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Non-Combat Operations of China's Armed Forces in the 21st Century : Historical Development, Current Drivers and Implications for Military Projection

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The Non-Combat Operations of China's Armed Forces in the 21st Century:

Historical Development, Current Drivers and Implications for Military Projection

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures from
The College of William and Mary

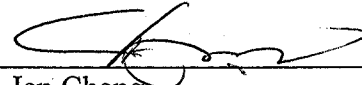
by

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The Non-Combat Operations of China's Armed Forces in the 21st Century:

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Austin Strange

Abstract

This thesis examines the twenty-first century non-combat activities of China's armed forces as defined in a 2009 official release titled "Building Non-Combat Military Operation Ability"¹ in order to understand the historical development, domestic drivers and broader implications of China's contemporary non-combat missions. The paper focuses primarily on disaster relief and domestic stability maintenance, two types of operations that are ideal for examining how the internal drivers of non-combat missions are manifested in practice. Both Chinese and Western PLA analysts frequently view non-combat activities primarily as a component of China's growing international military presence rather than analyzing the domestic scope and causes of these operations. Indeed, participation in international non-combat missions allows China's armed forces to achieve unprecedented operational experience outside of China's immediate periphery and has also helped enhance China's international soft power. This thesis, however, demonstrates that People's Liberation Army (PLA) and People's Armed Police (PAP) twenty-first century non-combat missions are chiefly designed to achieve domestic goals. These include maintaining regime stability, balancing complex civil-military relations, and preserving the PLA's image as an army "serving the people" amid complex internal and external national security environments. I argue that an "outward-looking" approach focused on the international ramifications of PLA and PAP non-combat operations is insufficient to fully understand these missions, and it can potentially distort our view of China's broader military development. As vital conduits for bolstering CCP regime stability, Chinese civil-military relations and the PLA's image as a people-centric force, China's twenty-first century domestic non-combat operations, driven by internal security challenges arising from socioeconomic, military and historical developments in post-reform China, will likely continue to grow in importance and scope as these trends persist and intensify, thereby ensuring that the military retains a prominent role in China. As a result, twenty-first century non-combat operations have the potential to impede outward Chinese military development rather than simply expand Chinese interests abroad as more resources are needed to pursue internal security objectives.

¹Sun Yanxin[孙彦新], "国防部: 军队年底将建成 8 支共 5 万人应急救援部队" [*Guofangbu: Jundui niandi jiang jiancheng 8 zhi gong 5 wanren yingji jiuyuan budui*] [Ministry of National Defense: Military will establish 8 emergency-response professional units with 50,000 troops by the end of year], 新华社 [Xinhuashe] [Xinhua News Agency], April 20, 2010, http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2010-04/20/content_1587746.htm

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Introduction

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), mainland China's ruling party since 1949, celebrated its 90-year history on July 1, 2011. Since its victory over the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) in 1949, the CCP's core objectives have included upholding CCP legitimacy, maintaining steady economic growth in China, preserving domestic stability, defending national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and aspiring to make China a great power. These objectives have remained constant amid perpetually evolving national security challenges.² While the CCP's fundamental interests have not changed, the means to securing them have evolved over time, and the structure and functions of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) have changed in order to adapt to diverse national security challenges stemming from economic development, social change, military modernization and shifting international relations.

In the 21st century, the diversification of PLA operations reflects the growing complexity of security developments in and around China. Both Jiang Zemin³ and Hu Jintao, China's two paramount leaders in the new millennium, have taken major steps to redefine and expand the role of the military in China and internationally in an era where China is increasingly confronted with formidable internal and external security.⁴ Perhaps most notably, Jiang's "winning local wars under conditions of informatization" (在信息

² China's leadership refers to these objectives in the context of "Comprehensive national power" (*zonghe guoli*—综合国力). This was noted in a report to US Congress made annually that comprehensively examines China's internal and external security environments and military development. See, "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2011," Office of the Secretary of Defense, May 6, 2011, 9-10, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/2011_cmpr_final.pdf

³ While Hu took over as General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCCPC) in November 2002 and as President of China in March 2003, Jiang remained Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) until late 2004, and as such presumably had considerable influence on Chinese military policy during almost half of the last decade.

⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of China's contemporary security challenges separated into "internal" and "external" threats, see Yang, J. "China's Security Challenges: Priorities and Policy Implications", *Asia Pacific Countries' Security Outlook and Its Implications for the Defense Sector*, Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), 141-159, 142-47, http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/joint_research/series5/pdf/5-10.pdf

化条件下打赢区域战争的能力)⁵ and Hu's "diverse military tasks" (多样化军事任务), central military policies of the two leaders, both have emphasized that China will face unprecedented security threats in the 21st century.⁶ The development of a blue water navy, a modern air force, streamlined ground forces, first-class missile systems, and advanced cyber-warfare and space programs reflect the PLA's comprehensive development towards a military capable of addressing twenty-first century challenges.

As China's military modernization unfolds, many experts place a growing focus on international PLA developments, including the PLA's growing portfolio of international non-combat operations (非战争军事行动).⁷ These include missions such as peacekeeping, disaster relief, humanitarian assistance and evacuation of Chinese citizens in emergency situations overseas. In recent years the PLA has attached great importance to international non-combat missions throughout the world, including in Southeast Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. Not only do these missions provide platforms for improving PLA operational capabilities, but they also help improve China's bilateral relations and international image as a responsible stakeholder.⁸ For example, the

⁵ This phrase is the descendant of the 1993 term "Local wars under modern high-tech conditions," unveiled in 2002 when Jiang released a set of "Military Strategic Guidelines" which stated that future wars would likely be "high-tech" compared to China's historical war fighting experiences. With respect to the terminology adjustment, PLA Scholar David Finkelstein notes, "That change, however, was basically a variation on the same theme. The important point to make is that the PLA was charged in 1993 to cease focusing its modernization efforts on late industrial age warfare and shift to a long term program of developing the necessary capabilities for fighting late 20th-century and early 21st-century conventional warfare as exemplified by U.S. forces in 1991." David Finkelstein, "China's National Military Strategy: An Overview of the "Military Strategic Guidelines," Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), 2007, 104-111.

⁶ "Annual Report to Congress," 1; James Mulvenon, "Chairman Hu and the Pla's 'New Historic Missions'," China Leadership Monitor, Volume 27, 7, <http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/CLM27JM.pdf>

⁷ Much available English literature places non-combat operations in the context of implications for China's soft power and operational experience. See, for example, Cynthia Watson, "The Chinese Armed Forces and Non-Traditional Missions: A Growing Tool of Statecraft," China Brief Volume: 9 Issue: 4, February 20, 2009, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=34532&cHash=b1466b4c24](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=34532&cHash=b1466b4c24); Bates Gill and Chin-hao Huang, "China's Expanding Role in Peacekeeping: Prospects and Policy Implications," SIPRI Policy Paper no. 25, November 2009, <http://books.sipri.org/files/PP/SIPRIPP25.pdf>; Drew Thompson, "International Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance: A Future Role for the PLA?," China Brief Volume: 8 Issue: 11, June 6, 2008, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=4941&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=168&no_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=4941&tx_ttnews[backPid]=168&no_cache=1); Tania M. Chacho, "Lending a Helping Hand: The People's Liberation Army and Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief," 2009, <http://www.usafa.edu/df/inss/Research%20Papers/2009/LENDING%20A%20HELPING%20HAND%20THE%20PEOPLES%20LIBERATION%20ARMY%20AND%20HUMANITARIAN%20ASSISTANCE%20DISASTER%20RELIEF.pdf>

⁸ Drew Thompson, "China's army looks beyond its shores," Asia Times Online, May 29, 2008, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/JE29Ad01.html>; Many Chinese scholars have noted the positive effects of non-combat

People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has gained historic operational far seas experience through its anti-piracy activities in the Gulf of Aden as well as from its evacuation of 30,000 Chinese citizens from Libya during the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, an operation that also allowed the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) to carry out its first overseas operational deployment.⁹

While operational gains and soft power are important to Chinese and Western observers alike, they often overshadow the reality that China's non-combat operations are fundamentally domestic in terms of both objective and scope. Somewhat paradoxically, non-combat operations are typically the face of the PLA's burgeoning international presence, such as the PLAN's anti-piracy escort task forces in the Gulf of Aden and the PLA's peacekeeping troops participating in African UN peacekeeping missions.¹⁰ Yet, as this paper argues, the core objectives and most significant gains of non-combat operations are the stability they provide to China's internal security environment. In fact, amid growing speculation among international observers that China is poised to boost its military influence throughout the world, a claim supported by consistent double-digit growth of China's military expenditures, many often neglect the reality that domestic non-combat operations are expanding the domestic role of the armed forces in China as well as the proportion of China's military budget that is spent domestically. China's

operations on the PLA's image. See, for example, Liu Mingxue [刘明学], "在重大非战争军事行动报道中彰显人民军队形象," [Zai zhongda feizhanzheng junshi xingdong baodaozhong zhangxian renmin jundui xingxiang] [Display the image of a people's army amid the reporting of major non-combat operations], 中国军网 [Zhongguo junwang] [China Military Online], May 4, 2011, <http://military.people.com.cn/GB/8221/51757/45802/194788/208832/14550344.html>

⁹ Gabe Collins and Andrew Erickson, "The PLA Air Force's First Overseas Operational Deployment: Analysis of China's decision to deploy IL-76 transport aircraft to Libya," *China SignPost*™ 洞察中国, March 1, 2011, http://www.chinasignpost.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/China-SignPost_27_Analysis-of-PLAAF-IL-76-deployment-to-Libya_201103011.pdf

¹⁰ For example, see Michael S. Chase and Kristen Gunness, "The PLA's Multiple Military Tasks: Prioritizing Combat Operations and Developing MOOTW Capabilities," *China Brief*, The Jamestown Foundation, Volume: 10 Issue: 2, January 21, 2010, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=35931&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=25&cHash=8945e05997](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=35931&tx_ttnews[backPid]=25&cHash=8945e05997). Much of the available scholarship on China's non-combat operations focuses on China's cooperation (or lack thereof) with other states as well as gains in operational experience and capabilities from international operations. Notable examples include PLA peacekeeping operations in Africa, People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden, People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) evacuations of Chinese citizens in Libya during the Arab Spring uprisings, and, more recently, joint anti-piracy patrols along the Mekong River in Southeast Asia.

domestic security budget has outpaced its military budget since 2010¹¹, indicating that Beijing has begun channeling substantial resources towards maintaining internal stability.¹²

This paper examines the internal drivers of non-combat activities of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the 21st century, with a focus on the military's role in disaster relief and domestic stability maintenance. While there are enormous benefits for China's international economic and military influence from participation in international non-combat missions, such as improving operational capacity and enhancing international soft power, I argue that the PLA's twenty-first century non-combat missions are chiefly designed to achieve domestic goals such as maintaining regime stability in China, balancing complex Chinese civil-military relations, and ensuring broad domestic public support of the military. I also argue that an "outward-looking" approach focusing primarily on international ramifications of non-combat operations is important, but in the end insufficient to understand the core nature and objectives of China's non-combat operations. Finally, I argue that when put in historical context and analyzed through domestic socioeconomic, civil-military and historical dimensions, it becomes clear that China's twenty-first century non-combat operations as a whole may deter Chinese external military development as a growing concentration of attention and resources is required for internal operations that have always been and will continue to be a stronghold of Chinese political and military legitimacy.

¹¹ China makes a distinction between its "external" military budget and its public security budget. The latter is supposed to include "the police, 'state security,' PAP, courts and prison system at the national and local levels of government." See Dennis Blasko, "Politics and the PLA: Securing Social Stability," China Brief Volume: 12 Issue: 7, March 30, 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=39208](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=39208)

¹² National People's Congress Spokesman Li Zhaoxing revealed in early March that China's military budget for 2012 is estimated to increase by 11.2% to 670.27 billion RMB, or about \$106.41 billion. See "李肇星:中国军费预算 2012 年为 6702.74 亿元," [Li Zhaoxing: Zhongguo junfei yusuan 2012nian wei 6702.74 yiyuan][Li Zhaoxing: China's estimated military budget for 2012 is 670.274 billion Yuan] 新华网[Xinhua News Online], March 4, 2012, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2012lh/2012-03/04/c_111600760.htm

Specifically, this paper examines two of the most common types of PLA non-combat operations: disaster relief (抢险救灾) and domestic stability maintenance (维持稳定). First, disaster relief and domestic stability maintenance together constitute the large majority of PLA non-combat operations. Second, both types of operations often require the PLA and PAP¹³ to operate in sensitive, high-pressure environments in which performance has considerable social, economic and political ramifications. Third, analysis of the PLA's and PAP's respective roles in disaster relief and domestic stability maintenance highlight the sensitivity of non-combat missions to both the military and the Party, and provide a valuable look into the PLA's changing role in Chinese society. Finally, these operations provide valuable windows to examine coordination between military units and civil government agencies at the national, regional and local level, and more broadly, allow us to highlight performance gains as well as existing deficiencies in the military's non-combat operational capabilities.

The analysis in this paper relies primarily on existing publicly available English-language and Chinese-language scholarship on twenty-first century non-combat operations, as well as publicly available Chinese-language primary source documents such as press releases and official regulations published by the military and central government. I analyze China's domestic non-combat operations since 2000, and as mentioned above, focus specifically on disaster relief and domestic stability maintenance. While the focus is on contemporary operations, much of my analysis is not directly on contemporary operations, but the 20th century developments in Chinese society that have shaped them and continue to steer the development of Chinese society.

¹³ The People's Armed Police, also referred to as the People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) is the CCP's paramilitary arm that has both internal and external security responsibilities, though as this paper will show, its primary duties are managing internal security.

In late 2011 China's military held a symposium specifically on PLA and PAP non-combat operations. Attendees included Chinese President and Central Military Commission (CMC) Chairman Hu Jintao, CMC Vice Chairman Xi Jinping and CMC Vice Chairman Guo Boxiong. The PLA and PAP were lauded by China's highest civil and military leadership echelons for their non-combat operational achievements to date, reflecting the growing centrality of non-combat missions to twenty-first Chinese military development.¹⁴ What does the term "non-combat operations" mean in Chinese society and how has it changed over time? What do twenty-first century non-combat operations look like? What explains the consistently increasing high levels of importance attached to non-combat operations by China's current leaders? This paper addresses these questions systematically, beginning with the historical development of non-combat operation in China to their present-day state.

