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America's Failure in China

1941-50

Tang Tsou



Volume 2

AMERICA'S FAILURE IN CHINA 1941-50

Volume II

TANG TSOU

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CHAPTER IX
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A. Civil Strife and Armed Intervention

In China, General George C. Marshall confronted a range of alternatives: armed intervention; provision of massive military assistance and operational advice to China; support for the Nationalist government short of armed intervention and without providing military assistance on such a scale as would, in his opinion, escalate into armed intervention; standing aloof from the military-political conflict between the Kuomintang and the Communists but granting economic aid to the recognized government; and finally, total withdrawal from China. Marshall did not choose to undertake armed intervention in China. His negative decision rested on the widely shared assumption that American interests in China were not worth a war. This estimate of American interests in China naturally reinforced other assumptions and considerations which predisposed the United States against armed intervention in the Chinese civil war. In turn, the decision against armed intervention shaped or controlled such crucial elements in Marshall's China policy as his efforts to effect a truce between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communists, his program to bring about a coalition government, his decision to limit the activities of the United States Army Advisory Group, his rejection of General Wedemeyer's recommendations for an expanded program of military assistance, and his negative response to Ambassador John Leighton Stuart's suggestion that the American government advise Generalissimo Chiang to retire.

When Marshall's policy is thus seen as an integrated whole, the relative importance of the various assumptions and considerations in influencing policy decisions can be determined, and the various elements of his policy fall into their proper place. Such a reconstruction enables us to see clearly that all the characteristic ambiguities of America's traditional policy toward China persisted in Marshall's policy. The withdrawal of the United States from China between 1947 and 1949, following President Franklin D. Roosevelt's wartime policy of making China a great power, can then be understood as another phase of the cycles of advance and retreat of the United States in China. In short, Marshall's China policy was a continuation of the traditional policy of the United States and met the same fate that befell its precursor.¹

1. *The Structure of Ends and Means in Marshall's Policy*

Soon after Ambassador Hurley abruptly resigned on November 27, 1945, and made public his letter of resignation,² President Truman appointed General Marshall as his special representative in China with the personal rank of ambassador.³ The policy which Marshall was to implement was thoroughly discussed by him and top officials in the State Department. It was again reviewed by him and Secretary of State Byrnes in a meeting with President Truman and Admiral Leahy on December 11⁴ and was outlined in a group of papers, supplemented by an oral understanding. The papers consisted of a letter of instructions from President Truman to General Marshall and three attached documents: a document entitled "United States Policy toward China," a public statement by the President, and a memorandum from Secretary Byrnes to the War Department.⁵

¹ For an account of the cycles of advance and retreat from 1899 to 1937, see A. Whitney Griswold's classic work, *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1938).

² Chap. viii, above.

³ Department of State, *United States Relations with China* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), p. 132 (hereafter cited as *United States Relations with China*). See also Harry Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1956), pp. 66-77. The name of General Marshall was suggested by Clinton Anderson, the secretary of agriculture, in a cabinet meeting on November 27 (Walter Millis, *The Forrestal Diaries* [New York: Viking Press, 1951], p. 113).

⁴ Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 87; Herbert Feis, *The China Tangle* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 413-15, 418-20.

⁵ General Marshall's role in the writing of his directive and in the formulation of the China policy at this stage was, for a time, a subject of controversy. In the hearings on his nomination as secretary of defense, General Marshall told the Senate Committee on Armed Services on September 19, 1950: "While I was in this room for a week undergoing the Pearl Harbor investigation, the policy of the United States was being drawn up in the State Department, and that was issued when I was on the ocean, going over there" (Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Hearings on the Nomination of General George C. Marshall to be Secretary of Defense*, 81st Cong., 2d sess. [1950], p. 21). In the MacArthur hearings, Marshall, on May 10, 1951, gave a slightly more

The superficially simple program laid down in these papers and in the oral understanding actually comprised an elaborate structure of interrelated ends and means. The "long-range goal" of the United States was defined as "the development of a strong, united and democratic China."⁶ This was a continuation of the policy adopted during the war; the words themselves had been popularized by General Hurley. The overriding short-term objective was to support the Nationalist government and to establish its authority, especially in Manchuria, as far as its military capabilities and limited American assistance would permit.⁷ This intention found expression in the press release which declared that the United States recognized "the present National Government of the Republic of China as the only legal government in China" and as "the proper instrument to achieve the objective of a unified China."⁸ The aim of establishing its authority as widely as possible was revealed in the following statement:

