

The Gun and the Reform: Changes and Continuities in Civil-Military Relations in the People's Republic of China

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Introduction

Television pictures coming out of Moscow during the coup against Soviet reformers in the summer of 1991 were reminiscent of China's Tiananmen Square in the summer of 1989. Indeed, the scenes in front of the Russian parliament were strikingly similar to those in Tiananmen Square: tanks rolling through the streets, local residents pleading with soldiers and setting up blockades, civilians throwing Molotov cocktails and rocks at the tanks, students waving flags and making V signs, etc. There is, however, a crucial difference in the outcome of the two events, i.e., the Chinese army did carry out and then uphold a crackdown, in the process killing perhaps hundreds of civilians, while the action taken by the Soviet army held only for seventy-two hours and then collapsed completely. A question one might ask is why the two events were resolved in such different ways.

After the Tiananmen Square incident in June, 1989, a number of Western analysts began to raise serious doubts about the progress that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had made since the late 1970s.¹ These doubts lead

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1. One of the most serious doubters is A. James Gregor who challenged the perception that the PLA was significantly professionalized and de-politicized in the 1980s. See Gregor, "The People's Liberation Army and China's Crisis," *Armed Forces & Society* 18:1 (Fall 1991), pp. 7-10. Also see June Teufel Dreyer, "The Role of the Military," *World Policy Journal* 6:4 (Fall 1989), p. 647.

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to two fundamental questions: To what degree has professionalization occurred to the PLA, and what is the impact of professionalization, if it indeed occurred, on military politics in the People's Republic of China?

This is an empirical study of changes and continuities in the Chinese military and civil-military relations in the People's Republic of China (PRC) since the late 1970s and the subsequent effect of these changes on the reform process in China. The key argument of this study is that Deng Xiaoping's political reform, focusing on political rationalization and institutional efficiency in the last decade, has transformed the PLA from a highly politicized and socially interactive institution into a more professional army. This process of de-politicization and professionalization has been most clearly manifested in the PLA's modernization of weaponry, reduction of the PLA's political and extra-military activities and interactions with civilians in society, and increased attention of the military to institutional matters related directly to making the army a disciplined, effective, and professional fighting force. Yet, professionalization of the Chinese army did not prevent the PLA from being used to suppress the democracy movement in 1989. In fact, the type of professionalization that the PLA experienced to some degree facilitated the convenient use of the army by the conservative Communist Party leaders in crushing the popular protests in the summer of 1989.

Military professionalization in this research is defined as the ability of the military to concentrate itself on its main task, i.e., preparation to defend the nation against external aggression and related matters, the autonomy of the military to manage its own institutional affairs with minimum outside interference, and the possession of a high degree of specialized knowledge and technical know-how by the military to perform military tasks.² It should be noted that the concept of military professionalization can be viewed in terms of a continuum instead of a dichotomy. In other words, professionalization is a relative term, and no military can achieve absolute professionalism. Military politicization refers to the army's political involvement in national and Communist Party politics and the Communist Party's control of the military establishment.³

2. For more on professionalism, see Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1957); Almos Perlmutter, *The Military and Politics in Modern Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (Chicago: Free Press, 1960); and Bengt Abrahamsson, *Military Professionalization and Political Power* (Beverly Hills, CA.: Sage Publications, 1972).

3. See Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 84-85; and "Interest Groups in Soviet Politics: The Case of the Military" in Dale R. Herspring and Ivan Volgyes, eds., *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems* (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1978), p. 14.

Data and Methodology

For the purpose of determining the extent of the PLA's professionalization, I distinguish four types of activities and issue-areas in which the military in China might be involved.⁴ The first type of issue, termed internal and institutional, is confined to matters of immediate concern to the military as an organizational entity, such as improving military training, conducting military exercises, stipulating military norms, and promoting military cohesion. The second type of issue is political and ideological in nature. It includes the army's participation in political campaigns, the army's reaction to party decisions, and political indoctrination in the armed forces.

The third type can be called social-military interactive issues which concern both the military establishment and civilians. Examples of such issues include changes in conscription regulations, the civilian sector's treatment of veterans and of servicemen's dependents, efforts to strengthen military-civilian unity, and instances of conflict and dispute between the military and civilians. The last type of issue is economic. Issues in this category refer to economic activities in which the armed forces are engaged, such as building dams and roads for local civilian communities, providing assistance to the agricultural sector at harvest time, carrying out rescue missions in natural disaster areas, and running profit-oriented business operations. In addition, sub-issue categories are also developed in order to track the exact types of activities in which the Chinese army engaged.

Studies of the Chinese military before the 1980s depict the PLA as a highly politically—active and socially—involved army.⁵ In fact, since its establishment, the PLA was not meant to be merely a fighting force. One analyst observed in the mid-1970s that

the range of roles and duties played by the PLA in Chinese society today is staggering. As far as performing functional work and getting along

4. The four categories of issues are partially derived from Timothy Colton's concept of scope of issues that any military establishment may be involved in. See Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 233.

5. For more analysis on the PLA prior to the 1980s, see Ellis Joffe, *Party and Army: Professionalism and Political Control in the Chinese Officer Corps, 1949-1964* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1967); William Whitson, *The Chinese High Command: A History of Communist Military Politics, 1927-1971* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973); John Gittings, *The Role of the Chinese Army* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); Samuel Griffith, *The Chinese People's Liberation Army* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967); and Kau Ying-mao, *The People's Liberation Army and China's Nation-Building* (New York: International Arts and Science Press, 1973).

with society, the PLA has no rival in the world.⁶

Indeed, from the civil war of the 1940's to the Cultural Revolution of the 1960's and 1970's, the PLA maintained a symbiotic relationship with the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese civilian society. If one hypothesizes that professionalization and de-politicization have occurred since the late 1970s, one should expect that the PLA had devoted more attention to internal/institutional activities and issues and had reduced its political/ideological, social-interactive, and economic activities.

Studies of communist China have traditionally been impeded by a lack of reliable and systematic data. To overcome this data problem, I have utilized the *Daily Report: The people's Republic of China*, published by the U.S. Foreign Broadcasting Information Service to extract information on the activities and foci of attention of the PLA. FBIS's *Daily Report* was chosen as the primary data source for the following reasons. First, the longitudinal nature of this research requires data covering changes in the military establishment from both the pre-reform and reform periods. The *Daily Report* provides the most systematic source of information dating back to the early 1970s. Second, the *Daily Report* translates and transcribes media reports from most important communist party and government news organs in China. Since I am mainly concerned with regime attention, the selective coverage of military activities by the official press does not pose any problem for my research, and in fact works to the advantage of this project. Third, military affairs in China, being of great concern for the United States, receive extensive coverage in the *Daily Report*. Thus, any significant reports concerning the armed forces and civil-military relations in the PRC should be picked up by FBIS.⁷

However, in using FBIS *Daily Report* this way, I am fully aware of the potential biases in the data. To ensure that FBIS selection of media reports on PLA activities was not seriously biased, spot-checks were conducted on original Chinese newspapers. One set of results, which are displayed in the appendix, corroborate the findings from the FBIS data. Spot-check results strengthen the contention that the FBIS *Daily Report* is a valid, if not perfect, source for tracking PLA activities.

In examining the FBIS *Daily Report*, I use content analysis, one of the

6. Charles R. D'Amato, "Civil-Military Relations in the people's Republic of China and Indonesia", in Charles L. Cochran (ed.), *Civil-Military Relations: Changing Concepts in the Seventies* (New York: Free Press, 1974), p. 287.

