

AN EXAMINATION OF THE FLYING TIGERS:  
THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS IN WORLD WAR II AND TO CHINESE-AMERICAN  
RELATIONS

A THESIS

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Bachelor of Arts

By

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*On my honor, I, Cordelia Glynn-Davidson, have not received unauthorized aid on this thesis. I have fully upheld the HONOR CODE of Colorado College*

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CORDELIA GLYNN-DAVIDSON

## Reader Approval

This thesis project, written by Cordelia Glynn-Davidson, meets the required guidelines for partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Asian Studies at Colorado College

Professor John Williams

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Professor Hong Jiang

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my great-grandmother Marion ‘Bamar’ Davidson, whose personal experiences serving with the Flying Tigers were the catalyst for my interest in the subject. Bamar is a wonderful source of pride for my family, and I am honored to research a history that meant so much to her.



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## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Introduction**

This paper will examine the impact the Flying Tigers had on World War II and their impact on American-Chinese relationships, as well as investigate the Chinese-American relations from 1936 to the end of World War II; and will examine the Flying Tigers as a case study to look at how the complimentary and contradictory objectives of Chinese-American relations resulted in the creation of the Flying Tigers and their success in China. The Flying Tigers or the ‘American Volunteer Group’, were a group of about 100 men who flew across the China-Burma-India (CBI) Theater from 1941-1942. These few men, though greatly outnumbered, soundly defeated the Japanese Air Force in the skies over Burma and China, ending the Japanese Air Force attacks and preventing the Japanese Army from occupying Southern China in 1942. Since Japan had previously won both the first Sino-Japanese war and the Russo-Japanese war, and had suffered no setbacks in World War II so far, this was the first defeat the Japanese had suffered in decades. This defeat marked the last time the Japanese would attempt an invasion of Southern China.

For the year that they flew, the Flying Tigers racked up an extraordinary flying record. To this day, the Flying Tigers are revered across China for their tremendous bravery in service to a country that was not their own. To understand the origin, the true

importance and impact of the Flying Tigers, one must also understand the key conflicts between Japan and China that span the historical period from the signing of the Treaty of Aigun in 1858 to 1942 when the Flying Tigers were flying across the CBI Theater.

This paper will attempt to answer the following questions: What were Chinese-American relations prior to and during World War II and how did their strategic objectives overlap and where did they differ? How did their overlapping objectives lead to the creation and success of the Flying Tigers? Conversely, how did the conflicting objectives between the U.S and China lead to the unsuccessful land campaign lead by General Stilwell against the Japanese in Burma? I will also be trying to determine the success of the Flying Tigers and their impact on World War II.

I must explain why I was interested in this topic in the first place. My paternal Great Grandmother, Marion Davidson, 'Bamar', had the honor to serve with the Flying Tigers from their inception in 1941 through 1942 when she finally flew out of Loiwing just before the Japanese overran the base. In 1941, her late husband's friend, William Pawley, was setting up a company, the Central Aircraft Manufacturing Company (CAMCO), to supply and support the Flying Tigers in China and asked Bamar to join him. William Pawley was a civilian primarily responsible for the physical creation of the Flying Tigers. Under the Neutrality Acts (passed in 1935, 1936, 1937 and 1939), the U.S was officially committed to maintaining a neutral position between the warring parties in Asia.

Nevertheless, with the support of the U.S Army, William Pawley signed a contract with T.V Soong (Chiang Kai-Shek's brother-in-law) in the spring of 1941 to equip, supply, and operate the Flying Tigers in China. He successfully acquired 100

planes and hired 101 pilots and transported them to Burma in the fall of 1941. It was discovered by Pawley's little brother that the Chinese had made no arrangements for the Flying Tigers, and so Pawley created contracts with the British RAF for the use of their bases in Tungoo and Magwe in Burma (Romanus & Sunderland 18-19). Bamar was already experienced in running the American Club in Hong Kong and supplying the PanAm clipper planes flying into Hong Kong, and was also in charge of the American Consulate in Hong Kong following the departure of the American Ambassador in 1940. She accepted and never looked back. Bamar, who unfortunately passed away before I was born, always fascinated me as a child. This summer I was fortunate to receive her handwritten memoirs and some wartime material she had saved; I have begun the task of transcribing her work, to preserve her legacy for my family. Additionally, as a small child my father and I read the Hergé Tintin comics. Our favorite Tintin is the *Blue Lotus*, which follows Tintin as he examines the Mukden Incident. I suppose my interest in this topic could be described as something that has been growing ever since I was a child and first heard about Bamar; and truly bloomed in my junior year at Colorado College when I read her memoirs.

Once in college I was fortunate to read several relevant books about China for other classes. One of these books is *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* published in 1983 by Michael H. Hunt who is currently the Professor of History Emeritus at the University of North Carolina. Michael Hunt has spent a four decade long career dedicated to teaching history, and particularly U.S Foreign relations and contemporary global history. Hunt's work explores the Chinese-American relationship from the 1700's to 1914, using both Chinese and American

sources so as to get a larger less-biased view of the period. In conclusion, Michael Hunt's main theme and theory through this book is that the 'special relationship' [a common description of the Chinese-American relationship] was not really a special one but was rather a tie between two countries that was created and encouraged out of necessity. Hunt's theory explores Chinese-American relations up to 1914, in this paper I will also be investigating whether or not Hunt's theory is applicable to the time period of the Flying Tigers. To this end, I will be looking at to what extent the creation and achievements of the Flying Tigers were affected by common overlapping objectives, and by the self-interests of the U.S and China, as well as how genuine American empathy towards China's plight motivated U.S actions.

While Hunt's book is focused on a large period of history, Daniel Ford's *Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and his American Volunteers, 1941-1942*, first published in 1991, focuses more specifically on the Flying Tigers and their importance during the war. Daniel Ford served in the U.S Army before studying journalism in Germany and becoming a war correspondent during the Vietnam War. Ford has also worked with the National Air and Space Museum and is most known for his research on the Flying Tigers and the Vietnam era. Ford's main observation is that the Flying Tigers are generally overlooked in the United States, even though the Tigers, despite having significantly less men and less resources than their Japanese enemy, were still able to defeat a major Axis powers' air force, contributing to the defeat of Japan.

A third influential book is Carol C. Chin's *Modernity and National Identity in the United States and East Asia, 1895-1919*, published in 2010. Carol Chin is currently an associate professor of history and international relations at the University of Toronto and

specializes in U.S- East Asian relations. Chin postulates that U.S, China, and Japan's modern identities were shaped by their ever evolving U.S-China relationship, and that America needed to modernize and educate China in order for the U.S to be able to comprehend and have a relationship with China. This book was influential in shaping my opinions on how the U.S and China relate to each other and also how each side views their relationship.

Braxton Eisel, a retired USAAF Lieutenant Colonel, has written a mass of historical accounts but it was his work called *The Flying Tigers: Chennault's American Volunteer Group in China*, published in 2009 that truly caught my attention. I believe that Braxton Eisel has demonstrated, and history has confirmed, that the Flying Tigers were not only an incredible fighting machine but also that they were entirely necessary. Eisel was able to show that the Flying Tigers had a pivotal impact on the war in the Pacific. However, when reading Eisel it is paramount to note that he has not only served in the U.S Air Force but that his work *The Flying Tigers: Chennault's American Volunteer Group in China* was published and edited by the Office of Air Force history for the U.S Air Force. This is critical as the book may reflect his own biases towards the actions of the Flying Tigers and may also have been edited by the U.S Air Force.

Charley R. Bond [a Flying Tiger] and Terry H. Anderson co-wrote *A Flying Tiger's Diary*, published in 1984, by using the beginning of each chapter to describe the historical time period and then the rest of the chapter is filled with relevant entries from Bond's wartime diary. This book is a moving way of understanding the Flying Tigers. By summarizing the ongoing events of the war at the beginning of every chapter and then following that up with entries from a Flying Tiger's wartime diary, the reader is not only

able to grasp the factual account as seen by historians but is also allowed to understand the war from the perspective of a courageous and dauntless fighter pilot. Bond flew many missions with the Flying Tigers and was, in fact, shot down once more. It was men such as Bond that made the Flying Tigers the feared enemy of the Japanese and the revered fighting force in the US at a time when everything seemed bleak.

Barbara Tuchman famously wrote *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1911-1945*, which was published in 1971. She uses the life of General Stilwell to investigate the Chinese-American relationship at the time. This, in and of itself, calls into question whether this is more of a biography or a historical account. However, through the course of the book, Tuchman is more than capable of entangling the two, to create a historical account that is navigated by the biography of General Stilwell. She manages this by using grander schemas of Chinese-American relations, which can then become more lifelike to readers when contrasted with the biography of Stilwell and the reality of life on the ground during this time. Tuchman's most compelling dialogue is by far her ability to tie both the historical narrative and Stilwell biography into one cohesive piece. However, Tuchman's and Ford's books are rather similar in that they both use the life of one man to explain the nuances of the time on which they have focused on. However, Ford and Tuchman are different in the style in which they approach this. Ford is more focused on the Flying Tigers and Chennault than on the overarching historical narrative during that one-year span, whereas Tuchman managed to combine the overarching narrative as well as the Stilwell biography. Tuchman and Hunt are vastly different. Hunt's work is an overarching narrative that occasionally included little stories to keep the reader grounded in the work and from getting too lost in the political details, whereas



Tuchman uses Stilwell's biography to explore the overarching narrative and visa versa. It is also necessary to understand that Tuchman's book is popular history and reveals her own preference towards Stilwell over Chennault.

Bernard Nalty was the senior historian in the Office of the Air Force and wrote *Tigers Over Asia* in 1978. Nalty's book covers the history of the Flying Tigers, from their inception to their disbandment, as well as Chennault's huge role in their success. Nalty credits Chennault with the vision that enabled the Flying Tigers to defeat the Japanese Air Force. While Nalty has written this book in a manner that is easy to read, he still manages to convey a massive amount of details. One issue with this book is its lack of reference maps. Nalty frequently mentions locations in relation to each other, however, without the maps it is hard to understand how these locations relate geographically. This book is an excellent source for material on Chennault and the Flying Tigers. While it does contain some of the same content as Daniel Ford's book, the content is written from a different person, therefore with different biases. However, where Ford is skeptical of the American records, it is very clear that Nalty's bias falls in favor of the American sides and reads rather patriotically. This makes sense as Nalty was a senior historian for the Air Force and would naturally have different perspectives and biases than someone like Barbara Tuchman who was a popular historian. While those are just some of the books I've read on this subject, they are the most influential in leading me to my thesis about the critical role of the Flying Tigers in the CBI Theater.

