

# 1. A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979: What Have We Learned? Where Do We Go?

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The past 20 years have seen many changes in the People's Liberation Army and the Chinese political system. Despite limited information and other problems inherent in the subject, it has been a very productive time in the study of Chinese civil-military relations, and the field currently enjoys a large and varied literature. Twenty years of research and debate have produced some important points of agreement. The PLA remains an important political factor in Chinese politics though there has been considerable debate about how extensive that role actually is. Everyone also agrees that the military has been largely loyal to civilian (that is, Communist Party) leadership and that any understanding of Chinese civil-military relations must take this into account. Indeed, overt challenges to civilian rule are rare in all Leninist regimes.<sup>1</sup> It is also generally agreed that PLA officers are better trained, educated, and professionally oriented than 20 years ago. Yet in many respects, there was greater clarity at the beginning of this 20-year period than there is now. At the beginning of the 1980s there were two rather distinct approaches to interpreting civil-military relations in China and the trends seemed fairly clear. Today, there is a greater diversity of analytical approaches and the available evidence, as Ellis Joffe has noted, provides a confusion of trends and countertrends.<sup>2</sup> Much work remains to be done if we are to understand how civil-military relations in China are evolving. This paper provides an overview of the past 20 years and a critique of what has been written, where scholarship has been accurate, and where it has

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<sup>1</sup>There are very few cases of direct military challenges to established party leadership in Leninist regimes. The best-known cases are the 1991 coup attempt in the Soviet Union, the military's rebellion in Romania in 1989, and the assumption of military leadership of the Communist Party in Poland. There has also apparently been a coup attempt in North Korea in 1995 and there have been consistent reports of coup plots in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia in the 1960s.

<sup>2</sup>Ellis Joffe, *The Military and China's New Politics: Trends and Counter-Trends* (Taipei: Chinese Council on Advanced Policy Studies, CAPS Papers No. 19, 1997).

failed to correctly analyze the situation. The first three sections of the paper cover analyses of civil-military relations before Tiananmen, the impact of Tiananmen, and the study of Chinese civil-military relations in the post-Tiananmen era. In some respects this is a rather arbitrary division as many of the key conceptual ideas that informed our debate about civil-military relations in the early-1980s are still very much in use. In the 1980s we debated the utility of factional analyses and we still argue about factions today. At the end of the 1990s military professionalism is still the dominant paradigm. This format was chosen in part because I want to show there has been some evolution in our thinking, and in part because I wish to make the argument that the political milieu in which civil-military relations operate is in many ways different in the 1990s than in the 1980s. The three phases of this chapter ask different questions and address different issues.

In the 1980s the most fundamental question was: What kind of military was to emerge out of the Maoist era and how would its role be defined? Military reform took place within the political context of a regime with new goals but continued to be dominated by the old revolutionary elite. Tiananmen deserves a short section in its own right. As the most important political crisis in post-Mao China, it produced an extensive literature and created an opportunity for PLA scholars to examine the PLA under a very different set of conditions. During the third phase of the 1990s, I argue, the PLA continues to be in transition, but the focus shifts to trying to understand civil-military relations at a time when new and truly distinct military and civilian elites are emerging for the first time. The conclusion of the paper will suggest areas for future scholarship into the next century. In particular, it will be argued that PLA scholars have taken current ideas as far as they can go and it is increasingly important to tap into the wider civil-military literature outside Chinese studies.

## **The Study of Civil-Military Relations in the Early Dengist Years: 1979–1989**

The Third Plenum of Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978 marked a major turning point in the Chinese political system and the beginning of wide-ranging economic, social, political, and military reform. It also marked an end to Mao's emphasis on "continued revolution" and a repudiation of the radical policies of the Cultural Revolution in favor of an emphasis on rapid economic development, pragmatism, and opening to the West. In terms of military reform, the coalition around Deng wanted a more modern and technically

qualified military, signaling a return to the professionalization of the 1950s and a reduction in the PLA's extra-military roles.<sup>3</sup> The political environment was relatively benign to military reform and by the end of the 1980s the PLA was more modernized and professionally oriented than at any previous time in its history. The political environment was also very much shaped by the remaining revolutionary elders in the Party and civil-military relations in China have to be understood against that background.

For most of the 1980s, debate on the study of Chinese civil-military relations was dominated by two basic approaches: factionalism and professionalization (also sometimes referred to as the interest group model). Both approaches pre-date military reform. Each approach has its merits and the role of factions and the degree of military professionalization continue to be important points of debate down to the present. It will be useful, therefore, to begin this discussion with a brief summary of the two approaches.

Factional models have long been popular among some China watchers, especially in Hong Kong and Taiwan. This approach stresses the existence of personal networks and cliques in the PLA as the primary locus of civil-military relations. It is an approach that assumes a high degree of politicization, as personal networks determine the rise and fall of individuals, policy outcomes, and interactions between the Party and the military. There have been a number of different types of factional models. Nelson, for example, based his factional model on the cleavages between regional and main force units.<sup>4</sup> Another variant was a factional model based on generations. Advocates of this approach argued that it was possible to identify groupings based on generational experiences. Each generation was posited as having its own specific experiences that defined its outlook and unified its members. The standard version of this argument divided the current officer corps into rough groupings, including the Korean War generation, the Cultural Revolution generation, the revolutionary war generation, and so forth.<sup>5</sup>

Most of this type of analysis, however, centered on the field army hypothesis, of which the best (and oldest) U.S. exposition is Whitson's *Chinese High*

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<sup>3</sup>Most observers would agree that some concern for military modernization and professional qualifications continued during the Cultural Revolution but it was limited. The main periods of military modernization are in the 1950s and after 1979.

<sup>4</sup>Harvey W. Nelson, *The Chinese Military System: An Organizational Study of Chinese People's Army*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981).

<sup>5</sup>See William W. Whitson and Chen-Hsia Huang, *The Chinese High Command: A History of Communist Military Politics, 1927-71* (New York: Praeger, 1973), chapter nine; William Parish, "Factions in Chinese Military Politics," *The China Quarterly* No. 56 (October 1973), pp. 667-699; and William del Mills, "Generational Change in China," *Problems of Communism* (November/December 1983), pp. 16-35.

*Command*.<sup>6</sup> Briefly put, the field army thesis argues that during the course of the Chinese revolution, military factions emerged that centered on the five separate field armies. These military factions were forged as a result of shared dangers and experiences, with years of close personal contact among each faction's members. Advocates of the field army thesis claim that these factions continue to this day and military involvement in politics is read primarily in the context of these military groups, particularly how they balance each other, form coalitions with other groups in the Party, and so forth. During the Cultural Revolution, this dynamic was believed to explain who sided with Lin Biao in his 1971 coup attempt (fellow Fourth Field Army men). In the 1980s, Deng Xiaoping's hold over the military was judged to be the result of his cramming the military leadership with Second Field Army men who served with him during the Chinese Revolution.<sup>7</sup>

These factional analyses of the PLA included non-military elements as well. As many of the civilians in the Chinese leadership served in the field armies before 1949, factional behavior is seen as crossing the military-civilian line, thus bringing the military into politics and politics into the military. This was further facilitated by the fact that many Chinese Communist Party leaders held both military and non-military positions and that all high-ranking PLA officers were members of the CCP. Several of those who wrote about factions in the 1980s saw a complex web of field army and other factions connecting civilian and military cadres and argued that the distinction between military and civilian elites was artificial and that civil-military relations should be seen as a "process of coalition politics among factions."<sup>8</sup> In this regard, some of the factional analyses are not unlike the "symbiosis" argument put forth by David Shambaugh and others (to be discussed in a later section) in that both argue there is no clear line of distinction between Party and army in the Chinese Leninist regime and that the system is one of a dual elite.

In contrast to the field army thesis and other factions is the professionalization approach. This approach derives from Huntington's work on military professionalism<sup>9</sup> and argues that the Chinese military is essentially professional

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Whitson, *Chinese High Command*; Jurgen Domes, *P'eng Te-huai: The Man and the Image* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985). Parris Chang has also been an exponent of this view. See, for example, Parris Chang, "Chinese Politics: Deng's Turbulent Quest," *Problems of Communism* (January/February 1981), pp. 1–21.

<sup>7</sup>See, for example, Yu Yulin, "Reshuffle of Regional Military Leaders on the Mainland," *Issues and Studies* (June 1990), pp. 1–4.

<sup>8</sup>June Teufel Dreyer, "Civil-Military Relations in the People's Republic of China," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1985), p. 28.

<sup>9</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957).

in its outlook. The main writers here have been Ellis Joffe, Harlan Jencks, and Paul Godwin.<sup>10</sup> Huntington makes a distinction between those who pursue a career for monetary gain and those who, as professionals, “pursue a ‘higher calling’ in the service of society.”<sup>11</sup> Simply wearing a uniform does not make an officer a professional. Military professionalism, as with other types of professionalism, is made up of three components: expertise, responsibility, and corporateness.<sup>12</sup> Expertise refers to the central skill of the military officer in “the management of violence.”<sup>13</sup> Competence in this requires lengthy training, and the resulting expertise is fundamentally different from the expertise of other professions, though universal in that ideology, place, or time do not alter this qualification. What makes a good officer in the United States also makes a good officer in Japan, or Great Britain, in the nineteenth century or in the twentieth.

This special expertise, according to Huntington, engenders a special sense of social responsibility. This responsibility takes three forms.<sup>14</sup> First, the professional officer represents the claims of military security of the state. It is he who informs the authorities about what is necessary to guarantee the safety of the state in a potentially hostile international environment. Second, he has an advisory capacity, reporting to the state on the implications of alternative courses of action from the military perspective. Third, the professional officer is responsible for the implementation of state decisions requiring his particular expertise. The military, unlike other professions, has but one client, the state. Above all else *this is an apolitical arrangement, since the professional officer is the servant of the state and not an individual, a political organization, or an ideology*. Furthermore, the professional officer does not serve for personal gain or because of a temporary emergency such as a war, which may invoke intense but temporary feelings of patriotism or duty. A professional serves out of a “technical love for his craft” and a desire to use his knowledge for the benefit of

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<sup>10</sup>See Ellis Joffe, *Party and Army: Professionalism and Political Control in the Chinese Officer Corps, 1949–1964*, Harvard East Asian Monographs (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965); Ellis Joffe, *The Chinese Army After Mao* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); Harlan W. Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles: Politics and Professionalism in the Chinese Army, 1945–1981* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982); Paul H. B. Godwin, “Professionalism and Politics in the Chinese Armed Forces: A Reconceptualization,” in Dale R. Herspring and Ivan Volgyes, eds., *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 219–240; and Paul H. B. Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces* (Maxwell Air Force Base: Air University Press, 1988).

