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The Party Controls the Gun, but How? Institutionalization as a Trend in Chinese Civil- Military Relations

Katherine V. Fleming

University of Pennsylvania, flemingv@sas.upenn.edu

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The Party Controls the Gun, but How? Institutionalization as a Trend in Chinese Civil-Military Relations

Abstract

Originally characterized by a tightly intertwined relationship based in informal manners of control, the relationship between the Chinese army, party, and state has evolved over the past few decades. Instigated by the reforms of Deng Xiaoping, which changed Chinese politics, economics, and society, the party and the army's relationship is no longer based in the "interlocking directorate," which characterized the party-army hierarchies of the past. Changes to the army, the party, and the state have contributed to an evolution of Chinese civil-military relations which can be characterized as "institutionalized."

Keywords

Chinese studies, civil-military relations, military studies, Political Science, Social Sciences, Avery Goldstein, Goldstein, Avery

The Party Controls the Gun, but How?
Institutionalization as a Trend
in Chinese Civil-Military Relations

Katherine Fleming
Spring 2009

Advisor: Dr. Avery Goldstein

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I. Introduction

“In war, the general receives his commands from the sovereign.” –Sun Tzu, The Art of War¹

In Sun Tzu’s profound work on war and military strategy, he formulated innovative theories on various aspects of victory, retreat, and army management which would be respected by military theorists for centuries to follow. As this quote helps illustrate, a key element related to military victory and political prowess was the ability of the sovereign to command his army. Throughout Chinese history, China’s leaders have been plagued by the issue of control of the military, whether during war or peace times. From imperial history onward, the ability of the emperor to control and harness the power of the military was crucial as it could contribute to a dynasty’s flourish or demise.²

With the fall of the Qing dynasty and the ensuing period of civil war between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT), the importance of military strength and civilian control of that power was again apparent. However, relations between the victorious CCP and its guerilla revolutionary force, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), would not follow a typical path of civil-military relations. The early PLA, an amalgamation of Soviet technique, Marxist ideology, and Chinese characteristics, was tightly intertwined with the CCP as their experience fighting the revolution together built an insoluble bond. However, as the death of Mao Zedong and the ensuing reform period of Deng Xiaoping brought about great change in Chinese politics and society, the relationship between the PLA and the CCP would have to evolve as well.

¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Filiquarian Publishing, 2006), 37, VII. Maneuvering, Point 1.

² In particular, the era of the Five Kingdoms and Ten States was characterized by military based dynasties, Warlordism and intense factions. For more information on that era and its civil-military relations, please see an overview in Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History: China* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 136-185. Additionally a more thorough study can be found in, F. W. Mote, *Imperial China: 900-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.)

Much has changed in the state, the party, and the army of China since its early Maoist years. The position of the party has shifted as ideology has softened and faded to be replaced with the glow of commercialism, profit, and a socialist system with market features. Deng Xiaoping, the leader to follow Mao Zedong, sought to raise China to the apex of global economic strength by opening up the country to the West and by allowing the market to flourish. As these changes took place in society and in politics, the PLA was profoundly affected as well. With modernization in society came a focus on improving the technical war fighting capability of the PLA along with improvements to the officer corps. Over time, the PLA has evolved into a leaner and more technically capable force better equipped to compete with advancing international standards.

While these changes have helped increase the PLA's capability as an army, they have affected its relations with the also evolving party and the state. Placed at this crossroads, party-army relations face growing pains and evolution as the army drifts from its original mission as the vanguard of Marxist ideology. This thesis will seek to determine how it is that the relationship between the PLA and the CCP has gotten to its current position, what implications the change in the balance between the party, the army, and the state could have for the dynamics of China's civil-military relations, as well as what direction its civil-military relations may move toward in the future.

II. China's Unique History

With a distinct history and culture, to understand the present in China, the past must first be considered. China's most recent history is of particular value as the nature of the incipient stages of PLA development and its relationship to the Communist Party molded patterns of civil-military relations for decades to follow. The history of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is

complex, but an examination with an eye toward CCP-PLA relations yields three phases. The first phase, which can be identified as “the revolutionary phase,” took place from 1927 to 1949 and was characterized by a symbiotic relationship between the CCP and the PLA. From 1949 to 1978, relations again evolved as the party worked toward penetration of the army and politicization of the army’s work during this “politicization phase.” The current “professionalization phase,” which began in 1978, showcased a shift in the dynamic between the party and the army as relations were influenced by changes made to army.³

a. The Revolutionary Phase (1927-1949)

The early history of the CCP is marked by struggle, near failure, and guerilla style tactics of revolution. The CCP’s early legacy is based in its battle with the KMT to take control of a China riddled by aggression from the West, a powerful Japan as its neighbor, and internal rebellion. On the brink of destruction and failure during the battles of the Chinese Civil War, the CCP was forced to march to the outer reaches of Chinese territory to preserve what remained of its force. This initial crisis, the Long March, is firmly established as one of the earliest glimpses of the CCP , the PLA, and what was to become the PRC and, as such, is the most significant event for civil-military relations in China’s early history. The Long March is considered to be “the most celebrated episode in Chinese Communist history and is legitimately considered to be

³ The framework of history that I will be using is developed from ideas presented by Yu Bin and James Mulvenon in their respective works: Yu Bin, “The Fourth-Generation Leaders and the New Military Elite,” in *Civil Military Relations in Today’s China: Swimming in a New Sea* eds. Kristen Gunness and David M. Finkelstein, (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2007): 74-95, and James Mulvenon. “An Uneasy Bargain: Party-Military Relations in Post-Deng China,” (paper presented at the National Association of Asian Studies Conferences, Boston, MA, March 11-14, 1999): 1-46. Additionally, Andrew Scobell’s piece which classifies five crises of civil-military relations is also informative in thinking about the phases of the relations between the CCP and the PLA, Andrew Scobell, “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations: Lessons Learned,” in *The Lessons of History: The People’s Liberation Army at 75* eds. Laurie Burkitt, Andrew Scobell, and Larry M. Wortzel, US Army War College (July 2003): 427-450.

a watershed event in 20th Century China.”⁴ Beginning in October 1934, tens of thousands of Communist supporters and fighters fled the threat from the KMT and marched all the way from Jiangxi province in the South to the distant Shaanxi province in the Northwest. The march was arduous and treacherous with the majority dying in the process. While death and destruction characterized much of the march, those who survived formed insoluble bonds which would shape the future of civil-military relations in the PRC. Additionally, the march forced the struggling CCP to re-evaluate its strengths allowing it to re-emerge stronger and more capable of defeating the KMT.⁵

The events surrounding the struggle to win the civil war and take control of China, with the Long March in particular, would serve as the baseline relationship for the future of CCP-PLA relations as the PLA’s identity became “inextricably intertwined with the party/state.”⁶ In looking to the Long March, the CCP constructed a pattern of party control of the army which would characterize their relationship in decades to follow. In particular, the party conceptualized the following parameters for the nascent CCP-PLA relationship:

1. As it is of utmost significance, a close interrelationship between the party, the army, and the people must be maintained.
2. “The party commanding the gun” is necessary.
3. Popular support is crucial.⁷

A close interrelationship between the party and the army grew out of the tedious and grueling nature of the march, leading to the development of the “dual role elites” of the party and army hierarchies which would characterize civil-military relations in China well into the late 20th century. The Long March also taught the necessity of “the army’s subordination to party

⁴ Andrew Scobell, “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations: Lessons Learned,” in *The Lessons of History: The People’s Liberation Army at 75*. eds. Laurie Burkitt, Andrew Scobell, and Larry M. Wortzel. US Army War College (July 2003): 428.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ David Shambaugh, “The Soldier and the State in China: The Political Work System in the People’s Liberation Army,” *The China Quarterly*, No 127, Special Issue: The Individual and the State in China (September 1991): 532.

⁷ Scobell, “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations,” 429.

control,” as the party would not have endured and succeeded without the army’s support.⁸ As such, retaining the army’s loyalty was crucial. Lastly, the army and the party recognized the value of cultivating support among the people. Along the march, the party and army encountered not only friendly supporters but also those who were hostile and militant forcing the Communists to realize that to stay in power they would need the allegiance of the people.

The Long March is also a turning point in Communist history as it was this event that raised Mao Zedong, once a minor figure of the CCP, to a position of power and influence in the party. Many of the Long March survivors in the CCP believed that “Mao Zedong’s accession to top leader of the Chinese Communist movement saved the day.”⁹ This ascension to power and wresting of complete control of the CCP would have monumental implications for the future as it was his personal control of the military that saved the CCP in several circumstances.

b. The Politicization Phase (1949-1978)

With the KMT defeated and the PRC founded on October 1, 1949, the party shifted its focus toward establishing a legitimate and functioning country. Based in Marxist-Leninist thought and the principles of Communism, the PRC modeled itself after its big brother, the Soviet Union, while incorporating its own distinctive Chinese characteristics. While the framework of civil-military relations which developed out of the Long March stayed in place, the roles of the military evolved as new departments and institutions were created which would address the issue of political education and further control of the army. As a result of the interlocking nature of the hierarchies between the party and the army, the PLA became a political actor as many military leaders became involved in the party and state mechanisms. Although the military had great involvement with politics, its subordination to the party was not assumed.

⁸ Ibid., 429.

⁹ Ibid., 428.

Rather, institutions were implemented to guarantee correct ideological allegiance of the army to the party. In particular, the General Political Department (GPD) was established as “one of the central headquarters under the reorganized and newly amalgamated People’s Liberation Army.”¹⁰ While the GPD was founded in 1945, it would serve one of the largest roles during the politicization phase as it administered the political work system which was “how the party principally controlled the gun through the system.”¹¹ Under the umbrella of the political work system, the party controlled the PLA through its political commissar system, party committee system, and discipline inspection system. These three systems together facilitated the “political monitoring and penetration of the military from top to bottom,” with activities ranging from publications on correct ideology to actual political officers attached with each unit of the PLA to oversee right thought and behavior.¹²

While the CCP had succeeded in its revolution and was seemingly establishing a functioning country, its power and the subordination of the PLA to the CCP would be tested with the trauma and violence of the Cultural Revolution. The Cultural Revolution was a period of roughly ten years beginning in 1966 which turned the order of Chinese society upside down.¹³ Fomented by Mao, who was then the leader of the PRC and the CCP, the Cultural Revolution was a movement which aimed at re-instilling the values of revolution in new generations of Chinese who had not felt the drama of the Long March and the fight against the KMT. The Cultural Revolution began in the spring of 1966 when the mayor of Beijing was denounced for “allowing the staging of a play that could be construed as critical of Mao.”¹⁴ What ensued was a

¹⁰ Shambaugh, “The Soldier and the State in China,” 531.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 535.

¹² Mulvenon, “An Uneasy Bargain,” 19.

¹³ A history of the Cultural Revolution can be found in: Patricia Buckley Ebrey. *Cambridge Illustrated History: China* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 313-321.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 314.

movement which rebelled against any aspect of culture seen as capitalist or revisionist. Mao encouraged young adults to form into Red Guard units and scour their towns and the countryside rooting out “evil,” often turning on their families, friends, and teachers.

However, the Cultural Revolution quickly spiraled out of anyone’s control forcing Mao to turn to the PLA, which had largely remained uninvolved, to regain control of the country and save the CCP from what seemed like impending doom.¹⁵ In early 1967, Mao commanded the PLA to ““support the left.””¹⁶ By March of 1967, little progress had been made and the PLA was further ordered to officially intervene and work toward restoring public order. However, “most units were not armed and had severe restrictions placed on the conditions in which they were permitted to use force,” as they were expected to while suppressing the Cultural Revolution still “support the Left, the workers, the peasants.”¹⁷ It was not until early autumn that the military was permitted to intervene whole-heartedly. Finally by October 1968, the situation was under control, and the PLA governed every province and autonomous region of China through a “Revolutionary Committee”.¹⁸ While Mao had declared the Cultural Revolution finished, many historians extend the period to include the power struggles and political instability which would plague China until Mao’s death in 1976.

The Cultural Revolution shaped and developed many attitudes within the party and the army as both drew various conclusions from the event. As a result of the army’s ability to calm the terror and restore order, the party realized the great value of its army as it was the PLA which served as “the most energetic agent of the paramount party leader and his critical last line of

¹⁵ Ibid., 315.

¹⁶ Scobell, “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations,” 430.

¹⁷ Ibid., 431.

¹⁸ Ibid., 431.

defense.”¹⁹ Mao may have been able to incite the chaos that was the Cultural Revolution, but he could not clean up his mess without the muscle and the backing of the PLA. The necessity of army loyalty and support had never been as apparent as it was in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. The army also took away important lessons from the Cultural Revolution as it quickly learned the importance of staying detached from political upheaval and party issues. While the close relationship between the two would make complete separation impossible, the army stressed the need to avoid involvement in party issues. The members of the PLA also likely felt “betrayed and embittered” by the situation in total.²⁰ While the PLA remained loyal to the CCP, the Cultural Revolution hurt the PLA’s relationship with the people of China as soldiers were forced to intervene in internal disturbances and to try to discern the bad from the good. Additionally, when finally called upon to intervene, they had been jerked around by the party and were not allowed to use full force until a year into the intervention. Calling the PLA into the Cultural Revolution had also exposed it to the party politics and factions of the era causing many in the military to “have harbored profound private doubts.”²¹

Along with the Cultural Revolution, the attempted coup by Lin Biao in 1971 also shaped civil-military relations. Chinese history officially records that Lin Biao, China’s Defense Minister and Mao’s heir apparent, was guilty of launching a coup d’etat. The coup was code-named Project 571 but was discovered by those in command of the CCP and was squashed before it had the chance to be executed. After the coup attempt was discovered, Lin and his family attempted to flee but mysteriously died in an airplane crash.²² Current historians call into

¹⁹ Ibid., 431.

²⁰ June Teufel Dryer, “Lessons Learned from the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Square Massacre,” in *The Lessons of History: The People’s Liberation Army at 75* eds. Laurie Burkitt, Andrew Scobell, and Larry M. Wortzel, (July 2003): 405- 426

²¹ Ibid., 411.

²² More details on the Lin Biao incident can be found in the following source: Patricia Buckley Ebry, *Cambridge Illustrated History: China* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 319-320.

question some of the details of the incident with debate as to whether the coup may have been plotted by Lin Biao's son, Lin Liguo, and his wife, Ye Qun, in an attempt to create power for their family.²³ While the exact details of the coup attempt may be unclear, the importance of the incident lies in the attempt by a prominent military figure to try and overthrow the CCP's control of the PRC.

Both the party and the army drew important conclusions from the drama and tensions which characterized the Lin Biao coup attempt. The party officially stated that it was “*essential* to keep the army loyal to the party.”²⁴ The coup attempt shook some from their daydream of unfaltering and unwavering allegiance of the PLA to the CCP. The party realized that a coup attempt was possible and that it was crucial to make sure that “the paramount leader commands the gun,” since the Cultural Revolution demonstrated that in the end it was that paramount leader, Mao Zedong, who controlled the army for the party.²⁵ The army drew conclusions from the incident as well in that it realized even further the importance of staying out of intra-party conflict with some even believing that loosening the personal connections between the army and the party would help resolve such issues.²⁶

c. The Professionalization Phase (1978-present)

In December of 1978 at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee, a major “turning point in the Chinese political system and the beginning of wide ranging economic, social, political, and military reform” occurred.²⁷ A new era in Chinese politics was born as

²³ Scobell, “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations,” 433.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 434.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 434.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 434.

²⁷ Thomas J. Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979: What Have We Learned? Where Do We Go?” in *Seeking Truth from Facts: a Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era* eds. James Mulvenon and Andrew N.D. Yang, (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 2001), 2.

“Mao’s emphasis on ‘continued revolution’” was ended and the “radical policies of the Cultural Revolution” were repudiated in “favor of an emphasis on rapid economic development, pragmatism, and opening to the West.”²⁸ With respect to the military, Deng Xiaoping, the next great leader of the PRC, along with those who coalesced in his support, turned to professionalization and an emphasis on modern technology and war fighting capability.²⁹ In trending toward the Huntingtonian ideal, the PLA attempted to attain a new standard of professionalization as Deng “purged the recalcitrant Maoists within the PLA, while simultaneously streamlining the ranks and implementing reforms in military education, personnel, and doctrine.”³⁰ However, the ability of the PLA to become a professionalized force would be tested by the events which erupted in 1989.

The spring of 1989 saw many of the pent-up frustrations that had developed since the Deng era reforms explode in conflict as students protested for democracy. With the death of Hu Yaobang, who had supposedly been in favor of a larger education budget, the students became more agitated and vocal in their frustrations with their society and began to protest in Tiananmen Square in Beijing.³¹ To try and avoid entangling the PLA in its problems, the CCP worked to separate the protest from the PLA. As of April 28, a directive from the Shenyang Military District stated that:

“No officers or soldiers are permitted to go among the students to network, and still less should they ever allow students to come among them to network.”³²

CMC vice-chair Yang Shangkun originally promised Deng Xiaoping that the protests would be contained and that the officers and soldiers of the military would not be affected.³³ While the

²⁸ Ibid., 2.

²⁹ Ibid., 2-3.

³⁰ Mulvenon, “An Uneasy Bargain,” 13.

³¹ Dryer, “Lessons Learned from the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Square Massacre,” 416.

³² Ibid., 417.

Cultural Revolution had shown the importance of removing the PLA from CCP problems, this issue was somewhat unavoidable as the public nature of the demonstrations caused many in Chinese society to develop their own thoughts on the situation. The military was no different as Tiananmen Square produced a wide range of opinions within the PLA with the commander of the 38th group army rumored to have been “sympathetic to the demonstrators.”³⁴ The events of 1989 also incited doubt in officers and soldiers of the PLA as they were poised to be ordered to attack one of their loyalties, the people of China, under the command of their other loyalty, the party. On May 19, Li Peng and Yang Shangkun declared martial law in part of Beijing, and on June 4, the PLA ended the student protests by force with much bloodshed in Tiananmen Square. While “no PLA unit defected from the CCP during the crackdown operation, many PLA members showed their reluctance to enforce martial law.”³⁵

The implications for the party and the army from the events surrounding Tiananmen Square would be profound and influential in future civil-military relations. The party employed the PLA as its last line of defense as Deng Xiaoping called the PLA “the party’s ‘great wall of steel.’”³⁶ The incidents at Tiananmen Square proved to the party that the army should continue to serve a dual role of international and domestic security. However, the party also took away from the situation that it must avoid putting the PLA in a similar position in the future as commanding it to attack the people weakened its domestic reputation and its trust in the CCP as a fair master. The largest lesson from Tiananmen Square for the party was that “the army is all that stands between communism and post-communism in China.”³⁷ Had it not been for the

³³ Ibid., 417.

³⁴ Ibid., 418.

³⁵ Chien-wen Kou. “Why the Military Obeys the Party’s Orders to Repress Popular Uprisings: The Chinese Military Crackdown of 1989,” *Issues & Studies*, Issue 36, No. 6, (November/December 2000): 38-39.

³⁶ Scobell, “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations,” 435.

