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Civil-Military Relations in China: Assessing the PLA's Role in Elite Politics

by Michael Kiselycznyk and Phillip C. Saunders



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Cover: Chinese President Hu Jintao greets military members at the People's Liberation Army logistics work conference in Beijing.

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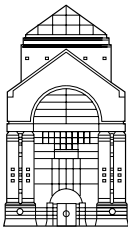
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Executive Summary

This study reviews the last 20 years of academic literature on the role of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in Chinese elite politics. It examines the PLA's willingness to support the continued rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and to obey directives from top party leaders, the PLA's influence on the selection of China's top civilian leaders, and the PLA's ability to shape the domestic political environment. Over the last two decades the discussion of these three issues has largely been shaped by five trends identified in the literature: increasing PLA professionalism, bifurcation of civil and military elites, a reduced PLA role in political institutions, reduced emphasis on political work within the PLA, and increased military budgets. Together, these trends are largely responsible for the markedly reduced role of the PLA in Chinese elite politics.

The theoretical models of Chinese civil-military relations that exist within the literature during the period divide into three distinctive categories. "Traditional models" including the Factional, Symbiosis, Professionalism, and Party Control models, dominate the literature from 1989 to 1995. Scholars worked to integrate information becoming available as the PRC opened to the world into these already existing models of Chinese civil-military relations. However, evolving political dynamics within the PRC following Tiananmen marginalized the utility of the models. From 1995 to 1997 many scholars argued that these traditional models should not be considered mutually exclusive but complementary. This concept of a "combination model" was short lived as it became increasingly apparent that even a combination of traditional models had little predictive or even explanatory power in light of rapidly changing political dynamics. Two new models, the Conditional Compliance and State Control models, emerged in the period of 1997–2003. Both incorporated elements of the traditional models while attempting to address the implications of new political and military dynamics in the PRC.

Examining the predictions of these models against four case studies involving major developments in civil-military relations, we found that although each model had some descriptive and explanatory power, none possessed strong predictive ability. The traditional models help explain the PLA's reaction to intensified Party control following Tiananmen, but none was able to predict how Chinese civil-military relations evolved subsequently. Civil-military models offered their most specific (and ultimately least accurate) predictions regarding the leadership succession from Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin. Most models predicted a strong role for the PLA in the succession that did not materialize. This was the period when traditional civil-military models began to run up against the reality of changing political dynamics within the PRC.

When the PLA was forced to withdraw from most commercial activities in the mid-1990s, the models predicted a far slower, more contentious, and less complete divestiture than ultimately occurred. Most analysts correctly predicted that the PLA would have only limited involvement in the leadership transition from Jiang Zemin to Hu Jintao following the 16th Party Congress in 2002, but subsequent explanations for why the transition went smoothly emphasize different factors. The models did agree in their emphasis on the importance of greater political institutionalization in reducing PLA influence and highlighted the implicit role and future potential importance of the PLA in elite politics, especially if divisions among the civilian leadership produce a political crisis in the future.

Based on this assessment, we conclude that existing models serve a useful role in identifying key variables for analysis in the study of Chinese civil-military relations. However, most of the literature has been descriptive and interpretive rather than predictive. The widespread practice of using elements of multiple models to analyze civil-military relations makes it difficult to assess the validity of individual models or to generate falsifiable predictions, thus limiting the predictive ability of current models. Although China is a much more open society today, lack of reliable information continues to make the study of civil-military relations in China difficult, forcing analysts to rely on indirect evidence and dubious sources to speculate about the military's influence on elite politics and about the relationships between top civilian and military leaders.

Since 2003 the literature on Chinese civil-military relations has successfully exploited new sources of information to offer useful analysis of the PLA's relationship with the Chinese economy and society at large. Yet there has been a notable lack of effort to develop, employ, or test new theoretical models that could help produce a new unified theory of Chinese civil-military relations. Future work may find fertile ground in exploring the nature of official and unofficial interactions between the PRC's bifurcated civilian and military elite, comparing how broader trends in China's civilian government are implemented in the PLA, or conducting a more genuinely comparative analysis with the experiences of other one-party states, transitioning democracies, or other Asian states.

Introduction

Given its role in bringing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to power and its position as a key base of power, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has always played an important political role in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Chinese civilian leaders have placed great emphasis on ensuring the military's continued loyalty to the CCP. The complexity and importance of the civil-military relationship, and the Chinese military's changing role in elite politics over time, have led scholars to devote considerable attention to this topic, producing a fairly large body of literature on civil-military relations in China. However, this paper only briefly addresses the issue of military influence on specific policy issues in the concluding section.¹

This paper focuses on the PLA's role in elite politics by reviewing the literature published in this area in the last 20 years. In so doing we have concentrated on three questions central to an understanding of this topic. The first involves the PLA's willingness to support the continued rule of the Chinese Communist Party and to obey the directives of top Party leaders. The question of the military's political loyalty and willingness to follow civilian orders in periods of crisis lies at the heart of civil-military relations. The second question involves the PLA's influence on the selection of China's top civilian leaders. Military officers sit on the key Communist Party institutions that formally elect China's civilian leaders, including representation in the National People's Congress, periodic Party Congresses, the Central Committee, and the Politburo. Although this gives military representatives votes in the formal approval of China's top leaders, in practice the selection of senior leaders occurs through informal processes where military influence is much less clear. The third question involves the PLA's ability to shape the political environment in which top civilian leaders operate and compete for influence and promotion. Even if the military is loyal and its influence on the selection of China's top leaders is limited, its ability to shape the broader political environment could affect the political standing and decisions of top leaders, with indirect effects on policy.

In approaching this topic, we have examined the analytical models that authors writing in this area have employed in order to assess how well specific predictions correspond with subsequent developments. We have concentrated on the literature published in the last two decades, with greater attention paid to assessing the predictions made in the earlier part of that period. This timeframe makes analytical sense given the importance of the military's role in suppressing the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square and the impact of this intervention on civil-military relations. Although some earlier literature still has considerable value in explicating the formal mechanisms that the CCP employs to exert political control over the PLA,

Tiananmen marked a new era in civil-military relations in China. For this reason, our review of the literature focuses on analysis written after 1989.

The paper is organized into five sections. First, we identify and assess key trends in civil-military relations over the last 20 years. This analysis seeks to identify (in retrospect) key changes in civil-military relations that affected (and mostly reduced) the military's role in Chinese elite politics. As part of this process, we discuss contemporaneous efforts to identify, describe, and analyze these trends as they were occurring. This section serves as a baseline for assessing the literature's efforts to predict trends. The second section contains a brief review of the main approaches to civil-military relations that have been employed in the literature. In addition to describing the main approaches, the section analyzes the evolution in analytical approaches over time.

The third section reviews cases where authors writing on the role of the Chinese military in elite politics made specific predictions that can be assessed against actual outcomes. Although there are relatively few specific predictions, the ones that do exist provide an additional means for assessing the predictive value of analytical models. The fourth section presents our conclusions about the literature's ability to apply analytical models to specific cases and generate firm predictions about the military's role in elite politics. Although China is a much more open society today than in the past, reliable information on this sensitive subject is still extremely scarce. A serious lack of information continues to make the study of civil-military relations in China difficult, forcing analysts to rely on indirect evidence and dubious sources to speculate about the military's influence on elite politics and about the relationships between top civilian and military leaders. We conclude that most of the literature has been descriptive and interpretive rather than predictive. The paper concludes with an assessment of the most recent literature on civil-military relations, identification of some potential directions for future research, and speculation about the potential for PLA efforts to influence China's national security policy to shape the domestic political environment in which elite politics takes place.

Five Key Trends in Civil-Military Relations

Professionalism

The first major trend is an increased emphasis on professionalism and professional expertise within the PLA. Analysis of military professionalism stems from Samuel Huntington's seminal work on civil-military relations, which defines it in terms of expertise, responsibility, and corporateness.² Huntington's view of civil-military relations fits awkwardly with the PLA's

role as a “Party-army,” but his focus on the roles a professional military plays is helpful in understanding increased professionalism in the PLA.³

Increased emphasis on professional expertise is evident in the PLA’s efforts to upgrade the military and technical skills of soldiers in order to operate more sophisticated equipment and conduct more complicated operations.⁴ Science and technology are being stressed more at Chinese military academies, coupled with efforts to recruit and retain graduates with specific technical skills from civilian universities. The PLA now endorses professional military education (PME) as a requirement for promotion and assignment to senior positions. A 6-week training course on science and technology is required for promotion to general officer. Service in a joint assignment is not currently a requirement, but one senior PLA officer commented that the PLA is moving in that direction.⁵

Improving the quality of military personnel is coupled with promulgating revised doctrinal and training materials that delineate a body of specialized knowledge military officers must master to advance in their profession.⁶ The emphasis on professional expertise and credentials parallels broader developments in China, where the growing importance of professional knowledge and formal educational credentials is evident in both government and society. The PLA has closely studied the doctrine and operational experience of other advanced militaries and adapted many of their practices to fit the Chinese context. This is evident in an increased emphasis on the importance of training “as a basic means to raise its combat effectiveness in peacetime, as well as an important method to foster and administer troops.”⁷

Discussions with PLA officers and study of PLA writings indicate that a sense of the military’s special responsibility for national security is widespread within the PLA. This is particularly evident when discussing the military’s role in deterring Taiwan independence and being prepared to fight if necessary. The extent to which PLA officers possess a strong sense of a separate, corporate identity is harder to assess, but contacts with senior and mid-level officers in a variety of settings certainly give that impression.

Bifurcation of Elites

A second major trend is an increasing bifurcation of civilian and military elites. China’s first generation of revolutionary leaders either served in the military as combat commanders or political commissars, or, as civilians, worked closely with military officers during the revolutionary period. These shared experiences forged close and enduring ties between civilian and military elites. Even as these elite leaders took on more specialized roles in government and the military in the post-revolutionary period, civilian leaders still felt free to intervene in

military affairs when necessary, while at the same time many military leaders retained independent political standing due to their role in the revolution and their longstanding ties to senior civilians. The Chinese military's interventions into political affairs, most notably during the Cultural Revolution, gave senior military leaders political experience and a legitimate role within Chinese elite politics. This produced a "dual-role elite" that obscured the line between civilian and military leaders.⁸

With the passing of the revolutionary generation due to death or retirement, the situation has changed fundamentally. China's current top civilian leaders do not possess any substantial military experience or knowledge and lack the extensive shared experiences and ties with military leaders that characterized the revolutionary generation. For their part, China's military leaders have succeeded within the military promotion system largely due to their professional skills. Although senior officers are all members of the Communist Party, they lack independent political standing within the Party or the public, especially when speaking outside their professional domain.

