China’s National Security Policymaking: Waning Military Representation and Shifting Policy Priorities

Joo-Young Jung

Abstract

The economic rise of China has continuously generated the “rise of the China threat” debate among scholars. Yet there is limited understanding on how national security policies are devised in China, increasing the uneasiness about China’s strategic behavior. This paper attempts to shed new light on China’s strategic behavior by analyzing the general logic of policymaking within China’s top leadership group—the CCP Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC). Utilizing the concept of “specialized representation,” this paper analyzes the composition of representatives within the PBSC as an important indicator of policy priority and interest representation of key sectors and groups within the policymaking process. The continuously waning PLA representation in the PBSC since the 1990s is a strong indicator of the PLA’s weakening influence in national security policymaking. The findings of this paper suggest that the logic dominating China’s security policymaking is not as different from other “normal” nations as one might think. With the increased institutionalization of the policymaking process in general and waning representation of the PLA in the security policymaking in particular, China’s strategic choices are more likely to be influenced by civilian leaders, who need to consider the interests of their domestic constituents rather than those of the military. Unless it faces a significant challenge to its national security, China is unlikely to make a radical strategic move that could threaten international stability and thus harm its economic interests.
Introduction

China has become a leading player in international affairs during the past few decades. With an impressive high-speed economic growth, China, previously only a “candidate” power nation, became not only one of the most important players in the world economy but also the post-Cold War world’s great power.¹ There is little doubt that China’s strategic orientation and security policies will be a key variable in not only East Asian but also global stability in the 21st century. Yet, there exists no clear agreement among scholars and policymakers regarding whether China would become a rational and responsible member of the international community. As Lampton once observed, China is “a giant screen upon which outsiders project their hopes and fears.”² Bright expectations of economic cooperation with the rapidly marketizing Chinese economy coexist with dire fears of the authoritarian and communist Chinese political regime that might pose a threat to international security.

The “rise of China” has continuously generated the “rise of the China threat” debate among scholars.³ The sources of uneasiness are not only China’s military capabilities but also its intentions and behavior. While most experts doubt that China possesses enough military capa-

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bilities to pose significant challenges to the region and the world, at least in the short term, others see more serious potential problems in China’s military modernization. While many scholars do not see China as an innately belligerent and destabilizing power, to those with suspicious eyes, China has often been a looming strategic threat.

One factor that greatly contributes to such ambivalence and uneasiness toward China’s strategic behavior is the lack of understanding of (and often times negative suspicion of) the logic of China’s security policymaking. As in other countries, China’s external behavior, i.e. national security policy choices, is largely determined by international and domestic political and economic variables. Yet these diverse variables (i.e. policy inputs) generate specific policy choices (i.e. policy outputs) through the domestic policymaking process. Even if we have abundant information on policy inputs, without understanding the policymaking process, we cannot fully comprehend policy outputs. A key obstacle to understanding China’s security behavior is the opaque-ness of its policymaking process. It is very hard to gain information on the policymaking at China’s top leadership level or have a glimpse of the top leaders’ policy preferences in general.

The ambiguity of the process enhances the unpredictability of the


6 See Andrew Scobell, China’s Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003).


outcome. There exist three predominant preconceptions regarding China’s security policymaking: 1) China being governed by an authoritarian communist political regime, her security policy is determined by the paramount leader under the tight authoritarian hierarchy of decision-making 2) The military (People’s Liberation Army, or PLA), closely associated with the Communist Party’s political dominance, exercises decisive influence on the security policymaking; and 3) Because of these two factors, facing a national security challenge, China is likely to react in a radical and aggressive military way that could harm its currently cooperative economic relations with other nations.

This paper, by analyzing the policymaking at the top leadership level, argues that these preconceptions are misguided. Since earlier groundbreaking works on the central state institutions associated with specific issue areas, it has been hard to find systematic analyses on China’s policymaking process. Considering that national security and military policymaking in China is even more tightly sealed from external penetration, the lack of existing studies on the logic of security policymaking is not very surprising. There are abundant high-quality studies on China’s national security policy, but they often focus on general overviews of China’s foreign relations or policy, the input and output


aspects of China’s security policy, or the implications of China’s increased power or security behavior for international security or specific countries or regions. When it comes to the “black box” of national security policymaking, one can find only a few in-depth studies. Providing excellent analyses on key institutions and actors relevant to the security issue area, however, these existing studies tend not to pay enough attention to analyzing the logic of security policymaking in the broad context of general policymaking and national policy agenda in China. Security policy outcomes are often explained as results of elite politics contingent on key individual actors’ security policy preferences and orientations, and regarded as issues that cannot be understood through generalizable indicators.

