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# China's Foreign- and Security-policy Decision-making Processes under Hu Jintao

Jean-Pierre Cabestan

**Abstract:** Since 1979, foreign- and security-policy-making and implementation processes have gradually and substantially changed. New modes of operation that have consolidated under Hu Jintao, actually took shape under Jiang Zemin in the 1990s, and some, under Deng Xiaoping. While the military's role has diminished, that of diplomats, experts, and bureaucracies dealing with trade, international economic relations, energy, propaganda and education has increased. Decision making in this area has remained highly centralized and concentrated in the supreme leading bodies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). However, China's globalization and decentralization, as well as the increasing complexity of its international interests, have intensified the need to better coordinate the activities of the various CCP and state organs involved in foreign and security policy; hence, the growing importance of the CCP leading small groups (foreign affairs, national security, Taiwan, etc.). But the rigidity of the current institutional pattern has so far foiled repeated attempts to establish a National Security Council.

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**Keywords:** China, foreign policy, decision-making, leading small groups, national security council

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## Introduction

There is no reason to think that under Hu Jintao, China's foreign and security policy is made and implemented very differently than under his predecessor Jiang Zemin.<sup>1</sup> Since Mao Zedong's death in 1976 and Deng Xiaoping's retirement in 1993-1994, major changes have taken place in this realm, resulting from reforms made to the country's political system and economic organization: the military's role has diminished; while that of diplomats, foreign-policy and security experts, and trade bureaucracies has increased; focus on international economic relations, energy, propaganda, and education has been accentuated; provinces and major cities have developed their own external links – and therefore local foreign policy; and on the whole, foreign- and security-policy decision-making processes have become less secretive.

Actually, these trends have been perceptible since the beginning of the reforms, in 1978-1979. For instance, Deng played a crucial role in initiating a professionalization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) – gradually decreasing the authority of the generals within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership – and, simultaneously, revived the activities of the CCP's foreign-affairs bureaucracy – the Central Committee's International (Liaison) Department (*Zhongyang duiwai lianluo bu*) (Shambaugh 2007a: 26-54). He also sent diplomats and experts more frequent invitations to important meetings. And the significant decentralization introduced by Deng himself allowed – arguably for the first time since 1949 – major localities to establish their own international cooperation networks.

However, there has also been a lot of continuity in foreign- and security-policy decision-making processes in the People's Republic of China (PRC). For one thing, monopolized by a political organization, the CCP, political power and decision making in this area have consistently been highly centralized and concentrated in the supreme CCP leading bodies, such as the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), the Central Military Commission (CMC) and various leading groups dealing with foreign affairs, in particular the Central Committee (CC or CCPC)'*s* Foreign Affairs Work Leading Small Group (*Zhonggong zhongyang waishi gongzuo lingdao xiaozu*, FAWLSG), all chaired by China's paramount leader. True, in the 1980s, the FAWLSG was chaired by Li Xiannian, PRC president from 1983 to 1988, and later by Yang Shangkun (PRC

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1 I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable remarks.

president from 1988 to 1993) and Premier Li Peng (1993 to 1998), but its role was then secondary; at least until it was taken over by Jiang Zemin in 1998 (Barnett 1985; Lu 2001: 40, 45-46). State institutions, such as the PRC presidency (held by the CCP General Secretary since 1993), the Foreign Ministry or (more recently) the Ministry of Commerce (MOC), play a role in foreign- and security-policy decision making hard to disconnect from that of the CCP and the position their respective leaders hold in the Party (this is even more so the case of the CCP/ International Department (CCP/ ID)).

The reader will have noticed that I have deliberately used the plural form “processes” since, depending on the nature and importance of an issue, processes have always varied: apparently decisions have at times been made collectively, and at others by the country’s “Number One” the PBSC, the CMC or a specific leading group. A well-known and rather well-documented case of individual initiative was Deng Xiaoping’s decision at the end of 1978 to normalize relations with the USA in spite of an unresolved disagreement about the continuation of US arms sales to Taiwan. However, many other cases of decisions are based on more speculative sources (Tyler 1999: 269). Similarly, I have associated foreign policy and security policy because of a persistent difficulty in differentiating between the two: internal and external security preoccupations have consistently influenced foreign-policy making, especially since the early 2000s, when soft-security considerations entered into the Chinese leadership’s global calculus and policies.