¹⁴ "Hu praises military for non-combat operations," Xinhua, September 6, 2011, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-09/06/content_13632889.htm; "Chen Bingde urges non-combat operation capacity building," PLA Daily, September 8, 2011, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2011-09/08/content_4670548.htm

Chapter 1: Historical Foundations and Modern Scope of China's Non-Combat Operations

While non-combat military activities existed throughout the 20th and 21st centuries in China, the nature and scope of these operations have often fluctuated. China's non-combat operations have gradually evolved from their pre-reform orientation towards national economic construction into missions primarily revolving around safeguarding national security. Since 2000, a range of formal institutions have been established legalizing and clarifying, to a degree, the non-combat role of China's armed forces, whose non-war duties have expanded rapidly in the 21st century. In addition to growing levels of institutionalization, evidence that both budgetary resources for internal non-combat operations and official media and academic coverage of these activities have increased dramatically are indicators that Beijing increasingly views military non-combat operations as critical mediums for preserving internal security. The fact that an overwhelming proportion of the PLA's modern non-combat operations are carried out on Chinese soil rather than abroad further underscores the growing domestic inclination of China's non-combat operations.

Historical Foundations of China's Contemporary Non-Combat Military Operations

Besides its intervention in the Korean War beginning in late 1950 and a brief border clash with Vietnam in 1979, China's armed forces have generally been disengaged from major warfare since 1949, and domestic non-combat operations were featured prominently throughout the Mao and Deng eras. A survey of non-combat operations in CCP history reveals the various ways in which the Party and army manifested the

traditional concept of an army “serving the people” (为人民服务) throughout the 20th century by employing the military in various non-war capacities.

The PLA traces its official origins to August 1, 1927, when Zhou Enlai and Zhu De led revolutionary troops against KMT forces during the Nanchang Uprising. A month later, with Zhu and Mao Zedong at the helm, the military arm of the CCP was officially named the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army (工农红军), the precursor to the modern PLA.¹⁵ Due to bleak economic and political conditions prevailing in China during the interwar years, the Red Army immediately shouldered broad production and propaganda responsibilities in addition to its war fighting duties, such as agricultural production within Communist bases.¹⁶ This strategy was closely linked to Mao’s belief that military victory relied on the ability to mobilize the peasant masses, an approach that originated in from Mao’s earlier work in Hunan which was instrumental in laying the foundations of the “mass line” (群众路线) in Chinese political and military activities and was reported in Mao’s 1927 “Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan” (湖南农民运动考察报告). Reliance on mass movements became a cornerstone of his “People’s War” (人民战争) doctrine during the Chinese Civil War and Second Sino-Japanese War.¹⁷ Mao tasked the Red Army with indoctrinating the masses, organizing the masses and helping the masses (宣传群众, 组织群众, 帮助群众), effectively inculcating the military as a political, military and economic arm of the Communist Party.¹⁸

¹⁵ “Timeline of People's Liberation Army (PLA) over eight decades,” China Daily, August 1, 2007,

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-08/01/content_5446933.htm

¹⁶ James Mulvenon, “Soldiers of Fortune: The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Military-Business Complex,” Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC), Bonn, Germany, 1999, 20

¹⁷ Arif Dirlik and Maurice J. Meisner, “Marxism and the Chinese experience: issues in contemporary Chinese socialism,” Armonk, N.Y. : M.E. Sharpe, 1989, 45

¹⁸ Liu Zhongmin [杨忠民], “杨忠民：人民军队战斗队、工作队、宣传队思想的历史发展与实践,” [Liu Zhongmin: Renmin jundui zhandoudui, gongzuodui, xuanchuandui sixiang de lishi fazhan yu shijian][Liu Zhongmin: The historical development and

These “Three Major Tasks” (三大任务) were stressed by Mao at the Gutian Conference (古田会议), the first meeting of the CCP following the Nanchang Uprising, and later reemphasized during the Zunyi Conference (遵义会议) in 1935.¹⁹ After returning from the Long March in late 1935, the Red Army resumed its non-war tasks, primarily in the form of leading peasant uprisings in the countryside against local tyrants and landlords in order to raise money to support peasants and soldiers living in CPC bases.²⁰ During the Second Sino-Japanese War, abysmal peasant living conditions in the countryside, worsened by frequent hostile encounters with KMT and Japanese forces, prompted Mao and Zhu to call on the Red Army to act as both a fighting force and production force whose responsibility it was to maintain subsistence in communist bases.²¹ The 359th brigade (三五九旅) in Nanniwan became an icon for this movement within the Red Army, as vivid descriptions of soldiers and Chinese peasants tilling fields together as a model of self-sufficiency were promulgated through CCP propaganda channels as part of a larger “Nanniwan Spirit” (南泥湾精神).²² The economic production efforts of military units during pre-revolutionary China were welcomed by CCP leadership, who utilized the military’s non-war activities to brand the Party and army as sympathetic to the plight of Chinese peasants throughout the countryside.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the CCP was constantly engaged in warfare and relied heavily on peasant assistance in defeating both the Japanese and the

practice of the fighting force, working force and propaganda force thought of the people’s army] 新湘评论杂志社 [Xinxiang pinglun zazhishe] [Xinxiang Commentary Magazine], 2010 (9), http://www.xsplzx.com/xxplml/yyyl2007/t20100510_297776.htm

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Feng Zhigui [冯芝桂], “朱德和南泥湾大生产运动,” [Zhude he nanniwan dashengchan yundong][Zhu De and the Nanniwan Mass Production Movement] 人民政协报 [Renmin zhengxie bao][People’s Political Consultative Daily], July 12, 2009, <http://epaper.sqdaily.com/sqwb/page/27/2009-07-12/A08/36741247389650675.pdf>

²² “Soldiers of Fortune,” 29-30.

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). During the 1920s and 1930s, peasant villages functioned as vital sources of local intelligence that allowed the CCP to survive Chiang Kai-shek's encirclement campaigns, as well as the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). The Party relied heavily on public support both on and off the battlefield. Many peasants, weary of KMT corruption and Japanese brutality, conscripted into the ranks of the growing PLA, and others sheltered PLA soldiers and provided intelligence to the PLA. Mao Zedong's concept of "People's War" flourished during this era, and support of the masses proved to be the most decisive weapon in the CCP's arsenal.

The CCP also relied heavily on peasant support in the countryside to defeat the KMT in the Chinese Civil War. In 1946 the CCP Central Committee, recognizing that supporting peasant land revolts was the only way to maximize peasant support, issued the May Fourth Directive.²³ The directive ordered CCP officials to fully support land revolts in agricultural China, and "Let no poor peasant remain poor, let no backward element remain backward, leave no question between the people be unresolved, leave no feudal remnants in the people's thinking, and leave no landlord in possession of his property."²⁴ Peasants rallied around common themes of oppression by landlords, and the CCP was a medium for collective action. Even after Communist victory, the thoroughness of the CCP's campaigns in rural China is exemplified by PLA's labeling of landowners as "exploiting classes."²⁵ By the conclusion of the Chinese Civil War, Mao had rebranded the PLA as a fighting force, a working force and a production force (战斗队, 宣传队, 工作队), solidifying the official scope of the military's non-combat operations.²⁶ The

²³ William Hinton, "Fanshen; a documentary of revolution in a Chinese village," New York, Vintage Books 1966, 202

²⁴ Ibid., 80-81

²⁵ Jun Jing, "The Temple of Memories: History, Power and Morality in a Chinese Village," (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 1996, 48.

²⁶ "人民军队战斗队"

multi-tasking nature of the PLA in pre-communist China built a broad foundation for further PLA expansion into other non-combat spheres of operation after 1949.

Non-Combat Operations in Communist China

The nature of China's non-combat activities has fundamentally changed several times between 1949 and present day.²⁷ PLA Scholar Zhu Zhijiang classifies the historical development on PLA non-combat operations into six periods, which are laid out in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Evolution of Non-Combat Operations in Communist China²⁸

<i>Period</i>	<i>Primary Nature²⁹ of Domestic PLA Non-Combat Activities</i>
1949-1953	Military Control ³⁰ , Suppression of Counterrevolutionaries and Bandits, Land Reform
1954-1965	Building the Countryside, Organizing Industrial and Agricultural Production
1966-1976	Military Control Militarization of Politics and Economic Production, Disaster Relief

²⁷ Zhu Zhijiang [朱之江], “人民军队非战争军事行动述论,” [Renmin jundui feizhanzheng junshi xingdong shulun][Discussion of the Non-Combat Operations of the People's Army], 军事历史研究 [Junshi lishi yanjiu][Military History Research], 2010 (1)

²⁸ Sources: “人民军队,” Andrew Scobell, “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations: Lessons Learned,” 2003 Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), 427-444; George Osborn, “The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Political Socialization,” Army War College, Parameters. Vol. I, Winter 1972. pp. 22-27 <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA510005>

²⁹ Of course, the PLA and PAP have participated in a myriad of other non-combat operations throughout different historical eras, such as disaster relief, occupation of Special Autonomous Regions (SAR), border control, and international MOOTW, to name a few. This chart attempts to capture only the primary form of non-combat operations throughout post-1949 Chinese history.

³⁰ “Military control” (军管) broadly refers to military units establishing political governance over an area. A prime example of such control were the “Revolutionary Committees” informally controlled by the PLA during the Cultural Revolution. See “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations,” 427-435.

1977-1988	Assistance to Construction of National Economy Through Agriculture, Industry and Business
1989-2001	Economic Production, Stability Maintenance, Disaster Relief
2001-Present	Stability Maintenance, Disaster Relief, Counterterrorism, Humanitarian Assistance

Between 1949 and 1989, the primary nature of China's non-combat operations can be broadly grouped into socialist state building in the form of economic production and political work. In the period immediately following Communist victory, pockets of KMT supporters remained throughout the countryside that worked against CCP forces. Moreover, many remnants of pre-revolutionary landlord systems had still not been eradicated despite large-scale, nationwide campaigns calling for peasants to overthrow exploitative proprietors such as the May Fourth movement.³¹ As such, the PLA was largely occupied with counterinsurgency operations against KMT loyalists as well as completing land reforms during this time.

With the conclusion of the Korean War in 1953, a relatively stable and peaceful China entered a period of socialistic national economy building that spanned the catastrophic Great Leap Forward (大跃进).³² Until 1966, the PLA contributed to national economic production efforts in both industry and agriculture, largely, according to Zhu, because no other organizations were developed or organized enough to do so. Scholar George Osborn noted in 1972 that 1953 to 1959 represented a "trough" in the degree of

³¹ William Hinton, "Fanshen; a documentary of revolution in a Chinese village," New York, Vintage Books 1966, 202.

³²“人民军队.”

political socialization of the PLA, a term he refers to as the general role of the PLA in Chinese politics and society, which were a large component of non-combat operations in 20th century China. This shift was due both to the expansion of the CCP's civil bureaucratic structure as well as the PLA's post-Korean war focus on professionalization and modernization. However, while the PLA's non-combat role in Chinese society declined after the Korean War, the "Red versus Expert struggle"³³ reaffirmed the army's status as a multi-tasking military with major sociopolitical responsibilities.³⁴

The PLA's non-combat role during the Cultural Revolution reached unprecedented scale in terms of soldiers used and intensity of operations. Virtually all political and economic activities were militarized following the mass purging of civil and intellectual leaders and essential collapse of civil society, largely due to the destruction brought about by the Red Guards in the late 1960s.³⁵ The PLA was paramount in maintaining social stability throughout the country. Simultaneously, the "Three Supports and Two Armies" (三支两军) campaign ordered the PLA to provide assistance to communist Leftists purging the civil government, as well as give support to agricultural and industrial production.³⁶ As China's civil infrastructure disintegrated, the PLA began overseeing practically all civil and economic affairs in regions throughout the country.³⁷ China's twenty-first century non-combat operations differ radically from the non-combat

³³ "Red vs. Expert" was an ideological debate on whether the PLA should remain a strong sociopolitical force or focus more on military professionalism. Mao and Lin Biao, Mao's eventual Vice Chair, were the major proponents of keeping the army highly politicized. Peng Dehuai, a PLA Commander at the time, advocated for modernization of the PLA by detaching it from domestic politics.

³⁴ George Osborn, "The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Political Socialization," Army War College, Parameters. Vol. I, Winter 1972. pp. 22-27 <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA510005>

³⁵ The Red Guards (红卫兵) were groups of Chinese students intensely loyal to Mao that attacked the four "olds" (custom, culture, habits and ideas) in Chinese society. Their psychological and physical assaults, mainly on traditional Chinese society as well as people who supposedly represented old Chinese society such as students with landowning family backgrounds and intellectuals, was initially supported widely by Mao and the central government. Eventually, Beijing began to view the Red Guard movement as a threat to internal stability and subsequently ordered the PLA to suppress the movement.

³⁶ "Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations," 427-444.

³⁷ "人民军队."

activities during the Cultural Revolution, partially a result of the damage done to the blurred image of the military in domestic society throughout this period.

The conclusion of the Cultural Revolution and the start of Deng's economic reforms ushered in a new era of non-combat operations characterized by extensive involvement in China's economic and political realms. From the end of the Cultural Revolution to the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989, PLA non-combat activities largely consisted of more national economic building, this time in the form of private enterprising and establishment of PLA business conglomerates. As PLA scholar James Mulvenon points out, China's economy in 1978 was depleted from two disastrous decades marked by the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, and wages in China were essentially frozen from 1958 to 1978. In order to initiate economic reform, Deng eliminated the Maoist framework that allowed the PLA to operate with the loosest of budget constraints, slashing the defense budget and encouraging the military to generate its own revenue.³⁸ The growing decentralization of China's economy after Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms led to immense profit-making and resulted in severe corruption within the ranks of PLA economic production enterprises. Mounting corruption coupled with the events of June 4, 1989 stained the military's domestic image and prompted the military to fundamentally adjust its domestic non-combat role towards one more likely to be welcomed in Chinese society.³⁹

The non-combat activities of China's armed forces underwent an unprecedented structural expansion in the period following the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989, when PLA and PAP troops open-fired on Chinese student protesters in Beijing. Enforcing

³⁸ "Soldiers of Fortune," 3-7.

