

# China's Political-Military Evolution

The Party and the Military in the PRC, 1960-1984

Monte R. Bullard



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Political-Military  
Evolution**

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In recent years the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has relinquished much of its political power to China's civilian leadership and has turned to the task of professionalizing the military. The transition of the PLA into a relatively apolitical force in Chinese society has occurred alongside great progress toward military modernization, with the foundation now laid for the PLA to become one of the world's most powerful military forces. Dr. Bullard traces the PLA's extremely important and almost revolutionary transition, examines the structural changes associated with it, and assesses current military policies and trends. He discusses in detail the political commissar system, the key institution for all political-military relationships in the Chinese military system.

Colonel Monte R. Bullard is U.S. Army Liaison Officer in the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong.



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# Contents

List of Tables . . . . .	xiii
List of Abbreviations . . . . .	xv
Preface . . . . .	xvii
1 INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Analytical Issues . . . . .	1
Overview: The Bureaucratic Environment and Elite Conflict . . . . .	6
Method of Analysis . . . . .	14
Notes . . . . .	16
2 THE PLA IN TRANSITION . . . . .	19
Overview . . . . .	19
Modernization and Political-Military Relations . . . . .	20
Chinese Threat Perception . . . . .	21
Self-Reliance . . . . .	22
Personnel and Organizational Change . . . . .	22
Personnel Change: The Three Transformations . . . . .	22
Modernization . . . . .	23
People's War Doctrine . . . . .	23
Revolutionization . . . . .	24
Regularization . . . . .	25
Professionalization . . . . .	26
Recruitment . . . . .	26
Training/Schooling . . . . .	27
Promotion Criteria . . . . .	28
Cadre Defined . . . . .	28
Cadre Revolutionization . . . . .	29
Rejuvenation . . . . .	30
Intellectualization . . . . .	31
Cadre Professionalization . . . . .	32
Demobilization . . . . .	32
Organizational Change . . . . .	34
Summary . . . . .	36
Notes . . . . .	37

3	INSTITUTIONS, ROLES, AND RELATIONSHIPS . . . . .	41
	Overview . . . . .	41
	Institutions . . . . .	41
	Elite Roles . . . . .	46
	Party . . . . .	47
	Military . . . . .	49
	Government . . . . .	50
	Relationships . . . . .	51
	Center-Region . . . . .	51
	Intraregion . . . . .	56
	Notes . . . . .	60
4	THE POLITICAL COMMISSAR SYSTEM: EVOLUTION, STRUCTURE, AND FUNCTIONS . . . . .	65
	Overview . . . . .	65
	Concept Origin . . . . .	65
	Political Commissar Concept Brought to Russia. . . . .	67
	The Chinese Setting . . . . .	68
	Sociological, Political, and Economic Factors Contributing to the Acceptance of Political Commissars in China . . . . .	69
	Political Commissar Concept Brought to China . . . . .	72
	PLA Political Commissar System: Organization and Functions . . . . .	73
	Summary . . . . .	82
	Notes . . . . .	84
5	THE INTERLOCKING DIRECTORATE--NATURE AND SCOPE . . . . .	89
	Part 1: Overview . . . . .	89
	Part 2: Regional Representation at the Center . . . . .	91
	Central Committee . . . . .	91
	Hierarchy of Province Representation . . . . .	92
	Hierarchy of Military Region Representation . . . . .	94
	Politburo . . . . .	96
	Summary . . . . .	97
	Part 3: Military Region-Province Linkages . . . . .	97
	Scope of Interlocking Roles--1960 . . . . .	98
	Scope of Interlocking Roles--1973 and 1982 . . . . .	98
	Command System--1973 . . . . .	100
	Command System--1982 . . . . .	101
	Political Commissar System--1973 . . . . .	101
	Political Commissar System--1982 . . . . .	103
	Summary . . . . .	104
	Part 4: Province Level Party, Government, and Military District Linkages . . . . .	106
	Province Level Party Linkages . . . . .	106
	Scope of Interlocking Roles: 1960-1982 . . . . .	106
	Summary . . . . .	117