This bifurcation is reinforced by the increasingly separate career paths that characterize successful civilian and military leaders. China's civilian leaders make their careers on the basis of formal educational credentials, technical knowledge, management experience, political connections, and/or political skills. Civilian leaders have relatively limited opportunities to interact with military officers until they reach senior provincial or national level positions.⁹ The premium on professional credentials and political networks based on school associations or professional interactions within Party or government structures further limits interactions between civilian and military elites.¹⁰

Conversely, China's current top military leaders are educated almost exclusively in military institutions, spend much of their early careers within a single military region, and have limited opportunities to interact with top political leaders until they attain positions in Beijing or are elected to positions in the Central Committee.¹¹ Coupled with an increasing sense of professional responsibility and a corporate identity as military officers, the result is an increasing separation between civilian and military elites.

What is less clear is how the diverging backgrounds and experiences that characterize China's civilian and military leaders affect the military's role in elite politics (and in policy). Differing experiences and professional responsibilities are likely to produce different perspectives on national security issues. The relatively limited exposure of civilian leaders to national security issues until the late stages of their careers, which is paralleled by the military's increasing focus on technical expertise and professional responsibilities of army building, suggests the

possibility that the two groups may differ significantly in their views on key issues. Moreover, the relatively limited contact between civilian and military leaders (most of which occurs in formal settings) may restrict the amount of trust and mutual confidence. One senior military academic privately admitted that the lack of military knowledge and experience among China's civilian leaders is a significant problem.¹²

Reduced Role for PLA in Political Decisionmaking

A third major trend is a reduced PLA role in formal political institutions. This is evident from analysis of the PLA's representation in key Communist Party organs. PLA watchers and analysts of Chinese politics have long focused on the degree of military representation in key organs such as the Politburo Standing Committee, the Politburo, the Central Committee, and the National People's Congress. Shifts in military representation have been regarded as an indicator of waxing or waning military influence. This has certainly been true at times; the military's role in restoring order during the Cultural Revolution was accompanied by greater military representation in these bodies. However, military representation has been steady or slightly declining in the post-Tiananmen period. For example, the military held 23 percent of the seats in the Central Committee elected during the 14th Party Congress. By the 17th Party Congress (in 2007), the percentage of military representatives had fallen slightly to 20.5 percent present.¹³ Even more importantly, the PLA has not had a representative on the Politburo Standing Committee since 1997.

The selection of PLA officers to serve in these bodies is increasingly tied to their formal military positions rather than to their independent political reputations or connections. (Of course, political reliability and connections remain important factors in promotions and assignments to senior military positions.) For example, members of the Central Military Commission (CMC) now appear to be selected on an ex officio basis, with the heads of the four military departments and the service commanders now routinely becoming members of the CMC.¹⁴

A key factor in the reduced role of the military elite in politics has been the ability of civilian leaders to avoid a major political crisis that might require intervention by the military.¹⁵ To date, China's civilian leaders have managed the difficult process of economic modernization without repetition of major civil unrest on the scale of the 1989 student protest movement. Despite a significant number of local protests and civil unrest, the combination of rapid economic growth, suppression of independent political organizations, and relatively rapid responses to grievances and protests has succeeded in maintaining order without the need for military intervention. Increased effectiveness of public security forces and the ability of the People's Armed

Police (PAP) to respond to larger scale disturbances have limited the need for military involvement in maintaining order.¹⁶

This relative stability has been facilitated by the ability of civilian leaders to avoid major leadership splits that could not be resolved within Party channels. Despite periodic reports about conflicts between political factions loyal to Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao and about differences in policy lines, whatever tensions existed have remained manageable. This may reflect the emergence of more institutionalized norms within elite politics that reduce the costs of losing in high politics.¹⁷ The net result is that civilian leaders have not needed to call on the military to resolve a political crisis. This has allowed military leaders to focus on their professional responsibilities, but has probably also reduced their influence in elite politics.

The Chinese Communist Party also appears to have developed a more institutionalized, if still informal, succession process that limits military influence to ratification of a future core leader and deputy chosen primarily by civilians.¹⁸ Analysis of the succession process that brought Hu Jintao to power and that appears likely (but not certain) to bring Xi Jinping to power in 2012 suggests that military influence in this process is extremely limited. In both cases, the future core leader was clearly identified at least 6 to 7 years before ascending to the top position.¹⁹ The future top leader and his future deputy (who is designated to serve as prime minister and head of government) are given a series of formal positions and informal policy assignments of increasing responsibility before ascending to their formal positions. In Hu Jintao's case, this included an appointment as Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission in 1999. Although it appears that the requirements for top leader status are becoming more standardized (for example, top leader candidates need to have served as Party secretaries in two different provinces), there is little evidence of a significant military role in the selection process.²⁰ Military representatives, like other members of the Central Committee, do ratify the incoming leaders as they move through their various preparatory positions. While in theory this provides an opportunity for dissent, in practice the military role appears to be formal approval of decisions that have already been made elsewhere.

It is worth highlighting that this extended succession process provides opportunities for the incoming core leader to interact more extensively with the military in general and with senior military officers in particular. This process probably includes increasing familiarization with military issues (partly through participation in CMC meetings) and senior military personnel. The core leader's eventual chairmanship of the Central Military Commission provides opportunities for reinforcing his image as commander in chief and for public demonstrations of military loyalty to the core leader in his capacity as General Secretary of the Chinese Com-

munist Party. These symbolic occasions have political value in highlighting the core leader's top status within a collective leadership. The extended succession process also provides opportunities for a core leader to assess the talents of senior military leaders and to identify those who might be politically unreliable or oppose his intended future political direction. After attaining the position of CMC Chairman, a core leader is in the position to decide on or significantly influence military promotions and assignments.

Reduced Emphasis on Political Work

A fourth major trend is less clearly documented but is nevertheless evident to observers of the PLA. This is a reduced emphasis on political work and political education (relative to the time spent on military duties). This partly reflects a general loss of confidence and belief in communist ideology throughout Chinese society. Top Chinese leaders have abandoned key tenets of Marxism while retaining key elements of Leninism such as the emphasis on the Party's absolute leadership. These changes (including the eligibility of capitalists for Party membership) have reduced the CCP's ability to draw upon Marxism as an ideological justification for its rule. The Communist Party insists on the importance of CCP leadership and strongly opposes any potential challenges, but no longer insists on controlling what its citizens believe. The shift has also been evident within civil-military relations, where the Party continues to insist upon the military's absolute obedience to it, but spends less time indoctrinating military officers and troops in the ideological details.

Some observers suggest that there has also been an increase in the procedural and functional power of commanders relative to political commissars and Party committees.²¹ Many also highlight indicators that at lower levels political officers and commissars are increasingly playing the role of morale officer, akin to chaplains in Western militaries, rather than political indoctrinator. Others suggest that this may depend on the personalities of the commander and political commissar involved and vary considerably across the military. Finally, there are those who point out that even if political officers and commissars are spending less time on political indoctrination, they have always served in the role of morale officers, and Western analysts should not overestimate the extent of change.²²

Reduced emphasis on political ideology is a logical consequence of the trend toward professionalization. Nevertheless, it is clear that the CCP can still impose its guidance on high-priority issues. For example, over the last decade the army has undergone campaigns against the Falun Gong movement, corruption, and talk of the PLA shifting to become a national army rather than a Party army. PLA publications and speeches by top military leaders quickly adopt

new political directions, concepts, and slogans introduced by top Party leaders (such as the “three represents” and the importance of “scientific approaches” to solving problems). The Party is able to ensure promulgation and formal compliance with its key ideological statements, but the degree of actual belief within the military is much less clear.

Increased Military Budgets

A fifth trend has been sustained increases in military budgets over the last 15 years. In particular, there have been double-digit real increases in China’s official defense budgets every year since 1997. Despite these very significant increases, it is worth noting that China’s official spending on defense is not increasing significantly as a percentage of gross domestic product or as a percentage of central government spending. Rapid economic growth and growing central government revenues have increased the resources available to China’s top leaders. The percent of money being spent on the military, at least as measured by the official defense budget, is remaining relatively static.

Some suggest that China’s civilian leadership is forced to spend more money on the military as a means of buying its loyalty.²³ Significant military spending indicates that the civilian leadership places a priority on the military. But in practice it is difficult to interpret the significance. Increased military spending can be thought of as delayed compensation for the 1980s, when defense industries were starved, the size of the military was reduced, and the military ranked last out of the four modernizations. Chinese civilian leaders may have a variety of motivations for increasing military spending. It is difficult to determine whether this practice reflects a commitment to development of a strong military as an important national goal, a rational investment in improving China’s capability to deter Taiwan independence and to prevent negative military developments that might have political consequences, or an effort to buy support from the military.

The fact that a significant chunk of recent defense budget increases has gone for higher salaries, better housing, and improved military facilities suggests a focus on winning support from military officers. However, these types of investments also make logical sense given the PLA’s need to attract and retain better educated personnel in order to build a more capable, modern military. If defense budgets varied based on the relative political standing or the balance of need between civilian and military leaders, one would expect to see more variation over time and some correlation with the relative standing of civilian and military leaders. At present, there is insufficient information to draw firm conclusions. If slower growth forces Chinese leaders to make tough decisions about how to allocate limited resources, more information about leadership priorities may become available.

Theoretical Models

Our survey of the civil-military literature focuses on the post-Tiananmen period. The theoretical models employed during this period proceed through three fairly distinct phases: traditional, combination, and contemporary.²⁴ The first phase (1989–1995) is represented by four traditional models: Factional, Symbiosis, Professionalism, and Party Control.²⁵ The second phase (1995–1997) witnessed a short-lived attempt to combine these traditional models into one comprehensive framework. In the third phase (1998–2003), scholars used aspects of the previous models to construct a new group of contemporary models that attempt to address many of the trends described above. Scholars have continued to work on civil-military issues, but much of the latest work focuses on the PLA's relationship to the broader Chinese economy and society and has not produced new analytical models that seek to explain Party-army relations.

The traditional models initially developed as distinct and competing ones. Each emphasizes a different dominant factor or dynamic to explain civil-military relations. They were conceived in and applied to a political environment defined by two key variables: a relatively coherent revolutionary elite and political volatility. Both factors began to wane in the mid-1980s as the revolutionary generation retired (and eventually passed away) and stronger political institutions and norms of elite behavior reduced political volatility. At the same time, increased access to information and field work conducted in the 1980s produced a new round of research on the PLA political work system and other aspects of the PLA's professional development. For a period in the early 1990s, scholars integrated this new information with traditional models even as those models lost utility as predictive and even explanatory tools. By 1995, scholars recognized the discord between traditional models and developing trends and began to move beyond traditional models. Nevertheless, these models serve as the point of origin for more contemporary models developed in the later part of this period and remain important to our review of the literature.

Factional Model

The Factional model is somewhat distinct because it is derived from the general literature on Chinese elite politics rather than the civil-military relations literature.²⁶ The model focuses on political factions among the PRC elite and how leaders and members of these factions interact and compete. The basis of factions varies, but may include personal, generational, professional, geographic, or institutional associations.²⁷ During the period we surveyed three

Factional models used within the civil-military context: Pekingology, the Field Army model, and biographical analysis.