In addition to books, I have also been able to access a copious amount of relevant academic articles. Here, I will briefly mention two of these articles to give a better frame of reference for my sources. First, C. Walter Young's article "Sino-Japanese Interests and

Issues in Manchuria” centers on the global political relationship between China and Japan to explain the intricacies of the political period from 1895 to three years before the Mukden Incident in 1931. While I have been unable to find a detailed biography on C. Walter Young, it is of interest to note that the University of British Columbia in the journal *Pacific Affairs* published this article in December of 1928. Secondly, Edward B. Parsons’ “Roosevelt’s Containment of the Russo-Japanese War” article is a wonderful source of information regarding American policy about this era. Similarly, I have been unable to uncover much about Parsons personal history. However, the University of California Press Journals in their *Pacific Historical Review*, in particular, published this article in 1969. However, I was able to find that Parsons also wrote at least one article about German-American relations prior to World War I.

This paper will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter of this paper will focus on the historical context surrounding Manchuria up until 1936 where China and Japan began their conflict. This chapter will also briefly review the tensions between the Nationalist and Communist parties in China. Finally, this chapter will discuss the U.S’s position towards both China and Japan in this period. The second chapter will focus on the Sino-American relations from 1936-1940. This chapter will explore in detail the objectives and action of the U.S and China leading up to the Japanese invasion of Burma. Finally, the third chapter will focus mainly on the Flying Tigers, how their creation and actions met both U.S and Chinese objectives, and how their military exploits affected the outcome of the war in China. I will also briefly contrast the success of the Flying Tigers with the failure of General Stilwell’s Burmese land campaign in an attempt to discover why these two undertakings had such different outcomes.

## **Chapter One:**

### **A Brief Historical Contextualization**

This first chapter will provide the historical context surrounding the area of Manchuria (Dongbei, 东北). I will explain the significance of its physical location and its relationship with Japan, Russia, and Mainland China. This first chapter will also serve to explain the important events of 1931 through 1936, to provide context for the second Sino-Japanese war and the beginning of World War II in the Pacific theater.<sup>1</sup> I will also briefly touch upon the role of Sun Yat-Sen in the foundation of the Chinese Nationalist party (Guomindang, 国民党), the rise of Chiang Kai-Shek as his successor and how Chiang Kai-Shek found himself exceptionally positioned to help create the Flying Tigers.

#### **Manchuria (东北) before 1931**

For centuries Manchuria has been fought over by nations attempting to acquire the strategic area for their own agendas. Manchuria is located in the Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning provinces, and lies in part of the Inner Mongolian autonomous region (see Map 1). Located in the Northeast of China, it shares three of its borders with Russia, Mongolia, and North Korea. The Han colonization after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BCE allowed

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<sup>1</sup> The Pacific theater for this purpose is referencing China, Japan and Korea.

Manchuria to become an important center of cultural influence. However, while sought after by Mainland China, Japan, and Russia, Manchuria was never completely conquered.

Russia was intrigued by Manchuria because of its convenient location for trading and first made contact in the 17<sup>th</sup> century due to traders and explorers (P.B 415). Over time the Russian traders laid claims to the Qing Dynasty's land near Russia.<sup>2</sup> These pressures gave rise to tensions with China and finally to the first Sino-Russian treaty, the Treaty of Nerchinsk, which was signed in 1689, and forced the Russians to withdraw to the Russian borders. This marks the beginning of international tensions surround Manchuria, as well as revealing Russia's expansionist plans towards China. This treaty lasted until the Treaty of Aigun in 1858 in which Qing China ceded part of northern Manchuria and western Xinjiang to Russia in an effort to show friendship between the two countries. Two years later, in 1860, China and Russia signed the Treaty of Beijing, which reconfirmed the Treaty of Aigun, and also ceded part of eastern Manchuria that borders with Korea to Russia (see Map 2) (Russian-Chinese Treaty of Aigun Concluded; 1860, Beijing-Russia; P.B 415).

Russia's growing presence in Manchuria gave rise to strong Japanese tensions with China: Japan felt that Russia's presence was a threat to their expansionist policy regarding Korea. In 1894 a group of Koreans rebelled against the Government, creating an uproar that spread through the country. That summer the Korean court asked the Qing to aid in suppressing the rebellion. Per their prior treaty agreement, China informed Japan that Chinese troops were being sent to Korea. Japan responded by also sending troops to

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<sup>2</sup> The Qing Dynasty is also referred to as the Manchu Dynasty because in 1636 the Manchurians established their own dynasty, overthrowing the Ming Dynasty. This is the only time Manchuria has been incorporated into Mainland China's rule.

allegedly protect its own interests. After the rebellion had been suppressed, China had expected Japan to withdraw. However, Japan had decided that this was the perfect opportunity to assert and expand its power in Korea and refused to withdraw (Fung 1010). This was the start of the first Sino-Japanese War. As Allen Fung stated this war was watched by Europe with interest to determine the success of “of the modernization programs carried out by the two countries in the years before” (Fung 1007). Within a year, Japan won the war and China was forced to recognize Korea’s independence, pay Japan a large indemnity, and cede her Formosa, the Pescadores, and the Liaoning peninsula in Manchuria (P.B 416). However, Russia was not pleased with the Japanese acquisition of the Liaoning Peninsula, and, joined by Germany and France, ‘advised’ Japan against acquiring the Liaoning peninsula. Japan agreed and returned the Liaoning peninsula in exchange for another indemnity (P.B 416).

In 1896, Russia and China signed a secret treaty that allowed Russia to build a Trans-Siberian railway across Manchuria to Vladivostok just over the Eastern Manchurian border (See Map 3). Two years later, Russia pushed her boundaries farther by acquiring a 25-year lease of the Liaoning peninsula from Manchuria (P.B 417-418). As P.B explains, this overreach of power, combined with the lease of the Liaoning peninsula forced Japan to recognize the true threat the Russia had become towards Japan’s desire to control Korea. This caused Japan to simultaneously seek an agreement on its compensatory rights in Korea from Russia, while also preparing for the potential Russo-Japanese war.

Japan and Russia finally clashed in 1904. In 1899 the Boxer rebellion broke out in China as a protest by the Chinese against foreign occupation. However, after the Boxer rebellion, all Allied troops pulled out of Manchuria except for Russia who stated it would

evacuate only if more of China were ceded to it (P.B 419). All of these power struggles resulted in the Russo-Japanese war. This war lasted only a year, from 1904-1905, and ended in a Japanese victory and in Japan attaining all of Russia's rights to Manchuria. This decisive victory over major Western power was the first time an Asian power had defeated Western one and marked Japan's arrival as a modern military power in Asia.

One important byproduct of the Russo-Japanese war was the growing Japanese influence in China. In his article 'Japan, America and the Chinese Revolution', Frederick McCormick brings up a very valid point. He argues that the Japanese influence in northern China, which existed only after Japan claimed all of Russia's Manchurian territories, gave rise to the Xinhai revolution that overthrew the last Chinese Dynasty (McCormick 46). This claim, while it seems rather bold, actually makes a great deal of sense. Both Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-Shek freely admit they learned their revolutionary ideas in Japan.

### **Manchurian Governance from 1913 until the Second Sino-Japanese War**

Here it is vital to explain the creation and rise of the Chinese National Party, as it is directly tied to the events in Manchuria and the creation of the Flying Tigers. The Xinhai revolution, 1911-1912, took place across China, but the most important parts of the revolution, for the purposes of this essay, regard Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-Shek.

After returning from abroad in 1911, Sun Yat-sen joined the Xinhai revolution and by the end of 1911 China had two parties, Sun Yat-sen's revolutionaries and the Republic of China run by Yuan Shikai (Metallo 267). After years of internal struggle, in 1923, Sun Yat-sen's National Party and the Republic of China finally agreed to work

with each other for a brief period. However Sun Yat-sen died in 1925 without leaving a successor. Perhaps, here, it is necessary to speculate about what this division truly says about China at this time. Now, this nation, beset upon by a more powerful nation is also fighting internal enemies. As the overthrow of the last dynasty shredded the unity of the nation, it is now necessary to understand what was happening in Manchuria

Zhang Zuolin was the autonomous Warlord of Manchuria from 1913-1928.

In 1918, Zhang Zuolin was appointed as inspector general of Manchuria's three provinces and used that power to rule Manchuria as an autonomous state (Careers of Principle Chinese Generals 213). In 1924, Russia negotiated with China to make the Manchurian Trans-Siberian railway branch a joint undertaking. Zhang Zuolin was displeased; as P.B claims he insisted that Manchuria was autonomous under his rule and separate from China. Russia recognized his political independence from that of China, and created an alliance with him (P.B 422). This political alliance undermined the very control that the Japan hoped to assert over Manchuria, their to-be foothold in China, and so Japan, in what could be seen as an effort to induce fear-driven loyalty, ordered the death of Zhang Zuolin in 1928 (Dull 455-456).

Chiang Kai-Shek was born in 1887. He started his political career by joining the Chinese Military Academy in 1906. From 1907-1911, Chiang Kai-Shek served in Japan and developed his admiration for the ideals of the Japanese military. Whelan states that “[i]ronically, Chiang had learned the art of the soldier in the Tokyo Military Academy, and served for a time in the 13<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery of the Imperial Japanese Army” (Whelan 13). While in Japan, Chiang Kai-Shek was convinced by his Japanese companions to join the plot to overthrow the Qing Dynasty. In 1911, Chiang returned to China to fight in the

revolution and in 1918 officially joined Sun Yat-sen's Nationalist Party. After Sun Yat-sen died in 1925, Chiang Kai-Shek, who considered himself to be the strongest contender for Sun's now-vacated position, took charge of the Nationalist party.

Zhang Xueliang replaced his father as the autonomous Warlord of Manchuria. Zhang Xueliang was understandably upset by the murder of his father and after some deliberation sided with Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist party (Young, W. 4). This decision caused Japan to push deeper into Manchuria from the territories ceded to them by the Russians. Chiang notoriously, and in my opinion, ignorantly, proclaimed that he would not resist the impending Japanese invasion, from Manchuria, until he had decimated the Communist movement, the Republic of China's leading party (Romanus & Sunderland 5). This proclamation was the result of Chiang Kai-Shek believing that "the Japanese success had weakened the Chinese economy and hurt public morale" and also believed that the Chinese communists would take advantage of this, and for that reason was more frightened by the threat of the Communists than the Japanese (Romanus & Sunderland 9).

### **Chinese – American Relations to 1936**

American relations with China can be dated back to 1784 when the merchant ship Empress of China left New York to trade in Canton in an attempt to re-coup the American loss of the European and West Indies markets after gaining independence from the British (Hunt 6). After decades of new trade treaties and Chinese rebellion, the U.S initiated the 'Open Door'<sup>3</sup> policy in 1899 that sought to enable China to trade openly with

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<sup>3</sup> Secretary of State, John Hayes, wrote the Open Door policy in the late 1900's. This policy forced China to accept trading relations with all nations in an attempt to keep one country from controlling China's trade. Today, the Open Door policy refers to Deng Xiaoping's mutation that allows any country that wants to invest in China the ability to.



all countries. Here, it seems plausible that the Open Door policy is connected the U.S's own self interest in keeping China open for all nations for its own trading purposes and to discontinue the British autonomy.

