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Iron and Nail: Civil-Military Relations in the People's Republic of China

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ABSTRACT

A recurrent theme in China studies is the influence of the military in power politics and the extent to which its particular interests are under civilian control. Since Deng's resurgence to power, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) seems to have fallen into disfavor, but a reexamination of civil-military relations in the PRC shows that the situation is complex. Deng's many military reforms have hardly created an apolitical professional military and the PLA still plays a significant role in Chinese politics. At the same time, because of Deng's reforms and the particular nature of Party-military relationships in China, military takeover of the Communist Party authority remains unlikely.

A RECURRENT THEME IN CHINA studies is the influence of the military in politics and the extent to which its particular interests are under civilian control.[1] Since Deng Xiaoping's resurgence to power, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which includes the navy and air force, seems to have fallen into disfavor. Deng's pragmatists have reduced military budgets for several years running, giving the military low priority in their modernization programs. The high costs and heavy casualties in the 1979 border conflict with Vietnam exposed serious weaknesses in China's combat capability and forced the PLA, reflecting on its longstanding doctrine of a People's War, to demand the renovation of military structure and equipment (Chen, 1987; Get, 1987). These changes, if taken at face value, are so far reaching as to justify a reexamination of civil-military relations in the People's Republic of China. To what extent does the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) now maintain control of the military? Above all, what are the dynamics of civil-military relations in China under Deng's leadership?

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Iron Rule with Nails

Over the centuries Confucian philosophy exalted the scholar-official and downplayed the soldier. The inferior status of the military was supported by the ancient proverb, "Good iron is not used for nails; good men do not become soldiers" (Lang, 1945:9). But the Confucian ideal of rule by the pen, rather than the sword, did not conform to the reality of imperial China. The status of the military altered as the situation changed; a threatening barbarian invasion or a period of dynastic succession clearly enhanced the prestige of the military. This practical reality prompted scholarly debate on whether or not the military had in fact a status of power higher than that of the literati in traditional Chinese society (Fried, 1952; Lee, 1952; Teng, 1946:81-82; Creel, 1935; Lang, 1939; Michael, 1946).

For the contemporary period, there is less debate on this issue. The unstable warlord system and repetitive defeats in military competition with imperialist powers placed military men in the dominant position. Serious political contenders had to combine the scholar-official and military strategist roles. Once they seized power, all leaders needed the control of the military forces to claim the legitimacy of their "mandate of heaven" (Strand and Chan, 1952:59-63; Jencks, 1982:266). The CCP was no exception: it based its power on command of the military forces.

Following a series of disastrous defeats in 1927, the CCP recognized the necessity of a formal military organization and the value of military expertise (Hu Nan Sheng, 1977:59; Hofheinz, 1967:87). The newly-formed military force, then known as the Red Army and later renamed the PLA, functioned as the armed extension of the CCP and gained a victory over the Kuomintang in 1949. Under this new regime, soldiers were no longer regarded as "bad iron" or rough-mannered warriors.

In many respects the PLA is an unusual military force. It has to perform a multifunctional role as an entity fighting to destroy the enemy's military force, using its manpower flexibility and mechanization for economic construction, mobilizing the masses in political work, and setting itself before the people as an example of the new communist man (Mao, 1972a:54; Mao, 1972b; Godwin, 1978b: 230-231; Kau, 1973:xxx-xxxii). Engagement in nonmilitary missions not only creates a positive image of the PLA in society but also makes efficient economic use of PLA manpower. Moreover, its involvement in nonmilitary activities, more or less a practice of the Party's well-known slogans "serve the people" and "learn from the masses", negates the emergence of a military subculture with a value system different from the rest of the society. These nonmilitary tasks are regarded as a basic means of nurturing and maintaining close links between the PLA and the society, a role derived from the earlier revolutionary period (Gittings, 1967:176-201). In his often quoted commandment, "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun", Mao recognized that the PLA had to be subordinated to CCP control. "Our principle is that the Party commands the gun", Mao explained, "and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party" (Mao, 1972a:274).