<sup>11</sup>Huntington, *Soldier*, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., especially pp. 8–18.

<sup>13</sup>Huntington quoting Harold Lasswell. Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

society.<sup>15</sup> He is thus different from the mercenary, the temporary citizen-soldier, or those who see the military as a mere occupation.

The third characteristic of the military profession is that of corporateness. The officer corps is a public bureaucracy, though the legal right to belong is carefully defined. Entrance to this bureaucracy is restricted to those with the necessary skills and training. Levels of competence are distinguished by rank, reflecting professional achievement in terms of experience, ability, education, and seniority.<sup>16</sup> Ranks are normally awarded within the profession itself based on its own internal criteria. The specialized knowledge of the military helps give it a special sense of identity. It is the military professional who defines the boundaries of that profession by excluding others, such as reserve officers, mercenaries, police, and so forth, who lack similar training and expertise, from the profession.

According to Huntington, the nature of the military profession means that its members are largely isolated from the rest of society. For him, and for most other writers on civil-military relations, professionalism means a very sharp distinction between civilian and military, dividing the two into fundamentally separate and inherently conflictual groups. What keeps this conflict under control is military subordination to civilian rule. Huntington further argues that there are two types of civilian control: subjective control and objective control. Subjective control is a way of maximizing civilian control either by social class (Junkers, Samurai), by government institution (such as supervision by parliament), or by constitutional means. As van Doorn has argued, subjective control usually implies political indoctrination. In other words, getting the military to share the norms and values of the civilian elite.<sup>17</sup> The problem with this form of civilian control, according to Huntington, is that civilians are not a cohesive group; therefore, maximizing civilian control usually means maximizing one group's control over the military at the expense of others.

To Huntington a much better means is objective control over the military which arises from recognizing the autonomy of the military as a profession. By letting the military professionals be military professionals, control is achieved because

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 16–17.

<sup>17</sup>See Jacques van Doorn, "Political Change and the Control of the Military," in *The Military Profession and Military Regimes*, Jacques van Doorn, ed. (Paris: Mouton, 1969). David Albright makes a similar point when he states that subjective control "relies on a shared outlook and common modes of thought" between civilians and the military. David E. Albright, "A Comparative Conceptualization of Civil-Military Relations," *World Politics*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (July 1980), p. 554.

the military has control over its own institution and is by nature the loyal servant of the state. Its professional responsibility does not make it loyal to any individual or group in society. Subjective control, by contrast, injects the military into politics by embroiling it in competition among civilian groups.

In the Chinese case, of course, the military cannot be truly apolitical. In Leninist regimes the military must be subordinate and loyal to the Party. A truly autonomous military that is loyal to the state would go against Leninist organizing principles.<sup>18</sup> Jencks therefore modifies Huntington's original conception by arguing that rather than becoming apolitical the trend of professionalization in China is toward "political quiescence," meaning that professional officers seek to withdraw from politics and concentrate on military affairs while accepting the principle of civilian rule, reinforced by political indoctrination and other party controls. In other words, in China and other Leninist regimes, civilian control is subjective rather than objective and this is made manageable by the common values held within the Communist Party by military and civilian elites.

Jencks and Joffe admit that not all PLA officers are professional and that many of the revolutionary war veterans were highly political, but they also assert that the trend is toward professionalism as the Chinese military becomes more modernized. That is, as the PLA becomes more professional it will seek greater autonomy in institutional affairs and become less politically active, though never to the point that it becomes separate from the Party. Jencks presses the link between professionalization and modernization quite strongly, arguing (based partly on Kolkowicz's work on the Soviet armed forces)<sup>19</sup> that just as technology produced military professionals in the Soviet Union, so it would in China.<sup>20</sup> As with Huntington above, the authors agree that the demands of modern warfare are universal in their nature, producing the need for the same kind of military organization, training, and outlook regardless of political

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<sup>18</sup>Amos Perlmutter and William M. LeoGrande, "The Party in Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (December 1982), pp. 778-789.

<sup>19</sup>Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967). Roman Kolkowicz argues that the Soviet military has become increasingly professionalized since its creation and that a typical military ethos developed, marked by elitism and detachment from society much as in Huntington's original model. In turn the military began to feel that the political officer was a threat to this military ethos. The Soviet military was viewed as seeking professional autonomy, putting it at odds with the Party, which sought a military that was politicized and firmly under its control, "the Party controls the gun" in other words. It does this by political indoctrination and using commissars and secret police to monitor the activities of officers (i.e., subjective control). The military, for its part, has its own interests and seeks to protect those interests and its own autonomy, resenting the interference of the party. Kolkowicz sees the military in the Soviet Union as being a cohesive unit separate and quite distinct from civilian elites and their relationship as being essentially conflict prone.

<sup>20</sup>Jencks, *Muskets to Missiles*, pp. 25-31.

system. China needed a military capable of meeting the needs of modern high-tech warfare and this would create the conditions for a professional military elite to emerge. Jencks' argument, therefore, is highly teleological, linking military modernization with professionalism in a linear fashion.

How useful have the factionalism and professionalism models been in helping us to understand civil-military relations in China? There are several reasons why the field army hypothesis and other factional models are worth considering. First and foremost is the obvious fact that personalistic ties (*guanxi*) are pervasive in Chinese society. There are a number of studies on personalistic politics and factions in China. Lucien Pye, Lowell Dittmer, Andrew Nathan, Tang Tsou, and several other scholars<sup>21</sup> have provided extensive discussion on the role of factions in Chinese politics and almost everyone agrees that personalism continues to exist. Michael Swaine has provided considerable evidence that even in the 1990s, the PLA high command remained highly personalized.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, fear of factional activity has been a consistent theme within the Chinese political system, lending further credence to the factional approach. The real question is, how much of what we see can be explained by these factions?

A second argument in support of the salience of factional models notes that factionalism has been a feature in the civil-military relations of many other countries and, therefore, there is no a priori reason for not considering a factional approach to Chinese civil-military relations as well.<sup>23</sup>

Third, before the 1980s both military units and military personnel remained in the same areas for decades, strengthening the notion that the field army elites

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<sup>21</sup>There are many studies of factions in PRC politics. For a general overview and to see how perceptions of the problem have evolved, see Andrew J. Nathan, "A Factionalism Model for CCP Politics," *China Quarterly*, No. 53 (January/March 1973), pp. 34–66; Tang Tsou, "Prolegomenon to the Study of Informal Groups in CCP Politics," *China Quarterly*, 65 (January 1976), pp. 98–114; Franz Schurman, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Frederick C. Tiewes, *Politics and Purges in China* (Armonck: M. E. Sharpe, 1990); David Lampton, *Paths to Power: Elite Mobility in Contemporary China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1989); Lowell Dittmer, Yu-shan Wu, and Jonas Pontusson, "The Modernization of Factionalism in Chinese Politics," *World Politics*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (July 1995), pp. 467–495; and Lucien Pye, *The Dynamics of Factions and Consensus in Chinese Politics: A Model and Some Propositions* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1980).

<sup>22</sup>Michael D. Swaine, *The Military & Political Succession In China: Leadership, Institutions, Beliefs* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1992).

<sup>23</sup>Factional analyses are especially common in Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern civil-military relations. On Thailand see, for example, Chaianan Samuwant, *The Thai Young Turks* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982). For a good summary of studies on personalistic ties and civil-military relations in the Middle East see Fuad I. Khuri, "The Study of Civil-Military Relations in Modernizing Societies in the Middle East: A Critical Assessment," in Roman Kolkowicz and Andrei Korbonksi, eds., *Soldiers, Peasants, and Bureaucrats: Civil-Military Relations in Communist and Modernizing Societies* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982), pp. 9–27.



remained cohesive groups over time. Rotations in command, a common practice in many armies, were extremely rare in the PLA during the Maoist years. Most officers spent their entire careers in the same unit and units were seldom moved around the country. A classic example is Xu Shiyou, who remained commander of the Nanjing Military Region for 27 years. Li Desheng was associated with the Shenyang Military Region for over 12 years. As most of the top PLA commanders in the 1980s began their careers in the 1930s, we see cases of PLA leaders serving together for decades, during which time it was assumed that extremely tight bonds were formed between them.<sup>24</sup> Presumably these factions were reinforced through recruitment of new members to the factions, as responsibility for promotion depended in part on patronage of those at the upper levels of the military regions.

However, factional models in general and the field army thesis in particular proved rather unsatisfactory in trying to analyze civil-military relations in the period 1979 to 1989. To begin with, it is extremely difficult to link factions with specific policies. In part, this is because we simply lack sufficient information on decisionmaking to know precisely how key groups and individuals behaved. But it is also the case that these factions are clearly not interest groups with specific policy agendas.<sup>25</sup> The case simply cannot be made that, say, officers who served in the Third Field Army believe in rapprochement with the Soviets or that former members of the Second Field Army were more in favor of the reintroduction of ranks than other factions.

Nor were these groupings a good predictor of actual behavior.<sup>26</sup> In many cases individuals did not side with their alleged factions. Wei Guoqing, for example, was a member of the Second Field Army yet he opposed many of the economic, military, and social reforms associated with fellow Second Field Army veteran Deng Xiaoping.<sup>27</sup> As Monte Bullard has argued, organizational interests can cause a “conservative” factional member to be very “liberal” on some issues and vice versa.<sup>28</sup> In other cases, issues are supported across the old field armies. Supporters of military modernization in the 1950s can be found among

<sup>24</sup>June Dreyer cites a Western diplomat as stating that Third Field Army connections were still very strong in the 1990s. See June Teufel Dreyer, “The New Officer Corps: Implications for the Future,” *China Quarterly*, No. 146 (June 1996), p. 329.

<sup>25</sup>William Pang-yu Ting, “Coalitional Behavior Among the Chinese Military Elite: A Nonrecursive, Simultaneous Equations, and Multiplicative Causal Model,” *American Political Science Review*, No. 73 (June 1979), p. 493.

<sup>26</sup>Both Parish and Ting came to the conclusion there was no clear link between field armies and political behavior. See Parish, “Factions,” and Ting, *ibid*.

<sup>27</sup>See June Teufel Dreyer, “Civil-Military Relations in the People’s Republic of China,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1985), pp. 27–49.

<sup>28</sup>Monte R. Bullard, *China’s Political-Military Evolution: The Party and the Military in the PRC, 1960–1984* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 11.

members of all the old field armies. Even Lin Biao supported some military modernization.