The United States and the United Kingdom by the Cairo Declaration in 1943 and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics by adhering to the Potsdam Declaration of last July and by the Sino-Soviet Treaty and Agreements of August 1945, are all committed

detailed account of the writing of the directive. It also minimized his own role and concluded with the statement that "my preparation for going to China was largely a matter in this room of the investigation regarding Pearl Harbor" (Senate Committee on Armed Service and Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearings on the Military Situation in the Far East*, 82d Cong., 1st sess. [1951], p. 468. [hereafter cited as *Military Situation in the Far East*]). In the same hearings, Secretary of State Acheson gave a different version of the events relating to the preparation of the instructions. It shows that Marshall participated in the task from the beginning (*ibid.*, pp. 1848-49). Acheson's account was fully substantiated by Feis' meticulous narrative of that episode (Feis, *op. cit.*, pp. 413-20).

In his attack on General Marshall, Senator Joseph McCarthy took full advantage of Marshall's erroneous testimony. See the speech made by McCarthy on the Senate floor on June 14, 1951 (*Congressional Record*, XCVII, 82d Cong., 1st sess. [1951], 6580). See also, Joseph McCarthy, *Story of General George C. Marshall* (1952). For a contemporary analysis see Norman Palmer, "Marshall's China Mission," *Current History*, September, 1951, pp. 145-46.

The letter of instructions, the memorandum from Secretary Byrnes to the War Department, and the press release can be found in *United States Relations with China*, pp. 605-9. The statement of policy was printed in Truman's memoirs (Truman, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-71). The press release omitted several significant passages from the statement of policy.

⁶Memorandum from Secretary Byrnes to the War Department, December 9, 1945, *United States Relations with China*, p. 609.

⁷See pp. 352, 355, below. Testifying in the MacArthur hearings, Secretary of State Acheson stated that the American policy was "to give important assistance of all sorts to the Chinese Government and to assist in every way in the preservation of peace in China and the working out of the agreements which were so necessary to enable the Chinese Government to establish itself in those parts of China where it had been before and to get, for the first time, into areas of China where it never had been" (*Military Situation in the Far East*, p. 1842).

⁸Statement by President Truman on United States Policy toward China, December 15, 1945, *United States Relations with China*, p. 608.

to the liberation of China, including the return of Manchuria to Chinese control.⁹

To achieve this objective, which was justified by the formulas regarding the unification of China and the evacuation of Japanese troops still remaining in that country,¹⁰ the American government adopted positive measures, but these, as we shall see, were counterbalanced by the negative decision that "United States support [for the Chinese government] will not extend to United States military intervention to influence the course of any Chinese internal strife"¹¹ and that "incidental effects of American assistance upon any dissident Chinese element should be avoided as far as possible."¹² On the positive side, various types of military assistance were provided to the Nationalist government. United States military and naval forces were to be maintained in China for the time being¹³ — a decision which had been made in a cabinet meeting on November 27. General Wedemeyer was instructed to "put into effect the arrangements to assist the Chinese National Government in transporting Chinese troops to Manchurian ports, including the logistical support of such troops," and to perfect immediately "arrangements for transportation of Chinese troops into north China."¹⁴ It was also decided to establish a United States military advisory group in China at the appropriate moment.¹⁵

At this time, the generally accepted view, shared by General Wedemeyer, held that the extension of the authority of the Nationalist government into Manchuria and North China would be impossible without either a political settlement with the Chinese Communists or American military intervention.¹⁶ Thus, the American government adopted measures designed to achieve such a settlement. General Marshall was instructed "to persuade the Chinese Government to call a national conference of representatives of the major political elements to bring about the unification of China and, concurrently, to effect a cessation of hostilities."¹⁷ In the public statement

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ At the time of Marshall's arrival only some 200,000 out of approximately 3,000,000 Japanese troops and civilians had been returned to Japan (*ibid.*, p. 690).

¹¹ Statement by President Truman on United States Policy toward China, December 15, 1945. This was the press release, reprinted in *ibid.*, p. 608.

¹² "United States Policy toward China," reprinted in Harry Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 70. The press release cited in n. 11 is a public version of this statement, with several important omissions.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 71, and *United States Relations with China*, p. 608.