While the military has a near monopoly concerning technical military expertise, the Party attempts to exercise a monopoly over the management of force within the State apparatus. Although the 1982 constitution established a new State Military Affairs Commission (MAC), responsible to the National People's Congress, to direct the armed forces of the country (Art. 93), the CCP continued to exercise its leadership over the military through the Party's Military Affairs Commission, which extends its control through its political arm within the PLA, the General Political Department (GPD). The GPD consequently became responsible for the political mobilization, education and cultural activities of the troops. The control of political and cultural education was intended to ensure the political awareness of the armed forces (*The Chinese People's Liberation Army*, 1950:19-25). The CCP has periodically called for various campaigns to raise the PLA's political loyalty and ideological commitment, for example, the "five-good" combatants, the "four-good" campaign for army companies, the "three-eight work style", and the "company management and education campaign" (Gittings, 1967:245-246; "Hold High the Great Red Flag", 1973).

The Party has established a structural means to ensure "unity of thought" in the PLA by means of the political commissar system, a plan similar to that of the Soviet Union.[2] To a certain extent, the political commissar is a "watchdog" within the PLA. Since the political commissar is responsible for civil-military relations, he must consider all the potential political consequences of any military activity. This does not necessarily imply that the political commissar's views prevail, should the commander and political commissar of a unit come into disagreement (Nelsen, 1977:14). Nevertheless, his access to personnel information, influence over assignment and promotion, responsibility for indoctrination and connection with higher party authority, all provide him with a system of checks and balances on the commander's authority and serve to elicit compliance from military personnel (Bullard, 1985:82; Segal, 1978:318).

At the level of high command, the practice of putting party leaders in the State MAC and the Party's MAC is another way of preventing deviation within the armed forces. Because most State MAC members concurrently hold the Party's MAC positions, the CCP is able to influence directly all military decision-making (Yan, 1983:59). Furthermore, the CCP top leaders, like Mao and Deng, have committed their own prestige to controlling the military. From the 1935 Zun Yi Conference to the mid-1970s, Mao maintained firm control over the PLA. At present, Deng plays a similar role. As early as 1975, Deng began criticizing the PLA in internally-circulated documents and talks. These accusations were later made public in his 1983 *Selected Works*. He accused the PLA of idleness, narrow-mindedness, factionalism and inefficiency (Deng Xiaoping, 1983:15-19; *FEER*, 20 March 1986:60). Had these harsh criticisms been voiced by some lesser figure, the PLA's reaction might have been less muted.

The Party also recognizes the strength of the "carrot and stick" strategy in controlling the military: in addition to institutional means of coercion, it

employs persuasive tools to achieve compliance with authority. The use of esteem, prestige and other normative honors is common (Godwin, 1978a:266). New hero-models are widely publicized. Mottoes like "learn from Lei Feng" and "learn from the PLA" enhance the social prestige of the PLA. PLA members have always enjoyed more material rewards and preferential treatment, especially in areas of housing and transportation, even though from time to time the CCP has called for the elimination of bourgeois privileges. The justification is that in view of the value of the work it performs, the PLA is entitled to some proper attention and good treatment (Ng-Quinn, 1986:264; *FEER*, 20 March 1986:60; Latham, 1983:99-109).

To conclude that the Party has brought the PLA under complete control, however, is too hasty. By virtue of its organizational strength and extensive involvement in social and economic activities, the PLA has acquired influence over policy issues and has extended its reach to many levels of power. Although some of the PLA's nonmilitary tasks have been relinquished since 1949, there remains considerable overlap between the PLA's responsibilities and those of civilian organizations in many sectors of Chinese society. The PLA thereby gains a voice in policy areas that would otherwise be reserved for civilian discretion and dominance.