7. See Ronald H. Linden, *Bears and Forces: The International Relations of East European States: 1965-1969* (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, 1979), p. 58. FBIS has also been used as a systematic data source on other subject matters, such as the Conflict and Peace Data Bank (COPDAB) project which was initiated by Edward E. Azar in the late 1960s.

most widely employed methods for analyzing media-generated information. In general terms, there are two types of content analysis: qualitative non-frequency and quantitative frequency approaches. The main difference between the two is that the former utilizes a single occurrence or non-occurrence of certain content characteristics for purpose of inference, while the latter is concerned with the frequency distribution of occurrence of a given content attribute. My research employs both approaches. In the quantitative frequency analyses, I adopted the **theme** or **issue-area** as the basic recording unit for classifying the data on the PLA's activities.

The content analysis of media reports on the PLA's behavior in this research covers the period between 1975 and 1988. I choose 1979 as the beginning year for the Chinese reform for the reason that the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which was held in December, 1978, officially "corrected past mistakes" and

Table 1. Frequency of Media Mentions of General PLA Activities (by Percentage)

Year	Internal Institutional	Political Ideological	Social-Military Interactive	Economic	N
1975	28.9	27.3	30.5	13.3	125
1976	11.0	59.3	18.6	11.0	141
1977	32.5	34.3	17.8	15.4	168
1978	37.6	38.3	16.8	7.4	140
1979	39.2	29.1	24.7	7.0	157
1980	37.2	24.4	29.9	8.5	163
1981	34.4	39.7	15.5	10.3	194
1982	41.0	29.5	18.7	10.8	138
1983	41.2	38.5	12.8	7.4	147
1984	46.2	30.4	16.5	7.0	160
1985	42.9	24.4	21.8	10.9	166
1986	51.2	19.7	19.7	9.4	130
1987	59.7	20.2	17.6	2.5	121
1988	62.4	10.6	23.8	2.1	144

Source: Compiled from FBIS *Daily Report: the People's Republic of China*, 1975-1988.

shifted party policy from "class struggle to the building of the 'four modernizations'".⁸ Hence, the pre-reform period refers to the period between 1975 and 1978 and the reform period is the period between 1979 and 1988.

8. See Harlan Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles: Politics and Professionalism in the Chinese Army, 1945-1981* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), p. 71.

Faced with a huge amount of data and limited resources and time, I sampled twenty percent of the total reports carried by the *Daily Report* on the PLA across each year covered in this study.

Table 2. *Frequency of Media Mentions of PLA Activities during the Pre-Reform Period (1975-1978)* (by Percentage)

Type of Issue	1975	1976	1977	1978
Internal/Institutional				
–military training/ military exercise/combat readiness	8.1	12.5	25.5	21.4
–promotion/demotion				1.8
–military norms	10.8	18.8	16.3	5.4
–military strategy/tactics	2.7	6.2		
–military science/technology			10.9	17.9
–Army Day celebration	32.4	43.8	27.3	14.3
–military cohesion				
–weapon test	2.7			1.8
–military inspection	2.7			
–soldiers' life				
–military efficiency				
–logistics				1.8
–officer rehabilitation				5.4
–officer-soldier relationship	8.1	18.8	3.6	1.8
–obituary/memorial service	5.4		5.5	5.4
–military audit				
–organization reform				
–military sports/cultural life	5.4		3.6	1.8
–military history	21.6		7.3	14.3
–military publications				1.8
–military accident				
Political/Ideological				
–general political activities ^a	20.0	8.1	19.0	28.1
–observe political holidays ^b		1.2		
–reaction to Party decision ^c		31.4	1.7	3.5
–play legislative function				1.7
–praise political leader		3.5	5.2	1.7
–political campaigns	71.4	51.2	74.1	63.2
–propagandizing society	8.6	4.7		1.7
–safeguard public security				
Social-Military Interactive				
–conscription				
–veteran affairs	2.6	11.1		12.0
–civilian-military unity	87.2	77.8	100.0	84.0

Table 2. (Continued)

Type of Issue	1975	1976	1977	1978
-civilian-military conflict				
-conduct patriotic education	7.7			
-train college students				
-settlement of demobilized soldiers	5.1	11.1		
-military dependents				4.0
Economic				
-agricultural work	47.1	50.0	57.7	45.4
-factory work	17.6		7.7	
-emergency assistance		25.0	19.2	
-construction corps	17.6	6.3	3.8	36.4
-run business operations				
-miscellaneous	17.6	18.8	11.5	18.2

Source: Compiled from FBIS *Daily Report: the People's Republic of China*, 1975-1978.

Notes: a. General political activities refer to activities of Party organizations in the army (such as Party congress), reaction to convening national Party congress and the People's congress, and political indoctrination of general purpose in the army.

b. Political holiday refers to the National Day.

c. Reaction to Party decision refers to reaction to the decisions of Hua Guofeng as Party, government and military leader, and stripping Deng of all his official positions.

Examination of the PLA's Behavior during the Pre-Reform Period

The PLA seemed to be far from a professional army during the pre-reform period. It was heavily involved in activities of non-military relevancy (See Table 1). Only one third of reported army activities concerned military internal or institutional matters. The PLA appeared to devote much of its time and attention to political and ideological issues. In addition, the Chinese army also engaged in economic endeavors.

Table 2, which breaks down each general category of army activities, indicates that the PLA paid insufficient attention to military training and combat readiness, especially during 1975 and 1976. Most reported army activities concerning internal and institutional issues were related to celebration of Army Day anniversary and events in army history (such as the

Long March), which were loaded with heavy political propaganda. Furthermore, these activities, which were not celebrated as pure military events, drew significant civilian participation, i.e., central and local party officials and civilian masses.

However, there were some interesting shifts in reported PLA activities during 1977 and 1978. The army was more concerned with combat readiness (see Table 2). Soldiers and officers were commended and honored more for their combat skills and military performance than for their "correct political attitude" and loyalty to the party. Themes such as military modernization began to be discussed in the army. A new activity on the PLA's agenda was the holding of "science and technology" conferences at all levels of the military establishment. This was a reaction to the nationwide campaign to give prominence to technological developments in the economy. However, these "science and technology" conferences served mostly the purpose of political reorientation.

Data from the media reports also portray a high degree of politicization in the armed forces, reflected mainly in the army's participation in party-initiated political campaigns—a principal form of mass political participation and political control by the party.⁹ Participation in political campaigns usually involved studying lengthy party and government documents, holding rallies, and attending public lectures. Politicization of the PLA reached its peak in 1976, as revealed in the data. This was due to the turbulent leadership turnovers during that year.

In addition, the PLA was heavily represented institutionally in party organs at both national and provincial levels. Military representation was fifty-seven percent in the Politburo after the 11th Party Congress and thirty-one percent in the party's Central Committee in 1977.¹⁰ PLA officers in military districts still played active roles in provincial politics, a phenomenon left over from the heyday of the Cultural Revolution. PLA district commanders continued to serve on provincial revolutionary committees which were composed of a "triple alliance," i.e., the military, the party, and the radical mass organization.

In the meantime, civilian party officials were also assigned to military posts. For instance, the first party secretary of each province served concurrently as the first political commissar of the military district in his province. Military matters often found their way onto the agenda of the provincial

9. The political campaigns that the PLA was involved in included "Study Marxist Theory of Proletarian Dictatorship and Eliminate Bourgeois Rights," "Learn from Dazhai and Build Dazhai Counties," "Criticize the Gang of Four," and "Learn from Lei Feng."

10. Figures cited from Liu Bih-Rong, "The Organizational Structure of the PLA," in Richard H. Yang, ed., *SCPS Yearbook on PLA Affairs, 1987* (National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, R.O.C.: Sun Yatsen Center for Policy Studies, 1988), p. 36.

party committee. Mutual penetration of military and civilian officials into each other's turfs partly served to promote central control of the vast areas in the provinces.