It should also be stressed that foreign and security policy-making processes are still largely opaque and it remains difficult – if not impossible – to propose an accurate description of the power loci where decisions are actually made and approved.

If we are looking for a rupture, a qualitative change in foreign and security decision-making processes, it probably happened in 1993, when for the first time, Jiang Zemin, a leader without a military background nor rich experience in international affairs, appointed CCP Secretary General in the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre (June 1989), finally took the reins of ultimate power (including in the areas of foreign and security policy) from Deng Xiaoping. Jiang subsequently became chairman – or director (*zuzhang*) – of the CCPCC Taiwan Affairs Leading Small Group (*Zhonggong zhongyang Taiwan shiwu lingdao xiaozu* (TALSG)), a key symbol and attribute of power. Although Jiang succeeded Deng as CCP CMC Chairman in November 1989, it was only four years later

(1992), following Deng's successful purge of the powerful brothers Yang – both generals – (CMC vice-chairman Yang Shangkun and CMC Secretary General Yang Baibing), and his eventual retirement, due to declining health, that Jiang became China's genuine paramount leader. And Jiang's power consolidation took some time: still rather weak in 1995-1996, he managed, only in 1998, to replace Li Peng as the chairman of the FAWLSG, a leading group that subsequently became a stronger power locus. Two years later, attempting to better manage international crises (potentially involving China), he established and chaired a new CCPC National Security Work Leading Small Group (*Zhonggong zhongyang guojia anquan gongzuo lingdao xiaozu* (NSWLSG)) (Miller 2008b: 10).

We will argue, therefore, that China's foreign- and security-policy decision-making processes are not fundamentally different under Hu than under Jiang. It is true that, at one stage, Jiang toyed with the idea of establishing a national security council (NSC); while Hu tried, apparently without much more success, to partially attribute this role to the CCP Central Secretariat between 2004 and 2007. Both leaders, however, had to fall back on the NSWLSG created in 2000. It is impossible to ignore the fact that Jiang's decision to cling to the CMC chairmanship until 2004, after having retired from the position of General Secretary in 2002, made the Jiang-to-Hu transition anything but smooth. Nevertheless, elected PRC president in March 2003, Hu was able – as early as May – to take (the aforementioned) control of the three key CCP leading groups, and in September 2004 finally became CMC chair. On the whole, Hu inherited a set of decision-making bodies and chains of command already consolidated by Jiang in the late 1990s. Most analysts agree that Jiang was initially a rather weak leader as far as foreign- and security policy was concerned, in particular, at the time of the Taiwan missile crisis (1995-1996) but managed to gradually strengthen his hand later, particularly in the years 1998-2002 after he took over at the FAWLSG (Zhao 1999: 8; Swaine 2001: 319-327; Finkelstein 2000; Shirk 2007: 192).

To be sure, under Hu, foreign and security policy continues to be made, formally, by collective power loci – first by the PBSC or the PB – who (as a group) take into consideration recommendations from various bureaucracies, in particular the Foreign Ministry, the MOC and the CCP/ ID. However, like Jiang (after 1998), Hu has played a crucial role, both in the leading groups he chairs, and in inviting CMC members and designated experts to participate in PBSC or PB meetings when he deems it necessary. In other words, as we will see, the Chinese “General

Secretary-President-Commander in Chief” enjoys maneuver room in orienting the debate, carefully preparing foreign- and security-policy decisions to be made, and presumably, in most cases, imposing his choices.

## The Role of the CCP’s Leading Organs

Key foreign- and security-policy choices must be formally approved by the PBSC, a body which – since 2002 – has appointed the nine most powerful CCP leaders to occupy, *ex officio*, China’s principal real or formal power loci (Lu 2001: 39-60).<sup>2</sup> Officially elected by the CC, and co-opted through much bargaining by the outgoing Party leadership, the PBSC is an unusual body for a communist party (to the author’s knowledge, the only other example is that of the Korean Workers’ Party (KWP) of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPKK)). Collective power is traditionally exerted by the Political Bureau (PB) and the CC’s Secretariat.