Province Level Government Linkages . . . .	117
Scope of Interlocking Roles: 1960-1982 . .	118
Summary . . . . .	126
Military District Linkages . . . . .	126
Scope of Interlocking Roles: 1960-1982 . .	127
Summary . . . . .	140
Part 5: Conclusions . . . . .	141
Notes . . . . .	146
6 CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	149
Appendix A: Party Cadre Levels . . . . .	157
Appendix B: Government Cadre Levels . . . . .	159
Appendix C: Military Grade Levels . . . . .	161
Appendix D: PRC Elites Holding Interlocking Positions (1960) . . . . .	165
Appendix E: PRC Elites Holding Interlocking Positions (1973) . . . . .	169
Appendix F: PRC Elites Holding Interlocking Positions (1982) . . . . .	177
Bibliography . . . . .	181
Index . . . . .	201



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# Tables

3-1	Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Members . . . . .	42
3-2	Chinese Communist Party Politburo Standing Committee Members . . . . .	43
4-1	Evolution of the Political Commissar Concept . . . . .	74
5-1	PRC Central Committee Composition . . . . .	92
5-2	Weighted Hierarchy of Province Representation at the Center . . . . .	93
5-3	Weighted Hierarchy of Military Region Relationship at the Center . . . . .	95
5-4	Dual/Triple Positions Held by Military Region Elites - 1960 . . . . .	99
5-5	Dual/Triple Positions Held by Military Region Elites - 1973 . . . . .	100
5-6	Dual/Triple Positions Held by Military Region Elites - 1982 . . . . .	102
5-7	Military Region Commander and Political Commissar Involvement in the Provinces in 1973 and 1982 . . . . .	105
5-8	Province Level First Party Secretaries - 1960 . . . . .	107
5-9	Province Level First Party Secretaries - 1973 . . . . .	108
5-10	Province Level First Party Secretaries - 1982 . . . . .	109
5-11	Province Level Party Committee Members - 1960 . . . . .	111
5-12	Province Level Party Committee Members - 1973 . . . . .	112
5-13	Province Level Party Committee Members - 1982 . . . . .	113
5-14	Province Level Party Committee Members (Standing Committee Members and Members) - 1973 . . . . .	115

5-15	Province Level Party Committee Members (Standing Committee Members Only) - 1982 . . . . .	116
5-16	Province Level Governors/Mayors (Government) - 1960 . . . . .	119
5-17	Province Level Chairmen (Government) - 1973 . . . . .	120
5-18	Province Level Governors/Mayors (Government) - 1982 . . . . .	121
5-19	Province Level Government Organization - 1960 . . . . .	123
5-20	Province Level Government Organization - 1973 . . . . .	124
5-21	Province Level Government Organization - 1982 . . . . .	125
5-22	Military District Commanders - 1960 . . . . .	128
5-23	Military District Commanders - 1973 . . . . .	129
5-24	Military District Commanders - 1982 . . . . .	131
5-25	Military District Command System - 1960 . . . . .	132
5-26	Military District Command System - 1973 . . . . .	133
5-27	Military District Political Commissars - 1960 . . . . .	134
5-28	Military District First Political Commissars - 1973 . . . . .	135
5-29	Military District First Political Commissars - 1982 . . . . .	137
5-30	Political Commissar System - 1960 . . . . .	138
5-31	Political Commissar System - 1973 . . . . .	139
5-32	Interlocking Directorate in the People's Republic of China (1960-1982) . . . . .	143

# Abbreviations

A	-- Alternate member of the Politburo
Alt	-- Alternate member of the Central Committee
Bn	-- Battalion
CAC	-- Central Advisory Commission
CC	-- Central Committee
CCP	-- Chinese Communist Party
Cdr	-- Commander
CH	-- Chairman
CMC	-- Central Military Council (State)
CO	-- Commander
DEP	-- Deputy
DPC	-- Deputy Political Commissar
DS	-- Deputy Secretary
F	-- Full member of the Politburo
GC	-- Garrison Command
GOV	-- Governor
GS	-- Government system (includes vice and deputy governors, vice and deputy mayors, standing committee members and members of province government organizations)
MAY	-- Mayor