¹⁴ Memorandum from Secretary Byrnes to the War Department, December 8, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 607.

¹⁵ President Truman to General Marshall, December 15, 1945, *ibid.*, p. 606.

¹⁶ For Wedemeyer's view, see *ibid.*, pp. 129–30; Feis, *op. cit.*, p. 402; see also chap. viii, above.

¹⁷ President Truman to General Marshall, December 15, 1945, *United States Relations with China*, p. 605.

of American policy, President Truman told the warring parties in China: The Government of the United States believes it essential:

1. That a cessation of hostilities be arranged between the armies of the National Government and the Chinese Communists and other dissident Chinese armed forces for the purpose of completing the return of all China to effective Chinese control, including the immediate evacuation of the Japanese forces.

2. That a national conference of representatives of major political elements be arranged to develop an early solution to the present internal strife — a solution which will bring about the unification of China.¹⁸

It was in this choice of means to re-establish the authority of the Nationalist government that a basic conflict of policies developed between the United States and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. The strategy adopted by the American government was to use the proposal of a broadly representative government, including the Communists, as a bargaining counter for gaining control over the Communist armies, and thus to check Communist influence. President Truman in his public statement declared:

The United States is cognizant that the present National Government of China is a "one-party government" and believes that peace, unity and democratic reform in China will be furthered if the basis of this Government is broadened to include other political elements in the country. . . .

The existence of autonomous armies such as that of the Communist army is inconsistent with, and actually makes impossible, political unity in China. With the institution of a broadly representative government, autonomous armies should be eliminated as such and all armed forces in China integrated effectively into the Chinese National Army.¹⁹

Since the development of a united and democratic China was not only a long-term goal but also a means to extend and strengthen the authority of the Nationalist government, it became an immediate objective of American policy. As President Truman told General Marshall in his letter of instructions, "Secretary Byrnes and I are both anxious that unification of China by peaceful, democratic methods be achieved as soon as possible."²⁰

In contrast, the strategy of the Generalissimo was, as subsequent events suggested, to crush the Communists by force, or, at least, to drive them

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 607–8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 608.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 605.

out of the strategic regions and to reduce them by military means to a negligible factor. For the Nationalist leaders, the elimination of the Communists was a matter of utmost urgency. As Mr. Ch'ên Li-fu, the leader of the C.C. clique was reported to have said later, the Chinese Communists were like a "bad appendix that has to be removed to preserve life."²¹

The American government was aware of this conflict of views over methods of solving the problem of China. Speaking of the necessity of broadening the government to include all major political groups, Secretary of State Byrnes told the War Department:

This problem is not an easy one. It requires tact and discretion, patience and restraint. It will not be solved by the Chinese themselves. To the extent that our influence is a factor, success will depend upon our capacity to exercise that influence in the light of shifting conditions in such a way as to encourage concessions by the Central Government, by the so-called Communists, and by the other factions.²²

Thus, the United States government adopted a policy of conditioning large-scale support for the Nationalist government upon the cessation of hostilities and the achievement of unity. President Truman instructed General Marshall:

In your conversations with Chiang Kai-shek and other Chinese leaders you are authorized to speak with the utmost frankness. Particularly, you may state, in connection with the Chinese desire for credits, technical assistance in the economic field, and military assistance (I have in mind the proposed United States military advisory group which I have approved in principle), that a China disunited and torn by civil strife could not be considered realistically as a proper place for American assistance along the lines enumerated.²³

The American government further realized that the prospective American military assistance and the Nationalist hope for American intervention would embolden the Nationalist government to seek a military solution to the Communist problem. President Truman's press release specifically ruled out American military intervention.²⁴ The sentences in the statement of policy concerning the decisions to continue to furnish military supplies, to assist the Nationalists to re-establish control over the liberated areas, including Manchuria, and to set up an American military advisory group

²¹ *New York Times*, July 22, 1946, p. 2.

²² *United States Relations with China*, p. 606.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 606.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 608.

in China were omitted from the press release.²⁵ General Wedemeyer was told that pending the outcome of Marshall's discussions with Chinese leaders he was to hold in abeyance further transportation of Chinese troops to North China, except to such North China ports as might be needed for the movement of troops and supplies into Manchuria. He was also instructed that arrangements for transportation of Chinese troops into North China might be immediately perfected but not communicated to the Chinese government.²⁶ These precautions were also necessary in order to preserve the impartial position of the United States as mediator in the internal Chinese conflict.

