It’s not our fault: Evolving perceptions of key parties and their influences on U.S. led peace talks dynamics during the Chinese Civil War, 1945-1947

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The Chinese Civil War

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Contents

1. Introduction

"I have never known any problem that had so much complexity in it as China."[1] So reflected George Marshall in 1949 on the problem of creating a lasting peace between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT). Given Marshall was the leader of the largest army in history and one of the main architects behind Allied victory in the Second World War, this speaks to the incredible complexity of "the China problem" and the numerous actors with conflicting interests. Marshall was well placed to make such an assessment, having served as U.S. special representative in China for 13 months in 1945-1947. This paper will primarily look at this period, the 13 months Marshall spent negotiating. The CCP and KMT had waged war on and off since the 1920s, but both agreed a truce during the Second World War to fight the Japanese occupation. Once Japan had been defeated, civil war threatened to erupt again, this time in a power vacuum left by the Japanese. This led U.S. President Truman to ask George Marshall out of retirement to lead peace negotiations. Marshall spent 13 months in China, with a brief return to the U.S. in the middle, trying to create a lasting peace in China. Marshall went there with little hope of success, with an aide saying that before the mission, Marshall and his aids estimated their chance of success at 2%.[2] However, his stature as one of the most respected Americans worldwide saw him well-received by all parties. Initial efforts succeeded, with a truce agreed and plans for political and military unification written. However, these plans were never ratified, talks disintegrated, and hostilities erupted, with the CCP eventually prevailing. The events during the Marshall Mission will be explained in more detail in later chapters.

This paper will focus on the Marshall-led peace negotiations, with the main research question: To what extent did the shifting perceptions and trust levels between Zhou Enlai, George Marshall, and Chiang Kai-shek throughout the U.S.-led peace talks in 1945-1947 impact the strategies and decision-making processes of these figures? During this time, power balances shifted, global distrust deepened, and all-out civil war finally erupted. In American literature, the question "who lost China" has dominated the discussion, especially due to the prominence this question had in the McCarthy era. This paper will examine the way the perceptions important players had of each other evolved during the Marshall-led negotiations. This topic was chosen as I believe that understanding this will help understand the decisions the leaders made throughout the negotiations. The three agents this paper will examine are George Marshall, U.S. special representative to China, Zhou Enlai, the representative of the CCP, and Chiang Kai-Shek, leader of the KMT. While Marshall went as a mediator, the U.S. had a whole set of objectives they aimed to achieve. They did not act as neutral facilitators and should be seen as a key agent with a substantive agenda.

This paper aims to answer the research question by first providing an overview of the events surrounding the Marshall Mission. Following this overview, three chapters will explore each central player respectively. Each chapter will focus on one party, explaining what their initial perceptions of the others were at the time of Marshall's appointment, and how this changed during the thirteen months Marshall's mission lasted. This will then help with understanding the reasons why the talks fell apart and were ultimately unsuccessful.

By examining the three crucial players, and the way their perceptions of each other evolved during the negotiations, I will answer the main research question. The perceptions were influenced

[1] Foreign Affairs File, 1949
[2] Byroade, 1988, 32

among others by global affairs, battlefield results, domestic concerns, and the compatibility of leaders' personalities. Decisions made throughout the negotiations were often complicated, with each player having multiple reasons for every decision. This paper aims to provide an overview of how the leaders' perceptions of each other changed, the reasons behind these changes, and how this impacted decision-making. This paper does not focus on the extent to which the perceptions of important parties were true or fair, and this is left to further research.

This paper has been written based on a comprehensive literature analysis, delving into both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources include books and articles written about the Chinese Civil War, the Marshall-led negotiations, or about the key players specifically. Primary sources include diaries, telegrams, letters, and meeting notes written at the time. The diaries of Chiang Kai-Shek and Colonel John Caughey, who worked for Marshall during the Marshall Mission, were both important sources. The diary of Chiang Kai-Shek is not openly published and was therefore cited as used in other secondary sources.