Military involvement in the Chinese communist politics can be seen in different forms and to varying degrees, as well as in a variety of political contexts. It might be an individual or small group challenge to the Party leadership, like Defense Minister Peng Dehuai's 1959 criticism of Mao's party policies and the Great Leap Forward Movement, as well as his questions concerning PRC military policy (Mozingo, 1983:91-92; Joffe, 1984:19-20). It might be an intervention as massive as the PLA's role in the Cultural Revolution, when it influenced all political affairs under the slogan of "Three-support and Two-military" (support industry, support agriculture and support the revolutionary left; military control and military training). The PLA played the dominant role in the Party and on the revolutionary committees of different levels (Nelsen, 1972). As Powell commented then, "a reorganized Party still controls the gun, but only because the generals control the Party" (1970:471).

Nevertheless, it cannot be concluded that the military has usurped the Party authority. To argue that the PLA's role in the Cultural Revolution demonstrates the dominance of the military neglects the fact that the PLA was virtually pulled into the political arena as an ally of one group against its opponents. During the Cultural Revolution, the PLA itself was far from unified as to whether it should be involved in politics (Segal, 1984:88; Harding, 1987:215). In fulfilling its various missions, the PLA entered into coalitional relations with civil authorities and inevitably internalized itself into the complicated network of Party politics. With no cohesive, unified position, the military could not be in control of the enormous Party bureaucracy.

The blurring of civilian and military functions makes military and Party institutions far from monolithic. Many communist leaders hold both Party and military posts and perform duties in both capacities. The distinctions between the Party and the military are murky, and issue cleavages tend to cut across institutional lines (Cheng and White, 1988:377; Dreyer, 1985:28).

This murkiness reflects the Party's deep conviction of the need for the military. While Mao said that "the Party commands the gun", he also admitted the importance and necessity of "having guns" for the creation of Party organizations, cadres, schools, culture and mass movements. He wrote that "the army is the chief component of state power" (Mao, 1972c:274-275). At all levels therefore, the PLA has significant representation in decision-making bodies. To a certain extent, the institutions share a symbiotic relationship characterized by low levels of differentiation between military and nonmilitary elites and the circulation of elites between military and nonmilitary posts. To argue that one institution controls the other is difficult because no clear-cut boundaries can be drawn between civilian and military (Albright, 1980:573).

Iron and Nails on the Anvil

According to Huntington, military and civilian spheres are inherently conflictual in nature because of the clear cleavage between these two (Huntington, 1957:20). In his view, a high degree of military professionalism, which places the soldier at the service of society, tends to keep the military out of politics[3] (Huntington, 1957:8-18). The Chinese experience, however, challenges Huntington's theory. Increasing professionalism is no guarantee of political neutrality because the PLA is designated as the military arm of the Party and the boundaries between these two are blurred. Professionalism in itself will not make the PLA politically sterile.

On the other hand, Finer and Abrahamsson maintain that a professional armed force, consolidated by virtue of a highly centralized command hierarchy, formidable discipline and *esprit de corps*, is anxious to defend its privileged position (Finer, 1970:542, 547; Finer, 1962:25-28). Thus, the more advanced the training given to the military and the greater the responsibilities bestowed on it, the more likely it becomes that the armed forces will be transformed into an influential pressure group in the decision-making process (Abrahamsson, 1972:157-163; Godwin, 1978b:220-221; Welch, 1987:15-16). Professionalism simply enhances the possibility of military intervention in politics.

If this view of military professionalism were to hold true in China, however, the PLA would be engaged in regular and fierce conflict with the Party on various issues. No doubt disagreements between the Party and the PLA are numerous and at times even severe. But because the Party and the military share fundamental values and ideological commitments, on the whole the military remains less vociferous than other groups in challenging the Party's authority and stands closer to the Party than does any other institution. A Party-military consensus on a variety of issues indeed exists in terms of policy substance, even if their institutional roles are differentiated (Odom, 1978:32-34; Perlmutter, 1982:324-325; Perlmutter and LeoGrande, 1982:786).