The program adopted at this time exerted pressure on the Chinese Communists too, for they had to face the possibility that rejection of the American plan might bring the United States to intervene actively on the side of the Nationalists. As it turned out, however, American pressure on the Nationalist government was far stronger than that on the Communists, because the American program for peace and unity coincided with Communist demands of the moment. Furthermore, American unwillingness to undertake armed intervention in China set a narrow limit on the amount of pressure which the United States could exert on the Chinese Communists.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that, these facts notwithstanding, the *overriding* objective of the United States was to support the Nationalist government and to establish its authority as far as possible. In the deliberations leading to the final adoption of the program, it was decided that, if the Generalissimo failed to make reasonable concessions to obtain a cease-fire and a political settlement, the United States would continue to support him "to the extent of assisting him to move his troops into North China in order that the evacuation of the Japanese might be completed."²⁷ This element of Marshall's program was agreed upon but not written into any of the official papers. The rationale behind this decision was stated by General Marshall in the following terms, according to the notes of a meeting on December 11:

If the Generalissimo . . . failed to make reasonable concessions, and this resulted in the breakdown in the efforts to secure a political unification, and the United States abandoned continued support of the Generalissimo, there would follow the tragic consequences of a divided China and of a probable Russian reassumption of power in Manchuria, the combined effect of

²⁵ Compare the two statements respectively in Truman, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-71, and in *United States Relations with China*, pp. 607-9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 607.

²⁷ Notes by General Marshall on a meeting with the President, Byrnes, and Leahy, December 11, as quoted in Feis, *op. cit.*, p. 419, n. 15.

this resulting in the defeat or loss of the major purpose of our war in the Pacific.²⁸

Marshall recognized that to continue to support Chiang under these circumstances the American government "would have to swallow its pride and much of its policy."²⁹ But in fact, it was this basic policy of supporting the Nationalist Chinese government, within what were judged to be the capabilities of the United States, which General Marshall endeavored to implement at the beginning of his mission to China and which, according to the State Department White Paper, governed American actions from 1946 to 1949. The establishment of a coalition government including the Communists was only a means to support the Chinese government, one element of a broad political program. To see this element as the over-all purpose of American policy, as the critics of Marshall frequently did, is a gross oversimplification.

Rather, the basic and controlling element in Marshall's policy was the decision against armed intervention and the related decision to refrain from action in China which might escalate into armed intervention. Despite the total collapse of the negotiations between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communists in November, 1946; despite the rapid deterioration of the political and military position of the Nationalist government in the summer of 1947; and despite Marshall's recognition in February, 1948, of the possibility of an early defeat of the Nationalist government,³⁰ this decision was strictly adhered to. Nor was its modification effected by the formal repudiation in March, 1948, of the concept of a coalition government including the Communists; the Communist conquest of Manchuria and North China between November, 1948, and January, 1949; the retirement" of Generalissimo Chiang from the presidency in January, 1949; the imminent crossing of the Yangtze River by the Communist forces in April, 1949.

2. *The Decision Not To Undertake Armed Intervention*

In the complex events from 1945 to 1949, the decision not to undertake armed intervention in China was inextricably intertwined with other factors: first, a misjudgment of the nature and intentions of the Chinese Communist party; second, the incompetence of the Nationalist government and its obstinate resistance to American advice; and third, America's anxiety over the growing influence of communism in Europe and the intensification of disputes with the Soviet Union. There are indications that

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Marshall's testimony before the Committees on Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs in executive session, *United States Relations with China*, p. 382.

in late 1945 the Chinese Communists were still judged by some high officials in the State Department to be something other than dedicated Communists. In Byrnes' memorandum of December 9, 1945, one of the three documents attached to President Truman's letter of instructions to General Marshall, the term "so-called Communists" was used.³¹ But according to his own testimony, General Marshall had no illusions about the Chinese Communists, at least after his arrival in China.³² Similarly, John Carter Vincent, the director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs from 1945 to 1947, was, according to his own account, led by the difficulties confronting Marshall in his negotiations with the Chinese Communists to the "definite conclusion" that they were Communists and part of the international Communist movement guided by Russia.³³ Although in the early months of 1949 some American officials probably entertained the idea that Mao would become a Tito,³⁴ Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in his characterization of the Chinese Communists as a party serving the "interests of a foreign imperialism"³⁵ in the letter of transmittal in the White Paper, showed that he did not subscribe to this view. The idea of a Chinese Tito was a negligible factor in the decision against armed intervention.