Thus, was Deng able to initiate military reform in the 1980s because of support from members of his old Second Field Army or because of support from officers desiring modernization irrespective of their personalistic affiliations? Political outcomes attributed to factional behavior can just as easily be explained by other means, as Parish's classic critique points out.<sup>29</sup> There is no credible evidence that members of other field armies were opposed to modernization purely on a factional basis. There certainly are non-factional reasons for supporting military modernization, for example, combat experience in Korean, Sino-Indian border, and the 1979 Vietnam conflicts. In fact, we now know that interest in modernization can be found across the field armies, as well as resistance to change. William Ting's 1979 attempt to mathematically model factional behavior in the PLA<sup>30</sup> anticipated this observation. As factions are officially banned in China, they are far more informal and fluid than in more open political systems, thus creating more opportunity for cross-factional alliances. That is, individuals and groups should cross factional boundaries in pursuit of goals of common interest.

This leads to a second problem with factional analysis. It disaggregates the military into distinct units and for this reason fails to focus on issues of common interest. This is important because there are many factors which promote corporate identity and interests in the PLA. The greater the extent of corporate identity and interests, the less room for factionalism and the more the nature of civil-military relations changes. For example, security issues such as the Soviet threat, the status of Taiwan, and the 1979 invasion of Vietnam unite the PLA around its primary mission of national defense. How to deal with these threats more effectively becomes an issue which transcends domestic factional concerns and gives most of the PLA a stake in supporting military reform and modernization. Some scholars in the 1980s, following the logic of factions, argued that "Maoists" in the PLA made alliances with Party conservatives to block reforms. As Bullard and O'Dowd correctly argue, however, this ignores the PLA's obvious interests in change. Most of the PLA supported reform because it was in their corporate interest to do so.<sup>31</sup> This is not to argue that factions were not a factor at all. Alastair Johnston has argued

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<sup>29</sup>Parish, "Factions." His point has been repeated many times since. Jencks and Joffe explain support for Deng's policies primarily on the basis of military modernizers, not factions. See Joffe, *Chinese Military*.

<sup>30</sup>Ting, "Coalitional Behavior," p. 493.

<sup>31</sup>Monte R. Bullard and Edward C. O'Dowd, "The Role of the PLA in the Post-Mao Era," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (June 1986), pp. 706-720.

that the rectification campaign of 1979 through 1984 was in part aimed at reducing opposition to reform in the PLA though he does admit that resistance to reform during this period was a losing cause.<sup>32</sup> What this suggests is that focusing on factions is revealing only part of the story and perhaps not even the most important part.

A third problem with factional approaches, especially the field army thesis, is that they are overly static. The field armies were formed before 1949. If nothing else, death and retirement were thinning out the ranks by the 1980s. Younger officers may be recruited into these factions, but they were recruited under different circumstances and therefore there is no reason to believe that their bonds will be as tight as those of the original members. This leaves the door open to other possible factions, with personalistic ties becoming more important. Overemphasis on field army loyalties initially blinded observers to the possibility of new personal associations emerging, though this oversight has since been addressed in the post-1989 literature.

Even more important, the static nature of the field army hypothesis diverts attention away from change. The field army thesis and other factional models are essentially a product of the Maoist period and the factional politics of the Cultural Revolution. Thus many of the basic assumptions in this kind of approach to civil-military relations are based on a political context rather different from the one that emerged in the 1980s. The dominant characteristic of Chinese politics over the past 20 years is change, but as Bullard noted, methodological approaches based on factions cannot explain change or offer predictions.<sup>33</sup> Too often, such analyses took factions as a given. Too little thought was given as to what conditions would encourage or discourage factional behavior and what developments could and would restrict and curtail factional behavior. This omission is glaring in the context of the 1980s because many of the military reforms launched in this period should have reduced the level of personalistic politics. These measures included, but are not limited to: mandatory retirement ages for officers, the beginning of a system rotation among regional commands, the reintroduction of military academies, the introduction of a military service law and other regulations, the reintroduction of a system of ranks, and promotion based on merit and technical accomplishments.

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<sup>32</sup>Alastair I. Johnston, "Party Rectification in the People's Liberation Army, 1983-87," *China Quarterly*, No. 112 (December 1987), pp. 591-630.

<sup>33</sup>Bullard, *Political-Military Evolution*, p. 6.

There is one final problem with stressing personalistic and factional ties. The literature on civil-military relations in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America (especially nineteenth century Latin America) abounds with studies on factions, personal cliques, cabals, and the like. Yet outside of Chinese studies, factionalism and personalistic politics are often associated with frequent military coups.<sup>34</sup> This is clearly not the case with China and is further evidence that factional analyses are providing only part of the explanation.

I do not wish to argue that factions and personalistic politics are not a factor in China; clearly that is not the case. Nor do I want to argue that they should not be considered in analyzing the PLA. My point is that the field army and other factional models represent a seriously flawed approach to understanding civil-military relations in the 1980s. Factional politics represents only one aspect of civil-military relations, and does not sufficiently take into account political and organizational changes taking place at this time. Factional analyses are most valuable when looking at periods of very low institutionalization and high levels of political uncertainty. The field army approach does not offer a superior explanation for why Deng initiated military reform or how he was able to implement those policies, though the existence of personal ties may have made implementation easier. Factional analysis is also a poor guide in trying to anticipate the likely impact of military reforms on civil-military reforms, as it is ill suited to analyzing important and fundamental changes in the system. In this regard, the professionalism model is far more useful as an analytical and theoretical tool.

Many aspects of the professionalization approach proved to be an accurate indicator of how civil-military relations developed in China in the decade prior to Tiananmen. The leadership that centered on Deng Xiaoping had as its goal a stronger, more economically developed China. They were interested in modernization, better expertise, skill and education in cadres, more regularization and legalization of the political system, trade, and political stability. They knew that China needed a more modern military to meet its security needs, to protect increasingly important trade, to take advantage of new military technologies, and so forth. Professionalism, unlike factional analyses, predicts what sort of changes needs to take place to achieve military

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<sup>34</sup>On the early history of Latin American civil-military relations see Brian Loveman, *The Constitution of Tyranny: Regimes of Exception in Spanish America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993); Frederick M. Nunn, *Yesterday's Soldiers: European Professionalism in South America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); and Frederick M. Nunn, *The Time of the Generals: Latin American Professional Militarism in World Perspective* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992). On factions and coups in the Middle East and Southeast Asia see footnote 23.

modernization and predicts the consequences of that modernization. That is, the military should become more withdrawn from political life and be more insistent on autonomy for its own affairs, restricting its influence to issues directly related to national security. Unlike factions, the professionalization model offers something concrete to measure: the degree to which military reforms conform to the expectations of the professionalization model. The model can also easily explain why the military supports reform.

Many of the developments in the Chinese military seem to bear out the assumptions made by Jencks, Joffe, and Godwin. To begin with, the 1980s saw a renewed emphasis on professional military education. The National Defense University (*Guofang Daxue*) was reopened in 1986 and many other military academies were established or revived during the 1980s. Officers were no longer recruited from the ranks as during the Cultural Revolution but were expected to be trained in military academies. Merit and technical skill became more important than ideology as criteria for promotion. Attempts to retire older officers led to a general trend toward lower age and better education among officers at all levels of the military hierarchy. Military officers spent less time studying political content and more time perfecting their military craft. Interestingly enough, this education included exposure to Western military theorists and their theories of professionalization. These new ideas were also introduced in the course of increased exchanges with Western military personnel. Deng and others also called for changes in the content of training, requiring, among other things, political officers to increase the amount of time spent acquiring professional, rather than political, skills.<sup>35</sup>

Training became more important, reflecting changes in equipment, military doctrine, and the need to coordinate combined arms operations. Much of the writing on military professionalism carefully documents the increasingly larger military exercises and other improvements in training and their implications for instilling a professional ethos among the PLA officer corps.<sup>36</sup> Political work also changed, stressing the importance of being professionally qualified as well as revolutionary. Ideological models of virtue, such as Lei Feng, temporarily disappeared from the scene. Political commissars seemed to be moving more in the direction of becoming morale officers rather than indoctrinators. There was a clear trend toward the importance of expertise in the PLA in this decade.

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<sup>35</sup>See Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping 1975–1982* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), pp. 27–38.

<sup>36</sup>Virtually every essay and book worth reading on the PLA mentions these changes. An excellent example is Ellis Joffe, *Chinese Army*.

Another development of special importance was the reintroduction of ranks in 1988 (abolished in 1965),<sup>37</sup> regulations on promotion, and new uniforms. Ranks and regulations are obviously important in developing a hierarchy of professionals based on impersonal rules of merit.<sup>38</sup> The greater the degree to which officers are chosen on merit and expertise, the greater the ethos of professionalism, and the less important personalism becomes as an explanatory factor in military politics. New uniforms and military decorations have the effect of reinforcing the distinctiveness between military and civilian, reinforcing professional pride among military personnel, and helping to build a sense of corporate identity.

Just as important was the shedding of many of the PLA's non-military roles and apparent retreat from politics. In September of 1985, six of the nine military men on the Politburo resigned and the decade as a whole witnessed a reduction in the number of military personnel serving on the Central Committee as well as the Politburo. This change was particularly noteworthy, as the PLA had long been noted for having more officers in these bodies than the militaries of any other Communist regime. Even more dramatic was the separation of military and civilian personnel at the regional level. There is no longer an interlocking directorate at the regional level with Provincial First Secretaries serving as political commissars of military districts and military commanders serving on provincial party committees. This split between regional civilian and military elites was further enhanced by the beginning of a system of rotation among the military region commanders.

In addition to its political roles, the PLA shed many other non-military activities. The railway engineer troops were transferred over to civilian control in 1983. In 1985, the last of the Production and Construction Corps, the Xinjiang PCC, was also civilianized. Many internal security duties were turned over to the revived People's Armed Police, which had been partially formed from units transferred from the PLA.<sup>39</sup> While this was not a complete separation and the PLA continues to have some internal security role, it did mark a renewed emphasis on the primary duty of any professional armed force—national defense.

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<sup>37</sup>The PLA did not have a system of rank until 1955, when they adopted the Soviet system. This was abandoned in 1965 in favor of a return to the more egalitarian traditions of the revolutionary war period. The uniforms adopted in 1965 also minimized the differences between officers and enlisted personnel. The only obvious distinction between officers and enlisted before the 1980s was that officers had more pockets and were issued a sidearm.

<sup>38</sup>See discussion of Huntington above.

<sup>39</sup>The PAP was absorbed by the PLA in 1965. It has never been completely separated from the PLA.

In sum, there were many trends in the 1980s that tended to support the hypothesis that the PLA would become more professional. Furthermore, there was considerable evidence that these and other changes, such as force reductions and doctrinal change, could be implemented because many officers within the PLA supported these reforms from a professional standpoint. Those who stressed professionalism clearly got many things right. But in focusing on these positive developments, writers within the professionalism paradigm did not always look sufficiently at other issues and this led to errors in their analysis.