In the early part of the period, analysts typically employed Pekingology or the Field Army model. Analysts and journalists using Pekingology rely on press reports or sources within the Party or PLA hierarchy for information on elite interactions and conflicts. This approach emphasizes personal dynamics and shifting political positions of individual leaders within PRC hierarchies. One of the most prominent practitioners is Willy Wo-Lap Lam.²⁸ Pekingology is not a rigorous theory, but focuses on obtaining and analyzing inside information about the internal workings of the PRC elite. Analysts using this method have sometimes provided valuable insights into elite interactions. However, the reliance on unnamed sources, unique and unverifiable information, and rumors makes it difficult to separate the nuggets of valuable information from the reams of informed (and sometimes uninformed) speculation.

The Field Army model is based on the premise that revolutionary leaders developed enduring personal and professional bonds during their service in one of the original five field armies of the revolutionary period. It traces these connections into the development of factions that cut across institutional lines, including the Party and PLA. Advocates assert that these factional relationships best explain civil-military interactions.

The literature utilizing the Field Army model is extensive,²⁹ but it is rarely used in contemporary studies. Michael Swaine conducted the last comprehensive study using the Field Army model in 1992.³⁰ His study illustrates both its strengths and weaknesses, especially in the post-Tiananmen period. Swaine presents very detailed information on the personal backgrounds and complex relationships of the elite. The information and analysis are very accurate. Swaine's study (and Factional models in general) encounters obstacles, however, when attempting to generate definitive predictions and conclusions. Factional boundaries are often ambiguous and overlapping, and the model requires making inferences based on personal relationships and interests that are only partially observable. Factional models also have difficulty predicting when factional interests will outweigh policy preferences, other personal factors, institutional interests, broader Party interests,³¹ or the bureaucratic interests of the PLA.³² Despite these weaknesses, the Field Army approach had some explanatory value so long as the first generation of revolutionary leaders made up the political and military elite.

By the late 1980s and 1990s, however, a new generation of leaders and increased elite bifurcation along with reforms within the PLA obviated the traditional Field Army model.³³ A year after the release of Swaine's analysis, Li Cheng and Lynn White, conducting the first of a series of analyses of the PRC elite, argued that "rapid military professionalization, not

just frequent regional reshuffles, has tended to bring military factions based on the field army systems to an end.”³⁴ In analyzing the top 200 civilian and military leaders with positions in the Politburo and Central Committee, Li and White find evidence that educational and professional backgrounds now serve as the basis of a new generation of coalitions and factions.³⁵ They go as far as to say that “biographical analysis is not an opposite or mere complement to analysis that seeks immediate motives. It provides an indispensable—sometimes a sufficient—account of these incentives.”³⁶ Biographical analysis has contributed a great deal to the field’s knowledge of the composition and characteristics of the PRC elite. However, this approach suffers from the same weaknesses of previous factional approaches: overlapping and ill-defined factional boundaries and uncertainty about factional preferences limit its predictive or explanatory value.

Symbiosis

The term “Symbiosis” has a long history in the study of Communist systems, especially the Soviet system.³⁷ It is defined as a relationship with “low levels of differentiation between military and nonmilitary elites” where “circulation of elites between military and nonmilitary posts” is the norm.³⁸ The term was originally applied to Communist systems born out of guerrilla armies where the “fusion” of political and military functions was inevitable. Symbiosis contrasts with coalitional models, which connote increasingly differentiated Party-army relations.³⁹ In a coalitional relationship, the Party and military work more independently and can be separated into fully distinct institutions. As Amos Perlmutter and William M. LeoGrande argue, Communist guerrilla movements like those of China and Cuba tend to begin as symbiotic ones. Over time, as the guerrilla movement becomes established, the Party and military become more specialized and institutionalized, reducing circulation of political and military elites. Symbiotic relations therefore tend to evolve into coalitional relations.

Perlmutter and LeoGrande argued that despite some movement toward becoming a coalitional relationship in the 1950s, the Party-military relationship has remained essentially symbiotic since 1927. These early uses of the term “symbiotic” in the Chinese civil-military literature were largely lifted from the Soviet literature and roughly applied to China’s own unique “dual-role elite” and “interlocking directorate.”⁴⁰ In the post-Tiananmen literature, however, it was David Shambaugh who fully developed and pioneered a “Symbiotic model” specifically tailored to the Chinese case. Building on Perlmutter and LeoGrande’s initial ideas, Shambaugh goes on to explain how, unlike the Soviet case, “politicization and military professionalism are not mutually exclusive” in the Chinese case due to the unique history of the CCP and PLA.⁴¹

Eberhard Sandschneider and Jeremy Paltiel put forward similar arguments for a unique Chinese Party-army relationship. Sandschneider rejected the notion that the PLA acts as a separate institution, laying out a “military-participation approach” where the military elite are part of the overall PRC leadership and PLA participation in politics is fully legitimate. Rather than focusing on conflictual aspects of the Party-army relationship, he emphasized their “full and complex relationship.”⁴² Jeremy Paltiel saw a Party-army relationship that was evolving but whose full separation has been inhibited by institutional and constitutional obstacles. He stated his belief that so long as the PLA is connected to, and gains its privileges from, the Communist Party and its role in political institutions remains ambiguous, the PLA will not withdraw from its “privileged role in the political system.”⁴³

Shambaugh, however, does not see the symbiotic nature of China’s Party-army relationship as a constant. While recognizing the historical significance of Symbiosis, he argues that trends in civil-military relations and the stress Tiananmen placed on the Party’s command of the gun began to fundamentally alter the relationship. In the post-Tiananmen environment he argues that the relationship is evolving from Symbiosis to Party Control (discussed below).⁴⁴ Ellis Joffe also criticizes symbiosis as too static, noting that numerous changes since the revolution have created functional differentiations that reduce the utility of a Symbiotic model. He also questions the premise that the PLA is accepted as a legitimate political actor, asserting that it has always remained subordinate to the Party. While acknowledging that the PLA has played a major role in policymaking, he attributes this dynamic to the revolutionary status of military leaders, not the inherent political legitimacy of the PLA as an institution.⁴⁵ Like Shambaugh, he believes that this symbiotic relationship will weaken as the founding revolutionary generation passes away.

By the mid-1990s, scholars agreed that elite bifurcation and professionalism had produced a military more clearly differentiated from the Party and diluted the traditional symbiotic relationship. Shambaugh notes that Symbiosis will always have some place in the study of Party-army relations because of the close relationship between the two actors.⁴⁶ Increasingly, discussions within the civil-military literature raise the question of the appropriate use of the term “symbiosis” given generational turnover and a steadily professionalizing PLA. When the term is employed today, it is used in a looser sense to refer to the inherent interdependence between the Party and army, as Shambaugh suggested. From here the literature was left to consider whether the trends of the early 1990s would produce a PLA with greater institutional separation and autonomy or result in the Party instituting greater political control over the PLA to ensure continued loyalty.

Professionalism

The Professionalism model is most commonly associated with Harlan Jencks, Ellis Joffe, and Paul Godwin.⁴⁷ They reject Huntington's assertion that military professionalism and political involvement must be diametrically opposed. Instead, they see a less political military, or as Jencks terms it, a PLA that strives toward "political quiescence."⁴⁸ While admitting that the PLA will always be a political force to some degree, the advocates of professionalism assert that the PLA is most concerned with advancing its own institutional interests to retain autonomy and develop as a modern fighting force. These efforts have sometimes faced resistance from elements in the Party and the PLA concerned with maintaining the army's political role. Advocates of professionalism argue that this "red versus expert" dynamic best explains Party-army relations.

The argument of the Professionalism model remains fairly consistent in the pre- and post-Tiananmen periods; most work has focused on identifying and cataloging evidence of the PLA's professional development.⁴⁹ Following Tiananmen, Ellis Joffe wrote that professionalism "remains its [PLA's] main unifying and motivation force" and that if forced to choose between different leadership groups the PLA can be expected to support the group that "is most responsive to its professional interest." Joffe is not convinced that the PLA will enter future political struggles. PLA commanders focused on professional pursuits will be quick to recall how disruptive past interventions into politics were to the PLA's professional development.⁵⁰ In 1996, Joffe went so far as to declare professionalism the victor in the longstanding red versus expert debate.⁵¹

In his excellent 1999 retrospective, Thomas Bickford generally agrees with proponents of professionalism, but identifies two countervailing trends: the military's role in foreign policy and PLA commercial activity. The PLA's commercial role was significant at the time, but has dropped precipitously since the 1998 divestiture order. Whether a PLA role in policy constitutes a challenge to professionalism is debatable; even Huntington accepts the military's role as a group of professional advisors in policymaking when specialized military expertise is necessary. The extent of the PLA's role, influence, and coercive power in this domain remains up for debate.⁵²

Advocates of professionalism are aware of the potential tension between a PLA that is less involved in elite politics but is more deeply involved in foreign and defense policymaking. A significant policy role gives the PLA the potential to exert influence in policy areas that affect the overall political climate. Swaine offers an in-depth look at PLA involvement in the policy process.⁵³ Mulvenon and Joffe consider the ambiguous implications of a more professional PLA.⁵⁴ Since Tiananmen, there have been few reasons for the PLA to intervene in politics or to resist civilian authority, but the possibility that the PLA could seek to reenter

the political arena still exists if civilians prove incapable of handling a crisis or its critical institutional equities are challenged.

Two questions linger over the Professionalism model. First, can a Party-army become a truly professional army in the Huntingtonian sense? Bickford questioned whether the term professionalism was being used inappropriately to describe the process of PLA modernization.⁵⁵ Joffe admits the PLA cannot be a fully professional army in the Western sense, but argues that the PLA is not simply a “Party stooge.”⁵⁶ In 1996, Joffe introduced the term “Party-army with professional characteristics” to describe the PLA. This leads to the second question. Considering the underlying Party-army relationship, is there a ceiling on the extent to which the PLA will be able to professionalize? The answers to these questions have implications for the future of Chinese civil-military relation. Contemporary models allude to these questions, but do not provide clear answers.

Party Control

The Party Control model emphasizes the role of the Political Work System in ensuring the Party’s command of the gun. This type of analysis parallels similar literature on the Soviet control system. During this period scholars such as David Shambaugh and Nan Li drew on newly available sources to explicate the particular characteristics of the Chinese system.