Moreover, since members of the military elite usually hold Party rank, they are naturally "pulled" or "pushed" into debates over ideology, elite composition and major policy directions. Conflicts are in a strict sense factional strifes, not clashes between unified institutions such as the Party and the

Military. While the PLA gradually transformed itself into a professional armed force, Party supremacy was seldom an issue. During the Cultural Revolution and the later arrest of the Gang of Four, parts of the PLA played key roles in supporting Maoist and Anti-Maoist coalitions sustaining the political demands of one party faction against the other. Yet the PLA did not try to put the flag of military hegemony over Party hegemony. Indeed, interest group conflict models cannot completely capture the state of civil-military relations in China. We need to pay heed to the shifting mechanism of cooperation and control, and also to focus on factional groups and coalitions because of the fluidity and informality of Chinese politics.

No doubt the debate on professionalism presented by Finer, Huntington, et al., has been based upon the Western experience. The debate, however, is also applicable to communist societies. Kolkowicz, for instance, argues that the drive for professionalism places the military in direct conflict with the Party, while Odom, Colton and others tend to see far more integration between the Party and the military (Kolkowicz, 1967; Odom, 1978; Colton, 1978).

The Chinese case presents something of a middle course between such theories. Although both the Party and the military share certain fundamental values and interests as well as commitments to national defense and security, we cannot proclaim "congruence" between the institutions. On the other hand, the view that Party-military relations are fundamentally adversarial and conflict-prone tends to neglect the linkages between party elites and military officers and the vertical connections of personal ties in the Chinese political arena.[4]

Moreover, the shifting institution-crossing coalitions lessen the importance of the debate about the role of the PLA as a vehicle to maintain the status quo or as a model for social change in the process of political development (Bullard and O'Dowd, 1986). Like most institutions, the PLA consists of the conservative element holding back China's rush into the modern world and a liberal element advancing the pace of the modernization process. Each attaches itself to, or finds alliances with, corresponding elements in other institutions. In consequence, the PLA is capable of playing the role of "obstructionist" as well as "vanguard" in Chinese economic and political development. This seems in line with Perlmutter and LeoGrande's observation that in communist societies the Party plays the leading role, but faces likely "intervention" from the military during factional conflicts (1982).

Deng's Soft Iron Hand

Deng is certainly no stranger to the PLA. He understands that with its monopoly of military force, the PLA plays a political role that is important and at times vital, either to consolidate one's power base or to come to one's aid. He knows it is impossible to have complete military disengagement from politics because of the close Party-military relationship. Deng and his supporters, however, do their best to restrict the PLA to an essentially military

role, except insofar as the PLA is expected to support closely everything they decide[5] (Nethercut, 1982:692-693).

For Deng, there is no significant danger of military coup attempts. Nonetheless, he must handle the PLA with kid gloves. Any dissatisfaction among PLA leaders could be serious enough to cause policy debates or factional strife. As Mao noted in describing his struggle with feudalism and capitalist bourgeoisie, "A single spark can start a prairie fire" (Mao, 1972d:69). The major goal for Deng is therefore to ensure that a "spark" in the PLA will be extinguished before it kindles "a prairie fire" within the Party. No matter how many difficulties may arise, military opposition must not hamper or torpedo Deng's reform policies.

Deng's policy toward the PLA has been one of "carrot and stick". He has restored smart uniforms for the soldiers, and plans to reestablish military ranks for improving the PLA's command structure and social prestige. Modernization of conventional weaponry is slowly continuing, and personnel measures have placed leadership positions in the hands of military cadres who are younger in age, better educated and technically competent (*BR*, 11 June 1984:20; *BR*, 14 April 1986:5-6; Cheng and White, 1988:387-388). In consequence, many newly-promoted military commanders are younger and much better educated than before. The average age of officers at divisional command level and above is now around 50 (*FEER*, 24 March 1988:65; Yu, 1988a:27; *Guang Jiao Jing*, 16 Nov. 1987:17). While these younger commanders are professional soldiers with fewer historical burdens than previous senior officers, they are invariably Party members. They perceive themselves as having risen to prominence not so much through seniority as through reform policies and their own merit. This runs counter to the PLA tradition of stressing "sponsor-protege relationship, seniority and ideological background" for promotion (Nelsen, 1983:144-145). Newer officers are therefore likely to be among the closest supporters of Deng's reform policies and to help Deng consolidate his power.