In contrast to the rapidly diminishing influence of the initial misjudgment of Communist intentions, the incompetence of the Nationalist government and its resistance to American advice assumed increasing importance in strengthening America's decision not to intervene by armed force. No one knows to what extent the United States could have been effective in reforming the Nationalist regime, had she actively intervened in Chinese politics. But the fact remains that after the termination of the embargo on arms in May, 1947, the American government did not again resort to strong pressure or intervene actively in Chinese politics, apart from Ambassador John Leighton Stuart's gentle advice and personal activities. One reason for this omission was obviously General Marshall's opinion that no Chinese leader could replace Chiang³⁶ and that there was no alternative to supporting him within the reasonable limits of American

³¹ Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 72, and *United States Relations with China*, p. 606.

³² Testifying before the MacArthur hearings, Marshall declared: "... when ... I got out to China and looked the ground over, from the very start, ... there was no doubt that the leadership of this group [the Chinese Communist party] were Marxist Communists, and they so stated in my presence, and insisted, in my presence, that they were" (*Military Situation in the Far East*, p. 378; see also p. 379).

³³ Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Hearings on the Institute of Pacific Relations*, 82d Cong., 1st and 2d sess. (1951-52), p. 1708 (hereafter cited as *Institute of Pacific Relations*).

³⁴ *New York Times*, February 14, 1949, p. 10; February 15, 1949, p. 12; February 18, 1949, p. 8; February 21, 1949, p. 5; April 24, 1949, Sec. 4, p. 3.

³⁵ *United States Relations with China*, pp. xvi-xvii.

³⁶ Pp. 385-87, below.

capability. But, as we shall see, another reason was American refusal to assume the moral and political commitment to do whatever was necessary to preserve the Nationalist regime in at least a part of China.³⁷ This commitment would have flowed from active intervention in Nationalist politics. But it would not have been compatible with the prior decision not to use American armed forces in China and the related decision not to give massive military assistance and operational advice in the field. Thus, the decision to refrain from armed intervention inhibited actions to make the Nationalist regime viable. In retrospect, it stands out as the fundamental decision governing China policy from 1945 to 1949.

The decision not to intervene with American armed forces in China stemmed also from considerations other than the misjudgment of Communist intentions and the perception of Nationalist failings. This is evidenced by the fact that such Republican critics of Marshall's policy as Senator William F. Knowland, Senator Owen Brewster, and Representative Walter H. Judd, who were bitter foes of the Chinese Communists and stalwart friends of the Nationalist government, nevertheless concurred in the decision not to use American ground forces in China for combat duties, or at least never publicly advocated such an action.³⁸ Thus, the decision not to undertake armed intervention must be examined in its own terms.

It should be remembered that events in China moved toward a climax during America's intensified struggle with the Soviet Union over the fate of Europe. Her concerns in Europe formed an increasingly significant element in America's decision against armed intervention in China. America's vital interests in Europe and the Mediterranean decreed that available resources should be devoted to these regions first. In the fifteen weeks of revolution in American foreign policy in 1947, the policy of containment was proclaimed, the program of aid to Greece and Turkey was enacted, and the general concepts of the European recovery plan were formulated. As the Soviet Union continued to push forward with the coup in Czechoslovakia and the Berlin blockade, the United States responded with the North Atlantic alliance and the airlift. These moves were undertaken at a time when the Chinese civil war was entering its decisive phase. Confronted with historic tasks in Europe and a hopeless situation in China, the administration steadfastly adhered to its decision against armed intervention and the related decision against any action which would degenerate into armed intervention. While its critics advocated granting increased military and economic assistance to China, none of them publicly proposed sending American ground forces to China. There was no basic conflict during 1945-49 between "internationalists" and "isolationists" over the

³⁷ Pp. 389-90, below.

³⁸ Pp. 363-64, below.

issue of armed intervention on the Chinese mainland. This phenomenal lack of disagreement on a basic issue obliges us to search for the deeper reasons for the decision to refrain from armed intervention which underlay the other elements of Marshall's policy.