³⁷ Ibid., 435.

intervention of the PLA, the CCP might well have collapsed in the face of a democratic uprising supported by increasing numbers of Chinese. However, putting the army in that position was dangerous as cleavages within the military leadership showed that not all agreed that intervening was the right thing to do. Ultimately, the army did the party's bidding, but the party realized that a similar situation should be avoided in the future.

The army also took away many lessons from its intervention in the Tiananmen Square demonstrations. While the CCP would stress the dual domestic and international role of the PLA, the PLA wanted to shift domestic internal security responsibility to the People's Armed Police. The PLA did not want to be put in a position again of having to attack the people. Additionally, the image of the PLA, as it had been after the Cultural Revolution, was tarnished by the domestic meddling that the CCP called upon it to undertake. Accordingly, the PLA emphasized its relations with society through propaganda campaigns and good-will efforts such as natural disaster relief. Noticeably, there has been an increase in propaganda since 1989 which portrays the army as loyal "to the people."³⁸

After Tiananmen Square, there was a brief period of hyper-political indoctrination through the political work system harkening back to the earlier politicization phase.³⁹ While the events of Tiananmen Square and the ensuing re-emphasis of political penetration and indoctrination may appear to have spelled the end for professionalization, many aspects of the improvements made by professionalization can be seen in the events and aftermath of Tiananmen Square. Had the army not been a force moving toward professionalization, it is likely that the stress of the incident would have caused it to split into factions. However, "the

³⁸ Ibid., 436.

³⁹ A discussion of the political work system post Tiananmen Square can be found in the following work: David Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State in China: The Political Work System in the People's Liberation Army," *The China Quarterly*, No 127, Special Issue: The Individual and the State in China (September 1991): 553-567.

PLA acted, however reluctantly, as a whole.”⁴⁰ The PLA was able to overcome personal feelings on the situation and act as a professional force capable of obeying even the most unsatisfactory of orders. This phase of professionalization, on the whole, has continued into the present era, and the current trends of behavior occurring between the CCP and the PLA will be the focus of this thesis.

III. Literature Review

As a result of the intriguing complexity of China’s history and its evolving pattern of civil-military relations, a vast body of knowledge has already been developed investigating many of the issues between the CCP and the PLA. While much literature exists, a distinction can be made between those works which focus on civil-military relations in theory and those which focus on the particular case of China. The works that have been published so far on Chinese civil-military relations specifically are thorough and cover most issues leading up to and following the Tiananmen Square crackdown. However, fewer pieces have focused on the changes that have taken place thenceforth. This thesis seeks to help contribute to that knowledge gap by examining civil-military relations from the reforms of Deng to the present to identify current trends and develop possible trajectories for the future of the relationship between the party, the army, and the state in China.

a. Theoretical Studies on Civil-Military Relations

While a vast body of work exists discussing civil-military relations at large as well as civil-military relations in a Communist context, the following three pieces have been most pertinent to this study of Chinese civil-military relations. Of general studies of civil-military

⁴⁰ Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979,” 19.

relations, the most well respected piece on the topic is Samuel Huntington's *The Soldier and the State*. While Huntington's work was written decades ago, his theoretical framework is still pertinent and applicable to studies of civil-military relations. He opens in describing the job of an officer as being analogous to any other professional job. While he argues that the public "hardly conceives of the officer in the same way that it does a lawyer or a doctor," the officer corps should aspire to no different a standard.⁴¹ Officers, like any other profession, need to be distinguished by their characteristics of "expertise, responsibility, and corporateness."⁴² While the Chinese officer corps may arguably be moving in that direction, the divergence between China and the Huntington ideal lies in his views on ideal civilian control of the military.

For Huntington, there are two main types of civilian control: subjective civilian control and objective civilian control, with the latter being the ideal. Subjective civilian control is described as involving "power relations among civilian groups."⁴³ The control of the military in this model is based in the power struggle between the various civilian interests such as governmental institutions, social classes, or political parties. Subjective civilian control is largely based in personal interactions, lack of military professionalism, and civilian use of the military. On the other hand, objective civilian control is grounded in "maximizing military professionalism."⁴⁴ Huntington describes subjective and objective forms of civilian control as directly opposite with the goal of subjective control in "civilianizing the military, making them the mirror of the state."⁴⁵ In a more objective form of control, the military should be involved in its own affairs and should act as "the tool of the state," rather than being involved in the issues of

⁴¹ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1985.) The first chapter, "Officership as a Profession," and the fourth chapter, "Power, Professionalism, and Ideology: Civil-Military Relations in Theory," are most pertinent for this discussion.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 8-10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 81-83.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 83-85.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

the state and its politics.⁴⁶ The case of civil-military relations in China, however, does not fit neatly into either category.

In discussing patterns of civil-military relations, Dongmin Lee explains why Chinese civil-military relations do not fit into the Huntington ideal of objective control of the military. In China, civil-military relations are marked by aspects of *both* objective and subjective forms of political control. With reforms brought about by Deng Xiaoping, Lee argues that it is “undeniable that the PLA has undergone professionalization,” indeed moving it toward the professionalism that is needed for objective civilian control.⁴⁷ However, subjective channels of power are still influential in policy making. Chinese politics have long been characterized by the importance of personal networks and channels of influence among individuals. The CCP-PLA relationship is no different with many links between the hierarchies of each. While China is moving away from subjective control as the “current technocratic leadership is very different from the old revolutionary cadres,” the legacy of subjective control of the military is still present in civil-military relations in China and has an impact, albeit weakened, on civilian control of the military.⁴⁸

Dongmin Lee offers an alternate view of Huntington’s ideal of civil-military relations in which he combines the Huntington forms of civilian control with Chinese characteristics and creates a concept of “strategic subjective control.”⁴⁹ While Lee argues that China is certainly moving in the direction of objective civilian control with its emphasis on professionalization, he also points out that characteristics of subjective civilian control are still present. In terms of subjective control, China has an army which has a traditionally subordinate role and which can

⁴⁶ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁷ Lee, Dongmin, 443.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 445.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 443.

be subject to politics. To resolve this conflict Lee uses the concept of “strategic subjective control,” which he has characterized as “the theoretical framework of subjective control, yet [with] some distinctive features of the Huntington model.”⁵⁰ While his characterization may not be the only way to look at Chinese civil-military control as it does not take new trends into account, his new term and idea about civil-military relations in China successfully showcase why the pure Huntington model cannot be applied to China.

Although Samuel Huntington’s piece discussed civil military relations from a theoretical perspective, relations between the military and its civilian command do not occur in an ideal environment free from outside influence. As such, civil-military relations must also be examined from a perspective which takes differing security threats into account. Michael Desch’s work on civil-military relations in differing security environments, *Civilian Control of the Military*, developed a theory which examines the effect of various combinations of security threats on the civilian control of the military. With a theoretical framework supported by practical examples, Michael Desch explains the predicted strength of civil-military relations as they vary depending on internal and external threat levels. According to Desch, civilian control of the military will be strongest when external threats are high and internal threats are low.⁵¹

Civil-military relations are also greatly affected by the political system under which they develop. Amos Perlmutter and William LeoGrande’s piece “The Party in Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems,” attempted to create a framework for civil-military relations in Communist systems in particular. In putting the larger study of civil-military relations into a Communist context, the piece organized party-army relations into three relationship categories: coalitional, symbiotic, and fused. The PRC has

⁵⁰ Ibid., 443.

⁵¹ Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

arguably evolved away from a strict Communist system in the current era, but the symbiotic relationship, which explains how a party and army which are tightly intertwined behave, accurately captured the relationship that defined the early phases of CCP-PLA history.⁵²

b. Studies on Civil-Military Relations in China

The range of topics and depth of information available specific to civil-military relations in China is vast as different authors seek to create broad surveys, more specific studies on sub-topics, or examinations of trends. To place Chinese civil-military relations in a larger context, a genre of historical studies has emerged with important works by Thomas Bickford and Ellis Joffe. These works are useful as they introduce the topic of civil-military relations in contemporary China and establish the earlier trends. Ellis Joffe, in his retrospective work, laid out major patterns which characterize early CCP-PLA relations. The party and the army had tight integration at the highest levels of each organization as a result of the overlap between their leaders with an opposite separation at the bottom between the army and the party because of the army's large size. Civil-military relations have also been affected by professionalization and modernization and the emphasis of the army on non-intervention in politics. Lastly, Chinese civil-military relations have been characterized by the party's political control over the military. As the past trends were identified, Joffe also hypothesized about prospects for the future. Of particular note is Joffe's emphasis on the potentially influential role of professionalism and modernization on the future of CCP-PLA relations.⁵³

⁵² Amos Perlmutter and William M. LeoGrande, "The Party in Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 76, No. 4. (Dec., 1982): 778-789.

⁵³ Ellis Joffe, "Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect," *The China Quarterly*, No 146. Special Issue: China's Military in Transition (June. 1996): 229-314.

Where Joffe postulated about the possibilities of professionalism, others have picked up at that point and argued for the validity of professionalism as a model of understanding Chinese civil-military relations. Thomas Bickford's historical work examined recent history to assess models which attempt to explain events and trends in Chinese civil-military relations. The factional model attempts to predict outcomes in civil-military relations by explaining Chinese civil-military relations as the result of factional politics between groups within the CCP and the PLA who are vested in their own parochial interests. However, professionalism and professionalization as a framework for explaining the evolution of civil-military relations between the PLA and the CCP seems better able to explain the recent push for modernization and seems to be more useful for predicting the effects of that modernization. Ultimately, Bickford argues that professionalization can explain why the military withdrew from politics and focused on internal issues in a way which the factional model cannot.⁵⁴

While the validity of professionalization as the general explanation for changing civil-military relations in China has been offered, professionalization can clearly be seen in many particular aspects of the CCP-PLA relationship. Within the PLA, changes have taken place to promote professionalism through economic divestiture and changes in leadership. With economic divestiture occurring in 1998 following an order from then President Jiang Zemin, the PLA was stripped of its large-scale commercial enterprises and forced to rely on state coffers for its funding. The reasons for this command and its resulting effect on PLA professionalism have been discussed by Thomas Bickford, James Mulvenon, and Dongmin Lee. With its origins deep in the self-sufficiency required of the PLA during the revolutionary period, the army has long been involved in economic endeavors. However, economic involvement peaked when the PLA began to expand from farming and small-scale production to national level commercial

⁵⁴ Bickford, "A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979," 1-37.

enterprises which competed with civilian businesses in the PLA, Inc. era of the 1980's and 1990's. As Bickford pointed out, the commercialism of that era had reached a turning point forcing Jiang Zemin to divest the PLA of its interest as it became rife with corruption.⁵⁵

According to James Mulvenon, the divestiture came about as a bargain between the PLA and the CCP in which the PLA received a pay out for its holdings and a promise of increased budgeting while the CCP gained an army which was re-focused on the war-fighting capability. Dongmin Lee took an alternate stance and argued that because China's civil-military relations were marked by features of both objective and subjective civilian control the divestiture happened as an imposition by the CCP leaders on the PLA through its methods of subjective control. Additionally, the PLA complied because it was in the national interest and in the PLA self-interest to have a force which was divested and more professional.⁵⁶ Regardless of the motivations, divestiture moved Chinese civil-military relations further along in its goal of professionalization.

As professionalism has taken root in the PLA and in CCP-PLA relations, the PLA itself has changed with a new generation of leadership taking control from the revolutionary generations of the past. Cheng Li concluded in a study on the new generation of PLA leaders that they are increasingly better educated, more focused on military affairs, and younger than their past counterparts.⁵⁷ Additionally, June Teufel Dryer studied this new generation of leaders and drew similar conclusions of this young, educated, and technologically proficient generation

⁵⁵ Thomas J. Bickford, "The People's Liberation Army and its Changing Economic Roles," in *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: the Transformation of the People's Liberation Army*, ed. Nan Li, (London: Routledge, 2006): 161-177.

Thomas J. Bickford, "Institutional Syncretism and the Chinese Armed Forces," in *Reconfiguring Institutions Across Space and Time: Syncretic Responses to Challenges of Political and Economic Transformation*, eds. Dennis Galvin and Rudra Sil, (Palgrave Macmillan, March 2007): 61-82.

⁵⁶ Lee, Dongmin. 437-453.

⁵⁷ Cheng Li, "The New Military Elite: Generational Profile and Contradictory Trends," in *Civil Military Relations in Today's China: Swimming in a New Sea* eds. Kristen Gunness and David M. Finkelstein, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2007): 48-73.

of PLA officers.⁵⁸ As this generation has evolved, they have strived to identify increasingly with the Huntington model of a professional officer corps.

While the PLA has evolved in a professional manner, change has also been increasingly characteristic among the leadership of the CCP. Just as the PLA leaders evolved away from the images of their predecessors, the CCP leadership has also transformed and shifted away from the leadership styles of its past. Joseph Fewsmith and Yu Bin both explore these changes and their implications for civil-military relations and Chinese society at large. Chinese party politics have undergone generational change as power has been handed from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping and then on to Jiang Zemin and the “fourth generation” with Hu Jintao.⁵⁹ As Fewsmith noted, each generation has been marked by distinct characteristics with the “fourth generation” being less devoted to ideology and less charismatic with reigns no longer based in personal control.⁶⁰ Through biographical analysis, Yu Bin also concluded that this fourth generation is different than the leaders of the past as they have integrated into positions of authority through different methods, lack personal control, and are generally less charismatic.⁶¹

In addition to focusing on the shift toward professionalism in civil-military relations, attention has also been devoted to the future trajectory of the CCP-PLA relationship. Scholars such as Jeremy Paltiel, Andrew Scobell, and David Shambaugh offer competing projections. Paltiel argues that because of contradictions and changes, the CCP-PLA relationship will face

⁵⁸ June Teufel Dryer, “The New Officer Corps: Implications for the Future,” *The China Quarterly*, No 146: Special Issue: China’s Military in Transition (June 1996): 315-335.

⁵⁹ The term “fourth generation” was derived from a speech given by Deng Xiaoping after the Tiananmen Square crackdown in which he referred to Mao Zedong as the “core” of the first generation, himself as the “core” of the second generation, and Jiang Zemin as the “core” of the third generation. Accordingly, the latest generation is the fourth generation with Hu Jintao as its leader. Joseph Fewsmith, “Generational Transition in China,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 25 (Autumn 2002): 35.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 23-35.

⁶¹ Yu Bin, “The Fourth-Generation Leaders and the New Military Elite,” in *Civil Military Relations in Today’s China: Swimming in a New Sea* eds. Kristen Gunness and David M. Finkelstein, (Armonk NY: M. E. Sharpe Inc, 2007): 74-95.

challenges in the future. As professionalization has disengaged the CCP elite from the PLA hierarchy, the two will be less connected making the relationship rife with possibility for conflicts.⁶² Andrew Scobell presents a different vision of a nationalized PLA loyal to the state. With the PLA dependent upon the state for funding and with legislation orienting the PLA toward the state, Scobell argues that *guojiahua*, or nationalization of the army, is occurring and pushing civil-military relations away from party control.⁶³ David Shambaugh has written extensively about China's military professionalism culminating in his recent book, *Modernizing China's Military*.⁶⁴ Originally a proponent of the symbiosis model of party-army relations, Shambaugh highlighted changes taking place such as the promulgation of new laws and the advancements toward regularization and professionalization now offering an argument which introduces the idea that the army is moving toward nationalization. However, Shambaugh also recognizes that this type of nationalization cannot truly take place until the state is no longer controlled by the party.⁶⁵

In sum much literature has been written about trends within the CCP-PLA relationship. Much less, however, has been written about current trends and their implications. This thesis, then, will pick up where many of these authors have left off to draw implications from many of the changes taking place as China increasingly emphasizes military professionalism. After

⁶² Jeremy Paltiel, "PLA Allegiance on Parade: Civil-Military Relations in Transition," *The China Quarterly*, No. 143 (September 1995): 784-800.

⁶³ Andrew Scobell, "Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations," 427-450.

Andrew Scobell, "China's Evolving Civil-Military Relations: Creeping *Guojiahua*," in *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: the Transformation of the People's Liberation Army* ed. Nan Li, (London: Routledge, 2006): 25-39.

⁶⁴ David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁶⁵ David Shambaugh has produced a number of pieces discussing issues related to civil-military relations including the following:

"Civil-Military Relations in China: Party-Army or National Military," *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 16 (2002): 10-27.

"Commentary on Civil-Military Relations in China: The Search for New Paradigms," in *Seeking Truth from Facts: a Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era* eds. James Mulvenon and Andrew N. D. Yang, (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 2001): 39-49.

"The Soldier and the State in China: The Political Work System in the People's Liberation Army," *The China Quarterly*, No 127, Special Issue: The Individual and the State in China (September 1991): 527-568.

assessing these changes, I will indicate some of the consequences for the relationship between the party, the army, and the state. Lastly, the thesis will conclude with consideration of the strength of this new trend in civil-military relations and its possible future trajectory.

IV. The Current Trend in CCP-PLA Relations: Institutionalization

While the CCP-PLA relationship is still certainly evolving within the professionalization phase, the current trend in their relationship can be characterized as increasingly institutionalized. The word “institutionalized” will be used to indicate a shift in Chinese civil-military relations away from informal and personal methods of party control of the army toward relations which are based in the authority of institutions, formalized methods of interactions, and an increase in attention to the role of law. Beginning with the reforms of Deng and through the succeeding eras of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, channels of personal influence and informal methods of control are withering in favor of codification and formalization of roles. Additionally, another player has been introduced into the party-army relation in a more significant way, the state. This shift away from party-army symbiosis toward institutionalization can be attributed mainly to three main categories of changes in China: changes made to the party and its leadership, changes made to the army and its officer corps, and changes made to the state.

a. Changes Occurring in the Party

As the party has evolved from its early stages of revolution and focus on ideology, its aims and its leadership have evolved as well. An array of factors has contributed to the party of the late 20th and 21st Century being markedly different from the party of Mao and his generation of leadership. In total, these changes contribute to the growing institutionalization of relations between the party, the army, and the state. The party leadership has trended toward emphasis on

technology and education over ideology leading to a more formalized set of interactions with the army. Additionally, the elites of the party no longer have warfare experience shattering the “interlocking directorate” which characterized earlier party-army relations. As elites have changed, their style of leadership has evolved as well. The personal credibility and charismatic personality, characteristic of the “paramount leader” style of Mao and Deng, has been supplanted by leaders such as Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao who no longer have the personal connections of the leadership of the past and must actively work to consolidate their power over the army. Beyond changes to the party leadership, a new language has emerged surrounding the control of the army by the party. None of these factors individually but rather the combination of changes has contributed to the party shifting away from a symbiotic relationship with the army and toward a more institutionalized and formalized set of interactions based in its authority as the single-party in control.

i. The Rise of New Generations of Leaders

One of the most pervasive factors related to the changes occurring in the party has been the rise of new generations of leadership within the CCP. The leadership of the CCP can be classified into four generations based on common experiences and characteristics. The first generation was that of the Long March veterans and those who fought the KMT to found the People’s Republic of China. Tightly bonded from their war experience and devotion to ideology, they were closely linked to their PLA counterparts as in many cases they served overlapping functions. During this era, party-army relations were marked by “interlocking directorates,” as the “military elites were also party elites; they were dual-role elites.”⁶⁶ The second generation of leaders, those of the Deng Xiaoping era, had many of the same experiences as the first generation

⁶⁶ Paltiel, “PLA Allegiance on Parade: Civil-Military Relations in Transition,” 785.

but had different aims and goals as they worked to transform China into a great world power through reform. Great thinkers and leaders who were bold in their decision-making, they were able to bring about economic, social, and political transformation to a rapidly modernizing China. Although the first and second generation of leaders achieved different goals, they both enjoyed control of the army based in their “extraordinary self-confidence derived from years of political activity across a full spectrum of issues and from the widely accepted belief that victory in revolution legitimized their rule.”⁶⁷

However, the third and fourth generations of leaders never had “the luxury of such self-confidence.”⁶⁸ The third generation of leaders, those of Jiang Zemin and his era of party members, laid the ground work for the changes which came with the fourth generation. This third generation was a departure from the earlier generations as they had “careers which were diametrically opposite of their revolutionary predecessors.”⁶⁹ Their personal characteristics were also drastically different as they were “better educated and more technocratic” with less military experience.⁷⁰ With similar characteristics, the fourth generation emerged out of the CCP’s Sixteenth Party Congress during November of 2002. Taking over the country while it was “experiencing dazzling economic growth and a confident standing in the world,” the fourth generation assumed power during an era in which China had great opportunity.⁷¹ However, with great opportunity came great challenge as China struggled with issues of “government corruption, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and increasing demands for political reforms.”⁷² Although these opportunities and challenges gave the fourth generation the potential for

⁶⁷ Fewsmith, 23.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁷¹ Wei-Chin Lee, “China’s Military After the Sixteenth Party Congress: Long March to Eternity,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 38, Issue 4/5. (2003): 416.