³⁹ "人民军队."

martial law in Beijing in the summer of 1989 marked a major shift in China's non-combat activities, which have since been increasingly focused on directly protecting national security rather than managing economic and political affairs in China. In 1993, then Chairman Jiang Zemin officially pointed out that PLA economic activities had grown too large in scope, facilitating corruptive practices, and were having severely negative effects on the operational and ideological development of the PLA as the protector of China.⁴⁰ Corruption on the business side of PLA operations decreased overall fighting force and leadership capabilities of PLA officials, and, equally alarming, directly contradicted the PLA's traditional ideology which stressed the army's duty to uphold respect for citizens, reflected in guidelines such as the Three Rules of Discipline (三大纪律) and Eight Points for Attention (八项注意).⁴¹ After several years of gradual dissolution and phasing, Jiang formally banned PLA private business enterprises in July of 1998.⁴² As a result, the military was largely disconnected, at least directly, from economic production for the first time in Communist Chinese history.

The military's 20th century non-combat activities were an essential platform for formalizing and institutionalizing non-combat operations as a core PLA responsibility in the years that followed. Indeed, during this era a considerable chunk of PLA operations were non-combat in nature, from tilling fields to serving as the CCP's main propaganda channel. The remainder of this chapter examines the institutionalization of, resources used for, and media coverage of China's non-combat operations during the Jiang and Hu

⁴⁰ “人民军队。”

⁴¹ These doctrinal principles were introduced shortly after the founding of the PLA and were emphasized throughout the Long March in the early 1930s. Red Army soldiers' respectful treatment of peasants in the countryside is credited as an important factor for the increase of CCP popular support during the Chinese Civil War and Second Sino-Japanese War.

⁴² “Asia's boardroom brass: Armies are in business all over East Asia. But they are being asked to beat a slow retreat,” Jul 8th 1999, The Economist, <http://www.economist.com/node/323260>

Jintao administrations in order to demonstrate Beijing's growing prioritization of domestic non-combat operations in the 21st century.

What Are China's Twenty-First Century Non-Combat Military Operations?

Non-combat operations in different forms have expanded rapidly during both the Jiang and Hu leadership administrations as a result of unprecedented internal and external security challenges in the 21st century. Precise definitions of modern non-combat operations vary, however most observers agree that these activities, also known as Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), are responses to the wide array of nontraditional security challenges that militaries throughout the world are facing in the 21st century.⁴³

In 1993 the United States Armed Forces first created the term "Military Operations Other Than War,"⁴⁴ shortly after military officials began to realize that many UN peacekeeping missions often involved types of military intervention not directly related to actual war.⁴⁵ Non-combat operations differ from war operations in that the former are aimed at deterring war and promoting peace and stability, while war refers to larger-scale combat objectives designed to protect basic national interests such as survival and sovereignty. According to official U.S. military doctrine, such operations may include "humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, some nation assistance, foreign internal defense, most support to counterdrug operations, arms control, support to US

⁴³ Numerous instances of bilateral and multilateral coordination in non-combat missions by states throughout the world in a variety of settings reflect the common belief that states, interdependent and connected to the global economy as never before, are facing non-traditional threats to their national interests. See, for example, joint anti-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa. "Piracy and armed robbery against ships," *International Maritime Organization*, 2011, <http://www.imo.org/OurWork/Security/PiracyArmedRobbery/Pages/Default.aspx>

⁴⁴ "Military History Operations," Department of the Army, Field Manual No. 1-20, August 2003, <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm1-20.pdf>

⁴⁵ Hugh Segal, *Geopolitical Integrity*, Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP), 2005, pp 275

civil authorities, evacuation of noncombatants in a permissive environment, and peacekeeping.”⁴⁶

Since 2000 the PLA has published its own official definitions of nontraditional uses of military force. The PLA’s official definition of non-combat operations is similar to that of the United States. In Chinese, the term for MOOTW translates literally to “Non-war military operations” (非战争军事行动). This term is potentially misleading because there are countless types of activities that militaries carry out not directly related to combat. For example, both the work of PLA “literary reporters” who wrote stories of battle during the Sino-Japanese Wars and Chinese Civil War, as well as that of modern PLA dance troupes, are indeed non-combat military activities.

This paper discusses Chinese non-combat operations as defined in recent PLA official statements, which are essentially new forms of the PLA’s longstanding non-war role in Chinese society. China’s 2008 National Defense White Paper referred to “Military Operations Other Than War” (MOOTW), and in January 2009 the PLA released a plan for “building non-combat military operation ability” (军队非战争军事行动能力建设规划). These documents laid out six chief forms of non-combat operations: Combating terrorism and safeguarding stability (反恐维稳), disaster relief (抢险救灾), safeguarding rights and interests (维护权益), security and protection (安报警戒), international peacekeeping (国际维和), and international search and rescue (国际救援).⁴⁷ These primary non-combat missions have been reiterated by PLA leadership, notably in General

⁴⁶ “Military History Operations.”

⁴⁷ Wu Tianmin [武天敏] and Han Guoxian [韩国贤], “全军和武警部队 2008 年以来遂行非战争军事行动任务综述,” [Quanjun he wujing budui 2008nian yilai suixing feizhanzheng junshi xingdong renwu zongshu][Summary of the responsibilities of the entire military and armed police force in carrying out non-combat operations since 2008], 解放军报[Jiefangjun bao][PLA Daily], May 9, 2011, http://chn.chinamil.com.cn/wy/2011-09/05/content_4672769.htm

Xu Caihou's address at the Center for Strategic International Studies in October 2009.⁴⁸

The growing importance attached to these specific non-combat operations has been reflected by high degree of legal development witnessed in the past decade.

Institutionalization of China's Modern Non-Combat Activities

Roughly coinciding with the PLA's highly publicized official exit from private commercial activities in 1998, a series of regulations (条例) were promulgated that partially delineated the function of China's armed forces with regard to non-combat operations, the first such publications in PLA history.⁴⁹ Each of these directives emphasize that PLA non-combat operations are an expansion of PLA responsibilities indispensable for confronting modern, non-traditional security challenges. Moreover, the formalization of Chinese non-combat operations over the last decade has signaled two notable shifts: the underlying transition from political- and economic-based non-combat activities to operations more directly linked to national security, and the growing official prioritization of domestic non-combat operations as core military stratagem by Beijing's twenty-first century leaders.

As Chairman of the CMC, Jiang Zemin played a paramount role in shifting the focus of PLA non-combat operations towards achieving national security objectives. An August 2001 document titled "Outline of Military Training and Evaluation" (军事训练与考核大纲)⁵⁰ introduced the term "Non-combat operations" for the first time in PLA

⁴⁸ "Statesmen's Forum: General Xu Caihou," Center for Strategic International Studies, Monday, October 26, 2009, <http://csis.org/event/statesmens-forum-general-xu-caihou> Video available at, (English: "The routine and constant missions for the military are tasks that involve counter-terrorism, disaster relief, peace keeping, protection of rights and interests, international search and rescue/international relief, as well as security and protection.") "养兵千日、用兵千日" <http://www.kouyi.org/speech/930.html> 11:00-11:35 for Chinese, 11:36-12:25

⁴⁹ Frederic Vellucci, "Recent Trends in PLA Navy Training and Education," Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission "The Implications of China's Naval Modernization for the United States", June 11, 2009, 2 http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2009hearings/written_testimonies/09_06_11_wrts/09_06_11_vellucci_statement.pdf

⁵⁰ "People's Liberation Army Air Force 2010," National Air & Space Intelligence Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, 61, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/nasic/pla_af_2010.pdf

history, and signaled the arrival of a new era for the non-combat operations of China's Armed Forces.⁵¹ This new era refers to the first time that operations such as disaster relief, public security and counterterrorism were legally incorporated into the mission statement of the military. One year later in September 2002, the CMC published "People's Liberation Army Military Training Regulations" (中国人民解放军军事训练条例) that demarcated the scope of military non-combat activities to primarily include disaster relief and social stability maintenance, and was also apparently the first time that disaster relief procedures were included in PLA training programs, reflecting the PLA's renewed focus on non-combat operations.⁵² These formal directives provided a limited degree of clarity and, more importantly, a valuable ideological platform based on enhancing the military's non-war duties for further legalization and specification of non-combat operations during the Hu administration.

PLA non-combat operations have flourished during the Hu Administration as a key component of his ideological paradigm "Scientific Development" (科学发展观), a military grand strategy that has functionally extended and developed Jiang's "Winning local wars under high-tech conditions" security paradigm.⁵³ Viewed as Hu's major contribution to PLA doctrine, "Scientific Development" ideology stems from Hu's assessment that China's internal and external security challenges have changed and continue to change in nature, and that diverse operations and high levels of technology

⁵¹ "解放军将按新的军事训练与考核大纲施训," [Jiefangjun jiang anxin de junshi xunlian yu kaohe dagang shixun][PLA to follow new military training and evaluation outline for initiating training] 新华网 [Xinhuaawang][Xinhua News Online], August 10, 2001, <http://news.sohu.com/21/12/news146191221.shtml>

⁵² Liu Chunjing[刘春靖], "《中国人民解放军军事训练条例》发布施行," [《Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi xunlian tiaoli》fabu shixing][Regulations on Military Training of the PLA] 新华社 [Xinhuashe][Xinhua News Agency], September 11, 2002, <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/shizheng/16/20020911/820467.html>

⁵³ Dr. Alexander Chieh-cheng Huang, "Chapter Six: Transformation and Refinement of Chinese Military Doctrine: Reflection and Critique on the PLA's View," in James Mulvenon and Andrew Yang, ed., Seeking Truth From Facts: A Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era, RAND Corporation, 2001, 131-140, http://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF160/CF160.ch6.pdf

are needed in order for nations to properly adapt to modern security challenges. Following Hu's New Historic Missions Campaign (新世纪, 新阶段我军的历史使命) which was announced in 2004, non-combat operations have been increasingly institutionalized within the framework of "diversified military tasks,"⁵⁴ a term introduced at the National People's Congress in 2006. China's 2006 National Defense White Paper further fortified the theoretical foundation of Hu's diversified tasks campaign by accentuating the increasingly daunting diversity of PLA security challenges.⁵⁵ The amount of text used to discuss these trends specifically with regards to non-combat operations has since increased in both China's 2008 and 2010 National Defense White Papers, indicating the high levels of attention that non-combat operations are receiving in the most powerful decision-making circles in China.⁵⁶

Domestic Non-Combat Operations Growth Indicators: Literature, Budget and Geographic Scope

Rising volumes of media and academic coverage of non-combat operations in the 21st century further bolster the assertion that non-combat operations are growing in importance in the eyes of China's central leadership. According to a 2011 article by noted PLA scholar Taylor Fravel, the number of articles in "PLA Daily (人民日报) explicitly mentioning the term "Non-Combat Operations" (非战争军事行动) has skyrocketed since 2008. PLA Daily, the PLA's mouthpiece newspaper, began reporting on non-combat operations in the mid-1990s, and annual mentions of non-combat operations have

⁵⁴ "忠实履行新世纪新阶段我军的历史使命," [Zhongshi lvxing xinshiji xinjieduan wojun de lishi shiming][Loyally Carry Out the Army's Historical Mission in the New Period of the New Century] 解放军报 [Jiefangjun bao][PLA Daily], March 15, 2005, http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2005-03/15/content_2698194.htm

⁵⁵ "China's National Defense in 2006," The Information Office of the State Council, December 29, 2006, full text available at http://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2006-12/29/content_486759.htm

⁵⁶ China's National Defense White papers are available at <http://www.china.org.cn/e-white/index.htm>

averaged well over 200 since 2008 after previously hovering between 0 and 10 per year.⁵⁷ Of course, an important reason for this spike is the numerous events requiring military non-combat intervention such as the Wenchuan Earthquake and snowstorms across China, as well as the Beijing Olympics that took place in 2008, a year dubbed by Senior Colonel Li Daguang as the PLA's "Year of the MOOTW."⁵⁸

Considerably less accessible than official publication statistics, public data on China's detailed budgetary allocations for non-combat operations are mostly non-existent. China reports a military budget annually that many analysts believe to be considerably less than actual expenditures.⁵⁹ Regardless of the actual number, the growing ratio between domestic security spending and the military budget suggest that a growing portion of security resources are being used to address internal issues.⁶⁰ In early 2012 it was announced that the estimated public security budget would reach an all-time high at \$112.5b, roughly \$5b more than the \$106.4b military budget, marking the second consecutive year public security has outweighed military spending.⁶¹ While specific budgetary allocations for various PLA and PAP activities are unavailable, it's discernible from official aggregate data that China's internal security resource burden is swelling, particularly since 2008.