However, McCormick is quick to say that the U.S was "[...] so negligent of eastern Asia [prior to 1909] that it was not in possession of the facts" (McCormick 52) This quote shows that the United States, at this point, had no interests in eastern Asia and therefore did not find it necessary to understand. Once fully understanding what was happening in Asia, the U.S put forward a 'neutralization proposal' that would meet the needs of Russia, China and Japan in regards to Manchuria (McCormick 52-53). McCormick contends that this proposal was rooted in the fact that the U.S's interests in Asia could not be satisfied by supporting just one of these three countries.

Several important conclusions can be reached by surveying this section of history. For a start, this marks the beginning of Japan as an aggressive military power. Japan's defeat of Russia in the early 1900's was the first time an Asian power successfully defeated a major European power and marked the emergence of Japan as the preeminent Asian power. Moreover, this was also the start of Japans' expansion across Asia with the occupation of Manchukuo and Korea. Further, Japan's defeat of China in Korea was the first marker that Japan, despite being a far smaller island nation, was strong enough to successfully defeat the largest country in Asia on the battlefield.

In contrast, The United States 'Open Door' policy signaled that the U.S did not have any interest in occupying China but was more interested in opening China as a trading partner for itself and other nations. This policy signals that even though the U.S does not want to occupy the nation, the U.S does want to further its own trading interests

by refusing to allow any single country to control China. I believe that America's birth as a revolutionary country, freeing itself from colonial occupation, motivated it to oppose the colonization of China by any nation. To this end, Roosevelt expressed deep frustration with the British attempts to use World War II to further expand its empire and vehemently refused to support any military action seeking to reinstitute the British Empire.

After World War I, America decided not to enter the League of Nations, instead choosing an isolationist stance. Therefore America took no significant action in regards to the rise of Japanese Imperialism. At home, America allowed its military to dwindle, feeling no need to keep it in fighting shape, as the intent was to avoid participating in any international military conflicts.

This period was also the beginning of conflict between the Chinese Nationalist and the Chinese Communists. Beginning with the tensions between Sun Yat-sen and Yuan Shikai as both were trying to become the new leader of China. Over the ensuing years, despite the rise of Japan as a threat towards China, the Communists and the Nationalists only agreed to work together twice, and were only able to make that happen a second time because in 1936 Chiang Kai-Shek was taken hostage by two of his own generals, one of who was Zhang Xueliang, for two weeks, in what is known as the Xian Incident, in an apparent attempt to force Chiang Kai-Shek to see reason and put China before its internal struggles (Romanus & Sunderland 5). This Incident resulted in the Nationalist and Communist parties agreeing to a temporary peace until the Japanese threat was dealt with. This strain between the two parties continued to grow over the duration of World War II and culminated in the Civil War from 1945-1949, which put an

obvious pressure on the U.S who were supporting Chiang Kai-Shek as well as on the Japanese who were supporting the Republic.

### **Manchuria After 1931**

As a result of Zhang Xueliang's decision to side with Chiang Kai-Shek, and worried about the Russian presence on the Manchurian border, on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1931 a portion of the Japanese army located in the Mukden sabotaged their own railway to make it seem like a rebellious Chinese incident, this is known as the Mukden Incident (See Figure 1). The Japanese Army used this 'incident' as justification to invade northern Manchuria. Some historians, whom I agree with, believe that the Japanese reasoning behind this self-sabotage was an attempt to begin a full invasion of China and take her resources to further the Japanese Empire (Ferrell 67). Chiang Kai-Shek was in the process of unifying China under the Nationalist party, and offered no resistance. Instead Chiang Kai-Shek asked the League of Nations to determine the outcome (perhaps this first attempt at garnering outside help signals Chiang Kai-Shek's understanding that he alone was too weak already); Japan was accused of being the attacker, and responded by leaving the League and occupying Manchuria until 1945. Japan seized Mukden and northwest and southwest Manchuria; regardless of the fact they had claimed many times invading China was not their intention (Wright 43). As if to justify this claim and their actions, Japan then announced that Manchuria's army was separate from the Chinese army and were therefore only guerillas (Wright 43). After gaining control of Manchuria

the Japanese renamed it the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo. This marked the first time Japan took a piece of China for herself in this period.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **The Political Scene from 1937-1940**

This chapter will deal primarily with the time period from 1937-1940, especially regarding China-American relations; Japan's continued occupation of Manchuria and expansion into the rest of China; as well as the biographies and actions of Joseph Stilwell and Claire Chennault. This chapter will set the stage for the creation of the Flying Tigers as well as explaining the entangled U.S-Chinese relations. I will also attempt to answer what Chinese-American relations prior to and during World War II and how did their strategic objectives overlap and where did they differ? How did their overlapping objectives lead to the creation of the Flying Tigers?

#### **Marco Polo Bridge Incident 1937**

Japan continued to remain a threat to the Nationalist party. Then, in the summer of 1937 there was a skirmish between the Japanese Army and Chinese forces that lit the spark for the Second World War. Japan forces were on maneuvers near a railroad bridge, next to the Marco Polo Bridge, which was the only remaining access to Peiping not under Japanese control (Tuchman 30). As the story goes, a small Japanese force was looking for one of their own soldiers and requested entry into a Chinese garrison town to continue their search. The Chinese garrison refused and a shot was fired. This single shot resulted in firing by both sides and exploded into what became the Second Sino-Japanese war

(1937-1945) (Eisel 6). This collision of forces at the Marco Polo Bridge became a stalemate; Japan demanded that China withdraw their troops from the bridge while at the same time beginning to mobilize their forces while awaiting a response from the Chinese. Chiang Kai-Shek's response from Kuling was historic: he declared that "no further positions in northern China could be surrendered and that a settlement with Japan must not invade sovereign rights or territorial integrity" (Tuchman 210). As Tuchman so aptly states "it was a statement that China's limit of endurance had been reached and that she was accepting the necessity of armed resistance" (Tuchman 210).

Japan responded with a soul crushing attack on Shanghai in 1937. This resulted in a horrific death toll, the most since the Somme in World War I, caused by Japanese dive-bombers and field guns. This Japanese rampage in Shanghai first caused the world to pay attention to China's plight. The most sobering of images to reach the West was of a crying baby, sitting on tracks in the middle of an empty street, which had been blasted by an explosion (See Figure 2) (Tuchman 214). The horrific actions of the Japanese in China resulted in endearing China's plight to the American public (despite their continued desire to remain isolationist), and key government figures.

Following their victory in Shanghai, the Japanese destroyed the Chinese capital of Nanking in December of that year, in what is known as 'the Rape of Nanking'. 42,000 civilians were horrifically killed by 50,000 Japanese troops, who bayoneted, machine-gunned or burned their victims alive (Tuchman 225). As if these acts of inhumanity weren't enough, the Japanese troops photographed these incidents as if to keep some sort of trophy. These terrible photos made their way into Western newspapers and furthered publicized the plight the Chinese (Tuchman 225).

October of 1937 saw the fall of Canton. This Japanese occupation closed off China's last access by sea to the outside world, and China became truly stranded. By the end of 1937, Japan had over 1 million armed troops in Mainland China, and now sought a Sino-Japanese treaty recognizing the Japanese occupation of China. Chiang Kai-Shek refused to negotiate with the Japanese (Tuchman 247). In October of 1938, the Imperial Japanese Army captured Wuhan, forcing Chiang Kai-Shek and his troops to retreat to Chungking. Chiang Kai-Shek refused to negotiate with Japan, and so Japan launched the first major bombing raids on the city of Chungking.

### **American Isolationism**

At this point, America was still very much in a neutral position, due to the strong isolationist views of the American public. Tuchman notes that in September of 1937, the White House State Department received 2000 letters, of which 95% demanded the US remain at peace, and 80% were in favor of peace at all costs, with only 15% opposed to neutrality believing it would benefit Japan to China's detriment (Tuchman 223). President Roosevelt's views were different, influenced by his family's history as ship merchants in China; he privately said that he "always had the deepest sympathy with the Chinese people" and that his instinct was to support China (Tuchman 220). According to his closest advisor on foreign policy, Sumner Welles, Roosevelt was enraged by the Japanese' conduct in 1937 and was "far more preoccupied with the threat of Japan than the threat of Germany" (Tuchman 221) However, Roosevelt did not take any official action at this time.

Nevertheless, China's resistance against Japan impressed America. In 1937, Time Magazine named Generalissimo and Madam Chiang Kai-Shek "Man and Wife of the Year" (See Figure 3). Henry Luce, Times publisher, had been born in China to U.S Missionary parents. At this time in American history the Missionary movement in China was firmly and publicly in support of China and of Chiang Kai-Shek's Christianity (Tuchman 238).

By this point, Japan was linked to Germany and Italy as a fascist country, and therefore many Americans regarded Japan as another enemy of Western democracy. In this year a poll showed that only 2% of Americans were pro-Japanese with 74% being pro-Chinese (Tuchman 240). The Japanese occupation of China also violated the American Open Door policy which prompted an official protest of the Japanese' actions (Tuchman 249). However, the U.S did not take any action at this time.

### **The Prelude to the Flying Tigers**

Following the death of Sun Yat-Sen, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek ran the Nationalist Government. The Generalissimo realized he would need external aid to be able to effectively fight the Japanese while working out a wartime agreement with the Chinese Communist Party. After the British government refused to aid Chiang, he turned to the U.S who agreed to an unofficial mission in China. In 1932, Colonel Jack Jouett helped establish the first Chinese flight school (Eisel 5). Sadly this flight school ended almost as quickly as it started; Japan decided that this flight school was a threat and used diplomatic pressure to put an end to the school (Whelan 17). It was after this that Chiang Kai-Shek hired Claire L. Chennault in 1937. While the National Government and the



Communist Party were still in discord, the Xian treaty was still in effect, thereby forcing the two parties to work together until the Japanese had been defeated. It is interesting to note that before turning to the U.S, Chiang Kai-Shek asked Britain, Germany, and Italy for help. Germany actually was hired to train over 30 Chinese divisions but resigned after allying with Japan; Britain refused, as they had no resources to spare; Italy was hired after Germany, but again, resigned after joining the Axis powers. At this time the U.S still had a small military, reflecting their desire to stay an isolationist society, this may have originally deterred Chiang Kai-Shek, it is clear that the U.S was not his first choice.

