

# **General Stilwell, Wartime Chongqing\* (Chungking), and American Foreign Policy to World War II China**

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**I. Background to this project:** Who am I, how did I come to create this project, why should your students use this project?

A. Who am I?

I have been a professor of political science at a California community college for almost two decades. I also teach classes as an adjunct at Stanford University. In my teaching, I have found that case studies focused on individual leaders can help students apply abstract knowledge in political science. I have also found that students have a hard time grasping the importance of political culture, people's beliefs and values concerning politics, as well as the continuing influence of historical narratives in a country's present (i.e., the ongoing effect of World War II guilt in shaping Germany's pacifist foreign policy). This project is meant to better explain the impact of history, culture, and leadership on contemporary China. It can serve as a case study in comparative politics or international relations. (It could also be used in an American foreign policy class, any class including US military strategy in World War II, or any world history class/world geography class.)

My classes have a mix of honors students and non-honors students—I am only requiring this of honors students in a comparative politics class in Fall 2009, but depending on the outcome, I may open it to all students. I will be revising this project based on the feedback from my students and any teachers who use this idea.

B. How did I choose this project?

I want to thank all of the following individuals and institutions for their assistance in the creation of this project, but I alone am responsible for any inaccuracies or errors. As part of the 2009 Fulbright-Hays Seminar to China, which was administered by the National Committee on US-China Relations (NCUSCR), I made a visit to five different cities: Beijing, Xi'an, Chongqing, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. I and fifteen other scholars were accompanied by an escort scholar, Prof. Craig Canning, and a Chinese escort, Mr. ZHAI\*\* Guanjun, who took the first two of the following photos, during July 2009. (See announcement in my local paper:  
[http://www.losaltosonline.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=18124&Itemid=56](http://www.losaltosonline.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18124&Itemid=56) /accessed Aug. 10, 2009.)

The focus of our seminar, history and culture, came alive for me when we visited Chongqing from July 13 to July 19. Mr. YUE Yong, the director of the Division of International Cooperation and Exchanges of the Chongqing Municipal Education Commission, gave us a comprehensive lecture on modern developments in this rapidly

growing city, which receives relatively little attention in the U.S. Then we made a visit to the Stilwell Museum honoring General Stilwell's accomplishments in World War II accompanied by Professor ZHANG Jin of Chongqing University, who helped found the museum. She lectured to us about Stilwell's influence on Chongqing. Earlier in the week, she delivered a lecture on the Anti-Japanese War and its impact on Chongqing.

I hope that my project further strengthens General Stilwell's intention and the museum's mission to emphasize respect for the Chinese people, confidence in China's future, and a willingness for Americans and Chinese to work together. The Stilwell Museum has had over 100,000 visitors since its opening in October 1991. (Dr. Zhang Jin, "China's Wartime Capital," July 14 2009) It was created on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of General Stilwell's death to serve both as a museum and an institute to train specialized interpreters. The museum is working on creating a web site and when that is accomplished, I will provide the link here.

Our seminar heard two other important lectures relevant to Chongqing: one was offered before our arrival in Chongqing by Dr. WANG Jue of Northwest University in Xi'an concerning China's Western Development Strategy, and the second was offered by Dr. WANG Yong of Southwest University in Chongqing concerning the influence of history and culture on young scholars in China.

I was also motivated to create this project, because I am a European comparativist scholar and I have always been embarrassed about my lack of knowledge of the Asian theatre in World War II and the nature of US foreign policy to China in the 1941-49 time period. After visiting the Stilwell Museum and hearing several lectures on Stilwell and Chongqing, I returned to California where I spent August reviewing and following up on my lecture notes from Chongqing, reading two books concerning the Stilwell experience, conducting on-line research, and exploring Stanford University's Hoover Archives records on General Stilwell's experience in wartime Chongqing. I was assisted by David Garrido, the Instructional Designer at Foothill, in assembling the photos and maps which are part of this teaching unit.