Along with the promotion of younger and better educated cadres has come removal of aged and incompetent commanders. Deng instituted a retirement system which set time limits for promotion and age limits for active service. This system has met some resistance, especially in the higher ranks (Wang, X., 1985:47). Deng has also chosen to coax aging officers into leaving the armed forces and to avoid antagonizing veterans who still have informal networks of influence; and he has tried to ensure their cooperation, or at least neutrality, in supporting reform policies. Moreover, the Party makes every effort to take care of the welfare of retiring officers by solving practical problems in housing, transportation, cultural entertainment, and by providing retraining for nonmilitary professions. The "dual-use talents" [Liang Yong Ren Cai] program has been accelerated under Deng to train demobilized soldiers for civilian occupations. Further, arrangements have been made by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the PLA to transfer senior veterans to administrative posts in local governments or to managerial jobs in state-owned enterprises. Although the PLA is still 3.5 million strong, one million men and

women have been mustered out since 1985 (*Zhong Hua Ren Min*, 20 June 1986:509-510; *Zhong Hua Ren Min*, 20 August 1985:787-791; Johnston, 1987: 621). If the carrot has been nibbled, however, the stick is also ready to be employed when bumps are encountered along the road to streamlining and reorganizing the PLA.

By holding the head position of the Military Affairs Commission of both Party and the State, Deng boldly continued his rectification campaign to bring the PLA under the heel of his group and thus to reduce the potential political interference from conservative military elements. He has removed from power his main military rivals, such as Chen Xilian and Wang Dongxing; and he launched heavy propaganda attacks on "leftist factionalism" in order to bring Li Desheng—another rival—into line (Johnston, 1984:1030). In the wake of the 1982 Zhao Yiya scandal, in which a General Political Department cadre openly criticized Deng's policy through the *Liberation Army Daily [Jie Fang Jun Bao],* leading political officers at or above the divisional level were required to attend courses to learn the "correct" message of the Party. The General Staff Department, controlled by Deng's group, organized the training courses (Johnston, 1984:1028; Ng Quinn, 1986:274-275). Wei Guoqing, then the director of the General Political Department, was replaced by Yu Qiuli, who argued that political and ideological work must fit realities and meet the needs of modernization. The latter may not have been a Deng man, but he was cautious enough to find out how the wind blew and to stay in line with Deng's policy at that time[6] (*BR*, 1 August 1983:13-31; Wang, J., 1985:177).

Deng understands very well that no factional coalition can long prevail in the political struggle without commanding the support of the majority of PLA members. The purge of Liu Shaoqi and the arrest of the Gang of Four were made possible only with the PLA's support. On the other hand, Hu Yaobang's lack of support from the PLA influenced his dismissal. Although there were many reasons for his removal, one interpretation is that PLA members were able to form a veto coalition within the Party elites. As a consequence, the PLA may play a stronger role in future succession politics in the CCP (Dreyer, 1987:31).

After the tragic fall of Hu, Zhao Ziyang, the Party General Secretary, was named the first Vice-Chairman of the MAC, even though he did not have a military background[7] (*FEER*, 21 April 1988:12-13). From such a position, Zhao was able to inspect military regions, cultivate close relations with PLA members and increase his control of the military. The current promotion system certainly enhances Zhao's prestige and command because most newly-promoted commanders are junior to Zhao in terms of seniority (*Cheng Ming*, Jan. 1988:42-43). In order to secure Zhao's authority, Deng personally instructed military commanders to consult with Zhao about military matters, arguing that Zhao, after all, holds the second position in the MAC (*Cheng Ming*, April 1988:11).