### **Major Chennault**

Claire L. Chennault (See Figure 4) was “a proud man with strong convictions [...] [who] battled his superiors and the enemy alike with tough aggressive tactics” (Eisel 1). In 1927 Chennault was given command of the Hawaiian 19<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron. It was during his time as a pursuit instructor, in 1931, that Chennault developed the fighter tactics that he would use with the Flying Tigers. Unfortunately, in 1937 Chennault was forced to retire due to medical problems he had developed. It was just before his retirement that General Mow of the CAF saw Chennault performing with the Air Force Aerobatic Team and recommended him to Chiang Kai-Shek as a viable option for CAF leadership (Eisel 5). Chennault’s leadership and aggressive fighter tactics would prove inspirational to the Flying Tigers. Chiang Kai-Shek, who was concerned about the state of his air force now that the second Sino-Japanese war had begun, asked Chennault to come to China to help overhaul the Chinese National Air Force. After reporting that the Chinese National Air Force was in no condition to fight, Chiang Kai-Shek hired

Chennault to be de facto Chinese National Air Force commander and an advisor (Eisel 7). Chennault began his overhaul of the Chinese National Air Force by trying to hire pilot mercenaries that could bulk up the force while he trained the Chinese pilots properly. However, after many failures Chennault ended the mercenary involvement (Eisel 7). By the time Chennault had been hired, the Japanese had taken both Beijing and Shanghai. This left the Burma Road as the only supply route available to the Chinese. Chiang Kai-Shek ordered the construction of the Burma Road in 1937 (See Figure 5 and 6). This road was connected to the end of a railway in Lashio that started in Rangoon (See Map 5). At Lashio trucks would take the supplies over the Burma Road to Kunming where Chiang was based. The Burma Road was quite literally carved into the mountainside. The addition of the Burma Road allowed supplies to be delivered to Chiang's air and ground forces again (Whelan 25).

### **Across the Pond**

In 1940, the American Army was only 241,000 strong, of which there were only 5 organized divisions and none were fully equipped (Tuchman 265). In June of that year, France fell to the Germany; the United Kingdom was left to fight alone in the 'Battle of Britain' with the heroic RAF and Winston Churchill's immortal words to face their "finest hour". The following month, President Roosevelt put a 'total defense program' in front of Congress calling for an army of 1,200,000 men, a matching air force and a two-ocean navy, for nearly 5 billion dollars (Tuchman 268). Military experts estimated that implementing this program would take two years. However, Congress was not ready to commit to such a large war effort. In fact, in October of 1941, the opposition to America

going to war was still so powerful that the extension of the draft was only passed by a single vote in Congress (Tuchman 287). While the American public opposed entering U.S involvement in war, American military planners had already foreseen that war against Germany, or Japan, or both could well happen in the near future. The task now presented to America was to avoid war with both Japan and Germany until America was war-ready.

Conversely, the German victory over France was a turning point for Japan that led them to begin negotiating an alliance with Germany in 1940. The German victory also resulted in the rise of the Vichy France. Vichy France became allies with Japan and Germany, agreeing to Japan's request that they close the railroad from Hanoi to China (Romanus & Sunderland 8). Just a few days later, Japan joined into a pact with Germany and Italy that suggested mutual offensive action against the U.K and U.S (Romanus & Sunderland 8). Britain, the last man standing, could not refuse the Japanese request that the Burma Road be shut; Britain closed the road for three months and excused their action as an attempt to allow Japan and China to come to an agreement. This road was China's last lifeline to the West, scratched out of mountains by thousands of men, women, and children (Tuchman 270). Germany's victory over France also emboldened Japan to ask that China recognize their occupation, and again Chiang Kai-Shek refused.

In September of 1940, more than one year before entering the war, President Roosevelt, together with the Secretary of State Stimson, and Secretary of Defense Knox, Army Chief of Staff Marshal, and the Naval Chief of Staff Stark, reached the fundamental decision that in the event the U.S went to war, the strategy implemented would prioritize offensive action in Europe and defense in the Pacific (Tuchman 274).

This 'Europe first' strategy reflected the American believe that Europe was the site of world power.

## **Chapter Three:**

### **The Flying Tigers**

This chapter will focus on the Flying Tigers' role in World War II from 1941-1942. I will examine how Chinese and American objectives during World War II led to the creation and success of the Flying Tigers. I will cover the actions of Claire Chennault, The Flying Tigers, Joseph Stilwell, and Chiang Kai-Shek and how the two separate campaigns had very different results. I will further analyze how Flying Tigers war efforts affected the outcome of World War II and how successful they were.

#### **The Creation of the Flying Tigers**

In the fall of 1940, under Generalissimo Chiang's orders, Chennault flew to Washington D.C to discuss the Chinese acquisition of U.S planes, pilots, and ground crews (Eisel 7). After meeting with Madam Chiang's brother, Dr. T.V. Soong, Chennault drew up the requirements the CAF would need the U.S to supply. The request comprised of 500 American fighter planes, medium bombers and heavy bombers manned by American pilots flying in the service of China, as well as American ground crews, training planes, parts, field equipment, together with a large loan of roughly \$200-300 million to finance the project (Tuchman 275). Chiang Kai-Shek argued that the planes could hit Japanese planes at their bases and that the long-range bombers would be able to carry the war into Japan proper. He also argued that medium bombers and fighter planes

could effectively harass Japanese sea-lanes, which would help protect Singapore and prevent Japan from controlling China's coast and from bombing the Burma Road [which, at this point, had been re-opened]. Chiang Kai-Shek also warned that China's economy and morale were close to collapse and if help did not come soon "it would be too late and China's position would be extremely if not hopelessly critical" (Tuchman 275).

Chennault and Soong worked together to get policy makers on their side as well as using Soong's "contacts with the Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox and the Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau to plant the idea with President Franklin Roosevelt" (Eisel 9). President Roosevelt proceeded to send Dr. Lauchlin Currie to China for a situation evaluation. Currie reported "the dire state of the Chinese's defenses and the impact should Japan knock China out of the war" (Eisel 9). Following Currie's report and Chiang's warning that that "if Wang [Japanese puppet ruler of Manchuria/Manchukuo] attracted support in China, he would free Japan to move south, seizing oil from the Dutch Indies and perhaps joining hands with Germany and Italy across the Indian subcontinent", and in conjunction with the belief that U.S airpower over China's sea-lanes would deter Japan from making a drive for southern China, and with the prospect of American flown B-17's attacking Japan itself, President Roosevelt decided to aid China (Ford 31).

Beyond these strategic objectives, Chinese sympathizers simply wanted to help China: "I wanted so much to give these poor men who have been fighting so hard for four years everything we can" said Secretary Stimson. Roosevelt said "I have a real fear that the domestic situation in free China will deteriorate unless we do something fast" (Tuchman 279). While the U.S had not officially entered World War II, the highest levels

of government believed that fighting in World War II was inevitable, as reflected in the 'Europe First' strategy devised before entering World War II, and aiding China was in the U.S's best interest (Eisel 1). It is evident that the combination of the United States own self-interests and genuine sympathy shows that the United States agreed to the creation of the Flying Tigers for at least these two reasons.

With the decision to adopt the 'Europe First' strategy, supply the U.K and the need to rebuild its own armed forces, the U.S did not have the manpower or interest in fighting a land war in Burma or China. At the same time, China had a potential army of more than three million men, which could, in theory, be harnessed to fight the Japanese. On the other hand, China had neither the trained pilots nor quality fighters needed to successfully fight in the air against Japan. From as early as the Russo-Japanese war, however, Japan had demonstrated its first rate air force and technologically advanced planes. The United States, therefore, decided to use a group of volunteers, the American Volunteer Group (the Flying Tigers), to gain experience in the war while also supporting the China in its fight against Japan. The U.S also saw that the longer the Japanese fought China the less soldiers Japan could send across the Pacific to fight in the West (Clancey 2-3,18). The U.S believed that providing U.S volunteers to fight in the Chinese air force would not provoke Japanese military retaliation, as the U.S could always claim the actions for these men fell under the purview of the Chinese government. A claim that would protect America with no regard for what that could mean for these men.

Once the decision to create the Flying Tigers had been made, the problem now was how to support the operation. Due to America's prior isolationism, the military was experiencing a major supply shortage in all respects. According to Tuchman:

“The United States did not have on hand enough planes to meet its own minimum requirements. Shortages in all branches of materiel were such, according to a war department survey in September, that the army could not activate and maintain in the field a combat ready force of more than 55,000 [...] Present production rates gave no hope of equipping the expanding Army, Navy and air arm, while at the same time filling British needs, before April 1942.” (Tuchman 278-279).

The U.S Army and Navy resisted the recruitment of their troops to volunteer for an air mission in Burma. “[I]t took direct personal intervention from President Roosevelt to pry the pilots and ground crews from the Army and Navy” in the form of an unpublished executive order (Flying Tiger Association). This reluctance reflected the U.S military commitment to their ‘Europe first’ strategy and their resistance to providing Chiang Kai-Shek with supplies which they believed would be better used in Europe and have a more important and direct impact upon the United States.

The American ‘Europe First’ strategy was reaffirmed in the 1941 Atlantic Conference between the U.S and U.K – the Chinese were not invited to be a part of this (Tuchman 289). The U.S Army/ Navy Joint Military Board had not only realized by now that without the U.S, Germany could not be defeated by the countries it was facing, but also that Britain and the Netherlands would not be able to survive a Japanese attack in Malaysia or the Indies. To this end, they understood that they must implement a plan with which to face war with both nations. The ‘Europe First’ strategy met this objective: fight an offensive war against Germany while defending against Japan with China playing an active role (Tuchman 288-289).

On November 4<sup>th</sup> of that year, President Roosevelt requested Stark and Marshall’s view on U.S aid to China. They replied by saying that in light of recent activity “no U.S armed forces be sent to China; that reinforcement and equipment of the AVG be expedited; that aid to China be accelerated; and that no ultimatum be sent to Japan”



(Romanus & Sunderland 40). This reply does not undermine the ‘Europe First’ strategy, but rather says that the ‘Europe First’ strategy does not prevent the U.S from aiding China or from creating and operating the Flying Tigers and that the U.S determination to avoid an offensive war with Japan did not prevent it from enabling China to continue its fight against Japan or from creating a Volunteer air force in service of the Nationalist Government – the Flying Tigers.

In 1941, despite the ‘Europe First’ strategy, Chennault was able to obtain 100 planes for the Flying Tigers taken from a British allotment (Ford 34). Based on the capabilities of the planes and his previous experience as a pursuit instructor, Chennault drew up the fighter tactics he believed to be best suited to the Tomahawks he acquired. Chennault decreed that he would “employ a two-plane flight against enemy fighters, for better maneuverability: but use a three-plane flight against bombers, for increased firepower” (Ford 71). The Flying Tigers were to dive on enemy planes from above, using their superior climbing capabilities and greater speed, while open firing with nose guns until they reached a closer distance and then using their wing guns. This ‘climb and dive’ was to be repeated as much as necessary but under no circumstances was a Tomahawk to engage in one-on-one dogfights with the Japanese fighter planes which were more maneuverable and could turn more tightly than the P-40’s (Ford 72).