If you want to investigate this Fulbright-Hays seminar or future ones, click on this link:

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpssap/index.html>

If you want to explore this Fulbright-Hays seminar at the NCUSCR site, click on this link:

<http://www.ncuscr.org/?q=programs/fulbright>

C. What is my project and why should YOUR students participate?

The audience for this project could be either high school students, community college students or university students. The purpose of this project is threefold. First, I hope to improve students' historical and foreign policy knowledge of China and the US in World War II. I also want students to better understand the domestic and international reasons why President Roosevelt and Generalissimo CHIANG Kai-Shek (hereafter CKS) both vacillated in their World War II policies. More generally, students should understand the impact of culture on foreign policy and diplomatic relations. I have come up with

background material and 10 questions (grouped into four categories) based on a close reading of Barbara W. Tuchman's book, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45* as well as *The Stilwell Papers*, which is edited by Theodore H. White. The latter author was one of Time Magazine's first correspondents to serve in Asia from 1938-1945. Future page references are from the Tuchman book unless indicated otherwise. Both of these books are on reserve at my college library and I would suggest that you, too, put these books on reserve in your library. I will require my students to also visit the Hoover Institution's Stilwell archive. Of course one can simply rely on the two books and on-line information if one does not have access to the archive.

\*The first spelling of this word is in pinyin, which was adopted by the Chinese government in 1958, as the better way to render Chinese into the Roman alphabet. The second spelling is in the Wade-Giles method, which was the predecessor to Pinyin. In this text when you see a Chinese word followed by one in parentheses, the first word will be transliterated in pinyin and the second word in the Wade Giles method. After the first time, you will only see the word rendered in Pinyin unless it is a quote. For more on these two methods, visit <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinyin>

\*\*In Chinese tradition, family names are rendered first before given names (emphasizing the community over the individual). As a result, I will capitalize the family name in my first reference to that name to emphasize it is the family name.



*The picture above is of the Fulbright-Hays group in front of the Jialing River and next to Stilwell's statue. I am standing on the left hand side (three in from the middle) in shorts. (The summer weather in China is very warm.)*

**II. Historical background:** (I will spend at least one to two hours in class covering this material after handing out this assignment. Prior to this lecture, ask the students to skim the Tuchman book, reading the introduction, forward, and prologue carefully in addition to Chapter 10, “I’ll go where I am sent.”)

A. Why was the China/Burma/India (hereafter CBI) theatre of World War II important; what were the Chinese, Japanese and American goals?

The war with Japan resulted from a weak China, which was unable to resist Japanese aggression. After CKS defeated warlords in southern and central China, he moved the capital to Nanjing in 1928. He also secured the nominal allegiance of the warlords in Manchuria. Japan then found a pretext to invade Manchuria and turn it into a puppet state with the last emperor of the Qing dynasty.

Japan wanted natural resources and was essentially acting as an imperial power in the way England and France had acted before. When full-scale war broke out between China and Japan in July 1937, Japan hoped to capture and destroy the capital, which had moved to Nanjing. CKS retreated inland, first to Wuhan and then up the Yangzi (Yangtze) River to Chongqing. The Japanese wanted to also take this new wartime capital and force the Generalissimo’s surrender. Hence holding Chongqing and this geographic area was essential to both Chinese and American goals especially after the Pearl Harbor attack. The Japanese tried attacking from the East of China as well as from the Southwest, Burma and India.

For more information on the CBI theatre, which is also underreported, try visiting the following web site: [http://cbi-theater.home.comcast.net/~cbi-theater/menu/cbi\\_home.html](http://cbi-theater.home.comcast.net/~cbi-theater/menu/cbi_home.html).

B. Who was General Stilwell and why is he worth reading about? Why is he relatively unknown?

1. Barbara Tuchman writes the following about reasons for Stilwell’s importance in Chinese-American relations: “because he combined a career focused on China with background and character that were quintessentially American; because his career spanned the period that shaped the present from the dramatic opening moment of 1911, the year of the Revolution, to 1944, a decisive year in the decline of the Nationalist Government; . . . because in the final and critical years of this period he was the most important figure in the Sino-American relationship” (xi).

He is especially important to Californians as he served at both Fort Ord and the Presidio; he built a house in 1934 in Carmel and returned there whenever he could. Also, the most complete archive on his life is located at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and my students will have the good fortune of visiting this archive.

Joseph Stilwell (known fondly as Uncle Joe and less fondly as Vinegar Joe) came from a military family—two of his ancestors fought in the American Revolution. He was born

on March 19, 1883 and died of stomach cancer on Oct. 12, 1946, two years after his service in China ended. He served in the Army and fought in both World War I and World War II. In China, he served three tours of duty in the inter-war period. He was fluent in the Chinese language and well versed in China's history. Of course that helped prepare him particularly well for his World War II assignment.