3. *The Basic Assumption behind American Policy*

Armed intervention in civil strife usually involves heavy commitment of a nation's resources, entails a grave risk of counterintervention by a third power, and points only to an uncertain outcome. In the classic balance of power in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, intervention was admitted to be legitimate only insofar as it was intended to protect the security and vital interests of the intervening power.³⁹ For the independence and sovereignty of the nation-state were the cornerstones of the international system and non-interference in the internal affairs of another nation was a principle for preserving national independence and for maintaining the flexibility of alignment. The doctrine of non-intervention, however, did not apply to weak nations outside Europe. On the contrary, the powers interfered actively in the internal affairs of these weak nations and, not infrequently, turned them into dependent states or colonies.

By her principle of respecting the territorial and administrative integrity of China and its corollary of non-intervention in Chinese internal affairs, the United States sought to extend the application of the doctrine of non-interference to China. Meanwhile, Wilsonian idealism, the Good Neighbor policy, the Atlantic Charter, the Moscow Four-Power Declaration, and the United Nations Charter—all gave the doctrine of non-intervention the appearance of a self-sufficient and universal principle, seemingly dissociated from the multiple system of balance of power on which it was originally based.

This trend in American thinking was still strong at the end of the Pacific war when the multiple balance of power was being replaced by a bipolar system. Under the new system, each of the two superpowers was the center of a particular philosophy and way of life. The rigid alignment of

³⁹ Commenting on the principle of intervention in the classical system of balance of power, Lord Brougham, an early nineteenth-century statesman and writer, wrote: "Whenever a sudden and great change takes place in the internal structure of a state, dangerous in a high degree to all neighbors, they have a right to attempt, by hostile interference, the restoration of an order of things safe to themselves, or, at least, to counterbalance, by active aggression, the new force suddenly acquired."

"The right can only be deemed competent in cases of sudden and great aggrandizement, such as that of France in 1790; endangering the safety of the neighboring powers, so plainly as to make the consideration immaterial of the circumstances from whence the danger originated" (Lord Brougham, *Works*, VIII, 37-38, as quoted in Edward Vose Gulick's *Europe's Classical Balance of Power* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1955], p. 63).

the two blocs and the ideological dimension of the conflict vitiated the historic reasons for non-intervention under the multiple system. Thus, while the long tradition of American thinking continued to restrain the United States, changes in the international system and the theory and practice of the Communist movement were placing a premium on intervention as a method in the world-wide struggle for power. More than ever, non-intervention became a policy designed to hold the ring against possible intervention by a third power while indigenous forces favoring the non-intervening nation maintained the upper hand in an internal conflict.

In any case and under any international system, the military and political risks involved in armed intervention can be justified and the commitments entailed can be successfully discharged only if the intervening power has made a prior political decision that her security and vital interests, or at least essential interests, are at stake. Generally speaking, this decision ought to be based upon long-term considerations reflecting geopolitical reality, which find expression in the historic policy of the nation. Once a positive decision is arrived at, the feasibility of armed intervention and its timing, limits, and methods can be determined by weighing the factor of cost and the chances of success in the light of the estimate of the interests at stake.

As we have noted, American policy toward China in the twentieth century contained two contradictory elements: espousal of the principles of the Open Door and refusal to go to war on behalf of China. America's pronouncements gave the impression that she had very important stakes in China. But her concrete actions up to 1941 had consistently been governed by a low estimate of her interests in China.⁴⁰ The acceptance of war with Japan represented only a temporary resolution of the contradiction in favor of the principle of upholding the integrity of China. The inconsistency in the traditional policy persisted in the wartime policy of making China a great power. This grandiose policy was in practice a political means to keep China in the war. It was meant to be a substitute for America's military presence in the Far East after the war. It implied nothing more than the circular notion that, to the extent China could become a great power, America would have important interests in China; otherwise she would not.⁴¹ After the Stilwell crisis, American officials, including President Roosevelt, entertained serious doubts that China would soon become a great power.

Thus, after the Pacific war, the assumption that American interests in China were not worth a war continued to govern American policy. It

⁴⁰ William L. Neumann, "Ambiguity and Ambivalence in Ideas of National Interest in Asia" in Alexander DeConde (ed.), *Isolation and Security* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1957), pp. 133-58. See chap. i, above.

⁴¹ See chap. ii, above.