



General Albert C. Wedemeyer: America's Unsung Strategist in World War II

John McLaughlin

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Like many heroes of the Second World War, General Albert C. Wedemeyer's career has been largely overshadowed by such well-known figures as Marshall, Patton, Montgomery, and Bradley. Wedemeyer's legacy as the main planner of the D-Day invasion is almost completely forgotten today, eclipsed by politics and the capriciousness of human nature.

Yet during America's preparation for the war, Wedemeyer was the primary author of the "Victory Program" that mobilized US resources and directed them at crucial points in order to secure victory over the Axis. In the late 1930s he had the unique experience of being an exchange student at the German Kriegsakademie, the Nazis' equivalent of Fort Leavenworth's Command and General Staff School. As the only American to attend, he was thus the only ranking officer in the US who recognized the revolutionary tactics of Blitzkrieg once they were unleashed, and he knew how to respond.

As US involvement in the European conflagration approached, Wedemeyer was taken under the wing of George C. Marshall in Washington. Wedemeyer conceived the plans for US mobilization, which was in greater gear than realized at the time of Pearl Harbor. The Victory Program, completed in the summer of 1941, contained actual battle plans and called for the concentration of forces in England in preparation for an early cross-channel invasion into France. However, to Wedemeyer's great disappointment (reflecting Marshall's), he was not appointed to field command in the ETO once the invasion commenced; further, he had run afoul of Winston Churchill due to the latter's insistence on emphasizing the Mediterranean theater in 1943.

Perhaps because of Churchill's animosity, Wedemeyer was transferred to the Burma-China theater, where a year later he would replace General Stilwell. Ultimately, Wedemeyer's service in the Asian theater became far more significant, though less known. Had the US political establishment listened to Wedemeyer's advice on China during the years 1943-48, it is possible China would not have been lost to the Communists and would have been a functioning US ally from the start, thus eliminating the likelihood of both the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Despite Wedemeyer's key position at the crux of modern history, his contributions have been overlooked in most accounts of World War II and the Cold War beyond. In this work we gain an intimate look at a visionary thinker who helped guide the Allies to victory in their greatest challenge, but whose vision of the post-war world was unfortunately not heeded.

REVIEWS

"fresh interpretation of Wedemeyer's achievements provide a perspective of one of this country's foremost military and diplomatic strategists."

ARMY Magazine

"How did Wedemeyer become World War II's forgotten prophet? The answer to that question is a tale of the perils of coalition warfare combined with ideological bias, treachery, and treason. McLaughlin tells the story in calm matter-of fact prose, which makes it even more astonishing....Is Wedemeyer still a significant

thinker? McLaughlin thinks his definition of strategy remains meaningful: The art and science of developing and employing all the political, economic and military resources of a nation together with its armed forces in the ongoing struggle to insure the security and well being of the people. How to persuade the politicians to listen to its soldiers' hard-earned wisdom remains a problem that can only be answered by each generation. This book is a cautionary tale for those who undertake that large task."

History News Network

"...an engaging book about a little known general who was in the thick of strategizing on both the European and Asian fronts."

The Sunday Star Ledger

"Highlights this far-sighted officer's contributions to the Allied victory. . . . Encapsulates Wedemeyer's military genius, the ability to see the big picture and grapple with 'grand strategy' while engaged in nuts-and-bolts planning. The vital importance of the Victory Program cannot be underestimated, even though Wedemeyer's role as its principal author has been largely forgotten." Toy Soldier and Model Figure

"The generals who ponder these crucial questions have always been less heralded than those who led through smoke and fire. This makes John J. McLaughlin's study of one of the U.S. Army's key planners all the more welcome... The overriding argument of this biography is that an American visionary was sacrificed on the altar of Allied harmony. Historians such as the late John Keegan have praised Wedemeyer as "one of the most farsighted and intellectual military minds America has ever produced." ... John J McLaughlin is to be applauded for shining a light on one of the least known U.S. commanders of the war."

Wall Street Journal

"McLaughlin has produced an important study of a lesser known yet important general and the different perspectives on well known historical figures. It will also cause readers to think about the doctrines Wedemeyer advocated and how they apply to current US Foreign policy. This book is recommended to anyone who has an interest in geopolitical strategy."

ON POINT

"...an excellent biography of little known general of World War II, Albert Wedemeyer. His biography is more relevant now, as we increasingly expect our general officers to make military recommendations that enhance national security policies, Wedemeyer served at a time when strict separation of the military and the political meant decisions were made that were not in the best interest of the nation... does an excellent job of telling Wedemeyer's story in the backdrop of inter-allied politics, pro-isolationist domestic political pressures that would lead Wedemeyer to be dispatched to China and away from the British portion of the Combined General Staff who found his intellect threatening. Chapters cover an intimate look at his service in China, his handling of Chiang Kai Shek and his nemesis Mao. It also contrasts Gen. Joseph Stillwell and Wedemeyer's approaches to China policy

... researched with the skill of a scholar and told in a straight forward way that is very engaging. ..did a great job of giving us the facts, telling the story, and leaving a tribute to General Albert C. Wedemeyer who was America's Unsung Strategist in World War II. The book is very good. It has lessons for military leaders, politicians, and strategic strategist.

Kepler's Military History

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