In January 1942, after the December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he was ordered to go to the CBI theatre and serve as a military leader under CKS. He served three different and sometimes conflicting roles: as CKS's advisor, as President Roosevelt's liaison with China, and as one of the lead trainers of the Chinese military. His actual title was a matter of constant dispute and this reflected ongoing tension in the Chinese-American relationship. Was he the head of the Chinese Army, was he above all other Chinese commanders or was this only the case when CKS gave his explicit approval? This ambiguity was never satisfactorily clarified.

If these political/cultural dilemmas were not complex enough, he had to struggle with balancing the alliance of the Americans, British and Chinese; the latter two nations were both poorly equipped and lacking in motivation in the CBI. In fact, the CBI was a low priority for both supplies and personnel for all three nations. The US only sent in a minor number of troops at the end of World War II in spite of frequent requests from Stilwell. He had to work with CKS and the Chinese military the best he could. As Max Hastings has written in a 2009 review of Andrew Roberts' *Masters and Commanders: How Four Titans Won the War in the West*: "Roosevelt and Marshall had brilliantly managed American emergence from pre-war isolation onto the world stage. Their only conspicuous failure was the attempt to make CKS's China an effective belligerent and a great power sympathetic to American policy objectives" ([http://www.nybooks.com/articles/article-preview?article\\_id=22975/](http://www.nybooks.com/articles/article-preview?article_id=22975/) accessed on Aug. 23, 2009).

## 2. Was his mission a failure?

Ultimately, President Roosevelt recalled him from China in October 1944. One could thus argue he is relatively unknown because his overall political and military mission ended in failure. The Japanese were not yet defeated and the CKS's military remained reluctant to engage in battle with the Japanese (preferring to fight domestic Communist forces). Although this was a failure that was clearly due to factors largely beyond his control, it was certainly a personal embarrassment. We should also remember, however, that he was admired by many members of the Chinese military and he won some unlikely military battles. His efforts to rebuild the approximately 700 mile Burma Road (see <http://www.worldwar2history.info/Burma/Road.html/> accessed August 25, 2009) and to build the 465 mile Ledo Road ([http://ledoroad.home.comcast.net/~ledoroad/Ledo\\_Main.html](http://ledoroad.home.comcast.net/~ledoroad/Ledo_Main.html) accessed August 25, 2009), after the Japanese took over the Burma Road, resulted in the Ledo road becoming the Stilwell Road. To see how hard the road was to build, click on this link: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/34190706@N02/3196497756/>.

Brooke Atkinson, who had interviewed both Mao and Stilwell, wrote a very accurate description of Stilwell's situation in an article in *Time Magazine* which appeared on Nov. 13, 1944: "The decision to relieve General Stilwell represents the political triumph of a moribund, anti-democratic regime that is more concerned with maintaining its political supremacy than in driving the Japanese out of China"  
(<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,801570-1,00.html/> accessed on Aug. 20, 2009).

Stilwell's lack of fame and misinformation concerning his accomplishments makes the creation of the museum in Chongqing all the more important. It may be the first place where Americans hear about this man. This was certainly the case for me.



*Here is a picture of our group with Dr. Zhang Jin and other researchers in front of the Stilwell Museum. Dr. Zhang Jin is third in from the left in the front row with her colleagues.*

C. Why was Chongqing the wartime capital, what type of city was it, and what is the city's significance to China today? [The following link has a 5 minute film history of Chongqing up until 1992, which I recommend you show to your students to introduce the topic (you have to join the site, but it is free): <http://vimeo.com/2327123/>.]

## 1. Why was Chongqing the wartime capital?



You can access the original map at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_Sino-Japanese\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War)

There is a very simple answer: it was a relatively safe place for CKS and the nationalists to hide out. In 1929, Chongqing became a municipality of the Republic of China and in the years after the first Japanese attack of 1931, CKS began preparing Chongqing and Sichuan for his retreat, where he thought he could “outwait” the Japanese and focus on his real problem, the Communists. (152) CKS could, however, also talk to the Communists in Chongqing as this was the location of their Southwest branch. This provisional capital was heavily bombed, although its mountainous surroundings provided some refuge. Somewhere between 5,000 and 11,500 bombs were dropped resulting the deaths of tens of thousands Chinese. Most the bombing was in residential areas, sometimes called terror bombing.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing\\_of\\_Chongqing/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Chongqing/)

In the war period, this city transformed itself into a heavily industrialized area, which specialized in producing weapons. With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, it was also seen as a “beacon of freedom” (Dr. Zhang Jin).