In looking at many developments leading to greater professionalization, scholars sometimes fell into the trap of overestimating the extent of reform actually achieved. For example, ranks were originally to be introduced in 1985. They were in fact not introduced until 1988. Many other structural reforms were also slow in being implemented. Of the 13 sections of military law promulgated in China since 1978, for example, 12 were not enacted until after 1988. In point of fact, most of the military laws and regulations currently in existence did not come into being until the 1990s.<sup>40</sup> While the PLA was becoming more professionalized, it still was a long way from being professional. Many gaps remained to be filled in.

A case in point was the long-term impact of PLA economic enterprises, which hurt efforts at regularization and training, encouraged officers to disobey superiors in order to hide profits, and most of all increased the degree of military corruption to new levels. All of these developments seriously undermined the process of professionalization,<sup>41</sup> recommitting the PLA to a whole range of non-military activities at a time when it was shedding many of its other traditional non-military roles. In the long run, analysts such as Jencks, Godwin, and Cheung were correct in their predictions that the PLA would eventually shed many of its entrepreneurial activities.<sup>42</sup> However, the task of getting the PLA out of business was far more problematic than was anticipated.

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<sup>40</sup>Thomas J. Bickford, "Regularization and the Chinese People's Liberation Army: An Assessment of Change," in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 3, (May/June 2000).

<sup>41</sup>See, among others, James Mulvenon, "Military Corruption in China: A Conceptual Approach," *Problems of Post-Communism* (March/April 1998), pp. 12–21; Thomas J. Bickford, "The Chinese Military and Its Business Operations: The PLA as Entrepreneur," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (May 1994); and Tai Ming Cheung, "The Chinese Army's New Marching Orders: Winning on the Economic Battlefield," in Jorn Brommmelhorster and John Frankenstein, eds., *Mixed Motives, Uncertain Outcomes* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1997), pp. 181–204.

<sup>42</sup>See, for example, Harlan W. Jencks, "Organization and Administration in the PLA in the Year 2000," in Richard Yang, ed., *SCPS Yearbook on PLA Affairs: 1988/89* (Kaohsiung, Taiwan: SCPS, 1989), pp. 53–54.

The transition to a fully professionalized PLA (assuming it is ever fully realized) will take far longer than originally predicted.<sup>43</sup>

Part of this can simply be explained as underestimating the amount of time it would require to overcome the damage of the Cultural Revolution. But there was also considerable resistance to many of the military reforms. While most of the PLA supported reform in principle, some felt threatened by changes and new standards and were in a position to block or slow down changes. Others had genuine ideological concerns about the long-term impact of some aspects of reform and/or were loath to see the ending of traditions they had helped create. PLA commercial activities, which grew rapidly in the 1980s, were a counter to professionalism. Yet commercial activities were accepted as legitimate in part because the PLA had a well-entrenched tradition of economic activity. The revolutionary elders as noted above dominated the leadership in the 1980s and this shaped which aspects of military reform were acceptable and which were not. Not all reforms were equally supported.

The case of China's parallel Central Military Commissions (CMC) is a good illustrative example. The Party's CMC has always been the organization directly responsible for running the PLA. When a state CMC was founded in 1982, it immediately attracted attention and speculation that this represented a major step in separating Party from state and, therefore, Party from army. In reality it was nothing of the kind. The state CMC has the exact same membership as the Party CMC with no separate existence except as a legal fiction. Nor, in hindsight, should there have been any expectation the case would be otherwise. Communist parties have always been very careful to maintain that the Party, not the state, controls the gun. To this end, the client of the military always must be the Party and only the Party. Putting the state CMC on the same level as the Party CMC would be a fundamental redefinition of the nature of the Party-state relationship in China. Such a redefinition would go against the beliefs of many of the top leadership within the People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>44</sup> Whatever the real reasons behind the establishment of the state CMC,<sup>45</sup> a genuine separation of party and state was not acceptable to Deng and other elders who saw them as essentially identical.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>See, for example, Ellis Joffe, "Party and Military in China: Professionalism in Command?" *Problems of Communism* (September/October 1983), pp. 48–63.

<sup>44</sup>This of course may be changing, as will be argued further in the paper.

<sup>45</sup>Shambaugh has suggested that it was at the instigation of Zhao Ziyang and/or his close associates who had read Huntington. See David Shambaugh, *Reforming the Chinese Military*, unpublished manuscript, p. 18.

<sup>46</sup>Jeremy T. Paltiel, "PLA Allegiance on Parade: Civil-Military Relations in Transition," *The China Quarterly* (1995), p. 787.



Another analytical trap centered on the fact that the professionalization of the PLA is very much a political process. This is recognized by many writers on the subject, but their interpretations are open to dispute. Joffe argued that the PLA willingly accepted their subordination and that by 1985 the PLA was out of politics.<sup>47</sup> This is somewhat misleading and the actual situation was far more complex. Joffe and others are correct, for instance, in asserting that the PLA has withdrawn from many aspects of politics, but it has never withdrawn entirely. Reducing the number of Politburo members who are military men reduces the formal lines of influence, but informal ties remain. As Michael Swaine has demonstrated, retired elders were still able to exercise varying degrees of influence even after retirement.<sup>48</sup> The irony is that military reform left the higher levels of civil-military relations still very much political and personal. The real demarcation was at the lower levels of civil-military relations, where there is a more definitive split between civilian and military elites. This created the unusual situation of a split between the functioning of civil-military relations at the top and the grassroots levels.

Another problem relates to the nature of professional expertise. As the PLA becomes more professional it should withdraw from many non-military roles, in a process of de-politicization. Yet as the synopsis of Huntington above indicates, the expertise of the officer qualifies him (or her) to give advice on security and other related matters. In a Leninist regime, where military leaders are also Party members, this expertise could translate into the military seeking a greater political role in foreign policy and other areas close to its corporate interests. This possibility has received a lot of attention outside the China field.<sup>49</sup> Among PLA scholars, however, very little attention was paid to this possibility in the 1980s.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, while it is easy to measure reforms that should encourage professionalism, actually measuring professionalism itself is rather difficult. All too often there is a tendency to assume that there was an automatic correlation between military modernization and professionalization. However, as Fang

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<sup>47</sup>Joffe, *Chinese Army*, p. 163.

<sup>48</sup> Swaine, *Succession*, chapter one.

<sup>49</sup>The most important work in this area is that of Abrahamsson; see Bengt Abrahamsson, *Military Professionalization and Power* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1972). There are a large number of case studies in Latin America which argue that there is a connection between professionalization and political activity. See Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Nunn, *Yesterday's Soldiers*; Nunn, *Time of the Generals*; and Claude Welch, *No Farewell to Arms? Military Disengagement From Politics in Africa and Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987).

<sup>50</sup>An exception was Gerald Segal, "The Military as a Group in Chinese Politics," in David S. G. Goodman, ed., *Groups and Politics in the People's Republic of China* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1984).

Zhu has argued,<sup>51</sup> it is possible to have military modernization without professionalization. Both Joffe and Jencks recognize that the PLA's officer corps is not entirely professional in outlook and have argued that what really matters is that most of the officer corps is professionally oriented. In his study of praetorianism, Perlmutter argued that only about 5 percent of an officer corps need be politicized in order for the military to behave in a praetorian manner.<sup>52</sup> How many officers must be professional in order for the PLA to behave as a professional force? The longer the PLA remains a semi-professional force in transition, the more important this question becomes.

## **The Study of Civil-Military Relations and the Impact of the Tiananmen Demonstrations: 1989–1991**

The 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations and their subsequent suppression were the biggest political crisis the Chinese regime has faced since the death of Mao. Moreover, the sense of threat was compounded by the collapse of Communist regimes throughout Europe that same year, culminating in the death by firing squad of Romanian Communist Party leader Nicolai Ceaucescu and his wife. Two years later the Soviet Union collapsed following a failed coup attempt in August 1991. Like these later crises, Tiananmen was a major test of military loyalty. The PLA's behavior during the crisis and the reactions of the Party, both to Tiananmen and to the collapse of communist rule elsewhere, offered an opportunity to test existing theories of civil-military relations in China.

Tiananmen produced a large volume of literature, perhaps the biggest single publishing boom on the PLA.<sup>53</sup> What does this literature tell us about the models we had been using in the 1980s? To a certain extent both sides can claim that Tiananmen vindicated their arguments. Factions were important in two key respects. First, factions were important in understanding how the Party came to the decision to use force. There was considerable maneuvering within the Party leadership that bypassed the official rules of decisionmaking and

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<sup>51</sup>See Fang Zhu, *Gun Barrel Politics: Party-Army Relations in Mao's China* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

<sup>52</sup>Amos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times: On Professionals, Praetorians, and Revolutionary Soldiers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 103.

<sup>53</sup>For a representative sampling of the literature see Harlan W. Jencks, "The Military in China," *Current History* (September 1989), pp. 265–268; Harlan W. Jencks, "Civil-Military Relations in China: Tiananmen and After," *Problems of Communism* (May/June 1991), pp. 14–29; Ellis Joffe, "The Tiananmen Crisis and the Politics of the PLA," in Richard Yang, ed., *China's Military: The PLA in 1990/91*; George Hicks, ed., *The Broken Mirror: China After Tiananmen* (London: Longman Current Affairs, 1990); Jane's Information Group, eds., *China in Crisis: The Role of the Military* (London: Jane's Defense Data, 1989); and Lee Feigon, *China Rising: The Meaning of Tiananmen* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1990).

eventually led to the dismissal of the nominal Party Chairman Zhao Ziyang. How Party elders, many of them former PLA leaders, lined up in favor of the crackdown mattered. Several “retired” PLA leaders were against a crackdown. Others, such as Peng Zhen, were strong proponents of the use of force. The role of Yang Shangkun and his brother Yang Baibing was apparently a key part of organizing the crackdown. Less clear was the degree of personal lobbying that Deng had to engage in to ensure the cooperation of PLA regional commanders. Some analysts have argued that there was evidence of factional loyalties in which units were involved in the crackdown and in which commanders received promotions in the years immediately following the massacre.<sup>54</sup> The return of a high degree of politicization (Lei Feng campaigns, military training for college students, etc.) after the crackdown tended to reinforce the impression that professionalism was on hold and that factionalism and a very political PLA had returned.

The second important point is that in the wake of Tiananmen it became obvious that Yang Shangkun and his brother Yang Baibing were building up a group of followers in the PLA.<sup>55</sup> The Yangs played a pivotal role in the crisis and, at least initially, appeared to be its primary beneficiaries, enjoying a considerable strengthening of their position within the Party-military hierarchy. An enormous amount of speculation, especially in the Hong Kong press, centered around evidence that the Yangs were bringing many of their supporters into key positions throughout the military. While the “Yang family village” did not last, it served to remind everyone that military reform had not fully eliminated personalistic politics. This gave rise to a new set of faction-based literature in the 1990s which emphasized the importance of personalistic politics during a crisis and the emergence of new forms of factional behavior.

