MILITARY COUPS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA: FAILURE, FABRICATION, OR FANCY?

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The most blatant and dramatic type of political act by soldiers is the coup d'etat. Scholars of civil-military relations often argue that communist states are virtually immune to coups because of effective mechanisms of party control over the army.[1] In the case of the People's Republic of China (PRC), many scholars contend that there have been no successful military coups,[2] although some assert there has been at least one abortive attempt—by Minister of Defense Lin Biao in 1971.[3] Chinese sources have reported many botched coup plots and some sinologists have accepted these as fact and/or labeled various events in PRC history as military coups.

Is the record of military coups in post-1949 China really one of abject failure? Is it instead the result of a willingness among some scholars to accept the official version of party history? Or is it largely due to a tendency to view Chinese communist politics as an intricate game of conspiracy and intrigue? This article examines whether or not military coups—successful and unsuccessful—have occurred and assesses the likelihood of their occurrence in the future. First, definitional and conceptual issues are considered, then events in PRC history, particularly those in 1971 and 1976, that might qualify as military coups, are assessed. Finally, possible scenarios of military intervention in China in the foreseeable future are considered.

DEFINITIONAL AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Before being able to assess the record of military coups in the PRC, one must first be clear on the meaning of the term. A coup d'etat, according to Edward Luttwak, is "the infiltration of a small but critical segment of the state apparatus, which is then used to displace the government from its control of the remainder."[4] What this means in practice is the sudden overthrow of an entire government, top leader, or group of high-level political leaders by a group, usually armed, and frequently in violation of the accepted rules of the game.[5] Furthermore, in a coup, a senior political leader or leaders are the target of overthrow by a lesser leader or leaders. By contrast, in a purge, a top

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political leader or leaders rather than being the quarry, serve as the instigator(s) targeting a lesser political leader or leaders.

Coups can be launched by a variety of state organs or individuals, not only military units but even by elements outside the state apparatus. Police, paramilitary formations, or other armed groups are also capable of launching a coup.[6] This article limits itself to coups that could possibly be described as "military" ones, that is, those which are performed wholly or largely by the military. A successful military coup does not require the armed forces to seize control of political power (i.e., form a military government). In fact, soldiers often launch coups with the clear aim of toppling one leader or government from power and replacing it with another civilian leader or leaders.[7]

While the Chinese military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), is organizationally a distinct entity clearly identifiable—by uniform, discipline, and command structures common to most militaries—it has also been intertwined with the chief civilian political organs: the Chinese Communist party (CCP) and the government of the PRC. The officer corps is composed almost exclusively of party members, and military men also concurrently occupy key positions of authority in the party and government hierarchies.

Civil-military relations in communist states have been described by "penetration" models whereby the party controls the army through a political commissar system.[8] This, however, does not seem to capture accurately a situation in which military men are also well represented in the highest echelons of the party hierarchy. I suggest this configuration is better labeled as "interpenetration."[9]

Since the party and military leaderships are so intimately intertwined, it is relevant to ask if a military coup is even definitionally possible in China.[10] The answer is "yes" because, despite the large number of individuals with memberships in both the party and army, there are numerous people who are readily identifiable as "military men" who have been engaged exclusively or almost exclusively in military affairs or PLA commands throughout their entire careers. At the same time certain prominent individuals, notably paramount leaders Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, tend to defy simple categorization, fitting the criteria for civilian political leadership as well as having substantial experience in military affairs. China's core of dyed-in-the-wool soldiers are those who had the rank of "Marshal" conferred upon them in 1955: Zhu De, Peng Dehuai, Lin Biao, Liu Bocheng, He Long, Chen Yi, Luo Ronghuan, Xu Xiangqian, Nie Rongzhen, and Ye Jianying. All of these men are now deceased but they have been replaced by another generation of career military men. Most prominent among these are Admiral Liu Huaqing (currently a member of the Politburo Standing Committee and vice chairman of the Central Military Commission [CMC]), and General Zhang Zhen, (also a vice-chairman on the CMC).[11]

Moreover, these soldiers have tended to identify themselves with the institutional interests of the PLA. Even political commissars, members of the General Political Department of the armed forces, who are supposed to serve as representatives of the CCP and provide a key civil check on the military, have repeatedly identified and sided with the PLA against the party.[12] Thus, although a political commissar system exists in the Chinese military, it does not mean that the CCP exerts firm control over the armed forces.

In fact, PLA obedience to the CCP rests less on any institutionalized control mechanism and more on a network of personal allegiances between senior soldiers and top party leaders.[13]

When is a Coup a Coup?

Allegations of unsuccessful military coup attempts are more difficult to confirm than those of successful ones. Periodic claims of military coup attempts deserve careful scrutiny, but Western sinologists are sometimes guilty of uncritically accepting official Chinese accounts due in part to the difficulty of obtaining alternative sources of reliable information. There sometimes appears to be a significant element of truth to these reports, but they warrant careful cross-checking and scrutiny. Allegations of military coups pepper post-1949 Chinese politics sometimes in subtle but usually in not-so-subtle terms.

Of course there is an inherent problem in documenting unsuccessful coup attempts, that boils down to how one measures what is in effect a nonevent. While it is fairly straightforward to identify a violent coup gone awry with gun battles, dead bodies, and surrendering mutineer soldiers captured in press photographs or television cameras—witness the bloody coup attempts against civilian governments in the Philippines in the late 1980s and in Columbia in February 1992—it is much more difficult to substantiate rumors of a failed coup, particularly in a communist state without an independent press.

The Chinese Context

Some scholars view the political history of modern China as an unending record of conspiracies and intrigues. This is understandable since the history of pre-1949 China is replete with army mutinies and power plays by military men. Landmark events such as the 1911 revolution that toppled the Qing Dynasty were precipitated by a military revolt. The celebrated Xian incident of December 1936 boiled down to an act of mutiny by a senior nationalist general, Zhang Xueliang, against his commander-in-chief, Chiang Kai-shek.

The early history of the CCP is also littered with accounts of military intrigue in which commanders and units mutinied against their putative leaders and joined the other side. Soldiers tended to owe their allegiance to an

individual commander rather than to any greater abstract entity or cause. With this history of shifting allegiances in the years preceding the founding of the PRC, it is not surprising that some scholars tend to see post-1949 politics, in many ways, as an extension of a previous half century of political intrigue.[14] Reports of plots, however, should not be taken as confirmation of the existence of coup attempts. Mao and other Chinese communist leaders were paranoid about the possibility of military coups. It would, in fact, be strange if party leaders did *not* entertain such fears given the prominent role that coups and mutinies played in their own rise to power.