- MAC -- Military Affairs Commission (Party)
- MEM -- Member
- MD -- Military District
- MR -- Military Region
- NDSTIC -- National Defense Science, Technology and Industry Commission
- NO -- Not a member of the Central Committee
- NPC -- National People's Congress
- PC -- Political Commissar
- Pltn -- Platoon
- POS -- Position
- PS -- Party system (includes second, deputy, acting, and alternate secretaries, secretaries, standing committee members and members of province party organizations)
- REG -- Region
- RP -- Responsible person
- SCM -- Standing committee member
- SEC -- Secretary
- Sec Gen -- Secretary General
- VC -- Vice chairman
- VG -- Vice governor
- 1S -- First Secretary
- 2S -- Second Secretary
- 3S -- Third Secretary
- 1VC -- First vice chairman
- ( ) -- Indicates first-listed, e.g., (1st) SEC is a first-listed secretary who is considered a first secretary in the study.
- (1) PC -- Probable First Political Commissar

## Preface

This book was originally written as a doctoral dissertation for Professors Robert Scalapino, Chalmers Johnson and Weiming Du at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1977. The original dissertation focused exclusively on the "interlocking directorate" phenomenon associated with the politics of the People's Republic of China. It suggested a methodological approach using the study of elite roles to examine structural change. Although the interlocking directorate was reduced in scope after 1976, the phenomenon continues to have significance in a historical context.

I have taken advantage of the past six years to add to my original study. In particular, I gained unique access to Chinese elites during my assignment as US Army Attache to the People's Republic of China from July 1980 to June 1982. I am therefore able to offer additional observations about Chinese political-military relations and the general development of the People's Liberation Army. Both of these areas are related to the original topic and provide some added insights into the direction of political and military change in China. I have also added some comments about analytical methodologies based upon perceptions I developed from participation in the US Government process of reporting on Chinese political-military affairs.

Some readers may find the scholarship in this book uneven. Since I did not have access to other authors' writings on similar topics while stationed in Taipei, Hong Kong, and Beijing, I was unable to incorporate their ideas into this work. Furthermore, since part of this book is based upon research and part is based on personal observation and loosely structured interviews, the writing style and organizational format may at times seem to lack continuity. However, I feel there are sufficient sections within the book that will stand alone and contribute to the understanding of Chinese political-military relations and elite change.

Among the problems I encountered in compiling the statistical data available for the three periods under study (1960, 1973 and 1982) were inconsistencies in data and position titles, and changing frames of reference. Nonetheless, I believe the data is reliable enough to allow valid conclusions to be reached.

Another problem was the change in Chinese terminology from year to year. This was particularly true for titles. For example, the senior government official in the provinces was known as a governor in 1960 and 1982, but as a chairman in 1973. I have attempted to clarify these changes as much as possible. The problem of romanization system was vexing. For the spelling of all modern Chinese words I used the Chinese pinyin system, but where names and words were quoted from historical references the system used by the original author was used. Thus, Mao Zedong will be used interchangeably with Mao Tse-tung throughout.

A final problem was in the terms used for province-level units. For ease of reading I have elected to use the term "province" to describe all province-level units. The five autonomous regions (Guangxi, Nei Monggol Ningxia, Xinjiang, and Xizang) and three province-level municipalities (Beijing, Shanghai, and Tianjin) are referred to throughout the book as "provinces."

I owe a great debt of gratitude to many people. Professors Scalapino and Johnson guided my original work with great care. Professors Kenneth Jowitt, John Starr, Robert Price, Kenneth Waltz, Paul Seabury, and Pat Hatcher helped me to organize my thinking process. Andrew Jameson greatly assisted in the editing of the original dissertation. Col. Carl Bernard, Dr. Don Marshall, and Dr. William Whitson inspired me to enter academia.