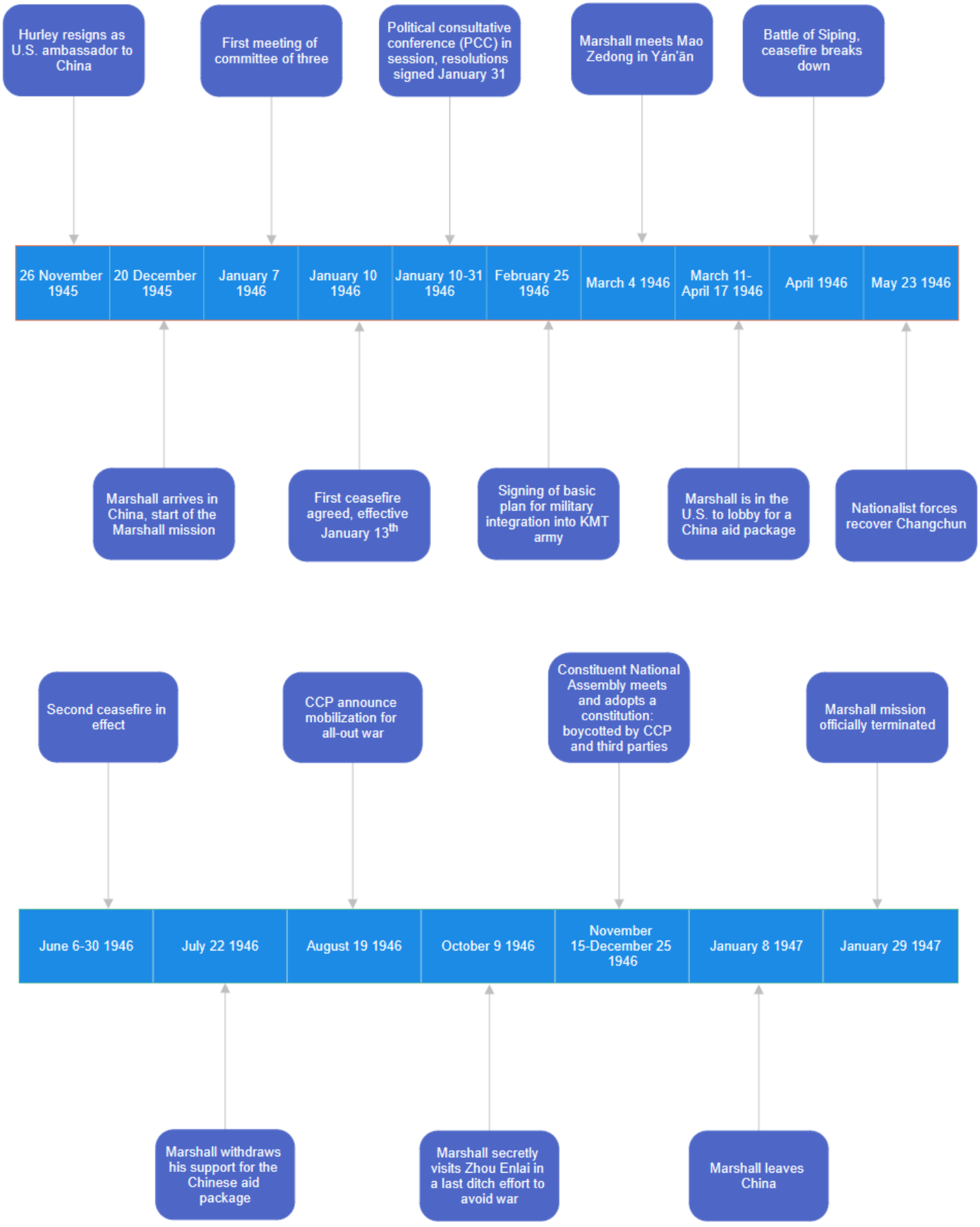

Figure 1. Timeline of important events during the Marshall Mission, 1945-1947. Based largely on timeline given in Caughey, 2011.

2. Hurley Negotiations and the Marshall Mission

During the 13 months of the Marshall Mission, both the domestic and global situation changed significantly. Crucial events that occurred during the Marshall Mission are shown in a timeline in Figure 1. While this timetable cannot cover every major event during the Marshall mission, its purpose is to provide a guide for understanding the progression of the Marshall-led talks. In this chapter, the events surrounding the Marshall mission will be explained, including the Hurley-led negotiations that preceded the Marshall Mission.

The first significant attempts to negotiate peace between the CCP and KMT were the talks mediated by the U.S. ambassador to China, Patrick Hurley, in the Autumn of 1945. The Soviet Union had signed pacts with the KMT and encouraged the CCP to negotiate, resulting in Mao Zedong travelling to Chongqing for negotiations with Chiang Kai-Shek. Mediated by Hurley, these first talks represented a good chance at peace, with Mao pressured by Stalin to make concessions.[3] Chiang Kai-Shek, on the other hand, had little control over large swathes of the country which had been under Japanese occupation. He needed U.S. help both in regaining control and in rebuilding the war-torn economy, and as a result agreed to negotiate. Mao, largely due to the pressure he felt from Stalin to negotiate, would have accepted a divided China, with the CCP in control of the north and the KMT in control of the south. However, Chiang Kai-Shek saw himself as the leader of a completely unified China. In his mind, he had fought for decades to unify China, both initially against the warlords that ruled most of China and subsequently against Japanese imperialism. He saw himself as the leader of this unified China, and could not or would not accept a divided China. This, along with his distrust of communism and of Mao's sincerity, led to Chiang being unable to accept Mao's proposals. Further reasons for the collapse of these talks were the worsening relations between the Soviet Union and the U.S., which led to decreasing pressure by Stalin on Mao to negotiate. While the Soviet support was still minimal, this gave Mao hope that he could pressure Chiang into further concessions or win a civil war in the long term. The situation at the end of the Second World War was extremely chaotic, with both the domestic and global situation changing constantly. Both Mao and Chiang hoped to take advantage of the chaotic situation, especially in the power vacuum left in Japanese-occupied areas. In the end, these talks failed mainly due to the changing global situation, along with the inability of Chiang to accept a divided China. Another factor was Hurley, who was a staunch supporter of Chiang and strongly anti-communist. Mao Zedong had mainly agreed to negotiate due to Soviet pressure and never saw Hurley as a fair mediator. Hurley finally resigned on November 27, 1945. His fear for communism had taken over, and he publicly blamed communists in the U.S. government for his failures in China.

George Marshall was appointed special envoy to China and arrived in China on December 20th, 1945. His powers to negotiate exceeded those of Hurley. He was given full power to negotiate on behalf of President Truman, and government officials were instructed not to negotiate with any Chinese official without Marshall's approval. The appointment of Marshall was initially well received by all parties, although more so by the CCP than by Chiang Kai-Shek (this will be explained further in later chapters). Hurley had never cared to understand the Chinese, once saying for example that "Chinese are just like Mexicans, and I can handle Mexicans."[4] Marshall worked quickly and secured the trust to

[3] Radchenko.
[4] Carter.

set up a committee of three between himself, Zhou Enlai (the communist representative) and initially Zhang Qun (the KMT representative). The Nationalist representative was changed regularly when Chiang Kai-Shek, the leader of the KMT, saw fit. While Chiang Kai-Shek was not officially part of the committee of three, he often negotiated with Marshall privately, and the nationalist representatives answered to him. Both Marshall and Zhou Enlai knew that Chiang was the true KMT representative with whom they were negotiating. Therefore, throughout this paper, I have seen Chiang Kai-Shek as the KMT representative.

Within days, the committee of three had agreed an indefinite ceasefire while negotiations were underway. Besides the committee of three, a Political Consultative Conference (PCC) was quickly formed, which would negotiate the finer points of a deal for governmental reform that both parties could agree to. A military subcommittee was also formed, to deal with the question of military integration of CCP and KMT armies, which was seen as one of the most difficult obstacles to lasting peace. An executive headquarters was also formed, located in Beiping (as Beijing was then known), which would help enforce the ceasefire agreement. This would be done by sending out truce teams to solve disputes, consisting of an American, CCP and KMT representative, who could only act on consensus.

Despite significant obstacles, these formed bodies were able to secure significant peace agreements. The PCC came up with an agreement for governmental reform and political unification in a coalition government. In the agreement, the CCP agreed to leadership under Chiang Kai-Shek in return for assurances of their political survival and their role in a coalition government. Along with this, a few weeks later an agreement was agreed for the integration of the CCP army into the KMT army. This was perhaps the most significant document, as both parties were extremely cautious with regard to military integration. The role of Marshall in securing these agreements was enormous, with Mao thanking Marshall personally for his help. He predominantly had to convince an initially irate Chiang to accept concessions to avoid war.[5] Chiang felt Marshall underestimated and pandered to the communists, a line of thinking that repeated itself throughout the Marshall Mission. The reasons each leader felt the way they did will be explained further in later chapters. With a truce agreed, and political and military unification agreed, Marshall had achieved the main initial goals of his mission. At this point the situation seemed to be heading towards lasting peace, with each party expressing optimism both publicly and privately.