⁵⁷ Taylor Fravel, "Economic Growth, Regime Insecurity, and Military Strategy: Explaining the Rise of Noncombat Operations in China," *Asian Security*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2011, pp. 177–200,

<http://taylorfravel.com/documents/research/fravel.2011.AS.noncombat.operations.pdf>

⁵⁸ David Lai, "Chapter One: Introduction," in Roy Kamphausen et al., *The PLA at Home and Abroad: Assessing the Operational Capabilities of China's Military* (Strategic Studies Institute, June 2010), 21,

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/FILES/PUB995.pdf>:

⁵⁹ Andrew Erickson, "Chinese Defense Expenditures: Implications for Naval Modernization," The Jamestown Foundation, China Brief Volume: 10 Issue: 8, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=36267](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36267)

⁶⁰ According to PLA expert Dennis Blasko, China's public security budget includes, "funding for the police, "state security," PAP, courts and prison system at the national and local levels of government throughout China." See Dennis Blasko, "Politics and the PLA: Securing Social Stability," China Brief Volume: 12 Issue: 7, March 30, 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=39208](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=39208)

⁶¹ Ananth Krishnan, "China boosts security budget to fight 'local wars'," The Hindu, March 6, 2012, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article2964442.ece>

In addition to increased official publicity and financial resources, data available on the geographic scope of PLA non-combat missions has been rapidly expanding during the Hu Jintao administration. Most observers are familiar with the PLA's international non-combat operations such as anti-piracy escort task forces off the coast of Somalia and the Indian Ocean, emergency evacuation of Chinese citizens in foreign countries, as well as the PLA's role in UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO). However, as Figure Two demonstrates using official data from China's most recent National Defense White Paper, practically all of the Chinese military's non-combat missions are in fact domestic in nature. Indeed, since 1990, over 99% of PLA troops used in non-combat missions have been deployed on Chinese soil.⁶² While it can be argued that anti-piracy escorts, foreign evacuations of Chinese citizens and UNPKO all have used advanced technology not used in domestic operations, the overwhelming ratio of manpower used in domestic and international non-combat missions is undeniable. Moreover, as China's economy becomes more dependent on stable international trade, it is not difficult to argue that international non-combat operations are increasingly tied to domestic security objectives.⁶³

Figure Two: Sample of Modern PLA Non-Combat Activities: Domestic vs. International

Activity	Number of PLA/PAP Troops Used	Time Frame
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⁶² Taylor Fravel, "Why 'Non-Combat' PLA Operations Are Vital for China's Regime Stability," *GlobalAsia*, Volume 2, Number 6, June 2011, http://www.globalasia.org/V6N2_Summer_2011/M_Taylor_Fravel.html

⁶³ "Economic Growth, Regime Insecurity, and Military Strategy," 177-182.

Domestic Disaster Relief	1.845 million ⁶⁴	2009-2010
International UN Peacekeeping	17,390	1990-2010
International Disaster Relief	630	2000-2010
International Anti-Piracy Missions in Gulf of Aden	6,160	2008-2010

Source: China's National Defense in 2010 White Paper; Taylor Fravel, "Why 'Non-Combat' PLA Operations Are Vital for China's Regime Stability" *GlobalAsia*, Volume 6, Number 2, June 2011, http://www.globalasia.org/V6N2_Summer_2011/M_Taylor_Fravel.html

To summarize, the nature of Chinese military non-combat operations has gradually evolved towards a national security-centric set of activities. The non-combat operations of China's military are clearly domestically oriented based on available data on official media, academic publications, financial resources and statistics on operations. Since 2000, the perceived significance of these missions by the Party and PLA has been reflected through growth in legal institutions, media coverage and budgetary allocations for non-combat operations. The next chapter analyzes socioeconomic, civil-military and historical trends in post-reform China that help explain the growth of China's domestic non-combat operations in the 21st century beyond the simple explanation of post-reform economic growth.

⁶⁴ It should further be noted that troop deployments are only one aspect of China's recent disaster relief efforts. According to China's 2010 National Defense White Paper, "In the past two years, the PLA and PAPF have engaged a total of 1.845 million troop deployments and 790,000 deployments of vehicles or machines of various types, flown over 181 sorties (including the use of helicopters), organized 6.43 million militiamen and reservists, participated in disaster relief operations in cases of floods, earthquakes, droughts, typhoons and forest fires, rescued or evacuated a total of 1.742 million people, rush-transported 303,000 tons of goods, dredged 3,742 km of waterways, dug 4,443 wells, fortified 728 km of dikes and dams, and delivered 504,000 tons of domestic water." See "China's National Defense in 2010," Information Office of the State Council, The People's Republic of China, Beijing, March 2011, full text available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-03/31/c_13806851.htm

Chapter 2: Internal Drivers of PLA Non-Combat Operations in Post-Reform China

This chapter analyzes post-reform China in three intertwined dimensions to help explain the recent surge of domestic non-combat operations discussed in the previous chapters. First, systemic socioeconomic tensions resulting from economic reform, such as regional and local income inequality and high levels of corruption, have increased domestic unrest and as a result have placed heavier domestic security burdens on the PAP and PLA. Second, military modernization since the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests has isolated the army from the people as the military has become more professional, a departure from Mao's traditional multi-tasking People's Army strategy, prompting Beijing to use disaster relief and other non-combat missions as channels for bolstering the PLA's image as a people-centric army, yet again rebranding the tradition of an army "serving the people." Third, the CCP's historical role reversal and transition to a policing enforcer of the status quo has been harmful to founding revolutionary CCP and PLA values, further signaling a departure from the founding tradition of the PLA as an army "Serving the people" and pressing Beijing to use non-combat missions to reinforce traditional Communist and PLA values in an unprecedented national security backdrop. The persistence and intensification of these trends are continuously expanding the domestic role of the armed forces.

"Unintended" Socioeconomic Challenges of Post-Reform Economic Growth

Three decades of economic reform have helped restore China's status as one of the largest, most technologically sophisticated economies in the world, a position it

enjoyed prior to the industrial revolutions in Western Europe and the United States.⁶⁵ However, the socioeconomic ramifications of China's remarkable economic transformation must not be overlooked, particularly when discussing Chinese military development. Economic liberalization has created innumerable outlets for corruption and exploitation, and has fueled extreme inequality at both regional and community levels. As these patterns intensify, social unrest in China has continuously mounted, and in many cases has had negative consequences for popular support of the government. Rising social tensions are leading to more protests, and as a result, the military is devoting a growing share of its resources to public security and domestic stability maintenance.

These undesirable ramifications of economic growth are certainly not a phenomenon unique to post-reform China. Samuel Huntington posited in 1968 that modernization "contributes to corruption by creating new sources of wealth and power, the relation of which to politics is undefined by the dominant traditional norms of the society and on which the modern norms are not yet accepted by the dominant groups within the society."⁶⁶ While her historically unparalleled economic boom since 1978 is typically extolled by Chinese and Western observers alike, China's growth has, similar to that of many emerging economies in history, created immense potential for domestic insecurity. This somewhat counterintuitive phenomenon of growth followed by domestic instability has already been documented as a key driver of China's growing non-combat operations by MIT scholar Taylor Fravel, who notes that for China, unintended growth consequences in the form of "internal migration, urbanization, income inequality, and

⁶⁵ Carl Dahlman and Jean-Eric Aubert, "China and the Knowledge Economy: Seizing the 21st Century," World Bank Publications, September 2001, xv.

⁶⁶ Samuel Huntington, "Political Order in Changing Societies," Yale University Press, 1968, 61.

corruption” all represent potential threats to CCP legitimacy.⁶⁷ Non-combat operations related to domestic unrest, such as social stability maintenance, have major implications for the image of the PLA and the legitimacy of the Party.

Perhaps the most frequently cited statistic on post-reform socioeconomic tensions, China’s Gini coefficient was reported to be .46 in March 2012, significantly higher than its pre-reform level of .302 in 1978.⁶⁸ While relatively low compared to other developing countries, this signals a definite increase in overall inequality in China.⁶⁹ Additionally, analysts frequently note enormous growth in internal people migration and unemployment, as well as China’s recent emphasis on investment-driven growth, as sources of vulnerability that could derail China’s national economic growth.⁷⁰ Besides these widely studied topics, local inequality and corruption are fueling social unrest throughout China, two interrelated forces that this chapter examines in more detail given their nationwide prevalence and persistence throughout the reform era.

Inequality does not simply exist between coastal and rural China, but also persists at the local level throughout the country and is fueled by local corruption. Market reforms have created enormous opportunities for distortion by local cadres in townships and

⁶⁷ Taylor Fravel, “Explaining the Rise of China’s Noncombat Operations,” *Asian Security*, <http://taylorfravel.com/documents/research/fravel.2011.AS.noncombat.operations.pdf> 180-181; Also see Huntington 63-65; An important caveat to Fravel’s analysis is the assertion that as China’s growth becomes more dependent on the world economy, developments outside of China increasingly exert influence on the CCP’s legitimacy, which is intimately linked to economic growth. As such, China’s foreign policy may indeed be increasingly designed to maintain stability of China’s overseas interests which have direct implications for China’s domestic security environment. In the context of this paper, this assertion means that aside from China’s overwhelming share of domestic non-combat operations, it can be argued that even international PLA non-combat missions are increasingly “domestically centered” in the sense that they are designed to preserve the stability of China’s external economic interests and resultant domestic legitimacy of the Party. As Fravel notes, maintaining military units with moderate projection capabilities in areas of economic interest that can carry out non-combat operations, and in some cases simply “show the flag,” are vital for ensuring the stability of China’s international trade. This is especially relevant in and around critical sea lines of communication (SLOC) such as the Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Mekong River Delta, where existing state and regional security apparatus are typically unable to uphold secure passage and where China’s Armed Forces have been active in recent years.

⁶⁸ Peter Hirschberg, “China’s Bo Signals Wealth Gap Breached Unrest Trigger Point,” *Bloomberg*, March 9, 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-03-09/china-s-gini-coefficient-exceeds-trigger-for-unrest-chongqing-s-bo-says.html>; The GINI coefficient is widely-used measure of inequality within a sample distribution, such as a set of incomes. A coefficient of 0 represents perfect equality, while a coefficient of 1 represents complete inequality.

⁶⁹ “Economic Growth, Regime Insecurity, and Military Strategy,” 182.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

municipalities throughout China. Vertically decentralizing power from the central government to local subordinates has allowed local officials to mobilize their own resources through “extrabudgetary” and “self-raised” funds in the form of informal fees. Local governments can arbitrarily impose fines and fees, and local leaders are often judged by to what extent they can raise local revenue through these channels.⁷¹

Post-reform rent-seeking through the use of informal taxes and fees in China is not a new phenomenon and has been a severe problem for the CCP since the 1980s. Beijing has instituted national anti-corruption campaigns throughout the past thirty years. In 1982 the CCP Central Committee (中国共产党中央委员会) publicly acknowledged the severity of economic corruption since reforms when it published *Cracking Down on Serious Criminal Activities in the Economic Arena*.⁷² In 1985, *The People’s Daily* newspaper, a mouthpiece of the CCP, published the first major article detailing a high profile corruption case.⁷³ Many anti-corruption agencies have been set up over the last thirty years, and by 1996 there were over 1500 organizations aimed at fighting corruption in China.

But while the central government has poured resources into corruption crackdowns, such measures are still unable to penetrate into local agencies where the bulk of corruption actually occurs. Beijing’s regulations have become more meticulous, but local officials continue to disregard anti-corruption legislation by utilizing traditional and informal mediums. This phenomenon has been officially referred to as “Where there is an order, there is no implementation; where there is a ban, there is still the prohibited

⁷¹ Thomas Bernstein and Xiaobo Lü, “Taxation Without Representation in Rural China,” Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, 84-88

⁷² *Ibid.*, 192.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 204.

practice” (有令不行、有禁不止). Another colloquial phrase to describe opposition to corruption by local officials is “Where there is a policy from higher authorities, there is a counter-policy from local authorities” (上有政策, 下有对策). When faced with these monitoring campaigns, local leaders often engage in “corruption protectionism,” or the process of foiling corruption investigations against their own workers. The utter lack of cooperation and, at times, downright resistance to Beijing’s policies reflects the underlying incentive misalignment that exists between central and local government in China. While the former wants to maintain popular support of the masses, the latter is better off by exploiting peasants for personal benefit.⁷⁴

In recent years land acquisition disputes, another medium of exploitation and corruption by local officials, have spread throughout China and intensified social unrest as a result.⁷⁵ Like informal taxation, “land grabs” are also a form of local corruption brought on by China’s economic reforms, which created enormous incentives for rent-seeking in the form of forcing peasant sales of farmland in return for meager compensation packages. After seizing land, local officials reclassify the land as commercial real estate and sell it to developers.⁷⁶ Forced relocation into new housing as a result of property confiscation also strokes contempt for local government. A crucial caveat to land disputes in China is the growing resentment over the negative implications for local communities as a result of environmental degradation from development. Public unrest over environmental issues has amplified significantly in the 21st century not only in high-polluting urban centers, but also in rural areas where distraught citizens

⁷⁴ “Cadres and Corruption,” 210.

⁷⁵ Sisi Tang “China land grab disputes spread west, hit new high,” Reuters, October 30, 2011 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/10/31/us-china-unrest-idUSTRE79U0B620111031>

⁷⁶ Austrevicius, Petras, and John Boozman, Co-Rapporteurs. “172 Escter 06 E – China’s Development Challenge.” *NATO Committee Reports*. 2006 Annual Session. <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1001>.

increasingly take matters into their own hands via public petition (上访), public protest and strikes. In 2005 environment-related mass incidents increased by over 25%.⁷⁷

China's systemic instability issues are aggravated in areas with distinct regional and/or demographic features. The most notorious example is that of China's buffer regions in western and northern China. In such areas economic challenges such as local corruption are aggravated by ethnic conflicts between Han Chinese, China's majority ethnic group, and ethnic minorities such as Tibetans and Uighurs.⁷⁸ These widely covered instances of unrest have been the most violent and largest in scale in recent years, highlighting the fact that in addition to nationwide corruption and local governance issues, complex regional characteristics compound security challenges in Chinese society.

Post-Tiananmen Military Modernization

In the context of non-combat operations, Chinese military modernization has also had what can be deemed "unintended consequences," most of which have surfaced during the Jiang and Hu administrations and have contributed to a growing rift between the army and Chinese society. First, post-Tiananmen military modernization has occurred within a civil-military paradigm roughly similar to Samuel Huntington's concept known as "objective control." In addition to major shifts in civil-military relations, the structural modernization of the PLA and consecutive decades of relative peace have challenged the traditional image of China's armed forces by decreasing the

⁷⁷ Ma Tianjie, "Environmental Mass Incidents in Rural China: Examining Large-Scale Unrest in Dongyang, Zhejiang," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, China Environment Series*. 2008-2009. 33-34, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/ma_feature_ces10.pdf.

⁷⁸ Harold Tanner, "Chapter Six: The People's Liberation Army and China's Internal Security Challenges," in *The PLA at Home and Abroad: Assessing the Operational Capabilities of China's Military*, ed. David Lai et al., (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), 258.

degree of interaction between the army and Chinese society as the PLA focuses more on sophisticated naval, air force, missile, space and cyber warfare development. As official statements and publications show, non-combat operations such as disaster relief and humanitarian assistance are viewed as critical mediums for filling this gap by rebranding the PLA's image as a multitasking army serving the Chinese people in various capacities during the 21st century.