Two of the Deng's supporters, Qin Jiwei and Yang Shangkun, sit on the Politburo to help Zhao consolidate his overall power base. Recently, Qin has been named Defense Minister and Yang the President of the National People's

Congress. Both play the role of Zhao's "patrons" within the PLA.[8] Despite the selection of younger PLA members for the CCP Central Committee, however, veteran officers and conservatives are not completely silenced and remain more or less influential in the Central Committee and the Central Advisory Commission (*Cheng Ming*, Jan. 1988:48; Yu, 1988b:7). Nevertheless, Qin and Yang are at least able to provide a counterweight to keep the conservatives from wielding too much influence. Although their age does not fit into the current Party policy of making room for younger cadres, obviously these two aging generals (Qin is age 74 and Yang is 81) have been retained to escort Zhao into the leadership position.[9] Obviously Zhao's predominance within the PLA does not merely stem from his post as the Party General Secretary; his authority is also derived from Deng's personal influence.

One current push for streamlining the PLA is to convert the 85 field armies into 24 integrated mobile armies. Some of these new integrated units have been deployed or are near completion in the Beijing, Shengyang and Wuhan military regions, but most exist only on paper (Hollingworth, 1988:788). No longer will the enemy be "drowned in the sea of people" as Mao "People's War" strategy once suggested; now it will be surrounded by several mobile integrated units.

Another recent effort to dilute the PLA's role in internal affairs has been to establish the People's Armed Police (PAP), which is under the Military Affairs Commission as well as the Ministry of Public Security, but outside the military chain of command (*FEER*, 24 March 1988:66, Chang, 1986). During the disturbances in Tibet in October 1987, the PAP was sent in to restore order. Such an interlocking institutional set-up ensures that no single organization has a monopoly of power for internal security and may limit the PLA 's future influence.

The PLA is racing to modernize its weaponry, and the state's emphasis on economic development has put muscle behind this push. Since money is tight, exporting military hardware becomes China's main money-maker (Lee, 1987-88). The Party has also allowed the PLA to engage in production of civilian commodities, ranging from hi-fi gear to motorcycles (*FEER*, 22 August 1985; *BR*, 3 August 1987: 14-16). These policies keep the PLA busy making money and further restrict the PLA's role in politics.

Military professionalism was enhanced by the opening of the National Defense University in 1985. Described as "China's highest military institution", it was designed to turn out "highly knowledgeable and capable" military officers (Cheung, 1987:241-243; Dreyer, 1988:217). No doubt professionalism is necessary for the PLA to face the challenge of modern warfare, but the attainment of professionalism cannot be equated with full disengagement of the military from political life in China. At the most, such professionalism might limit the political involvement of the PLA. Deng might try to keep the PLA from asserting influence in Party politics because military components involved in factional fights or nonmilitary activities might neglect their professional tasks and operate autonomously without restraint. If such PLA groups aligned themselves with opposition factions, Deng's reform programs would

fall to the ground. Since military leaders know that political involvement threatens the military institution itself and violates the rule that "the Party controls the gun", Deng's policy has won him some PLA support. It appears that Deng, intentionally or unintentionally, has tried to achieve "military disengagement" in Chinese politics. The result gives Deng firm control of the PLA. Most military officers apparently regard Deng's policy on professionalism as relatively acceptable, if not completely satisfactory (Joffe, 1983:56; Joffe, 1984:30).

The CCP's historical experience points to the difficulty of a successful military disengagement. The distinction between the Party and the military scarcely exists in any political system based on the Leninist model of a vanguard party. Because the capitalists, who are constantly lurking, threaten socialism, military forces are always needed by a Socialist party. In this respect, the CCP and the PLA have made the system work by being responsible to each other. When the CCP fails to meet the demands of the PLA, the military may grumble and complain, but there is no immediate danger of a military coup. Persistent throughout has been a relationship of mutual reliance based on historical experiences as well as interlocking structures.