But in China, the PB (comprised of 25 members since October 2007) does not meet frequently enough to approve every major foreign- or security-policy decision – probably once a month or, at most, every fortnight – although Hu occasionally organizes expanded PB meetings during which his personally invited outside-experts may present their views (interviews 2006; interviews 2008).<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that, since its restoration in 1980, following the Cultural Revolution, the Secretariat (comprised of six members since 2007) no longer plays a key role in foreign and security affairs; its principal role consists of coordinating

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2 The nine members (in protocol order) of the PBSC, since the Seventeenth CCP Congress in October 2007, have been: Hu Jintao, General Secretary, PRC President and CMC Chairman (since 2002, 2003, and 2004 respectively); Wu Bangguo, the National People’s Congress (NPC) Chairman (since 2003); Wen Jiabao, Premier (since 2003); Jia Qinglin, Chairman of the China People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) (since 2003); Li Changchun, the leader in charge of propaganda; Xi Jinping, PRC Vice-President and CCP Secretariat No. 1 (Zeng Qinghong between 2003 and 2008); Li Keqiang, First Vice-Premier (since 2008); He Guoqiang, CCP Central Discipline Inspection Commission Secretary (since October 2007); and Zhou Yongkang, CCP Political and Legal Affairs Commission Secretary (since November 2007). Li, He, and Zhou travel abroad less frequently than do the other six members of the PBSC.

3 All personal interviews with Chinese officials and scholars were conducted with the understanding that the interviewees’ anonymity would be respected.

the activities of the major CC departments and commissions (e.g., propaganda, organization, united front, international liaison and discipline inspections). Prior to 1992, and between 1997 and 2007, the Secretariat included a member of the military charged with coordinating Party work in the PLA; however, no leader specifically headed foreign affairs. Since 2002, the Secretariat – relatively smaller – has concentrated its activities on Party affairs; as they are only occasionally reported, we know neither the frequency nor agenda of its meetings. It is also worth noting that, since 1987, the Secretariat is no longer chaired by the General Secretary, but by an Executive Secretary – at present, Xi Jinping. Since 2007, Xi has been involved in foreign affairs, however, the CCP/ID – headed since 2003 by Wang Jiarui – reports both to the Secretariat and the PBSC. This “two [-centers] pattern” is underscored by Wang Jiarui’s inclusion in the FAWLSG chaired by Hu (Miller 2008a: 6).

Although the PBSC’s leaders wield uneven degrees of influence (“Number Two” Wu Bangguo and “Number Four” Jia Qinglin are probably less powerful) its members, including Wu and Jia, are among the leaders who travel abroad most frequently. For instance, the National People’s Congress (NPC) Chairman Wu – in charge of parliamentary diplomacy – is sometimes asked to convey important policy messages through that channel. For his part, Jia, as the China People’s Political Consultative Conference chairman, plays an important role on a number of issues involving united front work (e.g., Taiwan, overseas Chinese nationals, and relations with developing countries). Often briefed by the foreign ministry, the CCP/ID or PLA leaders (and CMC members) on foreign- and security-policy matters, the PBSC probably meets weekly to endorse a wide range of decisions in this domain (interviews 2006; interviews 2008).

However, even the PBSC rarely debates military issues as such – unless addressing international crises involving China. The CCP CMC is an eleven-member body (which the state CMC copycats) that, although chaired by the General Secretary, is comprised – exclusively – of military leaders representing (again *ex officio*) the main departments and sectors of the PLA. Established in March 1983, the state CMC membership is identical to the Party CMC. It is however renewed a few months after the latter. For instance, Hu was appointed Party CMC chairman in September 2004 but elected state CMC chairman by the NPC in March 2005. This delay does not seem to be a source of concern for the Chinese leadership since the Party CMC prevails and (de facto) forces the state CMC

members to retire before the NPC formally elects the new state CMC. (interviews 2006; interviews 2008).

The PB discusses military matters even more rarely. For instance, between 2002 and 2004 – arguably a time of transition – there were only two reports of PB “study meetings” debating such matters. While certain PLA experts are occasionally invited to brief the PB in the context of an “expanded” or “study meeting” format, it is not likely that actual decisions are made or even endorsed during these meetings. The first of the two “study meetings” took place in May 2003 and focused on the big powers’ military modernization programs and the PLA’s modernization priorities, while the second one, held in July 2004, discussed the coordination between economic development and military modernization. Some Military Science Academy researchers took part in the first and Armament Department and COSTIND (Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense) representatives in the second. PLA officers can also be asked to attend Politburo meetings in order to present their respective analyses of non-military subjects. For example, in August 2005, some Military Science Academy researchers were invited to a PB meeting dealing with “national unity and patriotism in view of WWII and [the] anti-Japanese war experience” (Miller 2006).