The professionalism school also believed that Tiananmen tended to reinforce their interpretation of Chinese civil-military relations. The army did not split, as one would have expected if it were still as factionalized as in the 1960s.<sup>56</sup> By and large the PLA acted, however reluctantly, as a whole. The most discussed piece of evidence that might hint at factions within the military was the argument that the 27th Group Army carried out the actual massacre and it was loyal because it was commanded by a nephew of General Yang Shangkun. This argument does not hold up under empirical scrutiny. As Jencks and others

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<sup>54</sup>For examples of these arguments see June Teufel Dreyer, “Tiananmen and the PLA”; Gerald Segal, “The Chances of a Coup d’Etat,” and “China’s Party-Army Relations,” Gerald Segal and John Phipps, “Why Communist Armies Defend Their Parties,” all in Yang, ed., *China’s Military*. See also Jane’s Information Group, *China*, especially pp. 3–11 and pp. 71–101.

<sup>55</sup>See especially Dreyer, “Tiananmen and the PLA.”

<sup>56</sup>Jencks, “Tiananmen and After,” p. 16.

have shown, the crackdown involved more than just the 27th Group Army. Elements from many different units, including paratroops and even soldiers from the allegedly pro-democracy 38th Group Army, were involved.<sup>57</sup> While there was evidence of military dissent, only some of this could be attributed to factions. Instead, officers were reluctant to use force for a variety of reasons. Some had sons and daughters among the student demonstrators. Others were concerned about the negative impact on the PLA's image if force was used. There was fear that involvement might split the PLA as it had been during the Cultural Revolution. Many were said to have the distaste that all professional soldiers have about becoming involved in suppressing domestic unrest.<sup>58</sup>

For advocates of the professionalism model, therefore, Tiananmen reinforced the notion of the PLA as professional in nature, at least in regard to obeying orders from the Party. Despite misgivings, the PLA acted as a whole and obeyed the orders to crack down on demonstrators. This underscores an essential point about the PLA. Throughout its history, its interventions in Chinese politics have always been at the behest of the Communist Party or at least the dominant group within the Communist Party. While the PLA has never threatened to replace the Party, it has helped decide what kind of communists are going to run the Party. Jencks noted that in this case especially the PLA obeyed orders on the basis of their "legality"<sup>59</sup> (the order was issued by Prime Minister Li Peng in line with Article 89 of the constitution),<sup>60</sup> and argued that the PLA was more professionalized than at any previous time in its history.

Yet the immediate impact of Tiananmen on the study of Chinese civil-military relations was not necessarily an endorsement of the professionalism approach. Though both Jencks and Joffe regarded Tiananmen as evidence of professionalism in that the PLA was obedient to civil authority, they were initially rather pessimistic about the impact on further professionalization of the PLA. Joffe felt that Tiananmen had inflicted considerable damage on the PLA's reputation and worried that further professionalization would be put on hold at a critical juncture in the PLA's modernization program.<sup>61</sup> Jencks

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., Jencks and Andrew Scobell, "Why the People's Army Fired on the People: The Chinese Military and Tiananmen," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Winter 1992), pp. 199-209.

<sup>58</sup>For good discussions of PLA concerns about Tiananmen, see Joffe, "Tiananmen Crisis," pp. 20-22.

<sup>59</sup>See Harlan W. Jencks, "Party Authority and Military Power: Communist China's Continuing Crisis," *Issues and Studies* (July 1990), pp. 11-39, and Jencks, "Tiananmen and After." Jencks notes that while the order was technically "legal," the process by which that decision was made did not follow the Party's legal norms and that not all within the PLA were happy with the "legality" of the order.

<sup>60</sup>Dreyer, "Tiananmen and the PLA," p. 37.

<sup>61</sup>Joffe, "Tiananmen Crisis."

worried that Tiananmen had undone much of what Deng had tried to achieve in the 1980s.<sup>62</sup> Not only had Deng overturned much of the institutionalization that he had tried to create, Tiananmen and the collapse of communism in East Europe was followed by an intense re-politicization campaign aimed at asserting the Party's control of the "gun." Political indoctrination was dramatically stepped up, Lei Feng came back, and PLA membership in the Central Committee and Politburo increased. Many younger officers were known to be frustrated with the situation leading some analysts to argue that while the PLA had been professional and obeyed orders, they might not the next time.<sup>63</sup> This is not to say that the writers on professionalization doubted their model, but they were keenly aware that the prospects for a continued trend in the direction of professionalization were by no means guaranteed.

Overall, the literature on civil-military relations from 1989 to 1991 is dominated by doubts about where the PLA might be going. Many speculated that the PLA was very much back in politics and might not go back to the barracks quietly.<sup>64</sup> There was some speculation about a possible "Polish scenario" in which the PLA might take over leadership of the Party in the event of the failure of civilian leaders.<sup>65</sup> Several writers argued that while the PLA obeyed the CCP this should not be attributed to professionalism but to the PLA's role as guardian or armed wing of the Party. Dreyer noted that in many respects, the PLA did not fit Western concepts of professionalism,<sup>66</sup> and Latham argued that studying professionalism and PLA loyalty were false issues.<sup>67</sup> Eberhard Sandschneider<sup>68</sup> argued that the massacre should have come as no surprise, since the PLA has always been the armed wing of the Party. He further argued that the aftermath of the Tiananmen demonstrations would be the reversal of institutionalization of the PLA and a return to the politicization that characterized it in the 1960s and 1970s. He did not agree with the professionalization thesis and felt the decline of overt representation of the PLA in party decisionmaking was less a sign of professionalization than that younger military elites felt too much direct

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<sup>62</sup>Harlan W. Jencks, "China's Army, China's Future," in David Goodman and Gerald Segal, eds., *China in the Nineties: Crisis Management and Beyond* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991); and Jencks, "Tiananmen and After."

<sup>63</sup> Scobell, "Chinese Military," p. 207.

<sup>64</sup>See Dreyer, "The PLA and the Power Struggle," *Problems of Communism* (September/October 1989), p. 46.

<sup>65</sup>Jencks, "Party Authority," p. 38; Scobell, "Why the People's Army Fired On the People." p. 207.

<sup>66</sup>Dreyer, "Tiananmen and the PLA," p. 37.

<sup>67</sup>Richard J. Latham, "China's Party-Army Relations After June 1989: A Case of Miles' Law?" in Yang, ed., *China's Military*, pp. 117-118.

<sup>68</sup>Eberhard Sandschneider, "The Chinese Army After Tiananmen," *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1990), pp. 113-123.

participation in politics had hurt the military. In response, a slight withdrawal was in order, but only in return for concessions. In other words, the military bargained for its quiescence and was therefore still political. In time, much of this pessimism has faded and discussions of Tiananmen are now more measured. But the questions raised by the incident remain and help shape the way the civil-military literature has developed since 1991.

In sum, Tiananmen represents a dividing line in how we think about civil-military relations in China. It shook confidence in the apparent long-term trend toward professionalization and raised many new questions about the future of Chinese civil-military relations. After Tiananmen, the study of civil-military relations became much more absorbed with the problem of the military's role in a post-Deng succession. Would the PLA become a "kingmaker" when Deng died? If so, would the military be united or would it be split? What factions might be important in the succession? Would the long-term impact of Tiananmen be a more politicized PLA? Or would trends toward greater professionalization continue? Was it possible for the PLA to be both political and professional? What would happen when the last of the revolutionary generation left the scene?

## **The Study of Civil-Military Relations: 1992–Present**

In the aftermath of Tiananmen there is a greater diversity of opinion on how to approach Chinese civil-military relations. Some scholars have focused on the top of the military and Party hierarchy, where politics remains highly personalized. Others have continued to argue that professionalism still offers the best framework for thinking about Chinese civil-military relations. Still others have argued for a "symbiotic" framework as an alternative to professionalism. Finally, some PLA scholars are now suggesting that new patterns in civil-military relations are emerging in the post-Deng era.

### ***Factional Analysis in the 1990s***

The role of factions has continued to be a point of debate since Tiananmen, though the terms of that debate have shifted in many important ways since the 1980s. There is little discussion of factionalism at the regional level, reflecting a growing consensus that promotions, regular rotations, and other policies have largely reduced the basis for regional factions.<sup>69</sup> Current discussions of

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<sup>69</sup>In 1989, less than 15 percent of officers at the Military Region level served in their native areas. Rotations now take place every three years. See June Teufel Dreyer, "The Military's

personalistic politics focus almost exclusively on the highest echelons of the PLA. Few Western scholars continue to discuss field armies, though the subject remains popular with observers in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. In place of field armies, scholars have discussed factions based on followers of the Yangs, provincial origins, even school ties. Most important, perhaps, in the 1990s factions are seldom regarded as a primary causal explanation in civil-military relations. They are considered of importance in promotion<sup>70</sup> or “latent personnel relationships” that matter during a time of crisis such as an uncertain succession.<sup>71</sup>

The most extensive and ambitious attempt to look at factions in the post-Tiananmen era is in the work of Michael Swaine.<sup>72</sup> Unlike many of his predecessors, his approach has tried to identify those factors in the Chinese political system that encourage and sustain personalistic politics. These include the absence of an institutionalized structure to determine leadership succession, an unstable domestic environment with high levels of social and economic discontent, and uncertainty about the transition from the remaining elders of the revolution to a much younger generation that is more specialized and lacks the breadth and experience of their predecessors. Under such conditions leaders in the Party can maintain their positions only by having networks of support within the military, and military personnel can really influence decisionmaking only by maintaining ties with civilians. It is important to stress here that Swaine feels that these factions are most important during times of crisis, when political and military leaders rely heavily on those personal ties that they can trust.<sup>73</sup> One important aspect of Swaine’s study, and perhaps his most useful contribution, is the evidence he presents about the high degree of control exerted by a few individuals over the military. Only Deng or his personal representative could give certain orders, and military commanders are highly restricted as to how many troops may be moved without permission from the center.<sup>74</sup> This has provided us with a much better understanding of the highly personalized nature of politics at the top of the

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Uncertain Politics,” *Current History* (September 1996); and James C. Mulvenon, *Professionalization of the Senior Chinese Officer Corps: Trends and Implications* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1997).

<sup>70</sup>June Teufel Dreyer, “New Officer Corps,” p. 330.

<sup>71</sup>Cheng Li and Lynn White, “The Army in the Succession of Deng Xiaoping,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 8 (August 1993), p. 760.