With these agreements signed, Marshall left China in order to lobby Congress for an aid package for China, enough to leverage his agreements until they had been implemented sufficiently. Chiang had agreed to peace, and while some critics are sceptical, the evidence shows that Mao too was ready for peace, sending orders to all party members that China was entering a new “democratic” era.[6] However, with Marshall gone, the situation deteriorated significantly. The negotiations had lost someone who was a skilled negotiator and could bridge differences like few others. Along with this, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Manchuria had left a power vacuum that past agreements were unable to cope with. Finally, with worsening U.S.-Soviet relations and the increasing Soviet support for the CCP that came along with it, the CCP became more confident in securing further concessions. Chiang was only too happy to see the situation deteriorate, as he had never wanted to negotiate in the first place and was confident of a military victory. The political and military unification agreements were never ratified, and the situation spiralled beyond control. Even Marshall’s return to China could not stem the tide, as a second ceasefire and last-ditch attempts at negotiations were

[5] Kurtz-Phelan, 110-116.
[6] Sheng, 123-124.

unsuccessful. Marshall's influence waned as both the CCP and KMT accepted all-out war to be the only way forward. Chiang's confidence in his military strength proved misplaced, as nearly two years later, the CCP emerged victorious. The CCP declared the formation of the People's Republic of China on October 1st, 1949, while Chiang fled to Taiwan, where he lived out the rest of his life.

3. Chiang Kai-Shek

"The generalissimo," as Chiang Kai-Shek was often called, was undeniably one of the three important players during the peace talks. In this chapter, Chiang Kai-Shek's evolving perceptions of his U.S. and CCP counterparts will be examined. Chiang Kai-Shek kept a comprehensive diary, and this has provided insight into his intentions. I will first explain Chiang's relationship with the U.S. during the Second World War, which will help explain his initial attitude towards Marshall. After this, I will examine his views of Marshall, in three stages: initial impression, during the negotiations in the first couple of months, and finally during the breakdown in talks that followed. Finally, I will explain the views Chiang Kai-Shek held of Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong.

3.1. Chiang and the U.S. during the Second World War

During the Second World War, U.S. General Stillwell served as chief of staff to Chiang Kai-Shek. He had served several tours in China, spoke Chinese fluently, and developed a deep affection for the country. Despite ostensibly being on the same side, Chiang and Stillwell clashed over everything from troop movements to questions of authority. Stillwell pushed Chiang hard to move his troops from the east front to Burma, in order to clear an important supply route. Chiang felt that moving troops from the Chinese heartland, where he needed them to defend against both the Japanese and the CCP, was more than a little disrespectful. While Chiang knew he needed American help, he resented their priorities and their constant stream of broken promises. The Allies had committed to a "Europe first" strategy, and constantly broke promises to Chiang whenever this suited their strategy. The percentage of total American global lend-lease assistance that went to China was never more than 4% during the war, and often decreased whenever Europe required more assistance.[7] All of these frictions between Stillwell and Chiang, along with simply incompatible personalities, eventually led to hatred. Stillwell took to referring to Chiang as "the peanut" and wrote in his diary that "the cure for China's troubles is the elimination of Chiang Kai-Shek."[8] Chiang felt the same about Stillwell, viewing an ultimatum Stilwell pushed for concerning military authority as "the most severe humiliation I have ever had in my life."[9] In a demonstration of Stillwell's contempt for Chiang, his reaction to the same ultimatum was sending his wife a song, which mocked: "I've looked the Peanut in the eye, and kicked him in the pants."[10] Chiang detested Stillwell, and after this affair, demanded Stillwell's return to the U.S., which finally happened in October 1944. He was replaced by General Wedemeyer, who came to be one of Chiang's staunchest supporters.

The relationship between Stillwell and Chiang helps understand Chiang's perceptions of Marshall throughout the Marshall Mission. He often referred to Stillwell throughout the Marshall Mission, fearing a repeat of a situation where he felt hostage to American interests due to his need for their money and weapons. Chiang distrusted the Americans throughout the war and felt severely disrespected. Global agreements concerning China, at Yalta, and Cairo, were either negotiated without Chiang, or were discarded immediately once the situation demanded it. Chiang complained in his diary that he was "a decorative object" and called Yalta "really laughable."[11] This distrust of the Americans only deepened when the Americans reached out to the CCP, disillusioned by Chiang, and set up the Dixie mission in Yán'ān. While the appointment of the right-wing anti-communist Hurley

[7] Mitter, 245
[8] Stilwell, cited in Generalissimo, 278.
[9] Chiang, cited in Generalissimo, 289.
[10] Stilwell, cited in Tuchman, 592.
[11] Mitter, 353

was well-received by Chiang, this did not change his overall opinion of the U.S. during the Second World War.

3.2. Chiang and Marshall

All in all, the mutual respect and trust between America and Chiang, to the extent it was there in the first place, very nearly broke down completely during the Second World War. The appointment of Marshall, a near-universally respected man, was meant to help regain the trust and kickstart negotiations between Chiang and the CCP. Chiang's opinion of Marshall varied widely during the 13 months of the Marshall Mission, ranging from admiration, to frustration, to resentment. The views Chiang had of Marshall will therefore be analysed using these three views respectively, representing three stages of the negotiations.

3.2.1. First stage: initial impression

At the time of Marshall's appointment, Chiang felt the U.S. had neglected and deprioritized China. In his view, the U.S. was naïve, due to the imminent communist threat the CCP and the Soviets posed. Chiang was initially displeased about Marshall's appointment; he had appreciated the strong stance Hurley had taken against the communists, and feared Marshall's appointment would force him into concessions with the CCP.[12] Despite this, Chiang also reasoned that a man of Marshall's importance would not have been appointed if the U.S. did not think China was important.[13] Spies had also relayed to Chiang that despite any threats Marshall would make, the U.S. would eventually always support him. This point is extremely important and helps understand Chiang's dealings with Marshall throughout the Marshall Mission. When Marshall had pressed Truman, as to what the U.S. would do if Chiang refused to make reasonable concessions or deal with the CCP, Truman had conceded that the U.S. would still support Chiang.[14] This help, despite what Chiang hoped, was never going to involve U.S. troops. They were exhausted after the Second World War, and the U.S. public had no appetite for U.S. military involvement in China. However, recognition of Chiang's government, along with aid packages, both economic and military, was a cornerstone of Truman's policy in order to combat communism in Asia. This severely weakened Marshall's position, as he had little real leverage over Chiang. From the beginning, Chiang knew he had U.S. support, and therefore felt much less pressure to negotiate than he would otherwise. While this is not the only reason Chiang dithered or outright rejected negotiations, this played an important role.