⁷² Ibid., 416.

greatness, this generation has not made any of the dramatic decisions of generations of the past and has “demonstrated little charisma or desire to be great.”⁷³

That lack of charisma or desire to make risky political decisions of Hu Jintao and his generation of leaders is related to their common backgrounds and historical experiences, backgrounds and experiences which diverge greatly from those of the first and second generation. The fourth generation was destined to be different for “the simple fact that Hu’s generation will be the first generation of leadership in the People’s Republic of China with no significant personal memory of pre-1949 China.”⁷⁴ They did not experience the turmoil of the civil war, the drama of the Long March, or the successes of the early years of the PRC causing them to lack the drive and motivation which earlier generations possessed as a result of the vindication of a successful revolution. Additionally, Hu and his generation of leaders “were the first in modern China to grow to maturity during relatively peaceful times.”⁷⁵ As a result, this generation did not have to worry about political disruption during their early years but could rather focus on academic pursuits and become proficient in such fields as science and technology. Their academic choices differed from party leaders of the past as these technological studies were at the expense of traditional Chinese studies causing them to lack the common academic base which many past generations held.”⁷⁶

While their incipient years of development may have been marked by relative peace, they share one traumatic experience which was to affect their methods of thinking for years to come: the Cultural Revolution. After working to pass their exams and gain entrance to college, the Cultural Revolution put the lives of an entire generation on hold as the school system was

⁷³ Yu, 81.

⁷⁴ Fewsmith, 24.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 24.

dismantled. They found themselves doubting the system in which they had developed as their “early faith in Mao and socialist China” was smashed while they watched “the country destroy itself in a paroxysm of violence.”⁷⁷ The damage wrought by Cultural Revolution blind adherence to doctrine and ideology was not easily shed and brought them to be less “devoted to any ‘ism’ and more willing to ‘fix’ problems with greater technological and intellectual capabilities.”⁷⁸ These technocratic leaders may not make any dramatic or profound changes but they will approach problems cautiously and will try to avoid making large errors as past generations have.

Differentiating the fourth generation further was that nearly all members of the generation “have no military background or identifiable networks of supporters within the military.”⁷⁹ Leaders like Mao Zedong could count on loyalty from the army as they had served alongside its leaders in the revolution. However, as this generation lacks that experience they accordingly lack “the authority of their predecessors to cross the boundaries between party and army.”⁸⁰ Without the authority of military experience, these leaders have had to actively focus on gaining respectability and power within the military ranks. Through maneuvers which seek to gain the favor of constituencies within the PLA as well as by slowly integrating themselves into lower levels of power, this generation has risen through those ranks as their power bases have grown. In his ascension to power, Hu Jintao followed a similar process in which he had to shore up his base of power within the PLA specifically before he assumed total control.⁸¹ That process and its implications will be discussed more in depth in following sections.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁷⁸ Yu, 81.

⁷⁹ James Mulvenon, “PLA Divestiture and Civil-Military Relations: Implications for the Sixteenth Party Congress Leadership,” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 2 (Spring 2002): 5.

⁸⁰ Joffe, “Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect,” 309.

⁸¹ Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979,” 24.

Beyond their shared background and historical experience, this fourth generation also came to power within the CCP and state hierarchies in different manners than past generations. They gained their power through ascension within government bureaucracies and by trying to avoid making decisions which would harm their careers. Armed with better levels of education and an emphasis on technocratic methods, these leaders focused on creating effective policies and governing their increasingly complex nation rather than striking out in “bold new political directions.”⁸² As devotion to Marxist-Leninist thought was eroded by the events of the Cultural Revolution, this generation emphasized rule by law and good governance. In June 2003, the party’s journal *Qiushi* emphasized this point in arguing that all party members “should be subject to the rule of law, and the National People’s Congress should be the highest law-making body.”⁸³

The implications of the changes occurring in PLA leadership on relations between the party and the army have been pervasive. What the third generation of leaders set into motion, the fourth generation brought to further completion. While the “interlocking directorate” began to dismantle with the third generation of leadership, who like their successors had little military experience, it is now broken as the fourth generation of leaders severed the CCP-PLA connection with its lack of personal connections or military experience. PLA loyalty to CCP leaders is no longer assumed and any potential leader has to build up a power base within the PLA before attempting to gain great power. In total, these third and fourth generations of leaders have been a large factor in the weakening of personalized relations between the party and the army, greatly contributing to the institutionalization of relations.

⁸² Fewsmith, 23.

⁸³ Yu, 82-83.

ii. Regression of the “Paramount Leader”

Closely related to the changes brought by the new generations of PLA leadership has been the decline of the “paramount leader.” The experience of the PLA during the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen Square demonstrated how the individual power and decisions of Mao Zedong or Deng Xiaoping could trump factionalism, power politics, or rules governing the interactions between the PLA and the CCP. Mao’s cult of personality, intense charisma, and personal power within the PLA allowed him to call upon the army to reign in the madness of the Cultural Revolution. Additionally, Deng Xiaoping’s similar stature and power gave him the confidence that the PLA would quell the student demonstrations taking place in Tiananmen Square when he commanded. While the PLA may have voiced some dissension with the orders related to the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen Square, both leaders had “used their personal authority and personal ties to consolidate their leadership in the face of military dissension.”⁸⁴ However, “paramount leaders” like Mao or Deng no longer characterize Chinese politics or the relations between the party and the army.

Currently, “a singular leader does not sit at the pinnacle of the decision-making structure ruling by power fiat. Rather, a collective leadership or single group unit” in conjunction with a leader at the apex of the power makes decisions.⁸⁵ Because of the changes brought by the newer generations of CCP leaders, the authority now “rests mainly on their institutional position, not on personal stature and long-standing ties.”⁸⁶ Without a personal military base of support or the paramount position, these leaders will “not be able to involve the PLA in politics as Mao or Deng,” and “will not be able to take for granted that the military will respond unequivocally to

⁸⁴ Paltiel, “PLA Allegiance on Parade,” 796.

⁸⁵ Alex Chopan, “A Table for Two: Jiang Zemin and the PLA,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 11, Number 31, (2002): 281.

⁸⁶ Joffe, “Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect,” 309.

his summons for political intervention.”⁸⁷ As party-army relations shift away from the paramount leader model in which one leader has complete control toward a model in which new leaders must work to attain their influence, the relationship is evolving into one in which “neither institution can dictate to the other.”⁸⁸

The decline of the “paramount leader” and the shift toward leaders who rule more by collective contributes greatly to the institutionalization of relations occurring in Chinese civil-military relations. The “paramount leader” was previously able to flaunt existing rules which dictated relations between the PLA, the CCP, and the state in favor of actions which he desired. However, the new rulers do not have that capability and must work through established methods to interact with the PLA. As relations between the leader and the PLA become more standardized and more routine, institutionalization will increasingly replace the personalistic and informal methods of interaction which characterized the past in Chinese civil-military relations.

iii. Methods of Power Consolidation and Leadership Transitions

Institutionalization is further demonstrated by the trend toward regularization of recent leadership transitions and the concurrent methods which new leaders have to undertake to consolidate their power. The process of power consolidation and the related transitions among recent leaders of the PLA have been complicated and complex with many obstacles during the transition. While leadership transition and power consolidation are codependent processes, they occur at different rates. Given the lack of military credibility of the new generation of leaders, being transitioned as the leader does not necessarily guarantee a successful consolidation of power. Because of the nature of that process, the ascensions of both Jiang and Hu are distinct with their power consolidations occurring at different stages of their transition process. While

⁸⁷ Ibid., 309.

⁸⁸ Mulvenon, “An Uneasy Bargain,” 2.

giving recognition that in the processes examined the transitions and the power consolidations occurred in roughly the same time frame, for the sake of the developing distinct arguments, the methods of consolidation will be considered first with a discussion of the final phases of the actual transitions to follow.

The methods of consolidation employed by Jiang and Hu are closely related to the characteristics of the third and fourth generation of leaders as well as the regression of the “paramount leader.” Because of their military backgrounds and specific personalities, leaders like Mao and Deng did not have to work to build a power base within the PLA as the characteristics which made them “paramount leaders” also made them powerful within the PLA. However, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao both lacked these personal connections and personality traits upon assuming the leadership of China and had to use different methods to consolidate their power.

Jiang Zemin was not originally the chosen successor of Deng Xiaoping but was rather “parachuted into Beijing during the height of the 1989 crisis to replace outgoing party chief Zhao Ziyang.”⁸⁹ Jiang, a technocrat with absolutely no military experience, was to become the “PRC’s first real civilian leader with limited personal authority and charisma.”⁹⁰ However, he did manage “to develop an unprecedented institutional base, which enabled him to preside over a vast central bureaucracy encompassing the party, the state, and the military.”⁹¹ Deng aided the consolidation by designating Jiang as the “core” of the party in making him the leader of the party, army, and state through his assumption of the positions of General Secretary, CMC Chairman and State President.⁹²

⁸⁹ Yu, 79.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 79.

⁹¹ Ibid., 79.

⁹² Paltiel, “PLA Allegiance on Parade,” 798.

To take control of these positions, Jiang needed to win over the army and acted strategically and methodologically to gain the allegiance of the PLA hierarchy through unparalleled promotions of senior military commanders, along with budgetary increases, and visits to particular units of the PLA.⁹³ He paid close attention to personnel policy in the PLA by personally promoting “more than fifty officers to the rank of full general.”⁹⁴ Jiang was also closely involved in the personnel transitions which took place in the Central Military Commission (CMC) during his tenure. As Jiang gained influence, he was able to shore his power further within the PLA hierarchy by promoting his own supporters such as Zhang Wannian, who became PLA General Political Department Director, and Chi Haotian, who was appointed to Defense Minister—both replacing former Deng loyalists.⁹⁵

In moving beyond the PLA hierarchy, Jiang reached out to different constituencies within the PLA to build a broad base of support. He attempted to sway interests within groups which covered the spectrum of important sources of power within the PLA currying favor with such groups as the political commissars, the military academies, the People’s Armed Police (PAP), the General Staff Department, the General Logistics Department, and all of the forces, among others.⁹⁶ Jiang can be described as a “consummate politician,” as he worked to be all things to all interests within the PLA in his effort to curry their favor.⁹⁷ Rather than rule absolutely, Jiang focused on coalition-building and arbitration between different factions to reach a decision.

Hu Jintao, the leader to succeed Jiang Zemin, also assumed his role with no military background and a need to work to consolidate his power within the PLA. While Deng had

⁹³ Joffe, “Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect,” 309.

⁹⁴ Shambaugh, *Modernizing China’s Military*, 35.

⁹⁵ Chopan, 284.

⁹⁶ A more complete list of the interests Jiang has catered to can be found in David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China’s Military*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 36.

⁹⁷ Shambaugh, *Modernizing China’s Military*, 36.

helped Jiang take over by ear-marking positions for him, Jiang helped Hu in his transition by inciting a process in which Hu became slowly involved in domestic affairs, national security, and military affairs.⁹⁸ As Jiang had ascended to power during the post-Tiananmen Square era, he realized these areas were of particular importance in terms of power consolidation as the nation could be vulnerable if a leader was not sufficiently in control of all three. After Hu progressed from the provincial level of party politics to the central bureaucracy, he was first integrated into positions related to domestic issues with national security following as he was allowed to become increasingly a part of “China’s foreign policy toward the United States prior to the Sixteenth Party Congress of November 2002.”⁹⁹ His triad of control was near completion when he became the vice-chairman of the CMC in 1999, as in the year prior Hu became vice president of the PRC. In becoming vice-chair of the CMC, Hu gained access to the top leadership of the PLA and was able to work directly with that critical power base to earn the PLA’s respect and build his credibility before assuming complete control upon Jiang’s later resignation.

Once Hu had gained more control, he worked to further his favor within the PLA through his actions. It is speculated that Hu gained considerable respect among the PLA through his handling of two incidents: the SARS epidemic and the Ming submarine tragedy, both of which occurred in 2003. While Jiang had not yet resigned his CMC chairmanship during these two crises, Hu emerged from the incidents having demonstrated control and his growing power within the PLA. Not long after the close of the National People’s Congress in March of 2003, the SARS epidemic rose to world concern as the disease spread throughout China eventually being “exposed by a military doctor in Beijing.”¹⁰⁰ Jiang Zemin largely failed in the public eye

⁹⁸ Yu, 85.

⁹⁹ Yu, 86.

¹⁰⁰ James Mulvenon, “The Crucible of Tragedy: SARS, the Ming 361 Accident, and Chinese Party-Army Relations,” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 8 (Fall 2003): 1.

as he “remained silent on the epidemic until April 26, 2003” when he met with a visiting dignitary and finally remarked on the incident in saying “China had ‘scored notable achievements in containing the disease.’”¹⁰¹ Contrastingly, Hu Jintao along with his premier, Wen Jiabao, at the beginning of the crisis, “took the leading roles in pushing the transparency policy once the extent of the disease in PLA hospitals in Beijing had become known.”¹⁰² Hu used his positive handling of the situation to gain momentum in his military consolidation by making “aggressive plays for an independent power base in the military, chairing a Politburo meeting on military reorganization that reportedly was not attended by Jiang.”¹⁰³

The Ming submarine tragedy also showed Hu’s growing power within the PLA. In late April or early May of 2003, a diesel-powered Ming-class submarine, numbered 361, suffered a mechanical malfunction during an exercise in the Yellow Sea causing the death of its entire crew of seventy. While the exact cause of the accident is unknown, the aftermath and the reactions of both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao are illustrative of the dynamic shift between the two and Hu’s power consolidation. From the beginning, Jiang attempted to domineer state coverage of the incident in an attempt to “project his authority as the head of the CMC.”¹⁰⁴ However, Hu Jintao, along with being apologetic and mournful, used the event to illustrate how the country should “be learning from the accident to advance the country’s national defense capacity and speed the PLA’s modernization drive.”¹⁰⁵ In turning the tragedy into an opportunity for reform and modernization, Hu could gain support from those within the PLA who wanted to see an increase in modernization. In sum, both the SARS incident and the Ming 361 accident demonstrated “Hu

¹⁰¹ Mulvenon, “The Crucible of Tragedy,” 5.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

Jintao's successful capturing of political momentum," and "led some outside observers to conclude that he was solidifying his power more rapidly than expected."¹⁰⁶

While the power consolidation efforts of both Jiang and Hu were different in their methods, both contributed to the growing institutionalization of relations between the party, the army, and the state. The divergence of Jiang and Hu from the paths of Mao and Deng show that the earlier era of control over the PLA based in an "interlocking directorate" and personal control ended as "Deng came to be the last truly paramount leader of China."¹⁰⁷ The focus that Jiang and Hu both devoted to the winning of the PLA in their journeys to become leaders of the PRC illustrate how relations are shifting away from informal and personalistic ties between the PLA and the CCP and toward relations which are grounded in more formalized relations and bases of power which were cultivated rather than organically developed.

Paired with complex and nuanced processes of power consolidation, the final stages of Jiang and Hu's leadership transitions also featured characteristics which are significant for institutionalization. Although the transitions have been far from perfect, they were less rocky than in the past and show the growing level of institutionalization within the CCP. Despite Jiang Zemin being chosen to succeed Deng in an era which was rife with conflict and in a power play which replaced Deng's original successor, once Jiang was chosen to take over, he worked toward consolidation of his power and building of power bases rather than factionalism or in-fighting. As demonstrated by his methods of power consolidation, he sought to be a coalition builder and a leader of groups rather than an inciter of factional politics. Additionally, Jiang having been chosen by Deng during his lifetime contributed to the smoothness of the transition. When Deng assumed power, Mao had already died, and Deng was able to emerge as a leader only after

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰⁷ Yu, 79.

political sleight of hand, maneuvering within the party, and wresting of power from Mao's chosen successor Hua Guofeng. However, Jiang's assumption of power with Deng's approval was worth much in party politics.

The transition from Jiang to Hu, although riddled with its share of bumps, also demonstrated the current trend in leadership transition of increasing regularization. Hu was earmarked as Jiang's successor when he was slowly phased in to different aspects of policy making with the final transition taking place in the CMC. Although Jiang did retain the position of CMC chairman after he had relinquished his other positions, military affairs was the last arena in which Hu was to attain control, so it seems fitting, albeit complicated, that Jiang relinquished that power last. Additionally, some even argue that Jiang's retention of the chairmanship was homage to Deng Xiaoping and demonstrated his desire to mimic Deng's reign down to the detail as Deng also relinquished the CMC chairmanship in a similar manner.¹⁰⁸ A PRC newspaper went as far as to say that retaining the CMC chairmanship, although causing some conflict, aided in "effecting the smooth transition from the old to the new generation."¹⁰⁹ When Jiang did finally transition fully with Hu by stepping down from the CMC Chairmanship in September of 2004, he explained his actions as a result of the "complicated and ever-changing international situation," as well as "the heavy tasks of national defense and army building."¹¹⁰

What is significant for institutionalization when examining the leadership transitions of Deng to Jiang and Jiang to Hu is not the ups and downs of the transitions, but rather, the trend in totality towards a more regularized and predictable process. Leadership transitions have evolved significantly since the era of Mao and are being increasingly marked by characteristics which are

¹⁰⁸ James Mulvenon, "The PLA and the 16th Party Congress," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 5 (Winter 2003): 20-21.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹⁰ James Mulvenon, "The King is Dead! Long Live the King! The CMC Leadership Transition from Jiang to Hu," *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 13 (Winter 2005): 2.

discernible to those observing Chinese politics. Transitions may not be completely regularized, but the trend appears to be toward a more stable process in which an heir apparent is designated by his predecessor and maneuvers through various positions within the party, army, and state apparatuses before assuming the lead role. Having this more regularized transition process makes the relationship between the party and the army more steady, more dependable and shifted toward institutionalized relations.

iv. The “Absolute Leadership” of the Party

Another factor contributing to the institutionalization of the relations between the party and the army is unrelated to changes within the leadership of the party itself but rather to the language that the party has emphasized with respect to its relationship with the army. In recent years, the party has stressed its “absolute leadership” over the army with little concrete reference as to why the party deserves such loyalty. As ideology has faded as the substance of the army’s loyalty to the party, the phrase of “absolute leadership” has emerged as the replacement.