<sup>72</sup>Swaine, *Succession*, especially chapters 2 through 5.

<sup>73</sup>Swaine, *Succession*, chapter one.

<sup>74</sup>Swaine, *Succession*, chapter six. A corps commander can only move a regiment, a division commander a battalion, a regimental commander a company and a battalion commander a platoon.

politico-military command, as well as giving us a better appreciation of how control can be maintained in such a highly personalized system.

A different approach to understanding how personal ties might affect the post-Deng succession was proposed by Li Cheng and Lynn White, who predicted that as the process of modernization proceeds and Chinese elites become more technocratic,<sup>75</sup> school ties will become more important as a basis of personal ties and the field armies will become less important as a source of factional behavior.<sup>76</sup> There is a certain irony here in that Li and White are looking for evidence of affective ties based on military education, a product of the professionalization of the 1980s. In the end they provided some very good evidence that the officer corps was becoming better educated and professionalized, but were much less successful in demonstrating that a by-product of officer education was a new form of personal ties. It is not that the logic was faulty. Educational ties have been shown to matter in other developing countries. The problem is that it is not clear whether educational cliques have an impact outside promotion.<sup>77</sup>

In the end, these and less well articulated discussions on factions and the post-Deng succession were largely moot, as Jiang's succession was relatively uneventful. The proposition that personalistic alliances might become very important in the event of another crisis remains untested. The post-Deng succession went smoothly in part because the PLA is loyal to the Party and there was no obvious alternative. But writings on Jiang's succession also indicate that Jiang's "courtship" of the PLA was an important aspect of his consolidation of power.<sup>78</sup> This tends to reinforce Swaine's central contention that the uppermost levels of decisionmaking civil-military relations remain highly personalized and even members of the professionalism school accept this argument.<sup>79</sup> This serves to remind us that though there has been a transition to a post-revolutionary elite, the Chinese political system is not yet sufficiently institutionalized to end personalistic politics.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>For a slightly different approach to professionalism, technocracy, and the persistence of personalism see Xiaowei Zang, "Professionalism and the Leadership Transition in the Post-Mao Chinese Army," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, Vol. X, No. 3 (Fall 1991), pp. 46–60.

<sup>76</sup>Li and White, "Army and Succession", p. 761.

<sup>77</sup>Dreyer, "New Officer Corps," p. 330.

<sup>78</sup>See especially David Shambaugh, "China's Commander-in-Chief: Jiang Zemin and the PLA"; June Teufel Dreyer, "Domestic Implications of an Emerging PLA"; both in C. Dennison Lane, Mark Weisenbloom, and Dimon Liu, eds., *Chinese Military Modernization* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1996), pp. 209–245. Shambaugh's treatment is the more extensive.

<sup>79</sup>Ellis Joffe, "Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect," *China Quarterly*, No. 146 (June 1996), p. 300.

<sup>80</sup>On the lack of institutionalization in general see Avery Goldstein, "Trends in the Study of Political Elites and Institutions in China," *The China Quarterly*, No. 139 (September 1994).



That said, assessing the role of factions in the 1990s remains highly problematic. All the limitations on factional approaches discussed in the first section remain valid, especially in terms of linking perceived groups to causation. The “Shandong Faction” represents a case in point. Officers from Shandong province are very prominent in the upper levels of the PLA. In 1994 both the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) commander and the political commissar were from Shandong, as were one-third of the CMC’s membership.<sup>81</sup> Overall, Shandongnese make up about a quarter of PLA senior officers.<sup>82</sup> It may very well be that this “faction” has an impact on promotion and other decisions within the PLA. It also may be the case that the high proportion of Shandongnese simply reflects where the PLA did much of its recruiting in the late-1940s and early-1950s.<sup>83</sup> The literature is also divided on the Yangs, with some scholars arguing that the end of the “Yang family village” increased factionalism at the top. Others argue that the Yangs inadvertently helped restrict the role of factions.<sup>84</sup> Factions exist in Chinese politics, but how we should think about them in civil-military relations remains a point of contention. Perhaps the only thing that can be said with any certainty is that personalism remains and its persistence allows us to measure the limits of institutionalization within the Chinese political system.

### *Professionalism After 1992*

For those writing within the professionalism paradigm, the essential arguments remain largely unchanged. They continue to view the PLA as a basically professional force within a Leninist state, with few substantively new ideas in the professionalization literature of the 1990s. As both the 1991 Gulf War and the recent NATO bombing of Yugoslavia aptly demonstrate, China’s security lies in developing a modern, technically proficient force. Therefore, China will need to continue to upgrade the skill and expertise of its officer corps, thereby strengthening the trend toward professionalization. The political campaigns that followed Tiananmen have subsided and are now viewed as a temporary manifestation of the normal tensions between a professional force and the

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<sup>81</sup>Dreyer, ed., *China’s Strategic View*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>82</sup> Mulvenon, *Professionalization*, pp. 51–54; and Li and White, “Army and Succession,” pp. 760–761. Li and White note that many of the Shandong officers come from the county of Rongcheng.

<sup>83</sup> See Mulvenon, *Professionalization*, pp. 51–54; and Li and White, “Army and Succession,” p. 760.

<sup>84</sup> Dreyer says factions are more likely. Dreyer, “Domestic Implications,” p. 203. Joffe argues that the end of the Yangs was made easier because professional officers opposed factions. Joffe, “Party-Army,” p. 306. Shambaugh says both, Shambaugh, “China’s Commander,” p. 223.

Party's desire to maintain control, a process that goes back to the 1950s.<sup>85</sup> The transition to a post-revolutionary elite should, in theory, further encourage trends toward professionalism. For the first time there will be distinct civilian and military elites. Unlike their predecessors, the new military elite ought to be more inwardly oriented toward professional concerns and less involved in political matters.<sup>86</sup> Barring a major conflict among civilian elites, the PLA should become even more like the Soviet military, which many observers regard as highly professional.<sup>87</sup>

Much of the writings that come under this category between 1992 and 1998 largely consist of new evidence that the PLA is acquiring more of the aspects of a professional force and in many respects is more professional now than in the 1980s. Reflecting vastly improved sources of information and some path-breaking work in statistical analysis, a number of studies have been published in the last few years on officer education that indicate a trend toward greater professionalization.<sup>88</sup> It is not just that the data indicate that officers are better educated than before. The data also indicate that the content of that education has also changed, emphasizing technical knowledge and military theory over ideological issues.<sup>89</sup> Technical specialization is increasing within the PLA.<sup>90</sup> Contacts with foreign militaries and exposure to the professional norms of Western armies have steadily increased.

Trends in officer education are reinforced by other developments in the 1990s. Since Tiananmen, the pace of regularization has picked up. Twelve of the thirteen sections of military law were enacted in just the past ten years. The year 1999 saw major steps toward greater regularization with the introduction of new combat regulations, as well as changes in logistics, military education, and training.<sup>91</sup> Studies of promotions indicate that professional qualifications are more important than ever.<sup>92</sup> The retirement system too seems to be more

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<sup>85</sup>See Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military*; nd Joffe, *Party and Army*.

<sup>86</sup>Joffe, "Party-Army," p. 310.

<sup>87</sup>Perlmutter, *Military and Politics*, pp. 229–250. In this earlier work, Perlmutter offered a tripartite scheme of professional, praetorian, and professional revolutionary armies, the last category consisting of national liberation-type movements of which China and Israel are the two examples given.

<sup>88</sup>See, among others, Lonnie Henley, "Officer Education in the Chinese PLA," *Problems of Communism* (May/June 1987), pp. 55–71; Dreyer, "New Officer Corps"; Mulvenon, *Professionalization*.

<sup>89</sup>Mulvenon, *Professionalization*, pp. 11–24.

<sup>90</sup>Mulvenon, *Professionalization*, pp. 25–34. Not only are there separate career tracks for military officers and commissars, it is now the norm to serve in the same service arm for their entire careers. In the 1970s it was not unusual, for example, to see a political commissar transfer from the infantry to the navy.

<sup>91</sup>See the chapters by Paul Godwin and David Finkelstein in this volume.

<sup>92</sup>Li and White, "Army and Succession."

effective than in the 1980s when it was first introduced.<sup>93</sup> The trend toward a reduction in domestic affairs (except commercial activity) increased through most of the decade. Whereas there were many at the beginning of the 1980s who claimed that the PLA was involved in making domestic policy, few would make that argument now.<sup>94</sup> The preponderance of the empirical data presented in the literature of the mid- to late-1990s indicate an irreversible trend toward a more professional officer corps. Perhaps the best indication of the strength of the evidence is that virtually all scholars writing on the PLA now acknowledge that at least some professionalism has taken place since the 1980s.

It is, therefore, rather ironic that at a time when the evidence for the arguments of Joffe and Jencks is stronger than ever, there should also be a considerable body of evidence that runs counter to those arguments. Two areas stand out: commercial activity by PLA-owned enterprises and growing evidence that the PLA is increasingly active in the foreign policy arena. The existence of PLA enterprises was a result of historical legacies. The decision to use them to generate funds for the PLA was in part because historical and ideological legacies meant both PLA and civilian Party leaders felt they were legitimate. Historical legacies still affect the PLA despite two decades of growing professionalism. PLA enterprises became highly dysfunctional in part because of social, political, and economic forces that are outside the military. Thus, PLA commercial activities have had an extremely negative impact on the PLA and even though the PLA was ordered to divest itself of these enterprises in July 1998, it will be years before the damage is repaired.<sup>95</sup>

The point I want to make here is that the issue is not just the damage that PLA commercial activity has done to the military. Jencks and Joffe are well aware of the extent to which “PLA Inc.” undermined professionalism. But professionalism focuses attention as much on what is happening inside the military itself as it does on the issue of civilian control. This is often a weakness of the approach because there are often many social, political, and economic developments in the society as a whole that can affect professionalism. Officers may be *distinct* from citizens, but the military is seldom truly *separate* from society.

PLA commercial activity is not just about the military being involved in the economy. It is also about bringing the larger society into the PLA, exposing

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<sup>93</sup>Mulvenon, *Professionalization*, pp. 33–43.

<sup>94</sup>David Shambaugh, “China’s Military in Transition,” *The China Quarterly*, No. 146 (June 1996), p. 272.

<sup>95</sup>See footnote 42.

officers and enlisted personnel to a whole range of norms and values that are at odds with professional norms and the political message of the Communist Party.<sup>96</sup> By focusing on the military itself and not the military's relationship to the entire political system, analysts may be missing trends that may help or hinder professionalization. Given the enormous amount of change going on in China, this is an important omission in how we think about civil-military relations. Those using the professional approach need to think more about how the developments in society may impact the PLA.