If Deng pushes military disengagement to its logical extreme and builds up an apolitical professional military, however, he must consider the creation of a comparable civilian staff in military affairs to avoid heavy reliance on the professional military for information, expertise and policy options. Otherwise, the initial emphasis on apolitical professionalism will be lost; more or less the military will encroach upon the Party's authority in the policy-making process. Stated differently, a group of civilian experts may check the military quest for professional autonomy and indirectly increase the policy latitude of the Party[10] (Condoleezza, 1987:55; Abrahamsson, 1972:160-162).

Tough to Nail Down

The close relationship between the Party and the PLA does not imply that Deng has no problem in dealing with the PLA. The toughest battle they both face is how to match up the needs of a modernizing military with the means of a still-developing economy. According to CIA figures, current defense spending on both men and weapons is being reduced in real terms. Officially, the 1988 budget calls for 2.6% increase in defense spending.[11] Yet with the official estimate of inflation running at 7% (which is in reality much higher) the PLA has been requested to cut the army's suit according to national cloth. The military has to manage its own buildup with frugality. Some PLA officers argue that the PLA should be spared from budget cuts in order to pull itself into the age of modern technology, instead of staying in the era of the humble infantry rifle. Even Yang Shangkun questioned the logic of sacrificing military modernization for economic development (*Asiaweek*, 13 May 1988:32).

Despite the fact that Deng implemented his retirement policy to make room for younger officers, his new agricultural policy has made recruitment more difficult.[12] Once it was an honor and a major channel of social mobility

for a poor peasant family to have a son in the PLA, but now the situation is reversed. To stay at home and cultivate the private family plot for the free market is more lucrative than joining the PLA (*Cheng Ming*, Jan. 1988:11-12; Dreyer, 1984:1022). Since the PLA has historically been closely linked to the peasantry, the proportionate drop in peasant recruits because of the bourgeois liberalism is regarded as an unhealthy development by some PLA members. Such critics have argued that the pace of economic modernization must be reset and that the importance of political work among the youth must be reemphasized.

The PLA's participation in civilian production also causes problems. Soldiers, who established their heroic reputation by undertaking such "glorious" tasks as blasting out reservoirs and building dams, are now supposed to play Santa Claus to meet the increasing demands of materialistic civilians by producing more consumer goods. Some officers feel that the PLA has been degraded by producing civilian goods. They worry that the current trend might drive the PLA to the hot pursuit of profits as well as to the neglect of military preparedness and the abandonment of ideological purity (*FEER*, 25 April 1983:92). Parallel to the concern about the growing involvement of the military in civilian production is the problem of "unhealthy tendencies" in the PLA. Officers are reported to have given and taken bribes for home leave, transfer, Party membership and registration in special training programs (*Cheng Ming*, Feb. 1988:16-17).

The concern for ideological purity and the recent double-digit inflation, which has pushed down the average soldier's real and perceived standard of living, has made the PLA worry about the rapid socio-political changes derived from economic reforms. The 1986 student demonstrations also made some "conservative" military cadres feel called upon to warn about "spiritual pollution" and "bourgeois liberalism" in Chinese society. While the Party cautioned that the campaign against "bourgeois liberalism" should be kept strictly within limits, the *Liberation Army Daily* of February 17, 1987, disclosed that the campaign was to be pursued throughout the whole PLA (*ECO*, 21 February 1987:38). Indeed, it was reported that the struggle against bourgeois liberalization was initiated by the PLA (*BR*, 13 April 1987:7).

Still other problems have been caused by military reforms. The prestige of those who remain in uniform has declined. Special privileges were curtailed to avoid civilian criticism. A generation gap exists between the older officers and the younger, better-educated ones. While the former find it difficult to adapt to newer technology, the latter advance quickly because of the policy emphasis on stricter educational standards (*ECO*, 8 November 1986:45).

Demobilized veterans also face dim futures. With new emphasis on youth, education and professional skill, their civilian career is uncertain in the burgeoning commodity economy. Although the state has given substantial pay-offs to demobilized officers to ease their re-entry into civilian life, their real income has declined owing to the continuous inflation. In addition to manifesting their complaints internally within the Party, veterans have publicized their dissatisfaction on wall posters and through sit-ins and petitions

(*Cheng Ming*, Aug. 1988:11-13; *Zhong Yang Ri Bao*, Oct. 3, 1988:4; Latham, 1983:109).