More recently, in June 1989, Deng Xiaoping was fearful of a coup, and this appears to have only intensified in the wake of the role played by the army in the overthrow of Romanian dictator Nicholae Ceausescu six months later and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.[15] In 1992 Deng reportedly commissioned a panel headed by Admiral Liu Huaqing specifically to analyze the issue of how to prevent a coup in China.[16]

THE RECORD OF THE PRC

How many purported coups d'etat have there been since 1949? How reliable are these reports? Table 1 lists 12 instances that variously might be described as military coups. Of these, I contend only two seem to bear up under scrutiny as military coup attempts empirically and definitionally. One, the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976, is probably the only event that qualifies as a successful coup while another, an attempt by Lin Biao's son Lin Liguo in 1971, appears to qualify as a failed military coup. While all 12 of the instances listed in table 1 will be evaluated, most of these purported coups can be discounted fairly quickly. Indeed, much of this article is devoted to the two most contentious instances, namely the one that allegedly occurred in 1971, often dubbed the "Lin Biao affair," and the one that supposedly happened in 1976 related to the "Gang of Four."

Claims of coup plots during the decades before and after the 1970s can be dealt with relatively easily either because they remain uncorroborated and/or appear outlandish after examination. This is not to say these claims can be completely dismissed, and in our analysis they must not be excluded based solely on lack of evidence. Allegations against Luo Ruiqing and He Long in 1965 and 1966, respectively, appear baseless and a product of the rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution. Luo Ruiqing, chief of the General Staff Department, was purged in 1965 by Mao in a clash over strategy and factional politics. Mao seemed concerned that Luo may have been plotting a "counter-revolutionary coup d'etat," but there is no hard evidence that Luo planned a coup.[17] Similarly, the claim that Marshal He Long plotted a coup in February of the following year rests solely on a claim by Lin Biao, a major military rival and hardly a reliable source of information.[18] The efforts of Gao Gang and Rao

TABLE 1
Possible Military Coup Attempts in PRC History

	Year	Perpetrator	Source	A Coup Attempt?
1)	1954	Gao Gang	Frederick Teiwes	No
2)	1959	Peng Dehuai	Mao Zedong	No
3)	1965	Luo Ruiqing	Mao Zedong/ Lin Biao	No
4)	1966	He Long	Lin Biao	No
5)	1967	Military as an institution	—	No
6)	1971	Mao Zedong	Yao Ming-le	No
7)	1971	Lin Liguo	Yao Ming-le	Yes
8)	1971	Lin Biao	Party line	No
9)	1976	Gang of Four	Party line	No
10)	1976	Ye Jianying/ Wang Dongxing	Jurgen Domes	Yes
11)	1989	Unnamed	John Fincher	No
12)	1992	Yang Baibing	*Ming Pao* (HK)	No

NOTE: For full citations see notes.

Shushi in 1954 did not constitute a military coup attempt; rather than a plot against Mao, this seems to have been an effort to challenge the power and position of Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai so as to position Gao and Rao favorably as successors in the event of Mao's death (which appeared possible given the state of his health at that time). While the core of the Gao-Rao faction did not contain top soldiers, central to the efforts of this group was a major initiative to prepare for the post-Mao era by winning military support for their cause.[19]

The Case of Peng Dehuai

Allegations that Peng Dehuai was plotting a coup at Lushan in 1959 also seem fabricated, although Mao and other senior leaders do seem to have been suspicious that a coup was brewing. While no one at the time ventured

explicitly to call the Peng Dehuai affair a military coup attempt, this is the way Mao appears to have perceived the challenge by his defense minister, and this is the way it is depicted in Cultural Revolution accounts.[20] Mao perceived Peng Dehuai's criticism of the Great Leap Forward at the Lushan Conference in 1959 not only as a direct attack on his personal prestige but also as a plot hatched mainly by PLA leaders to undermine his position as paramount political leader. While this was almost certainly not the case, what is noteworthy is that Mao seemed to fear a "military club" was prepared to oust him.[21] The depth of his concern or paranoia can be measured by the language he used to confront the alleged plotters. Mao threatened that if the PLA would not follow him, he would go to the peasantry and raise another army.[22] Significantly, other leaders at Lushan appeared to harbor fears that plans for a coup might be afoot.[23] Peng's posthumous rehabilitation in the post-Mao era has resulted in a reinterpretation of the Lushan confrontation more favorable to the marshal. No scholar views the confrontation at the Lushan Plenum as a coup attempt, but several see it as a civil-military conflict.[24]

Military Intervention in the Cultural Revolution

While neither scholars nor CCP historians claim that the military intervention in 1967 to restore order out of the chaos unleashed by the launching of the Cultural Revolution was a coup, it seems possible to describe this as such. The collapse of civilian political institutions across China and the breakdown of basic law and order prompted Mao in 1967 to order the PLA to institute military control and reestablish calm. The result was de facto martial law throughout China with the military taking over administrative and criminal justice functions in lieu of party and state organs. The CCP prefers to downplay the extent and degree of this military intervention as it is sensitive to perceptions that the principle of party control of the gun was violated.[25] Civil-military scholars, while documenting more meticulously the extent and nature of the PLA's activities during this era, also shy away from labeling this as any kind of military coup. They argue that the PLA became involved in the Cultural Revolution in 1967 reluctantly and only because it was instructed by the CCP leadership to restore order.[26] As in most other instances in post-1949 China, the army acted only at the request of senior party leaders rather than on its own initiative. Certainly, the military intervened on the orders of paramount civilian leader Mao Zedong, but the PLA never forced a change of CCP leadership at the center or even dictated terms to the center. The PLA's displeasure at being forced to play a sordid, complex, and frustrating domestic role, rather than prompting a coup, triggered episodes of intramilitary violence. But there was no military coup.[27]

The Crisis of 1989

One scholar has asserted that the military crackdown on the Tiananmen demonstrations and the ouster of Party Secretary Zhao Ziyang in the spring of 1989 constituted a military coup d'etat.[28] However, this claim seems exaggerated and probably definitionally impossible.[29] According to this interpretation by John Fincher, the ringleaders were State President Yang Shangkun and State Premier Li Peng. The imposition and bloody enforcement of martial law in Beijing and the fall of Zhao can hardly be defined as a military coup since Yang and Li occupied the top civilian offices in the state apparatus. Further, the man whose decision was critical in the episode was Deng Xiaoping, who at the time was chairman of both the state and party CMCs—historically the key civilian post through which the party has sought to control the military. In moving to enforce martial law in the center of the capital, the military was following the orders of the civilian authorities. While the imposition of martial law was more or less carried out in accordance with the 1982 PRC state constitution,[30] the fall of Zhao on the other hand may have been improper procedurally. At an enlarged Politburo Standing Committee meeting the CCP General-Secretary lost a rigged vote on the question of whether or not to impose martial law. Nevertheless, Zhao's ouster seems to have been part purge and part voluntary exit. Once Zhao had been outvoted by a majority of other senior leaders, he appears to have chosen of his own free will to step down from his position as CCP chief: his tearful visit to Tiananmen Square on the night of May 18–19 and his decision to absent himself from the line-up of leaders present on camera for the formal declaration of martial law one day later attest to this aspect of his fall.[31]