## 2. What type of city was it during World War II and where did Stilwell live (now the Stilwell Museum)?

Barbara Tuchman describes Stilwell's first unfavorable impression when she writes "the remote provincial 500 year old city with its steep streets and steps climbing up from the river, its open sewers and dank fogbound climate in winter was a 'sloppy dump'" (197). "Bomb-shattered houses were leaky and shaky, filth and smells were increased by the crowding, rats came out at night" (261). Stilwell's residence stood in contrast to this. It was modern and he had many servants. It was a Western-style house built by TV Soong (the brother of Madame Chiang Kai-Shek; he served as the Foreign Minister of China for most of World War II and sometimes schemed against Stilwell). It was provided to Stilwell by the Chinese government. As Tuchman describes it "Chungking occupied a rock promontory jutting into the junction of the Yangtze (pinyin: Yangzi) and Chialing (pinyin: Jialing) rivers and Stilwell's house was on the Chialing side with one story at street level and three stories overlooking the river, like a house in San Francisco." (261)



*I took this picture, which gives you the San Francisco sense of the city, which Tuchman writes about, on a foggy, humid summer day.*

3. What is the city's significance to China today?

While the city was demoted back to a provincial city--part of Sichuan Province--in 1954, it began to regain prominence when it was made a municipality once again in March 1997. (It is one of four municipalities in China--the other three are Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin. Municipalities have the same political status as China's other provinces.) This designation was intended to assist in China's Western Development, a strategy which started in 1999. This development includes twelve of China's provinces, but only



one municipality, Chongqing, “The Gateway to the West” (Dr. Wang, “The Economy in Western China,” Northwest University, July 10).

With a population of 32 million, it would appear to be the largest city in the world. However, if one just counts the urban area of Chongqing proper, the population is closer to six million, and hence the 35<sup>th</sup> largest city in the world.

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_cities\\_by\\_population/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_by_population/) accessed Aug. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009)

There are large differences between the rural areas and urban areas (and collectively the rural population is larger than the urban) in terms of GDP per capita, health care, job opportunities, etc. One goal of the Chinese government is to overcome these barriers. (Dr. Wang, “Understanding China: View of A Young Scholar,” Southwest University, July 16) Still, this city with GDP growth ranging around 12% in the first half of 2009 (Mr. Yue, July 13, 2009), is increasing at almost twice China’s national rate of growth (variously estimated at 6-8%) and it is compared by some to Manhattan (or Shanghai or Hong Kong). I think you can see why in my night pictures of the urban areas of Chongqing below.



### III. Instructions to students, project questions, sources, and reflections:

A. Instructions: Now that you have reviewed these introductory comments and web sites as well as skimmed the Tuchman book, please write two page answers to three questions: one question from section one below, one question from EITHER sections two or three, and one question from section four, for a total of six pages. These answers should be typed and double-spaced. You will present ONE of your answers to the class and be prepared to answer questions. The written work is worth the same points as your five-minute presentation of your written work (75 points).

As for the six pages of written work, each of these questions call for a great deal of interpretation. However, my chief concern is that you back up your interpretation with specific evidence, which you tie together as you progress from one set of questions to the next. As your analysis is very important, I want  $\frac{1}{4}$  of your work (at the most) to consist of quotes. I am requiring you to use all three sources listed at the end (the two books are on reserve in the library and the Hoover Archives are five minutes away by car). I also want you to consult one additional source (it may be a newspaper, book, web site, film, etc.). Be sure to use proper MLA formatting to document all of your work. Your writing will be judged on the quality of English, analysis, and evidence.

You will only be able to present on one of your answers and you may need to coordinate your presentation with one other student. I am looking for the following qualities in your presentation: a good presentation style, a clear point of view, a consideration of other points of view, evidence, and a strong conclusion.

#### B. The Project Questions:

##### 1. Historical/Cultural Influence

a. Investigate what the Chinese refer to as the “century of humiliation” from the first Opium War (1839-1842) to the 1940s. Provide at least four examples of the humiliations Chinese suffered during this period. In your estimation, did China’s “century of humiliation” influence Chinese perceptions of American and British intentions during World War II? Please provide two examples to support your viewpoint on this question.

b. Describe at least two specific incidents during World War II involving General Stilwell, where you see a Chinese proclivity to make promises, which are in part intended to pacify the other party and preserve harmony.