Even so, no visible sign indicates that the disgruntlement of some officers seriously challenges Deng's reforms. As Meaney correctly observed, the "conservative constituency" in China now is relatively weak; the "reform constituency" is relatively strong (Meaney, 1987:225-228). Deng has made every endeavor to improve the quality of the PLA, reducing its size, relieving its officers of nonmilitary functions and restoring political control over the military. But in view of the political upheaval in Beijing in January 1987, any prediction on the future of the Party-military relationship is problematic. Yet one conclusion seems warranted. Military involvement in CCP politics appears inevitable, while military takeover remains unlikely. In order to have a successful reform, Deng's group has to address itself to a two-front war: one in the Party, the other in the PLA. Iron, whether good or bad, is still useful to build nails, which are essential to Party building and socialist system maintenance.

NOTES

1 There is much literature on the issue of civil-military relations. A useful summary of various studies can be seen in Harries-Jenkins and Moskos (1981) or Ball (1981). China studies have produced plenty of writings on civil-military relations. Several publications examining China's civil-military relations are a useful introduction and contain rich references. See Dreyer (1988), Godwin (1988), Jencks (1986), Joffe (1987), Ng-Quinn (1986), and Strand and Chan (1982).

2 For a study of the Soviet political commissar system, please see Colton (1979). The PLA's political commissar at various levels is given different titles. Please see Bullard (1985:76-78).

3 For a discussion of military professionalism, see Downes (1985); Huntington (1979:15-22); Janowitz (1960:417-442); and Sarkesian (1984).

4 To some extent, this observation concurs with Colton's view of the Soviet civil-military relations. See Colton (1986).

5 As for the concept of military disengagement, please see Finer (1970:568-573); and Sundhaussen (1984).

6 Currently the Director of the General Political Department is Yang Baibing, a brother of Yang Shangkun.

7 Zhao holds the position of Vice-Chairman in both the State MAC and the Party's MAC. See *Yuan Jian Za Zhi* (June 1988:28-31). Zhao was too young to take part in the Long March (1934-35). He also lacked impressive pre-1949 revolutionary credentials. Since 1949, he has stayed basically in the Party-government bureaucracy.

8 The Profile of Yang Shangkun can be seen in "Profiles of New Leaders", (*BR*: 18-24 April 1988; April 1988:30-31); "2 Backers of Change Named to Top Posts by Chinese Congress", *New York Times* (April 9, 1988:3); "For China, 'Rejuvenated' Leadership", *New York Times* (13 April 1988:3).

9 Some veterans are not happy about the retention of Yang and Qin, while they are forced to retire because of their age. See *Cheng Ming* (May 1988:7-8).

10 What I am suggesting is the creation of civilian-staffed institutions outside of the military establishment, not within it. Recently, China has issued regulations governing nonmilitary personnel serving in the PLA. This nonmilitary personnel is involved in only administrative duties and activities in scientific research and medicine. See "PLA Establishes Civilian Post" (*BR*, May 16-22, 1988:11).

11 It is always difficult to ascertain Chinese defense spending. Different figures are presented

by various estimates. The discrepancy occurs because China does not include in its official defense spending figures many of the items that go into regular defense budgets in Western countries. For example, spending on defense research and development is usually excluded from the published defense budget. See "Putting Muscle on the PLA" (*Asiaweek*, 13 May 1988:32). For a discussion on the PLA's cuts, see Frankenstein (1985).

11 A new conscription law has been issued. See Shi Renyu, "New Conscription Law Strengthens Defense" (*BR*, 11 June 1984:18); *Zhong Hua Ren Min Gong He Guo Guo Wu Yuan Gong Bao* (483:20 November 1985:1046-1053). For the Chinese military legal system, please see Rodearmel (1988).

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