Apart from participation in political campaigns, the PLA was also closely integrated into the civilian society, evidenced in the PLA's extensive and frequent interactions with civilians. Most of the reported army-civilian interactions came during the Chinese traditional Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) in January and February and the Army Day period between mid-July and early August (labeled "civilian-army unity" in the coding scheme) (see Table 2). The usual forms of army-civilian interactive activities during these period included joint celebration gatherings, soirees, exchanges of greetings and courtesy visits. The army during these two period was also mobilized to offer physical assistance of various kinds to civilians, such as cleaning streets, helping passengers at bus/train stations, and doing house chores for the disabled and the elderly. The official name for these activities on the part of the army was "support the government and cherish the people" and on the civilian part was "support the army and give preferential treatment to army dependents" (often referred to as "two supports"). These extra-military institutional activities presumably strengthened the bond between the PLA and civilians and led to integration of the army with civilian society. It is also safe to surmise that these interactive activities were most likely to consume time and attention which the army would otherwise have spent on military internal/institutional matters.

In addition, the PLA was mobilized extensively to take part in economic activities. The most frequent economic endeavor was in the agricultural area, which included farmwork, forestry, fishing, and husbandry. Furthermore, the PLA routinely sent medical teams to the countryside and remote areas to help with medical treatment of civilian patients. The PLA's economic engagements also extended into the industrial sector. According to one report, industrial labor activities by PLA units stationed in Hangzhou City of Zhejiang Province over a certain period of time included working in a motor vehicle engine plant, a joint meat processing plant, a silk weaving plant, a cigarette factory, and a general manufacturing plant.¹¹ The activities were often preceded by a joint political study forum with the factory workers.

The picture of the PLA between 1975 and 1978 depicted in media reports is very similar to that shown in various analyses of the Chinese army before 1979, namely, the army was marked by a low level of professionalism, high degree of politicization, and high degree of structural and functional diffuseness. The PLA still carried apparent traits from the height of the

11. *FBIS-CHI*, July 28, 1975, p. G3.

radicalism during the Cultural Revolution. Mao's dictum of "man over weapon" was very much alive in 1975 and 1976. The role of ideology, morale and courage was exaggerated to such a degree that these factors purportedly could not be matched even by atomic weapons. "Mao Zedong Thought" became an almost magic weapon that could guarantee victory in all types of wars. The data also show that with the downfall of the "Gang of Four" and reinstatement of Deng Xiaoping as the chief of the General Staff in July, 1977, the PLA began to undergo a process of moderate changes, manifested in increasing emphasis on professional training and restoration of the military education system.

Civil-military relations in pre-reformed China was a classical example of subjective civilian control conceptualized by Samuel Huntington in his book *The Soldier and the State*. According to Huntington,

Subjective civilian control achieves its end by civilianizing the military, making them the mirror of the state. Objective civilian control achieves its end by militarizing the military, making them the tool of the state.¹²

The ramifications of subjective civilian control include denying military professionalism and encouraging political involvement of the military. Clearly, this strategy was what the Chinese communist party opted for in its relations with the armed forces.

Examination of the PLA's Behavior during the Reform Period

General trends of the Chinese army's activities, as revealed in Table 1, exhibit discernible changes. Since 1979, while the PLA's activities involving military internal/institutional issues were on a significant increase, the army's political/ideological activities showed a steady decline. In the meantime, the data also depict a somewhat less economically and socially-active PLA during the reform period. These findings, even though very informative, fail to present the whole picture. To analyze changes, we have to examine more closely the specific issues that the PLA was concerned about during the reform period.

1. On Military Internal/Institutional Issues

Differences in the PLA's behavior regarding internal/institutional issues from the pre-reform period to the reform period can be easily seen in the data presented in Table 3 and comparing them with corresponding cate-

12. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

Table 3. Frequency of Media Mentions of PLA Activities during the Reform Period (1979-1988)

Type of Issue	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Internal/Institutional										
-military training/military exercise/combat readiness	38.7	38.2	29.2	31.6	42.6	20.5	17.9	20.0	29.6	22.7
-promotion/demotion	7.3	3.1	1.8	11.5	12.3	3.0	1.5	2.8	2.3	
-military norms	25.8	10.9	35.3	22.8	4.9	17.8	26.9	12.3	7.8	13.6
-military strategy/tactics	1.6				1.6			4.6		
-military science/technology	9.7	5.5	1.5	7.0	9.8	12.3	7.5	21.5	11.3	3.4
-Army Day celebration	9.7	9.1	9.2	17.6	3.3	11.0	3.0	7.7	14.1	
-weapon test	3.2	9.1					1.5	1.5	2.8	1.1
-military cohesion				1.8						10.2
-military inspection	1.6	7.3	3.1	5.3	4.9	1.4	3.0	3.1	2.8	3.4
-military efficiency			3.1	1.8	1.6	1.4			2.8	
-logistics	1.6		4.6			1.4		1.5		4.5
-soldiers' life		1.8								1.1
-obituary/memorial service		3.6					1.5	1.5	1.2	2.3
-officer rehabilitation	4.8				4.9					
-officer-soldier relationship							3.0	1.5	2.8	2.3
-military audit						1.4				11.4
-organizational reform		1.8		3.5	4.9	4.1	17.9	4.6	7.0	15.9
-military sports/cultural life	3.2	10.9	9.2	3.5	6.6	2.7	1.5	4.6		3.4
-military history		1.8	1.5			5.5	4.5	12.3	7.0	1.1
-military publications		1.8		1.8	1.6	4.1	3.0			
-military accident	1.8									
-miscellaneous				1.8	1.6	4.1	6.0	1.5	7.0	1.1

Table 3. (Continued)

Type of Issue	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Political/Ideological										
-general political activities	41.3	52.5	41.6	26.8	35.1	20.8	21.1	48.0	58.3	53.3
-observe political holidays			2.6		8.8	2.1	2.6			
-reaction to Party decision	4.3	7.5	26.0	36.6	8.8		7.9	4.0	12.5	33.3
-play legislative function	2.2				3.5				4.2	6.7
-political campaigns	45.6	40.0	27.3	36.6	43.9	75.0	68.4	48.0	20.8	6.7
-propagandizing society	2.2		1.3			2.1			4.2	
-safeguard public security	4.3		1.3							
Social-Military Interactive										
-conscription	2.6	4.1	16.7		5.3	15.4	5.9	8.0	9.5	8.8
-veteran affairs	10.3	6.1	13.3	19.2	15.8	26.9	20.6	28.0	4.8	26.5
-civilian-military unity	84.6	85.7	63.3	57.7	36.8	53.8	29.4	36.0	47.6	29.4
-civilian-military conflict							2.9		4.8	2.9
-settlement of demobilized soldiers	2.6	4.1	6.6	7.7	5.3	3.8	32.4	20.0	19.0	23.5
-train college students				3.8	36.8		2.9		9.5	
-conduct patriotic education				7.7						5.9
-military dependents				3.8			2.9		4.8	2.9
-miscellaneous							2.9	8.0		
Economic										
-agricultural work	27.3	7.1		13.3	9.1				33.3	33.3
-factory work	18.2		5.0							
-emergency assistance	18.2	14.3	25.0	26.7	27.3	18.2	5.9			
-construction corps		28.6		20.0	27.3					
-run business operation			10.0				41.2	50.0	33.3	33.3
-miscellaneous	36.4	50.0	60.0	40.0	36.4	81.8	52.9	50.0	33.3	33.3

Source: Compiled from FBIS Daily Report: the People's Republic of China, 1979-1988.

gories in Table 2. First, themes relating to military training and combat preparedness seem to have become a predominant concern for the PLA during most of the reform years. Second, reports of the Army Day celebration, a politically charged event, decreased. Third, the category of stipulating military norms (including strengthening military discipline and presenting military honors) shows an impressive increase. There appeared to be significant shifts of priority in the PLA's activities and attentiveness. Through substantive content analysis, significant progress in the PLA's professionalization has been observed in the following areas: military training, modernization of military technology and weaponry, promotion and institutionalization of military norms and discipline, and organizational reform of the military establishment.