A comparison of the manner in which martial law was imposed in Beijing to its invocation in Poland in December 1981 is helpful in labeling the event. Upon close examination, the incident in Poland seems a far more promising candidate for the label "military coup." The case of communist Poland in 1981 has been explained simply as the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP) invoking emergency rule. Yet the imposition of martial law was largely the doing of General Wojciech Jaruzelski who was not only the head of the party but also concurrently minister of defense and a career military man. While Jaruzelski acted formally in his capacity as head of the PUWP, a post he assumed only two months prior to the imposition of martial law, it was through his military status and the armed forces chain of command that he actually established control of the country. Furthermore, all the members of the Military Council for National Salvation who assumed the duties of civilian cabinet ministers were soldiers. By contrast, enforcement of martial law in China did not entail wholesale removal of civilian leaders—let alone replacement by military personnel. Thus, unlike the 1981 Polish case, the circumstantial evidence surrounding the imposition and enforcement of martial

law in 1989 Beijing strongly suggests this event does not qualify as a military coup.[32]

An Aborted Coup in 1992?

According to reports by a Hong Kong newspaper quoting an internal CCP document, Yang Baibing, in September 1992 then director of the General Political Department of the PLA and general-secretary of the CMC, was guilty of plotting an "abortive minor military coup d'etat."[33] It appears that Yang held at least one unauthorized meeting with other military leaders and senior officers of the People's Armed Police before the 14th CCP congress to discuss arrangements upon the death of Deng Xiaoping. This maneuvering seems similar in context and purpose to the moves by Gao Gang and Rao Shushi except that unlike the machinations some 40 years earlier, the intrigue initiated by Yang was centered on the military. To call such a gathering a military coup seems rather sensationalistic, although it is very plausible that such a parley took place. However, that Yang Baibing, possibly in collusion with his half-brother Yang Shangkun (first vice-chairman of the CMC), was jockeying for power and seeking allies in order to position himself as a successor to Deng is in fact very probable.[34]

THE LIN BIAO AFFAIR

The most prominent and hyped case of a coup attempt in PRC history is the so-called "Lin Biao affair" of 1971. The vast majority of scholars and analysts of modern Chinese politics has been content to declare this a botched military coup d'etat, although most preface their mention of the coup attempt with the adjective "alleged."[35] What is often conveniently overlooked is the fact that this incident is the most mysterious episode in modern Chinese politics. Until very recently, aside from the fact that a Trident jet with Chinese markings crashed in Mongolia in September 1971 while apparently attempting to flee to the Soviet Union, virtually all other details of the affair remained shrouded in mystery.

According to a recent story in *U.S. News and World Report*, based on new information obtained from mainland, Taiwanese, and Soviet sources, Lin was bundled onto the airplane in a semiconscious state on the evening of September 12, 1971. The jet was commandeered by his wife and son, who feared their arrest was imminent.[36] Until the publication of this account in January 1994 no compelling proof had been forthcoming attesting to Lin's presence on the doomed aircraft. Although the fact that a Chinese plane did crash in Mongolia in September 1971 is generally accepted as true, it had never been established beyond all doubt that Lin was actually on the aircraft—even with the publication in 1988 of the account by China's ambassador to Mongolia

about his visit to the crash site.[37] According to a Mongolian official, who in 1971 inspected the scene of the crash and was interviewed in 1990, none of the bodies were identified as Lin's.[38] Yet according to a Soviet military pathologist and a KGB officer, their tests conclusively identified one body as that of Lin Biao. Dispatched to Mongolia twice to exhume the bodies and determine if, in fact, Lin Biao did die in the crash, the specialists concluded after a study of one of the cadavers that its skull, dental work, scars, and ailments all corresponded exactly to the extensive medical and dental records of Lin held by the Soviet government.[39]

According to the official CCP version, Defense Minister Lin Biao attempted a coup against Mao, and when it failed, he fled aboard the airplane and perished along with the other passengers and crew when it crashed.[40] An alternative hypothesis offered is that Lin was assassinated upon Mao's orders as part of a crafty counterplot.[41] This scenario, which had not been conclusively proved or disproved, was no less credible or incredible than the official story.[42] However, what we know about the escape attempt by air is more logical if it was a mad dash to flee the country in the immediate aftermath of an attempt to seize or kill Lin Biao and his family. Haste and desperation would help explain why the Lins would select the Soviet Union as their destination—an odd place for them to seek refugee for a number of reasons.[43] Lin Biao and his immediate family faced essentially two options: they could stay and try to ride out the storm or they could flee. Given the extreme climate of the period and the enemies they had made, the Lins knew they faced possible brutal and even lethal treatment and could not rely on the more predictable exit pattern in Chinese politics in place prior to the Cultural Revolution. But flight from China does not necessarily make Lin Biao guilty of an attempted coup against Mao.

What can be determined based on the sketchy evidence and conflicting accounts? While one cannot say conclusively whether any of the stories are completely false, we can detect strands of consistency and continuity from the data and make certain inferences. First, it seems as if there was a coup plot afoot in 1971 but it was probably the doing of Lin Biao's son, Deputy Director Lin Liguo of the General Office of the PLA Air Force, rather than his father. In other words the younger Lin conceived of and spearheaded the elaborate plans to assassinate Mao and install the elder Lin without his father's knowledge. Both the CCP official line and the alternative hypothesis concur that the lion's share of coup planning was carried out not by Lin Biao himself, but by his son Lin Liguo. In fact there is very, very little evidence given to implicate Lin Biao in "Project 571" as it is known. Instead all the juicy details revealed by party documents and the official account center on the efforts of Lin Liguo while his father seems strangely aloof and detached from the coup-making activities.[44] Moreover, the "Outline of Project 571" appears to bear the unmistakable mark of Lin junior and none of the hall-

marks of Lin senior.[45] It was Liguo, for example, who labeled himself "*Kang-man-de*"—the homophone for the English word "commander"—and came up with the code name "Joint Fleet," for the cabal of conspirators, allegedly after watching a Japanese war movie.[46] Lin Liguo reportedly told other members of the "fleet" that he was acting on the instructions of his father.[47]

Lin Biao, according to the official version, remained peripheral to the development of the plan—a surprising role for a man reported, by many accounts, to be obsessed with coups. Some scholars comment on Lin's interest in the subject of military coups. Indeed according to an American biographer, he had a coup "fetish."[48] Some analysts seem to have taken Lin's discourse on the subject during a May 1966 speech as virtually irrefutable evidence that he was guilty of a coup effort in 1971. The suggestion is that towards his latter years he became fascinated with coups and thus, practically an expert on the subject, was more than capable of launching his own. Lin, however, was concerned with coups not only during the last five years of his life, but probably throughout his career. This interest is evident since at least the 1950s.[49]