This paper attempts to shed new light on China’s national security policy by analyzing the logic of policymaking at the top leadership level. Often times, it is regarded that Chinese policymaking is so unique and complicated that it cannot be explained using general concepts such as interest representation and policy constituency. This paper, however, utilizes these two concepts to explain the logic of policymaking in China. It first shows that the policymaking within the Chinese top leadership group is a decentralized process of consensus-making among the “specialized representatives,” rather than a highly centralized process monopolized by the whims of one or two top party leaders. This paper then focuses on the composition of the representatives within the core policymaking apparatus—the CCP Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC)—as an important indicator of policy priorities.

13 Good examples are the books and articles on the abovementioned “rise of China” debate.
and representation of a specific interest group or issue area within the policymaking process. The continuously declining number of PLA representatives within the PBSC since the 1990s is a strong indicator of the PLA’s weakening influence on the national security policymaking. The findings of this paper suggest that the logic dominating China’s security policymaking is not as different from other “normal” nations as one might think. With the increased institutionalization of the policymaking process in general and waning representation of the PLA in the security policymaking in particular, China’s strategic choices are more likely to be influenced by civilian leaders, who need to consider the interests of their domestic constituents before the voice of the military. Unless there is a significant challenge to its core national security, China is unlikely to make a move that threatens existing global stability and thus could harm its economic interests.

Decentralized Decision-making: Consensus among the “Specialized Representatives”

Contrary to the general assumptions, policymaking among the top Chinese leadership group is a process of consensus-building among the top leaders, which observes the opinions of specialized representatives. These rules are applied to the national security policymaking as well. This section explains these two general rules of policymaking in detail and shows why the composition and background of the specialized representatives are important indicators of the military’s influence on China’s national security policymaking.

Consensus-building

A common misunderstanding about Chinese policymaking is that, China being dominated by the authoritarian Communist Party, the decision-making power is concentrated in one top political leader. This is false. Despite the authoritarian nature of the regime and highly centralized political power in the top leadership group, policymaking in China is not monopolized by one or two paramount leaders, but rather shared among several leaders at the top. In other words, even though
the paramount political leader has a big influence on the decision-making process, especially regarding strategic or military policy choices, his or her preference alone cannot determine policy outcomes.

The share of decision-making power is based on the fundamental behavioral code of maintaining consensus inside the top leadership group. A rare account that shows the decision-making rule at the top leadership level is the explanation provided by Wang Renzhong. Talking about the decision-making process in the Politburo and Secretariat in the early 1980s, Wang revealed that the decision-making in the Politburo is done not simply by majority rule but by consensus through collective discussion. Wang said the following:

“Of course, we all respect the opinions of both comrades Yaobang (then the party general secretary) and Ziyang (then the premier), but decisions are never made by any single individual. Discussions may be made only after going through collective discussion. . . . If there are different opinions, then the Secretariat adopts a cautious attitude and postpones making a decision. . . . The Central Committee Politburo also works this way.” (Note: Explanations inside the parentheses are added by the author).

The stress on consensus-building has continued through the 1990s and into the present. Even during the 1980s, Deng’s leadership was not “Deng-in-command” but “first among equals,” al least among the party elders. Deng repeatedly emphasized “collective leadership” and equality among the decision-making leaders. And, since Deng, the power of the “paramount leader” has been further reduced. Jiang Zemin, in his reports to both the 15th and 16th Party Congress, empha-

17 Ibid.
sized the “principles of collective decision-making” along with democratic centralism, individual consultations, and decisions by meetings.\textsuperscript{19} Hu Jintao’s leadership further emphasizes the need to institutionalize decision-making processes within the leadership group and enhance consultation and collective deliberation in decision-making. Such an emphasis aims at creating the image of a collective leadership rather than a group under the direction of one paramount leader.\textsuperscript{20} In sum, national policymaking has not been executed simply by one or two top party or government leaders in China. Steady institutionalization since Deng’s era has routinized consensus-making among the key government and party leaders.