When Marshall was appointed, Chiang did not want to negotiate and preferred a military solution. However, he knew he needed U.S. aid to rebuild China, and was convinced during Marshall's first few days to negotiate with the CCP. Chiang wrote in his diary that he felt Marshall respected his leadership, and was reassured that Marshall was aware of what he called deceptive communist propaganda.[15] On the other hand, he felt Marshall was insufficiently sceptical of communists, both of the CCP and the Soviet Union.[16] After Marshall spent his first weeks in China gathering information, the committee of three was formed. Despite Chiang's fears, he had been won

[12] Sidney, 184-185.
[13] Chiang Kai-Shek, November 28, 1945. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 60.
[14] Marshall papers, Vol 5, 393. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 44.
[15] Chiang Kai-Shek, December 21, 1945. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 53.
[16] Chiang Kai-Shek, December 26, 1945. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 71.

over by Marshall's understanding of his security concerns and wrote in his diary that: "he can be trusted to join the three-person conference and take charge." [17]

3.2.2. Second stage: negotiations

Within days of the committee of three meeting, an indefinite ceasefire was agreed, going into effect January 13th, 1946. An executive headquarters was established in Beiping (as Beijing was then known), from which truce teams went into areas with disputes. These truce teams consisted of three members; a Nationalist, a communist, and an American, who went into the field in order to enforce the peace and prevent accidents or disagreements breaking the ceasefire. A political consultative conference (PCC) was also formed, in which CCP and KMT leaders would negotiate a permanent peace deal. Marshall had intended to stay out of this but had been urged both by Zhou Enlai and Chiang Kai-Shek to join discussions. This indicates the trust both parties had in Marshall at the time, impressed by his diplomatic ability and work ethic. Chiang wrote in his diary that he felt Marshall had to join negotiations if there was to be even hope for peace.[18]

With the CCP and KMT at an impasse, Marshall proposed his plan for China, with a bill of rights, a constitution, and an interim coalition government. While Marshall felt this was fair, Chiang was completely taken by surprise, and thought Marshall had been taken in by the CCP. He began to see the Stillwell saga repeating itself and wrote that "even the Communists would never dare to make this proposal."[19] Chiang eventually relented and agreed to present these ideas to the CCP, but only under the condition that it seemed like it was his idea. The ideas were integrated into an agreement for political unification, and was signed by both parties on January 31st, 1946. Chiang was eventually optimistic about this deal, despite his initial reluctance. He wrote in his diary that Zhou's attitude was changing, being more cooperative than ever, and that he and Marshall were bonding over their shared success.[20]

However, every party felt that the largest obstacle to a lasting peace was the integration of the CCP into the Nationalist army, not political unification. This does not mean that the agreement reached by the PCC was unimportant. On the contrary, it achieved major gains, such as the CCP promising to recognize the legitimacy of the rule of Chiang Kai-Shek, along with promises by Chiang for meaningful democratic reform. However, the communists did not want to lay down their arms without serious assurances, while the KMT feared insurgent communist army units within the national army. Despite serious difficulties, an agreement was finally reached for a basic plan to integrate the armies, which was signed on February 25th, 1946. This was the point during the Marshall Mission when every party felt most optimistic. Marshall had felt he had achieved all of his initial goals, and both the CCP and Chiang were optimistic about future peace. The views of Marshall and the CCP at this point will be explained further in later chapters. However, it is important to note that at this point, it did seem as if Chian was heading towards peace. Soon after, Marshall met Mao in Yán'ān, and left for the U.S. on March 11th in order to lobby for a comprehensive Chinese aid package to help guide the implementation of the signed deals. However, this implementation, along with the impact of global affairs, was not to be underestimated. By the time Marshall returned to China on April 17, the political landscape was completely different. The agreements had not been ratified by either party. Initially, KMT conservatives revolted, forcing Chiang to seek further

[17] Chiang Kai-Shek, January 3, 1946. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 81-88.
[18] Chiang Kai-Shek, January 16, 1946. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 101.
[19] Chiang Kai-Shek, January 22, 1946. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 110.
[20] Chiang Kai-Shek, February 2 & 9, 1946. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 116-117

concessions from the CCP. Chiang did not much mind this, as despite his initial optimism, he had serious reservations about the deal he had signed. He complained in his diary that the plan "was the biggest loss of his government."[21] The CCP in turn refused, and after a period of negotiations where no headway was made, fighting broke out again. By the time Marshall returned, the situation had significantly worsened.

3.2.3. Third stage: breakdown in negotiations and end of Marshall Mission

Throughout the Marshall Mission, Chiang had doubts about whether Marshall sufficiently understood the danger of the communists. He wanted to fight, not negotiate, and often felt that Marshall was holding him back. While part of this was certainly Chiang's own thoughts, a lot of it was due to pressure from factions within the KMT. A right-wing, fascist group called the CC clique wielded significant power and influenced Chiang's decisions. These officials often controlled parts of the government and military and feared loss of status and power if negotiations succeeded. Chiang's control of the country had always been fragile, as he had to balance the interests of various factions and regional leaders. This is an important point to note, as Chiang's perceptions can only be examined in the context in which he had them. In Chiang's view, he often had no choice but to fight, lest he lose control of his party. He had purged most of the leftists in his party, and a significant portion of what remained was diametrically opposed to anything but all-out war.