Second, if one assumes that Lin Biao was not involved in the preparation or implementation of "Project 571," then the evidence presented is far more plausible and logical. One of the most significant sources of skepticism of the whole affair by scholars is that its low level of sophistication and second-rate efforts at implementation are unworthy of a strategist like Lin Biao. Why, for example, would virtually all the conspirators be air force personnel when ground force units are the type of military force most critical in coup situations?[50] Lin was renowned as a calculating, cautious, and extremely thorough strategist and tactician given to excessive planning.[51] By most accounts the alleged coup plot was exceedingly poorly organized—something completely out of character for Lin.[52]

Third, and following from points one and two, not only was the elder Lin probably not involved in "Project 571," but he was also likely not a participant or ringleader in any other coup plot. Instead, Lin Biao most likely devised an elaborate coup plan along the lines of the scheme described by Yao Ming-le once he realized Mao was out to get him—but it never went beyond the stage of a personal intellectual exercise or mind game. According to the account given under this pseudonym, the elder Lin devised a fantastic scheme, code-named "Jade Tower Mountain," independent of "Project 571" that entailed, among other things, precipitating a war with the Soviet Union. While all the details given by Yao seem farfetched and ultimately implausible, the overall form and content are far more in keeping with the brilliant strategist Lin Biao was reputed to be. While this version claims that Lin took initial steps toward implementing the scheme (making contact with the Soviets),[53] there are other less fanciful explanations for seeking to forge clandes-

tine links to Moscow. Efforts to improve relations with the Russians, for example, would act as a counterweight to the negotiations underway with the Americans.

These two coup "plots" are independent of earlier efforts by Lin Biao to bolster his status as Mao's successor. Prior to late 1970, Lin was obviously working diligently to build up a network of supporters in top positions and strengthen his following in the PLA. Mao was aware of Lin's efforts and was becoming increasingly disenchanted with the man he had formally designated as his heir. According to the official account, Lin first properly conceived of a coup against Mao following the 1970 Lushan plenum when he became convinced that he had fallen out of favor with Mao.[54] That Chairman Mao was almost certainly set to move against Lin, and that his defense minister was aware of this seems beyond dispute. Lin feared that at the very least he was about to be purged and face severe punishment and even death. Lin must have known that in the extreme political climate of the time he could expect no leniency. Thus it is possible that Lin contemplated a coup attempt.

If Mao sought merely to remove Lin from his official positions, the affair is easily classified as a purge since Mao, as paramount leader, was senior to Lin. If, however, Mao's aim was to kill Lin rather than purge him, it is better labeled as a "professional hit" or, if one believes that Mao ordered an attack on Lin's automobile, then a gangland-style execution attempt is more descriptive.[55] If, on the other hand, one believes that Lin perished in the air crash—the Trident jet went down because it was damaged by Chinese artillery or missiles—then this is better classified as a spectacular feat of aerial marksmanship.[56]

THE GANG OF FOUR AND 1976

Ranking second only to the riddle that surrounds the events of 1971 is the mystery that continues to engulf the machinations in the immediate aftermath of the death of paramount leader Mao Zedong in September 1976. There are two instances in this confusing period that may qualify as coup attempts: an unsuccessful effort by the so-called "Gang of Four," and another, successful one spearheaded by Marshal Ye Jianying.

According to the official CCP version of events, the Gang of Four (Mao's widow Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen), plotted to launch a coup against the man Mao reportedly designated as his successor: CCP Vice Chairman and acting PRC Premier Hua Guofeng. The gang's scheme was preempted by the swift action of Ye and other leaders united in opposition to the possibility that these four high-level officials might succeed Mao. An attempt by this group would not qualify as a military coup since only one of the gang, Zhang, held any military positions: director of the General Political Department of the PLA. Moreover, Zhang was a

party propagandist by training, not a career soldier. Indeed, the gang enjoyed limited support within the military and relied instead on the workers' militia. In the final analysis, the evidence for the existence of a plot by the gang is at best tenuous. It appears that the alleged existence of a coup plot was used as a pretext by Ye and others to deal once and for all with a troublesome rival center of power. No documentary evidence exists suggesting a plot to launch a "counterrevolutionary armed rebellion" similar to that of the "Outline of Project 571" released in 1972 to support charges of a coup plot by Lin Biao.[57] Thus the evidence of scheming by the gang, just as the evidence of plotting by Lin Biao personally in 1971, seems either "flimsy" and/or doctored.[58]

In contrast to the Lin Biao affair, the seizure of the Gang of Four in October 1976 is a more likely candidate for a military coup. First of all, by any name the arrest and internment of the gang was a well-implemented operation conducted by subordinate leaders that succeeded in displacing top-ranking political leaders. The situation at the time was confusing, and disentangling the proper hierarchy of political leaders is not easy. In the autumn of 1976 there existed two rival centers of power. Though Mao apparently designated Hua as his successor, Hua's only claim to leadership consisted of one sentence in Mao's purported last testament: "With you in charge, I'm at ease." The Gang of Four also produced a testament and sought to have Mao's widow, Jiang Qing, take the post of party chairman, and have Wang Hongwen assume responsibility for day-to-day CCP affairs.[59] The members of the gang were all senior officials—members of the CCP Politburo. Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen were members of that body's Standing Committee, and Zhang was also PRC vice premier and director of the PLA's General Political Department. Ye Jianying and Wang Dongxing, the leaders of the coup, were also members of the Politburo, and Ye in addition was vice chairman of the CCP Central Committee and vice chair of the CMC. Therefore a certain degree of ambiguity existed regarding the leadership hierarchy: whether Ye Jianying and Wang Dongxing were subordinate to Jiang and Zhang. Nevertheless, the positions of Ye and Wang were inferior because, unlike the two members of the Gang of Four, neither Ye nor Wang could make good claim to be Mao's heir apparent.