### **The Design of the Flying Tigers**

The Flying Tigers were created to defend from Japanese bombing attacks in China and Burma (especially the port city of Rangoon) and to provide air defense over the Burma Road so that the Nationalist Government could receive the supplies they

needed to continue the defense of their country from the Japanese. As mentioned the loss of Beijing and Shanghai meant that the only supply route that China could utilize was Rangoon sending supplies up the Burma Road. Crucially, the Flying Tigers were able to keep Rangoon and the Burma Road open for many months, which slowed down the Japanese invasion of Burma and the eventual attempted invasion of Southern China.

The famous emblem of Flying Tiger's came about after one pilot remembered, "the Japs, an island people of fishing fleets and navies and odd religious believes, entertained a wholesale fear of sharks"; so the men of the AVG painted on a red mouth, flashing teeth, and the eye of a tiger shark (Whelan 45). This was not an original idea though; in previous wars other aircraft had utilized this decal. To further distinguish their planes, the AVG invited several Disney animators to come up with an idea. The end result was "the figure of a flying Bengal tiger with two comically ineffectual wings, flying bravely through a "V" for "Victory"" (See Figure 7) (Whelan 46).

After originally inspecting the Chinese air theatre in 1937, Chennault saw that there was a great need for an air raid warning system. When describing the warning system eventually put into place, Chennault said:

The Chinese air-raid warning system was a vast spider net of people, radios, telephones, and telegraph lines that covered all of Free China accessible to enemy aircraft. In addition to continuous intelligence of enemy attacks, the net served to locate and guide lost friendly planes, direct aid to friendly pilots who had crashed or bailed out, and helped guide our technical intelligence experts to wrecks of crashed enemy aircraft. (Flying Tigers Association).

These intricate systems allowed Chennault to be aware of incoming Japanese air raids permitting him to let the Japanese come to them so as not waste fuel or planes by sending the AVG into the air prematurely (Regan). This early warning system proved to be a key factor in the success of the Flying Tigers.

The Flying Tigers started training in Toungoo, Burma while the Central Aircraft Manufacturing Company (CAMCO) assembled the P-40 planes Generalissimo Chiang had bought. Chennault spent a great deal of time making sure that each of his pilots knew everything they could possibly need to know before they could begin their campaign across the whole China-Burma-India Theater supporting ground troops, attacking certain ground targets and engaging the enemy in the air. Chennault is quoted saying:

Every pilot who arrived before September 15 got seventy-two hours of lectures in addition to sixty hours of specialized flying. I gave the pilots a lesson in the geography of Asia that they all needed badly, told them something of the war in China, and how the Chinese air-raid warning net worked. I taught them all I knew about the Japanese. Day after day there were lectures from my notebooks, filled during the previous four years of combat. [...] Captured Japanese flying and staff manuals, translated into English by the Chinese, served as textbooks. From these manuals the American pilots learned more about Japanese tactics than any single Japanese pilot ever knew. (Flying Tiger Association).

These men had no idea that they were going to become one of the history's finest fighter groups.

The Tigers had not yet finished training when Pearl Harbour was bombed on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941 and America entered into war with Japan. At Pearl Harbour the U.S lost eight of its capital ships, over 150 planes, and 4000 casualties (Tuchman 298). The Japanese started the war with a Navy almost equivalent to the American, British and Dutch naval forces in the Pacific combined. At this point, Japan still had 10 battle ships and an equal amount of carriers with roughly 500 planes, while the Allied forces had 3 battle ships and 3 American carriers (Tuchman 298). On land the Japanese Army had 51 divisions, with a total of 21 in Mainland China, 13 in Manchuria, and 11 assigned to Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific; in comparison the only American land troops were in the Philippines, soon to be defeated by Japan (Tuchman 298). Japan embarked on

a series of impressive victories, Guam and Wake Island fell on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, Hong Kong on Christmas Day, Manila on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1942. Japanese troops invaded the Netherland's Indies, occupied Thailand, and Indochina was opened up by the Vichy regime, bringing Japan to the Burma border (Tuchman 299; Romanus and Sunderland 8).

### **General Stilwell and Chiang Kai-Shek**

Joseph Warren Stilwell (See Figure 8) began his military career as a West Point graduate in 1904 (Tuchman 16-17). From there he served with the American Expeditionary Force during World War I. Stilwell served in Tien Tsin from 1926-1929 and was also a military attaché in Beijing from 1935-1939 (Tuchman 114). After the attack on Pearl Harbour in December of 1941, Chiang Kai-Shek sought further American assistance in fighting Japan in China. Because of the shortages of men and material and the U.S strategy of 'Europe First', the U.S was unable and unwilling to commit U.S troops to fight the Japanese in Burma.

Instead the U.S offered to send General Stilwell to China to advise Chiang Kai-Shek and to oversee the training and future engagement of Chinese troops in the fight against Japan. Since Chiang Kai-Shek was displeased at the idea of a mere senior officer becoming his Chief of Staff, Stilwell was made a four-star general and Commander of the Pacific Theatre (Tuchman 5-6).

The American military aim was to equip the Chinese forces with the arms, equipment, and training under American advisors so they could fight the Japanese effectively and deter the Japanese from further military action; or as Tuchman claims

“the program was not philanthropy but was intended as a means to enable the Chinese to keep the Japanese occupied” (Tuchman 282-283).

Army Chief of Staff Marshall viewed the Burma land campaign as a defensive theater, with China as the place where “maximum offensive power should be developed for ultimately carrying the war to Japan.” His instructions to General Stilwell, who he had appointed as the Commander General of the U.S Army Forces in the CBI theater and Chief of Staff to Chiang Kai-Shek, were to “maintain the Burma Road, command such Chinese forces as may be assigned to him, assist in improving the combat efficiency of the Chinese Army, and increase the effectiveness of U.S assistance to the Chinese Government for the prosecution of the war” (Tuchman 315). Stilwell was also charged with “organizing the hump [the treacherous air supply route over the Himalayas from India to Burma] and developing the Ledo Road [which starts in India and connects to Burma Road just before Wanting] to counteract the potential loss of Rangoon” (see Map 6) (Tuchman 315). However, General Stilwell was never given any authority over Chinese troops, Chiang Kai-Shek retained that power (Romanus & Sunderland 73-74). Contrarily, Chiang Kai-Shek made Colonel Chennault the highest-ranking air officer in China (Romanus & Sunderland 74). This difference reflects the U.S and Chinese agreement that it was appropriate for Chennault to control the Chinese air force while Stilwell was left as an advisor to the Generalissimo who controlled the Chinese armies.

The American objective to keep Japan occupied in China was not an objective shared by China; rather Chiang Kai-Shek wanted to bolster his forces with U.S money and weapons for his own purposes (Tuchman 283). Stilwell reported “the Chinese believed they had fought the Japanese for four years, and now it was someone else’s

turn”; he also said “there was a tendency by Chinese military leaders to hoard both men and equipment for local power, or in the case of the central government, for use against the Communists” (Tuchman 283). Chiang Kai-Shek’s voiced his concerns about the Communists to Ambassador Johnson, saying “he was more concerned about the Communists “taking advantage of the situation” than the Japanese” (Tuchman 283).

### **Flying Tigers in Action 1941**

The Japanese began the land and air invasion of Burma in December 1941. In addition to cutting off the Burma Road as the only remaining supply route to China, the Japanese intended to use the Burma Road as a means to invade both southern China and western India. The British asked for a squadron of Flying Tigers to help defend Rangoon from a possible Japanese attack. As the Third Squadron of the Flying Tigers flew to Rangoon to assist the British, the other two squadrons flew up to Kunming to begin their mission protecting supplies coming along the Burma Road (Sherman). On December 20<sup>th</sup> 1941 the Japanese launched a bombing raid on Kunming, but as the Flying Tigers confronted the bombers they dropped their loads before reaching Kunming and turned to retreat. The Flying Tigers managed to down three planes and damage others while chasing after the departing bombers (Eisel 19). While this aerial encounter does not seem important, this AVG victory marked “the first time Japanese bombers have been turned back from bombing Kunming” (Anderson & Bond 62). Not three days later a Japanese raid was sent to Rangoon. The Flying Tigers in their defense of Rangoon downed “eight heavy bombers and fifty airmen” (Ford 216). The result of this raid upset the Japanese General Sugawara to such an extent that he planned a retaliation raid on Rangoon for

Christmas day. However, once again, the Japanese found themselves outmatched in skill. The Christmas raid was “like shooting ducks” for the AVG (Ford 135). Chennault backs this sentiment in his message Roosevelt reporting that the AVG had downed 29 planes while only losing two pilots (Ford 137).

Through the beginning of 1942 the Japanese air force relentlessly attacked Rangoon to obliterate the port’s ability to supply the Chinese. However the Flying Tiger’s continued defense of the city “seriously disrupted the Japanese timetable for conquering Burma and invading India” (Eisel 24). The Flying Tiger’s had created such a problem for the Japanese plans to bomb Rangoon into submission that General Sugawara actually called off the aerial Rangoon campaign. Although the Japanese had stopped trying to take Rangoon from the air, the Imperial Japanese Army did eventually capture Rangoon on March 6<sup>th</sup> 1942. This occupation pushed both the RAF and AVG north from the Mingaladon Airfield to Magwe. In response, Chennault sent a mission to a Japanese airfield near Moulmein and wiped out twenty fighter planes while the RAF attacked Mingaladon and destroyed 12 bombers and 16 fighters (Anderson & Bond 117-118). The Japanese in turn caught the RAF’s entire bomber force on the ground at Magwe, destroying the RAF’s in Southeast Asia. Now, Chennault “directed a retaliatory mission on the Jap Air Force headquarters in Southeast Asia” (Anderson & Bond 130). This mission was to repeatedly strafe the Japanese field in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Charley Bond, a pilot who took part in this mission, said that, “the resulting destruction of the successive passes in that ten to twelve minutes of aerial attack is too much to describe. The entire airfield seemed to be in flames as we headed back to Burma” (Anderson &

Bond 135). While this mission was a serious setback for the JAAF, the Japanese ground troops continued their advance in Burma supported by imperial bombers.

### **Stilwell's Burma Land Campaign**

To build a fighting force from the multiple local Chinese armies, commanded by Warlords, proved to be a task at which Stilwell would fail. The land campaign was beset by numerous difficulties. China was split into 12 separate warzones; this was because of the Chinese belief in 'defense in depth'; the 12 warzones were established to prevent the Japanese from being able to end the war in one blow (Tuchman 338; Romanus & Sunderland 33). Chiang Kai-Shek's view on the use of force reflects the Chinese concept of 'defense in depth', which holds that tactics should prevent all forces from being concentrated in one place –risking total decimation (Tuchman 341). Further, based on his own military experience, Chiang Kai-Shek thought that three Chinese divisions were required to defend against a single Japanese division, and five were needed to attack (Tuchman 342). A famous Chinese saying holds that the best victory is not to win 100 battles without a loss, but to win a war without a battle.