The worsening situation that came when Marshall left China was due to numerous reasons. Soviet-U.S. relations were worsening, and Stalin was providing more support to the CCP. The Soviets had finally completely vacated Manchuria, which left a power vacuum that both the CCP and KMT tried to fill, despite the ceasefire and other agreements. Both parties felt that if they could change the situation in Manchuria to their advantage, they could force the other side into further concessions. Soon after Marshall left China, problems started arising with truce teams not reaching a consensus, or between Zhou and Chiang, as each side pressed for an advantage. This finally led to the ceasefire being broken in the battle of Siping, where the CCP emerged victorious in a turning point in the war. However, an important reason for the breakdown in talks, the failures of the truce teams and the subsequent all-out civil war was Marshall's absence. One of his closest aides had observed before his departure that "Marshall's presence is what is holding China together."[22] Marshall was extremely adept at overcoming disagreements and convincing both sides that the deal was most advantageous to them. With Marshall gone, both sides felt they had lost the neutral arbiter that could help them bridge disagreements. Zhou at one point refused to return from Yán'ān, only relenting when the aide sent to retrieve him invoked a personal plea from Marshall.[23] Chiang started to doubt parts of the military integration deal, and without Marshall to influence him, the doubts evolved into actions. This breakdown was remarkable when realizing that Marshall worked tirelessly in the U.S., even skipping his goddaughter's baptism, and finally secured an aid package generous enough to help implement the deals he had negotiated. While the situation is clearly more complicated, Marshall himself later felt that if only the situation had remained stable until his return, real peace could have been possible.

[21] Qing, 80.
[22] Caughey, 245
[23] Kurtz-Phelan, 153

Marshall himself initially primarily blamed Chiang Kai-Shek and the KMT for the deteriorating situation. “They murdered my effort,” he complained, blaming the KMT for failing to ratify the agreements and enforce peace.[24] While he was gone, the Soviet troops leaving Manchuria, along with poor military decisions and incompetent corrupt KMT governance, had changed the balance of power. As things started to unravel, Chiang Kai-Shek started to blame Marshall more and more. The most controversial issue in the negotiations had been the timing of military unification. Chiang had always insisted that the CCP lay down their arms before any coalition government could be formed. The CCP insisted that political unification come before military unification and was unwilling to compromise on this point. Marshall eventually sided with the CCP, convincing Chiang to agree, against his wishes, to military unification after a coalition government was formed.[25] While this was not the only reason he blamed Marshall, it was an example of what Chiang saw as Marshall’s unreasonable support of the CCP and Marshall’s encroachment on his authority. He likened Marshall’s ideas to the appeasement policies of Neville Chamberlain and called Marshall in his diary “afraid and helpless.”[26] Eventually, Chiang simply stopped listening to Marshall, as he sought a military solution to the conflict. Marshall attempted in vain to force Chiang to negotiate, for example withdrawing his support for the China aid package he had lobbied for. However, this only seemed to harden Chinang’s position, as he felt this proved Marshall was holding him back from a certain military victory. This frustration eventually led to hatred, as Chiang likened Marshall to Stalin and complained that with every defeat “it reminds me that all of this is Marshall’s fault.”[27]

Chiang blamed Marshall for a number of things. He blamed Marshall for pushing him into concessions he shouldn’t have given. He blamed Marshall for every time he convinced him, as talks broke down, to not push his military advantage. He blamed Marshall for the inadequate U.S. aid he received. Chiang felt the U.S. had abandoned “the Asia problem,” and wished in hindsight that he had never allowed the Marshall Mission to happen.[28] By the end of the civil war, his contempt for Marshall neared the levels with which he detested the CCP. He initially even refused to sign a note to Marshall’s wife after Marshall’s death, writing in his diary that he hoped Marshall’s death was a by-product of his guilt.[29] This was a far cry from the optimism Chiang showed at the start of Marshall’s mission, when they had bonded, and Chiang had trusted Marshall to lead negotiations.

3.3. Chiang and the CCP

While Chiang’s opinion of Marshall varied wildly throughout his mission, from cautiously optimistic, to trusting friendship, to frustration and eventual contempt, his opinion of his communist counterparts was far more consistent. “The Japanese are a disease of the skin, the Communists are a disease of the heart,”[30] Chiang Kai-Shek took to saying during the Second World War. His primary complaint concerning Marshall had always been that Marshall did not see the true danger of the communists. His opinion of Zhou Enlai and the CCP rarely changed throughout the Marshall Mission. Only at the most optimistic point of the Marshall Mission, after the signing of several deals in late January and February 1946, did he wonder if peace by negotiation was truly possible. He wrote in his

[24] United States Department of State, volume 9, document 789.
[25] Qing, 77.
[26] Chiang Kai-Shek, 20 April 1946. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 180-181.
[27] Chiang Kai-Shek, 24 January 1949. Cited in Kurtz Phelan, 345.
[28] Chiang Kai-Shek, 16 June 1951. Cited in Kurtz Phelan, 347.
[29] Chiang Kai-Shek, 17 October 1959. Cited in Kurtz Phelan, 357.
[30] White.

diary that he thought Zhou Enlai had changed and seemed ready for peace.[31] However, this cautious optimism did not last long, as the situation soon deteriorated.

All in all, I have found no evidence that Chiang's hatred of communists ever truly dissipated, or that he ever trusted Mao Zedong or Zhou Enlai. While Chiang had agreed to negotiate, he wanted to do this on his terms. He became more and more frustrated by Marshall's role and what he saw as the never-ending betrayals of the CCP. Chiang's opinion of the communists never changed: he hated them throughout the Marshall Mission and was glad to see the talks break down. When Marshall warned, as the last-ditch attempts at negotiations were failing, that a final rupture was in the midst, Chiang wrote in his diary that "this is indeed in line with my intentions."[32] Chiang believed, despite warnings by Marshall and others to the contrary, that his army could wipe out the CCP in a matter of weeks. This proved a miscalculation, as the CCP won battle after battle against the KMT. This was due to a number of factors, including corrupt and disloyal KMT generals and officials, misgovernance resulting in an alienated populace, and an incorrect belief by Chiang in the CCP's military inferiority. Chiang, throughout the Chinese civil war, made bad decision after bad decision, and blamed the results on both the CCP and Marshall. I believe that he allowed his distaste for the communists, along with his frustration with Marshall and U.S. policy, to influence his decision-making. He ignored warnings by Marshall about his military vulnerability or about the necessity of reigning in the power of the CC clique. Along with this, Chiang underestimated the CCP time and time again, which eventually played a role in his defeat.

[31] Chiang Kai-Shek, 2 February 1946. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 117-118.
[32] Chiang Kai-Shek, 27 September 1946. Cited in Kurtz Phelan, 267.

4. Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong

Zhou Enlai was the CCP representative in Chongqing during the Marshall-led negotiations. His perceptions of his counterparts are more difficult to analyse than Chiang's. This is primarily due to there being no record of him keeping a diary, and that most communications between him and Mao Zedong were either never written down or never released. However, to the extent this is possible, this chapter will examine Zhou's perceptions of Marshall and Chiang, and how this changed during the talks. Along with this, the relationship between Zhou and Mao Zedong, the leader of the CCP, will first be explained.