Military Training

Unlike the pre-reform period during which correct political thinking was regarded as the most important factor in the battle-field, the reform period emphasized adequate military training and maximal combat effectiveness as the key in any modern warfare. Modernization of the PLA served as the central link among the three professed goals in army building during the reform period, i.e., modernization, regularization, and revolutionization.¹³ This change of heart was partly due to the failure of the PLA to achieve a decisive victory in the Sino-Vietnamese war in 1979. The outcome of the war was widely viewed as an embarrassment for the Chinese army, since the PLA had been a tutor of the Vietnamese armed forces from the 1950s through the mid-1970s. As one Western analyst commented succinctly, when the Chinese army set out to "teach Vietnamese a lesson, it learned a lesson instead."¹⁴ Indeed, the lesson was that years of neglect of military training and failure to update military hardware seriously hampered the combat capabilities of the PLA. In a way, the Sino-Vietnamese war played the same role as had the Korean War thirty years before, i.e., serving as a catalyst for army professionalization.

Military training of the officer corps, not surprisingly, was given the top priority. Deng Xiaoping set out the goals of officer training in an expanded meeting of the CCP military Affairs Commission in March, 1980:

At present, our officers cannot fight a battle without knowledge of modern warfare. They have to possess a knowledge of aerial combat, guerrilla warfare, ground battles, and submarine warfare, including com-

13. See Jiefangjun Bao, March 21, 1987, in *FBIS Daily Report: the People's Republic of China (FBIS-CHI)*, April 6, 1987, p. K22.

14. See Ellis Joffe, "Civil-Military Relations in the PRC in 1987," in *SCPS Yearbook on the PLA Affairs*, p. 126.

munication and liaison work. As for Armed Forces reform, we must start by reforming the systems. All officers at or above platoon level must receive training from a military academy. All platoon and company cadres must graduate from a basic infantry academy. All battalion and regiment cadres must graduate from an intermediate military academy. And all leading army and division cadres must have attended an advanced military academy before assuming their posts.¹⁵

Since the early 1980s, new officers at all levels have been graduates of military training schools and military academies. By 1987, seventy percent of the officers at the platoon and company levels and half of the officers at the battalion level and above had received military training from military academies.¹⁶ By 1986, a total of 100 military schools were open, up from forty during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁷ In December, 1985, the PLA established its first comprehensive military academy—the National Defense University.¹⁸

Another measure adopted to improve the officer corps of the PLA was the recruitment of fresh college graduates into the army and the promotion of them to command positions after a short period of military training. In addition, officers who did not have college degrees were encouraged to raise their levels of education by attending correspondence, television, and evening schools.¹⁹ As a result of the intensified efforts to raise the educational level of the officer corps, one fourth of PLA officers in 1987 had college degrees, compared with only two percent in 1977.²⁰

Moreover, the increased reportage of military exercises held by the PLA during the reform period also indicates the shift of attention given to military professional training. Military exercises held during the reform period exhibit the following characteristics. First, the scale was much larger. In 1981, the PLA conducted its largest military exercise ever, with the participation of six to seven armies, involving close to 200,000 troops.²¹ It was also a combined exercise, i.e., having the participation of foot soldiers, tank troops, the air force, and others. Second, more specialized military exercises were reported during the reform period, such as laser-simulated manoeuvres, technical nuclear exercises, anti-landing exercises, chemical

15. As reported in Hong Kong *Wen Wei Pao* (in Chinese), July 1, 1983, in *FBIS-CHI*, July 6, 1983, p. W1.

16. Xinhua in English, May 17, 1987, in *FBIS-CHI*, May 18, 1987, p. K23.

17. See a speech by Yang Dezhi, in *FBIS-CHI*, February 27, 1986, p. K18.

18. *FBIS-CHI*, January 29, 1986, p. K26.

19. Xinhua in English, May 30, 1987, in *FBIS-CHI*, June 1, 1987, p. K27.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Hong Kong *South Morning Post* (in English), September 24, 1981, p. 8, in *FBIS-CHI*, September 24, 1981, p. W1.

defense exercises, and military reconnaissance exercises. Moreover, demonstrations and contests of military skills became frequent practices of the PLA, as reported in the official media.

Modernization of Military Technologies

Modernization was another widely reported theme during the reform period. Modernization of the armed forces was one of the “four modernizations,” the battle cry at the outset of the Chinese reform in the late 1970s. As mentioned previously, the emphasis on science and technology had already become official policy even before radical reformers began to carry out their programs in the early 1980s. To justify the shift of policy, Chinese leaders had to reevaluate Mao’s dictum that the “human factor” always preceded other factors, including modern technology. Mao’s claim was significantly modified, if not categorically refuted.²² Mao’s military strategy of “people’s war,” which was similar to a traditional Chinese war strategy of “human wave assault,” was also indirectly criticized in an article written by Yang Shangkun, then vice chairman of the Central Military,

Now people have come to realize that the trial of strength in a war [is] manifested not only in the number of soldiers but, more importantly, in modern weapons and equipment and in people’s capability to operate modern equipment. With the swift development of modern science and technology, there is indeed a tremendous increase in the power of weapons.²³

Information generated from the official media reports corroborates the pronouncements of policy changes with regards to modernizing the military. Table 4 provides a list of reported weapons tests and the development of military equipment during both the pre-reform period and the reform period. A number of observations can be made from the table. First, the PLA seemed to have made significant progress in missile technologies. China developed its Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) in the late 1970s. China also acquired Multiple Independently Targeted Reentry Vehicle (MIRV) capability as early as 1981.²⁴ As reported, the Chinese navy tested submarine-launched carrier rockets in 1982 and attained under-sea missile-launch capability in 1985, thus obtaining Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) weapon systems.

Second, the data also indicate that the PLA worked very hard in develop-

22. The modification can be clearly seen in an article by Yang Shungkun. See *Hongqi*, No. 5, August 1, 1982, pp. 6-10, in *FBIS-CHI*, August 25, 1982, p. K22.

23. *Ibid.*, p. K23.

24. See Jencks, 1988, p. 109.

Table 4. List of Reported Developments of Weapon Technologies of the PLA: 1975-1988

Year		
1975	(1) Underground test conducted	
1976	(1) Nuclear test conducted	(2) Successful nuclear test conducted
1977	(1) New 'F-12' fighter aircraft being developed	(2) Successful nuclear test conducted
1978	(1) PLA engineer design new sight for 85-mm cannon	(4) Successful launching of guided missiles
	(3) Shenyang PLA artillery develops new fire control system	(2) Air force develops aircraft through remodeling
1979	(1) Ballistic missile launch	
1980	(1) Test of ICBM missile	
1981	(1) Navy develops refueling device for ship	(2) New naval destroyer completes test mission
1982	(1) PLA uses inflatable aircraft repair hanger	
	(3) Submarine-launched carrier rocket tested	
1983	(1) Intellectuals help modernize missile unit	
1984	(1) Navy speeding up development of missiles	(2) PLA establishes strategic missile wing
	(3) PLA armored force developing new tanks	(4) Jinan PLA uses automation for combat command
1985	(1) Undersea missile launch tested	(2) New guided-missile escort launched in Shanghai
	(3) Navy launches first submarine service ship	(4) PLA builds missile escort vessel
1986	(1) Airborne electronic countermeasure system certified	(2) Nuclear submarines handed over to the Navy
	(3) Army establishes automation command unit	(4) PLA fortifies nuclear/chemical defense
	(5) New fighter aircraft testing system developed	(6) New weapons accelerate army modernization
	(7) Lanzhou PLA uses simulation equipment for war games	(8) New type of rocket engine developed
	(9) Computerized simulated warfare system developed	(10) Shannxi PLA builds missile simulator trainer
	(11) PLA land force equipped with unmanned plane	(12) New improved missile frigate commissioned
	(13) First home-made naval training vessel launched	(14) Air Force modernizes aircraft maintenance