As Chinese civil-military scholar Nan Li has pointed out, a major reason that the PLA ultimately intervened on June 4 was because of Deng Xiaoping's strong military credentials and relationships with high-ranking officers. In the post-Deng era, Chinese leaders have been wary of a potentially disastrous loyalty crisis that could arise from a future large-scale protest and polarize the Party and the people.⁷⁹ PLA scholars such as Andrew Scobell have noted that China's most recent paramount leaders, Jiang and Hu, have been civil technocrats with much less credibility in military circles than their predecessors Mao and Deng.⁸⁰ To ensure the PLA's loyalty to the Party and minimize the probability that the PLA will have to choose between the Party and the people, Jiang and Hu adopted a civil-military strategy resembling Samuel Huntington's concept of "objective control" which aims to control the army by professionalizing it and confining it to specialized military tasks.⁸¹ In the context of modern Chinese civil-military relations, objective control refers to "enhancing civilian governance, thus the CCP's legitimacy to rule, and endorsing programs that confine the PLA to its military-technical

⁷⁹ However, Xi Jinping, pegged as the next Chairman of the CCP Central Committee set to take over during the 2012 political turnover, has considerable clout in the military relative to Jiang and Hu.; See Dennis Blasko, "Servant of Two Masters: The People's Liberation Army, the People, and the Party," in *Chinese Civil Military Relations; The Transformation of the People's Liberation Army* (Asian Security Studies).

⁸⁰ Andrew Scobell, "Is There a Civil-Military Gap in China's Peaceful Rise?" *Parameters*, Vol. XXXIX, no. 2 (Summer 2009), 7-14, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/parameters/Articles/09summer/scobell.pdf>.

⁸¹ Samuel Huntington, "The Soldier and the State: the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations," Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957, 83-84.

and external tasks.”⁸² It also implies a decrease in China’s traditional, post-reform non-combat operations heavily rooted in domestic social and political work. Somewhat counterintuitively, however, civil-military policies of Jiang and Hu have helped drive the growth in 21st century non-combat operations, which are fundamentally different than the PLA’s twentieth-century domestic non-combat duties.

Indeed, objective control has effectively shrunk the traditional non-combat role of the PLA by excluding it from both domestic security and economic production activities.⁸³ The visible manifestation of objective control has been structural military specialization. In 1995, the principle of “preparing for local war under high-tech conditions” from 1993 was formally instituted into a policy of transforming the manpower-based PLA to a technology-based military. Jiang reinforced this shift in 1997 by introducing “leapfrogging development,” which emphasized the “informatization” of the military and converging with more advanced foreign militaries. In 2002, the PLA was downsized by 500,000 troops as a result of the shift to technology-intensive development.

Recent policies and resultant troop reductions reflect the specialization of the military that has occurred during both the Jiang and Hu eras. Specialization, Li notes, has also erected barriers between the PLA and domestic social issues. PLA ground forces, likely the units that would participate in mass incident management, have suffered the brunt of cutbacks as technology-intensive sectors such as the People’s Liberation Army

⁸² Nan Li, “Chinese Civil Military Relations in the Post-Deng Era,” U.S. Naval War College, China Maritime Studies, Number 4, January 2011, 12-14 <http://www.usnwc.edu/Research---Gaming/China-Maritime-Studies-Institute/Publications/documents/China-Maritime-Study-No-4-January-2010.aspx>.

⁸³ In fact, following turbulent socialist decades that saw the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, the CCP’s shift towards “economic growth at any cost” is largely the result of major doctrinal shifts after 1989 that called for military professionalism. For example, Jiang eradicated post-Tiananmen policies of military control and ideological indoctrination, replacing them with economic growth-based initiatives, during the Fourteenth CCP Congress in 1992. The policies aimed to transfer the weight of CCP legitimacy away from repressive military and ideological control by pegging legitimacy to economic indicators such as income, living standards and employment, and effectively pushing the military further away from everyday Chinese society.

Navy (PLAN), People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and Second Artillery have received major boosts in funding.⁸⁴ As PLA analyst Frank Miller asserts, modernization fundamentally changed the PLA's functional role in society, and "the PLA is not as close to the people as it once was and still claims to be."⁸⁵ Given the high level of military specialization that has occurred in the post-Deng era under Jiang and Hu, the day-to-day relationship between PLA soldiers and Chinese society has changed dramatically since the late 1990s. And given the intimate historical relationship between PLA soldiers and Chinese citizens, it is as such critical that the PLA finds new ways to effectively maintain its image as an army for the people in a security environment where China's military and civilians are increasingly estranged. Contemporary non-combat missions such as disaster relief and humanitarian assistance are often the only channels for the military to project this image, particularly in areas with poor infrastructure and formidable geographic terrain, which also happen to be where most of China's natural disasters occur.

In addition to objective control policies, a relative lack of external security threats, particularly since the Cold War, have aligned the CCP's and PLA's incentives for scaling up domestic non-combat operations. Since 1979, China has enjoyed relative peace and has avoided entanglement in major conflict, and vulnerability to external security threats decreased even more following the collapse of the Soviet Union and a general cooling of tensions among states worldwide.⁸⁶ While Beijing has confined the PLA to military tasks to avoid a loyalty crisis, both CCP and PLA leadership have the incentive to maintain the

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Frank Miller, "Chapter Two: Changing the Landscape of Civil-Military Relations in China: The PLA Responds to Recruiting and Retention Challenges," in Andrew Scobell and Larry Wortzell, Ed., *Shaping China's Security Environment: The Role of the People's Liberation Army*, Strategic Studies Institute, October 2006, pp 30, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub413.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Of course, a strong argument can be made that China's relative "lack" of external security threats is also the result of China's well-known non-interference (互不干涉) foreign relations policy. However, this paper is not interested in the reasons for China's external security environment but rather its implications for the military's relationship with domestic society.

PLA's operational capacity in order to safeguard their respective interests. Non-combat operations provide excellent opportunities for doing this for many otherwise idle PLA units, and as a result, the military has enlarged the scope of its non-combat duties both within China and internationally.⁸⁷ Thus in order to maintain capacity despite limited external security threats, while also reaffirming the PLA's image throughout the country, twenty-first century non-combat missions have flourished as a convenient intersection of CCP and PLA interests.

Amidst monumental civil-military shifts, a larger role in domestic non-combat operations such as disaster relief operations has provided a golden opportunity to fill the void between the PLA and the people created over the past twenty years. The PLA's emphasis on creating and maintaining a favorable reputation and image in Chinese society, particularly during the post-Tiananmen era, is an important reason why PLA disaster relief efforts have been scaled up. Moreover, non-combat operations often represent an area where the incentives of China's civil and military leaders are in line, since activities such as disaster relief enhance domestic stability while also allowing the PLA and PAP to remain active during times of otherwise idleness.

Post-Reform Historical Shifts

Another dimension of PLA non-combat operations involves broader historical changes to both the CCP's and military's role in Chinese society. The CCP's military arm, the Red Army, amassed widespread support of the Chinese people by liberating them from various types of oppression during the first half of the 20th century. Since 2000, however, the military has frequently been tasked with managing situations of

⁸⁷ Especially in domestic sectors like disaster relief where social institutions are not developed enough to deal with problems otherwise.

internal disorder, involving both ethnic Han Chinese and Chinese minority groups. Traditional PLA principles such as dedication and loyalty to common Chinese people are being put into question as a result of the military's transition towards a policing role in China. While the PLA attempts to minimize its operations in this field, preferring to defer to the PAP, the negative implications of this historical role reversal are helping drive growth in other types of non-combat missions such as disaster relief, where participation contributes to the traditional image of the military through on-site operations and the accompanying nationwide media campaigns that have been witnessed during recent disaster relief operations such as the Wenchuan Earthquake in 2008 and Zhouqu mudslides in 2010.⁸⁸

The relationship between the CCP and Chinese society was forged in an era of turbulence and violence. During the period between the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 and Communist victory in 1949, Chinese citizens endured decades of warlord factionalism, civil war, and war against Japanese invaders. During this period, the CCP established itself as a revolutionary political party strongly opposed to the feudalistic landlord system that persecuted millions of Chinese peasants. They also built up popular support by vehemently denouncing intrusion in China by foreign invaders, particularly Japan.

Other than contempt for intrusion by foreign militaries such as Japan, steep taxes were primary causes of mass unrest, just as they are in modern agricultural rural China. Widespread inequality between landowners and poor peasants fostered exploitative

⁸⁸ The role of PLA and PAP units in the aftermath of recent natural disasters in China has received enormous media coverage in China as well as considerable popular support. For example, see, "PLA brigade awarded for earthquake, mudslide rescues," Xinhua News Agency, November 25, 2011, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90786/7657031.html>.

practices such as rent seeking and bribery. As the non-ruling revolutionary political party, the CCP did not have to feed entire cities until 1948, and was thus well-positioned to appeal to the peasantry by advocating for land reform.⁸⁹ These sentiments transformed into immensely powerful social and nationalistic forces that forged an intimate bond between the CCP and China's masses. Whereas the CCP was an ardent supporter of peasant revolt against oppressive landlords in pre-revolutionary China and for much of the Mao era, today brutal exploitation of peasants by local CCP cadres is viewed as the primary ill in rural Chinese society.

Just as in pre-Communist China, local political systems in place in the post-reform era are increasingly incapable of protecting the interests of the peasants. This reality is the manifestation of the awkward role reversal of the CCP that has taken place locally since economic reforms, worsening significantly in the 21st century. Indeed, a role reversal has gradually taken shape in China, where local CCP officials increasingly exploit lower-class Chinese citizens who lack access to reliable legal systems, rather than helping to liberate peasants from oppressive local rulers as Communist revolutionaries did against landlords in the 20th century. This "reversal" has a major caveat, however, which is that it is only taking place at the local level, as Beijing is emphatic about its support for the exploited masses. Unlike in 20th century China, protests against local exploitation and corruption have been largely confined to fighting for rights locally rather than calling for revolutionary political upheaval. Regardless, the CCP increasingly finds itself in an awkward position, particularly as this reversal matures and becomes more visible to increasingly capable lower-class citizens, compounded by the reality that

⁸⁹ Dupuy, Trevor N. (Trevor Nevitt), "The Military History of the Chinese Civil War" Littlehampton Book Services Ltd (1970): 65.

Beijing has largely failed in its attempts to control local exploitation and corruption. In this light, non-combat operations are viewed as vital for bolstering the Party's image as a government that cares about its citizens and thereby preventing protests from developing into challenges to CCP legitimacy.

Of course, peasant revolts in pre-communist China were revolutionary, organized and widespread, unlike those of today which are essentially village- and township- level protests. As both military and economic scholars have noted, village-level mass incidents in China to this point have been specific, concrete grievances with local officials rather than calls for broader political change. Further, there has been virtually no connectivity between rural and urban protests, reinforcing the above notion that protests are primarily locally based.⁹⁰

Nonetheless, the role reversal of local Party cadres from liberators to enforcers presents an undeniable historical paradox. While the CCP was once a medium for peasant revolt, today it is constantly attempting to eliminate channels for collective action and cooperation among distraught peasants. This has significant consequences for China's armed forces, which are increasingly tasked with suppressing protests by Chinese citizens as a result.

Moreover, while current protests largely target wrongdoings of local officials, even the CCP's most powerful leaders have publicly acknowledged that the worsening of post-reform economic trends may indeed prompt protestors to expand their demands and aim for broader political reform. This was highlighted during the closing meetings of the National People's Congress in early March 2012, when Vice Premier Wen Jiabao

⁹⁰ Lü, "Tax, Protest and (In)stability," 12.

passionately called for immediate, major structural political reforms and openly urged for the gradual adoption of direct elections in China at local and regional levels.⁹¹ Wen's statements, along with those of several other officials in recent months, reflect growing concern within Party circles that domestic unrest directed at local officials may evolve into broader discontent with China's political system and thereby harm CCP legitimacy if social imbalances are not addressed. While one consequence of this historical shift for non-combat operations is the increased role of the military in suppressing Chinese citizens, a second outcome is the need for the central government and armed forces to reassert their commitment to the Chinese people.

A trend towards protests calling for political change may already be emerging. Some observers have noted that in the past several years, many mass incidents in China have seemingly been "anger-venting" in nature and not necessarily organized around a specific grievance or legal complaint.⁹² This is especially relevant as the "masses" in modern China become more educated and technology-savvy. The advent of widespread internet use in rural China in recent years had provided a modern conduit for spreading news of social unrest almost instantaneously. Indeed, over 70% of China's internet users have either a high school degree or lower, suggesting not only that young people are one of the primary groups of internet users, but also that internet access has diffused rapidly in less developed areas throughout China.⁹³ As peasant competency of social media improves, so does the probability that news of a given mass incidence will reach neighboring towns and counties, raising the overall potential for inter-village

⁹¹ Jamil Anderlini, "Wen attacks Party Conservatives," *Financial Times*, March 14, 2012.

⁹² Will Freeman, "The Accuracy of China's 'Mass Incidents,'" *Financial Times*, March 2, 2010. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9ee6fa64-25b5-11df-9bd3-00144feab49a.html#axzz1bhytgNQN>.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Tong Yanqi and Lei Shaohua, "Creating Public Opinion Pressure in China: Large-Scale Internet Protest," EAI Background Brief No. 534, June 2010, 1-17, <http://www.eai.nus.edu.sg/BB534.pdf>.

coordination. This in particular makes effective management of mass incidents much more complex.

Amid repeatedly failed attempts to control corrupt behavior of local officials, non-combat operations allow Beijing to reinforce its commitment to the Chinese people, particularly in the countryside where the majority of both natural disasters and instances of unrest originate. Increasing domestic non-combat missions such as disaster relief and humanitarian assistance are seen as critical operations for maintaining the status quo, which is domestic unrest limited to concerns with local government rather than broader political change. These missions reinforce the notion that the central government is dedicated to the people, especially in rural areas, and especially in regions where PLA and PAP forces have been tasked with suppressing civil disorder.