Turning to national security policy, there is increasing evidence of a substantial military role in this policy area.<sup>97</sup> This stands in remarkable contrast to the past, when there was little evidence to suggest that the PLA had any role in foreign policy.<sup>98</sup> Not only has the passing of the old revolutionary elite meant a new political role in national security policy, available evidence indicates that the PLA's involvement is growing.<sup>99</sup> The emergence of a new generation of separate civilian and military elites helps make this possible. Not only do the new civilian elites lack the stature and military experience to set security policy, new military elites are more expert and have a stronger sense of the PLA's corporate interests in security policy. To a certain extent this does not pose a problem for the professionalism argument. As the synopsis of Huntington at the beginning of this paper shows, one of the responsibilities of a professional officer is advice on defense-related issues. The problems start when generals start giving more than advice. That opens the door to bargaining, coalitional behavior between the PLA and civilian groups, political influence, perhaps even directives to civilians by military personnel. All these types of behavior pose problems for the image of a politically quiescent PLA. It may very well be that professionalization of the PLA will lead to a narrowing of the PLA's political role, but with the countervailing effect of intensifying the PLA's political influence in those areas that it remains active.

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<sup>96</sup>To give an anecdotal example, one general used the extra earnings gleaned by his unit's enterprise to send his daughter to private school in England. I would submit that an officer using extra-military earnings for private family advantage is not only inconsistent with professional norms, it is also highly inconsistent with Marxism. The general reportedly felt that divestiture was very unfair to him. See Susan V. Lawrence and Bruce Gilley, "Bitter Harvest," in *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 29, 1999.

<sup>97</sup>For studies on how the PLA affects foreign policy see Michael D. Swaine, *The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1996); Michael D. Swaine, "The PLA in China's National Security Policy: Leaderships, Structures, Processes," *The China Quarterly*, No. 146 (June 1996); and John W. Garver, "The PLA an Interest Group in Chinese Foreign Policy," in Lane, Weisenbloom, and Liu, *Chinese Military*, pp. 246–281.

<sup>98</sup>See footnote 51.

<sup>99</sup>See Swaine, *National Security Policymaking*.

In sum, while the 1990s has been a good decade for many aspects of the professionalism argument, there are also many issues that do not fit well with the expectations of the argument, and this leads to the possibility that the professionals do not have the full story.

### ***New Trends and Developments in the Literature: Symbiosis and Beyond***

The post-Tiananmen period also sees some new trends and developments in how PLA scholars think about their subject. The writers who will be considered in this section are rather heterogeneous in their work, but they all have at least one of the following aspects in common. First, in the wake of Tiananmen and the subsequent and intense political campaign in the PLA, many observers began to look for an alternative conceptual approach to professionalism. Second, in the 1990s some PLA scholars started to take more interest in the literature on civil-military relations in other Leninist regimes.<sup>100</sup> Third, many PLA scholars began to think seriously that post-Deng civil-military relations might be different from the past.

In the early 1990s, both Cheng Hsiao-shih and Nan Li drew on the work of Soviet specialists in developing their analyses of the PLA's political work system. Cheng agreed with the work of William Odom,<sup>101</sup> especially the latter's argument that the divide between military and civilian was an artificial one in Leninist regimes. Rather, Party and army should be regarded as a whole and civil-military relations are really relations within the party.<sup>102</sup> While providing some valuable insights into the work of the GPD and making a valuable contribution by comparing the PLA to Taiwan's ruling Guomindang Party, Cheng did not really develop his ideas about civil-military fusion. Nor did he carry his analysis past the mid-1980s, when professionalism became more prominent within the PLA. Nan Li, on the other hand, drew on the work of Timothy Colton<sup>103</sup> to create an alternative argument about the political work

<sup>100</sup>Prior to 1990 Roman Kolkowicz is virtually the only Soviet civil-military relations specialist whose work is cited by PLA scholars.

<sup>101</sup>William E. Odom, "The Party-Military Connection: A Critique," in Dale R. Herspring and Ivan Volgyes, eds., *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 27–52. An updated version of Odom's argument can be found in William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>102</sup>Cheng Hsiao-shih, *Party-Military Relations in the PRC and Taiwan: Paradoxes of Control* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), p. 7.

<sup>103</sup>Timothy J. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979); and Timothy J. Colton and Thane Gustafson, eds., *Soldier and the Soviet State: Civil-Military Relations From Brezhnev and Gorbachev* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). Colton argues for a participatory model. Colton disagrees with Odom's position that there is no institutional line between military and

system.<sup>104</sup> While Li's work provides some good arguments as to why the factional approach will become less useful as the political system bureaucratizes, he is less convincing in his argument that changes in the political work system invalidate the assumption that the PLA acts as a professional interest group.

Another study on the political work system that has had a wider impact on the debate on Chinese civil-military relations is that of David Shambaugh.<sup>105</sup> Shambaugh has drawn on the work of Odom, Perlmutter, and LeoGrande<sup>106</sup> to develop what he calls the "symbiosis" model. Briefly stated, Shambaugh accepts that the PLA displays many of the aspects of a professional force, particularly in terms of skill, expertise, and obedience to civil (Party) authority. Unlike Jencks and Joffe, however, Shambaugh contends that the PLA has historically been "inextricably intertwined" with the Party-state and is therefore very political as well as professional.<sup>107</sup> This apparent contradiction is resolved by understanding that the PLA and the Party have evolved together in a symbiotic relationship, each affecting the other. Indeed, the long period of revolution guaranteed that this symbiotic nature would last long after the founding of the PRC. Symbiosis, however, is not static. Shambaugh's analysis of the political work system within the PLA indicates that the relationship between Party and PLA changes over time and that there have been periods where the Party has been more dominant and sought control. In some respects this argument is not new. Several writers in the 1980s argued that the PLA and the Party formed a dual elite.<sup>108</sup> What is new is the emphasis on the professional aspects of the PLA<sup>109</sup> and the idea that symbiosis can evolve.

The strength of Shambaugh's approach is that it reconciles the problem of professional military behavior (loyalty to the Party) with the obvious fact the

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civilian in the Soviet Union, but neither does he find such a boundary as conflict ridden as Kolkowicz does. Rather, the military participates in Soviet politics, bargaining and interacting with civilian elites. Neither side tends to dominate the other, but the military accepts the party's ultimate authority. Colton's model also allows for alliances and political support to crisscross the boundary between civilians and the military. In the end, though, he admits that the Soviet military does not participate as much in politics as it could. The Soviet military does not involve itself in societal choices.

<sup>104</sup>Nan Li, "Changing Functions of the Party and Political Work System in the PLA and Civil-Military Relations in China," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Spring 1993), pp. 393–409.

<sup>105</sup>David Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State in China: The Political Work System in the People's Republic of China," *The China Quarterly*, No. 127 (September 1991), pp. 527–568.

<sup>106</sup>Perlmutter and LeoGrande, "Party in Uniform"; and Odom, "The Party-Military Connection."

<sup>107</sup>Shambaugh, "The Soldier and the State," pp. 527–533

<sup>108</sup>See Bullard, *Political-Military Evolution*; and Dreyer, "Civil-Military Relations."

<sup>109</sup>Cheng Hsiao-shih also draws heavily on Odom in his comparative work on political work systems in Mainland China and Taiwan. Unlike Shambaugh, however, he does not imbue the PLA with professional-like qualities in the 1980s. See Cheng, *Party-Military*, chapter five.

PLA does indeed participate in politics, albeit in a subordinate role. The symbiotic argument is also in many ways more appropriate to the Maoist and early Dengist period than the professionalism approach. The level of professionalization is so much higher in the 1980s and 1990s compared to the 1950s through 1970s that one wonders how much of Maoist civil-military relations can be explained by professionalism. Shambaugh's argument allows for the possibility of evolution from symbiosis to professionalism.<sup>110</sup> I would agree with Shambaugh that the PLA is best thought of as being symbiotic before reform. There really was a dual elite and symbiosis reflects well the revolutionary legacies of the PRC. Professionalism in the PLA was at best partial before the 1980s. However, there is no denying that there has been considerable professionalization of the PLA since 1979 and no one could argue that the PLA has been moving away from symbiosis.<sup>111</sup> To this extent, symbiosis and professionalism are not alternatives but complementary. Joffe is correct in arguing that each describes part of what is a multi-faceted problem.<sup>112</sup>

Shambaugh has recently suggested that there have been subtle changes going on in the relationship between Party, state, and PLA in the 1990s.<sup>113</sup> In this respect Shambaugh touches base with Paltiel.<sup>114</sup> Paltiel also sees the Party-army connection as being symbiotic and argues that there are tensions in the constitutional framework of the Party-state-military relationship. He too sees the potential for important changes in the nature of this relationship. Exactly where these subtle changes may ultimately lead is far from clear. However, Shambaugh does provide some evidence that the state may be (stress on may) developing more direct controls over the armed forces, even to the point of the Party allowing the PLA more relative autonomy. Such a development, if it occurs, would be a logical result of the trend toward professionalism. It is known that some PLA officers desire a state-centered army. A new generation of professionally oriented civilians may also be open to the idea of a clear division of labor between state and Party that gives some control of the PLA to the state.

However, considerable caution is needed here. Leninist regimes are not known for their tolerance of state-centered armies, the Chinese Party especially so.

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<sup>110</sup>See Shambaugh, "China's Military in Transition"; and Shambaugh, *Reforming the Chinese Military*, chapter two, unpublished manuscript.

<sup>111</sup>Perlmutter and LeoGrande argued that symbiosis and professionalism were at opposite ends of a continuum of civil-military relations within Leninist regimes.

<sup>112</sup>Joffe, "Party-Army."

<sup>113</sup>Shambaugh, unpublished manuscript.

<sup>114</sup>Paltiel, "PLA Allegiance on Parade."

Even minor changes in the relationship between Party, state, and military would have a major impact on civil-military relations. William Odom is adamant in his new study that altering the link between Communist Party and military was very detrimental to the Soviet political system under Gorbachev.<sup>115</sup> There is a real problem in determining how far one can go in reforming the Party-state relationship without undermining the Party-state itself.