The 12 warzones resulted in concentrated local power, with the armies used for political gains by local Warlords. This also split the strongest armies into smaller pieces, meaning that no single Chinese army had the to force to defeat the Japanese (Tuchman 338).

Stilwell was dealing with a war-weary China who had been fighting for four years. Sadly, the government supply route did not reach the average Chinese soldier who marched in straw sandals, and shared one blanket between five men, with only rice



carried in a sock around his neck for field rations. Recruitment for these men was a press gang process, slowly siphoning the manpower from every village and farm (Tuchman 339). Basic training was a measly three weeks. Every division was understrength because army payment was made in a lump sum to the Warlord – the fewer the men the greater his profit. Additionally, if a Warlord lost any men in battle, there would be no replacements (Romanus & Sunderland 34). The divisions were also decimated by malnutrition and disease, including recurring malaria and backwater fever (Tuchman 339). The land war in Burma was plagued by military deficiencies and incompetence: there was a shortage of radios, poor communication, and sparse medical facilities. However, “the greatest asset of the Chinese army was the heartyhood and valour of the peasant soldier [...] It’s greatest liability was the failure of its Warlord commanders who see their soldiers as anything more than counters in the unending game of Chinese politics”(Romanus & Sunderland 33).

After the fall of Rangoon the Japanese made steady progress along the Irrawaddy River north towards Mandalay (see Map 4). They continually bombed the Burmese villages. On an average day the Japanese outnumbered the Allied planes 260 to 45 (Tuchman 348). At this time, both the British forces and the Chinese forces under Stilwell were steadily retreating. General Stilwell traveled to Chungking to ask Chiang Kai-Shek for more troops to fight with, but Stilwell was not able to convince Chiang Kai-Shek to use his Chinese forces, supplied with U.S arms, to counterattack the Japanese. Stilwell was convinced Chiang Kai-Shek “did not regard the southern China losses as a catastrophe. Chiang Kai-Shek imagines that he can get behind the Salween front and there wait in safety for the U.S to finish the war” (Tuchman 626). Chiang Kai-Shek’s

inaction reflected his priority of hoarding resources and waiting for the war to end with the U.S victory over Japan, while at the same time leaving himself as strong as possible for the anticipated civil war with the Chinese communists.

Unbeknownst to the Allies, Japan was sneaking two more divisions into Burma to launch a three-pronged attack up the three river valleys of Burma to envelop and destroy the Allies between Lashio and Chindwin River before monsoon season (See Map 4) (Tuchman 360). The Japanese made a last drive for Lashio just before the monsoons, successfully breaking through the Chinese 55<sup>th</sup> division (Tuchman 368). This final Japanese breakthrough forced a British retreat to Imphal, India over the Chindwin River and a Chinese retreat to China via Myitkyina in Northern Burma. Stilwell's forces also retreated to Myitkyina from which most of his staff flew to Imphal (Tuchman 373). Afterwards, Stilwell left with 115 men on foot to Imphal, all of whom arrived safely, making his men the only retreating force make it out without a casualty (Tuchman 382). Stilwell stated in his own famous words: "I claim we got a hell of a beating. We got run out of Burma and it is humiliating as hell" (Tuchman 385).

### **Flying Tigers in Action 1942**

After conquering Burma the Japanese tried to attack China by crossing the Salween River Gorge. The Chinese Army was retreating from Burma across the only bridge over the gorge and had mostly completed the crossing. However, the Japanese were so close behind the Chinese that there was no time to wait for the remainder of the Army to cross. The Chinese Army proceeded to blow up the bridge, leaving about a third of their soldiers stuck between the river and the Japanese (Whelan 189). Upon learning about the Japanese' plans to cross the gorge, Chennault "sent every airplane in China

within reach of the gorge against the Japanese column” (Eisel 29). As the Flying Tigers appeared above the Japanese column and began their attack, one Tiger recalled that the Chinese soldiers who hadn’t made it across the gorge, stopped fighting “to conduct a disorganized but delighted cheering section of waving caps and guns”(Whelan 190). Not only was the Chinese Army elated to have the Flying Tigers supporting them, but the soldiers who did make it over the river were so enthusiastic that they ran back through the river “waving their rifles over their heads and heading for the Japs like men possessed” (Whelan 191). The Flying Tigers successfully prevented the Japanese from crossing the gorge and therefore blocked their attempted invasion of Southern China. Eisel states “it would take two years of hard fighting to dislodge the Japanese from Burma and reopen the Burma Road, but the Japanese never again threatened either China from the west or India to the east” (Eisel 29).

### **The End of the Flying Tigers**

The AVG was absorbed into the U.S Army Air Forces as a fighter group in the summer of 1942. This absorption ended the storied history of the Flying Tigers. Sadly, as many of the pilots had come from different service branches many left the fighter group to rejoin their original military branch, and some left the military all together to fly for Chiang Kai-Shek’s air force.

The Flying Tigers have been considered a great success by the Chinese and the Allied forces. After the war Chennault wrote to Dr. T.V. Soong expressing his regrets that the equipment and salary costs for the Flying Tigers ended up costing China roughly \$8,000,000; Dr. Soong wrote back to Chennault saying, “The AVG was the soundest

investment China ever made. I am ashamed that you should even consider the cost!” (Flying Tiger Association). Two other notable remarks were made about the Flying Tigers from President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. President Roosevelt wrote that, “The outstanding gallantry and conspicuous daring that the American Volunteer Group combined with their unbelievable efficiency is a source of tremendous pride throughout the whole of America” (Flying Tiger Association) Prime Minister Winston Churchill “cabled the Governor of Burma in 1942” to say that “the victories of these Americans over the rice paddies of Burma are comparable in character, if not in scope, to those won by the Royal Air Force over the hop fields of Kent in the Battle of Britain” (Regan).

### **The End of the Burma Campaign**

As a result of the successful Flying Tiger Campaign, stopping all Japanese Air attempts at occupying Burma and preventing the invasion Southern China, Stilwell was finally able to commit to a successful land campaign. In the last week of October 1942, at a foreign ministers conference in Moscow, at American insistence, China was included as a signatory on the Four-Power Declaration establishing an international organization for the maintenance of international peace after the war (Tuchman 508). China’s signature meant that China was now officially recognized as one of the four leading global powers with the U.S, U.K, and Russia. Following this, China was invited to a conference in Cairo with the U.S and U.K to discuss the next steps in their war against Japan – Russia could not attend, as it was not then fighting Japan (Tuchman 508). It was at this conference that Stilwell presented the new Chinese war plans. This plan committed China to provide

90 divisions in the war against Japan in the next two years, including 50 in the current year; and further committed China to participate in an agreed plan for the recapture of Burma (Tuchman 511). In return China demanded an all-out Allied effort in early 1944 to reopen communications to China through Burma. The U.S was also asked to equip all 90 Chinese divisions, and supply 10,000 tons a month to the Air operations in Burma; these were no longer the actions of the Flying Tigers but of the U.S Army Air Force (Tuchman 551).

Roosevelt's objective at the Cairo conference remained "to keep China in the war tying up Japanese soldiers" (Tuchman 513). Despite their prior seemingly friendly history, at this point Roosevelt was becoming disillusioned with Chiang Kai-Shek, telling Sumner Wells that Chiang Kai-Shek is highly temperamental, argumentative, and had an inefficient corrupt government that did not care about the Chinese people. However, Roosevelt confided to his son "With all their shortcomings, we've got to depend on the Chiangs" (Tuchman 514).

In return for China's commitment to a land war in Burma, she demanded that the U.S, and U.K launch a joint naval campaign in southern Burma, to divert Japanese forces from the land war (Tuchman 514). Unfortunately, the Cairo conference negotiations did not go as planned. Chiang Kai-Shek's commitment to supply 50,000 troops steadily fell to 14,000 throughout the conference, and the Allies were not prepared to commit to a Naval operation in Southern Burma (Tuchman 510). Lord Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander, wrote in his diary that this Cairo Conference was the first experience for Roosevelt, Churchill and the combined Chiefs negotiating with Chiang Kai-Shek and that "they have been driven absolutely mad" (Tuchman 520).

This conference was briefly placed on hold so that the U.K and U.S could attend another conference, this time in Tehran with the Soviet Union. The Tehran conference saw Stalin finally commit to enter the war against Japan with the condition that they enter after the fall of Germany (Tuchman 520-522). This Russian commitment greatly diminished the necessity for China as a launchpad into Japan. However, the price of the Russian commitment was that the U.K and U.S agree to a naval invasion of France. Agreeing to this Russian request Churchill stated that the U.K could not invade both Burma and France at the same time and effectively killed the Burma naval campaign. The Cairo Declaration, signed by the U.K, U.S and China, published on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1942 promised the return “of all the territories Japan had stolen from the Chinese” and committed the signatories to fight until the unconditional surrender of Japan (Tuchman 522).

Thus China had achieved recognition of its war-end aims. However, the quiet notification from the U.K and U.S, that there would be no Burma naval operation provoked Chiang Kai-Shek into committing less Chinese troops to the battle of Burma, undermining the ongoing military land campaign. This failed negotiation marked the start of the decline of China’s importance in the Allied war strategy.

The renewed Burma land campaign shifted to the Allies favor: the British defeated the Japanese attack at Imphal, decimating the Japanese army. Meanwhile Stilwell’s Chinese forces successfully crossed the Salween River Gorge and after weeks of hard fighting captured Myitkyina. Finally, the Japanese were defeated and north Burma was once again allied territory.

Now, however, the U.S. Pacific strategy shifted. Instead of focusing on a land campaign in Burma or China, they now focused on a Pacific naval campaign aimed at targeting the Philippines, Formosa, and Canton as a springboard for the invasion of Japan. Myitkyina was now an important air base whose primary role was to support the naval operations in the Pacific. Looking retrospectively, this was the moment that the land campaign in Burma ceased to be a meaningful theater of operations and lost momentum from all nations involved. The Japanese never fought another land campaign in Burma.

On April 1<sup>st</sup> 1945, the Americans captured Okinawa. Okinawa is the largest of the Ryukyu island chain lying between Formosa and Japan's southern tip, only 350 miles from the center of Japan. This possession allowed the U.S. B-29's to bomb Japan proper, destroying its industry and war power. This also meant that the use of China as a launchpad was no longer a part of the U.S. Pacific war plans (Tuchman 660). The U.S. Navy was now in control of the Pacific and the Japanese were reduced to using kamikaze pilots as their last gasp.<sup>4</sup> Shortly thereafter, the U.S. dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; effectively ending World War II.