Second, the military plainly played the critical role in the episode. Numerous soldiers were involved in the planning and execution: in addition to Ye Jianying, other military men involved in the operation include Nie Rongzhen, Xu Xiangqian, Su Yu, Song Shilun, and Yang Chengwu.[60]

Some scholars have also argued that the arrest of the gang does not constitute a military coup for several reasons. The army was acting on behalf of the party, as part of a broader coalition, and no military regime was formed after the fact.[61] While it is certainly true that Ye Jianying and his co-conspirators were acting in the name of the CCP and its leader Hua Guofeng, the coup was, nevertheless, "military initiated,"[62] and senior PLA leaders were "instrumental" in the seizure of the gang.[63]

The military men were nominally acting at the behest of China's top civilian leader, Chairman Hua Guofeng, and in cooperation with other civilian leaders; in a larger sense, however, these soldiers were acting out of a sense of loyalty to the army, an institution they saw as being directly threatened by the gang. CCP accounts of the event go to great lengths to show that the arrest of the gang in no way constitutes a military coup: Ye Jianying was following the orders of Chairman Hua or the Politburo. However, this was clearly not the case: while Ye may have technically been obeying a general direction from Hua, the idea was conceived by Ye, who convinced Hua of the urgent need for the move. Furthermore, the Politburo did not convene until after the arrest of the Gang of Four to legitimize the act ex post facto.[64]

Second, cooperation with nonmilitary actors does not automatically disqualify a coup from being classified as "military." As the extensive literature on coups shows, military plotters invariably seek out like-minded civilians with whom to form alliances. Indeed such civil-military alliances often appear essential to ensuring the successful outcome of a coup.[65] The organizational affiliation of the overwhelming majority of the planners and implementers of the October 6, 1976, coup was the PLA.[66] Certainly the military worked with nonmilitary leaders, notably Hua Guofeng and Wang Dongxing,[67] but other than these individuals the cast of characters at the heart of the operation was soldiers.

Third, as noted, a successful military coup does not necessarily result in the formation of a military government. Recent scholarship reveals, however, that after the arrest of the gang, the generals appeared on the verge of taking the reins of power themselves. Indeed Ye Jianying demurred from calls by civilian and military leaders for him to formally take center stage in political affairs.[68] Nevertheless, Latin American militaries have deposed civilian governments in order to replace them with new civilian governments. Alfred Stepan has labeled this pattern of military involvement in politics as the "military as moderator." In these conditions the army intervenes in the name of state or constitution, installs a new government, and then exits. By its actions in 1976, the PLA performed a system maintenance role whereby it neutralized the chief rival center of political power. The Gang of Four constituted a serious threat to the political order and to the institutional interests of the PLA (the gang controlled a rival institution—the workers' militia). Thus, as Jurgen Domes concludes, the capture of the gang seems to qualify as a "military coup d'etat."[69]

CONCLUSION

How then can one evaluate the reports of military coup attempts in the PRC? The record seems less one of utter failure than one of fabrication and fancy. Most of the reported attempts appear to be a combination of official

invention and/or the inventiveness of outside observers. The former explains such episodes as Lushan in 1959, the Lin Biao coup of 1971, and the plot by the Gang of Four in late 1976; the latter accounts for the alleged assassination of Lin Biao ordered by Mao in 1971 and actions of the military in the spring of 1989. However, there have been two episodes that appear to qualify as coup attempts. One is a shining success: the seizure of the Gang of Four in October 1976. The other is a conspicuous failure: the plot hatched by Lin Biao's son, Lin Liguo, that quickly fizzled.

FUTURE SCENARIOS

Assessing the prospects for a coup in the immediate future is a difficult proposition. It is noteworthy that the one verifiable successful military coup d'etat and one apparent unsuccessful attempt in the last 40 years occurred during years in which leadership transition arrangements were in flux. Since the mechanism for political succession is no more institutionalized in the mid-1990s than it was in the 1970s, there is a significant probability that the eventual determination of which paramount leader or coalition of leaders will rule China in the post-Deng era will be a rough-and-tumble affair.

While in the past, the PLA has identified strongly with the institution and ideology of the CCP and this has been reinforced by heavy interpenetration of personnel, these conditions have been altered considerably.[70] Increasingly, soldiers consider themselves military men rather than party men. Moreover, as the Long March generation—which comprised the critical mass of "dual role elites" who served concurrently as military and party leaders in the same hierarchy since the 1920s and 1930s—dies off, the result is that the degree of interpenetration between the party and the army weakens. Consequently, multiple military loyalties, political and personal, that tended to reinforce allegiance to the party, now tend to diverge and conflict. Individual civilian party leaders with long and extensive experience in military affairs, service as political commissars, and vast networks of supporters in the PLA such as Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and Bo Yibo are an endangered species. Among senior officers, political loyalty to the party will likely no longer converge with personal loyalty to a paramount civilian leader like Deng.

It is quite possible that the imminent leadership succession will initially proceed smoothly and the party and army will for a time accept Jiang Zemin, who concurrently holds the posts of PRC president, CCP general secretary, and chairman of the CMC, as an interim successor to Deng Xiaoping. Deng has designated Jiang as the "core" of the new generation of Chinese communist leaders and orchestrated a campaign to encourage acceptance of this arrangement. But Jiang has no firm base of support or any obvious constituency from which to draw strength. He is also, at age 68, young by Chinese

communist standards and lacks the wide experience and prestige necessary to sustain a "youthful" ruler. Jiang is likely to be a transitional figure unable to retain the troika of top positions he now holds for more than a few years beyond the passing of his patron Deng. Once the last of their patrons in the Long March generation depart the scene, the positions of Jiang and/or other first line leaders of similar age will be effectively undermined. Indeed Jiang's possession of these three formal offices underlines the tenuous nature of his position in a system where power is derived from personal prestige, contacts, chronological age, and experience rather than official posts. This weakness is further emphasized by the concentrated propaganda campaign directed at the PLA urging soldiers to pledge their loyalty to Jiang, and Jiang's own stepped-up schedule of activities at military installations and ceremonies throughout the country.[71]

Given the tumultuous conditions following the death of Mao and the weaknesses evident in Deng's designated successor there is a good chance that the transition will ultimately prove to be rocky. However, the political situation should remain fairly tranquil for at least several years after Deng's death since the political spectrum in China today is nowhere near as wide or extreme as it was 18 years ago. Nor are there multiple and rival centers of power identifiable in 1994 as clearly as there were in 1976. Today, unlike in 1976, radical Maoism has been totally discredited and no cohesive factional grouping comparable to the Gang of Four is apparent. There is a broad consensus that the Dengist reforms must continue (although the issue is, at what pace), and factional groupings seem far too fluid and amorphous to permit the formation of rival centers of power (except perhaps along regional lines). Nevertheless factions do exist and any of these could become more potent.[72]

In any event, the new post-Deng political arrangement will require the approval and involvement of the military. Indeed one of the rules of the game in PRC elite politics seems to be that the military has veto power over succession arrangements—by coup if necessary (as the arrest of the Gang of Four illustrates). If the start of the post-Deng era proves relatively smooth and the CCP swiftly unites behind Jiang or another leader or group of leaders, and China faces no economic crisis or recession, then the PLA probably will be content to remain on the sidelines. Nonetheless it quickly becomes apparent that such a rosy scenario is clouded with "ifs." What follows are five general crisis scenarios, which entail some form of PLA political intervention potential during the five to ten year period following Deng's death. The first three scenarios are short-term possibilities, while the last two are more medium-term scenarios.