4.1. Zhou Enlai's relationship to Mao Zedong

Despite Zhou being the lead negotiator for the CCP, he was not their leader. Mao Zedong stayed in Yán'ān throughout the negotiations and entrusted the talks to Zhou. Zhou Enlai retained Mao's trust throughout the talks and had the authority to negotiate on Mao's behalf. However, before any major signings of documents, Zhou travelled to Yán'ān to get Mao's approval. While Mao generally agreed with Zhou's views and signed the deals he had negotiated, there were instances of Mao overruling Zhou. One example of this is the military unification agreement, signed in February 1946. Mao overruled the deal Zhou negotiated, believing he had given up too much. While a deal was agreed shortly after, this shows the crucial role Mao held in the talks, despite not being present.

There were also instances where Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong disagreed. For example, a military attaché to Marshall recounted that Zhou Enlai explained their internal disagreements about the pace of communizing China, saying: "Make no mistake about it, we want to communize China. Mao thinks we can do it almost overnight. But, you know, we really can't. We've got less than 30 really well qualified people."[33] Zhou was generally more in favour of negotiating, and of the U.S., than Mao Zedong was, who thought of negotiating as a tactic within the theatre of war. However, it is false to state that Zhou had merely been sent to stall while Mao waged the war militarily. Mao was more sceptical than Zhou, but he did believe at times in negotiating, for example declaring after the PCC proposals were signed in January 1946, that "peace was truly possible."[34]

4.2. CCP and the U.S.

4.2.1. Initial Appointment and Negotiations

"Expose the darkness within the Chinese ruling circle to win their sympathy towards the CCP."[35] This was a CCP directive in 1941 concerning the U.S., and explains the general tactics of the CCP in dealing with the U.S. The CCP was well aware that the U.S. was frustrated with Nationalist corruption, incompetence, and ingratitude to U.S. aid. While the CCP hoped for aid from their more natural backers, the Soviets, Stalin had initially refused to commit to helping the CCP. Stalin did not believe the CCP could win a civil war, and even said that "Chinese communists are not real communists."[36] Mao was aware of his need for U.S. assistance, or more importantly, his need to limit U.S. assistance to Chiang. Mao admitted that China needed huge amounts of capital in order to modernise, and that the U.S. was the only country that could supply this.[37] After signing the PCC agreements in January

[33] Byroade, 37.
[34] Kurtz-Phelan, 116
[35] Sheng, 150
[36] Feis, 140
[37] Qing, 68.

1946, Mao even asked Zhou to pass along to Marshall that he would rather visit America than the Soviet Union, as "there are so many things I can learn from America."[38]

Due to their need for Soviet support, their need to limit U.S. assistance and their need not be seen as the reason for all-out civil war, The CCP entered negotiations willingly. Mao Zedong saw Marshall as a far more progressive force than Hurley, and hoped he could help, at the very least, to delay the outbreak of all-out civil war.[39] However, the CCP was aware that the end goal of the Marshall Mission was a China under the rule of Chiang Kai-Shek, even if the CCP managed to achieve significant concessions. Therefore, the general CCP strategy throughout the mission was to gain as many concessions as possible, delay or prevent all-out civil war, and limit U.S. assistance to the KMT.[40]

When Marshall was first appointed, the CCP praised his appointment, both publicly and privately, indicating their public praise was not just for show. The CCP agreed to join the committee of three and begin negotiations, heartened by Marshall's insistence that all decisions be unanimous.[41] Zhou also pushed for Marshall's involvement in discussions after initial agreements had been reached and consultative organs created. Zhou trusted Marshall to an extent and believed that his involvement would allow them to reach a fair agreement.[42]

4.2.2. PCC Resolution and Military Unification Agreement

The most optimistic stage of the negotiations was after the political reforms agreed by the PCC had been signed. The CCP took this seriously, perhaps more so than Chiang. Chiang was reluctantly optimistic, feeling Marshall had forced him into concessions (see Chapter 3.2.2). He would perhaps have been more optimistic if he had heard what CCP leadership was saying in closed circles. Directives went out emphasising a turn away from violent struggle towards peace and a coalition government, and even warning members to beware of "the major danger of the narrow-minded outlook among many of our comrades."[43] The tactic of the CCP shifted, from simply trying to gain concessions, to a plan for long-term peace. The CCP sent memos explaining their tactic, focussing on isolating the right-wing CC clique while working with Chiang Kai-Shek, even temporarily stopping propaganda against the KMT.[44] The CCP even started planning to move their headquarters to a major city. The leadership started thinking about their future in a coalition government, with Zhou thinking he would make a good minister of agriculture and forestry.[45]

However, the CCP was more cautious when it came to military integration. Mao was especially cautious: he wanted to first implement governmental reform before any military integration. He feared agreeing to anything too quickly, saying: "we want unification, but we do not want to be eliminated. This danger can be avoided only if we manage the situation carefully and properly."[46] As explained previously, Marshall eventually sided with the CCP, and convinced Chiang to agree to political unification before military unification. This helped the CCP trust Marshall, as they

[38] Zhou Enlai, January 31, 1946. Cited in Qing, 78.
[39] The papers of George Catlett Marshall, Vol 5, 304.
[40] The papers of George Catlett Marshall, Vol 5, 304.
[41] Kurtz-Phelan, page 87
[42] United States Department of State, volume 9.
[43] Confidential letter, February 5, 1946. Cited in Qing, 79.
[44] Memo, February 6, 1946. Cited in Qing, 79
[45] Kurtz-Phelan, 116
[46] Sheng, 126

began to think he was sufficiently anti-Chiang to aid their cause. Zhou Enlai compared him to Stillwell, the American general who was extremely critical of Chiang.[47]

4.2.3. Breakdown in Negotiations

However, this trust soon changed. As described in Chapter 3.2.2., the conservative and military factions of the KMT refused to ratify the agreements and forced Chiang to seek further concessions. After Zhou had agreed a new deal, Mao overruled him, believing that the right-wing factions of the KMT would never accept peace with the CCP. Therefore, by the spring of 1946, Mao had decided to fight, saying: "We must speak from a position of strength, to force Chiang to come to terms at the negotiation table."[48] Mao did not completely give up on negotiations, thinking up to the summer of 1946 that Marshall would force Chiang to come back to the table with what he saw as reasonable proposals.[49] The decision to fight came as the Soviets were withdrawing their troops from Manchuria. Mao knew, as did Chiang, that whoever filled the power vacuum most efficiently could force the other side into further concessions. Proper negotiations never materialised, however. Marshall's role was diminished, largely due to Chiang ignoring Marshall as he sought a military solution. Zhou Enlai in turn reported to Mao that Marshall had no influence over Chiang anymore. By the summer of 1946, the CCP began definitively changing their plans, from a peaceful coalition government that Mao had accepted only a few months earlier, to one of preparing for all-out war. A second ceasefire in June 1946 was largely ignored, and the CCP finally gave up on negotiations on August 19, 1946, as they openly called for mobilization for all-out civil war.