## The Preeminent Role of the Country’s General Secretary-President-Commander in Chief

Both Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao have exerted a preeminent role in foreign- and security-policy decision-making processes due to what Chinese political scientists call the “three in one” (*sambeyi*) principle or organizational model. Since 1989, the CCP General Secretary has held the CMC chairmanship and – since 1993 – the PRC presidency. While it is true that Jiang provisionally suspended this formula in November 2002, deciding to retain the CMC chairmanship; it was restored in September 2004 and will probably not be questioned again. The formula seeks to better coordinate foreign- and security-policy decision-making processes by permitting the country’s Number One, on the one hand, to be appointed (*ipso facto*) commander in chief and, on the other hand – less importantly – as president, to be received abroad (particularly in democratic countries) with the protocol reserved for heads of state. Interestingly, the Soviet Union enacted in 1977 a new state constitution that

included a similar formula, allowing Brezhnev – in all circumstances – to be regarded as a head of state, a treatment that he enjoyed a great deal.

Upon election as PRC president (March 2003), Hu replaced Jiang as chair of the three major CCP leading groups dealing with foreign and security affairs, thereby clipping Jiang's wings and making any long-term “*cobabitation à la chinoise*” at the top of the CCP a risky venture (Cabestan 2004).

In this regard, it is worth noting that Hu apparently did not take control of these leading groups in the immediate aftermath of the Sixteenth Party Congress in November 2002, but only after he became head of state, a purely honorific position. While it would be unwise to jump to the conclusion that the state presidency has become a source of power, and it should be stressed that leading groups are Party and non-officially-recognized organs, this sequence of events probably demonstrates a growing willingness to enhance the role of the state constitution.

Linked to this development, in March 2004 an amendment to the state constitution was introduced, declaring that the “president conducts state affairs” (*Guojia zhubu jinxing guoshi*) (Article 81). Enacted when Jiang was still CMC chairman, one can speculate that it was a stratagem deployed by Hu to enhance his personal power over both civilian and military “state affairs” particularly in foreign and security policy. Was it a means to institutionalize the president's supremacy over government? So far, this change has had no impact on the Party-State relationship but, may become more meaningful, if – one day in the future – China follows a path similar to the Soviet Union's under Gorbachev (Chen 2004: 22).

In any event, the Secretary General-President-Commander in Chief exerts preeminent and ultimate power in foreign and security affairs. This concentration of power is not surprising for a country that claims to be a great power, and possesses both nuclear weapons and ambitions to compete with the United States of America; such a concentration of power is a feature common to all countries that have acquired or claim world influence. However, owing to the opacity of the CCP-led political system, Hu Jintao's personal powers are much harder to delineate than those of Barack Obama, Angela Merkel or Nicolas Sarkozy.

## The Grooming of the Vice President

The PRC Vice President does not hold any specific powers in deciding foreign or security policy apart from his participation in relevant PBSC

deliberations. According to the constitution, the vice president “assists the president in his work” (Article 84) without assigning him any particular role. Having said that, since being elected vice president in March 2008 – and “Number Six” in the CCP leadership – Xi Jinping has been involved in foreign-policy activities and has clearly been groomed to succeed Hu Jintao by 2012-2013 (more so than was his immediate predecessor, Zeng Qinghong, considered too close to Jiang Zemin to ever be fully trusted by – let alone to succeed – Hu).

As we know, Zeng played an important role on various issues such as Hong Kong, Japan, and the Korean peninsula. Xi assumed some of these responsibilities and, immediately following his promotion to the PBSC, began meeting with foreign dignitaries. Since November 2007, he has been charged with Hong Kong and Macau affairs (Miller 2008b: 11) and, in this capacity, visited both Special Administrative Regions (SARs) in October 2008.

However, Xi has been given greater responsibilities than was Zeng. Since November 2007, he has been deputy chairman of the FAWLSG (while Zeng’s membership in this group was contested) (Miller 2008b: 10); in February 2008, was named to coordinate preparatory work for the Beijing Olympics – with its multiple foreign-policy and security implications – and in June 2008, made his first official visit abroad, to North Korea and Mongolia. He has recently completed several trips abroad, to the Caribbean and Latin America (in February 2009). Although he apparently does not have an official seat in the TALSG, he possibly has a say on Taiwan affairs since he acquired experience in this area when posted in Fujian.