In numerous speeches given by party leadership, newspaper articles written in party publications, and pieces of party writing, the importance of the “absolute leadership” of the party over the army is seamlessly mentioned with scant reference to the source of this power. A range of CMC leaders tout this principle with CMC vice chairman Xu Caihou stating that it is important for the military to “adhere to the *Party’s absolute leadership* and ensure the correct orientation of army building,” along with General Guo Boxiong, also vice chairman of the CMC, similarly stating that the army must “unswervingly adhere to the fundamental principle and system of the *Party’s absolute leadership* over the military.”¹¹¹ Additionally, recent Defense White Papers, which outline China’s overall defense strategies and are released on a varying

¹¹¹ Dawei Li, “PLA Generals Swear Loyalty to Party Leadership,” *China Military Online*, 7 March, 2007, accessed 1 January 2009 from <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/>

basis, reference this phrase. The 2004 Defense White Paper in its section on “innovating political work,” places adherence to “the fundamental principle and system of the *Party’s absolute leadership* over the armed forces,” as one of its overarching tenets.¹¹² This sentiment is further demonstrated in the 2006 Defense White Paper as it lists one of the basic tasks of the PLA as “guaranteeing— politically, ideologically, and organizationally— the nature of the people’s army under the *absolute leadership of the Party.*”¹¹³ Most currently, the 2008 Defense White Paper continues to echo this party line in emphasizing the importance of ensuring “the *Party’s absolute leadership* over the armed forces.”¹¹⁴

A result of China’s fading ideology, these speeches and pieces of PLA thought show how the PLA no longer focuses on “the specific philosophical tenets of particular ideology espoused by the CCP, but instead concentrates on the more instrumental ethos of single-party control of the PLA by the CCP.”¹¹⁵ As the CCP no longer has the revolutionary ideals and ideological foundations which drove the relationship between the CCP and the PLA in the past, it now relies on bombast and strong language to inspire in the PLA the loyalty it desires. The implication of this shift in emphasis is great as it indicates a change in the fundamental relationship between the CCP and the PLA. Mao’s dictum of the “*party controls the gun,*” is now reaching its full realization as the party as an institutional body rather than any sort of ideology or controlling theory is what is commanding loyalty from the army. Just as leaders consolidated their power because of their institutional positions, the party now reserves the right to control the army

¹¹² “China’s National Defense in 2004,” (Defense White Paper), issued by the Information Office of the State Council, December 2004, accessed 6 January 2009 from <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/>, Section III: Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese Characteristics, Sub-Section: Innovating Political Work.

¹¹³ “China’s National Defense in 2006,” (Defense White Paper), issued by the Information Office of the State Council, December 2007, accessed 6 January 2009 from <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/>, Section IV: The People’s Liberation Army, Sub-Section: Political Work.

¹¹⁴ “China’s National Defense in 2008,” (Defense White Paper), issued by the Information Office of the State Council, January 2009, Accessed 6 March 2009 from <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/>, Section III: Reform and Development of the PLA, Sub-Section: Strengthening Ideological and Political Work.

¹¹⁵ Mulvenon, “An Uneasy Bargain,” 34.

because of its position as the single-party in control. The army must “support the ‘absolute leadership of the party,’ seemingly no matter what the party believes.”¹¹⁶

This shift makes the relationship between the CCP and the PLA more stable as it is based in a foundation that is steadier, the control of the CCP of China. The basis for army loyalty in the past, the success of Marxist-Leninist thought as a theory, was much more volatile and strained the relationship of the army and the party in such traumatic events as the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen Square. As Marxist-Leninist theory faltered as a ruling system, so too did the loyalty of the army to the party. By having the loyalty of the army based in the party’s institutional position as the single-reigning party, the relationship is more likely to weather ups and downs so long as the CCP continues to be the leading party of the PRC.

b. Changes Occurring in the Army

While changes occurred within the party which contributed to the growing institutionalization of relations, change has been dynamic with the army evolving as well. As the party’s shifts were largely linked to the different characteristics of the new generations of CCP leadership, a pervasive trend has also been overarching in affecting change within the PLA as well, modernization and professionalization. Revitalized by Deng in its most recent iteration, modernization and professionalization have contributed to force upgrades, changes within the officer corps, shifting PLA roles, responsibilities, and loyalties, and the economic divestiture of the PLA. Altogether, these changes have altered the way in which the PLA interacts with both the party and the state as opportunities for personalized and informal channels of interaction have declined in favor of institutionalized relations based in the army’s professionalism.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 34

i. The Army's Force Modernization

As the 1978 reforms brought about by Deng and his supporters affected much political, economic, and societal change, many in China also began to realize the necessity of updating and modernizing the ground force based and technologically lagging PLA. This conclusion was reached as many realized that warfare notions had changed as the principle of people's war was replaced with "limited, local war." While people's war focused on winning wars of attrition and the value of strategic retreat, in this new concept of "limited, local war," the PLA would need to be a more streamlined and efficient force capable of fighting more high-tech wars with strategic campaigns.¹¹⁷ The emphasis had shifted away from being able to engage in all out war with such past foes as the Soviet Union or the United States to a war type in which the PLA needed to adapt to limited battle scenarios requiring China to "project force rapidly and decisively to the diverse terrains and conditions of China's continental and maritime frontiers."¹¹⁸ Accordingly, the PLA needed to be able to operate under joint force conditions as battles would not just be waged on the ground.

While Deng initiated the modernization reforms of the 1980's, more recent world events have further proved the need for force modernization. The Gulf War of 1991, the US military's "revolution in military affairs," (RMA) and the NATO campaign in the former Yugoslavia in 1999 all had landmark effects on the way China viewed its forces and capabilities. The Gulf War was the first event to really shake the PLA's notion of the new types of war and particularly its vision of the ability of the US to engage in these types of battle as PLA analysts originally

¹¹⁷ A thorough discussion of the shifts in the PLA's notions of war from people's war to limited war under high-technology conditions can be found in David Shambaugh's recent book, *Modernizing China's Military* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), Chapter 3: Doctrine and Training.

¹¹⁸ Lyman Miller, "The Political Implications of PLA Professionalism," in *Civil Military Relations in Today's China: Swimming in a New Sea* eds. Kristen Gunness and David M. Finkelstein, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. 2007): 132.

believed that the US would be “bogged down in ground war.” Highly to the contrary, the US showcased a sleek force capable of using electronic warfare, highly technical forms of munitions, precision bombing, coordinated joint force attacks with an emphasis on attack aircraft, and minimized loss of life. As such, “the Gulf War precipitated a thorough revision of operational doctrine and training in the PLA,” as emphasis was shifted toward modernization and technology along with more joint force training.¹¹⁹

Another demonstration by the US military, the revolution in military affairs, also greatly affected the Chinese view of force capability and the importance of modernization. The RMA focused on the “application of information technology to the battlefield and contemporary warfare.”¹²⁰ The American military increasingly trained to fight a more technical war aided by sophisticated intelligence; so accordingly, the Chinese shifted increasingly away from conventional force projection and toward the information and technical based sources of power needed to win the current type of battle. This idea of RMA has greatly affected Chinese thought on military power and capability as many recent Defense White Papers, which outline China’s national defense strategy among other military goals, have referenced that the RMA “with Chinese characteristics,” needs to take place within the PLA. The 2008 Defense White Paper recognized that the process of modernizing to be capable in an RMA affected world began in the 1990’s with evolution toward RMA goals as “the only way to modernize the military.”¹²¹ It further stated that to modernize according to RMA, the PLA has “accelerated the development of weaponry and equipment, stepped up the development of the arms and services of the armed

¹¹⁹ Shambaugh, *Modernizing China’s Military*, 69-70.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹²¹ “China’s National Defense in 2008,” Section III: Reform and Development of the PLA.

forces,” as well as has “optimized its system and structure, and reduced the number of personnel by 700,000.”¹²²

Lastly, the 1999 NATO campaign in Yugoslavia reinforced many of the ideas about military capability which the Gulf War and the RMA had already incited in the PLA. While many PLA analysts noted the campaign as an example of the US attempting to “extend its global ‘hegemony,’” others extracted conclusions related to Chinese force capability and modernization. The PLA was impressed with the use of aerial bombardment and noted the importance of electronic jamming, destruction of command and control infrastructure, and the role of “information dominance” through use of satellites.¹²³

As the PLA modernizes, it will increasingly seek “greater autonomy over affairs it considers to be fully in its corporate domain—training, doctrine, force structure, personnel appointments, military education, and protection of national security.”¹²⁴ The PLA is focusing on capability and improving mechanisms related to the battlefield as well as aiming to shed past political involvement as it realizes the importance of focusing on technical capability in the new era of war. As the PLA develops its own domain of control by focusing on affairs distinctly related to its military capability, the PLA is contributing to the institutionalization of its relations to the CCP. In turning toward its own distinct domain of affairs and away from intervention in party or society politics, the PLA is removing the opportunity for informal and personal-based relations between the CCP and the PLA allowing their relations to be more based in formal interactions.

¹²² Ibid., Section III: Reform and Development of the PLA.

¹²³ Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 85.

¹²⁴ David Shambaugh, “Civil-Military Relations in China: Party-Army or National Military,” *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, 16 (2002): 18.

ii. Professionalization and the Evolving Officer Corps

While professionalization may seem to be a feature arising with Deng's 1980's reforms, professionalization actually has a longer history in CCP-PLA relations. The first instance of professionalization occurred in the mid-1950's and was linked to Soviet Union assisted modernization efforts focused on upgrading to a more modern war-fighting capability with concomitant transformation of the officer corps along more Huntington style professional lines. However, the volatile political situation of that era interrupted efforts to professionalize as in 1959 the Minister of Defense Peng Dehuai, a proponent of professionalization, was replaced with Lin Biao whose aims centered upon increasing the more political aspects of the military. While modernization of the military did continue with Lin Biao, professionalization was shelved as an emphasis on political education became the focus of the army.¹²⁵

This current phase of professionalization grew out of the formal revision of the PRC's defense priorities at the 1985 meeting of the CMC as the leadership of China recognized that if modernization did not occur rapidly along with professionalization its forces it would be "in danger of falling even further behind," the capabilities of the world powers.¹²⁶ As such, professionalism has meant not just the turning toward military aims and capabilities by the PLA but also the "emergence of senior officers with a distinctive career path and set of life experiences [different from] from civilian elites in the party hierarchy."¹²⁷ The officer corps of the PLA, like that of the leadership of the CCP, has evolved in manners which contribute to the changes taking place in Chinese civil-military relations. Accordingly, this group of officers has begun to mimic that of the Huntingtonian ideal with common experiences and backgrounds which allow the officers as a group to develop an esprit de corps and corporate identity.

¹²⁵ Miller, 132.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 132-133.

¹²⁷ Paltiel, "PLA Allegiance on Parade: Civil-Military Relations in Transition," 797.

This generation of officers has been characterized by more advanced levels of education attained through the concurrent re-establishment of the military education system and growing emphasis on science and technology. Prompted by Deng in the 1980's, reforms were initiated which overhauled the military education system with a goal of improving "the qualities of officers' education and technological hardware," as Deng believed "the growth of professionalism of the PLA has been inseparable from modernization."¹²⁸ With Cultural Revolution-era emphasis on politicization of the military now defunct, the National Defense University was reopened in 1986 with many other military academies being established or revived during the 1980's. As the era of emphasis on political ideology at the expense of technological ability and specialization was finally coming to an end, Cultural Revolution policies of recruiting officers from the ranks were repudiated as officers were increasingly expected to have training in the military academies.¹²⁹

Deng's goal of building a technocratic coterie of officers came to fruition as increasing numbers of PLA officers attained higher levels of education with almost all senior officers attending the National Defense University at some point in their career. This increasing number of officers with technical and scientific education is remarkable especially when compared with the past education level of PLA officers. The early PLA was made up of peasants, some of whom were even illiterate, with the percentage of officers with junior college level education or higher merely 4 percent of officers at the Military Region level or higher in 1985. As Deng emphasized education and the value of technology among the PLA, the number of officers with junior college education or higher surged to 70 percent in the 1990s.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Lee, Dongmin, 444.

¹²⁹ Bickford, "A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979," 13.

¹³⁰ Li, Cheng, 55.

To attain this goal of an educated and technically competent officer corps, a number of programs have been made available to officers already commissioned as well as to civilians seeking commissions making education attainable for many. The PLA has focused on being able to provide “institutional education linked with training in units, education in military educational institutions carried on in parallel with education through regular institutions of higher learning, and domestic training combined with overseas training.”¹³¹ The National Defense University offers one year advanced training programs for officers who hold the rank of major general or above. Additionally, while many officers pursue education within China, programs have been established to allow for military exchanges in foreign countries’ military education programs. Between 2006 and 2008, the PLA sent 900 military students to more than thirty different countries. Chinese military institutions have also partnered with their counterparts in over twenty countries including the United States, Russia, Japan, and Pakistan.¹³² To obtain qualified civilians as officers, the PLA has partnerships with one hundred and seventeen civilian colleges which educate and train civilians to become officers in the “national defense student” program, a program similar to the American Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC).¹³³ These programs have been successful in recruiting educated officers as the PLA gained 30,000 college graduates from civilian universities between 1997 and 2002. With undergraduate level education increasingly becoming nearly a “prerequisite for a PLA officer who is interested in a military career,” many PLA officers are even pursuing graduate-level studies at civilian and military institutions.¹³⁴

¹³¹ “China’s National Defense in 2008,” Section III: Reform and Development of the PLA, Sub-Section: Stepping Up Personnel Training.

¹³² Ibid., Section XIII: International Security Cooperation, Sub-Section: Military Exchanges and Cooperation with Other Countries.

¹³³ Ibid., Section III: Reform and Development of the PLA, Sub-Section: Stepping Up Personnel Training.

¹³⁴ Li, Cheng, 55-56.

Along with changes made to the education levels of the officer corps, reforms were initiated which aimed to increase esprit de corps and institutional identity of the officers. After a time during the Maoist period in which ranks were abolished to promote an egalitarian nature for the army, ranks were reintroduced in 1988 and new uniforms were created which greater set apart the officers from the enlisted personnel.¹³⁵ Regulations were also developed which governed the methods under which officers were to be promoted. Personalization in the army was decreased as a shift was made in promotions toward promoting officers based more on merit and capability rather than personal or political factors. While nepotism in the PLA is still certainly present with the influence of the “princelings,” children or relatives of PLA leaders, still prevalent, steps have been taken to move away from personalistic methods of promotion and toward promotions based more on merit and in rules.¹³⁶ Establishing ranks, creating distinctive uniforms, and instituting a more formalized system of promotions all allowed officers to have more pride in their work and instilled a sense of corporate identity amongst the officer corps.¹³⁷

To try and reverse past issues of factionalism and further push the officer corps toward professionalization, the PLA has also begun enforcing term limits, strict retirement ages for its older officers, and has implemented a rotation system. In past generations of PLA officers, a strong officer could command and retain a position until retirement allowing cliques and factions to form around strong leadership. However, in 2000 the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress passed the PLA Active Duty Officer Law implementing the strict enforcement of term limits for different levels of military leadership. An individual officer at the

¹³⁵ Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of China Civil-Military Relations Since 1979,” 14.

¹³⁶ A discussion of the “princelings,” and their higher rate of promotion and attainment of high level positions can be found in the following work: Cheng Li, “The New Military Elite: Generational Profile and Contradictory Trends,” in *Civil Military Relations in Today’s China: Swimming in a New Sea* eds. Kristen Gunness and David M. Finkelstein, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2007): 64-69

¹³⁷ Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of China Civil-Military Relations Since 1979,” 14.

level of division, army, or military region can no longer hold a particular position for more than ten years.¹³⁸ The ages of the officer corps are becoming younger as older officers are retiring according to the enforceable age limits of their respective position. The CMC has seen a reduction in its average age from 68 in 1998 to 63 in 2003.¹³⁹ Additionally the span of ages between officers at the same position level has decreased with the age span between the youngest and oldest full general being only five years.¹⁴⁰ To try and prevent the rise of region based factions, officers are now rotated under the concept of “*wu hu si hai*,” or “five lakes and four seas,” meaning that officers must come from all regions of the country.¹⁴¹ By rotating officers through all corners of China, factions and cliques are less likely to form, as they have in the past, shifting the PLA away from what Mao had called the “independent kingdoms.” Rotations are made frequently as officers at the military region commander or above are not allowed to stay in any position for a given number of years.¹⁴²

The officer corps has also shifted toward greater professionalization in the training it undertakes. Political ideology and study, approximately 30 percent of training time in the past, is being replaced in favor of more military training.¹⁴³ As officers are more educated and capable of learning more technically complex material, training is focused increasingly on doctrine, strategy, and tactics instead of Communist ideology. Modernization and the changes in strategy brought about by the RMA have largely affected the methods of PLA training as joint force tactics are an emphasized capability. Additionally, training often focuses on implementing the lessons learned from the Gulf War and the campaign in Yugoslavia with focus intent on being

¹³⁸ Li, Cheng, 56.

¹³⁹ Li, Cheng, 57.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁴¹ Mulvenon, “An Uneasy Bargain,” 21.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴³ Shambaugh, “Civil-Military Relations in China,” 13.

prepared to undertake “limited wars under high-technology conditions.”¹⁴⁴ Standards have also been developed to evaluate the level of training to aid the PLA in assessing its ability.¹⁴⁵

Additionally, remaining political work is focused on more diverse issues such as welfare, morale, and living issues rather than the ideological indoctrination of the past as the General Political Department has shifted its focus accordingly to welfare for soldiers and their families.¹⁴⁶ A recent campaign demonstrates this shift away from ideology and toward issues related to morale, goals, and capability. In 2004, Hu Jintao hoped to make his mark on the arena of political thought as he pushed forward the “advanced nature political education campaign.”¹⁴⁷ A campaign originally aimed toward education of the CCP’s party members, the campaign was later expanded to the PLA in 2005. The campaign focused not on ideology or political issues but on “maintaining the advanced nature of party members,” and on vigorously inspiring “the enthusiasm of the majority of party members about acting as pioneers and the vanguards in accelerating the revolution with Chinese characteristics in military affairs and in being satisfactorily prepared for military struggles.”¹⁴⁸ The campaign emphasized the need for modernization in the PLA and the associated morale of CCP and PLA members rather than any overtly ideological or political goal. The 2008 Defense White Paper reinforced the need for political work to focus on these types of topics as it described how political work should aim to educate on the PLA’s “historical missions, ideals, beliefs, fighting spirit, and the socialist concept of honor and disgrace.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ Shambaugh, *Modernizing China’s Military*, 101.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 94-105.

¹⁴⁶ Shambaugh, “Civil-Military Relations in China,” 13.