Mao did not take this decision to break off negotiations lightly. Hu Qiaomu, Mao's secretary, later wrote that Mao had only ever agonized over two decisions in his life: entering the Korean war, and breaking off negotiations with the KMT in the summer of 1946.[50] Mao did want to negotiate, and initially fought battles primarily to improve his bargaining hand and to force Chiang back to the table. This was in contrast to Chiang, who negotiated mainly to appease his American allies, and preferred to eliminate the CCP militarily. Whether Mao would have been satisfied in a coalition government is another question, but in early 1946, this is exactly what he was preparing for. As the situation evolved into all-out war, in official channels and CCP propaganda, Marshall was criticized heavily. The "imperialistic" U.S. was blamed for the situation along with Chiang Kai-Shek's corrupt government. This was necessary as the CCP knew the U.S. would continue supporting Chiang now that negotiations were over. However, this did not necessarily align with the personal views of CCP leadership. While Mao had only met Marshall once and primarily blamed Chiang for the worsening situation, Zhou Enlai had come to like and respect Marshall, even as things fell apart.[51]

4.3. CCP and Chiang Kai-Shek

The perceptions of Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong of Chiang Kai-shek are similar to the perceptions Chiang had of the CCP: distrust and hatred. Initially, as the talks progressed well, and it seemed real peace was possible, the CCP decided to try to work with Chiang Kai-Shek, and isolate the right-wing factions in his government. However, as talks broke down, Mao blamed Chiang, saying "all that has happened lately proves that Chiang's anti-Soviet, anti-CCP, and anti-democratic nature will not

[47] Qing, 80
[48] Qing, 81.
[49] Qing, 81.
[50] Hu Qiaomu. Cited in Qing, 86-87.
[51] Zhou, 16 November 1946. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 288.

change."[52] These two parties, as explained earlier in Chapter 3.3., never trusted each other. Mao was ready to negotiate with Chiang under the protection and mediation of Marshall, whom they viewed as a progressive force that could help them achieve peace. However, when Marshall's influence waned, as Chiang stopped listening to him, Mao ended up agreeing with Chiang that all-out civil war was the only solution. As far as Mao, Zhou and the CCP were concerned, Marshall had been the only thing holding the negotiations together, and with his influence diminished, fighting was the only way out.

As explained in Chapter 3, Chiang Kai-Shek allowed his frustration with Marshall and his hatred of the CCP to detrimentally influence his decision-making. Despite Zhou Enlai coming to like and respect Marshall, I do not believe this was as much the case for the CCP. The CCP was driven by its desire for social revolution in China. While hatred of Chiang Kai-Shek was a part of this, CCP leadership was willing to change strategy if the situation demanded it. When Soviet pressure demanded negotiations with the KMT, the CCP complied. When a (temporary) coalition government seemed the best result, Mao prepared his party for this outcome. When Manchuria became the testing ground as each side fought to gain the upper hand in further negotiations, the CCP complied. When, subsequently, it became clear that all-out war was inevitable, the CCP mobilised for war. In the case of the CCP, understanding their perceptions can only partially help understand their decision-making. It can help understand their reactions to events, such as KMT's refusal to ratify the PCC proposals, or Marshall's diminishing influence, or the outbreak of all-out war. However, I have not found evidence that Zhou's and Mao's perceptions of their counterparts significantly changed any major decision.

[52] Sheng, 127

5. George Marshall

As explained in chapters before, the hatred between Chiang Kai-Shek and Mao Zedong ran deep. While both had their reasons to be optimistic or pessimistic about negotiating, the importance of Marshall in the talks should not be ignored. He convinced Chiang to come to the table and start negotiating, despite Chiang preferring a military solution. At the same time, he gave Zhou and Mao hope that a fair solution was possible, with the CCP generally viewing his influence on the negotiations positively. Marshall's own perceptions of his counterparts will be examined in this chapter. While there is no record of Marshall keeping a diary, many of his private telegrams to President Truman have survived, along with other sources from which his views can be inferred.

5.1. Marshall and Chiang Kai-Shek

The relationship between Marshall and Chiang was complicated. The two spent countless hours together, and their wives became good friends. As explained in Chapter 3.2.1, the two initially bonded, and Chiang trusted Marshall to lead negotiations. However, Chiang grew more frustrated with Marshall the longer the mission went on, and this frustration eventually evolved into hatred. While Marshall, never hated Chiang, he did not think Chiang was blameless.

The views U.S. officials had of Chiang varied widely. Some officials such as Wedemeyer thought highly of Chiang and pushed for more U.S. military assistance. Other officials like Stilwell were more sceptical and thought Chiang was a terrible leader, and that the U.S. needed to withdraw their support for Chiang. Marshall's view can be placed between these two camps, and it evolved throughout the course of the Marshall Mission. Primarily, he thought Chiang was a terrible military commander, who made mistake after mistake, pushing militarily when he should have negotiated and negotiating when he should have pushed militarily.[53] On the other hand, he had great respect for Chiang, and believed he was truly devoted to his country and that "his personal integrity is on a high level."[54] Marshall would later sum Chiang up by saying he "always did the right thing, but always too late."[55]

While Marshall thought Chiang was a man of integrity, he and other American officials did not think the same of other Nationalists. Wedemeyer thought that in the KMT there were "thousands of incompetent parasites."[56] Marshall saw the danger of the militaristic and right-wing factions in the KMT and warned Chiang constantly to control them. He was also extremely critical of Chiang's tolerance of corrupt incompetent officials, which he largely kept in place to retain his control of the party. With regard to the negotiations, Marshall thought that by refusing to negotiate with the CCP, Chiang had given in to the CC clique and other KMT conservatives. He blamed Chiang for going back on promises, for example when the KMT did not ratify the political and military unification agreements in February 1946. Later on, Marshall became frustrated by Chiang's reluctance to listen to him. Marshall knew his influence was waning and tried his best to reinforce his authority, by withdrawing his support for the Chinese aid package. However, this only incensed Chiang further, and Marshall eventually had to ask Truman to terminate his mission as it became clear there was nothing more he could do. All in all, Marshall had great respect for Chiang, and

[53] Byroade, 38.
[54] The papers of George Catlett Marshall, Vol 6, 381. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 306.
[55] Kurtz-Phelan, 306.
[56] Wedemeyer, 8 September 1945. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 107.

thought Chiang was truly devoted to his country. However, he was deeply critical of Chiang's military acumen, and his failure to control dissident factions in his party, enact democratic reforms, or improve governance.