Then who are these key leaders? The pool of leaders has been generally regarded as the top 25 to 35 leaders, headed by a paramount leader.\textsuperscript{21} They are mostly members of the Politburo and Secretariat of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and of the State Council Standing Committee (the Premier, Vice Premiers, and State Councilors), the top military commanders, and the leaders of largest cities and provinces.\textsuperscript{22} This pool of people can potentially participate in the key central state decision-making process and determine the direction of policy in all important spheres, including the security sphere.

Among them, the core decision-makers are the members of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC). There is little contention among scholars on the fact that the Politburo Standing Committee is the supreme decision-making body in China.\textsuperscript{23} The 1958 CCP Central Committee and State Council joint circular further stipulated the fol-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Miller, “Hu Jintao and the Party Politburo.”
\item \textsuperscript{21} Scholars use other words, such as the “core leader” or “preeminent leader,” as well.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Lieberthal and Oksenberg, Policy Making in China; and Lieberthal, Governing China.
\item \textsuperscript{23} See Li, “China’s Next Phase?”; Kim, “Leading Small Groups,”; Lieberthal, Governing China; and Miller’s articles from various issues of China Leadership Monitor.
\end{itemize}
lowing: “With regard to major policy orientation, principles, and guidelines, and to implementation planning and supervision, government organs and their Party groups have the power to make recommendations. But the decision-making power belongs to the Party Center.” This rule is still in effect today. And this paper focuses on the PBSC as the core policymaking apparatus within the top leadership group.

Specialized Representation

Yet, it is important to understand that the emphasis on “consensus-making” does not mean that everyone within the leadership group has an equal say on every issue. This is because members of the top leadership group are differentiated from each other in terms of functional areas of work, and responsible for distinct fields of work.24 In other words, these leaders are specialized in specific issue areas, and the opinions of these “specialists” matter and are respected in the decision-making process.25 Therefore, in the case of security issues, those leaders in charge of security or military issue areas are the key players whose opinions matter most in the security policymaking.

The major specialty areas are: party affairs, government affairs, security affairs (public security and state security) and foreign affairs—and each individual can be in charge of one or more issue areas. Issue areas relevant to China’s national security are those of security and foreign affairs. Security affairs include both public security (the police) and state security (counterespionage), and may carry some responsibility for the People’s Armed Police (PAP) and the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). Foreign affairs are typically led by a top political leader—Zhou Enlai was in charge of foreign affairs until his death, Li Peng most of the 1990s, Jiang Zemin since 1998, and then Hu Jintao since 2003.26 This system of sectoral management does not appear on formal organizational charts, but has been institutionalized and is now extremely important in policymaking in China.27

25 Author’s interviews with Chinese mid- to high-level central bureaucrats.
With the effort to routinize the policymaking process since Deng’s era, such a representation also became much more institutionalized. For example, the Politburo composition reveals that it is no longer simply the reservoir of the most powerful leaders and their most important protégés. It has become much more an ex officio body, of which members concurrently hold leading positions in the principal bureaucracies. The paramount leader or the Party General Secretary play an important role, especially when there is a gridlock, but as discussed earlier, even the paramount leader or top party leader has to respect the consensus among and opinions of the “specialists.” These specialists typically have built their professional careers in respective ministries or sectors, have extensive institutional networks in the ministries or sectors, and can often provide opinions as experienced technocrats or experts in the field as well.

Such divisions of responsibility not only enhance expertise in policymaking but also guarantee that each sector’s interests are represented in the top decision-making process. As Shirk pointed out, Chinese governmental institutions are structured in a way to encourage expressions of departmental points of view and sectoral interests. Ministries’ explicitly serving their constituents are not regarded in a negative light. Ministries are expected to articulate the interests of the particular sectors they are in charge of, and each leadership group member represents articulated interests and perspectives of a specific sector or ministry in the process of policy-making. This is a “Chinese style of representa-

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27 The sectoral responsibilities are assigned at the Politburo’s first meeting following a party congress. Such divisions of labor are never formally announced, and one can only infer them from media reporting on their public appearances and their career backgrounds. Politburo leaders ordinarily attend and often address work conferences of officials in the policy areas that they monitor on behalf of the Politburo. During inspection tours of areas outside Beijing, their remarks often focus on the areas they are responsible for. For further discussions on the leadership division of labor, see Miller, “Party Politburo Processes Under Hu Jintao,” p. 11.