¹⁴⁷ James Mulvenon, “Power, Money, and Sex: the PLA and the Educational Campaign to Maintain the Advanced Nature of the Party,” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 14 (Spring 2005): 1-5.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹⁴⁹ “China’s National Defense in 2008,” Section III: Reform and Development of the PLA, Sub-section: Strengthening Ideological and Political Work.

While many changes have occurred as a result of professionalization, they all have contributed to an officer corps which is increasingly focused on creating a modern and effective war-fighting force. Additionally, as the officer corps professionalizes it focuses more on its own domain of issues with lessening interest in political involvement. Professionalization of the army contributes to institutionalization of relations between the two as the personal linkages and informal methods of control are replaced with a professional officer corps which conducts relations in a professional and formal manner.

iii. Shifting Roles and Responsibilities

The changes which have been initiated by professionalization and modernization have also affected the roles and responsibilities of the PLA. As it sheds many of its non-military roles and focuses more specifically on its war-fighting mission, it is becoming a more capable force which behaves more professionally and interacts along more formal lines with the CCP. Before the 1980's the PLA was largely involved in four spheres of activity: national defense, internal security, non-military activities related to domestic issues, and economic activity. However, with changes taking place in the 1980s and 1990s, the PLA has pared its mission to revolve around national defense and non-military activities which are related to domestic issues and benefit the country at large.

As the PLA has pursued its goal of becoming an organization which is increasingly focused outward and toward defense related issues, it has attempted to relieve itself of its internal security responsibility. While the CCP relied on the PLA to handle such domestic crises as the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Square demonstrations, the stress of those incidents provoked the PLA to rid itself of that mission. What the PLA has shed, the People's Armed Police (PAP) has gained. With PAP history dating back to the founding of the PRC in 1949, its

lifespan has been characterized by tumultuous change and jurisdictional struggle with the PLA.¹⁵⁰ The most recent evolution of the PAP occurred in 1982 and was to be funded by the national treasury. Although formal control was in the hands of the CMC and the State Council, in actuality, the Ministry of Public Security controlled the day to day operational activities. The history of this recent iteration of the PAP can be split into pre and post 1989. Before the Tiananmen Square crackdown, the PAP chiefs “took a relaxed view of the security situation and training and operation preparedness suffered as a result.”¹⁵¹ Accordingly, the PAP failed miserably in its role in handling the events of 1989 and underwent a large overhaul to aid it in effectively and efficiently absorbing the internal security role of the PLA.

The PAP after 1989 has been marked by changes developed to better adapt it towards its task of handling uprisings and incidents with the development of rapid response mobile units becoming the PAP’s primary responsibility.¹⁵² With social stability as its prime directive, PAP training and capability has been enhanced with the creation of “detailed contingency plans to react quickly to any crisis.”¹⁵³ Beyond training and strategy, the PAP has also acquired better technology with more advanced artillery and armored fighting cars more useful in handling domestic uprisings. Most recently, the PAP has participated in the defense force wide emphasis on modernization and informatization as it has “made efforts to regularize and strictly manage the performance of its duties, and improve through science and technology.”¹⁵⁴

Although the PLA has a storied history with varying levels of involvement with the PAP and its operations, the PAP becoming more serious about handling domestic disturbances

¹⁵⁰ A more in depth discussion of the history of the PAP can be found in Tai Ming Cheung, “Guarding China’s Domestic Front line: The People’s Armed Police and China’s Stability,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 146: Special Issue: China’s Military Transition (Jun 1996): 525-527.

¹⁵¹ Cheung, 527.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 527.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 535.

¹⁵⁴ “China’s National Defense in 2008,” Section VIII. The People’s Armed Police Force.

contributes significantly to the PLA being able to shift away from domestic issues and toward realization of its goal of becoming a professional, outward looking force. In becoming a more capable force, the PAP on average during a given year handles “dozens of attempted attacks against guarded targets,” and also “ensures the security of important international and national conferences and large-scale events in cooperation with government departments.”¹⁵⁵ As the PAP was tasked “to take over the PLA’s internal security duties and allow the military top brass to concentrate on rebuilding the PLA into a professional and streamlined force after decades of neglect and politicization,” the PLA is transforming increasingly into a professional army capable of a more appropriate relationship with the party.¹⁵⁶

While the events of Tiananmen Square caused the PLA to realize the importance of its withdrawal from internal security, it also realized that more attention needed to be paid to its main constituency: the Chinese people. As the PLA has claimed a “sacred bond with the people of China,” it has maintained its commitment to assisting in non-military affairs which contribute to the country’s overall well-being.¹⁵⁷ Most significantly, the PLA is involved with disaster relief, economic development in communities, and the construction of public works’ projects. In dealing with disaster relief, the PLA along with the PAP have dispatched over 600,000 troops per effort and participated in over 130 disaster relief operations related to floods, earthquakes, snowstorms, typhoons, and fires. In January of 2008, the PLA sent over 200,000 troops to assist those suffering from the deadly snowstorms and dangerously freezing weather.¹⁵⁸ The most recent demonstration of the PLA’s role in domestic affairs was its involvement in the earthquake relief efforts which took place in Sichuan in May of 2008. Reacting swiftly and efficiently,

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., Section VIII: The People’s Armed Police Force.

¹⁵⁶ Cheung, 539.

¹⁵⁷ Scobell, “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations,” 438.

¹⁵⁸ “China’s National Defense in 2008,” Section X: The Armed Forces and the People.

“within a week, China’s armed forces had reportedly dispatched more than 100,000 soldiers and armed police to help with rescue operations.”¹⁵⁹ To aid in economic modernization, the PLA is also often tasked with assisting with national development through projects related to construction of infrastructure, building up of the countryside, and supporting development in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities.¹⁶⁰

As the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Square suppression showed, the PLA has learned that loyalty to the party “has too often not resulted in reciprocal loyalty to the military.”¹⁶¹ Being an enabler of the party’s wishes tested and stretched its relationship with the people of China as many officers and soldiers felt they were betraying one of their main loyalties. In prioritizing its relationship with the people, the PLA is able to ameliorate the ill effects of its past actions. By relieving itself of roles in which the CCP has control based in its own self-interest, such as internal security, and turning toward roles which protect the Chinese people, such as national defense and assistance in domestic affairs, its bond with the Chinese people will strengthen. A strengthened bond would perhaps make the PLA think more thoroughly about its loyalty to the party should the CCP put it in another Tiananmen Square like situation. Additionally, as the PLA turns toward its more professional roles, its relationship with the CCP will accordingly tend toward relations which are increasingly institutionalized and based in the proper jurisdiction and realms of interaction of both bodies.

¹⁵⁹ James Mulvenon, “The Chinese Military’s Earthquake Response Leadership Team,” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 25 (Summer 2008): 1.

¹⁶⁰ “China’s National Defense in 2008,” Section X: The Armed Forces and the People, Sub-section: Participating in and Supporting National Construction.

¹⁶¹ Dryer, “Lessons Learned from the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Square Massacre,” 421.

iv. Economic Involvement and Divestiture

While the shedding of its internal security responsibilities was crucial for the evolution of its relationship with the party and the state, another change has made even larger impacts on the PLA's ability to interact with the CCP along institutionalized lines: the divestiture of the PLA of its commercial enterprise system. Although the PLA was largely involved with economic ventures from its inception, the PLA had risen to new levels of commercialism in the 1980's with the birth of what came to be known as "PLA, Inc." Jiang Zemin's decision to divest the PLA of those enterprises in 1998 further assisted the PLA in becoming a professional and modern force capable of institutionalized relations with the party.

While the notion of a military being involved in economic enterprises may be foreign to a Western audience, the PLA from its origin was involved in many aspects of commercial activity. The history of PLA involvement in economic endeavors can be divided into four eras: early history (1920s until 1949), expansion and modernization (1949-1978), commercialization (1978-1998), and reform and divestiture (1998 to present). Throughout early imperial history, the Chinese military was never fully supported by the government due to the immense cost related to maintaining a standing army. In China's ancient history, army leaders sought funding in activities ranging from raiding provincial treasuries to imposition of unofficial taxes on the population to make up the funds which the state could not provide. The PLA would retain some of the characteristics of past Chinese armies' need for self-support as the modern army was a combination of "pre-twentieth century Chinese military practices, Western organization, and Soviet party-army."¹⁶²

¹⁶² Bickford, "Institutional Syncretism and the Chinese Armed Forces," 69.

Throughout PLA history, the PLA's economic enterprises were characterized by activities which could supplement its needs and reduce its burden on the peasant population of China. The first enterprise to emerge was that of subsistence farming in which the PLA used land not otherwise desirable to grow food to feed its forces. To further support its troops, factories were opened which were to produce military goods. However, their methods were not sophisticated and produced items which "were simple and required very little technology."¹⁶³ While the PLA was expected to maintain these enterprises to increase its self-sufficiency, it was also realized that production should not get in the way of the military capacity of the PLA or its level of training.

PLA involvement in commercial enterprise evolved with the foundation of the PRC in 1949 and the ensuing transformation of the CCP from a revolutionary party to a ruling party. While it may be expected that since the CCP was in control of the state it would dismantle the PLA enterprise system in favor of funding the PLA from state coffers, the opposite occurred as the PLA's economic involvement expanded and modernized. The burden of expense of the Korean War furthered the need for the PLA to be self-sufficient. However, as the Korean War faded, the PLA was expected to continue in its economic endeavors to "limit the burden of defense on the national budget."¹⁶⁴ The emphasis at that time was on allocating the scarce resources of the government toward development of the socialist economy aiding the CCP in its consolidation of its control of the fledgling nation. Additionally, in having the PLA support itself financially, it was highlighted as a socialist model of success for the rest of the country as it

¹⁶³ Ibid., 71.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 73.

stood as “an example of revolutionary virtue, a school for spreading literacy, socialist culture and values, as well as political and economic knowledge.”¹⁶⁵

During the 1970’s, increasing emphasis was being placed on the rapid economic growth of China’s economy with scant attention paid to the budgetary needs of the PLA. Although demobilization had decreased the number of soldiers on the rolls, the PLA still faced budgetary shortfalls causing it to seek a way to make up that crucial difference. The PLA then moved beyond its position of self-reliant production to complete participation in the civilian economy taking advantage of the newly developed market economy to reap revenue. While the PLA expanded and marketized industries in which it had previous experience, such as the production of agricultural goods, it also rapidly expanded its sphere of economic involvement to include activities ranging from airline flights and hotels to illegal activities of smuggling and prostitution. The various activities of the PLA began to reach into most corners of society earning it the title of PLA, Inc. Despite the PLA’s long history of economic involvement, this evolution was much different than the past and proved to be incredibly problematic.

With the exposure to vast amounts of money and commercialism came increasingly corrupt practices and decline in PLA military preparedness as units focused more on making money than on training. This obsession with business and profit “undermined discipline and central authority” as units even competed amongst themselves in rival enterprises.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, the military involvement in civilian industry hurt its relationship with the people of China as its economic endeavors often competed with its civilian counterparts and at an unfair advantage as the PLA had access to benefits which civilians did not. For example, military vehicles were often used to transport commercial goods allowing the PLA to avoid taxes

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 74.

¹⁶⁶ Bickford, “The PLA and its Changing Economic Roles,” 167.

incurred in transportation, a large cost to a civilian business. While economic involvement had allowed the PLA to support its expenses, in the process, it damaged the capability of the PLA as a military force, increased issues related to corruption and illegal activity, and tainted its public image.¹⁶⁷

With numerous ill effects, the party realized that the negative aspects of PLA economic involvement vastly outweighed any gain. Beginning in 1993, the party made a concerted effort to resolve the problem by limiting the economic activities of PLA units and by increasing supervision.¹⁶⁸ Although the CCP claimed that its efforts had made inroads in the problem as of 1995, corruption continued and in 1998 Jiang Zemin at an enlarged session of the CMC publicly called for the dissolution of PLA, Inc. in saying that:

“the army and the armed police should earnestly screen and rectify various commercial companies operated by their subordinate units, and shall not carry out any commercial activities in the future.”¹⁶⁹

If there had been any confusion about the party’s stance on PLA economic involvement, Jiang resolutely settled the issue and commanded the divestiture of PLA economic interests. Although the CCP had previously lauded PLA economic involvement as the model of socialist virtue, the declaration should not be seen as a dramatic reversal of any prior policy but as the “logical culmination of over six years of rectification and consolidation campaigns in the military enterprise system.”¹⁷⁰ In recognizing the serious nature of the havoc wreaked by the era of commercialization on the PLA as a capable fighting force, Jiang bargained with the PLA to make the transition as smooth as possible in offering a “one-time transfer and payoff for the PLA’s

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 166-168.

¹⁶⁸ Joffe, “Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect,” 311.

¹⁶⁹ Mulvenon, “An Uneasy Bargain,” 42.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 42.

divested enterprises,” along with promises of increased annual budgets to “make up for lost enterprise revenues.”¹⁷¹

The economic activity of the PLA since 1998 is now more similar to that of the early era of PLA economic activity. While it was divested of its more egregious commercial enterprises, the PLA was permitted to stay involved in activities which contribute to its readiness and capability level. The PLA retained its agricultural components as well as basic logistical enterprises along with the telecommunications industry, an industry which was originally a very expensive investment. As of 2006, at least 6,000 of the supposed 10,000 PLA enterprises had been transferred out of PLA control ending the era of PLA, Inc. As such, the PLA has to rely on the government’s promise of increased state allotments in the budget.¹⁷²

With the PLA disentangled from its problematic economic activity, it can focus even more on its professionalization and modernization efforts. As economic distractions are decreased, control can be re-established, and the PLA can work toward focusing on being a capable war-fighting force. By removing the PLA’s outside sources of income, it will additionally increase its reliance on the state for its funding molding the PLA increasingly in the model of other professional and modern forces. Divestiture has contributed to the development of a PLA which is professional, capable, and appropriate in its interactions with the CCP.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 44-45.

While Mulvenon argues in his piece that the divestiture process can be seen as a case study of a new phase of civil-military relations with interactions based in bargaining, not all authors take this view of the divestiture process. Alex Chopan argues that the PLA itself was upset with the corruption and the damage done to its force and accordingly was “not displeased with the order, and lined up behind Jiang.” Because of the lack of opacity of Chinese civil-military relations and the enormous size of the PLA, it is difficult to know the exact reaction of the PLA to the divestiture command. Given their benefit from their commercial activities, it seems likely that although some in the PLA favored divestiture many would be upset and bargaining would be necessary to facilitate that drastic of a change.

For more information on both arguments see the following: James Mulvenon, “An Uneasy Bargain: Party-Military Relations in Post-Deng China,” (paper presented at the National Association of Asian Studies Conference, Boston, MA, March 11-14, 1999): 1-46. Alex Chopan, “A Table for Two: Jiang Zemin and the PLA,” *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 11, Number 31. (2002) 281-296.

¹⁷² Bickford, “The PLA and its Changing Economic Roles,” 168.

c. Changes Occurring in the State

While changes have occurred within the party and the army which contribute to the growth of institutionalization as a trend of Chinese civil-military relations, the position of the state in that relationship has also evolved as recent legislation and an overall trend toward legalization has increased the state's relative power. Additionally, the divestiture of PLA enterprises in 1998 put the state in financial control of the PLA. As the state evolves into a more authoritative set of organs, the relations between the party and the army will have to incorporate the state as well.

i. Recent Legislation and an Emphasis on Legalization

As the party has based its legitimacy more in its institutional position as the single-party in control of Chinese politics, state control is increasingly asserted through an emphasis on following procedure of law and legalization. With politics in general tending toward more formal and less personal relations, it follows that the state would assert its position in civil-military relations through emphasizing its formal roles as delegated in Chinese legislation. Accordingly, recent legislation which stresses the positions of state organs in Chinese politics has served to reawaken the state as a more legitimate factor in civil-military relations. Particularly, the state has "tried to increase its own jurisdictional control over the armed forces while continuing to delineate its sphere of responsibilities distinct from the party."¹⁷³ Contrasted with the former informality of command and control in PLA politics, the military is increasingly "subject to control by a large number of formal laws and regulations."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Shambaugh, "Civil-Military Relations in China," 10.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

The most recent version of the Chinese Constitution, adopted December 4, 1982, lays the groundwork for this trend of emphasis on the importance of law and the role of the state. To establish the position of the Constitution amongst Chinese politics, it proclaims that: “All state organs, the armed forces, all political parties and public organizations, and all enterprises and undertakings must abide by the Constitution and by the law...No organization or individual may enjoy the privilege of being above the Constitution and the law.”¹⁷⁵ The Constitution specifically outlines the role of the PLA in Chinese society in describing its responsibility “to strengthen national defense, resist aggression, defend the motherland, safeguard the people’s peaceful labor, participate in national reconstruction, and work hard to serve the people.”¹⁷⁶ Of particular note, this article outlined the PLA’s responsibilities with no reference to ideology or a loyalty to the party. In declaring the roles of the PLA, the Constitution is making the army a more professional force focused on its responsibilities to the state and to the people rather than simply to the party.

Beyond basic principles and theories which the Constitution espouses, it also lays out in more concrete terms the roles and functions of the various state organs within the dynamics of civil-military relations. Article 57 recognizes the National People’s Congress (NPC) as the highest organ of state power entrusting it with the crucial abilities to “elect the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, and upon his nomination, to decide on the choice of other members of the Central Military Commission,” as well as to “examine and approve the state budget.”¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, the Standing Committee, the permanent body of the NPC, is also important to civil-military relations as it holds the power to supervise the work of the CMC,

¹⁷⁵ “Constitution of the People’s Republic of China,” Adopted at the Fifth Session of the Fifth National People’s Congress and Promulgated for Implementation by the Proclamation of the National People’s Congress on December 4, 1982, Accessed 6 January 2009 from: <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/>: Article 5.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Article 29.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 62.

which is comprised of a chairman, vice-chairmen, and general body members. While the CMC “directs the armed forces of the country,” the provisions of the Constitution require that it operate under legislative oversight.¹⁷⁸

The Constitution set into a motion an increase in state power which the National Defense Law (NDL) carried further. After five years of revisions in a process which took place entirely within military legal circles, the National Defense Law was finally adopted by the Fifth Session of the Eighth National People’s Congress in March of 1997.¹⁷⁹ In providing a framework for “administering the army according to law,” the NDL elaborated upon various aspects of PLA operations ranging from topics related to mobilization for war, maintenance of equipment, training and education, and personnel management. The law also explained the position of state bodies with respect to the army as it empowered the state to “exercise unified leadership over national-defense activities.”¹⁸⁰

Most striking about the law was this stark subordination of the army to the state, rather than the party. In the NDL, the state is responsible for almost all aspects of military operations with the law distinctly placing the “armed forces” under the control of the state. In particular, the state is referenced in the following articles:

- “The state shall build and consolidate its national defense independently and through its own efforts, pursue an active defense strategy, and uphold the principle of all-people self-defense.” (Article 3)
- “The state shall strengthen the revolutionization, modernization, and regularization of the armed forces in order to increase the national defense capacity.” (Article 20)
- “The state shall direct scientific research and production for national defense in a unified way and exercise planned regulation and control in these regards.” (Article 32)

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., Article 93.

¹⁷⁹ Shambaugh, *Modernizing China’s Military*, 47.