Table 4. (Continued)

Year	
1987	<p>(1) Nuclear test</p> <p>(3) First ship-carried helicopter passes test</p> <p>(5) New missile detector developed</p> <p>(7) Missile technical training center opened</p> <p>(9) Naval phased-array radar system approved</p> <p>(11) Armored forces technology, weaponry modernized</p> <p>(13) Integrated strategic missile defense system formed</p> <p>(15) PLA applied computer software with good results</p> <p>(17) Anhui PLA prepares communications for wartime use</p> <p>(19) Modern defense communications network developed</p> <p>(2) Ship gunnery weapons system design approved</p> <p>(4) New radar for warship use developed</p> <p>(6) First generation B6-D bomber developed</p> <p>(8) Navy gets new warships</p> <p>(10) PLA develops new missile firing command system</p> <p>(12) New missile tracking equipment developed</p> <p>(14) Modern defense technology system formed</p> <p>(16) PLA advances in electronic communication</p> <p>(18) Nanjing PLA's command system computerized</p> <p>(20) New missile detector developed</p>
1988	<p>(1) Helicopter lands successfully on warship</p> <p>(3) Navy receives new guided missile frigate</p> <p>(5) Surface-to-air missile launch conducted</p> <p>(7) New radar simulator used by air force and navy</p> <p>(9) Military develops nuclear explosion and chemical weapon simulators</p> <p>(11) Navy armed with strategic nuclear missiles</p> <p>(13) PLA navy continues to develop various missiles</p> <p>(15) PLA armored corps achieves modernization</p> <p>(17) "Nerve center" of China's strategic missile force developed</p> <p>(19) Advanced airborne radar recently developed</p> <p>(21) New fighter plane joins air defense service</p> <p>(23) Computerized warship command system designed</p> <p>(2) Missile corps has "retaliatory" capacity</p> <p>(4) Modern minelayer deployed to PLA navy</p> <p>(6) Navy now capable of long-range navigation</p> <p>(8) PLA completes automated command network</p> <p>(10) Small, fast artillery command system developed</p> <p>(12) PLA navy develops guided missile systems</p> <p>(14) Announcement on experimental rocket launching</p> <p>(16) New fighter planes in service</p> <p>(18) New minesweeper proves successful in trials</p> <p>(20) HK-11 Doppler acoustic radar developed</p> <p>(22) PLA strategic missile launchings successful</p>

Source: FBIS Daily Report: the People's Republic of China.

ing and improving its command, control, and communication systems (C₃) during the reform period. Automation of command, utilizing computer technology, seemed to be a favorite project in this regard. Third, the PLA appeared to have developed a variety of more sophisticated simulation equipment for training, which was not available during the pre-reform period. In addition, data also show the development of conventional weapons and logistical facilities.

Instituting Military Norms and Rituals

As reported in the news media (see Table 3), military norms were given significant emphasis in the reform era. Military norms referred to in this paper comprise military ethos of both symbolic and substantive nature, including honor, discipline, hierarchy, subordination, professional dedication, bravery, and sense of duty and responsibility. Many of these military virtues were seriously undermined during the pre-reform period, especially during the Cultural Revolution. The Maoist style of army building was meant to eliminate military distinctiveness and to merge the army with civilian society. The professional military ethos was criticized as a "pure military point of view" or "bourgeois militarism," and was replaced by a "revolutionary" ethos. The reform period witnessed the restoration and establishment of many professional military norms which became an integral part of the regularization process of the PLA.

A major event that was widely covered by the media was the restoration of the military rank system in the army. The idea was first proposed by Deng Xiaoping in 1980, but it was realized only in 1988. Military ranks were introduced into the PLA in 1955 and were abolished in 1965, based on the claim that such a hierarchical system did not conform to the Marxist value of equalitarianism and the revolutionary tradition of the PLA. The new rank system contained eleven ranks in three classes of generals, field officers, and junior officers.

The restoration of the military rank system not only carried symbolic meaning, viz., making the PLA look more like an army, but also facilitated army building in the several areas. First, military ranks fostered pride and identity among officers and soldiers. As an article put it,

Military ranks also represent a kind of honor conferred on soldiers by the state. This will effectively strengthen their self-esteem and sense of honor, encourage them to make progress, and cultivate more outstanding officers.²⁵

25. *Ban Yue Tan* (in Chinese), No. 14, July 25, 1988, in *FBIS-CHI*, August 12, 1988, p. 47.

A related advantage of adopting military ranks was that the honor and prestige symbolized by insignias made the army more attractive to young people.²⁶ Another benefit of introducing ranks was that it helped improve the management and command of the army because the symbols of ranks make recognition of the grades of the officers easier and, thus, would enable officers to command and carry out management of men beyond the scope of their immediate subordinates under the circumstances in which the ordinary chain of command is disrupted. Finally, military ranks facilitated Chinese officers in their international functions because their command roles could be more easily identified.²⁷

There were also intensive institutional efforts to strengthen military discipline during the reform period. Codified military ordinances were discarded by Marshal Lin Biao when he was in charge of the PLA in the 1960s, and this impeded army discipline.²⁸ In 1981, a set of statutes called "PRC Provisional Regulations on Punishing Servicemen Who Commit Offenses Against Their Duties" (draft) was adopted by the 19th Session of the 5th National People's Congress Standing Committee. The purpose of the regulations, as was explained, was "to wage struggle by means of penalty against all crimes against servicemen's duties and the state's military interests, to ensure victory in war and smooth progress in the army's modernization."²⁹ These provisional regulations, signed into military law in 1984 by Deng Xiaoping, were known as "Disciplinary Regulations of the Chinese Liberation Army." Accompanying the promulgation of the military laws was the re-establishment of the military procurator's office, which had been abolished during the Cultural Revolution.

Furthermore, the PLA became more interested in servicemen's appearance and manner. In the mid-1980s, the military changed its uniforms from the "ever-green" Mao-suits into Western style combat and full dress uniforms. Regulations were also introduced on cap and collar insignias, hairstyles, and courtesy.³⁰

Several other moves, although full of symbolism, also testified to the PLA's concern for instilling military norms and ethos. One of them was holding military parades on military and political occasions. Holding standard presentations was another practice for the same end as the military parade. Another symbolic event that was designed to nurture militancy among the rank-and-file was taking the military oath, in which the soldier

26. *Jiefangjun Bao*, July 21, 1988, in *FBIS-CHI*, July 29, 1988, p. 33.

27. *Ban Yue Tan*, No. 14, *op. cit.*, p. K47.

28. This was mentioned by Yang Dezhi, then chief of the General Staff of the PLA, as reprinted in *China Daily* (in English), February 4, 1982, p. 1, in *FBIS-CHI*, February 4, 1982, p. K3.

29. *Xinhua*, June 10, 1981, in *FBIS-CHI*, June 12, 1981, p. K4.

30. *FBIS-CHI*, September 10, 1984, p. O2.

pledged to dedicate himself to the defense of the country and to obey military laws and discipline. This was required of every serviceman and it was usually done in a military rally. Oath-taking rallies were extensively covered in media reports during the 1981-1982 period.

Army Reorganization

Organizational reform was a widely reported activity engaged in by the PLA during the reform period. The central theme in army reorganization efforts was improving the efficiency of the military institution. Overstaffing and organizational inertia were two key problems identified by Deng Xiaoping as early as in 1975 when he was the chief of the General Staff. One of the solutions he offered was streamlining the armed forces,³¹ which was carried out in every branch of the army. Organizations were merged and staffs were cut. By the end of 1985, the three general headquarters at the central level had been cut by twenty-four percent and the various military regions by fifty percent. Also in 1985, the eleven PLA military regions were incorporated into seven. This measure resulted in concentrated troop command and improved combined operations.³² Similar reorganization efforts were also taken at the levels of military districts and military sub-districts.