### **The Record of Success of the Flying Tigers**

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<sup>4</sup> My paternal grandfather, Bamar's son, George TD Davidson, served on the destroyer USS Rodman as her Chief Intelligence Officer. The Rodman was stationed on the destroyer picket line between Mainland Japan and Okinawa on the day the U.S. invaded Okinawa. His destroyer suffered four kamikaze attacks that day, causing many casualties and forcing the destroyer out of action. One kamikaze struck the bridge causing my grandfather and many of his men to jump overboard. He spent a day afloat in the ocean to be picked up by the U.S. Navy at dusk. My grandfather told my father that when he jumped off the bridge he was carrying with him the current U.S. intelligence, which he proceeded to swallow at sea not knowing whether or when he would be picked up. The USS Rodman was towed back to port for repairs and never served in World War II again.

Back when the Flying Tigers were helping to defend Rangoon on the days leading up to Christmas, Radio Tokyo broadcasted this message “We warn the American aviators at Rangoon that they must cease their unorthodox tactics immediately, or they will be treated as guerrillas and shown no mercy whatsoever” (Whelan 75). Radio Tokyo also “reported blithely that thirty Anglo-American planes had been downed over Rangoon and that the city was now without air protection” (Whelan 76). This radio broadcast was surely meant to intimidate the Flying Tigers and boost Japanese morale. However, the Flying Tigers mission records show a very different result. Throughout the seven months the Flying Tigers were in operation they destroyed “299 Japanese planes with another 153 probably destroyed. All of this with a loss of 12 P-40’s in combat and 61 on the ground, including the 22 burned at Loi-Wing. Four pilots were killed in air combat; six were killed by anti-aircraft fire; three by enemy bombs on the ground; and three were taken prisoner. Ten more died as a result of flying accidents” (Flying Tiger Association)

The Japanese never treated the three pilots they took prisoner as guerrillas but treated them “as well as regular British and American POW’s” Chennault took this a sign of “the enemy’s genuine respect for our organization” (Flying Tiger Association). This also may have been evidence that Japan respected the Flying Tigers as a worthy advisory, whereas the Chinese POW’s in Japan were treated terribly, perhaps reflecting a Japanese lack of respect for the Chinese Military. Daniel Ford’s words capture the spirit of the Flying Tigers:

It’s an especially pleasing irony. Japan went to war knowing that its enemies were larger and richer than it was, but believing it would prevail—and promising its soldiers and airmen that they’d be victorious—because a man’s spirit was more important than the quality of his weapon. Yet Japan’s first and most spectacular



defeat was at the hands of a few dozen American pilots who embodied that very same principle. (Ford 334).

The Flying Tigers had defeated the Japanese “in more than 50 air battles without a single defeat” and alongside the British RAF “kept the port of Rangoon and the Burma Road open for 2 ½ precious months as supplies trickled into China” (Flying Tiger Association). Chennault also states that the Flying Tigers “reputation alone was sufficient to keep the Japanese bombers away from Chunking [Chiang’s new capital]” (Flying Tiger Association). Because the United States’ priorities were fighting the war in Europe against Germany and the naval war in the Pacific, it was unable to provide all the resources and supplies that China required in order to defeat the Japanese in China. However, the Flying Tigers made invaluable contributions to the defeat of the Japanese in the Pacific. Their protection of the Burma Road and the supply port of Rangoon, the only effective supply route to China, prevented Japan from occupying southern China (Eisel 24). By actively keeping Japanese forces tied up in China, 600,000 to 800,000 Japanese troops could not be sent to fight on another front (Clancey 18). Chennault’s memoirs state “299 Japanese aircraft were destroyed, with 153 more probably destroyed, while the AVG had 12 P-40’s destroyed in combat, with 61 destroyed on the ground” (Eisel 33). At the end of the war the Japanese confessed “they thought Chennault had several hundred fighter planes at his disposal, instead of the several dozen that in fact existed” (Eisel 31).

In their seven months of intense combat an extraordinary twenty-five of the Flying Tiger pilots became aces (credited with 5+ kills), but Tigers also paid for their courage as more than a third of the group lost their lives during the war (Ford 345, 359-361). At the end of February 1942, thirty-three of the Flying Tigers were awarded the

Order of the Cloud Banner including several Flying Tigers who were awarded the Order of the Cloud Banner posthumously (Whelan 150, 213). At the reception that the Order of the Cloud Banners were presented, Madam Chiang Kai-Shek made a speech proclaiming how proud and honored China is that these men would fight so valiantly for a country which is not their own. Madam Chiang Kai-Shek is quoted saying, “Your lives are one with theirs and mine, your good name is one with theirs and mine. I act towards you as I act towards other members of the Chinese Air Force” (Whelan 145). This quote shows just how much respect Madam Chiang Kai-Shek had towards these men and how honored she was to have them fight for her country.

### **Personal Stories of the Flying Tigers**

While there are many powerful and impressive stories of the Flying Tigers, one of the most moving is a narrative about pilot Jack Newkirk, leader of the Second Squadron of the Tigers. He was known throughout America and was one of America’s first Aces with ten confirmed kills. Whelan quotes Jack Newkirk saying, “[...] Murder and bullying of peaceful, innocent peasants is one of those things I can’t stand for. Until I have done all in my power to relieve the situation, I cannot leave it for the other fellow” when talking about why he joined the Flying Tigers (Whelan 166). Jack Newkirk was killed in action His fellow pilots left his name on the room he stayed in and when asked why, they replied “oh, we always leave it open. We have a kind of funny feeling that Jack drops in on us now and then, to see how we’re doing” (Whelan 167). Madam Chiang Kai-Shek, who felt close ties to every Tiger, as she was their honorary commander, sent a letter to Jack’s sister after he passed saying “[t]here are no bounds of place or time to the memory

of those who die for the love of men. As China grieves with you in your great sorrow, she is also proud to claim a special part in persevering the record of his fair name” (Whelan 168).

While most historical accounts of this time period don’t really explain how the Chinese people felt about the Flying Tigers, Charley Bond’s own story is emblematic of this. Charley Bond crashed and was taken by a Chinese farmer to the town of Yang-Tu where the Rev. Herbert Elliot treated his injuries. When Charley Bond left the mission with the Reverend to see the town “a crowd of hundreds of Chinese greeted them with cheers and exploding fireworks” (Anderson & Bond 204). Charley Bond admitted that he didn’t understand why he was being treated this way and the Reverend responded “Why, my boy, this is the greatest moment the town has had in years, they know all about the wonderful exploits of the Flying Tigers and the A.V.G here” (Anderson & Bond 204). Bond also explained “two Chinese boys ran out from the crowds, came smiling up to Charley, and touched his coveralls reverently” (Anderson & Bond 204). The Reverend also said that “they’ve been bombed for almost four years, regularly, think what it means to them to see one of the famous Flying Tigers right here, fighting for their town and their homes and their children” (Anderson & Bond 204).

## **Conclusion**

From 1931 to 1942 the Japanese launched a series of successful invasions in China, beginning with Manchuria in 1931; followed by the 1937 occupation of Shanghai initiated by the Marco Polo incident; and then the rape of Nanking; as well as the fall of Canton in 1938. Chiang Kai-Shek was driven by the Japanese west into central China, eventually settling in Chungking. Proving unable to stop the Japanese on the ground in China with his forces, Chiang Kai-Shek sought U.S fighting forces and aid. Although the United States had already decided to attack Germany first and initially defend against Japan in concurrence with their 'Europe First' strategy in the event of war, they nevertheless decided to support the Chinese in their fight against the Japan. The U.S determined to support China in its fight against Japan, in order to engage over 1 million Japanese troops fighting in China as part of its overall campaign to defeat Japan. This desire to pin down Japan in China is directly related to their commitment to their 'Europe First' strategy. By tying down Japan in China while offensively fighting the European Axis powers, the U.S created a situation that limited Japan's ability to stretch it's Pacific war-arm to aid the European Axis powers in other war theaters. Additionally, the U.S wanted to use China as a springboard to invade Japan later in the war. However, many Americans, including President Roosevelt, felt deep sympathy with the Chinese and wanted to aid them in their plight against Japan.

Although the U.S was willing to aid China, the U.S was not willing to send U.S troops to fight under the American flag. The U.S did not want to fight a land war in China against Japan because the U.S had adopted an isolationist stance after World War I and its military had dwindled to a inconsequential size; the public overwhelmingly did not want to go to war; and the U.S wanted to avoid a direct conflict with Japan.

On the Chinese side of this equation, Chiang Kai-Shek did not want to use his own troops to continue to fight Japan, as he felt that he had fought the Japanese for four long years and it was the U.K and U.S's turn. Chiang Kai-Shek was also faced with the threat of a looming Civil war against the Chinese Communist Party, and to this end Chiang Kai-Shek also wanted to use the U.S money and supplies to bolster his forces and weaponry in an effort to be prepared for the oncoming civil war. In the same vein, Chiang Kai-Shek did not have the pilots qualified for this, nor the fighter planes with technology capable of going up against the Japanese Air force. To this end, the U.S and China collaborated to create the Flying Tigers who were U.S volunteer pilots fighting in service to the Nationalist Government.

The Flying Tigers met the objectives of both nations. Chiang Kai-Shek was willing to appoint Chennault as the head of the Chinese Air force and allowed him incredible freedom with that air force because Chiang Kai-Shek knew he did not have a qualified air force and desperately needed one. Chennault proved to be the perfect leader for these men and the Flying Tigers are a credit to both his intelligence and their own force of will.

While the objectives listed above are the reasons for the creation and eventual success of the Flying Tigers, they are also the reason that the Burmese land

campaign failed to stop the Japanese invasion of Burma. As neither nation wanted to fight a land war it is not surprising, to say the least, that a land campaign was a failure. This land campaign, lead by Stilwell using Chinese forces, failed to hold off the Japanese for a variety of reasons. The main ones include Chiang Kai-Shek's unwillingness to commit the necessary Chinese troops to effectively fight the Japanese in the first place, reserving them instead for his own internal political objectives; the Chinese forces were not well trained; and Chinese forces had been split into 12 warzones, these forces were under the control of warlords and were used to political means. Additionally, the use of Warlords meant that the forces were undersupplied, ill-trained, and weak in numbers as warlords realized the less money and men put towards these forces would result in them keeping more money. The Chinese tactics were more defensive and aimed at preserving force rather than risking it, and the U.S and General Stilwell with no troops on the battlefield could only advise. The Japanese proved to be a stronger force on the ground than they were in the air. One could summarily say that because of China's non-unification and unwillingness to commit an appropriate amount to the campaign, it is no surprise that it failed.

The success of the Flying Tigers and the failure of the Burmese land campaign are related in that they both emphasis the Chinese-American relations of the time. The success of the Flying Tigers is related to both mutual self-interest as well as genuine emotion. The failure of the Burmese land campaign can be chalked up to contrasting self-interests and lack of emotion.