SHORT-TERM SCENARIOS

1) Polish scenario: military elite as party leaders

In this scenario the military's response to the succession crisis, in which party leaders are factionalized and divided, is a swift and bloodless coup d'etat. This scenario, as with the following two scenarios, is triggered by economic crisis and urban unrest. Civilian leaders cannot agree on Jiang or any other individual figure to oversee the day-to-day affairs of the country. A unified PLA acts effectively as the "party in uniform"—just as its Polish counterpart did in 1981, with Admiral Liu Huaqing playing the role of Wojciech Jaruzelski. Martial law or a state of emergency is declared (since martial law now holds negative connotations for many Chinese after the brutal repression of 1989, the latter term may be preferred). Leading dissidents and perhaps even certain party leaders such as Jiang and or Li Peng are arrested, and demonstrations are banned. The army remains in the background, relying on security organs like the People's Armed Police and Public Security Bureau squads to deploy on the streets. The military leadership works closely with a security chief such as Qiao Shi who oversees the operation of this extensive coercive extra-military apparatus. While the PLA rules the country in the name of the party, most if not all of the senior positions are assumed by soldiers. With social and economic turmoil, the veneer of unity within the party is quickly worn away as the passing of the close-knit Long March generation is replaced by loosely competing coalitions of younger leaders. This short-term scenario is the most likely of the three because, while many in the PLA are scornful of some CCP leaders, they still tend to remain supportive in principle of communist rule.

2) Romanian bloodbath: army destroys party

In this scenario, also sparked by economic crisis, there is a spontaneous outburst of popular discontent against the party, and the top leadership, spearheaded by aging figures such as Chen Yun or Bo Yibo, responds with a brutal and bloody crackdown. Much of the military, rather than hesitating as it did in 1989, not only refuses to move against the people, but this time attempts a coup d'etat. However some PAP and PLA units remain loyal to the elders and fierce gun battles break out in Beijing and several other cities. The CCP is completely discredited in the eyes of most Chinese. Finally, after several days or weeks, a less tainted party leadership emerges and establishes a non-communist "Government of National Salvation" composed of former communists such as Wan Li or Zhao Ziyang. This outcome is unlikely because elderly leaders such as Chen Yun do not command personal loyalty among soldiers to the same extent as a Mao or Deng and because of the uniform distaste within the PLA for its role in the 1989 Beijing massacre.

3) Soviet fiasco: military and party elite as reactionaries

In the face of economic crisis and centrifugal forces of ethnicity and regionalism, elderly top party and military leaders launch a coup against the formal paramount leader, such as Jiang Zemin, to attempt to reassert central control. The coup, like its namesake in Moscow in August 1991, is bungled and quickly collapses. These leaders, like the so-called "Committee of Eight," are also completely out of touch with their own subordinates not to mention the Chinese masses. The coalition of party, military, and security officials commands little respect or authority among military and paramilitary units ordered to seize key installations, reform-minded leaders, and dissidents. Officers and men in the PLA and PAP refuse to support the coup leaders. The situation could either evolve into a "back to the future" scenario and fragment, or China proper could remain largely united if soldiers rally to the support of a Chinese Yeltsin—possibly Zhao Ziyang. China, like the Soviet Union, breaks apart with regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang declaring their independence, and provinces such as Guangdong and Fujian pressing for considerable autonomy.

This becomes an increasingly possible scenario in three to five years as party legitimacy erodes and the generation gap widens between conservative elderly and middle-aged leaders and younger more progressive ones.

MEDIUM-TERM SCENARIOS

4) Back to the future: regionalism or warlordism

There are two basic variants of this scenario: a gradual and subtle process, or a more dramatic and sudden rupture. In either case the outcome is fundamentally the same: a diffusion of political power. This scenario develops due to excessive efforts to reassert central control in the provinces. In particular, a central government experiencing severe revenue shortfalls will exert heavy pressure on prosperous provinces to increase substantially the monies they remit to Beijing. This, combined with resistance from military leaders to reassignment out of comfortable and financially lucrative regional postings where they have established power bases to less prosperous regions, will unite civilian and military elites in the provinces in common cause against Beijing.

The first variant is more likely and is simply an extension of current trends in political and economic decentralization. There are no explosive confrontations or violent struggles but rather a continuing evolution into regional blocs of provinces and autonomous regions, which feel greater affinity with neighboring territories than they do with the distant central authorities or regions.

In the second variant, individual military units mutiny as provincial loyalties dominate and China splits into de facto and de jure independent king-

doms reminiscent of the warlord era (1916–1926). But this time warlordism is less violent and chaotic with fewer military-politico units, each covering larger geographical areas than in the previous era. Neither the party nor the army are unified enough to hold the country together. The major split comes along regional lines with a pronounced north/south divide as the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian dominate some type of loose confederation of dynamic and economically thriving provinces, while Beijing and Tianjin form the nucleus of a northern coalition of poorer, less developed provinces and municipalities. The autonomous regions and provinces of Xinjiang, Gansu, Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Ningxia, and Qinghai also form two or three federations, the former three with their ethnic or religious compatriots of the former Soviet bloc. While these ethnically distinct regions will likely declare formally their independence from China, similar to the paths selected by the non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union, the provinces with overwhelmingly Han Chinese populations will probably prefer outwardly to maintain the fiction of one China while inwardly enjoying virtually complete autonomy from a nominal central government in Beijing.

A variant of this scenario is a real possibility, more than many observers would readily admit.[73] The PLA, as the most cohesive and unified national entity in China, itself has substantial divisions along regional lines, specifically about a north-south axis. An examination of the PLA elite reveals an army overwhelmingly dominated by northerners. A study of military men with full membership in the Central Committee of the 14th Party Congress reveals that at least 83 percent (38 of 46) were born in northern provinces. A look at the 224 most senior soldiers of 1988 reveals an even greater overrepresentation of northerners: 91 percent (203 of 224). By contrast, southerners were dramatically underrepresented in both samples: at least 9 percent of military delegates to the 14th Central Committee (4 of 46), and only 8 percent of top soldiers in 1988 (17 of 224).[74] Such a disparity does not auger well for military harmony.

5) Latin Liberators: Army abandons party

In this medium-term scenario the party is racked by squabbles while the country faces chronic urban and rural unrest, as inflation, corruption, and unemployment spiral out of control. Declaring the CCP a morally and materially corrupt regime that had forfeited its right to rule, the military, led by a respected soldier, such as General Zhang Zhen, playing the role of a Chinese Pinochet, ousts the party leadership in a coup and formally establishes a military junta. Justifying its actions by a neo-authoritarian doctrine, the new government promises a new era of clean government, economic prosperity, and social order. Although off to a good start with substantial popular support, as with most juntas it soon succumbs to the sins of its predecessors. This

outcome is increasingly possible as the trend of weakened CCP-PLA ties continues and Chinese soldiers become more aware of the wide variety of political roles an army can play independent of the politicians.