James Mulvenon offers a rather different argument about where the PLA is going in the post-Deng era. He argues that civil-military relations are now essentially a balance of power with intense bargaining going on between civilian and military leaders over policy and distribution of resources.<sup>116</sup> Mulvenon also argues that civil-military relations have moved from symbiosis to professionalism. However, he also argues that in a Leninist context, Huntington's notions of responsibility, corporateness, and expertise lead not to political quiescence but to political involvement. Expertise, he argues, may be a double-edged sword that makes it easier to intervene in domestic politics. Responsibility means that the PLA is very nationalistic in defending China's strategic interests, but he argues that the PLA has yet to grasp the other half of the equation,<sup>117</sup> which is responsibility to society or to state. Corporate identity, when combined with the Party's demands that the PLA remain a political force, creates the potential for praetorianism. In making this argument, Mulvenon is one of few people within PLA studies who has noted that many scholars in the study of civil-military relations have argued that professionalism is a two-edged sword. It can lead to a withdrawal from politics and it can lead to intervention in politics.<sup>118</sup> As evidence for his argument, Mulvenon cites the growing influence of the PLA on national security policy and bargaining surrounding the divestiture of the PLA's enterprises. It is an interesting argument and Mulvenon deserves credit for expanding the terms of debate on professionalism. However, it remains to be seen whether the bargaining and balance of power he describes are a temporary manifestation of the transition to a post-Deng China or if they are a more permanent state of affairs.

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<sup>115</sup>See Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, especially chapter two and the conclusion.

<sup>116</sup>James Mulvenon, "An Uneasy Bargain: Party-Military Relations in Post-Deng China," unpublished manuscript.

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>118</sup>The classic work on this point is Abrahamsson's *Military Professionalism*. Finer also argues that under certain circumstances professional militaries can intervene in politics. See S. E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Penguin, 1976), pp. 20–21.



So we return to the opening argument of this paper. Twenty years ago there was greater clarity in the study of Chinese civil-military relations. Either civil-military relations would continue to be shaped by the politics of the Cultural Revolution era or reforms would take hold and move civil-military relations in a new direction. The PLA has been in transition for 20 years. Some of the concepts we use to analyze civil-military relations pre-date that transition. China is still a Party-state, but it is not the same Party-state it was 20 years ago. In the year 2000 we understand less about civil-military relations than in the past. The literature of the past ten years offers a variety of contradictory interpretations. Factional politics remain important, or it may be declining, or the basis for factions may be changing. The PLA is showing signs of being more professional, yet there are also many factors that serve to undermine that trend. The PLA may be moving, however uncertainly, to a more state-centered army. The PLA may be becoming more active in political bargaining with the Party. There may very well be some important trends that we are not yet aware of simply because we are not asking the right questions. In many respects all the main themes described here are looking at different parts of what is a multifaceted relationship between the PLA and the Party that created it. They point to the need to step back and try to integrate the various elements of that relationship to better understand how it has evolved over the years.

I would argue that we have taken current arguments as far as we can, using China alone as our model. One of the most striking features of PLA studies is how little comparative work has been done. To a certain extent that is natural. Many aspects of Chinese politics are highly unusual, if not unique. However, Chinese civil-military relations, like the rest of its politics, are becoming more like those of other countries and PLA scholars need to look to other countries to help us form ideas and questions, especially suggestions about paths for future research.

### ***Comparative Civil-Military Relations***

PLA scholars have made only limited use of the wide and varied comparative literature on civil-military relations. Most comparative work done on the PLA has been limited to the work that has come out of the Soviet Union, namely that of Kolkowicz, Odom, Colton, and Perlmutter and LeoGrande. The work of these scholars has certainly informed and enlivened the debate on issues such as professionalism and symbiosis, as Leninist regimes such as the PRC and the Soviet Union share many characteristics in common. However, PLA scholars

should not excessively rely on the Soviet case for comparative purposes. The early histories of the Soviet army and the PLA are very different.<sup>119</sup> Many of the recent professional features of the PLA have been present in the Red Army for over 60 years. We, therefore, need to be aware of the possible differences between old, established professionalism and recent professionalization in comparing the role of the military in security policy in the Soviet Union and the PRC.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, the Soviet models currently being used by PLA scholars are from the pre-reform Soviet Union. As in China, economic reforms under Gorbachev unleashed a variety of social, political, and economic forces that have had an important impact on the military. Looking at the literature on civil-military relations under the Gorbachev reforms may give us new insights into how the wider reforms in China are affecting the PLA and perceptions of its role in the Chinese political system.<sup>121</sup>

Some writers, such as David Segal, Walter Bacon, and Robin Remington,<sup>122</sup> have suggested that there is probably more similarity among those Communist states that experienced a guerrilla war than there are between guerrilla-origins militaries and the Soviet Union. PLA scholars are very much aware of the legacies of the PLA's early years and how they continue to affect the development of the PLA and civil-military relations. Yet little comparative work has been done on communist guerrilla armies or how they have managed the transition to modernized armed forces.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>For an interesting history of the early Soviet military see Mark von Hagen, *Soldiers of the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet Socialist State, 1917–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>120</sup>For an interesting discussion on the role of military expertise in Soviet security policy, see Kimberly Marten Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation, 1955–1991* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>121</sup>I have already cited Odom's study which extends his main thesis through 1991. See also Robert Barylski, *The Soldier in Russian Politics: Duty, Dictatorship, and Democracy Under Gorbachev and Yeltsin* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1998); Dale R. Herspring, *Russian Civil-Military Relations* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996); and Dale R. Herspring, "Redefining Civil-Military Relations: The Future of the Russian Military," *Problems of Post-Communism* (March/April 1997), pp. 47–55.

<sup>122</sup>See Walter M. Bacon, Jr., "Civil-Military Relations in Romania: Value Transformations in the Military," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (Autumn 1978), pp. 237–249. Robin Alison Remington, "Civil-Military Relations in Yugoslavia: The Partisan Vanguard," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (Autumn 1978), pp. 250–264. David R. Segal, "Civil-Military Relations East and West," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. XI, No. 3 (Autumn 1978), pp. 310–326.

<sup>123</sup>For example, there is extensive literature on the close and rather symbiotic relationship between Party and army in Cuba. See Louis William M. LeoGrande, "A Bureaucratic Approach to Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems: The Case of Cuba"; Irving Louis Horowitz, "Military Outcomes of the Cuban Revolution"; Marta San Martin and Ramon L. Bonachea, "The Military Dimension of the Cuban Revolution," all in Irving Louis Horowitz, ed., *Cuban Communism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1982); Jaime Suchlicki, ed., *The Cuban Military Under Castro* (Miami: North-South Center University of Miami Press, 1989). For that matter there are many parallels between communist guerrilla armies and other guerrilla armies. See, for example, Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

In terms of understanding where Chinese civil-military relations might be headed, there is a growing literature on professionalization and political transition in former Leninist regimes. Zoltan Barany's work, for example, indicates that transformation to state-oriented professionalized armies in the former communist states of Eastern Europe is anything but a straightforward process, and that military elites in many of these regimes have resisted de-politicization.<sup>124</sup>

Indeed, Leninist and post-Leninist regimes represent a wide spectrum of political outcomes, ranging from apolitical, professional, modern armed forces to praetorian militias. Understanding how the same regime type, Leninism, could produce so many different outcomes will help us understand better the processes taking place in Chinese civil-military relations and the Chinese political system.

There is also a considerable amount of literature on civil-military relations on non-Leninist one-party states. Taiwan is one area that should be explored more. The GMD has been essentially a Leninist party without Leninism, and there are several recent and very good studies of the military in Taiwan.<sup>125</sup> A somewhat different case is represented by Mexico, which is an excellent example of a professional military under the subjective control of a single party.<sup>126</sup> Interestingly, there are signs that as one party rule declines in Mexico, the military may be becoming more politically active.<sup>127</sup> The civil-military relations of other one-party states may also be informative at least concerning the role of military as guardian of the regime. More broadly, the recent arguments of Shambaugh and Mulvenon indicate that we should think more about new models for civil-military relations. As Mulvenon points out, professionalism may lead to more political intervention as well as less.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>Zoltan Barany, "Democratic Consolidation and the Military: The East European Experience," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (October 1997), pp. 21–41. See also Zoltan Barany, *Soldiers and Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945–1990: The Case of Hungary* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Constantine Danopoulos and Daniel Zirker, eds., *Civil-Military Relations in the Soviet and Yugoslav Successor States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); and Constantine Danopoulos and Daniel Zirker, eds., *The Military and Society in the Former Eastern Bloc* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).

<sup>125</sup>In addition to Cheng Hsiao-shih's book already cited, recent works on Taiwan included Monte Bullard, *The Soldier and the Citizen: The Role of the Military in Taiwan's Development* (Armonck: M. E. Sharpe, 1997); and David Shambaugh, "Taiwan's Security: Maintaining Deterrence Amidst Political Accountability," in David Shambaugh, ed., *Contemporary Taiwan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>126</sup>Roderic Ai Camp, *Generals in the Palacio: The Military in Modern Mexico* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>127</sup>Roderic Ai Camp, "Mexico," in Constantine P. Danopoulos and Cynthia Watson, eds., *The Political Role of the Military: An International Handbook* (Westport, Conn.: Greenview Press, 1996).

<sup>128</sup>See footnote 48.

Shambaugh's argument leads us more to the recent literature on military disengagement in Latin America, Asia, and Southern Europe.<sup>129</sup>

One last area of the comparative civil-military literature that we need to look at concerns a wider meaning of the word "civil" in civil-military relations. Traditionally civil-military relations have focused on the issue of control. The literature abounds on studies of coups and attempted coups and more recently has focused on getting the military out of politics. But there are other dimensions of the civil-military nexus that deserve attention as well. Two recent works will serve as exemplars here. Elizabeth Kier has argued armed forces have distinct organizational cultures that shape policy preferences of the officer corps.<sup>130</sup> For Kier, each military organization has its own particular set of collectively held beliefs based on historical experience and other factors. This set of particular beliefs is separate from professional values common to all modern military professionals and separate from the beliefs held by civilian policymakers.<sup>131</sup> Organizational culture shapes the preferred ends of the particular officer corps. Thus, in Kier's study, two professional militaries, those of Great Britain and France, had very different preferences on national security issues during the 1920s and 1930s. Given the PLA's new activity in security policymaking, organizational culture may be a fruitful approach in understanding PLA preferences.

Stephen Rosen makes a somewhat different cultural argument by positing that militaries mirror their society even if the military is highly professional.<sup>132</sup> For PLA studies, this type of approach has many possibilities. The PLA was born in a peasant society. Many of its traditions, such as economic activity, have roots in China's past. Yet in the 70 years of the PLA's existence, enormous changes have taken place in Chinese society. Huntington argued that officers are distinct and separate, and experts on civil-military relations have tended to follow his lead. This is misleading. The PLA and its relations with the Party must also be understood in light of what changes have occurred in society and how they affect the political system and civil-military relations. Looking at these issues will strengthen and better inform the ongoing debate about the

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<sup>129</sup>See, for example, Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). Two good case studies are John Samuel Fitch, *The Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); and Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

<sup>130</sup> Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>132</sup>Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

study of civil-military relations in China. By taking a more comparative approach we will not only enhance our understanding of Chinese civil-military relations, we will be able to contribute to the rest of the literature rather than just borrowing from it.