¹⁸⁰ “Law of the People’s Republic of China on National Defense,” Adopted at the Fifth Session of the Eighth National People’s Congress on 14 March 1997, As reproduced in Xinhua Domestic Service, 18 March 1997.

- “The state shall decide on the scale, structure, and distribution of assets for national defense and adjust and dispose of such assets according to the needs of national defense and economic construction.” (Article 38).

This list is by no means exhaustive but should give an idea of in which direction the state has designated its power over the army. It is to control the overall strategy, modernization, and budget allotments for the PLA as well as supervise the CMC in running the day to day operations of the army. As the state is tasked with the largest share of the responsibility for the PLA, the party is given only one reference, which is limited at best. In the entire law, the state as an entity is mentioned well over thirty different times while the party receives only one direct reference which states that “the armed forces of the People’s Republic of China are subject to leadership by the Communist Party of China.”¹⁸¹ The language of that statement is somewhat weak and establishes an ambiguous role for the party in China’s civil-military relations.

While the Constitution and the NDL provide enhanced roles and responsibilities for the state with respect to the PLA, PRC history has proved that rules on paper are nothing without people who believe them and follow them. Leaders like Mao Zedong frequently flaunted rules which worked to their disadvantage and purged politicians who tried to pass legislation which was unsatisfactory to their ends. However, the words of the Constitution and the NDL are more salient when coupled with the growing emphasis on operating Chinese society and the PLA in a manner which is consistent with Chinese law. The Defense White Paper of 1998, which was issued succeeding the establishment of the National Defense Law, illustrated this trend as it emphasized how China had established and improved its national defense system “in accordance with the Constitution, the National Defense Law, and other relevant laws.”¹⁸² The Constitution

¹⁸¹ “Law of the People’s Republic of China on National Defense,” Article 19.

¹⁸² “China’s National Defense in 1998,” (Defense White Paper), Issued by the Information Office of the State Council, December 1998, Accessed 6 January 2009 from <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/>. Section III: National Defense Construction, Sub-section: Defense System.

itself reflects this trend toward rule by law as an amendment emerged from the Ninth NPC which emphasized the importance of “ruling the country in accordance with the law and building a socialist country of law.”¹⁸³ More recent Defense White Papers have consistently mentioned how the PLA executes its duties in accordance with appropriate law. The 2004 Defense White Paper stated that the PLA “implements the principle of governing the armed forces strictly and according to the law,” and that the PLA “relies on laws and regulations,” in its operations.¹⁸⁴ The 2006 Defense White Paper specifically referenced the Constitution as it stated how the PLA “has established and keeps improving a leadership and administration system for national defense in accordance with the Constitution,” and other appropriate legislation.¹⁸⁵ The 2008 Defense White Paper continued this trend toward emphasis on legalization as it contained an entire section dedicated to the topic of “persisting in governing the forces in accordance with the law.”¹⁸⁶

The recent Tenth NPC also highlighted this trend of legalization of military affairs and the role of the Constitution. Having taken place in March of 2004, the Tenth NPC highlighted two interrelated themes of “growing legalization of military affairs and constitutional reform.” An NPC delegate summarized the role of the law in the military in saying that the PLA must “proceed according to law,” as well as “put army-building on a legal track.”¹⁸⁷ The role of the Constitution with respect to the PLA was also referenced as the army was highlighted as being “responsible for the safeguarding of the Constitution.”¹⁸⁸ Leaving no confusion, the

¹⁸³ “Constitution of the People’s Republic of China,” Amendment 3.

¹⁸⁴ “China’s National Defense in 2004,” Chapter III: Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese Characteristics, Sub-Chapters: Innovating Political Work, Governing the Armed Forces Strictly and According to Law

¹⁸⁵ “China’s National Defense in 2006,” Section III: China’s Leadership and Administration System for National Defense.

¹⁸⁶ “China’s National Defense in 2008,” Section III: Reform and Development of the PLA.

¹⁸⁷ James Mulvenon, “Your Guess it as Good as Mine: PLA Budgets, Proposals, and Discussions at the Second Session of the 10th National People’s Congress,” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 11 (Summer 2004): 5.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

Constitution was stated to be “the basis for ‘administering the military in accordance with the law.’”¹⁸⁹ As demonstrated, a trend has developed in China which emphasizes the importance of adherence to law in administering the PLA, especially with respect to the relationship between the party, the army, and the state.

It is also important to note, that these changes do not suggest a total implementation of distinct and clear rule of law. Ambiguities certainly exist, and it is certain that the CCP maintains a firm degree of power with or without rights delegated from the Constitution or the National Defense Law (see Appendices 2 and 3 for comparisons of the organization charts in theory and what is likely in practice). A large ambiguity with respect to Chinese civil-military relations exists in the roles of the “dual CMC’s.” Two seemingly identical and parallel organizations exist in both the party and the state functioning as the “Central Military Commission.” While the Party CMC has existed since early PLA history, the State CMC was created in 1982 bringing “speculation that this represented a major step in separating party from state.”¹⁹⁰ Currently any speculation is relatively useless as the memberships of both the state and the party CMC are identical. However, the ambiguity creates the potential for tension in the future should the state develop its CMC independent of the party CMC with differing membership and authority. Additionally, there is potential for confusion in the present as it is often unclear to which CMC Chinese legislation refers. It is assumable though that legislation is likely directed toward the Party CMC as this is the body which wields the legitimate power.

In sum, a trend has occurred in state legislation which indicates a shift toward emphasis on following and operating in accordance with the Constitution and other relevant laws. These laws, which have been promulgated in an era which has increasingly emphasized the importance

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁹⁰ Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979,” 16.

of law, have carved out a role for the state in the dynamics of Chinese civil-military relations. With the state's involvement in civil-military relations more defined and based in a set of substantial law, the interactions of the state with the army will be more formalized, legally based, and institutionalized.

ii. The Power of the Purse and PLA Budgeting

With the divestiture order of 1998 placing the responsibility of financial support squarely on the state budget, the state's involvement with the PLA greatly changed. No longer able to be financially independent with its own commercial enterprises, the PLA would need to depend on state coffers to fund its much needed modernization. As the power of the purse is one of the most "effective means of controlling militarism," the state, with the NPC in particular, was placed in the position of being able to influence the future of the PLA and its modernization efforts, ensuring increased loyalty from the army and its leadership.¹⁹¹

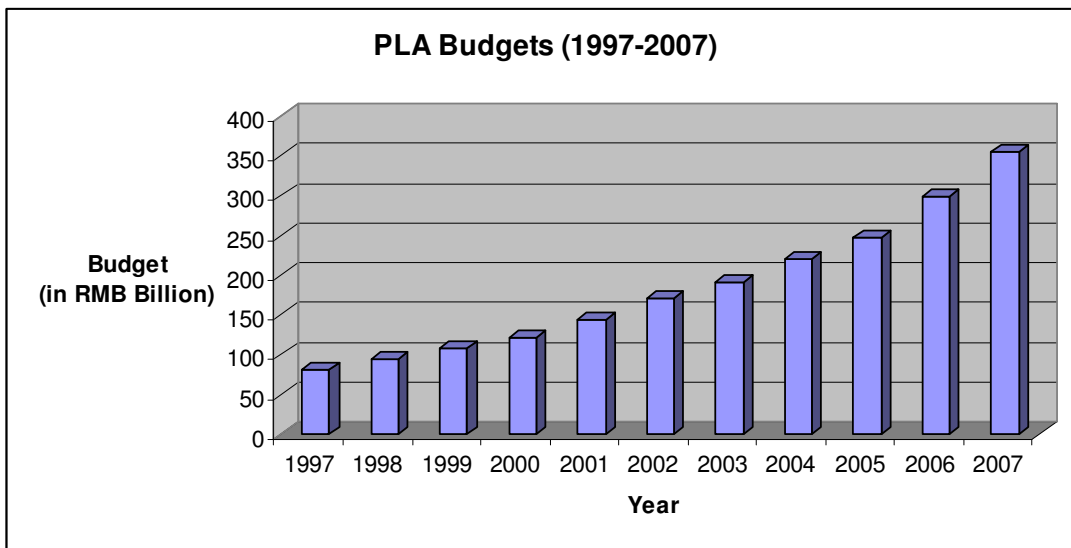
While defense budgets are attainable as many PLA documents now exist in the public sphere as a result of increased efforts toward transparency, a note must first be made about what these budgets mean, what they include, and the greater context of budgeting for the PLA. The transparency of the PLA budgeting process has been notoriously obtuse with many PLA analysts estimating the published budget to be "only a fraction of the total revenue available to the People's Liberation Army."¹⁹² Due to a number of differences between the accounting systems of Western armies and the PLA, there are probably more funds available for the army's use than are included in the yearly defense budgets. Without digressing into unnecessary detail, the budget can be skewed because of surplus funds from prior years bankrolled each year, categories

¹⁹¹ Jeremy Paltiel, "Civil-Military Relations in China: An Obstacle to Constitutionalism?" *Journal of Chinese Law*, 9, (1996): 39.

¹⁹² Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 210.

which are traditionally considered part of defense budgeting by international standards excluded in the Chinese model, and the lingering of some un-divested commercial enterprises. Most notable is the differing view on what comprises defense budgeting between Chinese and international standards. While it certainly does cover the major expenses, the official budget seems to exclude funds designated for: Chinese produced weapons and equipment, some research and development costs, the costs for the People’s Armed Police, funds for large weapons purchases from abroad, funds directly allocated toward military factories, and military aid. In reviewing these categories, it is apparent that this category of unrecorded funds may be significant with its exclusion from the budget causing China’s military spending to appear smaller than reality.¹⁹³

That being addressed, recent Defense White Papers outline the amount of funding the state has been allocating for defense. In analyzing the budgets from 1997 through 2007, it is apparent that budgets have increased in a fairly substantial way as illustrated below.



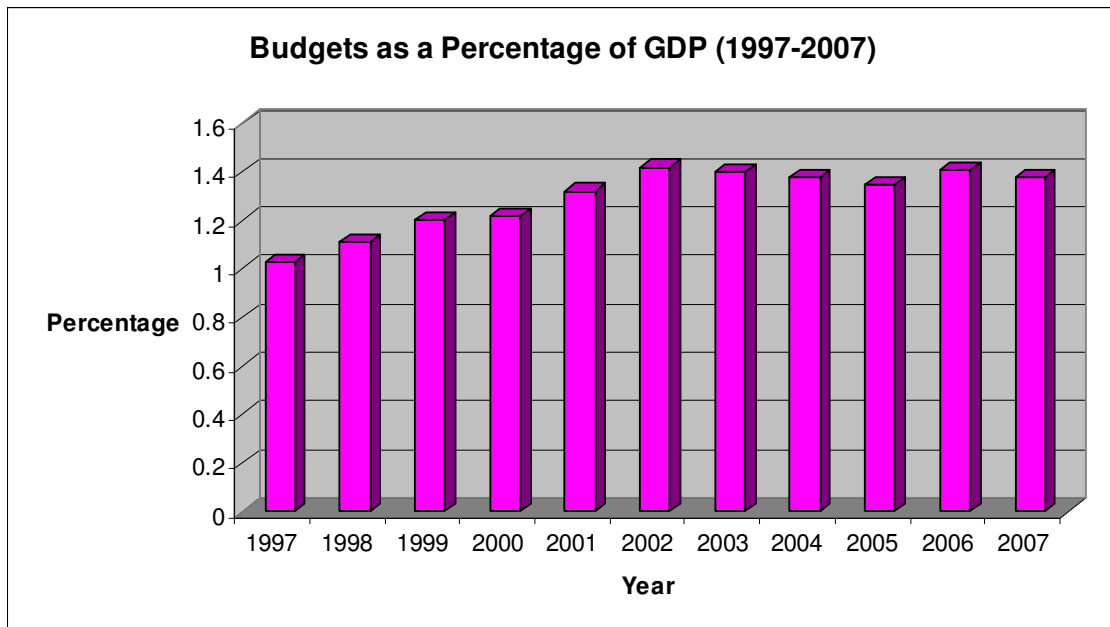
194

¹⁹³ For a thorough discussion of China’s budgetary practices see David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China’s Military*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): Ch 5: Budget Finance, particularly 215-222.

¹⁹⁴ Chart created from “China’s National Defense in 2008,” Appendix V: Defense Expenditure of the PRC (1978-2007). Raw data set available in Appendix 4.

While these budget amounts do not take inflation into account, the 2006 Defense White Paper reported that between 1990 and 2005 average annual increase in defense budgets was 15.36 percent with average increase in inflation being 5.22 percent. As a result, in real non-inflated terms the increase has also been significant with the average increase in defense budget between 1990 and 2005 being 9.64 percent. The 2006 White Paper accounts for this increase in budgeting as a result of four main factors: increasing salaries to compete with market averages, increasing investment in weapons and equipment, supporting new methods of training, and compensation for inflation.

While budgets have been increased dramatically over the years, they have been adjusted to hold fairly steady with China's economic growth as they have never been larger than 1.5% of China's GDP, as illustrated below:



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In increasing the budget of the PLA over time and in a manner which is consistent with economic expansion, the state has kept largely true to the promise it made to the PLA of

¹⁹⁵ Chart created from "China's National Defense in 2008," Appendix V: Defense Expenditure of the PRC (1978-2007). Raw data set available in Appendix 4.

supporting it financially while also avoiding consuming extreme amounts of funding which could detract from economic growth. As the most recent Defense White Paper from 2008 stated, when deciding the PLA's allotment of the state budget, it is guided by the "principle that defense expenditure should grow inline with the demands of national defense and economic development."¹⁹⁶

The significance in PLA budgeting is not the change in percentage from year to year or the amount which China actually spends on defense, but is rather, the ability of the state to exert its influence within the PLA through increasing budgets which allow the PLA to attain its goals. Prior to the divestiture order, the PLA received insufficient funds from the state causing it to develop outside sources of funding. However, after the divestiture, the PLA was forced to rely increasingly on the state for funding as it lost its independent sources of revenue. Given the dramatic increase of the PLA's funding between 1997 and 2007, the state seems to be holding its end of the divestiture bargain.¹⁹⁷ With the PLA increasingly interacting with the state, its loyalty to the state will grow and institutionalization of civil-military relations will be further increased as the relations between the party, the army, and the state become more formal.

As state strength seems to grow within this context of institutionalization, the dynamic between the party, the army, and the state will have to shift. However, while state methods of control have certainly been asserted through legalization and budget control, it must be taken into account that in the PRC, the state does not necessarily equate to a body which is independent and free of party influence. The implications of this dynamic will be discussed in the following sections.

¹⁹⁶ "China's National Defense in 2008," Section XII: Defense Expenditure.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., Section XII: Defense Expenditure. For more detailed data on the changes in PLA budgeting between 1978 and 2007 please see Appendix 4.

VI. Conclusion

In examining the trends in civil-military relations in the past twenty to thirty years, implications can be drawn for the relationship between the party, the army, and the state. Given the changes taking place and the evolving natures of each of the bodies, a shift will have to occur in the balance of power between the three. While this thesis argues institutionalization as the trend of relations between the party, army, and state, other authors have constructed alternate arguments which emphasize to differing degrees the strength of the army or the state. Also salient in the examination of the trends in Chinese civil-military relations is comparative analysis of states which are ideologically or geographically similar. In taking all of these implications, alternate arguments, and comparative considerations into account, it is possible to then postulate on the future of civil-military relations in China with particular attention paid to the ability of the party to maintain its monopoly of power over the army.

a. Implications for Party-Army-State Relations

In total, the themes and trends which this thesis has sought to examine suggest an overall shift in relations between the party, the army, and the state toward a more formalized, institutionalized, and legally based set of interactions. Because of the withering of informal sources of power and overall trending toward professionalization and modernization, the party no longer has the innate and charismatic control over the army as it had in the past. Additionally, the role of the state has begun to be asserted through emphasis on rule of law and new legislation which firmly places the state as the supreme power in army issues. What do these shifts implicate for the balance of power between the party, the army, and the state? Additionally, what does the change in the dynamic between the three bodies mean for the ability of the party to command the army? Has the state supplanted the party as the power which commands the army?

Although the changes which have taken place implicate institutionalization of relations in which the party, the army, and the state behave according to more formalized and increasingly well-defined roles, that institutionalization does not suggest that the state is evolving to become the commanding body of the army. Chinese civil-military relations, at least in the present era, need to be studied within the context of party control. While it may seem trite, as Mao had established, the goal has always been “the party controls the gun.” Although the party may change the way it exercises its control or the state may seek to reassert its power, in the end, so long as the CCP is the single ruling party, it will assert itself over the army. PRC history has repeatedly demonstrated how the army is crucial to the party’s maintenance of its power in Chinese politics and society. As such, the rise of the state’s power along with the shift in party power away from informal and personal control does not signal the weakening of the party at the expense of the rise of the state.

The rise of state power and the demise of ideology additionally do not “suggest that a creeping transition to democracy is silently taking place.”¹⁹⁸ Instead, the party is consolidating its power as the single ruling party and exerting its influence *through* state organs. The dual and confusing nature of the state and party CMC’s show this exertion of party power through state organs. While the Constitution had sought to expand state power in creating a state CMC to work alongside the party CMC, the reality is that the state CMC *is* the party CMC as both have identical membership. As such, the party is still the body in control as party involvement in “the CMC ensures party dominance in the state.”¹⁹⁹ It is also still abiding by the rule of law and the Constitution as the state CMC does technically exist as Deng Xiaoping in September of 1982 had

¹⁹⁸ Shambaugh, “Civil-Military Relations in China,” 26.

¹⁹⁹ Paltiel, “Civil-Military Relations in China: On Obstacle to Constitutionalism?” 53.

to submit a separate letter of resignation to both the state and party CMC's.²⁰⁰ The case of the dual CMC's shows how growth of rule of law and party power are not in conflict as the party is able to exert its power through state organs and still abide by the laws. Additionally, outside of the CMC, the party exerts influence in other important state bodies as it typically comprises between half and seventy five percent of the NPC's membership along with constituting a majority of the Standing Committee.²⁰¹

The ability of the party to exert influence through state bodies demonstrates that “increased state control need not imply, ipso facto, the zero-sum displacement of the party's relationship with the army. From one perspective, the relationship of the military to the state and party can be seen as complementary.”²⁰² The party has been able to consolidate its control through the growing bodies of state power by exerting its control through those outlets. As the party had lost its personally based control over the army, it replaced that relationship with a more indirect, yet still powerful, influence through state bodies coupled with the power it derives from its institutional authority as the single-party in control. Although the changes which took place within the party, the army, and the state, could have posed great risk to the party-army relationship, the party has evolved its power to meet these challenges and maintain control.

While the party has seemingly extended its power over the military in a new and distinct direction, the strength of that power has been tested by recent events. The ability of the CCP to command the PLA in an emergency situation was demonstrated by the swift deployment of PLA soldiers to Sichuan during the devastating 2008 earthquake. The effort to aid Sichuan was technically headed by the “State Council Headquarters for Resisting Earthquake and Providing

²⁰⁰ Scobell, “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations,” 439.

²⁰¹ Andrew Nathan, “China's Constitutionalist Option,” *Journal of Democracy*, 7.4 (1996): 44.

²⁰² David Shambaugh, “Commentary on Civil-Military Relations in China,” in *Seeking Truth from Facts: a Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era* eds. James Mulvenon and Andrew N. D. Yang, (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 2001): 43.