Two other steps taken by the PLA in the mid-1980s can also be seen as part of the effort to streamline the military. One was the establishment of the "People's Armed Police" (PAP) in 1983; PAP took over public security responsibilities from the PLA. In 1986, the border defense troops were also transferred to the administration of the PAP, making the PAP look functionally very much like the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). The other move was the civilianization of units of the PLA's Capital Construction Corps and Railway Engineering Corps. These moves were obviously efforts to reduce the functional diffuseness of the PLA.

Streamlining was only one side of the coin in the PLA's reorganization scheme. The other was creation of new military units and institutions that were needed to build the PLA into a modern army. In 1984, the Second Artillery Division, the nuclear weapons unit of the Chinese army, was expanded and renamed as the Strategic Rocket Troops, the same name used by its counterpart in the Soviet armed forces. Some other new additions to the PLA included the Marine Corps (established in 1988) and the Navy's amphibious forces.

Rejuvenization of the officer corps was also a key focus in the organiza-

31. See Deng Xiaoping, "The Task of Consolidating the Army," in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, 1975-1982* (Beijing, China: Foreign Language Press, 1984), p. 27.

32. Zhongguo Xinwenshe, December 26, 1985, in *FBIS-CHI*, December 30, 1985, p. K13.

tional reform of the PLA, and it received fairly extensive media coverage. Chinese political and military leaders fully realized that a modernized PLA could not become a reality without a younger and more energetic officer corps with better educational background who were more inclined to implement Deng's reform measures in the army. By 1985, the average age of the leadership in central military organs and military regions dropped from sixty-five to fifty-seven, a huge drop by Chinese standards.³³ The highest echelon of the PLA experienced a drastic shakeup after the Thirteenth Chinese Communist Party Congress in 1987. All the directors of the three general departments of the army in their 70's were replaced by younger officers aged in their 50's and 60's. The generational change of the officer corps was reported to be even more drastic and extensive below the level of the military district.

2. On Political / Ideological Issues

Table 1 shows that the PLA's politically and ideologically related activities exhibited a general downward trend from the pre-reform period through the reform period. The decrease was more dramatic in the latter years of the reform period, i.e., between 1985 and 1988. A closer examination through content analysis of the sub-themes in this category during the reform period further discloses a series of significant departures from the pre-reform period.

First, participation in nation-wide political campaigns was not always the most frequent political activity of the PLA during the reform period (See Table 3). Indeed, the army engaged increasingly in "general" or more normal political activities such as indoctrination of Marxist theories, party congresses in the army, and study of current government policies (including economic reform policies). A major difference between a "political campaign" and the normal political activity is that the former carried more intensity and entailed a wider scope of participation than the latter. Moreover, political campaigns in the pre-reform period were usually carried out in the form of mass rallies and street demonstrations, which were largely absent in the political campaigns in the reform years.

Second, beginning from 1979, the emphasis of the army's political and ideological work shifted from "class struggle" to "speeding up modernization of national defense."³⁴ Daily political indoctrination activities often centered around the need to raise the level of the army's professionalism. For instance, strenuous efforts were made by the PLA leadership in the

33. *Ibid.*

34. Xinhua, January 17, 1979, in *FBIS-CHI*, January 18, 1979, p. E3.

mid-1980s to boost low morale among the rank-and-file due to the sacrifices that many servicemen had to make to serve in the armed forces. An army-wide discussion of "gains and losses" in joining the army was conducted to convince servicemen that material benefits should not be regarded as the only gain from their service in the armed forces. Results of the efforts were dubious at best, given that the country was becoming increasingly materialistic as a result of liberal economic reforms.

Some reports indicated neglect of political work within the PLA. One report revealed that an air force unit stationed in Wuhan cared only about flight training and did not pay close attention to studying party documents or spend sufficient time on "political training." Another example of the downplaying of politics can be seen from the following requirements for college students intending to join the army carried by the Xinhua News Agency:

The qualifications for university students to be selected are as follows: They must excel in academic attainment and have good conduct; must be healthy, male and under 24; and must voluntarily want to dedicate themselves to the cause of national defense.³⁵

Political and ideological qualifications were noticeably absent in the descriptive requirements, an omission which would have been unthinkable during the pre-reform period. Also, discussion of military strategies and doctrines was much less colored by politics. Twice in 1986, more than 100 military experts and high-ranking army officers gathered in Beijing to explore and map out a defense strategy to the year 2000, without the participation of civilian politicians.³⁶

Third, the army's political involvement outside the barracks was greatly reduced beginning in the early 1980s. According to the official account, the policy of "three supports and two militaries" (i.e., supporting agriculture, industry, and the left; and military control and military training of the militia), which was formally denounced and renounced in the early 1980s as part of the rejection of the Cultural Revolution, had resulted in a number of negative consequences for the army and its relationship with civilians: animosity between the army and civilians due to the army's support being given to some mass factional civilian groups which were feuding with some other groups, the army's mismanagement of the civilian economy, and factionalism brought into the army.³⁷ With the repudiation of "three supports and two militaries," the PLA's disengagement from provincial and local politics was virtually completed at the institutional level. PLA officers

35. Xinhua, May 24, 1983, in *FBIS-CHI*, May 24, 1983, p. K3.

36. *Jiefangjun Bao*, March 12, 1986, and *FBIS-CHI*, July 22, 1986, pp. K1-3.

37. *FBIS-CHI*, January 30, 1985, p. Q1.

at the regional level were relieved of their posts as provisional party secretaries.

PLA representation in central party organs also declined by a significant degree during the 1980s, in comparison with earlier periods. Military representation in the Politburo and on the Central Committee dropped from as high as fifty-seven percent and thirty-eight percent around 1977-1978 to eleven percent and eighteen percent, respectively, in 1987.³⁸

3. On Social-Military Interactive Issues

Although the PLA's activities with regard to the category of social-military interactive issues only show a marginal decrease during the reform period (See Table 1), a closer investigation of the sub-themes in this category reveals two interesting and meaningful changes in the PLA's behavior in this area during the reform period that the aggregate data fail to discover.

First, reported PLA activities concerning the sub-theme "civilian-military unity" decreased markedly beginning in 1982. As indicated earlier, this sub-theme in most cases concerned joint celebrative activities held between soldiers and civilians, and the "two supports" activities with the aim of strengthening the intimate bond between the army and the people. Not only did the total frequency of such activities decrease, but the extent of these activities also declined beginning in the early 1980s. For instance, during the pre-reform period, a typical celebrative gathering during the Spring Festival and the Army Day usually involved thousands of military personnel and civilians. It was also accompanied by goodwill visits and exchanges of greetings between civilians and servicemen. Servicemen often went into the streets doing good deeds for civilians, and civilians in return lent help and paid visits to servicemen's families and dependents. Media reports reveal that during the reform period, especially since 1983, such activities were not nearly as frequent as during the pre-reform period. Joint celebrative activities often occurred at the military and civilian leadership levels. In addition, such joint activities often took the form of a movie reception or a tea soiree.

The only event during the reform period that resembled practices of the pre-reform period was the so-called "building socialist civilization" campaign in 1983, in which the PLA was called upon to promote "good" virtues and perform good deeds outside the barracks. Interactions between servicemen and civilian on a large scale were reported during this period. These activities went on, however, only for a year or so.