To sum up, socioeconomic, military and historical changes are intimately connected to the domestic non-combat operation boom in twenty-first century China. Mounting internal unrest has elevated the domestic stability role of the armed forces, primarily in the form of suppressing mass incidents. This trend, coupled with China's military modernization since Tiananmen Square as well as the gradual role reversal of local CCP government units, have challenged the Party and army to find new ways to show their dedication to Chinese people. Given that the trends discussed within these three dimensions all appear to be growing, it is natural to posit that these domestic developments will serve as an increasingly heavy anchor for the domestic role of China's armed forces. The following two chapters detail two specific domestic non-combat operations, disaster relief and social stability maintenance, in order to provide a deeper

and more concrete understanding of two of China's primary twenty-first century non-combat operations and demonstrate the resource needs for improving these missions.

Chapter 3: The PLA's and PAP's Role in Domestic Disaster Relief

This chapter examines twenty-first century disaster relief operations in China to bolster the argument that domestic non-combat operations are growing in importance and that significant resources are still needed to enhance the effectiveness of such operations. I examine the PLA's historical role in disaster relief, explore current deficiencies in disaster relief operations and expound on the institutional roles of both the PAP and PLA⁹⁴ in order to demonstrate that the PLA is concerned with its image as an army “serving the people” in modern China.

Background and Historical Development

With a large area and diverse geographic features, China is particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. It has experienced a myriad of catastrophes since 2000 including floods, droughts, fires, landslides, typhoons and earthquakes, all of which have taken the lives of Chinese citizens. Three of the world's ten deadliest natural disasters in the last century have occurred on Chinese soil, and five of the ten all-time deadliest disasters in recorded history have been in China.⁹⁵ According to China's 2009 White Paper on Natural Disasters, over 70% of Chinese cities and over half of the Chinese population are located in regions with high incidences of earthquakes. Two thirds of China's land is vulnerable to flooding, while drought and heavy rains damaged many regions throughout China. The white paper asserts that natural disasters have affected 300 million per year

⁹⁴ Yu Jia [于嘉], “多样化军事任务≠非战争军事行动,” [Duoyanghua Junshi Renwu ≠ Feizhanzheng junshi xingdong][Diversified Military Tasks ≠ Non-Combat Operations], 中国军网 [Zhongguojunwang] [China Military Online], December 11, 2008, http://www.chinamil.com.cn/site1/zbxl/2008-12/11/content_1580605.htm.

⁹⁵ “The world's worst natural disasters: Calamities of the 20th and 21st centuries,” CBC News, August 30, 2010, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2008/05/08/f-natural-disasters-history.html>.

on average, while financial costs have risen above 200 billion yuan.⁹⁶ As economies throughout the world continue to emit greenhouse gases, problems associated with climate change may lead to more extreme weather irregularities and result in more natural disasters worldwide. Throughout history and for the foreseeable future, natural disasters constitute a serious threat to China's security.

The high frequency, intense scale and diverse nature of natural disasters in China makes national disaster preparation and management particularly difficult. This is exacerbated by the trend of natural disasters striking in relatively underdeveloped regions with limited transportation and social infrastructure, such as the 2010 earthquake in Yushu Country in Qinghai Province and mudslides in the Zhou Country of Gansu Province. Such areas, though less densely populated than China's eastern coastal regions, are home to millions of Chinese citizens, including Han Chinese and various ethnic minority groups.

According to official statistics, the PLA has carried out disaster relief operations over 420,000 times since 1949. These operations combined have deployed over 20 million soldiers and 100,000 air flights, and have evacuated over 12 million citizens.⁹⁷ The PLA assumed primary responsibility for disaster relief efforts in China during the time period between Communist victory in 1949 and Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in 1978 despite a lack of legal framework and effective coordination. Without explicit doctrine and laws governing the armed forces' role in emergency situations, disaster relief operations were carried out informally and without a central directive spelling out

⁹⁶ "China issues first disaster-relief white paper on quake anniversary," Xinhua News Agency, May 11, 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-05/11/content_11350759.htm.

⁹⁷ "PLA's Disaster Relief Works," 50.

objectives.⁹⁸ This lack of organization undoubtedly hindered national, regional and local coordination efforts, and likely undermined operational effectiveness. Despite institutional and, disaster relief was still viewed as a core responsibility of the military during the Mao era. In the immediate aftermath of the Tangshan earthquake, for example, PLA and PAP rescue units were dispatched in mass quantities tasked with "letting the people have hope for life and keeping danger of death for oneself."⁹⁹

The Tangshan Earthquake of 1976, one of the deadliest disasters of the 20th century, exemplifies the informal leadership role of the military in domestic disaster relief that existed long before disaster relief operations were institutionalized. In the summer of 1976, an Earthquake registering a 7.8 magnitude on the Richter scale struck Tangshan City in Hebei Province, killing over 240,000 people and leaving over half a million homeless. The central government dispatched over 110,000 soldiers from the Beijing and Shenyang Military Area Commands to direct relief efforts in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.¹⁰⁰ Aside from rescuing survivors trapped amid rubble and debris, the PLA was also responsible for restoring telecommunication lines between Tangshan and Beijing. It took responsibility for clearing highways and major roads in order to allow relief supplies, such as food and medicine, to be shipped into Tangshan. The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) played a crucial role in evacuation efforts, as it transported supplies and evacuated citizens with military planes from over twenty different airports around the country.¹⁰¹ Besides these core operations, the PLA contributed significantly

⁹⁸ Nirav Patel, "Chinese Disaster Relief Operations: Identifying Critical Capability Gaps," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Vol. 52, 2009, 111-117, <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=32688>.

⁹⁹ Wang Zixing, Cui Xifu and Liu Keren, "Chapter Six: Earthquake Relief and Reconstruction of Tangshan," in Liu Huixian, ed. (English editing by George Housner and He Dixin), *The Great Tangshan Earthquake of 1976*, Earthquake Engineering Research Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, Berkeley, California, 2002, 748. http://authors.library.caltech.edu/26539/1/Tangshan/Volume3_Chapter_6.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ "Earthquake Relief and Reconstruction of Tangshan," 749.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 752

to the longer-term recovery of Tangshan-- soldiers helped build temporary housing, directed traffic, rebuilt schools, and engaged in a variety of other longer-term activities. Though the effectiveness of the military's operations was likely subpar, Tangshan shows that the PLA and PAP were inherently responsible for taking care of Chinese citizens in times of need long before disaster relief laws were formally passed. Tangshan is evidence that the multifunctional nature of the military advocated by Mao was persistent throughout pre-reform China.

Disaster Relief Operations in the 21st Century

From 1990 to 2010 there have been over 100,000 occasions of disaster relief operations by the PLA and PAP.¹⁰² As of 2010, China has eight national-level emergency response agencies designed to coordinate reaction and relief efforts for various natural disasters.¹⁰³ This national emergency response mechanism is military-based (以军队力量为主体) and relies primarily on the armed forces for implementation. The establishment of this emergency management system was the first of such in CCP history.¹⁰⁴

During 2009 and 2010 alone, the PLA and PAP combined to dispatch over 1.8 million troops to participate in domestic disaster relief operations including floods,

¹⁰² "Lending a Helping Hand," 5.

<http://www.usafa.edu/df/inss/Research%20Papers/2009/LENDING%20A%20HELPING%20HAND%20THE%20PEOPLES%20LIBERATION%20ARMY%20AND%20HUMANITARIAN%20ASSISTANCE%20DISASTER%20RELIEF.pdf>.

¹⁰³ Sun Yanxin[孙彦新], "国防部: 军队年底将建成 8 支共 5 万人应急救援部队" [Guofangbu: Jundui niandi jiang jiancheng 8 zhi gong 5 wanren yingji jiuyuan budui] [Ministry of National Defense: Military will establish 8 emergency-response professional units with 50,000 troops by the end of year], 新华社 [Xinhuashe] [Xinhua News Agency], April 20, 2010, http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2010-04/20/content_1587746.htm.

¹⁰⁴ The 8 units are: "China formed eight state-level emergency-response professional units, boasting a total of 50,000 personnel, specializing in flood control and emergency rescue, earthquake rescue, nuclear, biological and chemical emergency rescue, urgent air transportation, rapid road repair, maritime emergency search and rescue, emergency mobile communication support, and medical aid and epidemic prevention." See, "China's armed forces important in disaster relief," Xinhua News Agency, March 31, 2011, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2011-03/31/content_12258002.htm; Sun Yanxin[孙彦新], "国防部: 军队年底将建成 8 支共 5 万人应急救援部队" [Guofangbu: Jundui niandi jiang jiancheng 8 zhi gong 5 wanren yingji jiuyuan budui] [Ministry of National Defense: Military will establish 8 emergency-response professional units with 50,000 troops by the end of year], 新华社 [Xinhuashe] [Xinhua News Agency], April 20, 2010, http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2010-04/20/content_1587746.htm.

earthquakes, typhoons, droughts and forest fires. These efforts are said to have evacuated nearly 2 million citizens, and have included activities such as transporting over 300,000 tons of goods, dredging nearly 2,500 miles of waterways, and delivering 500,000 tons of water.¹⁰⁵

Not only is the scope of China's armed forces' activities much larger within China than internationally, but the nature of such assistance is also fundamentally different than overseas efforts. The PLA, PAP and militia are referred to as a "shock force" (袭击力量) for domestic disaster relief. In addition to being the first line of help immediately after disasters, however, the military is also committed to longer objectives in areas hit by natural disasters. According to China's 2010 Defense White Paper, the military has constructed eight schools and a rehabilitation center in the earthquake-stricken provinces of Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu, reflecting the comprehensive and sustained role of the armed forces in disaster relief and recovery.¹⁰⁶ The larger scope and broader nature of domestic disaster relief are further reaffirmed by the myriad of legislation that has been published on domestic disaster relief since 2000. As Chinese media has frequently pointed out, the PLA's role in domestic disaster relief is inherently different than that of other militaries, such as the United States, in the sense that China views disaster relief as a core military duty.¹⁰⁷

Institutional Foundations of China's Twenty-First Century Disaster Relief

¹⁰⁵ "China's National Defense in 2010."

¹⁰⁶ "China issues first disaster-relief white paper." <http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/101380/9275185.html>.

¹⁰⁷ For example, see "比较中外军队救灾理念:中国军队用打仗心态救灾," [Bijiao zhongwai jundui jiuzai linian: Zhongguo jundui yong dazhang xintai jiuzai][Comparing the Concept of Disaster Relief Between China's Military and Foreign Militaries: China's Military Uses War Mentality] 北京晚报 [Beijing wanbao][Beijing Evening Newspaper], March 20, 2011, <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/sd/2011-03-20/144822148341.shtml>.

Conditions in 21st century China have made effective disaster relief operations even more critical, and China's demographic and geographic characteristics have enormous implications for the military's role in disaster relief.¹⁰⁸ While post-reform China is typically associated with migration from west to east and rapid urbanization, urbanization in China is still in its infancy. Less than half of China's population lives in urban areas, and though this proportion is projected to rise to 65% by 2030, it is still significantly lower than the U.S. current level of 79%.¹⁰⁹ Coupled with the fact that all of China's recent natural disasters have been centered in rural areas, this means that disaster relief efforts are implemented in underdeveloped regions with relatively limited economic infrastructure. The military has access to the most advanced equipment in China, including transportation technology that is particularly critical in emergency situations. The fact that a relatively high percentage of Chinese people live in formidable geographic conditions makes utilization of this technology even more vital.

Though the military's implicit responsibility to carry out disaster relief operations has not changed since 1949, the institutional framework of such operations has perpetually evolved during the 1990s and 2000s, and reflects the importance placed on military leadership in modern disaster relief missions by Beijing. Over thirty laws and regulations have been issued regarding disaster relief over the last three decades,

¹⁰⁸ There are several practical reasons for persistent role of the Chinese military in disaster relief. One reason is that as a developing country, China does not yet have in place many of the nongovernmental and social organizations that make significant contributions to disaster relief efforts in developed countries. Additionally, China's demographic and geographic characteristics make it particularly difficult to transfer disaster relief duties to regional and local nonmilitary agencies. Third, though the central government has made strides in developing national-level disaster relief mechanisms, China still lacks a central agency to manage all natural disasters with significant power and influence that some other countries have; Many studies have shown that China lacks the nongovernmental social organizations that often play fundamental roles in disaster relief response in other countries. For example, while the Red Cross and Salvation Army assist with provision of food, clothing and emotional support in Western countries, the roles of similar organizations have been very limited in China. While such institutions are growing quickly in China, it takes significant periods of time to institutionalize such nongovernmental practices. This institutional void has important consequences for the army, who is well-positioned to be the "shock force" of disaster relief for the foreseeable future. Weiwei Du, "Policy Analysis of Disaster Health Management in China," Queensland University of Technology, November 2010, 61-73, http://eprints.qut.edu.au/47022/1/Weiwei_Du_Thesis.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ "Census 2000 Population Statistics," Office of Planning, Environment, & Realty (HEP), U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 2000, http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/census_issues/archives/metropolitan_planning/cps2k.cfm.

including the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.¹¹⁰ In 1990 the State Council and the Central Military Commission (CMC) (中央军委) published an edict explicitly calling for the army to actively participate in disaster relief.¹¹¹ In 1995 the Central CCP Committee promulgated another directive outlining the PLA's role in disaster relief,¹¹² and two years later in 1997, the CMC formally made disaster relief a foundational mission of the military for the first time.¹¹³ Though specific, detailed procedures for executing disaster relief were not provided, the various regulations put forth during the 1990s made it clear that the military should play a central role in domestic disaster relief management. The regulations also set the foundation for stronger legal institutions to be established during the following decade.