Of course, like Zeng Qinghong (between 2003 and 2008) and Hu Jintao (in 1998-1999), Xi is not a CMC member. However, contrary to Zeng, Xi has been approved as Hu’s potential successor and will probably be integrated in the CMC before taking power in 2012-2013. In other words, while Xi must regularly report to Hu on Hong Kong and Macau affairs, his visits abroad, and cannot make any major foreign-policy decision by himself, he is already groomed as the PRC’s future Number One and is today, therefore, in a better position than other PBSC members to influence Hu’s policies.

## Confirmation of the Military's and the CMC's Diminishing Role

As early as 1992, following Deng's decision to groom Hu as his successor and to retain Jiang as General Secretary, the CMC became a purely military decision-making body. The CMC subsequently began including (with the exception of the CCP General Secretary) only top military leaders and those representing the PLA's main organs *ex officio*: the General Chief of Staff, the Defense Ministry, the General Political Department and the Logistics Department. All leaders who, like Yang Shangkun, had held positions in both the Party and the PLA subsequently retired. In 1998, the director of the newly formed Armament Department joined the CMC; followed by Hu – in 1999 – a year after being appointed PRC Vice-President. By the end of the 1990s, the CMC's role in foreign-policy matters had already diminished, except during periods of international crises having a specific military dimension (notably, the 1995-1996 Taiwan missile crisis, the 1999 Taiwan “mini-crisis”, and the EP-3 incident in 2001) (Tai 2001). But, even in such cases, decisions were made not by the CMC, but in PBSC meetings to which some CMC members had been invited at the discretion of the General Secretary. This is not to say that PLA leaders refrained from raising opposition and attempts to exert pressure, but already in the late 1990s, Jiang was in a stronger position to resist their demands, and to enforce decisions made by a larger circle of top civilian and military leaders, in which the military's voice was just one of many (as in 1999).

After taking the reins of the CMC in September 2004, Hu expanded this body to include commanders of the Navy, Air Force, and Second Artillery, turning Mao's old powerbase into a kind of “National Defense Council” which dealt, increasingly, with strictly military and hard-security issues. This does not, however, signify a loss of influence by CMC and military leaders on certain key foreign-policy issues where they perceive there to be a strong security dimension, as in relations with the USA or Taiwan. For instance, in July 2005, a year after Chen Shui-bian's first referendum and reelection in March 2004, Major General Zhu Chenghu, dean of the National Defense University's Institute for Strategic Studies – trying apparently to convince the CCP leadership to adopt a more aggressive policy towards the USA and to renege upon its non-first-strike principle – threatened to hit America with nuclear weapons if the USA

decided to intervene militarily in an armed conflict over Taiwan. He was quoted as saying:

If the Americans draw their missiles and position-guided ammunition into the target zone on China's territory, I think we will have to respond with nuclear weapons [...] If the Americans are determined to interfere [...] we will be determined to respond, and we Chinese will prepare ourselves for the destruction of all cities east of Xian [...] Of course the Americans will have to be prepared that hundreds of, or two hundreds of, [or] even more cities will be destroyed by the Chinese (*Wall Street Journal* 2005).

However, not only was Zhu later disciplined for his remarks, but his attempt to influence the CCP top leadership failed. Hu had already embarked upon a more flexible policy towards Taiwan that, instead, concentrated on taking advantage of the deep divisions on the island (Cabezan 2009). This example tends to demonstrate that Hu has been even more habile than Jiang in withstanding pressure from the most conservative elements of the military.

Of course, like his predecessor, Hu must grant the PLA greater benefits than did either Mao or Deng, in order to secure its allegiance (Scobell 2006). Military leaders participating in the CMC (and – informally – in PBSC or PB meetings), continue to have a say in foreign and security matters affecting their missions and interests: land and maritime border issues, the United States of America, Taiwan, Japan, Russia, India, non-proliferation, and space. Moreover, the CMC's role remains unclear: neither are the meetings publicly reported nor the subjects they discuss known.

However, the CMC is no longer the “National Security Council” that it occasionally was under Mao or even, Deng. In PBSC or PB meetings and in those leading groups where they are officially seated (like the one concerning Taiwan), military leaders constitute a minority: while their views might be taken into account, they exert absolutely no decisive influence on the decision-making process. In 1982, six military leaders sat on the PB. The last PLA leader with a seat in the PBSC was Admiral Liu Huaqing who retired in 1997. Today, as in Jiang's era, only the two most-senior military leaders – Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou – are PB members and none are PBSC members.

