European Theater.

Wanting to both hold onto its treasured eastern resources and railroads while still avoiding a war in Asia, Stalin voiced his belief that the Soviet Union needed to “tightly tie up Japan’s hands and feet in China, and only when Japan’s hands and feet are tied up can we avoid a two-front war once the German aggressors attack us.” Despite believing in China’s utility, Stalin deemed backing China to be a risky gamble because he perceived Chiang Kai-shek to be a poor leader incapable of running his county. He concluded that the Soviet Union would gain little from a Chinese victory, especially in view of what the great costs of being dragged into a war with Japan would likely mount.

464 Tuchman, 40; FRUS 1937, 22.
466 Schaller, 92.
467 Yu, 22.
Fearing that Japan’s power and expansion would go unhindered, Stalin, in 1937, made a calculated decision to quietly back China in an attempt to check Japan, or at the very least, wear the Imperial Army down so that available Red Army forces could defend the USSR’s eastern territory and resources. The Soviet leader’s motives were not altruistic; he preferred that China remain weak and militarily impotent after the war, but he believed that they were his only available option to counter Japan until the later US entry into the war. Thus, the Soviet goal, like the later American one, was to essential keep China in the war, and to that end military aid and technical assistance started flowing into China from the north starting in September of 1937. Moscow sent Chongqing everything from planes to artillery pieces to tanks to rounds, and with the United States handcuffed by its own Neutrality Acts and Britain and France largely self-restrained by their own policy of appeasement, the Soviet Union stood as the undisputed primary patron of the GMD from the autumn of 1937 to the end of 1941.

The closing of the Burma Road in March 1942 led British and American strategists to seek alternative supply routes, and they found the Soviet Union to be a surprisingly accommodating partner in the supply effort. The Soviet Union agreed to allow supplies to flow through two routes: one being through its northeast ports and along trails into northern China, and two being through its ports on the Persian gulf and along

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468 Tuchman, 407; Memorandum by Standley to Secretary of State (Hull), June 18th, 1942, Foreign Relations of the United States 1942, Volume V: China, (Washington: GPO, 1942), 598.
469 Haslam, 52.
471 Yu, 14.
The Soviet Union supplied the GMD with approximately 900 aircraft, 1140 artillery pieces, 92 tanks, 10,000 machine guns, 2000 Trucks, 2 million grenades, 180 million rounds and 250 million dollars of loans.
rail lines and roads across central Asia.\textsuperscript{472} Desiring to avoid drawing Japan’s ire, Moscow took great lengths to conceal its assistance efforts, and it sought to maintain as normal of diplomatic ties as possible with Tokyo.\textsuperscript{473} Japanese leaders were not blind to the Soviet Union’s covert supply operation, but they deemed it to an issue to complain of, rather than exercising force over.\textsuperscript{474} Aside from the loss of a few fishing boats in Northeast Asia and a few minor skirmished along the Sino-Manchukuo border, Soviet possessions remained relatively unharmed.\textsuperscript{475} This successful attempt to elude a confrontation with Japan resulted less as a result of skillful Soviet diplomacy and more as a result of the fall of the Netherlands and France in Europe and the subsequent Japanese move southward to take advantage of these states newly vulnerable targets colonies in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{476}

The Soviet Union’s absence from direct involvement in the war against Japan lead it to have little say in the Allied operational efforts in the CBI, yet due to its contributions in the European Theatre and the fact that Roosevelt found it beneficial to include another anti-colonial voice during strategic talks, the Soviet Union enjoyed a seat, albeit a back bench, at the Pacific War planning table. Recognizing that the Soviet Union absorbed the brunt of the Nazi war machine starting in 1941 and that the Soviet defensive effort and counterattack had given the Allies time to prepare for their own move against Germany. As a result, Roosevelt and Churchill felt obligated to at least lend Stalin an ear on general Allied matters. Like his American counterpart, Stalin shared the belief that the days of the

\textsuperscript{472} Memorandum by the Counsel General to Secretary of State (Hull), May 6\textsuperscript{th}, 1939, \textit{Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, Volume V: China}, 604, 614.
\textsuperscript{473} Jonathan Haslam, \textit{The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East, 1933-1941: Moscow, Tokyo, and the Prelude to the Pacific War} (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 119.
\textsuperscript{474} Haslam\textsuperscript{103}.
\textsuperscript{475} Bagby, 21-22.
\textsuperscript{476} Smith, 140.
British and French empires had rightfully passed and so he opposed any plan that diverted Allied forces away from the fight against the Axis powers for the purpose of colonial preservation. All in all, the Soviet Union had relatively little say in directing Allied forces in the CBI, despite its substantial aid to the GMD; yet, due to the fact that Stalin’s concurrence on colonial matters with Roosevelt strengthened the president’s hand when bargaining with Churchill, American statesmen occasionally cited Soviet support for their efforts when it was politically feasible.