Michael Hunt argued for an earlier period of Chinese-American history that the Chinese-American relationship of that time was not special and was instead borne out

of self-interest and complex political ties in *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914*. In relation to the Burma land campaign, I believe, in accordance with Hunt's theory, that the failure can be attributed to self-interest of two nations with conflicting objectives. However, I believe that the Flying Tigers do not fit this theory. The Flying Tigers are widely regarded in China as an example of successful and friendly American-Chinese relations. After reading many Flying Tigers and their personal feelings, it is obvious to me that these men did not give their all because they were told to but because they volunteered for a mission they believed in. These men embodied the genuine feeling of the U.S towards China and its plight. In this vein, the President of the United States voiced his sympathy towards the Chinese, and Madame Chiang Kai-Shek went out of her way to give a moving, emotional speech about how thankful China is to the Tigers. Here, Hunt's theory fails. The Flying Tigers were not merely created out of self-interest but also out of human idealism shown both in the courage with which they fought and the strong support they received in China.

In December 1941 Japan invaded Burma. With the fall of Canton, the Burma Road was China's only access to Western supplies and also represented a direct invasion route for the Japanese into China. The Chinese forces under Stilwell, as well as the British army, were initially unsuccessful at stopping the Japanese land invasion of Burma. The British retreated to India; the Chinese forces fighting under General Stilwell retreated to China; and General Stilwell, defeated, walked out of Burma in a humiliating retreat. The story of the Flying Tigers is profoundly different. At this critical point in the war, which had seen no Japanese setbacks, the Flying Tigers defeated the Japanese in the air over Burma, and prevented the Japanese from crossing the Salween River Gorge to

invade southern China. The Japanese suffered their first defeat in the war and never successfully invaded southern China.

The war in the Pacific pivoted to the successful U.S naval campaign against Japan across the Pacific, ending with the invasion of Okinawa. In the end, China was no longer necessary as a springboard for the invasion of Japan. Finally, the Americans dropped Little Boy and Fat Man on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, effectively ending World War II.

Chiang Kai-Shek and his army of warlords, despite stockpiling U.S arms that were never used in the fight against Japan, were overrun by the Communist Chinese army within three years. The U.S who had backed Chiang Kai-Shek until the end of the Chinese civil war, and Communist led China eventually became foes.

The Flying Tigers, however, remain a legend in China for their extraordinary fighting exploits and as a memory of a time when the U.S and China were winning allies in arms. I know from personal experience and my research that in China the Flying Tigers are widely known and revered; however, in America, this period of history seems to have been completely lost to us. I believe that the success of the Flying Tigers, while measureable in terms of kills and successful actions, is immeasurable in relation to the impact they had on the moral of the Chinese people, reinvigorating them and giving them the hope and courage to keep going against a seemingly, but not in reality, unstoppable enemy. Possibly U.S and China relationships would benefit if both sides were more aware of this time of an extraordinary alliance.



## Appendix I: Figures



Figure 1: Tintin watching the Japanese Sabotage of the Mukden railway in Hergé's *Blue Lotus*.



Figure 2: A child crying, naked, in a Shanghai street

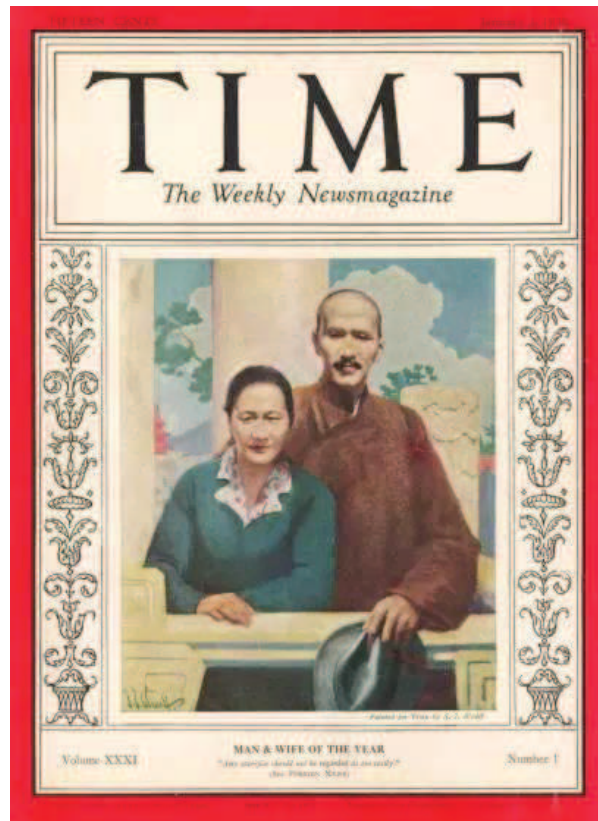


Figure 3: Generalissimo and Madam Chiang Kai-Shek as Man and Woman of the Year



Figure 4: Major Chennault



Figure 5: Construction of the Burma Road

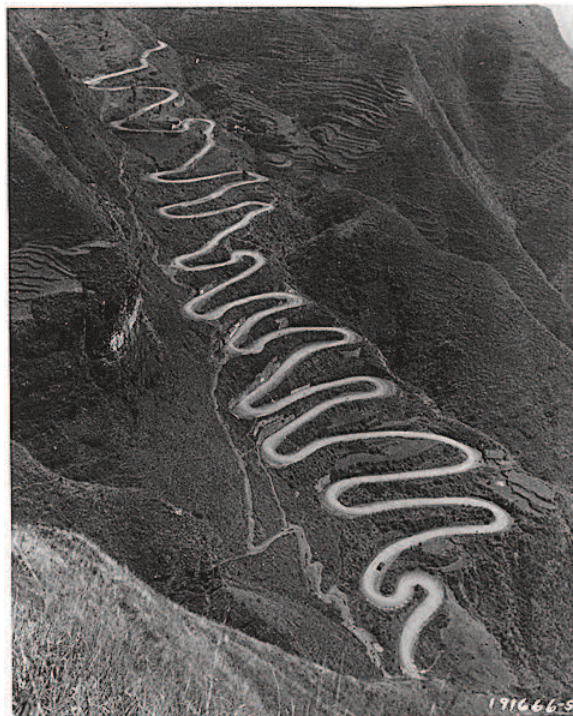


Figure 6: The Burma Road



Figure 7: Flying Tiger P-40 with visible emblem

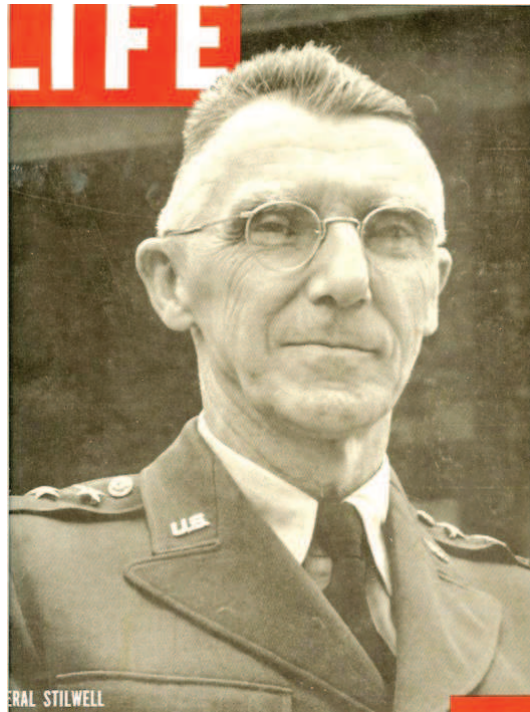


Figure 8: General Stilwell

**Appendix II: Maps**



Map 1: The geography of Manchuria



Map 2: The distinctions between the Treaty of Aigun and the Treaty of Peking



Map 3: The location of the Trans-Siberian railway through Manchuria

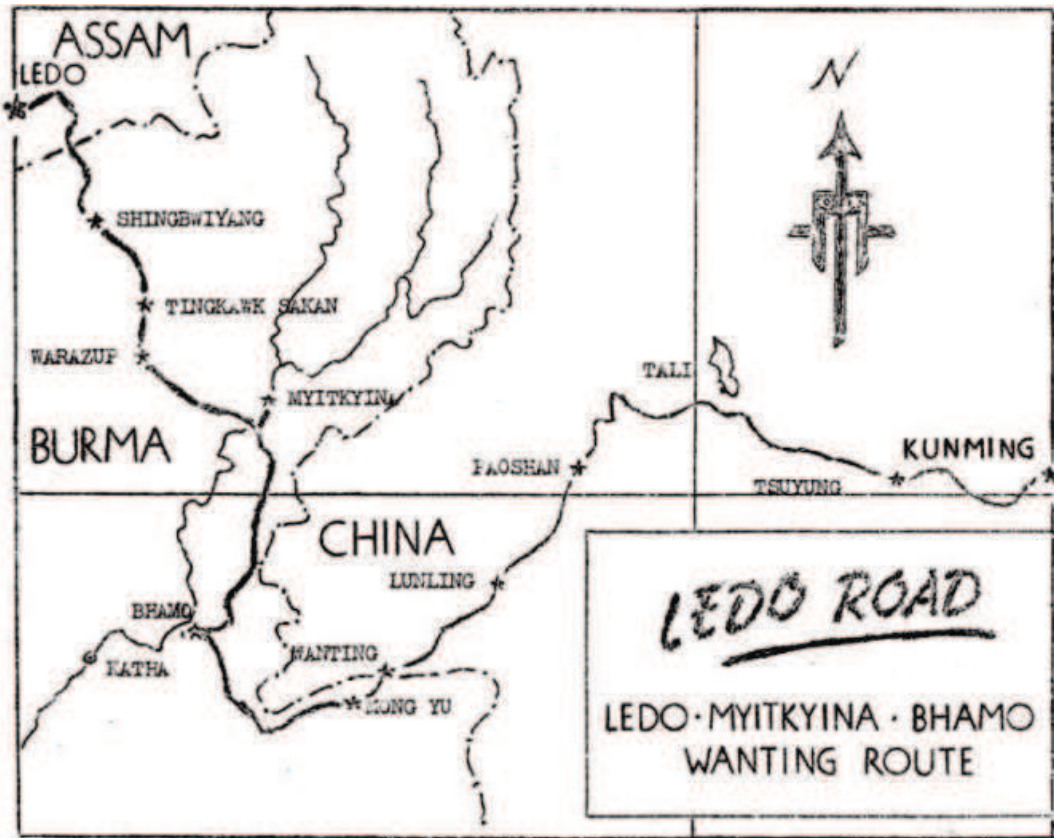




Map 4: In-depth map of Burma



Map 5: The location of the Burma Road



Map 6: The location of the Ledo Road

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