And, while – until October 2007 – General Xu Caihou, then head of the PLA General Political Department, was a member of the CCP Central Secretariat, since then only civilian leaders have constituted this or-

gan. After the reestablishment of the Central Secretariat in 1980, the PLA representative in this body was in most cases the General Political Department Director: Yu Qiuli (1982-1987), Yang Baibing (1989-1992) and Xu Caihou (2002-2007). In 1980-1982, the chief of the general staff (Yang Dezhi) represented the PLA in the Secretariat. In 1982, deputy-chief of the general staff Yang Yong was also promoted to the Secretariat but was not replaced after his sudden death in 1983. And between 1997 and 2002, Zhang Wannian, the PLA's top military leader and CMC vice-chairman, was a member of the Secretariat, in order to better coordinate the PLA and CCP crisis management after increasing tension in the Taiwan Strait in 1996. There was no military representative in the Secretariat between 1987 and 1989, and 1992 and 1997.

The decreasing representation of the military in senior Party decision-making bodies has been one of the direct consequences of the PLA's professionalization. Today, below the PLA's top echelons, military careers follow a regular, even predictable trajectory (Allen and Corbett Jr. 2004). Although all officers are CCP members – 19 per cent of CC members and nine per cent of NPC delegates are members of the military – PLA generals are less inclined to be involved in political affairs. Nevertheless, in the eventuality of a political or regime crisis, the military would have no choice but to participate, and the role it played, as well as the side taken, would have a decisive impact on the outcome. Thus, the PLA's professionalization renders it a legitimizing force, ever-ready to follow any majority taking shape at the head of the civilian leadership, as long as it perceived that majority to be legitimate.

That said, the evolution toward professionalization has also fed increased self-governance by the military, precipitating increasing dysfunction and difficulties with the outside world. The PLA has developed its own system of international relations (if not diplomacy) based mainly on arms transfers (acquisitions and sales), joint military exercises with an increased number of nations, and a growing participation in Peace-Keeping Operations (PKOs). Since China restructured its weapon industry in 1998 and its enactment of further arms export-control regulations – due to USA pressure (in the early 2000s) –, better coordination among military and civilian governmental agencies (COSTIND, the PLA general staff and the Foreign Ministry) has taken shape. However, this coordination can hardly be characterized as smooth and comprehensive (Kan 2009).

Weapon-manufacturing and export industries (Xinshidai, Great Wall, NORINCO, and China North Industries Incorporated et al.) tend to follow their respective interests and do not always toe the government line in terms of arms transfers (e.g., Chinese light-weapons and small-arms exports to Africa) (Amnesty International 2006). Rivalry among military agencies is well known (as in the case of the PLA Armament Department and the Defense Ministry's Foreign Affairs Office) (Service Canadien du Renseignement de Sécurité 2003). And in spite of growing awareness of the problem, it remains difficult to assess the role of the Foreign Ministry (the signatory agency to the UN conventions on arms controls) in China's arms exports vis-à-vis the COSTIND, the PLA general staff and, indeed, the CMC (UNODA 2005).

Since March 2008, the COSTIND has become subordinate to the [Super-] Ministry of Industry and Information (*Gongye he xinxihua bu*) (since renamed the Science and Technology Industries for National Defense Bureau) and lost its ministerial status; this new arrangement may strengthen the civilian – and political – coordination of Chinese arms transfers. However, this fresh restructuring also underscores the lingering resistance of the “PLA Inc” to dictums emanating from the State Council (as opposed to the CMC).

The weak link in any such organizational pattern is that successful coordination finally depends upon General Secretary-Commander in Chief, Hu Jintao, himself; hence the on-going debate (since the late 1990s), on the need to strengthen military-civilian coordination and establish a US-type “national security council”. However, so far, because of deep bureaucratic traditions and rivalries, no “NSC *à la chinoise*” has been established, perpetuating the “leading-group” pattern in foreign and security affairs and other areas.

## The Failed Attempt to Establish a National Security Council and the Creation of a National Security Leading Small Group

The idea to create a NSC (*Guojia anquan weiyuanhui*) dates to the 1996 Taiwan missile crisis. Although there has been much conflicting information surrounding this project and the establishment (around 1999-2000) of the CCPCC NSWLSG, the Chinese authorities have acknowledged the existence of just such a group – at least since 2008 (Chinese Government's official web portal 2008) and sometimes under a slightly dif-

ferent name, the “National Security Leading Small Group” (*Zhongyang guojia anquan lingdao xiaozu*) (Miller 2008b: 10).