38. Bih-Rong Liu, "The Organizational Structure of the PLA," in Yang (ed.), *SCPS Yearbook on PLA Affairs*, 1987.

A second change in civilian-military interactions during the reform period was that the interactive activities were more problem-solving oriented. Dual-purpose training is a case in point. Civilian expertise and facilities were extensively utilized by the army to teach servicemen civilian skills so that they could fit into society after being discharged. Another issue to which the PLA seemed to pay increasing attention during the reform period was the settlement of demobilized officers and soldiers, especially around 1985 when China reduced its armed forces by one million men (see Table 3). The army was concerned with proper placement of these ex-servicemen in civilian jobs and the treatment that they would receive in society. In a similar vein, the military showed an increasing concern over the welfare of veterans, since many local civilian authorities failed to give appropriate preferential treatment to the veterans and military families during the reform period.³⁹ After the adoption of the "household responsibility system" as a key agricultural reform measure in the rural areas in the beginning of the 1980s, many of the veterans and servicemen's dependents who had been taken care of by communes before the reform were afterwards left in the cold. The military had to deal with civilian authorities at both the central and local levels to solve or lessen such problems because they might cause low morale among serving officers and soldiers.

Recruiting qualified young people into military service was still another issue over which the army needed civilian cooperation. As mentioned earlier, a negative effect of economic reform for the PLA was the unattractiveness of soldiering for young men in China when many other opportunities were becoming available. This problem became acute by the mid-1980s. Therefore, each year an intensive conscription campaign had to be mounted, with the participation of both the civilians and the military, to get the quota fulfilled. What should be noted is that the interactions between the army and civilians over the issue of placement of demobilized servicemen, satisfactory treatment of veterans and military dependents, and recruitment of conscripts were mostly restricted to military and civilian officials rather than at troops and mass levels. In other words, civilian-military interactions in the reform years were far less extensive than those during the pre-reform period.

In 1986, another widely reported step towards separating the army from civilians was the transfer of People's Armed Forces Department (PAFD) at municipal and county levels from the PLA's administration to local civilian jurisdiction. PAFD was mainly in charge of the militia, which was composed of industrial workers, peasants, government office workers, and others. This was a critical move to relieve the army of another burden on its

39. A *Ming Bao* report, December 26, 1981, p. 2, in *FBIS-CHI*, January 6, 1982, p. W3.

way to professionalism.

In sum, even though the aggregate data of media reports do not show much variation in the frequency of the PLA's interactions during the reform period, sub-theme and case analyses reveal some important changes in the pattern of the army's interactions with civilians, which might have weakened the once intimate relationship between the PLA and the civilian population.

4. On Economic Issues

The PLA's economic endeavors, as the aggregate data show, were only slightly reduced in comparison with the pre-reform period (see Table 1). However, a closer examination of the sub-themes reveals some important changes in PLA behavior in this area. Several conclusions can be derived from Table 3. First, there was a significant reduction in PLA activities in agricultural and factory work, in comparison with the pre-reform period. Yet, reduction in this type of activities did not mean an end to the PLA's economic role. On the contrary, the Chinese army was used as an important agent in the modernization drive because the army was more efficient and better disciplined than civilians, and most importantly, the army could provide inexpensive or free labor. According to Zhang Aiping, then-Defense Minister, between 1981 and 1986 the army contributed more than 100 million work days and 2.5 million sorties of machines and vehicles, and army troops participated in more than 10,000 economic projects throughout the country.⁴⁰

One widely reported economic endeavor by the PLA during the reform period was its participation in key state and local construction projects. In many cases, the military was simply asked to do manual labor with no sophisticated skills required. One such project was the diversion of the Luan He river into Tianjin to solve the problem of water shortage in the city. The project went on for two years and the PLA troops stationed in and around Tianjin were involved during the entire project.⁴¹ In addition, the PLA also played an instrumental role in the construction and development of special economic zones (including Shenzhen near Hong Kong) and the opening up of fourteen coastal cities as ports for trade with foreign countries.⁴²

A second new development in PLA's economic behavior was the making of military facilities, technologies, and human resources available for civil-

40. Zhongguo Xinwen She (Hong Kong), July 31, 1986, in *FBIS-CHI*, August 8, 1986, p. K1.

41. *Renmin Ribao*, August 16, 1983, p. 1, in *FBIS-CHI*, August 18, 1983, p. K1.

42. Xinhua, June 9, 1984, in *FBIS-CHI*, June 12, 1984, p. K11.

ian use. Between 1984 and 1987, for instance, the PLA opened fifty-nine military airfields, twenty military ports, 259 military telephone lines, and more than 300 military railroads to civilians to lessen communication and transportation problems around the country.⁴³ In 1985, the PLA's air force, in response to a government request, sold more than 200 transport planes to civilian aviation companies at discount prices to ease the growing demand for civilian air travel.⁴⁴ Moreover, starting in the mid-1980s, military research institutions in China began to be integrated into the civilian scientific community and be utilized to facilitate much needed civilian scientific ends. Military scientists and specialists were encouraged to serve as consultants and advisors in civilian circles.⁴⁵

A third new development in the PLA's economic activities during the reform period was the increasingly extensive scope of the army's profit-oriented business operations, which is well documented in the data (see Table 3). A major economic activity of the army was the production and sale of civilian goods manufactured by military factories run by the General Logistics Department of the PLA. Before reform, the only products of those factories were either ammunition and weaponry or military uniforms and equipment. During the reform period, military factories began to manufacture a variety of products for general use, such as clothing, shoes, knitwear products, sewing machines, bicycles, television sets, and motorcycles.⁴⁶ Apart from the domestic market, military-produced goods also found their way into the international market, and were exported to the United States, Western Europe, Japan, and Hong Kong.⁴⁷ For instance, in 1981 alone, military enterprises earned more than \$10 million in hard currency for the government.⁴⁸ Like their civilian counterparts, military factories also sought foreign investment or joint ventures.

Apart from commercial production, the PLA was also involved in commercial transactions. The most comprehensive and conspicuous trading operations by the military were conducted by China Xinxing Corporation (CXXC), which was set up in 1984 and run under the management of the PLA. In a *China Daily* report, CXXC's director boasted that the trading company served more than 4,000 military supply factories, farms, horse breeding farms, mines and research institutions with a work force of

43. Wang Shu-shin, "The Economic Role of the Chinese People's Liberation Army," in Yang, ed., *SCPS Yearbook on PLA Affairs*, p. 143.

44. Xinhua, (in English), August 3, 1985, in *FBIS-CHI*, August 7, 1985, p. K4.

45. See Wang Shu-shin, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

46. *FBIS-CHI*, November 25, 1981, p. K15; and "Chinese Army at War on Economic Front," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 31, 1988.

47. *FBIS-CHI*, November 25, 1981, p. K15.

48. Xinhua, December 28, 1981, in *FBIS-CHI*, December 29, 1981, p. K14.

700,000 personnel. The company earned a profit worth \$20 million from its international transactions between 1884 and 1986.⁴⁹ In 1986, CXXC held its largest trade exhibition with 5,000 products on display.⁵⁰

Commercial activities were also prevalent at divisional, regional, and local levels. In 1986, the PLA air force set up a commercial civil aviation corporation, called the United Airline Company, using transport airplanes owned by the military and military air fields to carry civilian passengers to places where the civilian airline (CAAC) did not offer service.⁵¹ In January, 1985, thirty-nine trading companies were operating in the Fujian Military District alone. They engaged in buying and selling scarce materials and products and engaged in speculative transactions involving motor vehicles, television sets, radiocassette recorders, and other goods.⁵²

The above analysis indicates that the PLA failed to reduce the level of its economic activities during the reform period although the forms and types of activities changed. A key factor in explaining the relatively high rate of PLA's economic activities, was the cuts in the military spending budgets beginning in the early 1980s. In the 1980s, China steadily reduced its military expenditures as a portion of its GNP,⁵³ and the PLA budget also declined in real monetary terms after allowing for inflation. To make up for the budgetary shortfall, the PLA had to look for alternative revenue sources. They found one such source in commercial dealings, taking advantage of the liberal economic atmosphere that existed during the reform period.

