

Desperate Times, Unprecedented Measures: The Confirmation of Gen. George C. Marshall to Serve as Secretary of Defense

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Abstract

In his fifty-seven years as a public servant, George Catlett Marshall Jr. served as an operations officer, the 13th Deputy Chief of Staff of the United States Army, 15th Chief of Staff of the United States Army, United States Special Envoy to China, 50th United States Secretary of State, 10th President of the American Red Cross, and 3rd United States Secretary of Defense. As Army Chief of Staff, Marshall orchestrated the largest expansion in U.S. military history, becoming a five-star general in the process and being named *Time* magazine's Man of the Year in 1943. As Secretary of State, he was one of the main architects of the Marshall Plan which provided \$12 billion in aid for the recovery of Western Europe in the aftermath of World War II, earning him the *Time* Man of the Year honor once again as well as a Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. By 1950 Marshall had established a reputation as both a military man and a statesman, making him an ideal replacement for Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson, whose failure to prepare for the

Korean War led to his removal by President Harry S Truman. Due to his status as a five-star general at the time of his nomination, Marshall's appointment to the position of Secretary of Defense raised some concerns regarding the principle of civilian control of the military but was largely approved of by the senate. Marshall's appointment to Secretary of Defense in a time of war also highlights the rising concerns over national security in the United States, a more aggressive American military presence overseas, and the increased emphasis on defense spending in light of the looming Soviet threat in the Cold War. While some Republicans in Congress feared that allowing a military man to serve as Secretary of Defense would set a dangerous precedent allowing future presidents to continue nominating military officials for the post, Marshall remained the only military official to hold the position for the next sixty-seven years. However, Marshall's actions as Secretary of Defense were often informed by his own military experience and did indeed reveal some of the potential dangers associated with sacrificing civilian control of the military.

I. Early Military Service

George Marshall graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1901 and was sent to the Philippines to serve as second lieutenant of the infantry in February of the following year. There, he was regarded by his peers as disciplined, quiet, and self-confident individual in possession of a fierce temper that he had learned to control.¹ Upon returning from the Philippines, Marshall was selected to serve as aide-de-camp for Medal of Honor recipient General J. Franklin Bell, who tasked him with selecting candidates for training as military officers and organizing the training camps in preparation for America's entry into World War I.

On June 9th, 1917, just two months after the 65th United States Congress declared war on Germany, Marshall was promoted and sent to France to serve as the 1st Infantry Division's operations officer. It was at this post that Marshall caught the eye of

Commander of the American Expedition Forces (AEF) General John J. Pershing, who adopted the young officer as his protégé. One day in October General Pershing was furious with the 1st Division's execution of a training exercise and proceeded to lambast their commander, General William Sibert, in front of the regiment. When Pershing turned to leave after delivering his vitriolic remarks, George Marshall—then a lowly operations officer thirty years his junior—reached out and grabbed him by the arm. In front of the entire 1st Division, Marshall delivered a furious critique of Pershing's headquarters and staff and blamed them for the division's lack of progress. Friends of Marshall who were present for the confrontation were sure that the outburst had effectively ended his career, but rather than being insulted by this insubordination, Pershing was impressed. Marshall's courage in speaking his mind and his reputation for

¹ Pogue, Forrest C. "George Catlett Marshall." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 27 Dec. 2019. Web. 07 Oct. 2020.

honest criticism led to him becoming an informal advisor to Pershing for the rest of the war.² In mid-1918 Marshall was sent to the AEF's headquarters where he continued to work closely with Pershing. There, Marshall was a key figure in the planning and coordination of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive that ended with the defeat of the German Army on the Western Front. During his time with the AEF Marshall would meet another man who would have a major impact on his life, though neither knew it at the time. In late 1918 then-Colonel Marshall inspected the AEF artillery school at Coëtquidan, France where he encountered a thirty-four year old army captain named Harry S Truman.³ By the end of WWI Marshall had built up a military reputation that, according to military historian Forrest Pogue, was "unexcelled by any other officer his age in the Army."⁴ On April 30th, 1919, Marshall was chosen by General Pershing to

serve as his personal aide-de-camp. During this five-year stint Marshall learned several lessons from Pershing which would prove invaluable later in his career. Shortly after WWI, Congress began considering bills to reorganize the armed forces and create a standing army of half a million men. With Marshall by his side, General Pershing testified before the Senate and the House against the proposed standing army and instead suggested universal military training and a standing army of only about 275,000 men. Pershing's opponents eliminated the proposal for universal military training but abandoned the idea of a standing army of 500,000 men. The result was the National Defense Act of 1920, providing "an authorized strength of 17,726 officers and 280,000 men, and a structure for a standing regular army, general staff, organized reserve, and war plans division, which Marshall would eventually inherit in 1939."⁵

² Roll, David L. *George Marshall: Defender of the Republic*. New York: Dutton Caliber, 2019. 20-21.

³ Miller, Merle. *Plain Speaking*. Berkley, NY: C. 1973. Print. 203

⁴ Roll 56

⁵ Roll 65

II. Rise to Prominence

In May of 1938, then-Brigadier General Marshall was ordered from his command of the 7th Infantry at Vancouver Barracks to the War Department at Washington where he was to act as head of the War Plans division and later become deputy chief of staff. Marshall's move coincided with the rise of Hitler's Nazi Germany to the level of an international threat, as the German chancellor set his sights on Czechoslovakia. With Chief of Staff General Marlin Craig's four-year term set to expire at the end of August, 1939, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was carefully weighing his options for a replacement. As a brigadier general, Marshall was in consideration for the job, but was only 34th in seniority and outranked by 21 major-generals and 11 other brigadier-generals. On November 14, 1938, Marshall was called into the Cabinet Room at the White House for a top secret meeting with the rest of the War Department and

President Roosevelt. In light of German Chancellor Adolf Hitler's military power and threat to take Czechoslovakia by force, Roosevelt announced that he had decided that the U.S. must expand its capacity to produce warplanes and, if necessary, lend them to countries in Europe to deter further German aggression. After he finished speaking, Roosevelt scanned the room for the military men's reaction and was met with the general approval of most of those present, with the exception of General George Marshall. Noticing Marshall's silence Roosevelt pressed him on the matter, saying "Don't you think so, George?" Moderately irritated by the President calling him by his first name, General Marshall replied that no, he did not think so at all. In Marshall's opinion, Roosevelt's proposal for an increase in air power was amateurish and oversimplified, as it failed to take into account the training required of the pilots and undermined the importance of ground

forces. Roosevelt was visibly surprised by Marshall's unabashed and outright disagreement and adjourned the meeting. Marshall's colleagues were certain that he'd just destroyed any chance that he had of becoming chief of staff, and bade him farewell after the meeting, thinking that his career in Washington was over.⁶ But just as General Pershing had been impressed by a young George Marshall's unmitigated honesty and refusal to be intimidated by an authority figure, President Roosevelt thought highly of Marshall after their encounter. On April 23, 1939, President Roosevelt met privately with General Marshall, telling him "I have it in mind to choose up as the next Chief of Staff of the United States Army. What do you think about that?" Marshall made no visible reaction, simply answering "Nothing, except to remind you that I have the habit of saying exactly what I think...Is that all right?"