Disaster Relief,” and was championed by Premier Wen Jiabao. Although the effort was in the state’s name, it was executed by the party and the army. As a result of those efforts, the PLA and the CCP were perceived publicly as acting effectively, jointly, and in a manner which greatly benefitted the people. While it may have been questionable how the party would control the army given its new methods of institutional power, the PLA’s response to the earthquake “reinforced the perception of complete CCP control of the military.”²⁰³

However, the limits of the strength of the CCP’s institutionalized control could be tested should the CCP call on the PLA to handle another Tiananmen Square type disturbance. Given the deleterious effects which that Tiananmen Square suppression command had on PLA morale and relations with the people of China, it is highly likely that the party would work to avoid putting the PLA in another similar situation. If the party wants to ensure its control of the military, it realizes that it must keep the military happy. Additionally, should the party be in need of a force to quell domestic unrest, the PAP has trained in techniques and strategies which would make it more effective in handling that type of situation. But should the CCP make the decision to put the PLA in a distinctly internal security role in a domestic disturbance, the resulting effect may not be similar to that of the 1989 crisis. The PLA has developed its own internal, professional aims making it less willing to sacrifice its image both domestically and internationally as an outward looking professional force. Additionally, the PLA has grown increasingly close with the people of China and may not be willing to tarnish that more positive relationship which it has worked to re-build since the crackdown of 1989.

For the PLA to resist orders from the CCP, a study conducted on Tiananmen Square concluded that the PLA must perceive that it has “strong incentives to disobey” paired with a

²⁰³ James Mulvenon, “The Chinese Military’s Earthquake Response Leadership Team,” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 25 (Summer 2008): 6.

high degree of likelihood of success in its disobedience.²⁰⁴ The PLA may see a strong incentive to disobey as it may value preserving its finely tuned public image and relationship with the people of China over its relationship with the CCP in such a situation. The likelihood of its success is debatable as the ability of the PLA to cohesively disobey in such a situation is largely untested. However, as the army has become more professionalized with a concurrent decrease in politicization and factionalism, should top military officials make the decision to defy the party, it seems increasingly likely that the rest of the army would obey. Overall, potential for the PLA to disobey CCP orders will depend upon how much it values its institutional independence and public image along with its ability to choose to make that difficult decision. As such, it seems that the ability of the CCP to command the PLA in such an internal disturbance would rest more on PLA decision-making rather than on actions taken by the CCP.

b. Alternate Views of the Direction of Chinese Civil-Military Relations

While the institutionalization of power argument seems to correlate with the recent trends in civil-military relations in China, others argue that China's civil-military relations are moving in different directions. The strands of alternate arguments fall largely along two lines: those who believe the state is gaining power at the party's expense and those who believe that the party and the army are growing in divergent directions with the party decreasingly able to effectively manage the army. Both Andrew Scobell and David Shambaugh have explored the possibility of increasing nationalization of the PLA within a context rising state power. Jeremy Paltiel and James Mulvenon have both suggested the possibility of schism occurring between the party and the army as the army professionalizes and develops sources of power distinct to its corporate identity and independent of party influence.

²⁰⁴ Kou, 30.

The rise of state power argument is largely centered on the idea that the PLA is becoming a nationalized army which allies more with the state than the party. In several pieces, Andrew Scobell has introduced the possibility of nationalization of the army and the accompanying concept of *guojiahua* which he defines as “the process of transforming the PLA from a purely party army into more of a state military.”²⁰⁵ In his assessment, since the 1980’s many changes have taken place to further subordinate the army to the state including the army’s professionalization and the breakage of the “interlocking directorate.” While this thesis’s argument of institutionalization recognizes many of the same changes, the conclusions drawn are different. Where institutionalization focuses on the institutional and formalized roles of the party, the army, and the state, *guojiahua* involves a different process in which the state increasingly functions as the commanding body over the army in place of the party. Scobell argues that because the NPC has the power of appointment of CMC members as defined in the Constitution and because the NPC has the ability to control the PLA’s finances, the state is exerting increased control over the army in place of the party.

However, in providing a possible argument for rising state control in explaining the changes brought about by the National Defense Law, David Shambaugh also explains why this argument is likely not valid in the current state of Chinese politics. Examinations of the NDL without an acknowledgement of the context of Chinese politics would make it appear that a fundamental shift has occurred in Chinese civil-military relations with the state taking the lead in the relationship. However, Shambaugh refutes this notion of state power in saying “little doubt exists that the Chinese Communist Party and its leadership remain the ultimate source of political

²⁰⁵ Scobell, “Seventy-Five Years of Civil-Military Relations,” 437-438.

power and authority in China.”²⁰⁶ The control of the CCP of power in China refutes the ability of state organs, as Scobell had argued, to effectively control army actions. At this point in time, the party still controls the state, so any arguments which detail state power must take into account that role of the party in the state.

Additionally, other scholars of Chinese civil-military relations have implied the possibility of a fissure between the leaderships of the army and the party. The idea of a schism between the army and the party has largely evolved out of the professionalism taking place within the PLA officer corps. As the army develops its own corporate interests and an institutionally identified officer corps, the interests of the PLA and the CCP will diverge allowing the possibility for conflict and disagreement. Additionally, the party has become disengaged from the military hierarchy allowing for more room for divergence. Jeremy Paltiel argued that “professionalization will weaken the personnel matrix, because it undermines collegiality at the apex.”²⁰⁷ Where Paltiel theorized on the possibilities for divergence, James Mulvenon has interpreted recent events between the party and the army to show the possibilities for increased conflict. Mulvenon first propagated this line of thinking in his analysis on alleged soldier protests in April and August of 2005. In these incidents, soldiers were said to have gathered in front of the gates of the GPD, the bureau responsible for responding to personnel petitions, to protest their treatment. Of the alleged protests, Mulvenon argued they “suggest that the system is not doing a good job of providing a strong social safety net.”²⁰⁸ As the party and the army seemingly diverge, Mulvenon brought forth the idea that “the military and civilian

²⁰⁶ Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 51.

²⁰⁷ Paltiel, “PLA Allegiance on Parade,” 798.

²⁰⁸ James Mulvenon, “They Protest Too Much (or Too Little), Methinks: Soldier Protests, Party Control of the Military, and the ‘National Army Debate,’” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 15 (Summer 2005): 1.

leaderships in China may indeed not speak with one voice and think with one mind.”²⁰⁹ He further warned that for the United States such “possible fissures are fraught with danger and opportunity.”²¹⁰

While the soldier protests set the tone for the party-army split argument, the event which many who make this argument use as their example is the military’s launch of an anti-satellite weapon’s test (ASAT) in January of 2007. According to some, the test, which brought tension between the PRC and the US, was conducted by the military without the explicit permission or knowledge of the civilian hierarchy. Furthering this argument was the lack of official response by the PRC’s Foreign Ministry until almost two weeks after the test. In his analysis of the situation, James Mulvenon ultimately blamed the “remarkably sluggish and ineffective crisis-management system,” of the PRC bureaucracy in a scenario in which the civilian hierarchy likely knew some of the details of the event but did not react properly.²¹¹ As the ineffectiveness of the party and state bureaucracies showed, for Mulvenon, the ASAT test further showcased the inability of the party to effectively exercise its methods of command and control over the army.

While many points of the party-army split argument are valid, overall the implications of this argument should not be as dire or dramatic as some may predict. Although the CCP and PRC bureaucracies certainly do have issues of slow response and inefficiency, as any bureaucracy does, this does not have to mean that the party and the army are growing apart in a dangerous way. The army is seemingly content with its situation as it receives what it needs: funding, more jurisdictional independence to pursue its professional interests, and respect from the party and the people of China at large. Specifically, the ASAT test should not be seen as an

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 5.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

²¹¹ James Mulvenon, “Rogue Warriors?—A Puzzled Look at the China ASAT Test,” *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 20 (Winter 2007): 5.

omen indicating future rebellious behavior of the PLA. As Mulvenon himself pointed out, even in countries like the United States “senior civilian leaders often have only top-level or at best incomplete cognizance of major R&D efforts.”²¹² While the party and the army may not always agree, it is unlikely that the party-army relationship is developing in any dangerous fashion in which the military is going to behave unscrupulously and without the control of the army.

c. Comparative Considerations

To gain a complete picture of the context of the institutionalization argument, a comparative examination of the current state of civil-military relations in other countries is necessary. Accordingly, important parallels can be drawn between China and other nations of the world with particular attention paid to those sharing its Communist history and its geographic setting. Russia along with the post-Soviet states serve as examples of possible developments of civil-military relations in post-Communist nations. With respect to its geographic neighbors, the changes occurring in such places as South Korea and Taiwan are particularly relevant examples of the possibilities for the Chinese development of civil-military relations. These examinations will show the variety of outcomes which could have occurred in China and demonstrate how its path and the development of institutionalization was not pre-ordained or destined.

i. Civil-Military Relations in Russia and the post-Soviet States

Russia and the former Soviet States provide plausibly useful cases for drawing comparison with China in the realm of civil-military relations. Both armies shared many common features as the Soviet era military could be described as “one of the pillars of communist rule whose loyalty was secured by a combination of penetration by the communist

²¹² Ibid., 3.

party system, political education, and the provision of substantial resources to support the armed forces.”²¹³ Soviet civil-military relations, as those in China, were also marked by “the hegemonic power of a single party,” and “the absence of constitutional means of transfer of power.”²¹⁴ Also similar to the Chinese model, the Soviet system of civil-military relations featured dual-role elites with politicization of the military as many in the military were also party members.²¹⁵ In these respects Soviet Russia and Mao-era China were very similar which is not surprising as China had looked to Russia during its nascent political stages for guidance.

However, their later stages of development display different paths and evolutions. While both were challenged domestically and internationally, their methods of handling these issues would help determine their divergent fates. The process of the collapse of the USSR shows one phase of civil-military relations which the CCP has yet to encounter, the role of the military during the complete collapse of party control. As struggle intensified between hard-liners and reformers, the military “intervened to suppress the independence movements in the Baltic States and elements in the Soviet high command joined with communist hard-liners in mounting the unsuccessful August coup attempt.”²¹⁶ While China has certainly felt the effects of a changing political system and the fall out from the loss of faith in communist ideology, its system has endured and the party has largely been able to maintain its control of China. However, whether the CCP will continue to maintain its grip on the country and whether or not the PLA would intervene in a party collapse remains to be seen.

²¹³ Andrew Cottey, Tim Edmunds, and Anthony Forster. “Democratic Control of Armed Forces in Central and Eastern Europe: A Framework for Understanding Civil-Military Relations in Post-Communist Europe,” A working paper from the Economic and Social Research Council’s “One Europe or Several?” Programme, 2

²¹⁴ Perlmutter, 783.

²¹⁵ Cottey, 10.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

The collapse of the Soviet Union instigated many processes of change in Russia as well as the Soviet bloc states. The levels of democratization and civilian control of the military have varied based on a number of factors including the content of constitutional and legal frameworks, the influence of non-state actors, and the culture of the military, among others. However, “Leninist and post-Leninist regimes represent a wide-spectrum of political outcomes ranging from apolitical, professional, modern armed forces to praetorian militias.”²¹⁷ While Russia may tend toward increasing patterns of de-politicization and civilian control of the military, other post-Soviet states have not necessarily followed the same path as military elites in some Eastern European nations have even “resisted de-politicization.”²¹⁸

As such diverse outcomes have ensued from the collapse of the Soviet bloc state’s Leninist systems, studying these patterns of civil-military relations could provide lessons about the future of civil-military relations in China. How a Leninist system produced such a variety of outcomes could illuminate the processes taking place in China as it evolves away from a traditional Leninist system toward one less defined by ideology. In short, discerning the reasons for similarities and differences among the various post-Soviet states could help clarify the future prospects for institutionalization in the civil-military relations in China.

ii. Civil-Military Relations in Asia

Studying the civil-military relations of China’s geographic neighbors in both East and Southeast Asia can also provide insight into the processes and trends taking place among the Chinese party, army, and state. As the cases of Russia and other post-Soviet states also demonstrated, comparisons with civil-military relations in Asia may be valuable to the study of

²¹⁷ Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979,” 1-35.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

Chinese civil-military relations insofar as they demonstrate the variety of possible civil-military relations in countries which share many of China’s societal values and histories.

While Asian nations certainly are diverse, displaying different patterns of civil military relations, it is possible to make one key generalization: change is occurring and in many of these countries that change is related to “reduction in the political power and influence of the military and strengthening of civilian control.”²¹⁹ This trend is demonstrated by the decrease over time in the number of military dictatorships in Asia as in the 1960’s and 1970’s seven or eight countries had this type of regime while currently only two or three, varying with differing definitions of “military dictatorship,” still exist. While military dictatorships in such nations as Burma and Pakistan occupy one extreme end of civil-military relations in Asia, a continuum has developed with the other extreme occupied by nations with firmly consolidated democratic control. The following sixteen countries of East and Southeast Asia can roughly be grouped according to their stage of civilian control of the military:²²⁰

Military Control	Communist/Totalitarian Civilian Control	Ethnic/Dominant Party Civilian Control	Transition to Democratic Civilian Control	Consolidating Democratic Civilian Control	Democratic Civilian Control
Burma, Pakistan	China, North Korea, Vietnam	Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka	Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand,	South Korea, Taiwan ²²¹	Japan, India

Although each of these countries has varying levels of civilian control of the military and accordingly offers different insights into the evolution of Chinese civil-military relations, two

²¹⁹ Muthiah Alagappa, introduction to *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 3.

²²⁰ This framework of categorization of Asian civil-military relations was developed in the previously footnoted book *Coercion and Governance* which sought to classify the current status of civilian control of the military in Asia according to level of civilian control of the military.

²²¹ Although certainly problematic given the current situation between the PRC and the Taiwanese “Republic of China,” for the purpose of this thesis, Taiwan will be referred to separately from China as it’s evolution of civil-military relations has many important implications for civil-military relations on the mainland.

cases are of particular interest and deserve a closer examination: South Korea and Taiwan. Both countries have undergone recent transformations in their civil-military relations in which the military has withdrawn from a closely intertwined relationship with the regime's politics making them both especially useful points of comparison with Chinese civil-military relations.²²²

The modern nation of South Korea developed in a manner much different than the PRC. Originally a colony of Japan, South Korea gained independence after 1945, although the regime was first considerably influenced by its close military and political relationship with the United States. Accordingly, the United States attempted to establish in South Korea a military in its own image grounded in firm civilian control. Despite these attempts, Korean civil-military relations were originally marked by military coups and political intervention. Two cycles of military intervention occurred in 1961 and 1980 with both coups staged by Major Generals in the South Korean military leading to military control of the government. In the 1961 coup, "problems of pervasive political instability, economic crisis, and social turmoil," prompted one faction of the military to intervene in civilian politics. In the 1980 coup, similar factors prompted another faction of the Korean military to occupy the political vacuum created by the assassination of the president in 1979. A result of military factionalism and a political power vacuum, the coups had set the stage for what seemed to be a pattern of military interventionism.

Although early CCP-PLA relations had the potential to spiral into a cycle of partisan factionalism, the PRC and the CCP were largely able to avoid any such cycle of intervention as the one attempted coup, that of Lin Biao in 1971, was squashed by the CCP. As such, the Korean case of civil-military relations is important in that it highlights how the strength, or weakness, of the political system in place can greatly affect a country's pattern of civil-military relations. China and Korea both faced the threat of coups from factional military leaders.

²²² Alagappa, 1-3, 11-22.

However, the CCP was able to control its threat while Korean politics were too weak and allowed the military to fill the void. Although South Korea was eventually able to transition away from military interventionism, this occurred through the development of a new political system. Rather than having the body in control take command of the military, in June 1987, following the mandate of the Korean Constitution, a successful election took place without military intervention and democracy was set in place.²²³ Where China had quelled the potential for military intervention and coup with the strength of its single party, South Korea turned toward the strength of the population as exerted through the newly developed democratic sphere to control its military.

Great changes took place in South Korea as the cycle of military coup and political intervention was supplanted by the democratic transition allowing for civilian leaders elected by the population to take control. This transition was largely brought about by three factors: the changing patterns of political domination, changes in security policymaking, and increased civilian control of the security and intelligence agencies. In terms of patterns of political domination, the first civilian leader of Korea, Kim Young-sam, elected in 1992, focused on reforming and cleaning up the powerful and at times corrupt military. Through his efforts at curbing factionalism and purging politicized officers, civilian control was intensified and the military lost much of its power and ability to manipulate the civilian system. Both of the earlier coups depended somewhat on the military control of the security policymaking process along with the intelligence and domestic security apparatus in Korea. As such, the ability of the civilian organization to control the military was dependent upon reducing military influence in those security functions. Toward that end, major changes occurred as the legislative branch of

²²³ Jinsok Jun. "South Korea: Consolidating Democratic Civilian Control," in *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia* ed. Muthiah Alagappa, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 122-126.

the government became more active in oversight. Altogether, these factors allowed civilian control to be consolidated and democratized as the military became disengaged from civilian politics.²²⁴

While the specific process of South Korea's transition from cycles of military intervention to democratic civilian control of the military is important, the broader setting within which the process unfolded was also crucial. South Korea's ability to sustain civilian control of the military has been shaped by the general pattern of political democratization, the emergence of a strong and viable civil society as well as changes within the military itself. Arguably the most important change contributing to civilian control of the military has been the democratization of South Korean politics as the civilian elected leaders worked hard to remove the military's influence from the country's politics. The military has been further deterred from intervention as the democratically elected civilian officials have affixed large penalties to military intervention with the two coup leaders from 1961 and 1980 imprisoned. While the military was originally the strongest and best organized institution in early South Korean politics, civil society has emerged during Korea's development with its increased prominence serving as a balance against the military's influence. Particularly, non-governmental organizations in Korea have made strong efforts to prevent the military from again becoming involved in politics. While efforts of civilian leaders and changes in Korean society have helped build civilian control of the military, changes within the military itself have helped consolidate civilian control. As military coups and the resulting political prominence of those who were involved benefitted only a handful of military leaders, friction arose within the military between those who favored the risky rewards of politicization and those who disliked the ensuing backlash. While many in the military disliked politicization and sought a shift away from it, this shift was furthered by "the

²²⁴ Ibid., 126-139.

practice of rewarding non-politicized officers through promotion while punishing politicized officers.”²²⁵

South Korea’s pattern of civil-military relations, although not identical with that of China, contributes to our understanding of the general importance of institutionalization by revealing the factors that help contribute to consolidation of civilian control of the military. Some of the same processes which took place in Korea are also seen in China, contributing to more salient civilian control. Particularly, some of the changes made by the civilian leaders in each country’s military along with the changes undertaken by the military itself have contributed to the increase of civilian control in Korea and the institutionalization of party control in China. Just as Korea’s first civilian president moved to reduce factionalism within the military through promotions and personnel changes, similar efforts were made in China with regularization of promotion patterns, rotation of officers throughout regions, and an increase in emphasis on the value of a geographically diverse officer corps. China and Korea also similarly saw the military itself move toward de-politicization and withdrawal from politics. As the newest generation of PLA leaders are more educated, less ideological, and more professional, they have focused increasingly on modernizing the military and pursuing professional, organizational objectives rather than political aims. In sum, the factors which contributed to the consolidation of civilian control in South Korea also helped contribute to the institutionalization of party civilian control of the military in China, despite the otherwise obvious differences in the nature of these regimes. As such, the Korean case helps confirm the proposition that reducing military factionalism and depoliticizing armies leads to increased civilian control of a country’s military.