5.2. Marshall and Zhou Enlai

Marshall was often accused, both by Chiang and Americans later in the McCarthy era, of being soft on communists, and being responsible for "the loss of China." As the Marshall Mission failed, previously firm allies turned on Marshall. Douglas MacArthur, who had praised Marshall during the early stages of the Marshall Mission, criticized Marshall, saying "Even if George Marshall remains in China until he is as old as Methuselah, he still won't make peace."[57] Even officials who remained firm allies wondered if Marshall had inadvertently been taken in by the communists. Many described Zhou Enlai's personality as magnetic, with Byroade, a key member of the Marshall Mission, claiming he "was one of the smoothest liars in the world, but you couldn't help but like him as a person."[58] The same official later wondered if Marshall "probably trusted Zhou a little too much."[59] While it is impossible to state with certainty whether Marshall had been conned or taken in by Zhou Enlai, it is important to understand two points regarding Marshall's relationship with the communists.

Firstly, Marshall did side with Zhou on occasion, which frustrated Chiang to no end. For example, he pushed Chiang to accept military integration after political integration, siding with the CCP. Marshall did trust Zhou to an extent, as he came to see him throughout the negotiations as one of the smartest people he had ever met.[60] After meeting Mao, Marshall even wrote optimistically to Truman that he had been extremely frank, and that Mao: "showed no resentment and gave me every assurance of cooperation."[61] Marshall also thought Zhou lied less than his KMT counterparts, often saying "Every time Zhou tells me there is going to be an attack it comes off."[62] However, in Marshall's view, he did not side with them to help the communists, but because on these points the CCP would not budge, and Marshall felt they had legitimate concerns.

Secondly, Marshall never wavered from his end goal of unifying China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek. While he criticised Chiang and occasionally sided with Zhou, he never attempted to fully withdraw support for Chiang or negotiate with the CCP about a unified China under their rule. He fought hard for an enormous aid package to China, only withdrawing his support when Chiang completely ignored Marshall and disregarded all attempts to negotiate. Marshall maintained respect for both Zhou and Chiang, the first primarily due to his intelligence and the second primarily due to his integrity and devotion to his country. And as the situation spiralled out of control, he blamed both parties for their broken promises, subterfuge, and what he viewed as their general insincerity.

[57] MacArthur, cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 311.
[58] Byroade, 50.
[59] Byroade, 50.
[60] Kurtz-Phelan, 288-289.
[61] Marshall, 6 March 1946. Cited in Kurtz-Phelan, 139.
[62] Kurtz-Phelan, 289.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

This paper has examined the evolving perceptions of Goerge Marshall, Chiang Kai-Shek and Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong, and the extent to which this influenced their decision-making. For all parties, there were a number of crucial turning points during the Marshall Mission that changed their perceptions. The initial appointment of Marshall was well received by both parties, albeit more so by the CCP, who saw him as a progressive force, than by Chiang, who preferred to fight than to negotiate. The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Manchuria, coupled with worsening Soviet-U.S. relations and the absence of Marshall from China, was a key turning point. This resulted in both the CCP and KMT halting negotiations and viewing Manchuria as a testing ground in the spring of 1946. While both the CCP and KMT attempted to fill the power vacuum in Manchuria left by the Soviets, this was done for slightly different reasons. Mao continued to believe that Marshall could convince Chiang to negotiate with the CCP and fought mainly for an advantage in future negotiations. Chiang, on the other hand, hoped that by achieving control over Manchuria he could illustrate to Marshall that negotiations were unnecessary, and that Marshall would provide backing for the elimination of the CCP. However, the situation spiralled out of control, with the CCP booking victories in Manchuria. This, coupled with increasing Soviet support and a refusal by Chiang to accept military realities, resulted in negotiations never truly being restarted. Chiang's already reluctant willingness to negotiate broke down, as he became adamant on a military solution. Marshall's influence waned as Chiang started blaming Marshall for the situation, and Zhou Enlai realized that Marshall could no longer convince Chiang to negotiate. Without the trust of the CCP or Chiang, Marshall could do nothing to stem the tide, and left China in early 1947.

This paper showed that the CCP primarily blamed Chiang for the negotiations breaking down, while Chiang blamed Marshall for forcing him to negotiate. Marshall, on the other hand, blamed both parties. He thought Chiang was a poor military commander and ruler, who had failed to enact reforms, control the conservative factions in his party, or keep his promises to both him and the CCP. On the other hand, he thought the CCP's military actions helped prove the right-wing factions in the KMT right, as it "strengthened the position of irreconcilable elements within the Kuomintang."[63] Marshall felt both sides made mistakes and were engaged in dishonest negotiations. At the same time, he maintained personal respect for both Zhou and Chiang, even as the situation fell apart.

This paper has shown the perceptions each party had of each other and how this changed throughout the negotiations. This most notably influenced the decision-making of Chiang Kai-Shek, as he allowed his frustration and eventual resentment of Marshall, along with his longstanding hatred of the communists, to derail the negotiations. However, further research is certainly needed. Domestic third parties, such as the Chinese democratic league, were not looked at in this paper. Both their influence and their perceptions of the CCP and KMT and vice-versa should be looked at. Along with this, the effects of other events besides the perceptions, such as battlefield results, other domestic concerns, or global affairs, were not analysed enough, and should be researched further. All in all, this paper aimed to illustrate the way each key party thought of each other, and who they blamed as the situation spiralled out of control. However, as a member of the Marshall summed up when the negotiations were failing, "The strangest things happen every day to make you think one is right and then to make you think the other is… Perhaps everybody is wrong."[64]

[63] Marshall, 6 May 1946. Cited in Qing, 82-83.
[64] Caughey, 108-109

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