Both Shambaugh and Nan Li agree the Party-army relationship will evolve away from a symbiotic relationship toward a more formalized and institutionalized relationship. Shambaugh argues that it is the political work system that ultimately ensures Party control. Shambaugh states, “If the relationship was more symbiotic, the Party would not go to such great lengths to try and assert its control over the PLA.”⁵⁷ In the aftermath of Tiananmen (when some army units refused to obey orders), he emphasizes civilian efforts to fortify traditional mechanisms of Party control and argues that the accelerating decline of the dual-role elite will make formal Party controls even more important. What Shambaugh describes is an evolution from a Symbiotic model to a Party Control model.⁵⁸ In this scenario, the new generation of Party leaders lacking revolutionary legitimacy and military experience would rely more on direct Party controls to ensure PLA obedience. Nan Li describes a coming shift from a predominantly Factional model to a Bureaucratic Behavior model. He foresees less extensive political controls than Shambaugh, but envisions a Party-army relationship increasingly defined by formal mechanisms and institutions. He does not, however, see the PLA developing as a distinct interest group.⁵⁹

For a short time after Tiananmen, the Party Control model accurately predicted Party efforts to intensify political campaigns and reassert control over the PLA. Over the longer term,

however, the Party's direct control over the PLA has weakened and the PLA has gained more institutional autonomy. Evidence suggests that the time spent on political work relative to combat training has decreased dramatically since this peak immediately after Tiananmen.⁶⁰ Others argue the political work system has not only weakened, but also could be evolving into something fundamentally different. Some developments suggest that as political officers become more enmeshed in the PLA's corporate culture, their loyalties and command relationships could be tested in a moment of crisis.⁶¹ At the same time others are quick to recall that the political work system and political officers have always encountered these dilemmas and that their role as a tool of political control or indoctrination has never been as strong as it was made out to be. Instead, it has simply been the subject matter of political work that has changed (from Marxism-Leninism to nationalism) and not the political work system itself.⁶²

Combination Models

By the mid-1990s, scholars were forced to reassess the utility of these models in the face of trends in civil-military relations. Although the models were originally developed as competing approaches, experts began to argue that they were not mutually exclusive, but complementary.⁶³ This shift in thinking produced a number of "combination" models. Ellis Joffe writes in 1996 about a "synthesis of all three models" (Symbiosis, Party Control, and Professionalism).⁶⁴ Shambaugh speaks of a more linear progression from symbiosis to Party Control that was leading not to professionalism but to a PLA with "limited autonomy."⁶⁵ Although Joffe combines the models while Shambaugh focuses on the evolution of the civil-military relationship, they both agree that the previous models are inadequate and that a more dynamic model is necessary to explain new developments.

This period was short-lived. In 1997, only 1 year after attempting to combine the models, Joffe declared that "the new Party-army relationship has largely obviated the relevance of approaches used in the past." He asserted that the assumptions underlying the traditional and combination models no longer held true. Greater elite bifurcation was breaking down symbiosis, developing PLA autonomy increasingly worked to undermine Party control, and the conflict between professional and political priorities appeared to have been resolved in favor of professionalism.⁶⁶ Under these conditions the traditional models and the combination model no longer had predictive or even explanatory ability. Shambaugh concluded in 2001 that "contemporary China and PLA studies is at a juncture in its analytical development, as past paradigms have lost much, if not all, of their explanatory power."⁶⁷

From this point scholars built a new set of models that incorporated elements of earlier models while also attempting to address the implications of new political and military trends.

Two models, Conditional Compliance and State Control (*guojiahua*), emerged in the period from 1999 to 2003. Although not mutually exclusive, each emphasizes a different aspect of the evolving civil-military relationships. These two models represent the most recent attempts to construct theoretical models of Chinese civil-military relations.

Conditional Compliance

James Mulvenon adopted Ellis Joffe's term conditional compliance and expanded the concept to create a full model.⁶⁸ The Conditional Compliance model posits an implicit bargaining and balancing process between separate civilian and military elites and institutions. Civilian elites seek PLA loyalty and obedience, especially if challenges to Party rule arise. In exchange, the PLA expects the Party to guarantee its professional interests including institutional autonomy in purely military affairs, budgets and resources necessary for modernization, and a role in specific foreign policy areas where the PLA's interests are directly involved (such as Taiwan, arms sales, and U.S.-China relations).

Mulvenon argues that the PLA should hold the upper hand in this process. The new generation of civilian elites lacks military experience and the personal stature to ensure unconditional military support. PLA leaders are aware of this and conscious of their role as the last line of defense for the Party. They should be able to exploit this political advantage. Mulvenon even speculates that increasing bifurcation and PLA professionalism could lead not to political acquiescence, but to greater political involvement under certain conditions.⁶⁹ However, factors such as PLA professionalism and hesitancy to embroil the military in politics moderate PLA willingness to leverage this power. As a result, the implications of elite bifurcation and increased professionalism for the PLA's role in politics remain ambiguous. The two sides maintain a delicate balance that remains very susceptible to shocks and sudden crises.

You Ji describes a similar "interest sharing" or "give and take" relationship.⁷⁰ Even with the breakdown of the old symbiosis, each side still needs the other to advance its institutional interests. He argues that increased institutionalization of elite politics and the civil-military relationship coupled with the Party's active promotion of PLA professionalization (in part to discourage PLA political activity) help ensure overall Party control while allowing the PLA greater autonomy. He labels the resulting relationship between the Party and paramount leader as one of "directional leadership." You Ji notes that these norms are not fully institutionalized, allowing room for potential conflicts, especially those created by personal influence. Although professionalization generally leads to less PLA political involvement, an increased sense of corporatism may create a more adversarial relationship when civilian and military interests do not align.

If this happens, barriers that would keep the PLA out of politics are not necessarily as strong as barriers that keep the Party out of the PLA. This opens the possibility for military intervention in politics.

Both models are essentially more sophisticated combination models that stress the bargaining element in civil-military relations. Mulvenon acknowledges that the conditional compliance model may have only temporary utility. Ongoing changes in the Chinese system and in Chinese society may require models of civil-military relations that look beyond the Party-army relationship to consider other social and political factors.

State Control (Guojiahua)

The State Control model also considers elite bifurcation, PLA professionalization, and an apparent decline in the PLA's political role. However, David Shambaugh, Andrew Scobell, and others emphasize institutional and legal changes (mostly notably the 1997 National Defense Law) that increase the formal role and authority of State institutions over the PLA.⁷¹ These institutions include the National People's Congress (NPC), the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Defense, and the State CMC. China's defense white papers document an increasing number of laws and regulations governing PLA procedures and activities.

Proponents of this model assert that these changes have increased separation of the Party and PLA and that this trend may continue. Shambaugh highlights the possibility that Chinese civil-military relations might evolve to resemble Party-State relationships in other areas such as economic management where the Party still lays out broad economic policy directions (*fangzhen*), but the state oversees direct policy (*luxian*) and implementation of policy (*zhengce*).⁷² You Ji argues that as the personal authority of civilian leaders has decreased, they have had to rely more heavily on institutions to control the PLA. This makes the relationship easier to manage and the rules of the game clearer but may "in the long run . . . facilitate a grand divorce between the Party and the military in the form of a depoliticized and state-run military."⁷³ Shambaugh argues that a battle between the Party and the State over control of the military would most likely benefit the PLA, which will gain greater autonomy from both in the process.⁷⁴

Advocates of this model acknowledge that any evolution toward state control remains in its infancy. The existence of both a Party and State Central Military Commission (with identical membership) highlights ambiguity in current command relationships. At some point this may facilitate a transition to state control, but speeches by civilian leaders and editorials in the *PLA Daily* continue to insist on the Party's absolute leadership and strongly criticize calls for a national army. The existing state control literature does not address the future relationship if

state control fully replaces Party control. If such a transition were to take place, it would require the replacement of current Party control mechanisms with new control mechanisms to ensure civilian control. In cases such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Indonesia, this has been an extended and difficult transition. The end point of such a transition might also involve reduction or elimination of military representation in political bodies such as the NPC, Central Committee, and Politburo. This highlights the possibility that a Chinese military under state control might be more professional (in the Huntingtonian sense) and have less of a political role.

Interpretive Approaches

Work in the last 5 years by Ellis Joffe,⁷⁵ Yu Bin,⁷⁶ and You Ji⁷⁷ has employed interpretive approaches attempting to identify key features of Chinese civil-military relations. Some of these works are retrospective, while others focus on contemporary issues such as Hu Jintao's ongoing consolidation of power and the eventual transition to the 5th-generation leadership. This literature focuses on identifying conditions, variables, and factors important to understanding the civil-military relationship, but to date has not produced a new generation of theories or models to predict the future evolution of civil-military relations. Some writings do contain specific predictions, but these generally reflect the author's analytical judgments rather than conclusions derived from a comprehensive theory.

For example, Ellis Joffe has identified four factors (leadership politics, the paramount leader, the military mindset, and circumstantial imperatives) that shape the PLA's role in politics and examined how they have fluctuated over time. This descriptive analysis helps explain past events, especially during the Mao and Deng periods. However, this type of analysis is fairly common throughout the study of Chinese civil-military relations and does not represent a distinctively new approach or model.⁷⁸ The factors are very general, rely heavily on analytical judgment, and have limited predictive power (circumstantial imperatives, by definition, are unknown until a crisis forces a critical decision). While useful in analyzing civil-military relations in China, this recent work does not provide a framework through which specialists in other disciplines or regions could conduct a comparative analysis of civil-military relations.

Cases

With these analytical models in mind, we will now examine four cases from the last 20 years that provide evidence about the PLA's role in elite politics. We selected cases where authors employing the analytical models discussed above offered relatively clear predictions about

events. Our goal is to assess the utility of these models as predictive tools, or failing that, to assess whether they were able to explain the events in hindsight.⁷⁹

PLA Reactions to Intensified Party Control after Tiananmen

In the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen, the Party made great efforts to strengthen its control over the PLA. Political work and education within the PLA were increased, and the power of the General Political Department (GPD) under Yang Baibing experienced a resurgence. Over the next several years, most analysts foresaw continued Party efforts to strengthen control mechanisms and tension between the political character and professional development of the PLA. Shambaugh and Nan Li identified conditions that would lead to increased Party control over the PLA or the development of new institutional mechanisms that would help the Party manage the PLA. Other analysts such as Joffe and Swaine predicted that certain elements of the PLA, namely the officer corps, would resent and possibly resist increased Party control. Most anticipated an intensification of the red versus expert debate, with serious implications for the PLA's professional development.⁸⁰

Contrary to most predictions, the political campaigns and more invasive political controls dissipated relatively quickly. The power of Yang Baibing and the GPD was checked through the actions of other coalitions within the leadership, possibly including a frustrated officer corps. Political activity within the PLA continued, but in increasingly moderate forms. Furthermore, PLA professionalization continued, accompanied by an apparent uptick in institutional autonomy.

Several of the models had explanatory value, but no model was able to independently predict or explain these events. Advocates of the political control model accurately predicted an increased emphasis on political control after Tiananmen, but appear to have overestimated civilian Party leaders' ability (or desire) to maintain these controls or underestimated the PLA's ability to resist them over the long term. Shambaugh's subsequent writing about a progression from a model of Party Control to "limited autonomy" acknowledges this outcome. In the long run, the Professionalism model seems to have accurately predicted that some elements of the PLA would resist increased politicalization and fight for the PLA's institutional autonomy. Factional rivalries between GPD Director Yang Baibing and other leaders were also factors. In this case, a combination of models offers the fullest explanation. However, the most persuasive combination of elements from different models can only be determined in hindsight. A key difficulty is the lack of a rigorous methodology capable of weighting the different elements of a combined model in order to develop predictions.