As a response to the various regulations that made disaster relief a specific duty of the PLA and PAP, the PLA incorporated disaster relief into its training programs for the first time in 2002.¹¹⁴ In July 2005 the State Council and the CMC released "Regulation of Military Participation in Disaster Relief." This official publication revealed the specific duties of the PLA and PAP in carrying out disaster relief operations for the first time. This was also the first time that the central government referred to the PLA and PAP as "shock brigades" for disaster relief efforts in China. Guidelines for PLA and PAP coordination at regional and local levels are other key components of the directive.¹¹⁵ In

¹¹⁰ "PLA's Disaster Relief Works," 50-55

¹¹¹ "关于加强军民团结正确处理军民关系问题的通知," [Guanyu jiaqiang junmin tuanjie zhengque chuli junmin guanxi wenti de tongzhi][Announcement about strengthening unity between the army and citizens and managing military and civilian problems] 国务院、中央军委国发[1990]52号, <http://www.zxtlaw.com/indexd/indexd587.htm>

¹¹² "解读《中国人民解放军共青团工作条例》," [Jiedu 《Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun gongqingtuan gongzuo tiaoli》][Explaining 《Regulations of the Work of China's People's Liberation Army Communist Youth League》] 江西文明网 [Jiangxi Wenmingwang][Jiangxi Civilized Online], October 11, 2010 <http://blog.jxwmw.cn/u/10568/archives/2010/52256.html>

¹¹³ PLA's Disaster Relief Works," 55

¹¹⁴ "Rescue, Disaster Relief Included in Military Training," Xinhua, March 13, 2002 <http://www.china.org.cn/english/archiveen/28738.htm>

¹¹⁵ "军队参加抢险救灾条例," [Jundui canjia qiangxianjiuzai tiaoli][Regulations on military participation in disaster relief], State Council, Central Military Commission Regulation 436, July 1, 2005 http://www.gov.cn/yjgl/2005-10/09/content_75376.htm.

addition to the groundbreaking directive issued in 2005, there are currently several other active regulations that direct the armed forces' role in disaster relief. The Emergency Response Law of the People's Republic of China of 2007¹¹⁶ discusses plans for coordination between the military and local civilian and government units when responding to emergency situations. Additionally, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Protecting Against and Mitigating Earthquake Disasters, issued in 2009, discusses the military's responsibilities specifically with regard to Earthquakes occurring in China.¹¹⁷ Lastly, the above-mentioned white paper on natural disasters broadly discusses the role of the PLA, PAP, militia and civilian units in disaster relief response.¹¹⁸

Performance and Existing Deficiencies

Twenty-first century disaster relief operations have revealed notable shortcomings in disaster relief missions with respect to coordination and technology application. First, improved professionalism of the PLA as a result of increased specialization has made disaster relief coordination between nationally-dispatched PLA units and local government agencies especially difficult, as communication channels between the two sides are underdeveloped and ineffective. During the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, Li identifies coordination problems between PLA units and country, township and village government agencies as the primary hindrance to effective implementation at lower levels. These two sides do not interact on a regular basis and thus lack institutional

¹¹⁶ “中华人民共和国突发事件应对法,” [Zhonghua renmin gongheguo tufa shijian yingduifa][The People's Republic of China's Law on Emergency Response] http://www.gov.cn/flfg/2007-08/30/content_732593.htm.

¹¹⁷“中华人民共和国防震减灾法,” [Zhonghua renmin gongheguo fangzhen jiangzai fa][The People's Republic of China's Law on Earthquake Prevention and Disaster Relief] 新华社, 2008年12月27日 http://www.china.com.cn/policy/txt/2009-03/06/content_17389417.htm.

¹¹⁸ “China issues first disaster-relief white paper on quake anniversary,” Xinhua News Agency, May 11, 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-05/11/content_11350759.htm.

coordination mechanisms Poor coordination efforts likely prevented the CCP and PLA from saving more lives in the aftermath of Wenchuan, and poor overall civil-military coordination is embodied in the calls by military analysts to employ local reservists who have relatively strong relations with both PLA units and local government officials.¹¹⁹

Coordination weaknesses between military and civil units are a partial result of China's recent inability to develop a centralized emergency management system. In 2005 the Office of the State Council created the Emergency Management Office (EMO) in an attempt to address inter-agency coordination deficiencies. Its mandate encompasses emergency planning, natural disasters, technological accidents, public sanitation issues, social security concerns, as well as recovery and reconstruction activities¹²⁰. The National Civil Defense (NCD) within the Ministry of National Defense (MND) is the second government entity designed to facilitate coordination. However, thus far it appears that the EMO and NCD have been unable to resolve the fundamental coordination issues between national response agencies, both with each other and with local governments. Additionally, the EMO and NCD's efforts have not addressed coordination issues between PLA soldiers who are transported into disaster-stricken regions and local officials.¹²¹ Local leaders rely on the PLA's supplies and sheer force in managing natural disasters, and thus can be easily overruled by the military during on-the-ground decision-making. But locals possess valuable local knowledge, and thus effective coordination between these two actors may be most crucial in achieving effective disaster relief.

¹¹⁹ "Chinese Civil Military Relations," 50-52.

¹²⁰“国务院办公厅关于设置国务院应急管理办公室（国务院总值班室）的通知,” [Guowuyuan bangongting guanyu shezhi guowuyuan yingji guanli bangongshi (Guowuyuan zong zhibanshi) de tongzhi][Announcement on the State Council setting up an emergency management office (State Council main duty office)] http://www.gov.cn/zwjk/2006-04/30/content_271547.htm.

¹²¹ Weiwei Du, "Policy Analysis of Disaster Health Management in China," Queensland University of Technology, November 2010, 61-73, http://eprints.qut.edu.au/47022/1/Weiwei_Du_Thesis.pdf.

In addition to inadequate coordination mechanisms, disaster relief efforts in the 21st century have also demonstrated the considerable inability of the PLA to apply combat equipment and technology to domestic disaster relief operations. For example, the large majority of PLA troops dispatched to areas in and around Wenchuan were trained for conventional warfare operations, and their equipment was essentially useless during relief efforts. Most soldiers used light tools such as picks and even their bare hands to remove concrete and other debris. This relative lack of equipment and expertise transferability probably raised the resource and human costs of the Wenchuan Earthquake.¹²² While Beijing has strived to improve the operational capabilities of military units responding to domestic emergencies, Wenchuan highlighted several persistent deficiencies, reflecting the fact that China's domestic non-combat operations will not only require more resources to expand in scope, but also demand additional resources to improve on existing deficiencies.

Disaster relief operations are sensitive to both the PLA and the CCP for several reasons. First, information on these operations is usually highly available, at least when compared to foreign policy and domestic unrest cases. Abundant information provides measurable indicators for the success or failure of any operation. Second, there are very high risks associated with domestic disaster relief operations. Operational failures on the part of the PLA can result in the loss of important resources as well as human life within a country. Domestic dissatisfaction with disaster relief management can threaten the competency of the military, and also the legitimacy of the regime. As such, in addition to the growing frequency and intensity of disaster relief operations in China, improving

¹²² "Chinese Civil Military Relations," 50-52.

operational quality is also a pressing demand for the PLA and PAP. As the next chapter will demonstrate, disaster relief is not the only domestic non-combat activity with persistent operational deficiencies demanding more resources.

Chapter 4: The Military's Role in Domestic Stability Maintenance

This chapter examines domestic stability maintenance, or *weiwen* (维稳) operations to further demonstrate that the significance of China's domestic non-combat operations has mushroomed in the 21st century. Similar to disaster relief, analysis on modern domestic stability maintenance missions also reveals that significant resource increases are needed to address major operational deficiencies for missions that are expanding in terms of both institutional entrenchment as well as operational frequency and intensity.

Background of Weiwen

The result of mounting domestic unrest throughout China is the increased frequency of public protests known as “mass incidents” in the 21st century. Mass incidents (群体性事件) refer to “large-scale demonstrations, which have the potential to develop into violent stand-offs between crowds of demonstrators and the authorities, or violent attacks on government organs, factories, or other property.”¹²³ They can be triggered by isolated events including but not limited to land confiscation, poor working conditions, rape and murder. Usually they reflect larger social discontent within a city or township. “Weiwen” operations are primarily manifested in the form of physically deterring and suppressing these instances of protest.¹²⁴

¹²³ Harold Tanner, “Chapter Six: The People's Liberation Army and China's Internal Security Challenges,” in *The PLA at Home and Abroad: Assessing the Operational Capabilities of China's Military*, ed. David Lai et al., (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), 258.

¹²⁴ “Chapter Six: The People's Liberation Army,” 254-260.

According to official doctrine, mass incidents stem from “contradictions within the populace” (人民内部矛盾).¹²⁵ Frustration with local government, unemployment, poor living conditions for migrant workers and income inequality are generally perceived as the main causes of mass incidents.¹²⁶ The vagueness of the term “mass incident” makes data collection difficult since it allows for idiosyncratic interpretations as to whether or not a disturbance qualifies. According to a Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) researcher, mass incidents increased from 8,709 in 1993 to 87,000 in 2005.¹²⁷ Further, a Tsinghua University researcher claimed that the annual growth rate of mass incidents climbed to over 25% from 1997 to 2004.¹²⁸ By 2010 the number of recorded mass incidents had reached 120,000, according to Tsinghua University Professor Sun Liping.¹²⁹ Given this sharp increase and the central role of the military in domestic stability maintenance, it is clear that domestic stability maintenance operations are demanding a growing share of the military’s resources.¹³⁰

Role of the Military in Managing Internal Unrest

As the paramilitary arm of the CCP, the primary responsibility of the People’s Armed Police (PAP) (人民武装警察部队) is to maintain domestic stability, whether by

¹²⁵ “Protecting Workers’ Rights or Serving the Party: The way forward for China’s trade unions,” China Labour Bulletin Research Report, March 2009, http://www.clb.org.hk/en/files/share/File/research_reports/acftu_report.pdf; See, for example, 王霞, “农村群体性事件的原因分析,” Wang Xia, [Analysis of the causes of Agricultural Mass Incidents] June 15, 2011, http://www.huzhoucx.jcy.gov.cn/fxyd/llyj/201106/t20110615_556572.shtml.

¹²⁶ “Chapter Six: The People’s Liberation Army and China’s Internal Security Challenges,” 258.

¹²⁶ “China Social Unrest Briefing, September 4-17, 2008,” China Youth Daily, BBC Monitoring., September 17, 2008.

¹²⁷ 于建嵘: 中国的骚乱事件与管治危机 [Yu, Jianrong, Riots and Governance Crisis in China], Address on 30 October 2007 at the University of California, Berkely. <http://www.chinaelections.org/newsinfo.asp?newsid=118361>.

¹²⁸ Hu, Lianhe, An’gang Hu and Lei Wang. “Empirical Analysis on Trend of Social Conflicts Affecting Social Stability”, Social Science Frontier, 2006 (4).

¹²⁹ “China’s Spending on Internal Policing Outstrips Defense Budget,” Bloomberg News, March 6, 2011

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-03-06/china-s-spending-on-internal-policing-outstrips-defense-budget.html>.

¹³⁰ While mass incidents in China have increased at an alarming rate, the definition of mass incidents is hazy, and most incidents are hardly “mass” in scale. For instance, in the first half of 2005 there were 341 cases of armed protest, 120 of which involved over 1,000 demonstrators and 17 of which involved over 10,000 people. In most cases mass incidents are resolved peacefully, and only a fraction of incidents grow into large-scale chaos. In the event that a mass incident becomes too severe for local officials to manage, the People’s Armed Police (PAP) is responsible for resolving conflicts between the people and local authorities. In recent years mass incident management has become the primary responsibility of the PAP. See Ivan Y. Sun and Yuning Wu, “The Role of the People’s Armed Police in Chinese Policing,” *Asian Criminology* (2009) 4:107–128, November 11, 2008, 124-125 <http://www.springerlink.com/content/5088701582025787/fulltext.pdf>.

providing emergency disaster relief or suppressing mass incidents that local police authorities are unable to manage.¹³¹ The PLA, essentially the “third line of defense,” may intervene in domestic stability operations by providing indirect assistance such as transportation and logistical support, or even suppressing protests that are especially large in scope.¹³²

The PAP has roots in the founding of Communist China in 1949 when it was established under a different name within the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). Since then control of the PAP has shifted back and forth between the MPS and the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). Major reorganization occurred in 1983, and since then the Central Military Commission (CMC) has exercised oversight over the PAP. Following the Tiananmen Square riots of 1989, the PLA has been hesitant to entangle itself in domestic stability operations, and as a result mass incident management has become a nearly exclusive responsibility of the PAP. Only if martial law is declared by the State Council, China’s highest-level decision-making body, will the PLA intervene. As of 2008, the PAP was estimated to have around 700,000 active troops.¹³³ Currently, the PAP has 14 mobile divisions that report to the CMC and function as front-line “shock troops” for handling instances of domestic instability.¹³⁴

The respective responsibilities of the PLA and PAP are directly a result of objective control civil-military policies pursued in the wake of Tiananmen. A key result of post-Tiananmen civil-military strategy has been the bolstered role of the People’s

¹³¹ Given especially alarming rising levels of peasant unrest, the PAP is expanding its operations in agricultural rural China. Current PAP institutional shortcomings in rural China, information deficiencies in rural villages and increasingly competent peasants make the PAP’s mass incident management operations in agricultural rural China particularly challenging.

¹³² “Chapter Six: The People’s Liberation Army and China’s Internal Security Challenges,” 258.

¹³³ Tai Cheung, “Guarding China’s Domestic Front Line; The People’s Armed Police and China’s Stability,” *The China Quarterly*, Volume 146, Issue 146, June 1996, 525-547.

¹³⁴ “Chapter Six: The People’s Liberation Army,” 241-242.