A FINAL WORD

In the final analysis the odds are good that China will enter the post-Deng era in a relatively smooth and trouble-free manner with minimal military involvement. Nevertheless, the possibility of military intervention, including that of a coup d'etat, cannot be totally excluded should China experience simultaneous economic, social, and political crises. The most perilous period will be the years immediately following Deng's death. If there is a coup it will most likely be a "Polish" one. If the army remains united and attempts a coup in the wake of Deng's passing, it is less likely to be a reprise of October 1976 when the army acted on behalf of the party and then stood aside; more likely, soldiers will emulate their Polish colleagues and decide to save the party from itself.

But if China can navigate successfully these first years without turmoil then the specter of a military coup is greatly diminished although praetorianism will remain a possibility. In the medium term the most likely scenario for military involvement in a crisis is perhaps one in which the PLA fractures along regional lines, and as a result China fragments. If current centrifugal trends continue, regional and provincial power will strengthen at the expense of the center. Furthermore, if Beijing responds with extreme measures, the military may inexorably split along these same lines resulting in a divided China. It is less likely, but possible, that the PLA will remain united and follow the example of military men in parts of the Third World and move to rescue their country from the clutches of the politicians.

While there are reasons for optimism in anticipating a united, civilian-ruled China in the foreseeable future, further judgment should be reserved pending the more immediate outcome of the succession to Deng Xiaoping.

NOTES

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1. See, for example, Eric Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 17.
2. June Teufel Dreyer, "Civil-Military Relations in the People's Republic of China," *Comparative Strategy* 5:1 (1985):27–49; Harlan W. Jencks, "The Chinese People's Liberation Army: 1949–89," in David S. G. Goodman and Gerald Segal, eds., *China at Forty: Mid-Life Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 86–116.
3. Harry Harding, "The Role of the Military in Chinese Politics," in Victor C. Falkenheim, ed., *Citizens and Groups in Contemporary China* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1987), p. 253; Gerald Segal, "The Chances of a Coup D'etat," in Richard H. Yang, chief editor, *China's Military: The PLA in 1990/1991* (Boulder CO:

Westview, 1991), pp. 51–61.

4. Edward Luttwak, *Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 12.
5. See Frederick C. Teiwes, "'Rules of the Game' in Chinese Politics," *Problems of Communism,* XXVIII:5–6 (September-December 1979), p. 67.
6. Kathleen M. Collihan and Constantine P. Danopoulos, "Coup d'Etat Attempt in Trinidad: Its Causes and Failure," *Armed Forces & Society* 19:3 (spring 1993):435–37.
7. See, for example, Alfred Stepan, *The Military in Politics: Changing Patterns in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pt. II.
8. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics,* pp. 15–17.
9. Andrew Scobell, "Why the People's Army Fired on the People," in Roger V. Des Forges, et al., eds., *Chinese Democracy and the Crisis of 1989* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 192–93.
10. At least one scholar argues that a military coup is "virtually impossible." Dreyer, "Civil-Military Relations," p. 46. See also June Teufel Dreyer, "The Military and the Power Struggle of 1989," *Problems of Communism,* XXXVIII:5 (September-October 1989), p. 48, n. 33.
11. Since the early 1980s two CMCs have existed. A separate state CMC was formally established but in practice its composition is exactly the same as that of the party CMC.
12. Cheng Hsiao-shih, *Party-Military Relations in the PRC and Taiwan: Paradoxes of Control* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), chap. 5.
13. See, for example, ibid., pp. 50–51; and Michael D. Swaine, *The Military and Political Succession in China: Leadership, Institutions, Beliefs,* no. R-4254-AF (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1992).
14. Interestingly, a leading approach to contemporary Chinese politics, the "factional model," was originally developed and applied to the Warlord era. See Andrew J. Nathan, *Peking Politics, 1918–1923: Factionalism and the Failure of Constitutionalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976).
15. Scobell, "Why the People's Army," pp. 197, 210; *New York Times* October 25, 1992, Week in Review section, p. 5.
16. See ibid., and *South China Morning Post,* August 14, 1992, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: China* (hereafter FBIS) August 14, 1992, pp. 27–28.
17. Michael Y. M. Kau, ed., *The Lin Piao Affair: Power Politics and Military Coup* (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, Inc., 1975), pp. 326–28; Segal, "The Chances of a Coup," p. 52.
18. Witold Rodzinski, *The People's Republic of China: A Concise Political History* (New York: Free Press, 1988), p. 165.
19. Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics at Mao's Court: Gao Gang and Party Factionalism in the Early 1950s* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990).
20. *The Case of Peng Teh-huai* (Hong Kong: Union Research Institute, 1968), p. 162.
21. Ibid., p. 316.
22. Stuart Schram, ed., *Chairman Mao Talks to the People: Talks and Letters: 1956–1971* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), p. 139.
23. Cong Jin, *1949–1989 nian de Zhongguo,* vol. 2, *Quzhe fazhan de suiyue* (n.p.: Henan Renmin Chubanshe, 1989), p. 206.
24. See, for example, Parris H. Chang, *Power and Policy in China,* 2nd ed. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), pp. 110–21.
25. For example, there is only a single reference to military control [*jun guan*] in Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao, *Zhongguo 'wenge' shinianli* (n.p.: Zhongguo Wenti Yanjiu Chubanshe, n.d.), p. 294.
26. See, for example, Harding, "The Role of the Chinese Military," pp. 241–42.
27. Segal, "The Chances of a Coup," pp. 52–53; Jencks, "The Chinese People's Liberation Army," pp. 93–96.
28. John Fincher, "Zhao's Fall, China's Loss," *Foreign Policy,* no. 76 (fall 1989), p. 14.
29. See also Dreyer, "The Military and the Power Struggle of 1989," p. 48, n. 33.
30. Andrew Scobell, "Martial Law and Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of China 1989–90" (manuscript, May 1991).