During the final phases of the book I also received a great deal of assistance. Bob Suettinger and Harlan Jencks offered extremely valuable suggestions to insure correct facts. The Hong Kong American Consulate's Defense Liaison Office research staff and Richard Welker helped me with much of the research in the final stages. Weber Wung, of the DLO research staff, was especially helpful in the wordprocessing and computer efforts.

I owe a special vote of thanks to Karl Eikenberry and Ed O'Dowd for a very thorough job of editing. Their critical page-by-page review added much to the clarity and accuracy of the final product.

Although I received a great deal of help in the preparation of this book, I accept all responsibility for the conclusions and any errors that remain.

Finally, it would not have been possible if it were not for the active support of my wonderful wife, Sylvia Shan Chen Bullard.

*Monte R. Bullard*

# 1

## Introduction

### ANALYTICAL ISSUES

Political change in the People's Republic of China in recent years has defied explanation much less prediction. Scholars have applied models, projected trends, developed intuitive hypotheses and used nearly every social science methodology available to make sense of the events of the Chinese Communist movement. To say that this topic is important and has serious implications throughout the world is clearly an understatement. Whether used as a model in comparative developmental studies or as a factor in the analysis of international relations, political change in China demands attention.

One of the most illuminating approaches to the study of political change and political-military relations in China has been elite analysis. Professor Robert Scalapino points out that by definition elites are those who manipulate power and that power is the essence of the political process.<sup>1</sup> But once elites are selected as the focus of attention there are still major methodological questions which must be answered depending in part on the purpose of the study.

Scholars who have studied political change in China have found it helpful to construct a wide variety of models to organize data about elites. Harry Harding has recently written an excellent critique of the models.<sup>2</sup> For purposes of this study only two of the most used will be discussed: the bureaucratic model and the factional model.

A **factional model** is defined by its focus on groups of elites in conflict within a single political system. The model stresses analysis of the characteristics of group members to identify attitudes or behavior patterns which can be correlated with policy outcomes.

A **bureaucratic model**, on the other hand, focuses on institutions and formal roles within institutions to identify changing characteristics and relationships of roles which might suggest conclusions about institu-

tional adaptability to, or stability in, a changing political environment. This model can also be used to organize data for comparison with a Weberian ideal-type bureaucracy to explain and predict bureaucratic behavior.

There are significant variations within each general model. Factional models, for example, can be divided into two categories based on the criteria for identifying a faction or group. One category includes the factions defined by the current issue orientation (for philosophies/ideologies, organizational interests, or selfish motivations) of the members. The second category includes the factions defined by common identity-forming past experiences. Some studies include combinations of both types. More complex factional models attempt to correlate the factions with issues or events to determine influence relationships. Some of the factional models have been successful at establishing a relationship between elite types and specific political outcomes, but they are still very narrow and fail to see general political change or implications. Furthermore, the relationships are always explained from hindsight and these models have not been useful in predicting outcomes.

If the analytical purpose is limited to the prediction of succession or which policy or range of policies are likely to prevail over the short run then a relatively narrow focus on elite conflict is useful. This approach can say little, however, about the long range maturity and stability of the political system. If the concern is more than what domestic or foreign policy is likely to result from the ability of one individual or group to prevail, then a more fundamental analysis of the political processes and the political environment must be included. This means movement from a factional politics model to some form of bureaucratic model.<sup>3</sup>

Whether one selects the factional or bureaucratic model to organize data, the subject matter must be elites and the method elite analysis. Gordon Bennett divides elite analysis into four variables the environment (to include the time dimension), the issues, the nature of the elites, and the political outcomes of elite conflict.<sup>4</sup> A fifth variable, the decisionmaking process, should be added.

Each of these variables includes subsets of variables, and most scholars up to this point have focused on the subsets, one or more of the five variables, or on relationships among the variables. There is no agreement as to which combination produces the best insights or predictive capacities. It is clear, however, that single factor analyses or reductionist approaches have not produced valuable conclusions, although most have developed and organized essential data which contribute significantly to more

eclectic approaches.