As I have already stated, the Allies waged their campaign in the CBI almost entirely independent of the Soviet Union’s involvement. The Soviet Union will play a fairly small role in the remainder of this paper. Nevertheless, due to its substantial role in the global Allied operation and its notable role in supporting China from behind the lines, the Soviet’s place in the CBI and in relation to the Nationalist government fully deserves mention in these pages.

From the Outside Looking In

Several other states in the Allied coalition contributed to the Allied effort in Asia and the Pacific, but by virtue of their relatively minute impact on the operational decision-making and war-fighting role in the CBI, they will receive only a cursory discussion in this section.

Despite the fact that enemy forces occupied and controlled its metropole, Queen Wilhelmina’s military forces in the Dutch East Indies remained loyal to the government in exile and stood ready to execute orders on how to combat the expansionist Japanese
menace in the Asia-Pacific. Throwing its weight (and its colonial fate) behind the United States following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Netherlands declared war on Japan in December of 1941 and quickly joined its new American, British, and Australian allies in the short-lived ABDACOM.\footnote{Bell, 92.} Unsurprisingly, the Dutch desired to preserve their Far East colony in order to continue to facilitate its access to the Asian market, strategically stationed naval forces, and draw upon its agrarian goods and natural resources. These interests were, however, tempered by the Dutch government’s realization during the war that it would be increasingly more difficult to maintain this fairly vast possession halfway across the world, and, much to Roosevelt’s delight, Queen Wilhelmina voiced a willingness to enter into a trusteeship with the colony after the war and assist in the process of Indonesian self-rule.\footnote{Gardner, 129.} This willingness, coupled with the perception that Dutch forces were putting forth a valiant resistance to Nazism in Europe and Japanese expansion in the Pacific, earned the Dutch wartime government Roosevelt’s admiration, though this approbation translated into little tangible benefit other than a vague promise to see that the Dutch maintain some trade interests after the trusteeship. Dutch forces, primarily naval forces, stoutly fought the Japanese foe in a losing ABDACOM effort in the opening months of 1942, and a sizeable number of Dutch forces that did not surrender to the Japanese in February and March 1942 continued to fight alongside other Allied nations in the ensuing battles.\footnote{Bell, 92.}

Like their Dutch ally, Australia also entered the war in December 1941. Feeling threatened by Japan’s southward advance, Canberra felt it important to quickly join the fight, presuming it to be preferable to engage the Imperial Army and Navy north, rather
than south, of the equator. Until early on in World War II, Canberra deferred most foreign policy decisions to London and believed that its own interests were best served by following the UK’s lead and accepting the security umbrella that the Royal Navy provided. Hence, Australia’s interest in the pre- and early war years virtually mirrored Britain’s, and Australia’s leaders fully backed the British colonial policy in the Far East in its attempts to appease the Japanese.

While pledging to remain a faithful member of the British Commonwealth, a number of factors slightly altered the policy calculus of Australian leaders in the years 1939-1941, which lead Canberra to decide to pursue a more independent foreign and defensive strategy in 1942. The war in Europe drew not only British attention away from the Pacific, but also caused a shift in military alignment and resources. This, coupled with the fact that Japan proceeded to move southward despite the appeasement offers, convinced leaders that they could no longer trust that the British navy would indubitably underwrite their security. The Australian Labor Party’s traditional line with regards to foreign policy had been that Australia ought to follow direction of the British Foreign Office and work to support London’s objectives, but starting in 1941, leaders within the party, namely Robert Menzies who served as Prime Minister during the early war years, began to voice a belief that Australia had unique national interests that required a foreign policy that deviated slightly from Britain’s. In a 1941 speech that drew the ire of Churchill and many Britons, Menzies stated:

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482 Bell, 29-40.
483 Bell, 10-11.
484 Bell, 12-13.
485 Bell, 28-29.
“The problems of the Pacific are different… I have become convinced that in the Pacific, Australia must regard herself as a principal providing herself with her own information and maintaining her own diplomatic contacts with foreign powers. I do not mean by this that we are to act in the Pacific as if we were completely a separate power; we must, of course, act as an integral part of the British Empire… But all those consultations must be on the basis that the primary risk in the Pacific is bourne by New Zealand and ourselves. With this in mind I look forward to the day when we will have a concert of pacific powers, pacific in both senses of the word. This means increased diplomatic contact between ourselves and the United States, China and Japan, to say nothing of the Netherlands East Indies and the other countries in which fringe the Pacific.”