31. *Ming Pao* (Hong Kong), May 29, 1989, in FBIS May 30, 1989, pp. 17–20; Ross Terrill, *China in Our Time: The People of China From the Communist Victory to Tiananmen Square and Beyond* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), pp. 256–57.
32. Segal, "The Chances of a Coup," pp. 55–58. For the argument that the imposition of martial law in Poland qualifies as a coup, see Robin Alison Remington, "Polish Soldiers in Politics: The Party In Uniform?" in Constantine P. Danopoulos, ed., *The Decline of Military Regimes: The Civilian Influence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 75–103. For the case that the military was simply acting as the "party in uniform," see Amos Perlmutter and William M. LeoGrande, "The Party in Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems," *American Political Science Review,* 76:4 (December 1982), pp. 778–89.
33. See *Ming Pao* (Hong Kong), November 13, 24, and 29, 1992, in, respectively, FBIS, November 13, 1992, pp. 38–39; November 25, 1992, pp. 17–18; November 30, 1992, pp. 36–37.
34. Many observers detected an embryonic "Yang family village" coalescing. Scobell "Why the People's Army," p. 209. Deng seems to have believed this was a distinct possibility and moved swiftly and skillfully to head off the threat. *Hsin Pao* (Hong Kong), November 20, 1992, in FBIS, November 25, 1992, pp. 15–17.
35. See, for example, James R. Townsend and Brantly Womack, *Politics in China,* 3rd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1986), p. 140; Jencks, "The Chinese People's Liberation Army," p. 97. Segal, "The Chances of a Coup," p. 53. Sometimes a coup attempt by Lin Biao is stated as fact: *International Military and Defense Encyclopedia,* vol. 3 (New York and Washington, DC: Brassey's (U.S.), Inc., 1993), pp. 1489–90.
36. *U.S. News & World Report* [hereafter *USN&WR*], January 31, 1994, pp. 51–54.
37. The Chinese ambassador to Mongolia at the time, Xu Wenyi, stated that he visited the crash site and supervised the burial of the bodies. He does not say he positively identified the corpse of Lin Biao. See *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), January 14, 1988, in FBIS, January 15, 1988, p. 11.
38. *Financial Times* (London), April 18, 1990, pp. 1, 23.
39. *USN&WR*, p. 54.
40. See Kau, *The Lin Piao Affair.*
41. Yao Ming-le (pseud.) *The Conspiracy and Death of Lin Biao* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983).
42. Robert Delfs, "Marshal's Mystery: Doubts on Lin Biao's last flight," *Far Eastern Economic Review,* May 10, 1990, p. 15.
43. For an explanation of why China's northern neighbor would be a strange choice, see Stephen Uhalley, Jr., and Jin Qiu, "The Lin Biao Incident: More Than Twenty Years Later," *Pacific Affairs,* 66:3 (fall 1993), p. 389.
44. Yao, and Uhalley and Jin also make this point. See *The Conspiracy and Death,* p. 21; "The Lin Biao Incident," pp. 391–92. Yan Jiaqi and Gao Gao give Lin the younger the central role in the scheme, while Lin the elder remains distant from the affair. *Zhongguo 'Wenge',* pp. 346–66.
45. Delfs, "Marshal's Mystery," p. 15; Uhalley and Jin, "The Lin Biao Incident," pp. 390–91.
46. Yan and Gao, *Zhongguo 'Wenge',* p. 344.
47. "Outline of Project 571," in Kau, *The Lin Piao Affair,* pp. 81, 91; Yao, *The Conspiracy and Death,* pp. 40, 91.
48. Thomas W. Robinson, "Lin Piao as an Elite Type," in Robert A. Scalapino, ed., *Elites in the People's Republic of China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 175.
49. Ibid., p. 172.
50. Uhalley and Jin, "The Lin Biao Incident," p. 391.
51. Robinson, "Lin Piao," pp. 160, 166–68.
52. Yao, *The Conspiracy and Death,* pp. 7–8; Uhalley and Jin, "The Lin Biao Incident," p. 391.
53. On "Jade Tower Mountain," see Yao, *The Conspiracy and Death,* chap. VI; on efforts to contact the Soviets, see ibid., chap. VII.
54. Yan and Gao, *Zhongguo 'Wenge',* pp. 340–42.
55. Three accounts describe artillery or gunfire directed at the automobile. They differ as to the location, timing, scope, and/or outcome of the attack. According to the dramatic account by

Yao, Lin was killed when his auto was destroyed by rocket fire in an ambush on Mao's orders near Beijing after leaving a banquet hosted by Mao. See *The Conspiracy and Death*, pp. 160–63. This version seems to have been written by a well-informed mainland source in collaboration with and embellishments from Taiwanese or Soviet intelligence. According to Yan, Gao, and the *USN&WR* accounts, shots were fired at Lin's car as it sped from Beidaihe to the airport at Shanhaiguan. *Zhongguo 'Wenge'*, p. 373; *USN&WR*, p. 54.

56. According to Yao, the airplane was hit by surface-to-air missiles. *The Conspiracy and Death*, pp. 181–82. Assuming one accepts the new evidence presented in the recent *USN&WR* article that Lin Biao was aboard the aircraft, then the biggest remaining mystery is what caused the plane crash.
57. Keith Forester, "China's Coup of October 1976," *Modern China*, 18:3 (July 1992), pp. 283, 290.
58. Ibid., pp. 264, 283, 287, 289–90.
59. Ibid., pp. 277–80.
60. Ibid., pp. 295–96.
61. Segal, "The Chances of a Coup," pp. 51, 53.
62. Cheng, *Party-Military Relations*, p. 151.
63. Jencks, "The Chinese People's Liberation Army," p. 98.
64. Forester, "China's Coup," pp. 284, 296, 280–81.
65. Luttwak, *Coup d'Etat*, p. 104.
66. Forester, "China's Coup."
67. Wang Dongxing defies easy categorization and is sometimes considered a military man. His primary organizational affiliation and career, however, falls within the public security apparatus and thus he is not classified as a soldier here.
68. Forester, "China's Coup," p. 289.
69. *The Government and Politics of the PRC: A Time of Transition* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 2.
70. Scobell, "Why the People's Army," p. 211.
71. On the campaign to encourage military allegiance to Jiang, see, for example, *Jiefangjun Bao*, November 6, 1992, in FBIS, November 13, 1992, pp. 41–43. On Jiang's generally weak links to the military and efforts to strengthen them, see Swaine, *The Military and Political Succession*, p. 51. Some accounts, however, indicate Jiang's support among soldiers is growing. See *China Times Weekly*, February 27–March 3, 1994, pp. 16–18.
72. For an overview of these factional groupings, see Swaine, *The Military and Political Succession*.
73. For a case made against the possibility of warlordism, see Peter Kien-hong Yu, "Regional Military Separatism After Deng Xiaoping?" *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* XI:1 (spring 1992):3–17.
74. The proportion of those soldiers on the 14th Central Committee born in the west is 0%, and 2% (4 of 224) of the 1988 group are from western China. These figures are calculated from Li Cheng and Lynn White, "The Army and the Succession to Deng Xiaoping," *Asian Survey*, XXXIII: 8 (August 1993), p. 767, table 3. My breakdown of the regional designations of provinces is somewhat different from that of Li and White; nevertheless the resulting calculations are virtually the same.