29 Shirk, The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China.

30 Ibid.
tion” that connects a specific leader at the top to his or her constituencies in the bureaucracy and the party, which, in turn, represents their constituencies in the society. In other words, the “specialization” of leaders in specific issue areas is also a way to achieve representation within the leadership group and obtain policy inputs from key social sectors and groups.

**Implications for National Security Policy Analysis**

The importance of consensus-making among specialized representatives does not mean that the Chinese policymaking at the top leadership level is horizontal, open, and democratic. One cannot deny that the decision-making power in China is highly concentrated in the top leadership group, the paramount leader often has the final say on important policy issues, and the general public is excluded from the policymaking process. However, it is important to understand that even national security policies are made through an increasingly institutionalized process of consensus-making among specialized representatives, who are supposed to represent the voices and interests of key social sectors or groups, and more so under Hu Jintao’s reign.

Therefore, the composition and background of these “specialized representatives” at the top decision-making apparatus provide an important clue to the influence of specific sectors or issue areas in the policymaking process in China. Changes in their composition and background suggest changes in the policy priority at the top policymaking process as well. For example, if the number of security representatives in the top leadership group is more than the number of any other issue areas’ representatives, this is a strong indicator that the security issue area is the top national policy priority of the time. And if all these security representatives are current or retired military officials, there is a very high chance that the voices of the military will influence the security policymaking process and be reflected in the final policy outcomes. This is not simply because of the informal connections or collusions that the officials might have with the military: this is because the

military leaders in the PBSC sit in the security policymaking table as the representatives of the military to reflect the interests and opinions of the military.

Hence, the proportion of military representatives in the security issue area is a strong indicator of military influence in the security policymaking. Although it is not the only or complete barometer of how much influence the military has on the security policymaking, the proportion certainly is an important generalizable clue that leads us into the highly guarded Chinese security policymaking. The following section analyzes the composition and background of representatives specialized in the security issue area within the PBSC, the center of China’s policymaking, between 1992 and 2007. The declining number of the military leaders among the security representatives is an important indicator of the weakening military presence in the policymaking process during this period.

Changing Military Representation in Security Policy-Making

**Waning Military Representation Since the 1990s**

It is true that the military has occupied a special position in China’s political system. In the Chinese party-state, the military has been regarded as an organic part of the political system, not an organization whose interests are separate from or in competition with the party’s.32 The root of this integration lies in the long revolutionary period that lasted more than 20 years before the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), during which time the Party and the army

were intertwined and party leaders performed both political and military functions. Ever since, the PLA had played an important role in both national security and domestic politics in China. The PLA not only fought wars in Korea, on the borders with India and Russia, and in Vietnam, but also played important political roles in the time of domestic turmoil: Mao Zedong called the PLA in to “support the left” during the Cultural Revolution in 1967 and Deng Xiaoping to suppress the Tiananmen demonstration in 1989.33

The PLA’s primary duty is protecting the party; and the CCP has controlled “the gun.” The CCP Central Military Commission (CMC)34 has been firmly in charge of the PLA and always been headed by the paramount leader of the CCP—Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and now Hu Jintao. The CMC is the apex of the PLA command authority, and all decision-making power to deploy armed forces resides with the CMC. Yet, as in other policy issue areas, the real highest-level decision-making authority is in the CCP Central Committee Politburo, and more specifically the PBSC. The PBSC has made major decisions concerning war, armed force, and national defense buildings.35

From Mao’s time until 1982, the PLA achieved a degree of military influence that is probably unprecedented in any 20th-century regime run by civilians, particularly with respect to representation in the top decision-making arena, the CCP politburo.36 Political and military leaders were closely integrated at the uppermost level of decision-making. To begin with, virtually all the old generation party leaders, including the paramount leaders such as Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, had extensive military experience. Through the early 1980s, the CCP Politburo

35 Shambaugh, Modernizing China’s Military, pp. 111–12.
included a high number of incumbent and former PLA members. After the Cultural Revolution, for example, the military had extraordinary representation in the 9th Party Congress leadership, holding 13 of 25 politburo members.37

From the late 1980s, however, this situation began to change dramatically. With Deng’s effort to modernize and professionalize the military, the PLA began to move out of the domestic political arena38 and focus on national security issues. Deng knew that he was the last paramount leader who could exercise personal control over the PLA. He brought in Jiang Zemin as the new CMC chairman after the military involvement in the Tiananmen demonstration. Jiang, who had no formal military experience, was the PLA’s first real civilian paramount leader, and managed to develop an institutional base with Deng’s personal backing.39