After the missile crisis, the CCP leadership’s first response to the need for better preparedness and coordination in managing international crises was to strengthen the Central Secretariat. In September 1997, at the Fifteenth Party Congress, General Zhang Wannian was appointed to this body. But this proved to be an insufficient measure for the previously mentioned reasons. Therefore, in 1999, after the NATO bombing of the PRC embassy in Belgrade (in May of the same year), a nine-member NSC preparatory group (*Choubei xiaozu*) was constituted, comprised of six civilian leaders: Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, NPC chair Li Peng, Premier Zhu Rongji, propaganda czar Li Ruihuan, and the vice-premier in charge of foreign affairs, Qian Qichen; in addition to three PLA generals: Defense Minister Zhang Wannian, Chi Haotian, and Xiong Guangkai, the deputy chief of staff in charge of intelligence. According to some sources, this group should have been given full CNS status at the Sixteenth CCP Congress in November 2002. Another source indicated that the NSC preparatory group – comprised of only three leaders: Zeng Qinghong, Zhang Wannian, and Wu Bangguo, the NPC chairman – was established as early as September 1997 (interview 2003). However, Jiang’s intention to stay on as CMC chair directly contributed to the plan’s demise.

A NSWLSG (*Zhonggong zhongyang guojia anquan gongzuo lingdao xiaozu*, [distinct from the preparatory group]) was established in September 2000 or a bit later (Xinsheng.net 2000; Miller 2008b: 10). It was rumoured that it included Jiang Zemin, Zhu Rongji, Hu Jintao, Zeng Qinghong (as the group’s general secretary), and Qian Qichen. It reportedly played an instrumental role in managing the EP3 incident (for this reason, it is probable and logical that Zhang Wannian actively participated in this group; although this has never been proved) (Miller 2008b: 10).<sup>4</sup> Responsible for both China’s “domestic” and “international” security, the group’s chairmanship was transferred from Jiang to Hu as early as November 2002 and its membership then, modified (Xinsheng.net 2000; Ding 2002). And according to other sources, this group’s name was “leading group for the management of sudden crises” (*Zhongyang tufa weiji chuli lingdao xiaozu*).

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4 Miller just indicates that Jiang Zemin and Qian Qichen then belonged to this group.

Although this group had two vice presidents (Zeng Qinghong and Premier Wen Jiabao), PRC Vice President Zeng continued to manage its day-to-day operations, up until the Seventeenth Party Congress in October 2007. The group also included CMC vice-chairman Guo Boxiong; Public Security Minister Zhou Yongkang; State Security Minister Xu Yongye; Liu Jing, the “Bureau 610” director (in charge of the struggle to stamp out the Falun Gong); Foreign Minister and then State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan; Chen Yunlin, director of the TAO and Wang Gang, the director of the powerful CCP General Office (*Zhongyang bangongting*), underscoring its dual – internal and external – mission. And finally, in March 2003, Li Zhaoxing, the new foreign minister, joined the group (Ching 2002; Lam 2003; Miller 2008b: 10).<sup>5</sup>

After acceding to the CMC chairmanship in September 2004, Hu did try to revive the NSC plan, establishing a new five-person preparatory committee which included Wu Bangguo, the new NPC chair; Luo Gan, the PBSC member then in charge of domestic security; Guo Boxiong; Zhou Yongkang, then Minister of Public Security, and Wang Gang, the then-director of the CCP Central General Office. However, as early as May 2005, persisting rivalries over the NSC membership once again stalled the project (interview 2005).

In 2007, several insiders indicated that it was Hu Jintao’s intention to try the “Secretariat option” once again, and to beef up its military component (between 2002 and 2007 Xu Caihou was the sole military representative) (interview 2007b). Nevertheless, exactly the opposite occurred at the Seventeenth Party Congress: the Secretariat became a totally civilian body, forcing Hu to count on either the CMC or the more traditional CCP leading groups to conduct and coordinate China’s foreign and security policy.