Armed Police (PAP) in managing domestic stability.¹³⁵ Downsizing of the PLA's ground forces has also resulted in many PLA infantry divisions being converted into PAP reaction units.¹³⁶ Theoretically, this process essentially shifts manpower-intensive military force to the PAP while allowing the PLA to avoid tarnishing its domestic public image through participation in potentially violent mass incidents.¹³⁷ PAP resource and manpower boosts have been spelled by major increases in budgetary allocations for domestic surveillance. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of security cameras installed in China's major cities (As well as in those with high socioeconomic/ethnic tensions), surveillance in China's rural communities is also being enhanced.¹³⁸ There have been indications in recent years that the PLA is still highly sensitive about its domestic image, such as reports that PLA vehicles concealed license plates on vehicles participating in domestic stability operations in Tibet in 2008 in order to avoid detection.¹³⁹

Outstanding Deficiencies in Twenty-First Century Weiwen

Severe deficiencies of domestic stability maintenance operations were first evident when the PLA intervened in Tiananmen Square, prompting reform of China's internal security structure. More than 20 years later, Twenty-first century operations have also revealed considerable shortcomings that threaten the effectiveness of domestic stability missions. These include the unequal distribution of PAP forces in China, local

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Tai Cheung, "Guarding China's Domestic Front Line; The People's Armed Police and China's Stability," *The China Quarterly*, Volume 146, Issue 146, June 1996, 525-547

¹³⁷ "Chinese Civil Military Relations," 36.

¹³⁸ Gabe Collins and Andrew Erickson, "China's S-Curve Trajectory: Structural factors will likely slow the growth of China's economy and comprehensive national power," *China SignPost™ (洞察中国)*, No. 44 (15 August 2011), <http://www.chinasingpost.com/2011/08/china%E2%80%99s-s-curve-trajectory-structural-factors-will-likely-slow-the-growth-of-china%E2%80%99s-economy-and-comprehensive-national-power/>

¹³⁹ Edward Cody, "Backstage Role of China's Army in Tibet Unrest Reflects Heed for Reaction Abroad," *Washington Post*, 13 April 2008, p. A17.

information deficiencies, and a lack of a long term solution for dealing with an increasingly capable peasant base.

Though large in aggregate force, PAP units are unevenly distributed across China, and are particularly scarce and inexperienced in regions of China where most of China's notable uprisings have occurred.¹⁴⁰ The primary reason for this is the reorganization of the PAP that occurred after 1989. Following the Tiananmen Square protests in which PAP units were caught unprepared by student-led demonstrations, urban PAP units were expanded, in part by transferring PLA officers into PAP ranks¹⁴¹ Each province and municipality has its own PAP general detachment with 800-2000 troops that oversee PAP operations within the region, but rural areas typically have far fewer soldiers due to the focus on wealthy urban and ethnically sensitive regions. Moreover, the fact that most detachment commanders receiving promotions are stationed in coastal regions suggests that these regions are higher priorities for PAP resource allocation¹⁴². Tiananmen resulted in a PAP reoriented towards urban centers. This reorganization, coupled with large-scale ethnic unrest in China's border regions in recent years, suggests that the PAP focus on central and rural China will be limited despite increasing unrest in these regions.

In addition to resource limitations, the PAP also faces severe informational deficiencies when handling mass incidents in China. Regional PAP provincial detachments rely on local village reports to assess whether or not to deploy PAP troops to dispel mass incidents. However, local police officers are often extremely hesitant to report the true severity of social uprisings, since the spread of social unrest may be seen

¹⁴⁰ "Chapter Six: The People's Liberation Army," 253-257.

¹⁴¹ "Guarding China's Domestic Front Line," 527.

¹⁴² "The Role of the People's Armed Police," 117-118.

as a failure of their agency.¹⁴³ Moreover, while the PLA is funded solely by the central government, the PAP relies considerably on local funding. It has been estimated that approximately 15% of total PAP funding is provided by local authorities at the city and township level¹⁴⁴. PAP units can often be persuaded into distorting information that flows vertically toward provincial detachments and the PAP central headquarters in Beijing. This behavior is particularly prevalent in relatively poor agricultural and rural areas where regulation is limited because of funding.¹⁴⁵

Another challenge is that while post-reform mass incidents in agricultural rural China have generally been confined to the villages in which they arise, the peasantry in this area is increasingly capable and well-educated. The advent of widespread internet use in rural China in recent years had provided a modern conduit for spreading news of social unrest. Indeed, over 70% of China's internet users have either a high school degree or lower, suggesting not only that young people are one of the primary groups of internet users, but also that internet access has diffused rapidly in less developed areas.¹⁴⁶ As peasant competency of social media improves, so does the probability that news of a given mass incidence will reach neighboring towns and counties, raising the overall potential for inter-village coordination. Additionally, while the PAP has used media suppression to eliminate the possibility of coordination in regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet, doing so requires action by higher levels of government. Again, many local officials, as well as local PAP units, see requests for assistance from higher levels of

¹⁴³ Kevin Larkin, "On a Silk Thread – 'Mass Incidents' and Social Stability in China," Worldanalysis.net, Thursday, May 13, 2010, Vol. II, Issue 7, <http://worldanalysis.net/modules/news/article.php?storyid=1370>.

¹⁴⁴ "Guarding China's Domestic Front Line," 533.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 527.

¹⁴⁶ Tong Yanqi and Lei Shaohua, "Creating Public Opinion Pressure in China: Large-Scale Internet Protest," EAI Background Brief No. 534, June 2010, 1-17, <http://www.eai.nus.edu.sg/BB534.pdf>.

government as an admission of failure and a loss of face.¹⁴⁷ As such, PAP units may end up being forced to handle mass incidents beyond their capacity.

Given the increase of mass incidents in agricultural rural China, the military's role in this region is expanding, but not necessarily with adequate resources or information. Besides this, more capable peasants raise the stakes and make mass incident management even more challenging.

¹⁴⁷ "On a Silk Thread."

Concluding Thoughts

In the context of a rising China, it is natural to focus attention to the Chinese military's activities beyond China's borders and overlook domestic operations in the process. However, an accurate and complete analysis of China's military development should take both domestic and international operations into account. China's development ceiling is determined by the extent to which it can uphold domestic stability. If domestic unrest increases, so does the amount of resources needed to attend to issues within China. In recent years thousands of mass incidents across China has been a sharp reminder that Beijing is still struggling with the decentralization of economic and political power, a process that has been the Achilles heel for previous regimes in China. The high frequency of natural disasters in twenty-first century China has also highlighted the fact that China relies on the military for virtually all internal security challenges, whether they are caused by collective human action or forces of nature.

Non-combat missions such as disaster relief and humanitarian assistance are viewed by officials as important pillars for reinforcing the image of a military committed to the well-being of Chinese citizens. On the other hand, internal stability operations carried out related to domestic security may have very different ramifications on Chinese public opinions of the military. Such policing activities carried out by the Chinese military can have potentially harmful effects on the relationship between Chinese citizens and the PLA, and consequentially can deteriorate domestic popular support for the PLA and ultimately the CCP. As a result more domestic non-combat military assistance is needed to rebuild the damages caused by these policing activities.

Stanislav Andreski wrote in 1968 about the “Peaceful Disposition” of military dictatorships, and noted how throughout history there has existed a simple dilemma for all militaries: The more time and resources used on internal affairs, the less time and resources will be available for external pursuits, and vice versa.¹⁴⁸ He also posited that armies supported heavily by the mass citizenry will fight better, while those militaries who are employed as “engines of coercion” will weaken their wartime capabilities. While domestic PLA and PAP disaster relief and humanitarian assistance missions are welcomed by Chinese society, domestic stability maintenance operations by nature possess a strong coercive element, as they involve directly suppressing the activities of Chinese citizens. Whether Andreski’s assertions on internal and external military activity will hold true in twenty-first century China is unknown. However, China’s leadership appears to be keenly aware of the risks of relying on the military to suppress domestic unrest, evident from policy shifts after Tiananmen Square. Ironically, China’s leaders have employed other forms of non-combat military missions such as disaster relief in part to help assuage tensions stemming from the military’s growing role as a suppressor of popular revolt.¹⁴⁹

Of course, socioeconomic change in the 21st century is only part of the story of the rise of China’s domestic non-combat operations. In addition, unmistakable civil-military shifts resulting in decreased economic and political roles for the military, as well as the government’s uncomfortable role reversal in local Chinese communities

¹⁴⁸ Stanislav Andreski, “On the Peaceful Disposition of Military Dictatorships,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Volume 3, Issue 3, 1980, 3-4.

¹⁴⁹ As noted in this paper, this is not the only reason why Beijing is eager to employ the PLA and PAP in domestic disaster relief and other non-combat missions that help enhance the Party’s and army’s domestic image. There are also practical reasons related to China’s status as a developing country.

manifested through local official corruption combine to beg the question—what role will the military play in twenty-first century Chinese society?

China's adoption of what resemble "objective control" civil-military policies in the 21st century, essentially confining the PLA to technical military development, is unprecedented in Chinese history to the extent that it has gained consensus support of China's top leadership. However, the concept of reducing the military's domestic non-combat role, at least in the form of social and political work, is of course not a new theme in Chinese society. After the Korean War, a large contingency of civil and military leaders, most notably Peng Dehuai, hoped to professionalize and modernize China's military, thereby precluding many economic and civil activities from the scope of military doctrine. Throughout the "Red versus Expert" (红专辩论) ideological struggle in the 1950s, this group believed that "Expert" was indeed better than "Red."¹⁵⁰

Ultimately, this faction was unsuccessful. In the decade that followed, the PLA's non-combat role, then consisting mainly of domestic economic and political work, reached an all-time high in what is considered one of the most disastrous periods in Chinese history—the Cultural Revolution. Andreski remarked in 1968, "Being primarily organized for defending the country, the army is seldom a good tool for ruling it, let alone reforming it." Andreski's observation stands out as a lesson learned for CCP and PLA leaders who continue to govern China in the 21st century, whose recognition of the inherent risks associated with domestic politicization of the military are embodied through the adoption of policies that perceivably fall into Huntington's "objective control paradigm."

¹⁵⁰ "The Chinese People's Liberation Army and Political Socialization," 22-27.

It may seem counterintuitive, then, that domestic non-combat operations have evolved into a cornerstone of PLA and PAP strategy since the start of the 21st century, given that China's leadership has worked to reduce the domestic economic and political non-combat role of China's armed forces. However, China's twenty-first century non-combat operations are fundamentally different than the primary forms of non-combat duties of the PLA in the 20th century. Earlier non-combat activities in the Mao and Deng eras occurred under the ideological framework of "Red is better than expert," the notion that the army, an engine of socialistic indoctrination, could be employed to perform a variety of social and political tasks regardless of its skill and experience in those areas.

Moreover, in pre-reform Communist China, the reality was that China had few external economic and security interests relative to contemporary China.¹⁵¹ The prevailing external security environment combined with a lack of domestic economic and social institutions in 20th-century Communist China necessitated an active role for the continental, manpower-intensive PLA in Chinese society. In stark contrast, the rapidly growing non-combat operations of China's twenty-first century military are carried out under a novel civil-military framework shaped by Jiang and Hu that seeks to limit the military to specialized military tasks. In this sense, China's contemporary leadership has redefined the domestic role of the military in historical perspective, actively pursuing military professionalization policies without excluding the military from operating in Chinese society.

¹⁵¹ This is not to downplay the effect of the Cold War on Mao and other CCP leaders. Rather, the argument is that China has become more interdependent on its external security environment since economic reforms, especially given how heavily the CCP relies on stable economic growth for regime stability.

Indeed, it is inherently paradoxical that domestic non-combat operations are expanding so quickly during an era of military modernization designed around separating the army from domestic social and civil affairs, but certainly not illogical. While the PLA is rapidly evolving into a comprehensive regional military power that many would argue is set to become a global power,¹⁵² the fact remains that China is still a developing country dealing with severe growing pains that often times only its armed forces can alleviate. Beijing is still totally reliant on the armed forces to preserve domestic stability, whether it be through dispelling protestors or rescuing earthquake victims. Chinese people rely almost exclusively on the PLA and PAP to provide vital support in times of urgent need, such as during natural disasters. China's armed forces also have a vested interest in enhancing their role in Chinese society. The PLA and PAP procure substantial funding, gain otherwise unavailable operational experience, and repatch their domestic image, an issue obviously sensitive to PLA leadership,¹⁵³ by participating in domestic non-combat operations. The set of socioeconomic, civil-military and historical patterns unfolding in contemporary China, coupled with China's status a developing state, makes it plausible to envision a continuously expanding domestic role of China's armed forces for the foreseeable future.

The perplexing role of the military in twenty-first century China is a marriage of interests of various actors in Chinese society. While today's non-combat operations are fundamentally distinct from those of Mao, PLA scholars, including some cited in this paper, have established links between traditional and twenty-first century operations so as

¹⁵² There are many examples. For a more recent one, see, "China's military rise: The dragon's new teeth," *The Economist*, Apr 7th 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21552193>.

¹⁵³ For example, see the PLA's sensitivity to revealing license plates during 2009 domestic stability maintenance operations in Xinjiang; David Lai, "Chapter One: Introduction," in Roy Kamphausen et al., *The PLA at Home and Abroad: Assessing the Operational Capabilities of China's Military* (Strategic Studies Institute, June 2010), 21, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB995.pdf>.

to extend the tradition of an army “serving the people” into a new historical era.¹⁵⁴ The logic behind this association is straightforward—the ability of the traditional Red Army to rally the masses in the Chinese countryside is due in no small part to the various non-combat missions carried out at the time, such as land reform, agricultural production and political campaigns calling for Japan’s exit from China. Making a connection to operations in pre-revolutionary era inextricably ties the PLA’s twenty-first century domestic operations to the traditional principles of the Red Army, and bolsters Army and Party legitimacy by recasting the modern identity of the PLA in a revolutionary light.

In this way, it is conceivable to posit that China’s domestic stability will continue to rank high on the military’s agenda for the foreseeable future, despite the conception that the direction of China’s military development is primarily outward. This claim is considerably bolstered when one examines China’s domestic non-combat operations in the context of rising social tensions among citizens across China, an army physically drifting apart from its citizens, and a Party unable to eliminate “bad eggs” at the local level throughout the country. The end result is more military resources being spent in China. While news of international PLA expansion is trending in media spheres throughout the world, knowledge of the domestic forces driving these operations and how twenty-first century non-combat operations fit into the historical development of an army “for the people” are indispensable for understanding China’s present day non-combat missions and making claims about their consequences for broader PLA development.

¹⁵⁴ Western PLA analysts have focused less on this connection not because of a lack of awareness, but simply because their research objectives have presumably been focused on assessing PLA and PAP operational capabilities from experience in various domestic and international non-combat missions.

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