##### 2. Alliance/Foreign Policy Issues

a. Describe the process by which Chinese and Americans became allies in World War II. Specifically, describe the impact of both domestic politics and international relations on one aspect of this alliance.

b. How did the changing political climate in China during World War II alter CKS’s view of General Stilwell and Stilwell’s place in Chinese history?

c. To what extent did personalities and leadership styles impact the Chinese-American relationship in World War II? In addition to describing the leadership of General Stilwell and CKS, describe the influence of one of the following: President Franklin Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Chief of Staff George Marshall, General Claire Chennault, American Ambassador to China Patrick Hurley, Chinese Foreign Minister T.V. Soong, or Madame Chiang Kai-Shek.

d. Compare and contrast the tactics and strategy of the American Army and those of the Chinese Army in battle against the Japanese on at least two occasions. To what extent were these similarities and differences based on lessons learned prior to World War II? To what extent were soldiers responsible for the outcomes; to what extent were leaders responsible?

e. Describe two ways in which China's positive experiences with the US in World War II might have encouraged China's "Opening to the West" in 1979?

### 3. Questions on Chongqing

a. Compare and contrast modern day Chongqing with World War II Chongqing (in terms of population, American foreign direct investment, occupations, and infrastructure). In what ways might Chongqing residents' worldview still be impacted by their memories of the World War II bombings? Be sure to describe these memories in some detail. (Try this web site: [http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200610/26/eng20061026\\_315332.html/](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200610/26/eng20061026_315332.html/).)

b. How did this chapter in history affect America's post World War II policy toward China and/or Chongqing? How does the changing political climate between China and the US during the late 1980s under President Bush (41) impact China's view of General Stilwell? (Note that the opening of the Stilwell Museum took place two years after the protests in Tiananmen Square to which Bush responded mildly.)

### 4. Application to Other Domestic Alliances

a. Describe in broad strokes a contemporary set of political alliances, within a developing country, which resemble the fractious and fragile nature of CKS's nationalist alliance. (I would recommend looking at Iraq or Afghanistan.) Are the historical, cultural or political reasons for these rifts similar? What can these contemporary leaders learn from the outcome of Sino-American relations in 1949 China?

### C. Sources Required to Complete the Project:

1. A link to the Hoover collection on General Stilwell follows, but to look at this collection, you must go to the Hoover Institution in person. This collection includes cassettes, photos and films, and many documents in over 100 boxes. It presents you with an excellent opportunity to become familiar with archival work, where you deal with primary sources. You should plan to spend a half day to a full day at the archive and work cooperatively in order to work most effectively:

<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf958006qb?query=General%20Stilwell>

2. Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1911-1945* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1985). This is the same as the 1971 edition (first edition was 1970) but it includes an introduction by John K. Fairbank.

3. General Joseph W. Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers* (New York, NY: De Capo Press, 1991). This is an unabridged replication of the 1948 edition, which was edited by Theodore H. White, but it contains a preface by Eric Larrabee. Stilwell wrote it only for his personal use, but after his death, his wife wanted it published so that his side of the issues would be recorded.

#### D. Reflections on the Assignment After Implementation:

As any teacher can guess, I got a mixed set of results and have come up with some conclusions about what I could do better next time. First, I would spend more time on the project and make it more central to the class. I only had about one hour to introduce the assignment and it really requires 3-4 hours to introduce. It is hard to cover Chinese history, Chinese foreign policy, and American and Chinese leaders in less than three hours. Also, I spent two weeks on China in my class and I would change that to three weeks in order to allow sufficient time for this unit.

I would suggest that if used at the high school level, it should only be used in AP classes. Enough of my honors students struggled with this assignment (although I think it was mostly a factor of the time they invested), that I realize it is more difficult than I intended. After surveying my students, this assignment generally required about 14-20 hours to complete. I may have students answer two questions instead of three.

One of the most interesting and unintended results of this unit was the fact that my Chinese students (maybe one-fifth of the 30 honors students) excelled at this assignment and were able to share many insights with the class concerning what they learned in China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan.

I want to share one more source with you that you may choose to use if you want to focus more on CKS than on General Stilwell. This book was published while I was writing up this assignment: Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo* (Honolulu, HI: Belknap, 2009). The author was a foreign service officer in Hong Kong during the Cultural Revolution and paints a very different picture of CKS than Tuchman.

I hope this assignment is as rewarding for your students and your class as it was for mine. Feel free to share your questions, concerns, or results with me by e-mailing me at [heisermeredith@fhda.edu](mailto:heisermeredith@fhda.edu). Also please be sure to look at the last link after this to view a student's power point in response to question 2e.