Lest this assessment sound harsher than intended, one should note the turbulent nature of Chinese politics during this period and the fact that most contemporary predictions about broader Chinese political trends do not hold up well either. Scholars were working with information and analytical models from the pre-Tiananmen period and attempting to apply them to an unknown and changing political environment. Traditional models using outdated information provided relatively little guidance on how generational leadership changes, political institutionalization, and reforms within the PLA were changing civil-military relations in the post-Tiananmen period.

Jiang Zemin's Succession

A second case involves the protracted leadership succession from Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin. Jiang Zemin was appointed to the positions of Party Secretary and CMC Chairman in 1989 following Zhao Ziyang's removal from office but needed to prove his ability to govern independent of support from his revolutionary era patrons. Here the literature on the military role in elite politics offers the clearest and ultimately least accurate predictions. First, most analysts expressed serious doubts about Jiang Zemin's prospects for political survival, let alone strong leadership. Second, the overriding expectation was that the PLA would play a major role in the process, possibly even serving as "kingmaker."⁸¹

The literature identifies a number of factors that support the prediction that Jiang would be unable to consolidate power. His lack of military experience and connections led most scholars to doubt his ability to win the trust of the military and consolidate control over the PLA. Jiang was surrounded by many revolutionary leaders and rival factions with more extensive personal connections to the military. Although Jiang held key formal positions, scholars were skeptical of how much authority these positions conveyed relative to his limited informal powers. Jiang's predecessors Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang had both held key formal positions but proved unable to maintain their positions in the face of opposition from senior leaders with greater informal power.

One of the more positive predictions for Jiang came from You Ji, who gave Jiang a "fair chance."⁸² He cites the same factors listed above, but offers a more optimistic outlook. Although Jiang did not have extensive military connections, You Ji identifies means Jiang might use to build these relationships. He discusses factional divisions, but emphasizes Jiang's connections rather than conflicts with powerful members of the revolutionary elite. Rather than viewing institutions and formal positions as underdeveloped, he highlights their relative maturity. Still, You Ji's analysis places heavy emphasis on the importance of the PLA in Jiang's rise.

In the end, Jiang succeeded despite these obstacles, and the role and direct influence of the PLA in the leadership transition appear to have been limited. The peak of PLA involvement in the succession process probably occurred in 1990–1992 when the faction centered around Vice President Yang Shangkun and his half-brother, GPD Director Yang Baibing, was most active. Military involvement came not through institutional actions or active participation of the PLA, but through a select group of revolutionary dual-role elites such as Deng Xiaoping, Yang Shangkun, and Yang Baibing. However, after the purging of the Yang brothers in 1992, there is little evidence of military involvement in succession. Numerous authors raised the possibility that the “Yang family army” would breed resentment among the PLA officer corps and even counterbalancing from other elites, but none predicted their downfall at the 14th Party Congress.⁸³ This unexpected event changed the dynamics of the leadership succession and appears to mark the height of PLA involvement in elite politics in the post-Tiananmen era.

The most common model used to develop predictions on the military’s role in the succession was the Factional model. Michael Swaine’s 1991 study illustrates how models could support very detailed and insightful analysis yet produce only conditional and often inaccurate predictions. After a comprehensive analysis of factional divisions within the PRC elite, Swaine offers four general succession scenarios, labeling them from least to most likely. His general conclusion was that the three most likely scenarios were not favorable for Jiang and would involve the military as an active participant. Swaine’s least likely scenario was for Jiang and a pro-reform regime to succeed without military involvement, which he regarded as possible but only if a large number of conditions were fulfilled. Yet this scenario most closely (though not exactly) describes how events unfolded. One of the key conditions Swaine (and others) identified was the order in which top revolutionary elites pass away. Swaine lays out a number of complex possibilities and describes how each would affect Jiang’s chances. Of these possibilities, the one that Swaine estimates would give Jiang his best chance at political survival is closest to what actually occurred. Other studies during this time consider similar variables that lead to similar assessments.⁸⁴ This highlights the contingent nature of predictions in a political system with weak institutions and strong informal power networks.

Four points are worth highlighting in this case. First, the literature focuses heavily on personal relationships and traditional Pekingology during this period. This may have been necessary given weak Chinese political institutions, but it produced predictions based on subjective analysis rather than rigorous theoretical frameworks. Second, the literature on civil-military relations contains little consideration of wider political, economic, and social changes. Scholars were very focused on the relationship between civilian and military elites, and especially on

relations between revolutionary elders, next-generation civilian elites, and the senior officer corps. A broader focus might have revealed larger patterns that could have helped to predict the relatively smooth leadership transition. Third, it is likely that the high priority the PRC elite placed on avoiding leadership splits that might produce another Tiananmen diminished the impact of traditional sources of civil-military conflict that many analysts emphasized in their predictions.⁸⁵ Finally, the leadership succession highlights the declining utility of the traditional models. Trends like increasing PLA professionalism and elite bifurcation played an important role in the final outcome of Jiang's succession. After the fall of the Yangs and the death of revolutionary elders, contemporary models are better able to explain civil-military events.

PLA Commercial Divestiture

China's economic reforms beginning in 1978 had the side effect of stimulating the growth of a vast PLA commercial empire, often referred to as "PLA, Inc." During this period the PLA expanded from low-level economic activities focused on self-sufficiency into formerly untouched areas such as pharmaceuticals, hotels, nightclubs, and tourism. Deng Xiaoping encouraged these commercial activities in order to vest the PLA in the reform and opening program and as a financial substitute for limited defense budgets in the 1980s.⁸⁶ By the 1990s, it became increasingly apparent to many Party and PLA leaders that PLA commercial activity was breeding deep corruption and affecting combat readiness. Yet pulling the PLA away from profitable commercial ventures presented a fiscal and political catch-22 to Party and PLA leaders.⁸⁷ Civilian Party leaders wanted to address excessive and corrupting commercial activity, but worried they lacked the political leverage to remove a major source of PLA funding. Much of the PLA leadership was concerned about the negative impact of commercial activities, but worried even more about how to replace the lost revenue.

The general view in the mid-1990s civil-military literature was that the PRC leadership would attempt to address some of the negative side effects of commercialization but was unlikely to force widespread divestiture of PLA businesses in the near future.⁸⁸ In 1993, Tai Ming Cheung wrote that the next round of PLA commercialization would likely focus on "conglomeratisation, corporatisation, profitability and quality, and segregation of functions."⁸⁹ He even speculated that the traditional battle of "red versus expert" might be replaced by an intense battle between professionalism and commercialism.⁹⁰ Bickford argued that despite the negative impact of PLA commercial activity, "the PLA as entrepreneur appears to be staying for the foreseeable future."⁹¹ Mulvenon wrote that civilians will "most likely continue to avoid direct confrontation with the military" and predicted continued corruption whose growth "the military and Party leader-

ships will be unable to significantly curb.”⁹² Joffe approached the issue from a slightly different angle, arguing that the PLA leadership could curb PLA commercial excesses and corruption if it chose to do so, but that PLA leaders were more focused on the immediate risk of losing funds for modernization. However, Joffe still questioned whether the military and civilian leadership would be able to reverse the damage if and when they decided divestiture was necessary.⁹³

After Jiang Zemin’s announcement of PLA divestiture in 1998, many analysts concluded that sudden divestiture was only possible because Party leaders bargained with the PLA leadership.⁹⁴ Mulvenon wrote that although military leaders agreed that divestiture was necessary, their acquiescence was predicated on a generous compensation package. He suggested that civilian leaders likely offered the PLA a one-time transfer of funds to compensate for the value of lost enterprises and promised to increase yearly budgets to make up for lost PLA commercial revenue.⁹⁵

The literature correctly identified the tension between PLA commercial activities and military missions and concerns among both civilian and military leaders about finding acceptable alternatives to replace PLA commercial revenue. However, the divestiture of PLA commercial enterprises came much sooner and with less civil-military conflict than most analysts predicted. The PLA continues to operate some commercial activities today, but has basically returned to the pre-1978 era of “self-sustaining” economic activities.⁹⁶ The large one-time compensation payment and expected budget increase that most believed were a precondition for divestiture did not materialize. The 1999 defense budget increased by 12.7 percent, not significantly more than the 12 percent increase in 1998. Although Mulvenon raises the possibility of hidden additions to military budgets, there is evidence (including PLA complaints) that the civilian leadership did not provide the financial compensation PLA leaders expected.⁹⁷ Tension resulting from the PLA disappointment at the compensation from divestiture may have been forestalled by greater defense budget increases following the 1999 Belgrade bombing and continuing into the next decade.

This is an interesting case for elite politics for a number of reasons. Divestiture highlighted the priority placed on military professionalism. Mulvenon states that “military and civilian leadership in the end decided that the disadvantages of commercialism outweighed the advantages, particularly with the prospect of professional tasks like the liberation of Taiwan and potential military conflict with the United States on the horizon.”⁹⁸ Divestiture also marked a key point where post-revolutionary civilian leaders worked with (or possibly against) the interests of PLA leaders to implement a policy change in a sensitive area of PLA institutional interests. Divided attitudes within the military about the costs and benefits of commercial

activities probably facilitated implementation of the divestiture order, but this case suggests that the PLA had less bargaining power than most analysts believed.

Battle of the Two Centers or Two-line Leadership

The 16th Party Congress in 2002 represented the first leadership transition between two groups of post-revolutionary leaders. Hu Jintao had reportedly been singled out as a future top leader by Deng Xiaoping, and his ascent to the positions of State Vice President (1998) and Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission (1999) highlighted his status as Jiang's likely successor. However, his experience and connections with the military remained weak, including only his oversight of PLA divestiture in 1998 and his relatively short term on the CMC.

Despite Hu's weak military ties, most analysts expected a fairly orderly succession process. There were few predictions that the PLA would play an active role in the transition, either by anointing a leader or taking sides in factional politics. Analysts remained interested, however, in the details surrounding the handover of the CMC Chairmanship from Jiang to Hu. Many suggested that Jiang would follow Deng's example and retain chairmanship of the CMC for 2 or 3 years following his retirement from his state and Party positions (thereby retaining significant political influence). These predictions proved accurate, although Hu became CMC Chairman in 2004, on the earlier end of most predictions. Two competing explanations for how events unfolded suggest an indirect but still important PLA role in the process.

Mulvenon cites evidence indicating open PLA support for Jiang Zemin's retention of CMC Chairmanship in the run-up to the 16th Party Congress. Even after attaining the positions of State President and Party General Secretary in 2002, Hu received little attention in military commentaries and publications. Yet over the next year, PLA publications voiced strong criticism over the ambiguity in the chain of command caused by the existence of "two centers" (Jiang and Hu). Although these concerns do not represent overt support for Hu, Mulvenon speculates that this apparent unease among the military undermined Jiang's informal but necessary base of support for remaining on the CMC. Mulvenon also notes that Hu Jintao showed impressive signs of leadership and concern for military interests during the SARS and Ming submarine crises during this period. Hu's actions may have alleviated PLA doubts about his abilities and motivations as commander-in-chief. These factors may have put pressure on Jiang to relinquish his position on the CMC earlier than he had hoped. If this assessment is correct, it indicates the PLA's ability to affect the overall political climate, if only implicitly and indirectly. It would also support contemporary models that assume the PLA has a latent power that, although rarely used, could prove decisive in a future and more intense political crisis.