Roosevelt smiled and answered with a yes.⁷ Within days the *Los Angeles Times* was reporting on Marshall's appointment to chief of staff, running a story on April 28th titled "Army's Staff Chief Picked: White House Upsets Precedent in Naming Brig. Gen. Marshall." The article spoke to Roosevelt's faith in the man he chose over several superior officers and highlighted the rising concern over the situation in Europe, claiming that Marshall's selection as chief of staff "was immediately tied up with administration plans for solidarity of defense in the Western Hemisphere."⁸

III. Chief of Staff

Marshall was sworn in as Chief of Staff on September 1st. Two days later Britain and France declared war on Germany. Inheriting a small and unprepared army of 188,000 men, George Marshall was immediately tasked with creating a fighting force that could not only protect America from attack,

⁶Roll 111-112

⁷Roll 111

⁸"Army's Staff Chief Picked." *Los Angeles Times*. 28 April, 1939

but also take the fight to foreign soil. With the public strongly opposed to another war and a largely isolationist Congress, it seemed an impossible task. Marshall put the army's overall preparation needs at a staggering \$50 billion in spending and decided that in the short term the absolute minimum for even a modest increase in the nation's defense capability was \$650 million. Thus, when he learned of President Roosevelt's proposal to cut the military budget by \$18 million in the 1940 election year, Marshall was apoplectic. He and Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr. both initiated a meeting with the President to prevent this cut in spending, and though he initially dismissed their requests, Roosevelt relented after a discussion with General Marshall. Three days later with France crumbling under the German onslaught and Prime Minister Winston Churchill requesting aid, Roosevelt appeared before Congress and asked for a military

appropriation of \$1.1 billion. With reports of German victories pouring in from Europe, Congress voted to appropriate \$300 million more than Roosevelt had initially requested.

This spending increase was not a one-time occurrence, as it had to not only be sustained, but increased over the next few years and then beyond to both prepare the U.S. for war and to fund the war effort once it had begun. Within the first ten fiscal months of 1941 total spending was already \$10,087,080,696 greater than it had ever been in a peacetime year before, with \$4,403,814,039 going to arms programs within that timeframe.⁹ In addition to funding Marshall also needed to provide a dramatic increase in military manpower leading up to the U.S. entry into WWII. Some men, it seemed, were all too willing to enlist on their own accord. In 1940 then-Senator Harry S Truman met with Marshall in the hopes of enlisting in the Army. Truman reminded Marshall that he had

⁹“April Military Spending Tops ¾ Billion Dollars.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*. 3 May, 1941.

trained young soldiers in WWI and asked to command a regiment. Marshall, who was sixty at the time, told the fifty-six year old Truman that he was too old to enlist. When Truman pointed out that he was four years younger than the general, Marshall replied “Yes, but I’m already in.”¹⁰ Despite Truman’s eagerness, the necessity of a military draft was recognized by Washington and went unchallenged in the Senate, so Marshall was relieved of the impossible task of creating a sufficient army based on voluntary enlistment. The Chief of Staff encountered a hitch when the one-year service obligations of the first wave of 600,000+ draftees were fulfilled six months prior to the nation entering the war, but he narrowly petitioned Congress for an extension of these men’s services (H.J. Res. 222 passed the House by one vote in 1941) due to the national interest being imperiled by the Tripartite Pact and Hitler’s army extending into Russia. Preparing these men

for war was another matter entirely. With time of the essence, Marshall approved a much-abbreviated training detail for the draftees consisting of little more than basic infantry skills, weapon proficiency, and limited combat tactics. When the U.S. finally entered the fight, these men were given their guns and hurried overseas.

As Army Chief of Staff, General Marshall was also presented with the decision of how the army would interpret the recent anti-discrimination provisions inserted by Congress into the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. With *Plessy v. Ferguson* still the law of the land, the army was segregated. Ostensibly adhering to the “separate but equal” motto of segregation, black troops in the army were almost entirely relegated to menial labor or service jobs. But now with anti-discrimination legislation and the NAACP publicly calling for the desegregation of the army, Marshall was forced to confront the issue of race and

¹⁰Miller 204

decide on whether or not to progressively integrate the army. Unfortunately, Marshall was a staunch opponent of desegregation in the army, stating that “It is the policy of the War Department not to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organization” and rejecting the notion that it was the task of the army to solve the “negro problem” at “the expense of national defense.” To save money on heating and shelter, General Marshall also sent black troops to train in the South where he knew they would face brutal treatment from white men and women. Two years before his death Marshall expressed regret for this action, but claimed that the treatment of black soldiers at the hands of white ones was “utterly beyond our control.” Historian David L. Roll eloquently summarized General Marshall’s record on race in his 2019 biography, *George Marshall: Defender of the Republic*:

“Though there is evidence that Marshall believed a movement to investigate “‘brutal treatment’ of negro army personnel” was backed by Communists, he was never outwardly hostile toward black soldiers. Rather, he was a blend of indifference and condescension, probably driven, as was Roosevelt, by racist beliefs that African Americans were fundamentally inferior to white people. One could try to explain Marshall’s attitude toward race by saying he merely reflected society at large, that he was a captive of his times. But Marshall was by no means a conformist. He was capable of rising above army tradition and societal mores. In the case of racial integration, however, he did not rise, convincing himself that war was not the time for engaging in social experimentation.”¹¹ Marshall was a man rigidly true to his beliefs and had no fear of challenging the status quo. He was not a follower, but a leader. As an operations officer in WWI he talked back to the

¹¹Roll 149

commander of the AEF and twenty years later as a brigadier general he challenged the President of the United States in the Cabinet Room of the White House. If his personal belief on any issue ran counter to that of his superiors, General Marshall was willing to die on that hill. By rejecting calls to integrate the military and choosing to continue the status quo set by *Plessy v. Ferguson*, George Catlett Marshall may well have revealed himself as a staunch opponent to racial progressivism. By the time Pearl Harbor was bombed and the U.S. declared war on Japan on December 8, 1941 and on Germany and Italy three days later, George Marshall had presided over a fortyfold increase in America's military manpower, turning the 188,000 man army he inherited into a civilian army of over 8 million soldiers within two years. Marshall's organizational skills were on full display in the early years of the war, and he was personally responsible for bringing men like Dwight D.