The governing Labor party’s new independent policy streak lead Australia to make a number of important changes: they began coordinating with the United States directly, rather than indirectly through a British intermediary; they opened “missions” and sending diplomats to important allies and state’s in the Pacific; and they began working with the US military leadership on war planning and logistical matters. But even more remarkable, the Australian military pulled its forces from the Commonwealth effort in North Africa and the Middle East and declined the British request to send a division to Burma in February 1942 to help shore up the Allies “Left Flank,” stating it

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486 Bell, 29.  
487 Bell, 13.  
488 Bell, 38.
was in Australian interest to amass their troops in the South Pacific. As the war progressed, the Australian primary interest of defending its home territory was complemented by a new foreign policy interest that sought to carve out its own sphere of influence in the South Pacific in the post-war era. Such interest in projecting influence was unprecedented in Australian history, but leaders in Canberra, seeing their men carrying a significant load of the war fighting, especially in 1942, believed that they had earned the right to have influence over the region it was fighting to protect. Fighting in the CBI would do little to bolster their claims as a leader of the South Pacific or to directly guarantee the protection of Australia and its neighboring countries. Consequently, Australia went on to play a notable role in the Pacific and a miniscule one in the CBI.

New Zealand’s core interests largely mirrored their Australian neighbor’s. Wellington vowed that they would take the necessary means to defend its islands. Yet, unlike their antipodean compatriots, New Zealand lacked the desire to elevate its prestige and role in the South Pacific post bellum. It was far more willing to follow British direction during the war. Kiwis, despite the threat to their own country, joined their Commonwealth brethren in the fighting in North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. In the Pacific, they contributed a sizeable force to fight under the Allied command and they did so without many operational or strategic demands. Due to its interest in assisting the Commonwealth’s effort in the European Theater and defending its home territory, New Zealand had few soldiers left to spare for efforts in the CBI.

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489 Sarantakes, 65; Bell, 74.
490 Bell, 41.
491 Bell, 156.
492 Bell, 52.
493 Sarantakes, 325; Bell, 56.
Glossary of Names and Terms

Joseph Alsop: American journalist, covered the CBI Theater for the *New York Herald Tribune*

Henry “Hap” Arnold: Commander of the US Army Air Force

George Acheson Jr.: Embassy counselor, Chongqing 1943-1945

Robert W. Bingham: Ambassador to the UK, 1933-1937

General Clayton Bissell: Commander of the 10th AF

Alan Brooke: Chief of British Imperial General staff, military advisor to Churchill.

James Brynes: Secretary of state, 1945-1947

William C. Bullitt Jr.: US Ambassador to France, 1936-1940

John Caldwell: Consul General Tientsin

Claire Chennault: head of the American Volunteer Group; US Army Air Corps

Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi): Chairman of the National Military Counsel, 1931-1946; Leader of the GMD, 1928-1975.

Winston Churchill: Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 1940-1945; 1951-1955

Lauchlin Currie: Economic Advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt

John Curtin: Prime Minister of Australia, 1941-1945

John P. Davies: Foreign Service Officer attached to Stilwell as a political advisor

Chen Cheng: Y-Force commander, 1943-1945

Eugene Dooman: US Chargé d’Affaires to Japan, 1937-1941

Colonel Frank Dorn: Gen. Stilwell’s aide-de-camp

Anthony Eden: 1st Earl of Avon, Foreign Secretary of the UK, 1940-1945

Peter Fraser: Prime Minister of New Zealand, 1940-1949

James Forrestal: Navy Secretary, 1944-1947

Clarence Gauss: ambassador to China, 1941-1944

Joseph Clark Grew: Ambassador to Japan, 1932-1942 (repatriated after war declaration); Under Secretary of State, 1924-1927, 1944-1945

Averell Harriman: Ambassador to the Soviet Union 1943-1946

Emperor Hirohito (Taisho Emperor): r. 1926-1989

Harry Hopkins: Secretary of Commerce, 1938-1940; Advisor to FDR

Stanley Hornbeck: Chief of the Far Eastern Affairs 1928-1937; Special advisor to General Ho Ying-chin: Chinese Minister of War

Cordell Hull: Secretary of State, 1933-1944

Patrick J. Hurley: FDR’s personal emissary; Ambassador to China, 1944-1945

Nelson T. Johnson: ambassador to China, 1929-1941; ambassador to Australia 1941-1945


Archibald Clark Kerr: 1st Baron Inverchapel, British ambassador to China, 1938-1942; ambassador to USSR, 1942-1946; Ambassador to the United States 1946-1948

Ernest King: Commander-in-Chief of the United States Navy and Chief of Naval Operations, World War II.