With the old generation leaders fading into history40 and the new generation of leaders emerging in the 1990s, the military’s role in domestic politics was no longer what it had been in Deng Xiaoping’s time. Dealing with civil unrest became the responsibility of a separate force called the People’s Armed Police (PAP). Since 1997, even in the foreign and security policy issue area—and especially policies toward Taiwan, where the military has a crucial and legitimate voice—the PLA’s role

38 There was a setback to this effort in 1989 when the PLA was brought in to suppress the Tiananmen demonstration. After 1989, the PLA experienced a period when it enjoyed significantly increased political presence at the center, as it did during the Cultural Revolution. While only 17 percent of the 13th CCP Central committee members were military leaders, 24 percent of the 14th CCP Central Committee members (46 out of 189) were military leaders, the highest percentage of military elites at the CCP Central Committee since 1977. Ibid., ch. 1 & 2; and Li Cheng and Lynn White, “The Army in the Succession to Deng Xiaoping: Familiar Fealties and Technocratic Trends,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 8 (August 1993), pp. 757–86.
40 Mainly the removal of Yang Shangkun from power at the 14th Party Congress and the illness and then death of Deng Xiaoping in 1997.
has been reduced in favor of the central party apparatus, more specifically the Leading Small Group (lingdao xiaozu) on foreign and Taiwan affairs. A Leading Small Group typically consists of a PBSC member and supporting officials, and functions as a bridge between the top leaders and the functionally related party, government, and/or military bureaucracies. The relatively enhanced power of the Leading Small Group means that the role of the specialized and “civilian” representatives in the top leadership group, rather than incumbent or retired military leaders, has increased in the security policymaking process.

An evidence of such a military withdrawal not only from politics but also from foreign and security policymaking can be found in the changing composition of the PBSC. Table 1 shows the 14th PBSC Members between 1992 and 1997 and their official positions. During this period, Jiang Zemin (Party General Secretary and CMC Chairman since 1989), Premier Li Peng (Politburo Standing Committee member in charge of foreign affairs), and two PLA elders, Generals Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen were the key figures in the security policymaking process. According to the consensus rule, the remaining four members of the PBSC—namely, Qiao Shi, Li Ruihuan, Zhu Rongji, and Hu Jintao—certainly expressed their views on national security issues. Yet, following the rule of specialized representation, their role was largely advisory and occasionally advocatory. When it comes to providing inputs on important national security issues, the chief line of contact would be Li Peng, Jiang Zemin, and Liu Huaqing, with some ex officio participation by Zhang Zhen.

One can notice that General Liu Huaqing, a CMC Vice-Chairman, was the only member with a PLA background at the 14th PBSC. There was a division of responsibilities between Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen, overseeing different aspects of defense policy. In charge of weapons production, defense industries, and military diplomacy, Liu Huaqing had overall responsibility for security policy, and managed the PLA’s relationship with the top Party leaders, ensuring that PLA interests were taken into account in the security policymaking. Zhang was in charge

of doctrine, training, deployments, and military education, exercising relatively limited influence on the security policymaking.42

Table 1. 14th Politburo Standing Committee Members (1992-1997)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Official Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jiang Zemin</td>
<td>CCP General Secretary, PRC President, CMC Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Peng</td>
<td>State Council Premier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiao Shi</td>
<td>National People’s Congress (NPC) Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Ruihuan</td>
<td>Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)43 Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhu Rongji</td>
<td>State Council Vice Premier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu Huaqing</td>
<td>CMC Vice Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
<td>CCP Secretariat Secretary, Central Party School President</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This was the last time a uniformed officer held a PBSC post. Table 2 showing the 15th PBSC Members between 1997 and 2002 indicates that military leaders started to stay outside of the PBSC from this period. PRC Vice President Hu Jintao was supposed to represent the PLA interests and concerns in the policymaking process as CMC’s first Vice Chairman. Yet he was a pure “civilian,” who originally was a hydropower engineer and then became party secretaries in local provinces such as Guizhou and Tibet.44 He lacked expertise in military affairs or connections to the

43 The CPPCC is a united front umbrella body. It is an important organ for the development of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC. More information, see http://www.china.org.cn/english/archive_27750.htm.
44 Hu’s only military experience was as the first party secretary of the Tibet and Guizhou military districts between 1985 and 1988.
military and commanded little respect from the military, but the appointment was mandated by protocol. Generals Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian were the key figures who respectively succeeded Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen as the top uniformed leaders and CMC Vice Chairmen. It appears that, while Chi Haotian was responsible for military diplomacy as the Minister of Defense, Zhang Wannian had the authority over all military matters. However, unlike Liu Huaqing who was a PBSC member, even Zhang Wannian was not a PBSC member but only a Politburo member.