A critical problem still to be resolved is one of level of analysis. Most approaches can be considered micro-political analysis, but some scholars have begun to move into the level of middle-range theory and macro-political analysis. The hope of someday reaching a general theory still exists, but in the meantime middle-range theory or macro-analysis based upon data from earlier micro-analyses has contributed significantly to our understanding of politics in China. This study will fall into the category of "middle-range theory and hypothesis of intermediate scope" as advocated by Scalapino.<sup>5</sup> But before the elements of this effort can be explained a brief review of some of the analytical problems in the field and a description of the bureaucratic environment are necessary to place this approach into perspective.

Clearly some scholars work from a narrower data base than others. It is difficult, however, to categorize research efforts by the scope of the data base. It is possible to separate works by the degree of focus on particular variables, variable subsets or relationships between variables. It is also possible to break them down by complexity as measured by the number of variables or relationships considered. Finally, most works can be distinguished by whether they fit into a factional or bureaucratic model of political analysis.

At the least complex end of the factional analysis scale are works on individual elites. These studies assume, often correctly, that the individual under study exercises significant influence over politics and that an understanding of the background, behavior, and attitudes of that person will clarify the political policies over which he has influence. A major weakness of these studies is their lack of explanation for more general political change and the rapid obsolescence of the work when the individual elite member is removed from the political scene by purge, retirement or death. Some of these works do, however, include important insights based upon factional or bureaucratic analyses as well as biographic study.

At a slightly more complex level are the works that attempt to categorize groups of elites who influence policy based upon similar ambitions or attitudes (factions), similar organizational interests (interest groups) or some type of personal relationships (cliques).<sup>6</sup> The search is for some commonality in the group's background which is likely to cause predictable political behavior or relationships. These categories also range from very simple to very complex.

The least complicated elite groups are those defined upon left or right leanings; they include the dichotomies between radicals and moderates, reds and experts, the Cultural Revolution Group (Jiang Qing fac-

tion) and Old Cadre Group (Deng Xiaoping/Zhou Enlai), or Dengists versus anti-Dengists. Another dichotomy is the classical Marxist analysis in terms of class background; bourgeois versus proletarian. Elites are also divided by their stand on current policy. There are those revisionists who take the "capitalist road" versus those who follow the correct party line.

One of the most important problems with this approach is identifying the members of a particular faction. For example, prior to 1976, Hua Guofeng had been identified as a radical and by implication should have been purged along with the Gang-of-Four. Instead he became Premier and Chairman of the Party. Nonetheless, these analyses can be useful in the larger examination of elite conflict at the national and provincial levels because they help to clarify the issues.

There are two other problems with dichotomies. First, they are always black and white by definition when the real world includes many shades of grey. This is especially true in Chinese politics where a shade of grey is perceived or interpreted as black at one time and white at another. Secondly, it is difficult to assign more than the top few leaders who make public speeches or whose background is well-known to one of the groups. For example, in the frequently discussed dichotomy, party versus army, there are real problems in identifying the members of each group. Key army elites are also party members and many party cadre have extensive military experience. Further, many military men have held concurrent positions in key party organizations as well as in the army. Neither party nor army is monolithic; seldom do all members of the "High Command" agree on any given issue, even one dealing with the role of the military.

Most elite groups have been identified by stands on policy issues, work style or personal relationships. An increasing number of analysts have attempted to identify groups based on past identity-forming experiences. The hope has been to correlate elite recruitment or mobility with environmental factors, elite conflict over issues, political styles, or policy outcomes. These approaches require the assembly of detailed biographic data which is generally available for senior elites but sparse at lower elite levels.

The assumption is that by identifying elite types which pervade, usually by sheer quantity, key policy-making or policy implementing organizations, explanations and predictions about policy can be made. These approaches go beyond background categorization and attempt to correlate the elite nature with other variables: issues, policy outcomes, historical periods, or organizational changes.

Data and conclusions based on these forms of micro-analysis add significant depth to our understanding of