Eisenhower, George S. Patton, and Omar Bradley to their prominent roles in WWII. Having maintained a "Germany first" policy to the wars in the European and Pacific theaters, Marshall was a key figure in the planning of the invasion of Europe that was Operation Overlord. It seemed a foregone conclusion that the Chief of Staff would become the Supreme Commander of the Invasion, but that turned out not to be the case. Roosevelt was caught between Marshall and Eisenhower for the role and was unsure if it would be wise to remove Marshall from his duties as chief of staff to send him overseas. It became apparent to Marshall that if he wanted command of the invasion, he would have to ask for it, something the general was too proud to do. When Roosevelt asked him point-blank what he preferred, Marshall remained noncommittal and advised the President to act "in the best interests of the country" and

“not in any way to consider [Marshall’s] feelings.” Roosevelt responded “Well, I didn’t feel that I could sleep at ease if you were out of Washington.”¹² With that, Marshall remained in Washington as Chief of Staff while Eisenhower became the Supreme Commander of Operation Overlord. Marshall coordinated Allied efforts throughout the remainder of the war and was made America’s first five-star general in December of 1944. With Roosevelt’s health rapidly deteriorating in early 1945, the four-term president handed all matters of diplomacy with Prime Minister Winston Churchill over to George Marshall. Marshall was declared *Time* magazine’s Man of the Year for 1943 and resigned as Chief of Staff after the conclusion of WWII. Dwight Eisenhower succeeded him as Chief of Staff. On November 26, 1945 Marshall was photographed at a courtyard ceremony with President Harry S Truman who was

congratulating the general on his resignation as Chief of Staff. The very next day Truman called Marshall at his Virginia residence and asked him to go to China as a special envoy to broker a peace between Nationalists and Communists. Marshall replied “Yes, Mr. President” and hung up. It was not the last time Truman would ask Marshall to postpone his retirement to serve his country.

IV. Secretary of State

While Roosevelt clearly saw Marshall as a talented and dignified general, Truman would come to regard him as the greatest American he’d ever met. Marshall immediately developed a reputation of unmatched dependability with President Truman, who remarked in a post-presidency interview that Marshall “had no more than announced his retirement [as chief of staff] and he and Mrs. Marshall had moved down to a new home in Virginia when I had to call on him to undertake another job.”¹³

¹²*Roll* 294

¹³*Miller* 235

Marshall was sent to China as special ambassador, but returned in 1947 after he failed to produce a coalition government between Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist and Mao Zedong's Communist Parties. Upon his return from China, Marshall became Truman's Secretary of State. Though shrewd and capable, Marshall was not a politician, and he passed along many of the responsibilities of the Secretary of State to his under-secretary, Robert A. Lovett. This is not to suggest that he did not have much influence on the proceedings in Washington from 1947 to 1949—indeed the opposite is true. Though Marshall was largely uninterested in the minutiae of the Secretary of Defense position, he was a staunch advocate for the nation's increased presence in foreign affairs. Marshall recognized that the post-WWII world was in a “political crisis” and claimed that any attempt to return to “economic isolationism” could have disastrous implications.¹⁴ On June 5,

1947, Marshall gave a speech at Harvard University that would serve as the basis for the economic recovery program that would later bear his name. In his address, Marshall spoke of the importance of providing for the postwar recovery of Europe, which he claimed had just experienced an unprecedented economic collapse. “It is logical,” Marshall said, “that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no secured peace.”¹⁵ The resulting Marshall Plan, hailed by Winston Churchill as “the most unsordid act in history,” appropriated over \$15 billion for the recovery of Western Europe and was instrumental in rebuilding the infrastructure of many critically damaged nations. Despite his perhaps more crucial role in preparing the country for WWII, in the eyes of the American public this was undoubtedly the highlight of George Marshall's career.

¹⁴“World in a Political Crisis, Marshall tells Senate Body.” *New York Times*. 15 February, 1947.

¹⁵“The Address of Secretary Marshall at Harvard.” *New York Times*. 6 June, 1947.

Though its passage and implementation were handled mostly by President Truman and Congress, Marshall was seen as the man behind the European Recovery Program and his reputation as a statesman increased dramatically. In addition to potentially saving Europe from economic collapse, the Marshall Plan strengthened America's alliances and precipitated the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949. For his role in the recovery of Western Europe, Marshall was again named *Time* magazine's Man of the Year in 1948 and later received a Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. The Marshall Plan was also perhaps the informal beginning of the Cold War. Marshall had included the Soviet Union in his Harvard Address as he did not want to create feelings of animosity between the nations by explicitly excluding the communist power, but the officials behind the implementation of the Marshall Plan knew that even if Stalin would have elected

to participate in the recovery program, provisions for Soviet aid would have died in Congress. Stalin did indeed reject the offer to participate in the recovery program and a key part of the Marshall Plan's legacy was transformed into a political tool used to stymie the spread of communism and to encourage the free-market economy. George Marshall resigned from his position as Secretary of State due to health concerns on January 7th, 1949.

V. Rising Importance of National Security and Foreign Affairs

Throughout Marshall's tenure as Secretary of State and in the months that followed, the Cold War and the increasing necessity of defense spending were constant talking points within the Truman administration and the American media. While the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan both promoted the containment of communism overseas, providing for the safety and

security of the United States within its own borders became an issue of rising importance among Washington officials. During his first term President Truman was beset with constant financial questions and between 1945 and 1948 “had tried to strike a balance between the warfare state and the welfare state.”¹⁶ Though Truman believed in a balanced budget and tried to rapidly demobilize the armed forces after WWII, fears of Soviet aggression ultimately led his administration to continue to increase defense spending. Marshall himself spoke out against the President’s plans to shrink the military, equating demobilization with a reduction of America’s global role and responsibilities.¹⁷ After the 1948 communist coup in Czechoslovakia, Truman reversed course and asked for a defense budget of \$9.8 billion for 1949, which Congress approved. The increasing importance of defense spending coincided with America’s emergence as a global superpower with

expanding influence outside its own borders. Gone were the days of non-interventionism propagated by the administrations of Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover. Deep-seated conservative fears over entangling alliances were realized in 1949 by the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which international media hailed as the “Tombstone of American Isolationism.”¹⁸ While he may have been reluctant to increase defense spending, Truman did not hesitate to thrust America to the forefront of international politics. “There is no room for economic isolationism in a world torn between freedom and Communist tyranny,” he said in May of 1948, “The United States has no choice but to work with the free nations of the globe in mutual assistance and partnership.”¹⁹ Between 1945 and 1949, America’s foreign relations— alliances and rivalries both—were strengthened to an extent never before seen in peacetime years. For Marshall’s purposes,

¹⁶Hogan, Michael J. *A Cross of Iron*. Cambridge: Cambridge University. 2007. Print. 119

¹⁷“Marshall Warns on Rapid Cutting of Armed Forces.” *New York Times*. 30 October, 1945.