While South Korea confirms some of the patterns observed in the Chinese case, the evolution of civil-military relations in Taiwan demonstrates how two entities with an intertwined

²²⁵ Ibid., 140.

political history and similar pattern of civil-military relations can sometimes evolve in entirely different ways. The Republic China (ROC) became a nation limited to a few islands off the Chinese coast, most importantly Taiwan, when the KMT fled the mainland after it was defeated by the CCP during the Chinese Civil War. As such, early ROC history was characterized by a focus upon regime survival and the CCP threat to it. To ensure its viability, the KMT had to structure civil-military relations around meeting this threat by trying to “ensure that the military was controlled by the party and divided against itself for the purpose of keeping a tight party grip on power.”²²⁶ As the CCP threat faded, the KMT was able to evolve into a more functional governing power. The KMT mirrored many of the political developments of the CCP as it was also ruled by a paramount leader, had a regime which was marked by tight authoritarian rule, and had party-army control based in political penetration. That party control of the military, as it had similarly developed in the early PRC, was indirect and not based on legally prescribed methods of command and control.²²⁷

While ROC history and methods of civil-military control were in important respects parallel to those of the PRC on the mainland, a divergence occurred when Taiwan began to democratize once the KMT lifted its longstanding martial law order in 1987. That process was taken even further in 1996 when Taiwan for the first time chose its president through a direct election. As Taiwan democratized, it also increased civilian control of the military and disentangled the KMT-military relationship. A number of factors have lead to increased civilian control over the military including societal demands for increased civilian control, decreased military involvement in defense policy, increased legislative oversight of the military, the separation of the KMT from the military with military withdrawal from politics, and normalized

²²⁶ Chih-Cheng Lo, “Taiwan: the Remaining Challenges,” in *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia* ed. Muthiah Alagappa, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001): 144.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 143-147.

military-society relations. While Taiwan has moved toward increasing civilian control of the military as a result of these factors, the process has not been perfect as many obstacles to democratic civilian control exist. For example, legislative oversight remains limited as the military does not always allow all of its information to be shared. The military has sometimes resisted shifting its loyalty from the KMT (party) to the Taiwan government (state) regardless of incumbent party, an indication that Taiwan has not yet fully achieved institutionalization of civilian control.²²⁸

While the ROC and the PRC have diverged significantly in their politics, their civil-military relations may display different views of a largely similar story. The early phases of KMT power consolidation and control of the army was quite similar to that of the CCP as both emphasized the necessity of army loyalty to the party with political penetration ensuring that loyalty. However, their patterns from that point onward diverge dramatically. The ability of the ROC in forty years to transform from a single-party authoritarian rule to a democratic system with democratic civilian control of the military may preview future trends for the CCP-PLA relationship. Should the CCP lose its grip on power, the pattern of civil-military relations in Taiwan may prove valuable for scholars examining changes in Chinese civil-military relations. In sum, the evolution of Taiwan's civil-military relations may provide insight into methods of civilian control over a formerly single-party loyal military in a newly multi-partied system.

d. Prospects for the Future

While the trend in China as well as in its neighbor nations in Asia has been toward increased civilian control of the military, the implications this new evolution will have for the future remains to be seen. There are a range of possibilities for the trajectory of civil-military

²²⁸ Ibid., 143, 146-153.

relations in China. However, four possibilities are most plausible and are largely dependent upon the ability of the CCP to continue its reign as the sole party maintaining a monopoly on the legitimate exercise of political power in China.

One possibility is that the relationship of the army and the party will continue as it now exists featuring the trend of institutionalization. The party will maintain its current level of control and will continue to use the state organs as a vehicle for its institutionalized forms of power; additionally, the army will be satisfied with this arrangement and will not challenge party authority but will rather focus on distinctly military issues including its own modernization and professionalization. Because the CCP is the single party in control, issues of state versus party will not be prominent as the party largely *is* the state and controls its main functions. Given the tendency for a system to continue unless challenged, this scenario seems most likely as long as the CCP can maintain its grip on political leadership in the PRC. However, as the regime is challenged by the effort to maintain the country's breakneck pace of economic modernization, by increasing social unrest from uneven economic growth along with various internal challenges from minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang, it is unlikely that the party will be able to continue its reign of unchallenged supremacy indefinitely. As such, two other scenarios for the future of civil-military relations are possible, both hinging upon the party's ability to handle disturbances, either internal or external.

In one such scenario, the military may become dissatisfied with the party's ability to handle domestic affairs, possibly in a crisis scenario, and may pull away from party control and challenge the CCP's supremacy in China. As explained earlier, the army is likely to disobey the party in situations in which it has a reasonable chance of success and in which it sees incentive to

disobey.²²⁹ If the military hierarchy increasingly disagrees with the party's methods of handling internal disputes, the incentive to disobey party control along with the chance of success may combine to encourage the military to disassociate itself from strong party control. The possibility of internal unrest in China seems to be likely to grow within the next twenty years or even the next decade as a host of social problems related to the effects of economic growth, the gender imbalance produced from the one-child policy, and ethnic unrest in border regions multiply. While the PAP was created to handle many of these internal disturbances, the PLA may still be expected to play a role in their quelling which could cause a rift between the CCP and PLA leadership. Should the PLA openly disobey the CCP, civil-military relations would transform dramatically and the trend of institutionalization would be greatly affected.

A legitimate external threat may give rise to a third scenario for the future of Chinese civil-military relations. While the PLA has evolved to handle different types of war scenarios, this does not mean that it would be readily accepting of the party line should an external threat occur. Many recent events have shown that the military and the party hierarchies do not always tow the same line when it comes to threats of war and military action. The actions surrounding the mysterious ASAT test show that the military and its party and state counterparts can have diverging opinions on military issues. While the civilian bureaucracy was wasting time in trying to figure out how to handle the situation, one military leader in an interview with a party newspaper expressed a certain sense of "military cockiness to the outside world by describing anti-satellite weapons as 'ordinary.'"²³⁰ However, the civilian authorities displayed no sense of cockiness but rather tried to downplay the implications of the test. While the drama surrounding the ASAT test eventually subsided with little effect on civil-military relations, the public bravado

²²⁹ Kou, 30.

²³⁰ Mulvenon, "Rogue Warriors?" 1.

of the military could reappear should a larger issue present itself. In the face of such a threat, if the party-state mechanism acts in a way which the military, and possibly even Chinese society, views as inappropriate, it is possible that the military could openly split with the party fundamentally transforming the existing pattern of Chinese civil-military relations.

Lastly, it is also possible that civil-military relations could change as the result of the party internally dissolving as a result of factionalism or in an inability to function effectively. While the party has worked to affect reform in China and bring about changes in accordance with “Chinese characteristics” and a socialist model, the Soviet Union reminds both the Chinese and analysts about what can go wrong to a dominant party trying to bring about reform. If the party veers too distantly from its original mission, it risks the possibility of losing its mandate of power. While the party maintains control now through such vehicles as its economic successes and a strong emphasis on Chinese nationalism, these sources of legitimacy are much more volatile than the once stable foundation of revolutionary Marxist-Leninist ideology. Should the economy slip causing loss of jobs and instability, the party could lose its source of power and dominance of politics. In such a situation, the party could collapse under its own weight in a cloud of factionalism and an inability to make decisions about how to handle its own, and the country’s, problems. The protests of Tiananmen Square showed how factionalism within the party could cripple the CCP’s ability to make decisions. Without a leader like Deng, that situation might have ended very differently. In lacking a powerful mandate for rule or charismatic and capable leaders, the CCP could easily crumble in the face of a changing Chinese society.

While all these events have varying plausibilities, the ability of the party to retain its new method of control over the military will largely depend on its ability to retain its power as the

single-party. The status quo will likely remain until a large shock, either internal or external, causes the military to defect from party leadership or causes the party to implode upon itself. The future of Chinese civil-military relations, then, will continue to be shaped by broader shifts in the internal domestic and external security situation of China. The CCP has thus far been able to transform its legacy of revolutionary-era control, based in personal ties and a common CCP-PLA history, into a system of control based on more formal and institutionalized relations. However, the party's ability to sustain this more recent system of control will ultimately depend on its ability to evolve and adapt to China's dramatic social, political, and economic changes.

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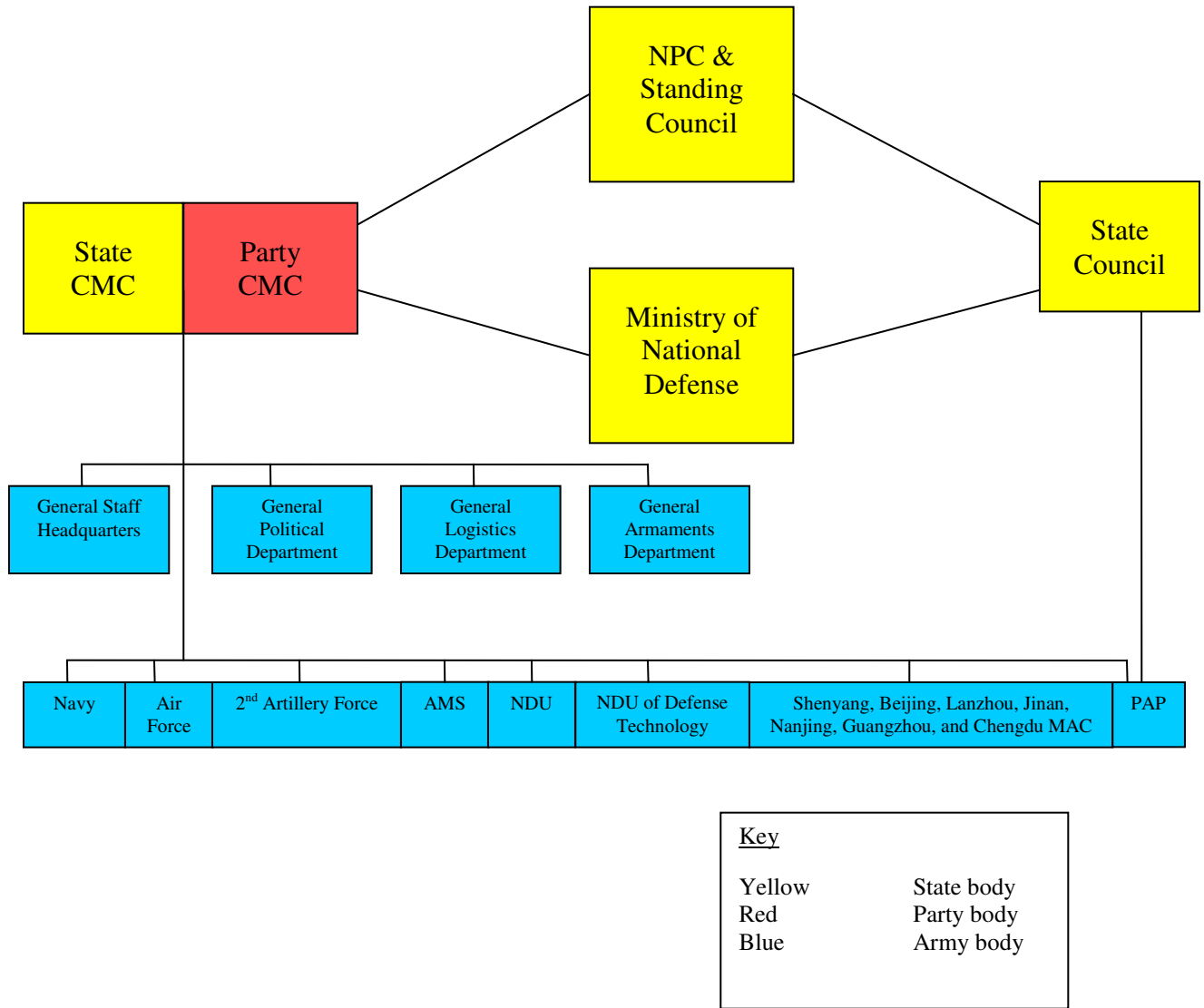
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VIII. Appendices

Appendix 1: Key Abbreviations

AMS:	Academy of Military Science
ASAT:	Anti-satellite weapon's test
CCP:	Chinese Communist Party
CMC:	Central Military Commission, may refer to the state or the party body
COSTIND:	Commission on Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense
GPD:	General Political Department, one of the four general departments under the CMC
MAC:	Military Area Command, seven in total which are regionally divided
NDL:	National Defense Law
NDU:	National Defense University
NPC:	National People's Congress, highest State organ
PAP:	People's Armed Police, serves as China's domestic force
PME:	professional military education
PLA:	People's Liberation Army
PRC:	People's Republic of China
PWS:	political work system, administered by the GPD
ROC:	Republic of China, refers to the government on the island of Taiwan
RMA:	Revolution in Military Affairs

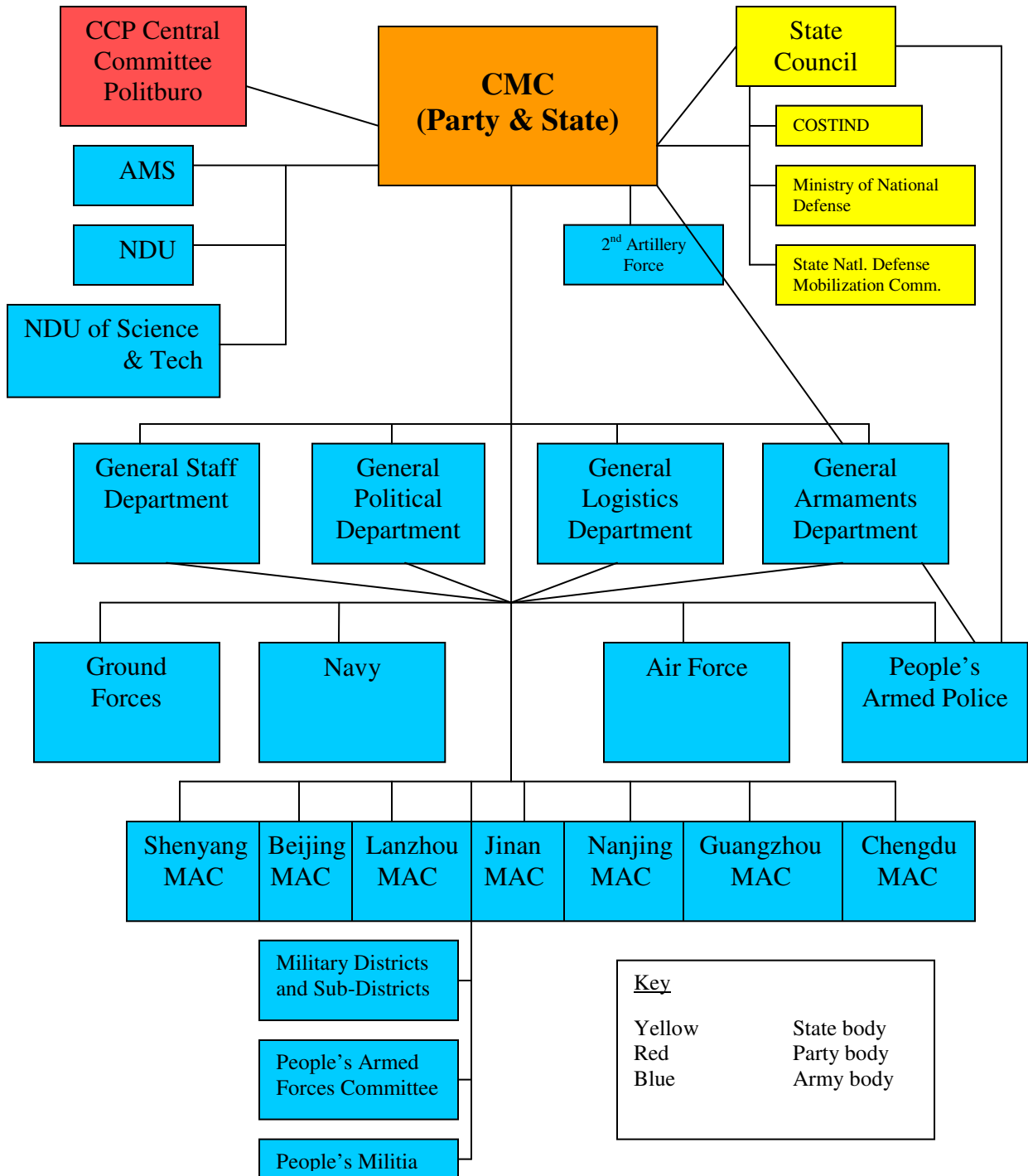
Appendix 2: Structure and Organization of the Armed Forces in Theory



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²³¹ Chart constructed based upon the “Structure and organization of the Chinese Armed Forces” chart available from English.chinamil.com along with the “Constitution of the People’s Republic of China.”

Appendix 3: Structure and Organization of the Armed Forces in Practice



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²³² Chart compiled in conjunction with David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002): 111.

Appendix 4: Defense Expenditure (1978-2008)

Year	GDP (billion RMB)	Government Expenditure (billion RMB)	Defense Expenditure (billion RMB)	Percentage of GDP (%)	Percentage of Government Expenditure (%)
1978	364.522	112.209	16.784	4.60	14.96
1979	406.258	128.179	22.264	5.48	17.37
1980	454.562	122.883	19.384	4.26	15.77
1981	489.156	113.841	16.797	3.43	14.75
1982	532.335	122.998	17.635	3.31	14.34
1983	596.265	140.952	17.713	2.97	12.57
1984	720.805	170.102	18.076	2.51	10.63
1985	901.604	200.425	19.153	2.12	9.56
1986	1027.518	220.491	20.075	1.95	9.10
1987	1205.862	226.218	20.962	1.74	9.27
1988	1504.282	249.121	21.800	1.45	8.75
1989	1699.232	282.378	25.147	1.48	8.91
1990	1866.782	308.359	29.031	1.56	9.41
1991	2178.150	338.662	33.031	1.52	9.75
1992	2692.348	374.220	37.786	1.40	10.10
1993	3533.392	464.230	42.580	1.21	9.17
1994	4819.786	579.262	55.071	1.14	9.51
1995	6079.373	682.372	63.672	1.05	9.33
1996	7117.659	793.755	72.006	1.01	9.07
1997	7897.303	923.356	81.257	1.03	8.80
1998	8440.228	1079.818	93.470	1.11	8.66
1999	8967.705	1318.767	107.640	1.20	8.16
2000	9921.455	1588.650	120.754	1.22	7.60
2001	10965.517	1890.258	144.204	1.32	7.63
2002	12033.269	2205.315	170.778	1.42	7.74
2003	13582.276	2464.995	190.787	1.40	7.74
2004	15987.834	2848.689	220.001	1.38	7.72
2005	18321.745	3393.028	247.496	1.35	7.29
2006	21192.346	4042.273	297.938	1.41	7.37
2007	25730.556	4978.135	355.491	1.38	7.14

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²³³ “China’s National Defense in 2008,” Appendix V: Defense Expenditure of the PRC (1978-2007).