Table 2. 15th Politburo Standing Committee Members (1997-2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Official Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jiang Zemin</td>
<td>CCP General Secretary, PRC President, CMC Chairman⁴⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Peng</td>
<td>NPC Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhu Rongji</td>
<td>State Council Premier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Ruihuan</td>
<td>CPPCC Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
<td>PRC Vice President, CMC Vice Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei Jianxing</td>
<td>Central Commission for Discipline Inspection⁴⁹ Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Lanqing</td>
<td>State Council Vice Premier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Military Representation and National Security in Hu’s China

Table 3 presents the members of the 16th PBSC led by Hu Jintao between 2002 and 2007. It includes the leaders of key organs: the paramount leader of the party and the state (Hu Jintao, the CCP general secretary and the PRC President), the Chairman of the NPC (Wu Bang-

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⁴⁵ Shambaugh, Modernizing China’s Military, p. 117.
⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 38–41.
⁴⁷ Nathan and Gilley, China’s New Rulers, p. 250.
⁴⁸ Jiang was the CMC Chairman until September 19, 2004.
⁴⁹ The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection is the CCP’s disciplinary body.
### Table 3. 16th Politburo Standing Committee Members (2002-2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Ranking order)</th>
<th>Official Positions</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hu Jintao</td>
<td>CCP General Secretary, PRC President, CMC Chairman&lt;sup&gt;50&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Party; foreign affairs; the military and major economic policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Bangguo</td>
<td>NPC Chairman</td>
<td>Legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wen Jiabao</td>
<td>State Council Premier</td>
<td>Administration; economic policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jia Qinglin</td>
<td>CPPCC Chairman</td>
<td>United front work; satellite parties and mass associations; religion; ethnic minorities; Taiwan; overseas Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeng Qinghong</td>
<td>CCP Secretariat Secretary, PRC Vice President, Central Party School President</td>
<td>Party building and organization; Hong Kong and Macao affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang Ju</td>
<td>The State Council Vice Premier</td>
<td>Banking and finance; SOE reform and unemployment issues; economic management; manufacturing and transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wu Guanzheng</td>
<td>Central Commission for Discipline Inspection Secretary</td>
<td>Party discipline; anti-corruption; ideology and propaganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Changchun</td>
<td>State councilor, CCP Central Political and Legislative Affairs Committee Secretary</td>
<td>Ideology; media; education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luo Gan</td>
<td>CCP Central Political and Legislative Affairs Committee Secretary</td>
<td>Legal enforcement and domestic security</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Additional information was collected from various Chinese Internet Web sites including http://www.people.com.cn.

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<sup>50</sup> Hu became the CMC Chairman on Sept. 19, 2004, after Jiang Zemin retired from the position.
guo), the Premier of the State Council (Wen Jiabao), the Chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) (Jia Qinglin), the Vice President of the PRC (Zeng Qinghong), the chairman of the party disciplinary body (Wu Guanzheng), and a State Council Vice Premier (Huang Ju). The rest of the standing Committee and the Politburo members include all the rest of the vice premiers (Wu Yi and Ceng Peiyan), two CMC Vice Chairmen (Zhou Yongkang and Cao Gangchuan), heads of key Central Committee bodies, the head of the national trade union body, and the party bosses from six provinces.

Hu Jintao took over the CMC chairmanship from Jiang Zemin in September 2004, confirming the trend toward a purely civilian PLA leadership that began with Jiang Zemin’s accession to power in 1989. One can notice that, although the number of PBSC members has increased from seven to nine, there is no CMC figure in the PBSC other than Hu Jintao, the CMC Chairman. Considering that Hu Jintao is the paramount leader, whose close involvement in the security issue area and assumption of the CMC chairmanship are customary, there practically is no PLA representative in the PBSC, the center of national policymaking. Such lack of military representation is not confined to the PBSC. Of the 24 Politburo members appointed in 2002, none has any meaningful military experience except the two professional military men—Guo Boxiong and Cao Gangchuan—who are two Vice Chairmen of the CMC. Comparing the three generations of the PBSC analyzed in this section, one can find an incremental but continuous reduction in the military representation in the PBSC. Considering the former era when the paramount leaders themselves were also military leaders, the nonexistence of military leaders in the current top leadership group under Hu Jintao is striking.