¹⁸“Significant Point in Atlantic Pact.” *The Times of India*. 20 March, 1949.

¹⁹“Truman Warns Against Rebirth of Isolationism.” *Daily Boston Globe*. 14 May, 1950.

the single greatest factor in determining his future was the outbreak of the Korean War in the summer of 1950. Truman and Dean Acheson—Marshall's successor as Secretary of State—both agreed that the United States had an obligation to intervene on South Korea's behalf when communist North Korea invaded in late June. Though the U.S. ostensibly scored an early victory with the Battle of Inchon, the subsequent northward march into Seoul was slow and revealed the nation's lack of preparation for war, with the Truman administration's hesitancy to appropriate funding for the nation's defense being a key factor. Truman was heavily criticized for America's lack of readiness for the war in Korea, and he determined that a political move had to be made to renew the public's confidence in his administration. Unfortunately for Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson, that political move would be a call for his resignation.

VI. Johnson's Failure, Marshall's Return

As Truman's Secretary of Defense from March 28th of 1949 to September 19th of the following year, Louis A. Johnson is best described as a fiscal conservative who was particularly focused on transforming the needs of the military to fit the budget rather than transforming the budget to fit the needs of the military. During his time in office Johnson was a strong ally for Truman in his economization of the defense budget and often sought to reduce spending even in the face of passionate resistance from those in the Department of Defense. Though Johnson was a rigid follower of Truman's economic policy, it was he who would shoulder most of the blame for the nation's failure to hit the ground running in Korea. While Johnson had approved Truman's budget of \$13.3 billion in defense spending for 1951, he was forced to propose a supplemental increase of \$10.5 billion after only one month of

fighting in Korea. Though he was not the only man at fault for the crisis in Korea, Johnson did himself no favors in Washington. He had a belligerent, abrasive personality that was endearing neither to his peers nor the American public. To combat the ebbing confidence in his administration's defense capabilities, Truman called for Johnson's resignation, replacing him with an old friend, General George Marshall. The *Los Angeles Times* ran a story on the end of Johnson's time as Secretary of Defense which was sympathetic to the outgoing Secretary for the blame he took for Truman's economic policy, but critical of the lack of decorum that precipitated his removal: "As for Johnson, he is something of a scapegoat for the failings of a clumsy administration. Many of Johnson's supposed errors were in fact the mistakes of Harry S. Truman. Johnson was brash and incautious in his utterances, bombastic, assertive, and too rough on anyone who disagreed with

him. But his policy of trying to save some money was good policy; that he tried to save it in some of the wrong places is an observation of hindsight. However, it is the duty of a Cabinet officer not only to be right, whether his chief is or not, but it is also the duty of a Cabinet officer to retain the public confidence. Here Johnson failed; and Marshall should succeed."²⁰ In his final remarks before leaving office, Johnson added that "When the hurly burly's done and the battle is won I trust the historian will find my record of performance creditable, my services honest and faithful commensurate with the trust that was placed in me and in the best interests of peace and our national defense."²¹ Though Johnson's intentions may have been honest, he is ranked by many historians as among the least successful Defense Secretaries. When replacing Johnson, Truman knew that Marshall's success in his unprecedented military mobilization as Chief of Staff in

²⁰"Marshall, Defense Secretary." *Los Angeles Times*. 14 September, 1950.

²¹"Louis A. Johnson." *Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense*. Web. 09 Nov. 2020

WWII would lend itself well to the pressing situation with Korea, and he knew that Marshall had the confidence of many of the American people in military matters. With his years of service as Secretary of State to build from as well, President Truman recognized that there was no man better suited for the job at hand than General George C. Marshall. Marshall was out fishing in Michigan when his wife received a call from President Truman asking about the former Secretary of State. “He’s fishing up in Michigan,” Mrs. Marshall replied, “I guess you want to get him in trouble?” Truman told her that yes, he did. “Well, go ahead,” Mrs. Marshall answered, “He’ll go anyhow.” When Truman finally got on the phone with the general several hours later, he told him that he would like Marshall to serve as the new Secretary of Defense. Marshall responded “Yes, Mr. President,” and hung up the phone.²²

VII. Confirmation

On the morning of September 13th, 1950, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Carl Vinson received the following letter from President Harry S Truman “My Dear Mr. Chairman: Attached is a draft of legislation which would permit Gen. George C. Marshall to serve as Secretary of Defense. I request that you lay this matter before your committee with a view to obtaining early and favorable action by the Congress. I am a firm believer in the general principle that our Defense Establishment should be headed by a civilian. However, in view of the present critical circumstances and of General Marshall’s unusual qualifications, I believe that the national interest will be served best by making an exception in this case. Sincerely Yours, Harry S Truman”²³

Chairman Vinson immediately called for a full committee discussion on the nomination of General Marshall to serve as the 3rd

²² Miller 236-237

²³ U.S. House. Committee on Armed Services. *Full Committee Discussion on Appointment of General Marshall as Secretary of Defense*. September 13, 1950. 7289

Secretary of Defense for the United States of America. It would not be a routine meeting. To ensure civilian control of the military, U.S. law clearly stated that the office of Secretary of Defense was to be held by a civilian—which as an active five-star general, George Marshall was not—who had not served in the military within ten years prior to his appointment. Now, just three years after the position had been created in the National Security Act of 1947, Congress was faced with the decision to either temporarily sacrifice civilian control of the military or to uphold the law and turn away the man most qualified for the job. It was immediately clear that most representatives present at the meeting had no intention of rejecting the nomination of General Marshall to serve as Secretary of Defense in the middle of the Korean War. The only question was how they could confirm the nominee without changing the law and sacrificing the sacred principle of civilian

control of the military. The most logical solution was the creation and passage of a waiver granting a one-time exception for General Marshall to serve as Secretary of Defense. Texas Representative Paul J. Kilday, who was in favor of Marshall's nomination, stated that "If this is reported and passed, it is because of the confidence we have in General Marshall." Chairman Carl Vinson, a Georgia Democrat, justified the waiver, claiming "We are not disturbing in the slightest degree the broad fundamental, well-founded principle of civilian control." While most representatives agreed with this ideological interpretation of the one-time exception, New York Republican Representative William S. Cole quickly fired a rebuttal to Vinson, saying "What do you mean you are not disturbing it, Mr. Chairman? You are setting it aside and nullifying it completely, the principle." When Vinson responded that the principle was only being set aside once in an