You Ji presents a different perspective that nevertheless yields similar implications for civil-military relations. He sees a more functional and cooperative transition rather than a direct political competition between the incoming and outgoing leader. First, the absence of revolutionary leaders and fewer potential challengers led him to believe Hu would establish authority over the PLA more quickly than Jiang.⁹⁹ He points out the importance of the PLA's open support for Jiang to remain as CMC chair at the 16th Party Congress, viewing this as an indication of PLA influence and the continuing importance of PLA support for civilian leaders despite increased political institutionalization. However, he sees a more coordinated and cooperative leadership handover that can be explained as a pattern of two-line leadership. He speculates that Jiang knew he could not exceed Deng's 2-year tenure holding the post of CMC Chairman without the concurrent positions of State President and Party Secretary. He argues that the overlapping period was actually designed to benefit Hu, allowing Jiang to use his political weight with PLA leaders to push forward institutional reforms and promote the revolution in military affairs. This smoothed the way for Hu, who lacked the political capital to institute such changes in a somewhat resistant military.

Despite their contrasting interpretations, both agree that the PLA did exert influence during the transition process, albeit in indirect ways. Both view the PLA's early and open support for Jiang to continue as CMC Chairman as implicit PLA involvement in elite politics. Mulvenon suggests civilian competition for power gave the PLA influence, while You Ji highlights civilian cooperation to force necessary changes on the PLA. Although neither sees the PLA playing the role of "kingmaker" in selecting China's top leader, both suggest that PLA backing remains a factor in leadership transitions.

Conclusion

After reviewing the five key trends, surveying the analytical models employed in studying the military's role in elite politics, and assessing the literature's efforts to predict developments in some specific cases, we are now in a position to reach some tentative conclusions. In general, we found that writings in this field made relatively few specific predictions about the future. Those that were made were often conditional in nature or couched in terms such as "the foreseeable future" or "so long as present conditions hold."

In reviewing the evolution of analytical models, it is evident that the models are more interpretive or descriptive than predictive. In the hands of a skilled and knowledgeable analyst, models such as Conditional Compliance can be useful in explicating important developments such as "the battle of the two centers." They serve a useful role in identifying key variables for

analysis, even if detailed evidence on the value of each variable is often unavailable. However, the recent tendency to incorporate elements from competing models into larger combined models makes it difficult to assess the validity of alternate models or to generate falsifiable predictions. Some earlier models of civil-military relations have been abandoned because generational change or changes in circumstances in China have made them obsolete. Still, there has been a notable lack of efforts to develop, employ, and test new theoretical models in this field.

Lack of detailed data about the precise nature of civil-military interactions at the senior level in China has been (and remains) a major impediment to progress. The data problem has been compounded by the absence of a major political crisis that might require military involvement and produce more observable information about the nature of civil-military relations. At a certain point, the lack of a major political crisis that might draw the military into elite politics needs to be treated as significant data about the nature of politics and civil-military relations within China. It may be that rapid economic growth and expanding resources to support military modernization along with other government priorities have muted potential conflicts between civilian and military leaders. If this is the case, the current economic slowdown may mark the beginning of a different era in civil-military relations that may both generate new evidence about civil-military relations and require new analytical approaches.

Future Directions

We should note the emergence of a relatively new body of literature that focuses on the PLA's relationship to the broader Chinese economy and society (rather than focusing narrowly on Party-army relations). These works draw upon the increasing availability of Chinese-language sources to examine issues such as the impact of broader social trends on the PLA,¹⁰⁰ PLA recruitment, training, and education,¹⁰¹ the relationship and flow of technologies between civilian and military sectors,¹⁰² and the relationship between the PLA and the broader civilian economy.¹⁰³ Although this work does not directly examine the relationships between top civilian and military leaders, it does illuminate broader ways in which the civilian and military spheres interact and influence each other. The increasing prominence of the PLA's role in domestic disaster relief and protecting China's economic interests abroad highlights ways in which the military can increase its value to China's civilian leaders, a trend not without political implications.

We do not have a new theory to offer, but our review of the literature over the last 20 years suggests some new approaches that may have value in generating evidence about the nature of civil-military relations in China. Although the trend toward bifurcation of civil and military elites has reduced ties between leaders, a systematic exploration of those interactions that

do occur might generate some useful evidence. This could include analysis of interactions between local civilian and military leaders; whether efforts to diversify PLA officer recruitment and support postgraduate study provide new opportunities for civil-military interactions and networking; whether more structured interactions (via interagency meetings, study sessions, or NPC sessions) spill over into personal ties; and the content of what civilian leaders learn about international affairs and military matters in universities and Party school classes.

Another approach might focus on comparing how broader trends and reforms in civilian government are implemented in the military. Comparative analysis could examine how actions such as downsizings, political campaigns, and the promulgation of broad laws or regulations play out within civilian and military organizations. This might provide some insight into the PLA's responsiveness or resistance to civilian dictates. It would also be worth examining how broader trends such as the increased emphasis on formal educational credentials and expertise play out within civilian and military domains. This approach could also be used to examine how new policies or slogans identified with particular civilian leaders propagate and are reflected in formal military documents (speeches, doctrine, educational materials) and informal military products (books, articles, and media commentary). Do these ideas spread differently in different services, or in military media versus official civilian media?

Finally, more genuinely comparative analysis could be done. The field of Chinese civil-military relations has drawn upon the Huntingtonian tradition and upon studies of Party-army relations in other communist states. After a two-decade hiatus, it might be worth reexamining the literature on Soviet and post-Soviet civil-military relations.¹⁰⁴ There has also been relatively little effort to draw upon the experiences of one-party states that have transitioned to democracy (South Korea, Taiwan, Mexico) or to do more systemic comparisons with other Asian states.¹⁰⁵ One promising effort, Muthiah Alagappa's edited volumes *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia* (Stanford University Press, 2001) and *Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002) consists of parallel chapters rather than systematic comparisons. However, these studies could provide the raw material for a useful start at more comparative work.

Although this paper has focused on the military role in elite politics rather than the military's role in the policy process, it is worth concluding with some final thoughts on the relationship between the two. Huntington highlights a legitimate role for professional militaries in offering policy advice on matters within their professional expertise. For the PLA, this potentially includes a broad range of policy questions, some of which may have significant implications for the domestic political environment within which civilian elites operate and compete. PLA views

about the proper pace of military modernization and the need for weapons systems such as aircraft carriers and antisatellite weapons have the potential to highlight difficult “guns versus butter” questions and to aggravate relations with China’s neighbors and other major powers such as the United States. (Writings of an incipient Chinese “naval lobby” that includes both military and nonmilitary voices are an indication that advocates of a blue-water navy are making a case via political means.¹⁰⁶) PLA views on Taiwan policy and on how to handle China’s maritime and sovereignty claims may complicate Chinese foreign policy and potentially stimulate negative reactions from other countries. The March 2009 incident between the USNS *Impeccable* and several Chinese vessels highlights this possibility.

China has sought to reassure its neighbors and other major powers that it will not pose a military threat even as it has accelerated its military modernization and ramped up its defense spending. The tensions between military modernization requirements and a prudent foreign policy that maintains a stable environment for economic development have been manageable so far. But if China’s civilian leaders decide to restrain military desires on important policy issues, civil-military conflict in the policy realm might begin to shape the broader Chinese political environment. Even a more professional PLA might eventually find pursuit of its institutional interests propelling it back into a broader role in elite politics.

Notes

¹ This paper was originally presented at the 2008 Annual Chinese Council on Advanced Policy Studies–RAND–Carnegie Endowment for International Peace–National Defense University–Center for Naval Analyses Conference on PLA Affairs. November 2008, Taipei, Taiwan.

² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (London: Harvard University Press, 1957).

³ Analysts such as Paul Godwin, Harlan Jencks, and Ellis Joffe have adapted Huntington's approach to the study of Chinese civil-military relations. See Ellis Joffe, *Party and Army: Professionalism and Political Control in the Chinese Officer Corps, 1949–1964*, Harvard East Asian Monographs (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); Paul H.B. Godwin, "Professionalism and Politics in the Chinese Armed Forces: A Reconceptualization," in *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems*, ed. Dale R. Herspring and Ivan Volgyes (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), 219–240; Harlan W. Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles: Politics and Professionalism in the Chinese Army, 1945–1981* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982); Ellis Joffe, *The Chinese Army After Mao* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); and Paul H.B. Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1988).

⁴ Roy Kamphausen, Andrew Scobell, and Travis Tanner, eds., *The "People" in the PLA: Recruitment, Training, and Education in China's Military* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007).

⁵ Author's interviews with senior PLA officers, September 2008.

⁶ James Mulvenon and David Finkelstein, eds., *China's Revolution in Doctrinal Affairs: Emerging Trends in the Operational Art of the Chinese People's Liberation Army* (Alexandria, VA: CNA Corporation, 2005).

⁷ This theme is prominent in the 2006 and 2008 defense white papers.

⁸ Amos Perlmutter and William M. LeoGrande, "The Party in Uniform: Towards a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems," *The American Political Science Review* 76, no. 4 (December 1982), 778–789.

⁹ This is not always the case. We would like to thank Monte Bullard for pointing out the extent to which Hu Jintao interacted with military leaders while serving as Party Secretary of Tibet. However, Hu Jintao's case can also be seen as an exception due to the events occurring during his tenure in Tibet and Deng Xiaoping's relatively early selection and grooming of Hu for a top leadership position.

¹⁰ Lynn White and Li Cheng have published a series of articles analyzing the backgrounds and characteristics of senior political and military elites elected to the Communist Party Central Committee. Their work documents the increasing emphasis on credentials and expertise among China's leaders, and the potential importance of civilian schools as the basis for political networks. See Li Cheng and Lynn White, "The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 8 (August 1993), 757–786; "The Fifteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Full-Fledged Technocratic Leadership with Partial Control by Jiang Zemin," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 3 (March 1998), 231–264; "The Sixteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Hu Gets What?" *Asian Survey* 43, no. 4 (July–August 2003), 553–597; Li Cheng, "The New Military Elite: Generational Profile and Contradictory Trends," in *Civil-Military Relations in Today's China: Swimming in a New Sea*, ed. David M. Finkelstein and Kristen Gunness (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 48–73.

¹¹ Military leaders do have some opportunities to interact with local, and potentially provincial level, civilian leaders during the middle phase of their careers while leading local military units or serving in senior positions in military regions. However, the civilian leaders they interact with will not necessarily ascend to senior national level positions. Moreover, some analysis suggests that primary responsibility for liaison with civilian officials is ordinarily handled by officers with long experience in a particular military region. Such individuals are typically not “fast burners” marked for promotion to top positions. See Elizabeth Hague, “PLA Leadership in China’s Military Regions,” in *Civil-Military Change in China: Elites, Institutes, and Ideas After the 16th Party Congress*, ed. Andrew Scobell and Larry Wortzel (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 220–221.