The consequences of the army's economic activities was ambiguous. On the one hand, the national economy benefitted from the contributions made by the PLA, and the military did raise some money for itself through commercial activities. On the other hand, however, economic activities inevitably distracted at least some of the attention and energy which the PLA might have devoted to military training and related matters. Military economic activities were contradictory to the objective of army professionalism pursued by both civilian and military leaders from the end of the 1970s.

Army Professionalization and June 4th

In the early morning on June 4, 1989, PLA tanks rolled into Tiananmen

49. *China Daily* (In English), August 14, 1986, p. 2, in *FBIS-CHI*, August 15, 1986, p. K16.

50. *Ibid.*

51. *FBIS-CHI*, June 12, 1986, pp. K16-17.

52. *Renmin Ribao*, February 3, 1985, p. 1, in *FBIS-CHI*, February 3, 1985, p. 01.

53. *World Military Expenditure and Arms Transfers, 1978-1988* (Washington, D.C.: Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1989), p. 42.

Square, and hundreds of civilians were killed throughout the city of Beijing. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the role played by the Chinese army in executing and sustaining the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in China has caused serious doubts about the PLA's progress in professionalism and de-politicization since the late 1970s. This research, however, supports the argument that the type of professionalization and de-politicization that the PLA went through help explain the way the army behaved in the Tiananmen crackdown.

First, this study shows that professionalization, as defined in this research, did take place within the Chinese army from the late 1970s. As evidenced in the data of media reports, the PLA increased its attention and activities on internal/institutional issues, such as military training, combat readiness, modernization of weapon technologies, promotion of military norms, and organizational restructuring (e.g., streamlining the command structure and reducing functional diffuseness). It is also evident that the excessive interference by civilians into the routine management of the military establishment was reduced, if not eliminated all together.

However, the data also show that professionalization of the PLA in the 1980s was by no means a linear process or comprehensive. For instance, the PLA's economic activities were almost at same level as the pre-reform period, although the types of economic activities that the PLA engaged in during the reform period changed. More importantly, de-politicization of the PLA was far from thorough. The PLA did reduce its political activities during the reform period, and its institutional representation and involvement of civilian politics outside the barracks were reduced. Yet, the data also show that political activities in the form of ideological indoctrination did not show any sign of decline during the 1980s. Moreover, there was no indication that the Chinese Communist Party had loosened its grip and institutional control of the armed forces. Put different, the PLA during the 1980s remained as much an army of the Chinese Communist Party as before the 1980s. Professionalization of the PLA in the 1980s should not be perceived as a process in which the Chinese army became a more independent and politically neutral institution. In fact, the professionalization the de-politicization that the Chinese military experienced beginning in the late 1970s was initiated and closely directed by the Communist Party.

Chinese military reform over the last decade was generically related to the general reform process in the PRC. The origin of Deng's reform in the 1980s stemmed from a determination to end Mao's radical revolutionary policies and to develop China into an economically well-to-do nation. Consequently, the central focus of Chinese reform in the 1980s was on political and economic rationalization, administrative efficiency, and institutional professionalism. Hence, reform in the PLA also revolved around the objec-

tive of raising the efficiency of the military. Military reform or military professionalization in the PRC since the late 1970s can best be described as a process of normalization and regularization. The focus of the reform was to move the army away from excessive political and societal entanglement and develop the military into a professionally effective and competent fighting force.

The army was little affected by the limited degree of political liberalization taking place quietly in the civilian society starting in the mid-1980s. In 1987, after the massive student demonstrations demanding for more democratic openness swept several major cities, the army proudly announced that not a single cadet from military schools participated in the protest activities.⁵⁴ Indeed, the type of professionalization that the PLA had gone through made the army a convenient repressive machine for the Party hardliners to crack down the protesters in Tiananmen Square since the army only knew how to effectively carry out orders from its "client," i.e., the state, to use Huntington's term.

It is illustrative to compare the PLA's behavioral changes with those of the Soviet army during the reform period. In the case of the Soviet army, President Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms (glasnost and democratization) led to internal decentralization of the military decisionmaking structure, democratization of military life inside the barracks, and civilianization of military affairs.⁵⁵ The quick collapse of the coup in the Soviet Union in August, 1991 was due largely to the defection of a number of military units to Russian President Boris Yeltsin's camp, as well as the refusal of a substantial number of military units (including the air force, paratroopers, and KGB elite assault forces) to carry out orders from the coup leaders. Unlike Chinese military reform, Gorbachev's political reform apparently brought home to many rank-and-file of the armed forces the ideas of pluralism and democracy.

Second, as shown above, the PLA's professionalization drive, in terms of releasing itself from societal entanglement and retreating back to military barracks, inevitably loosened the army's ties with the civilian population. Mao described the relationship between the army and civilians as one between fish and water. The army is the fish while civilians are the water; naturally, the fish cannot survive without the water. During the reform period, the fish gradually swam away from the water. The detachment of the PLA from civilian society resulted in a lack of communication, and even alienation, between the army and the people. Indeed, it can be argued that

54. *FBIS-CHI*, February 19, 1987, p. K37.

55. For more on changes in civil-military relations in the USSR, see Yang Zhong, "Civil-Military Relations in Changing Communist Societies: A Comparative Study of China and the Soviet Union," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 14:1 (March 1991), pp. 77-102.

the more a military is removed from society, the more it may be used to repress a populace. Such an army-civilian relationship could be visualized in the scene of confrontation between soldiers and civilians during the Tiananmen events in the summer of 1989. Beijing residents who were trying, with passionate pleas, to persuade PLA officers and soldiers to back off with passionate pleas only met with stark and emotionless soldiers, who did not seem to understand much the civilians were trying to say.

Looking into the future, the direct involvement of the PLA in the Tiananmen massacre has put the army in a pivotal position in reversing the official verdict for the 1989 pro-democracy movement, a crucial action that has to be taken to move China out of the current political paralysis. If history can serve as a guide, when democratization is absent in the armed forces in a Leninist regime, the action or non-action of the army to block transition from authoritarianism to democracy is most likely to depend upon the attitude of the High Command of the armed forces. Refusal of the High Command to carry out orders of repression was the crucial reason for the failure of the East German army to repress demonstrations in Leipzig and for the success of the Romanian revolution against the rule of Nicolai Ceausescu. For that reason, military High Command positions have been vigorously pursued by the conservative forces in the Chinese Communist Party since the events of June, 1989. It will be interesting to see whether the younger and better educated officers in their 50s who are moving into the High Command will be as reliable as their predecessors when called upon to use deadly force against civilian masses to save the Party hardliners, especially after what happened in Romania and the former Soviet Union.

Appendix

Data of media reports gathered from FBIS *Daily Report: PRC* register a drastic reduction of civilian-armymen interactive activities during the 1980s. To make sure that this finding was not due to selection bias by FBIS, I conducted a spot check on reports of these activities in three newspapers located in three different cities in North China, Central China and South China (i.e., Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou). Because Wenhui Bao and Nanfeng Ribao prior to 1982 were not available in the United States, the author could only use issues during the reform period. The reason for choosing different years for the three newspapers was due to incomplete collections of the newspapers in libraries in the United States. Despite the two shortcomings, content analysis of reports on civilian-soldier interactive activities during the Chinese New Year period (January and February) confirms that the reduction was real.

*Reports of Civilian-Military Interactive Activities
during the Chinese New Year Period (January & February)*

	1975	1982	1983	1986	1988	1989
People's Daily (in Beijing)	41		31		25	
Wenhui Bao (in Shanghai)		12				8
Nanfeng Ribao		24		11		