emergency situation, Cole rebuffed “That certainly is disturbing it.”²⁴ Vinson again responded to Cole’s challenge, arguing that “When you bring a new man in, a civilian, it will take him 5 or 6 months or a year to begin to grasp the working of the Military Establishment of the Government. General Marshall, having had a long and honorable military career, can go right straight along with it.”²⁵ Cole, unsatisfied, shot back that if a military man is so much better in doing the job than a civilian, they might as well just remove the requirement completely. Vinson denied the false dichotomy of leaving the law untouched or removing it entirely, again claiming that an exception was only being made due to an emergency situation. Maryland Representative Landsdale G. Sasscer, a Democrat, challenged Vinson’s explanation but not his decision. “Mr. Chairman,” Sasscer asked, “isn’t the reason possibly a little different from that? It isn’t so much suspending it on account of the

emergency. If that was the reason, we could suspend it on any emergency. Isn’t the real reason the unbound confidence we have in General Marshall as a man, regardless of whether he has been in the military or not?”²⁶ Sasscer raised a good point, one that Vinson would not deny. Though the U.S. was certainly in an emergency situation regarding the Korean War, this was not just any military man being nominated to Secretary of Defense, this was General George C. Marshall, former Chief of Staff, former Secretary of State, and undeniably the best man for the job. Were Marshall’s credentials not so unparalleled and uniquely suited for service in the present situation, Truman and Congress would have chosen the path of least resistance and sought out a civilian to hold the office of Secretary of Defense. But due to the national emergency that was the Korean War, neither President nor Congress was willing to settle for any less than the man who would best serve his

²⁴U.S. House. September 13, 1950. 7293.

²⁵U.S. House. September 13, 1950. 7293.

²⁶U.S. House. September 13, 1950. 7293-7294.

country. When it came time for the closing arguments before the meeting was adjourned, Sasscer again made a brilliant and impassioned statement on the greater emphasis of Marshall's unique qualifications rather than the national emergency "Mr. Chairman, I haven't too much difficulty about [the proposed waiver]. I approach it from possibly a somewhat different angle. I think that the time is more of a factor than the question of the emergency. We know that the matter of hours and days are important. I don't put as much stress on the danger of the military man being head of the Defense Establishment—although I think that as a matter of precedent it is better not to have the military man—as I do on the structure of the legislative monstrosity known as the Unification Act under which, as we have seen it administered, you are building up an unlimited power in that head. I think it is vitally important for this committee and the Congress to try to relieve some of the power

they have given away to the military. Whether you are a civilian, [or] in the military makes little difference. Neither Hitler nor Mussolini came from the military, but they had unlimited power and they bought badge and uniforms afterward. So I think it all boils down to a simple issue that General Marshall is an outstanding American. He is a good administrator. He will relieve the situation over there concerning which many of us have been disturbed for some time. We are exceedingly fortunate to be able to get his services. I will vote for the bill without any difficulty."²⁷ Thereafter the meeting was adjourned until a vote was to be called two days later on September 15th. An hour later on the same day, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services Millard Tydings (D-Maryland) called a meeting to discuss the very same waiver. This meeting was very similar to its House of Representatives counterpart and many

²⁷7299-7300.

senators expressed the very same sentiments of their peers in the House. Like Chairman Vinson, Chairman Tydings harped on the unique qualifications of General Marshall and the extreme circumstances regarding the crisis in Korea. Most senators clearly agreed with the chairman and sought to do the same as the House had done only hours earlier, that being approving the nomination of General Marshall to serve as Secretary of Defense without permanently sacrificing civilian control of the military. Again the solution seemed to be a one-time exception to the law and a forty-two year-old senator by the name of Lyndon B. Johnson (D-Texas) rose to make his argument “I feel because of the peculiar circumstances surrounding General Marshall and the fact that the people feel as they do about him and the further fact that he has washed some of the military background off himself as Secretary of State, that we should make an exception under these circumstances for the

man, George Marshall, but not for any other military leader, and if we are ever confronted with it, we ought to face up to it at that time just as we are facing up to this.”²⁸ Most senators agreed with the future president, but Senator William F. Knowland, a Republican from California, was not one of them. Senator Knowland recognized Marshall’s accomplishments and qualifications but opposed the passage of the waiver because of his strong belief in maintaining civilian control over the military. “If this nation is so bankrupt that out of our 150 million people there is no other man qualified to take this position, why, that is something else again,” he remarked, “I do not believe that is the case.” Knowland also showed his fears over a ‘one-time exception’ setting a dangerous precedent, saying that “Once having waived the law, it is going to be far easier for the President or any President to ask for its waiver a second time.”²⁹ Several other

²⁸ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. *Letter of President on General Marshall’s Appointment: Report of Proceedings*. September 13, 1950. 5-6.

²⁹ U.S. Senate. September 13, 1950. 7-8

senators agreed with the sentiment expressed by Senator Knowland, but for the most part those present did not think that a one-time exception to the National Security Act in a time of war would irreparably damage the principle of civilian control of the military. Senator Edward Gurney (R-Florida) spoke passionately in favor of Marshall's appointment "I believe the American people will immediately after this appointment remember the great confidence they had in General Marshall and the super manner in which he handled the World War II effort as Chief of Staff. It is my feeling and always has been that the people of the United States owe probably as much to General Marshall as to any other man in the period of World War II, any other man in Government any place. Therefore, my vote will be cast in favor of the language in front of us."³⁰ When roll was called the motion to consider the bill was passed in the senate with only two votes against it, coming from

Senators Knowland and Harry P. Cain (R-Washington). The official vote for the waiver was set for both the House and the Senate on September 15th.

The House of Representatives passed H.R. 9646 authorizing Marshall to serve as Secretary of Defense on a one-time exception to the National Security Act after a brief debate on September 15th.