¹² Author’s interview with PLA officer, November 2007.

¹³ Li Cheng and Lynn White, “The Sixteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Hu Gets What?” 553–597; and James Mulvenon, “Chinese Military Leadership After the 17th Congress: Hu’s Guys or Whose Guys?” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 23 (Winter 2008), available at <www.hoover.org/publications/clm/issues>.

¹⁴ Notably, this change added the commanders of the PLA Air Force, Navy, and Second Artillery Corps to the CMC in 2004. Although at first glance this may appear to increase military influence within the CMC, in practice it provides a means of elevating interservice disputes and bringing them to the attention of top civilian leaders. Thus, it may actually reduce the ability of the military to coordinate positions and present a united front to civilian leaders.

¹⁵ Ellis Joffe stresses that the PLA only becomes involved in elite politics when there are splits among the civilians. Ellis Joffe, “The Chinese Army in Domestic Politics: Factors and Phases,” in *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: The Transformation of the People’s Liberation Army*, ed. Nan Li (New York: Routledge, 2006), 8–24.

¹⁶ However, local PLA units appear to have played a limited role in suppressing unrest by ethnic Tibetans in March–April 2008.

¹⁷ *The China Journal*, no. 34 (July 1995) and no. 45 (January 2001).

¹⁸ See Andrew J. Nathan and Brice Gilley, *China’s New Rulers: The Secret Files* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2002), 37–64.

¹⁹ Hu Jintao was identified as the future top leader by Deng Xiaoping. He was elected to the Politburo Standing Committee in 1992, a full decade before taking power in 2002, although his position as the future top leader only became secure years later.

²⁰ Murray Scot Tanner noted in 2004 that “all reporting to date suggests that . . . the PLA played virtually no role as ‘kingmaker’ in Hu’s selection and promotion.” Murray Scot Tanner, “Hu Jintao as China’s Emerging National Security Leader,” in *Civil-Military Change in China: Elites, Institutes, and Ideas after the 16th Party Congress*, ed. Andrew Scobell and Larry Wortzel (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 52.

²¹ See You Ji, “Sorting Out the Myths about Political Commissars,” in *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: The Transformation of the People’s Liberation Army*, ed. Nan Li (New York: Routledge, 2006), 89–116.

²² Thanks to Monte Bullard for offering the counterpoint that PLA political officers and commissars have had a very similar role and responsibilities over time.

²³ This is explicit in bargaining or conditional compliance models of civil-military relations.

²⁴ In this paper we use the term “models” to encompass a range of theories, formal models, and analytical approaches in the literature. This is an oversimplification, given variations in the rigor and sophistication of the models, but is helpful for readability.

²⁵ For earlier analyses and evaluations of these models, see Thomas J. Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979: What Have We Learned? Where Do We Go?” in *Seeking Truth from Facts: A Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era*, ed. James C. Mulvenon and Andrew Yang (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 1–37; Jonathan D. Pollack, “The Study of Chinese Military Politics: Toward a Framework for Analysis,” in *Political-Military Systems: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Catherine M. Kelleher (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974), 239–269; and Harlan W. Jencks, “Watching China’s Military: A Personal View,” *Problems of Communism* (May–June 1986), 71–78.

²⁶ See special sections in *The China Journal*, no. 34 (July 1995) and no. 45 (January 2001).

²⁷ For discussion of factions based on generations, see William W. Whitson and Chen-Hsia Huang, *The Chinese High Command: A History of Communist Military Politics, 1927–71* (New York: Praeger, 1973); William Parish, “Factions in Chinese Military Politics,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 56 (October 1973), 667–699; William del Mills, “Generational Change in China,” *Problems of Communism* (November–December 1983), 16–35. For discussion of factions based on regional and central forces, see Harvey W. Nelson, *The Chinese Military System: An Organizational Study of the Chinese People’s Army*, 2^d ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981).

²⁸ See Willy Wo-Lap Lam’s reporting and books *China After Deng Xiaoping—The Power Struggle in Beijing Since Tiananmen* (Singapore: John Wiley and Sons, 1995), 193–238 and 323–430; and *The Era of Jiang Zemin* (Singapore: Prentice Hall, 1999), 153–212.

²⁹ See Whitson and Chen, *Chinese High Command*; Parris Chang, “Chinese Politics: Deng’s Turbulent Quest,” *Problems of Communism* (January–February 1981), 1–21; Jurgen Domes, *Peng Te-huai: The Man and the Image* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985); June Teufel Dreyer, “Civil-Military Relations in the People’s Republic of China,” *Comparative Strategy* 5, no. 1 (1985), 27–49; Yu Yulin, “Reshuffle of Regional Military Leaders on the Mainland,” *Issues and Studies* (June 1990), 1–4.

³⁰ Michael Swaine, *The Military and Political Succession in China: Leadership, Institutions, Beliefs* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992).

³¹ This line of thought borrows from Thomas Bickford’s 1999 retrospective. See also Parish, “Factions in Chinese Military Politics”; William Pang yu Ting, “Coalitional Behavior Among the Chinese Military Elite: A Nonrecursive, Simultaneous Equations, and Multiplicative Causal model,” *American Political Science Review* 73, no. 2 (June 1979), 478–493; Monte R. Bullard, *China’s Political-Military Evolution: The Party and the Military in the PRC, 1960–1984* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985); June Teufel Dreyer, “Civil-Military Relations in the People’s Republic of China,” *Comparative Strategy* 5, no. 1 (1985), 27–49; Monte R. Bullard and Edward C. O’Dowd, “The Role of the PLA in the Post-Mao Era,” *Asian Survey* 26, no. 6 (June 1986), 706–720.

³² We did not focus on this issue because although elite politics and policy overlap, this topic fits more properly into the policy realm. For further information on the PLA as an interest group, see Bullard, *China’s Political-Military Evolution*; Harry Harding, “The PLA as a Political Interest Group,” in *Chinese Politics from Mao to Deng*, ed. Victor Falkenheim (New York: Paragon House, 1987); “The

PLA as an Interest Group in Chinese Foreign Policy,” in *The Chinese People's Liberation Army*, ed. Mark Weisenbloom, Dimon Liu, and Denny Lane (New York: Kegan Paul, 1996), 246–281.

³³ June Teufel Dreyer argues against and then for this assertion. See “The New Officer Corps: Implications for the Future,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 146 (June 1996), 315–335 and “The Military’s Uncertain Politics,” *Current History* 95, no. 602 (September 1996), 254–260.

³⁴ Li and White, “The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping,” 757.

³⁵ Ibid., 757–786; Li and White, “The Fifteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Full-Fledged Technocratic Leadership with Partial Control by Jiang Zemin,” 231–264; “The Sixteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party: Hu Gets What?” 553–597; Li Cheng, “The New Military Elite: Generational Profile and Contradictory Trends,” 48–73.

³⁶ Li and White, “The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping,” 785.

³⁷ See Roman Kolkowicz, *The Soviet Military and the Communist Party* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967); William E. Odom, “The Party-Military Connection: A Critique,” in *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems*, ed. Dale R. Herspring and Ivan Volgyes (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), 27–52; Timothy Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979); Amos Perlmutter and William M. LeoGrande, “The Party in Uniform: Towards a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems,” *The American Political Science Review* 76, no. 4 (December 1982), 778–789.

³⁸ Perlmutter and LeoGrande, “The Party in Uniform,” 784.

³⁹ There are also fused civil-military relationships where the Party develops out of the army, as in the case of Cuba. See Perlmutter and LeoGrande, “The Party in Uniform,” 785–786.

⁴⁰ For early discussions on the interlocking directorate, see Bullard, *China's Political-Military Evolution*.

⁴¹ David Shambaugh, “The Soldier and the State in China: The Political Work System in the People's Liberation Army,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 127 (September 1991), 527–568.

⁴² Eberhard Sandschneider, “Military and Politics in the PRC,” in *Chinese Defense and Foreign Policy*, ed. June Teufel Dreyer (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 331–349.

⁴³ Jeremy T. Paltiel, “PLA Allegiance on Parade: Civil-Military Relations in Transition,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 143 (September 1995), 799.

⁴⁴ Shambaugh, “The Soldier and the State in China.”

⁴⁵ Ellis Joffe, “The PLA and the Succession Question,” in *China's Military, The PLA in 1992–1993*, ed. Andrew Yang (Taipei: Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies, 1992–1993).

⁴⁶ David Shambaugh, “Commentary on Civil-Military Relations in China: The Search for New Paradigms,” in *Seeking Truth From Facts: A Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era*, ed. James C. Mulvenon and Andrew Yang (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 39–49.

⁴⁷ Ellis Joffe, *Party and Army: Professionalism and Political Control in the Chinese Officer Corps, 1949–1964*, Harvard East Asian Monographs (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965); Ellis Joffe, *The Chinese Army After Mao* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Harlan W. Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles: Politics and Professionalism in the Chinese Army, 1945–1981* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982); Paul H.B. Godwin, “Professionalism and Politics in the Chinese Armed Forces: A Reconceptualization,” in *Civil-Military Relations in Communist Systems*, ed. Dale R. Herspring and

Ivan Volgyes (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), 219–240; and Paul H.B. Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1988).

⁴⁸ Cited in Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979,” 7.

⁴⁹ Bickford also makes this point in his retrospective. See June Teufel Dreyer, “The New Officer Corps: Implications for the Future,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 146 (June 1996), 315–335; James Mulvenon, *Professionalization of the Senior Chinese Officer Corps: Trends and Implications* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997); Li and White, “Army and Succession.”

⁵⁰ Joffe, “The PLA and the Succession Question.”

⁵¹ Ellis Joffe, “Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 146 (June 1996).

⁵² For discussion on the PLA’s policy influence, see John W. Garver, *Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan’s Democratization* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), and Michael D. Swaine, “The PLA and Chinese National Security Policy: Leaderships, Structures, Processes,” *The China Quarterly* no. 146 (June 1996), 360–393, and *The Role of the Military in Chinese National Security Policy-making* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1998).

⁵³ Swaine, “The PLA and Chinese National Security Policy,” and *The Role of the Military in Chinese National Security Policymaking*.

⁵⁴ Joffe, “Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect,” 299–314; “The Military and China’s New Politics: Trends and Counter-Trends” in *The People’s Liberation Army in the Information Age*, ed. James C. Mulvenon and Richard Yang (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999), 34–47; “Concluding Comment: The Political Angle—New Phenomena in Party Army Relations,” in *The Chinese Armed Forces in the 21st Century*, ed. Larry Wortzel (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1999), 321–328; “The Chinese Army in Domestic Politics: Factors and Phases,” in *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: The Transformation of the People’s Liberation Army*, ed. Nan Li (New York: Routledge, 2006), 8–24; and James C. Mulvenon, “China Conditional Compliance,” in *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 317–335.