William Mackenzie King: Prime Minister of Canada, 1935-1948

Prime Minister Konoye (or Konoe): PM of Japan, 1937-1939, 1940-1941

Wellington Koo: Chinese ambassador to Paris

H.H. Kung: Finance minister, Chiang’s brother-in-law
Owen Lattimore: American academic who served as an advisor to Chiang Kai-shek (appointed by FDR)
Admiral Leachy: Ambassador to France, 1941-1942; Chief of Staff to the Commander-in-Chief, 1942-1949
General Tai Li: head of the KMT secret police, the “Blue shirts.”
Frank P. Lockhart: Counselor of US embassy in China 1935-1940; Counsul general in Shanghai 1940-1941
General John Magruder Jr.: Commander of the American Military Mission to China
George C. Marshall: Chief of Staff of the Army, 1939-1945
James McHugh: Naval Attaché to China, 1940-1943
Robert Menzies: Prime Minister of Australia, 1939-1941
Frank Merrill: Leader of the 5307th composite unit (codename GALAHAD).
Milton Miles: Commander of US Naval Group China,
Henry Morgenthau Jr.: Secretary of the Treasury, 1934-1945
Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten: SEAC commander, 1943-1945
Chester W. Nimitz: Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet and the Pacific Ocean Area of Operations
William Pawley: Businessman and sponsor of the American Volunteer Group (AVG)
Franklin Delano Roosevelt: 32nd President of the United States, 1932-1945
William Slim, 1st Viscount Slim, Commander of the British 14th Army (Burma)
T.V. Soong: Chinese Foreign Minister (maintain residency in Washington throughout the war); Chiang Kai-shek’s brother-in-law
General Joseph W. Stilwell: Military Advisor to Chiang Kai-shek, FEB 1942-OCT 1944;
Commander of US forces, China-Burma-India (Lend-lease supervisor, China); Deputy commander of SEAC 1943-1944, Commander of Chinese forces, India;
Henry Stimson: Secretary of War, 1911-1913/1940-1945
Henry A. Wallace: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Vice President, 1941-1945
Field Marshall Archibald Wavell: Allied Commander, Far East, 1941-1942
General Albert Wedemeyer: successor of General Stilwell
Sumner Welles: Under Secretary of State, 1937-1943
Queen Wilhelmina: Queen of the Netherlands, r. 1890-1948
Wendell Willkie: visited China October 1942 to resolve the three demands crisis.
Hugh R. Wilson: Assistant Secretary of State, 1937-1940; Ambassador to Germany, 1938
Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku: Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese combined fleet, 1939-1943
Zhou Enlai: Wartime CCP representative in Chongqing, informal foreign minister

Acronyms, military jargon, and abbreviations

ABDACOM= American-British-Dutch-Australian Command
AO: Area of Operations
ARCADIA= Initial Allied conference in Washington in December 1941. Established the “Europe First” strategy and set up the Combined Chiefs of Staff
BOLERO=early Allied force build up in Great Britain for operations in the European theater
CBI: China-Burma-India Theater
CULVERIN: British proposed strategy that called for a campaign that would be launched from India and would aim to take Sumatra and Malaya and then proceed to retake Singapore en route to Japan.
DRACULA: CBI/SEAC strategy put forward by the British similar to the earlier
FRICION POINTS: Identified points in a chain of command or operation plan where potential or actual problems exist.
GALAHAD: code name for the 5307th composite unit, the US long range penetration group in Burma better know is Merrill’s Marauders.
GMD: Goumindang
MATTERHORN: American-led strategic bombing campaign targeting the Japanese homeland and Formosa (modern Taiwan).
NACC (Northern Area Combat Command): Commander Chinese and US ground forces in the CBI.
OVERLOAD: codename for the Allied invasion in Normandy, better known as “D-Day.”
SAC China: The Supreme Allied Commander in China; refers to both the commander’s (Chiang Kai-shek) position and his force.
SEAC (Southeast Asia Command): commanded British ground forces and Allied air and naval forces in India, Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaya, and Sumatra. Also commanded offensive operations for French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies.
SEXTANT: Better known as the Cairo Conference held in 1943
SYMBOL: better known as the Casablanca Conference, held in 1943, focused primarily on operations in North Africa.
TOC: Tactical Operations Center
TRIDENT: Allied strategic conference held in May 1943; first time significant operations in Burma discussed at strategic level.
QUADRANT: Allied strategic conference held in August 1943; built on TRIDENT talks and added more resources and manpower to the CBI.
USAF CBI: United States Armed Forces in the China-Burma-India Theater

Typical Force Structure Strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Strength Range</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platoon</td>
<td>30-55 (2-5 squads)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>80-225 (2-6 platoons)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battalion</td>
<td>300-1300 (2-6 companies)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regiment</td>
<td>1500-3000 (2+ battalions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brigade</td>
<td>3000-5000 (2+ regiments)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division</td>
<td>10,000-30,000 (2-4 brigades)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corps</td>
<td>40,000-80,000 (2+ divisions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>100,000-1,000,000 (2-4 corps)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[494\] n.b. The Chinese units, with the exception of those trained under Stilwell in Ramgarh, were undermanned. These are the standard ranges for typical American and British units, provided here primarily to illustrate force size for readers less familiar with land-based units.
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*Stilwell’s Mission to China, 365*
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