Representative Dewey Short, an excitable Republican from Missouri, highlighted the debate by calling Marshall a "catspaw and a pawn" brought back to government "to bail out desperate men who were in a hole," those men being Dean Acheson and Harry S Truman.³¹ Aside from Dewey's dramatics, the debate was unspectacular and the motion passed easily by a vote of 220-105. The breakdown of votes is as follows:

Yea: Democrats—192	Republicans—27
Nay: Democrats—5	Republicans—100

The Senate also debated on the passage of the waiver on September 15th. While the

³⁰ U.S. Senate. September 13, 1950. 15

³¹ Roll 564

previous sessions regarding Marshall's nomination had gone rather smoothly, this one would not. With most of the Senate in favor of the waiver allowing Marshall to serve as Secretary of Defense, Senator William E. Jenner, a McCarthyite Republican from Indiana, launched into a hysterical, hour-long diatribe against General Marshall, the Democratic Party, President Harry S Truman, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Secretary of State Dean Acheson. In his twelve years in the Senate, Jenner would develop a reputation as being second to only the infamous Joseph McCarthy in his shameless, fear-mongering claims that the U.S. government was corrupted by a vast conspiracy of Communist agents. After a far too lengthy career, Jenner refused to seek a third term in 1958, saying that he was disgusted and tired of Washington. As far as Washington was concerned, the feeling was mutual. But on September 15th, 1950, Jenner was as present

as ever, and he would not let the proceedings end before he had spoken his mind in full. After obtaining the floor, Senator Jenner first stated that he would not yield until he had concluded his prepared remarks, then began his now-infamous speech laden with historical inaccuracies, unsubstantiated conspiracy theories, baseless accusations, and marked by a sensationalist understanding of international foreign policy. Not only did Jenner make an incredibly personal attack on General Marshall who was a hero in the eyes of the American people, the Senator further shocked his peers by disparaging the late Franklin D. Roosevelt, who held the confidence of the American people over the course of his unparalleled twelve years as President of the United States, winning all four elections with no less than 81.4% of the electoral vote. Senator Jenner began his hyperbolic attacks by accusing the Truman administration of covering up "the most

frightening betrayal of America in history” and hiding the truth “of how the Democratic Party has been captured from within and used to hasten our destruction, both from within and without, during these tragic years.” The sheer boldness of these opening remarks no doubt came as a shock to most individuals present, as over the last eighteen years two Democratic presidents had seen the nation through the Great Depression and World War II—if they wanted to destroy America, the Democratic Party would have succeeded long ago. Of course, these observations were lost on a man like Jenner, who continued undaunted, shouting that “the time has come to expose this whole sordid, tragic conspiracy in which we are caught.” And what of General Marshall, the military man who had dedicated the past forty-eight years of his life to the service of his country? Senator Jenner called him “a front man for traitors” and “a living lie.” By this point at least one senator, Majority Leader

Scott W. Lucas (D-Illinois), had heard enough, asking if Jenner would yield the floor, a request that the McCarthyist firebrand promptly shot down. Returning to his attack on General Marshall, Jenner claimed that the former Secretary of State “has helped to betray his solemn trust and to set the stage for the staggering Soviet victory that is sweeping across the earth.” Before moving on to the “facts,” Jenner delivered one more particularly insulting attack to Marshall’s character “General Marshall has either been an unsuspecting, well-intentioned stooge, or an actual co-conspirator with the most treasonable array of political cutthroats ever turned loose in the executive branch of our Government.”³² The sheer violence with which the words were said and the magnitude of the accusations leveled against a lifelong military man of exemplary dignity and poise made Senator Jenner wildly unpopular with his peers, but for his part, Jenner never

³² U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. *Appointment of Gen. Marshall to Serve as Secretary of Defense*. September 15, 1950. 14913

thought twice about his conduct. “I’ve never regretted that,” he said years after his tantrum on the Senate floor, “I nailed him [Marshall], but I paid a hell of a price for it. A lot of people never got over what I said, but I would say it again.”³³ But Jenner wasn’t finished. He accused Marshall of being part of a conspiracy with President Roosevelt wherein secret commitments regarding the U.S. entry into WWII were made with the British between the years of 1939 and 1941. Thereafter, Jenner absurdly denounced General Marshall for the extension of aid to the Soviet Union under the Lend-Lease Act in 1941. Though this aid was of course sent to the Soviet Union not with the intention of creating a communist empire, but in an effort to defeat Nazi Germany, it was clearly enough—at least in Jenner’s mind—to label George Marshall a communist sympathizer. Jenner, apparently intent on holding the general accountable for the acts of his wartime presidents, also

attacked Marshall for the agreements made with the Soviet Union at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. The Senator from Indiana rambled through several other ‘acts of treason’—hiding President Roosevelt’s health from the American people, trying to stop the civil war in China, supporting the United Nations (which Jenner called “a ruthless instrument of power politics”)—before turning his attention to the Marshall Plan. Despite its reputation as a communist deterrent in Western Europe, Jenner claimed that the Marshall Plan was “pouring into Soviet hands the war materials and potential which has enabled her to continue her fantastic armaments race and her growing conquest of the world.”³⁴ He finished his remarks by insulting President Truman and Secretary Dean Acheson. Years after his presidency, writer Merle Miller asked President Truman how to explain a man like Senator Jenner. “There’s no explaining him,” Truman responded, “Birds like that

³³ “Anti-Communist Ex-Senator Jenner Dies.” *Los Angeles Times*. 13 March, 1985.

³⁴ U.S. Senate. September 15, 1950. 14916

are just part of the dirt that comes up when we're in for a run of hysteria in this country. He's just one of the dirty sonsabitches that gets elected to the Senate and elsewhere when we're going through one of those periods."³⁵ Unflappable as always, Marshall didn't even dignify Jenner's comments with a response. When he was told about the attack on his character a day or so later, he simply remarked "Jenner? Jenner? I do not believe I know the man."³⁶ Perhaps the most unfortunate part of Senator Jenner's outburst was that it irreparably damaged the arguments of Senators Knowland and Cain, while dooming the efforts of the other one hundred twenty-seven Republicans and six Democrats who would vote "no" on H.R. 9646 in an effort to prevent a military man from serving as Secretary of Defense. While the debate had previously been on the grounds of the principle of civilian control of the military, Senator Jenner's personal attack on George C. Marshall roused several

of his fellow senators—Republicans and Democrats both—to stand and speak in defense of the general's character. Jenner's speech completely shifted the tone of the proceedings from professional to personal, and the conviction of those who believed no military man should ever serve as Secretary of Defense was lost in the process. When Senator Jenner finally concluded his statement, Senator Leverett Saltonstall, a moderately conservative Republican from Massachusetts, rose and addressed the presiding officer and gave an impassioned rebuke of Jenner's remarks. Senator Saltonstall went on to echo the sentiments of most members of Congress who had made their cases regarding the waiver on September 13th, saying that he was in favor of civilian control of the military but would vote in favor of the bill due to the emergency situation and the general's unique qualifications. Thereafter the debate continued largely along party lines, but with

³⁵ Miller 238

³⁶ Roll 564

some other Republicans standing with Senator Saltonstall in defense of General Marshall's character. Ultimately, H.R. 9646 passed in the Senate by a vote of 47-21. The voting breakdown is as follows:

Yea: Democrats—37	Republicans—10
Nay: Democrats—1	Republicans—20

Despite Senator Knowland's concerns over the Marshall waiver setting a dangerous precedent for future presidents to ignore the requirement that the Secretary of Defense position be filled by a civilian, General Marshall remained the only individual granted such a waiver for sixty-seven years until President Donald J. Trump nominated General Jim Mattis. Public reaction to the passage of H.R. 9646 was more directed at the lack of decorum on the part of men like Dewey Short and William Jenner than the bill itself. The *New York Times* ran a headline the next day titled "Congress Votes Marshall Bill in Unusually Bitter Sessions" that contained the reactions of several

senators to Jenner's outburst. Democratic Senator Scott W. Lucas, for example, called Jenner's speech "reprehensible, irresponsible, the most diabolical speech in a hall of Congress that I have ever heard in sixteen years here!"³⁷ With the passage of H.R. 9646, Marshall's confirmation was all but assured, with his hearing before the Senate set for September 19th. Marshall's confirmation hearing on September 19th before the Senate Committee on Armed Services lasted only fifty-five minutes. Throughout the questioning, General Marshall was dignified, quiet, and answered all questions quickly and succinctly. The confidence that most of the senators on the committee had for Marshall was immediately apparent, as Senators Russell, Gurney, Byrd, Saltonstall, Chapman, Morse, and Johnson all began the session by voiding their time for questions and simply expressing their gratitude to the general for his willingness to once again serve his

³⁷ William S. White. "Congress Votes Marshall Bill in Unusually Bitter Sessions." *New York Times*. 16 September, 1950.

country. Even Republican Senator Harry P. Cain, who would vote against Marshall's confirmation, had only good things to say about the nominee "I want to say to General Marshall that because he is a military man—and I like to point out that he is one of the most distinguished persons in the annals of American military history—who has been nominated for the post of Secretary of Defense, which I believe completely should be filled by a civilian, there is absolutely nothing I can or would do to secure this post for General Marshall. If General Marshall were a combination, which no man can possibly be, of the finest characteristics of Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, Wellington, Grant, Lee, Foch, Pershing, Eisenhower, and Bradley, I would not vote to confirm General Marshall as Secretary of Defense. In my opinion, America will not solve her problems by endeavoring to find a soldier, old or young, to carry burdens which ought to be borne and conquered by ordinary

civilians. I wish, however, to state directly to General Marshall that should the Armed Services committee favor your nomination, and if the Senate confirms it, as seems most likely, the Senator from Washington [Cain himself] will stand always ready to be of assistance to your responsibilities in every conceivable way. Upon the assumption that you will shortly become America's Secretary of Defense, I wish you well, sound health, and a long life."³⁸ Senator Cain's effusive praise for the man whose nomination he would vote to oppose may well have been a conscious effort to distance his dissent from Senator Jenner's personal attacks just a few days prior, but it was an honorable moment of cooperation and support while staying true to one's principles. Senator Knowland, who voted no on H.R. 9646, was next to question Marshall, asking him a series of questions about the situation in Korea. Marshall offered no new information about the

³⁸ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. *Nomination of General Marshall to be Secretary of Defense*. 19 September, 1950. 2-3

Korean War, simply stating that the key decisions were made by the Truman administration after he had ceased serving as Secretary of State. Senator Knowland then asked General Marshall about his thoughts on the possibility of arming Western Germany “either as a police force or in a more extensive way.” Marshall declined to go into details, claiming “I have not formed my own opinion because I have not heard any discussion other than what I have read in the newspapers, so I would be speaking entirely on a very superficial basis of information.” Senator Knowland, acknowledging that Marshall was sure to be confirmed as Secretary of Defense later that day, said that he was asking because the prospect of arming Western Germany had been broached in relation to the newly created North Atlantic Pact. Marshall assured the Senator that if he was indeed to be confirmed, he would familiarize himself with the issue by speaking with the Chief of

Staff, State Department, and President Truman. Marshall was not a man who spoke on matters that he did not fully understand. Senator Knowland’s Cold War-centered line of questioning continued as he next asked for Marshall’s opinion on making Spain “a unit to defend Western Europe against the possibility of Soviet aggression.” Marshall mentioned that he had, as Secretary of State, formed an opinion on the matter, but in the months that had passed between his resignation and the present, was missing key intel from the British, Belgians, Norwegians, and the French who had particular influence on such a matter, and therefore thought it unwise to give what might by then be an outdated or irrelevant opinion. Secretary Knowland asked a few more questions before yielding his time, each of which received a similarly noncommittal response from the general. Senator Johnson had only one question for Marshall, simply asking if he had ever made any public statements

about the necessity of civilian control of the military. Marshall replied that long ago when he had first joined the army, he had made a statement that for the Army to achieve progress the Secretary of War should be a soldier, but he claimed that after living through some major events in military history, he later came to the conclusion that the Secretary of War should never be a soldier. Though he was not even a member of the Committee on Armed Services, it was again Senator Jenner who drew the most attention at the hearing. Clearly using his platform to boost his own political figure rather than seek answers, Senator Jenner introduced a list of outrageous questions to be asked of General Marshall, much to the chagrin of the other men present. Senator Jenner presented these questions in the form of a letter to the members of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and, as chairman, Senator Millard E. Tydings (D-Maryland) was tasked with reading them to

the general. After reading Senator Jenner's letter and growing frustrated with nature of the questions that were about to be asked, Senators John Chandler Gurney (R-South Dakota) and Leverett Saltonstall (R-Massachusetts) requested that the questions be asked off the record in a private executive session. Senator Lyndon B. Johnson (D-Texas) called Senator Jenner's questions "irritating," but argued that since the questions would be made available to the public as a result of being introduced during the open session, the answers should be made public as well. Chairman Tydings put the matter to a vote, and those in favor of asking the questions in the open session carried the majority. Obviously aware of the content of Jenner's character, Senator Tydings apologized in advance to General Marshall for the questioning that he was about to begin and emphasized the fact that the questions were not written by him. Jenner's first question asked why Marshall

had permitted the signing “of the lend-lease agreement with Russia which gave the Russians priority on our war matériel at the expense of American fighting forces.” Marshall replied that he did not sign the lend-lease agreement, but that it was signed with the obvious intent of defeating Nazi forces. The next few questions contained inflammatory language, absurd presuppositions, and were intended to further Jenner’s narrative that Marshall was a communist sympathizer intent on destroying America. There was discussion of Marshall’s postwar failure to set up a coalition government in China which Jenner characterized as an endorsement of a Mao’s regime, but Chairman Tydings and the rest of the Committee on Armed Services steered the line of questioning away from such ridiculous conspiracies. Jenner’s next question portrayed the Marshall Plan as Soviet aid before being followed with “Are you in favor of surrendering American

sovereignty into the hands of an international superstate and the turning of the American Armed Forces into a permanent foreign legion?” It is unclear how Jenner expected this question to play out, but Marshall, amused, replied “That pretty well covers the water front. No; I am not in favor of that.”³⁹ Jenner’s questions concluded with a weak effort to cast blame on General Marshall for the American losses during the bombing of Pearl Harbor before the Committee recessed before convening in a private executive session wherein Marshall was confirmed by a vote of 9-2. General George C. Marshall was confirmed by the whole Senate the following day by a vote of 57-11. The vote breakdown is as follows:

Yea: Democrats—42	Republicans—15
Nay: Democrats—0	Republicans—11

VIII. Secretary of Defense

When Marshall’s duties began as Secretary of Defense, General Douglass MacArthur had just completed a bold and surprisingly

³⁹ U.S. Senate. September 19, 1950. 24

successful amphibious landing at Inchon.