⁵⁵ See Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979,” and James C. Mulvenon, “China Conditional Compliance,” in *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 317–335.

⁵⁶ Ellis Joffe, “Party-Army Relations in China: Retrospect and Prospect,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 146 (June 1996), 300.

⁵⁷ Shambaugh, “The Soldier and the State in China,” 568.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Nan Li, “Changing Functions of the Party and Political Work System in the PLA and Civil-Military Relations in China,” *Armed Forces & Society* 19, no. 3 (Spring 1993), 393–409.

⁶⁰ David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China’s Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 13.

⁶¹ See You Ji, “Sorting Out the Myths about Political Commissars,” in *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: The Transformation of the People’s Liberation Army*, ed. Nan Li (New York: Routledge, 2006), 89–116.

⁶² We would like to thank Monte Bullard for raising this point on an earlier draft of this paper.

⁶³ Perlmutter and LeoGrande made this argument in 1982 when discussing the work of Kolko-wicz, Colton, and Odom and analyzing civil-military relations in communist systems.

⁶⁴ Joffe, "Party-Army Relations in China," 300.

⁶⁵ David Shambaugh, "Civil-Military Relations in China: Party-Army or National Army?" *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies*, no. 16 (2002), 10–29.

⁶⁶ Ellis Joffe, "The Military and China's New Politics: Trends and Counter-Trends" in *The People's Liberation Army in the Information Age*, eds. James C. Mulvenon and Richard Yang (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999), 34–47.

⁶⁷ David Shambaugh, "Commentary on Civil-Military Relations in China: The Search for New Paradigms," in *Seeking Truth From Facts: A Retrospective on Chinese Military Studies in the Post-Mao Era*, ed. James C. Mulvenon and Andrew Yang (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 39–40.

⁶⁸ James C. Mulvenon, "China: Conditional Compliance," in *Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Honolulu, HI: East-West Center, 2002), 317–335, and James C. Mulvenon, "Straining against the Yoke? Civil-Military Relations in China after the Seventeenth Party Congress," in *China's Changing Political Landscape: Prospects for Democracy*, ed. Cheng Li (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 267–282.

⁶⁹ See Mulvenon, "China Conditional Compliance," 317–335; and Mulvenon, "Straining against the Yoke?"

⁷⁰ You Ji, "Hu Jintao's Consolidation of Power and His Command of the Gun," in *China into the Hu-Wen Era: Policy Initiatives and Challenges*, ed. John Wong and Lai Hongyi (Singapore: World Scientific, 2006), 33–60; and "The 17th CCP National Congress and the Changing Elite Politics in China," in *China: the Next Decade*, ed. Dali Yang and Zhao Litao (Singapore: World Scientific, 2008), 45–61.

⁷¹ David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Andrew Scobell, "China's Evolving Civil-Military Relations: Creeping Guojiahua," *Armed Forces & Society* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2005), 227–244.

⁷² Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 19.

⁷³ You Ji, "China: From Revolutionary Tool to Professional Military," in *Military Professionalism in Asia*, 132.

⁷⁴ Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military*, 54.

⁷⁵ Ellis Joffe, "The Chinese Army in Domestic Politics: Factors and Phases," in *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: The Transformation of the People's Liberation Army*, ed. Nan Li (London: Routledge, 2006), 8–24.

⁷⁶ Yu Bin, "The Fourth Generation Leaders and the New Military Elite," in *Civil-Military Relations in Today's China: Swimming in a New Sea*, ed. David M. Finkelstein and Kristen Gunness (Armonk, NY: East Gate, 2007), 74–95.

⁷⁷ You Ji, "China: From Revolutionary Tool to Professional Military," in *Military Professionalism in Asia*, 111–136.

⁷⁸ See Harry Harding, "The PLA as a Political Interest Group," in *Chinese Politics from Mao to Deng*, ed. Victor Falkenheim (New York: Paragon House, 1987); and Joffe, "The Military and China's New Politics."

⁷⁹ One potential case we did not examine was the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait crisis. We felt this case involved PLA efforts to exert policy influence rather than to shape elite politics. The crisis was also a relatively sudden event with few advance predictions that could be assessed.

⁸⁰ Ellis Joffe, “The PLA and the Succession Question” in *China’s Military: The PLA in 1992/93*, ed. Andrew Yang (Taipei: Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies, 1993); Ellis Joffe, “The Chinese Army: Coping with the Consequences of Tiananmen,” in *China Briefing*, 1991, ed. William A. Joseph (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 37–55; Harlan W. Jencks, “China’s Army, China’s Future,” in *China in the Nineties: Crisis Management and Beyond*, ed. David Goodman and Gerald Segal (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 149–159; and Michael Swaine, *The Military and Political Succession in China: Leadership, Institutions, Beliefs* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992).

⁸¹ See Swaine, *The Military and Political Succession in China*; Harlan Jencks, “Civil-Military Relations in China: Tiananmen and After,” *Problems of Communism* 40, no. 3 (May–June 1991), 14–29; Ellis Joffe, “The Chinese Army: Coping with the Consequences of Tiananmen”; Ellis Joffe, “The PLA and the Succession Question”; Andrew Scobell, “Why the People’s Army Fired on the People: The Chinese Military and Tiananmen,” *Armed Forces & Society* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1992), 193–213; and Jeremy T. Paltiel, “PLA Allegiance on Parade: Civil-Military Relations in Transition,” *The China Quarterly*, no. 143 (September 1995), 784–800.

⁸² You Ji, “Jiang Zemin’s Formal and Informal Sources of Power and Chinese Elite Politics After 4 June 1989,” *China Information* 6, no. 2 (Autumn 1991), 1–22.

⁸³ Good examples of predictions that Yang Baibing may face difficulties include Swaine, *The Military and Political Succession in China*, and Joffe, “The PLA and the Succession Question.”

⁸⁴ See Michael T. Byrnes, “The Death of a People’s Army,” in *The Broken Mirror: China After Tiananmen*, ed. George Hicks (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1990), 132–151, and Jencks, 1991.

⁸⁵ For discussion of this point, see You Ji, “Jiang Zemin’s Formal and Informal Sources of Power”; and Bickford, “A Retrospective on the Study of Chinese Civil-Military Relations Since 1979.”

⁸⁶ See Thomas J. Bickford, “The Chinese Military and Its Business Operation: The PLA as Entrepreneur,” *Asian Survey* 34, no. 5 (May 1994), 460–474; Ellis Joffe, “The PLA and the Chinese Economy: The Effect of Involvement,” *Survival* 37, no. 2 (Summer 1995), 24–43; Chong-Pin Lin, “Limits to Professionalism: The Extramilitary Roles of the People’s Liberation Army in Modernization,” *Security Studies* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1992), 659–689.

⁸⁷ Mulvenon, “China Conditional Compliance,” 178.

⁸⁸ One of the stronger predictions on eventual PLA divestiture is Harlan W. Jencks, “Organization and Administration in the PLA in the Year 2000,” in *SCPS Yearbook on PLA Affairs: 1988/89*, ed. Richard Yang (Kaohsiung, Taiwan: SCPS, 1989), 53–54.

⁸⁹ Tai Ming Cheung, “China’s Entrepreneurial Army: The Structure, Activities, and Economic Returns of the Military Business Complex,” in *Chinese Military Modernization*, ed. C. Dennison Lane, Mark Weisnbloom, and Dimon Liu (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 1996), 168–197; and Tai Ming Cheung, “The Chinese Army’s New Marching Orders: Winning on the Economic Battlefield,” in *Mixed Motives, Uncertain Outcomes: Defense Conversion in China*, ed. Jorn Brommelhorster and John Frankenstein (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1997), 181–204.

⁹⁰ Tai Ming Cheung, "Profits over Professionalism: The PLA's Economic Activities and the Impact on Military Unity," in *Chinese Regionalism: The Security Dimension*, ed. Richard H. Yang, Jason C. Hu, Peter K.H. Yu, and Andrew N.D. Yang (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 85–110.

⁹¹ Bickford, "The Chinese Military and Its Business Operation," 472.

⁹² James C. Mulvenon, "Military Corruption in China," *Problems of Post-Communism* 45, no. 2 (March–April 1998), 12.

⁹³ Ellis Joffe, "The PLA and the Chinese Economy: The Effect of Involvement," *Survival* 37, no. 2 (Summer 1995), 24–43. Joffe only discusses the PLA leadership's role in this process and does not specifically address the civilian leadership's ability or inability to do so.

⁹⁴ This announcement was not the first attempt at divestiture. Previous steps to curb PLA commercial excess were proclaimed and instituted throughout the 1990s. Although these did curtail PLA involvement in the most excessive and corrupt economic activities, they did little to end PLA commercial activity and the associated ills.

⁹⁵ James C. Mulvenon, *Soldiers of Fortune: The Rise of the Military-Business Complex in the Chinese People's Liberation Army, 1978–1998* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 178.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁹⁹ You Ji, "Hu Jintao's Consolidation of Power and His Command of the Gun," in *China into the Hu-Wen Era: Policy Initiatives and Challenges*, ed. John Wong and Lai Hongyi (Singapore: World Scientific, 2006), 33–60.

¹⁰⁰ Tony Saitch, "Social Trends in China: Implication for the People's Liberation Army," in *Civil-Military Relations in Today's China: Swimming in a New Sea*, ed. David M. Finkelstein and Kristen Gunness (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 3–25.

¹⁰¹ Kamphausen et al.

¹⁰² Evan S. Medeiros, Roger Cliff, Keith Crane, and James C. Mulvenon, *A New Direction for China's Defense Industry* (Arlington, VA: RAND, 2005); and Richard A. Bitzinger, "The People's Liberation Army and Its Changing Economic Roles: Implications for Civil-Military Relations," in *Chinese Civil-Military Relations: The Transformation of the People's Liberation Army*, ed. Nan Li (New York: Routledge, 2006), 161–177.

¹⁰³ See Joseph Fewsmith, "China's Defense Budget: Is There Impending Friction Between Defense and Civilian Needs?" 202–213; Sijin Cheng, "The Challenge of Conscription in an Era of Social Change," 235–254; and Maryanne Kivlehan-Wise, "Demobilization and Resettlement: The Challenge of Downsizing the People's Liberation Army," in Finkelstein and Gunness, *Civil-Military Relations in Today's China*, 255–269.

¹⁰⁴ Thanks to Jonathan Pollack for raising a question regarding the existence of any recent comparative studies of Soviet civil-military relations that prompted this point.

¹⁰⁵ One such study is Cheng Hsiao-shih, *Party-Military Relations in the PRC and Taiwan: Paradoxes of Control* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990).

¹⁰⁶ Unpublished papers presented at the 19th Annual CAPS–RAND–CEIP–NDU conference on PLA affairs attempt to address this issue. See M. Taylor Fravel and Alex Liebman, "Beyond the Moat:

PLAN's Evolving Interests and Potential Influence," and Daniel M. Hartnett and Frederic Vellucci, Jr.,
"Towards a Maritime Security Strategy: A Summary of Chinese Views since the Early 1990s."

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