In addition, Table 3 also shows that, in the division of responsibilities within the 16th PBSC, there is no specialist other than Hu Jintao in charge of national security issues. This certainly does not mean that national security is a trivial issue to the top CCP leaders. Neither does it

51 Again, note that Hu did not assume the CMC chairmanship until December 2004, when Jiang Zemin retired from the position.
mean that the national security issue area is not covered by other leaders. However, the lack of an exclusive specialist suggests that, to the minds of the CCP leaders, national security is not the top priority issue that needs their urgent attention, given the current international security environment. It is possible that they do not intend to make any dramatic changes to the existing national security policy. The division of responsibility among the 16th PBSC members indicates that the most impending policy issues to the current top Chinese leaders are elsewhere: economic reform and maintaining social and regime stability. Hu Jintao, Wen Jiaobao, and Huang Ju are specialized representatives of the economic issue areas, while Zeng Qinghong, Wu Guanzheng, Li Changchun, and Luo Gan are in charge of the party, ideology, and domestic security-related issues.

All in all, Hu’s China is in a significantly different era from the past—not only in terms of the military representation in security policymaking but also of the major policy constituents of the top policymakers. Such changes indicate important shifts in the policy priority order, which have significant implications for China’s security behavior. Now national security by itself is not the foremost goal of policymaking. Other domestic issues, such as economic development and social stability, being the primary concerns to the current Chinese leadership group, the definition of national security also has to actively incorporate the needs to secure domestic development and stability.

Jiang Zemin’s report to the 16th CPC National Congress confirms this exact point. He set a principle to “stick to the guiding principle of coordinated development of national defense and the economy and promote the modernization of national defense and armed forces on the bases of economic development.” China’s White Paper on National Defense published in 2007 also highlights the same point. It emphasizes orchestrating the relationships between development and security, defending the nation’s development interests, and safeguarding important strategic opportunities for national development as the important goals of national defense. In other words, economic development is

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54 PRC Information Office, Zhongguo guofang bao [China’s National Defense in 2006]
an integral part of national security, and national security policies need to be pursued without harming the national economic development interests in today’s China.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to shed new light on the analysis of China’s national security policymaking by focusing on policymaking at the top leadership level. It first showed that policymaking in China, as closed as it is, is not as unique as we often think. Although China is governed by an authoritarian political regime, interest representation is an important principle of policymaking. National security policymaking is not monopolized by the paramount leader, but determined by consensus among several “specialized representatives” within the top leadership group. Then this paper showed that the representation of the military in the core policymaking leadership group, i.e. PBSC, has continuously weakened since the 1990s. Under Jiang Zemin and now Hu Jintao, China has attained thoroughly civilian leadership over both its political and military hierarchies for the first time in nearly a century.55

The findings of this paper reveal significant changes in the national security policymaking in China. With the increased institutionalization of decentralized policymaking in general and the waning representation of the PLA in the security policymaking in particular, China’s strategic choices will be made by the civilian leaders, whose major concerns are not the interests or opinions of the military. The key difference is the leaders’ major policy constituencies. In devising national security policy, these civilian leaders are more likely to be influenced by other important considerations, such as economic development and social stability, than by the losses and gains in strictly military terms. They are also likely to seriously consider the harm a hostile or radical security behavior can cause to their domestic constituents, such as the financial sector or export industries.

It is an exaggerated fear to see that China, governed by an authori-
tarian and communist regime, is prone to radical or military action that could threaten international security. What is often overlooked in the China threat debate is that China’s remarkable economic growth has been made possible by its engagement with and dependence on the capitalist world outside. The bright expectations of gains from peaceful economic cooperation are likely to have a strong appeal to the civilian security policymakers of China as much as they do to the policymakers in other political contexts. It seems inevitable that China will pursue a national security policy that can maintain peaceful coexistence with its economic partners and enable continuous national economic development, at least in the foreseeable future.

56 Kim, “Chinese Foreign Policy in Theory and Practice.”