The Pusan perimeter quickly collapsed after MacArthur's landing and the invading North Korean People's Army was rapidly pushed northwards. By October 1st, the 38th parallel had been restored and South Korea was under United Nations' control. Originally, Truman had approved military intervention in Korea with the goal of returning the region to its former borders. But with the NKPA retreating northward, the joint chiefs and the State Department encouraged Truman to authorize MacArthur to pursue the fleeing NKPA forces across the 38th parallel and destroy them. While newly-confirmed Secretary of Defense Marshall did not necessarily believe in an invasion of North Korea, he agreed that MacArthur should be allowed to pursue the retreating NKPA forces and advised President Truman as such. On September 27th, Marshall approved a directive for MacArthur to peruse and destroy NKPA forces north of the

38th parallel, with Truman approving the directive later on the same day. However, U.S. General Walton Walker had indicated that he would halt his Eighth Army at the 38th parallel until he was expressly authorized by the UN, not the U.S., to move further north. Due to the overwhelming likelihood of a Soviet veto, President Truman maneuvered to bypass the issue of UN approval by claiming that MacArthur found operations north of the 38th parallel to be a matter of military necessity. On September 29th, Marshall personally sent an "eyes only" message to MacArthur stating that instead of waiting for UN approval, MacArthur and all of his field commanders should "feel unhampered tactically and strategically to proceed north of the 38th parallel." MacArthur responded by saying that "Unless and until the enemy capitulate I regard all of Korea open for our military operations." To this comment, Marshall made no response. Given the benefit of

hindsight, the decision to allow General MacArthur to pursue NKPA forces north of the 38th parallel was the greatest mistake of George Marshall's career. On October 19th, 1950, Chinese forces surprised MacArthur and U.S. intelligence by entering the war and pushing the UN forces back into South Korea. For the remainder of the war ground forces were locked into a stalemate near the 38th parallel while the U.S. began a massive bombing campaign against North Korea. General MacArthur was removed by President Truman following a series of remarks perceived as critical to Truman's policy, a move which was extremely unpopular with the public who welcomed the general as a hero on his return home. With Marshall's military background taken into consideration an important interpretational question is raised: Were the fears of Senator Knowland and Senator Cain over sacrificing civilian control of the military realized during General Marshall's

tenure as Secretary of Defense? While it is unknown how a civilian Secretary of Defense would have reacted to the situation presented to George Marshall regarding the decision whether or not to pursue the NKPA past the 38th parallel and into North Korea, Marshall's decision was undoubtedly rooted in his own experience as a general. George Marshall was both a general and a statesman, but he was never a politician. Before being promoted to Chief of Staff, he believed in 1939 that, as a brigadier general, he knew better than President Franklin Delano Roosevelt when the latter proposed an increase in the nation's manufacturing of warplanes. Marshall believed that while the military was to take orders from the president and from Congress regarding foreign policy, the means for achieving the intent of its superiors should be left to the discretion of the military's own field commanders. As a general himself, Marshall trusted MacArthur's judgement on the

situation in Korea; if MacArthur thought it necessary to pursue NKPA forces beyond the 38th parallel, Marshall would allow him to do so. He did not trust the international political figureheads within the United Nations to make decisions regarding U.S. military operations. Marshall resigned as Secretary of Defense in September of 1951, but his decision to allow MacArthur to operate north of the 38th parallel resulted in the continuation of the Korean War for another two years.

IX. Conclusion

While Senator Knowland and Senator Cain feared that allowing Marshall to serve as Secretary of Defense would set a dangerous precedent allowing future presidents to seek waivers that might allow more military men to become Secretary of Defense, General Marshall remained the only individual granted such a waiver for sixty-seven years until President Donald J. Trump nominated

General James “Jim” Norman Mattis to serve as his Secretary of Defense in 2017. The waiver for Mattis’ nomination passed by comfortable margins in the House and the Senate and he was confirmed by a vote of 98-1. The sole “no” vote was from Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-New York) who echoed Senator Harry P. Cain by saying that while she deeply respected General Mattis’ service, “Civilian control of our military is a fundamental principle of American democracy, and I will not vote for an exception to this rule.”⁴⁰ General Mattis served as Secretary of Defense for two years before resigning after a disagreement with President Trump regarding the latter’s decision to remove U.S forces from Syria. Trump accelerated Mattis’ resignation—which was set to become effective on February 28th, 2019—to January 1st and claimed that he had “essentially fired” the Secretary of Defense.⁴¹ Trump’s rift with

⁴⁰ Schor, Elena. “Gillibrand says she won’t vote for Mattis waiver,” POLITICO, 2 December, 2016.

⁴¹ Haberman, Maggie. “Trump Says Mattis Resignation Was ‘Essentially’ a Firing, Escalating His New Front Against Military Critics.” *New York Times*. 2 January, 2019.

Mattis could perhaps indirectly be tied to the general's military background, as Mattis' own military experience may well have influenced his staunch opposition to the President's decision to remove troops from Syria. With only two exceptions among the twenty-seven men nominated to serve as Secretary of Defense in the position's seventy-three year history, there is perhaps too little evidence to say for certain whether or not a military man serving as Secretary of Defense is more likely to depart from the norms of the position as set by civilians. However, it can be said that in the case of General George C. Marshall, it was not possible for the Secretary of Defense to remove himself from the ideas and values cultivated during his decades-long career in the military. With President Joseph Robinette Biden Jr.'s newly appointed Secretary of Defense, General Lloyd Austin, recently confirmed by a Senate vote of 93-2 and thus becoming the third military official

to hold the position, it appears that Congress' once-fervent conviction that the office of Secretary of Defense should be held by a civilian has significantly lessened. How this shift will affect the post going forward, however, remains to be seen.

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