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### Joseph W. Stilwell Analytical Paper

Joseph Stilwell, dubbed Vinegar Joe for being honest, strong, and to the point, was an American general in the United States Army. He was centrally involved in the Sino-American war against Japan and had proven to be a good leader and influencer. This was displayed throughout his life and the legacy he left behind. General Joseph Stilwell was well informed on Asia and proposed robust, wartime strategies; however, he was unable to implement them as Hurley, and others, impeded his work to the point of unrecoverable measures.

Joseph Warren Stilwell was born on March 19th, 1883 in Palatka, Florida, but from a young age, he was raised in Yonkers, New York. His parents were strict and emphasized religion which he later turned away from, as he felt it did little good for people; he preferred, as he put it, just using common sense. Stilwell was known for being meticulous in his school work and play as a football quarterback through his schooling. He became a bit of a rebellious young adult, hanging out with mischievous friends who began to find themselves in trouble which eventually resulted in them, except Stilwell as he graduated by this time, getting expelled. It was initially planned that he attends Yale University, but his father, however, enrolled him in the United States Military Academy at West Point. This was to enforce a level of discipline that he felt Stilwell needed. His planning paid off, Stilwell displayed a natural leader and excelled at foreign languages and sports while at West Point. During these developmental years, Stilwell gained leadership qualities that served him well in the years to come. In 1910, he married his wife

Winifred Alison Smith and together had five children. One of them, Joseph W. Stilwell Jr., even went on to become a Brigadier General in the army and served in the second World War, Korea, and Vietnam.

In the early 1940s, the conflicts between China and Japan have escalated into a full out war. Japan was becoming greedy as a nation and had plans to claim Manchuria and China. China at this point was not gelled together, if you will, in the sense that there was no leading party. The country was split by the Nationalists (GMD) and the Communists. Japan intended to take advantage of this by claiming “chunks” of China at a time. Chiang Kai-shek, the leader of Nationalist China, was spearheading this battle, but not in a very traditional manner. His army was weak, and his people were suffering greatly as the Japanese army pushed its way into the East coast of China. Japan captured several cities on the coast, including Beijing, Nanjing, and Shanghai. It is worth pointing out that the Japanese took a ruthless approach to this war, slaughtering and bombing unarmed civilians in Shanghai, even after the GMD pulled out of the city. Chiang and his aids decided to trade space for time with the Japanese. This meant falling back, deeper into the heart of China into a town named Chongqing. This was for two main reasons. One, to preserve the lives of those in the GMD party, as their army was feeble against the Japanese military. Two, to buy time in the hopes that the United States would support the GMD in defense of their country. This eventually paid off; however, Japan grew substantially strong in China by that point.

On December 7th, 1941, Japan decided it was a good idea to attack Pearl Harbor, which is part of the United States of America. The attack gave President Franklin Delano Roosevelt cause to enter the Sino-Japanese war and support China in their fight against the Japanese. Chiang and his aids rejoiced that the U.S. was coming to their rescue. However, by this point, the

Japanese influence on the mainland created a semi-circle defense in and around Eastern China.

China had one zone of access that the U.S. could provide support through, that was Burma.

Slightly before this, President Roosevelt and Chiang came to the agreement that a U.S. military advisor should be sent to aid China. Chiang's brother, T.V. Soong, even said that the officer need not be an expert on East Asia. However, Joseph Stilwell, whom Roosevelt chose, was quite an expert in this area. He had lived in China previously and studied Asia a great deal both in the U.S. through schooling, and first hand in their country. During the 1920s and 1930s, he served as a military attaché, where he traveled on the ground through the country. This combined with his great military and leadership training made him a perfect choice for President Roosevelt. As the Burma Road was developing, Stilwell was involved in the American planning on the Southern front, which included heavy machinery and powerful tools that helped in the development.

However, it was brought to his attention that the GMD could only spare two divisions to work on the road from the South, the rest were tied up. Additionally, the Chinese population working on the construction of the road from the Northern front had no alternative but to use hand-tools and raw man-power; to be more accurate, it was not only men, but a large portion of the workers were also women and children. This was a long and difficult undertaking, however, once completed, allowed the U.S. to provide supplies through the new median.

Stilwell clashed quite heavily with Chiang from the moment he landed in China. Quite early on, Stilwell tried to gain full control over the Chinese army to lead them to victory as he saw it. Chiang and Stilwell had opposing views on most everything. One of the most central of these points was that of balance between fighting the Communist party and the invading Japanese. Chiang felt strongly that the GMD fight the Japanese, while at the same time, suppress the growing Communist party. His biggest worry, aside from Japan, was that Mao Zedong and

his Communist party would overthrow the Nationalists. This mentality later influenced President Roosevelt, through Ambassador Patrick Hurley, who lead the President to believe the agendas that he thought was best; regardless of the truth. Stilwell felt quite differently from Chiang, and he was unhappy with the current state of the Nationalist army and Chiang's unwillingness to fight the Japanese. He proposed that by unifying the Communist military and the Nationalist army, temporarily, they would be more equipped to fight the Japanese and reign victorious. Unlike the GMD army, who was ill-equipped, not adequately fed, and had low morals, to name a few, the Mao's army was better equipped, hardy from proper food, well trained, and had high morals. The latter was achieved through the ideology that if a soldier has something to lose, they will want to fight. This turned out to be true. Stilwell was unable to gain the power needed to lead both armies and Chiang did not want to submit to his advice.

Hurley, who was sent by Roosevelt to ease relations between Stilwell and Chiang, ended up being the most significant roadblock to Stilwell. He was an uninformed, ill-educated on Asia, oil-lawyer and former secretary of war, who failed to do his job at every level. Instead of easing the relationship between Stilwell and Chiang, Hurley caused chaos that leads to the unnecessary death of many individuals. He sided with Chiang against uniting the GMD and Communist party and pushed strongly in Washington that the reason for chaos in China was Stilwell. During a meeting in Washington that Stilwell and Hurley attended, General Claire Chennault, known for later leading the Flying Tigers, proposed the best course of action in China was to develop air bases and bring the fight to the skies. Stilwell strongly warned against this as the Chinese army was too weak to defend the bases on the ground, and that Japan could too easily destroy them. However, Roosevelt sided with Chennault and Hurley and gave the go-ahead for an air war. This ended disastrously when the Japanese overthrew the ground bases, just as Stilwell predicted.

By October of 1944, Hurley influenced Roosevelt so substantially that the President essentially blindly followed his lead. Hurley convinced him that Stilwell was causing so much conflict with Chiang that he must be stopped as there is no room in China for the two of them. He proposed that Roosevelt support either Stilwell or Chiang, but that by supporting Stilwell he would lose Chiang which would mean they would lose China. This was not an option. The President decided on October 10th, after Hurley bent-over-backwards to promote Chiang, to recall General Stilwell from China.

It is difficult to determine how the war would have played out if Stilwell had been given a chance to prove his strategy, in good faith. However, Stilwell may have brought this upon himself by being too eager and confrontational against Chiang. Initially, the President sent him to China as a military advisor; however, he took it upon himself to push for complete control over the Chinese army. This initial action by Stilwell may have caused the growing tension between the two men. Had he remained less “attached,” he may have been able to influence Chiang more effectively. However, this is only hypothetical. His strategies without given a chance to implement them fully, seem sound minded and appear to be stronger than contrary plans by others like Chennault which were applied. Would China fall into a civil war and eventually fall into the hands of the Communists had Stilwell been able to unite the two party’s armies? Nobody truly knows, but it seems likely that it would have been more successful.

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