After October 2007, the NSWLSG was reorganized to include the newly promoted leaders, and although no official listing has – so far – been published, we can surmise that Premier Wen Jiabao and Vice President Xi Jinping hold seats. Interestingly enough, Dai Bingguo – who, in March 2008, was promoted State Councillor in charge of foreign affairs – was then confirmed director of this leading group’s office, a position he has held officiously since 2005 (he became director of the FAWLSG

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5 Miller indicates that the reshuffle took place in December 2002 and only confirms the membership then of Hu (head), Wen, and Zeng (deputy heads).

office the same year).<sup>6</sup> (Chinese Government's official web portal 2008; Miller 2008b: 10). This double appointment is worth noting since it was an attempt to resolve tensions between the NSWLSG and the FAWLSG (Lewis and Xue 2006). Alice Miller claims that the groups' memberships have been identical, following the well-known and customary CCP institutional model "two signboards, one body" (*Liang kuai pai zi, yi tao jigou*). The domestic role of the NSWLSG may have diminished and it cannot, in any case, duplicate the daunting job of the Central Commission for Comprehensive Social Order, chaired since November 2007 by internal-security czar Zhou Yongkang. However, although a certain degree of overlap persists, the reality of a complete merger continues to be contested: the NSWLSG's and the FAWLSG's respective memberships remain differentiated in part, with each leading group pursuing a distinct and individual mission (interviews 2008).

## The Other Leading Small Groups

Obviously, Hu Jintao still relies on LSGs to discuss and decide foreign- and security-policy matters; however, they are not empowered to make final decisions, and even their proposals must be formally endorsed by the PBSC (Hamrin 1992: 101; Kim 2003); and arguably, on purely military issues the CMC continues to act independently. However, the LSGs remain the most convenient and appropriate loci in which to prepare, coordinate, implement – and actually make many – foreign- and security-policy decisions. For this reason, their number and role have increased under Hu Jintao, although much of the information related to these CCP structures remains off the record, and therefore subject to conflict.

At present, in addition to the NSWLSG, three major leading groups deal directly with foreign affairs – respectively with foreign affairs, Taiwan, and Hong Kong and Macau. The globalization of China's economy has also increased the international role of LSGs in charge of finance and economy, energy issues, and global warming.

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6 Dai Bingguo has had an unusual career: trained in Russian, he occupied various positions, including in the ex-Soviet Union (1969-1973), before being promoted vice-foreign minister in 1993. However, in 1995 he became deputy director of the CCP/ID that he headed from 1997 to 2003. Then he returned to the foreign ministry, became Party Secretary of the ministry but never Foreign Minister because the leadership preferred to appoint Li Zhaoxing to this position. In 2008, he was directly promoted state councillor in charge of foreign affairs.

Between March 2003 and October 2007, among those added to the FAWLSG roster were two officials – acknowledged as being not particularly close to Hu – Ms. Wu Yi, the vice-premier charged with international economic relations and Zeng Qinghong. However, this did not preclude the group continuing its activity and the integration of new figures like Dai Bingguo (Lampton 2001: 45ff.). Subsequent to the Seventeenth Party Congress, the FAWLSG was drastically reshuffled and probably expanded to, once again, include – as in the late 1990s – a number of military leaders thus, feeding new speculation of its purported fusion with the NSWLSG. At that moment, Xi Jinping was promoted FAWLSG deputy chair and simultaneously, Premier Wen Jiabao apparently left the group. Defense Minister Liang Guanglie and the deputy chief of staff in charge of intelligence, Ma Xiaotian, have held seats on the FAWLSG at least since 2008. Other members belonging to this LSG today, include the FAWLSG office director Dai Bingguo; Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi; PB member and Propaganda Department director Liu Yunshan; Director of the CCP/ ID Wang Jiarui; Minister of Commerce Chen Deming; Minister of Public Security Meng Jianzhu; Minister of State Security Geng Huichang, and the director of the Overseas Chinese Office Li Haifeng (Miller 2008b: 10).

Until 2003, the TAWLSG became increasingly security-oriented: in addition to officials who deal with Taiwan on a daily basis, like the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) Chairman Wang Daohan and Chen Yunlin, the TAO director; the group included Xiong Guangkai, deputy chief of staff in charge of intelligence and Minister of State Security Xu Yongyue (Cabestan and Vermander 2005: 113-117). The TAWLSG's security dimension is as crucial as ever, but after Hu took over as chair, membership diversified and expanded – enhancing its united front (relations with non-communists) as well as its economic tasks and objectives. Hu promoted CPPCC chairman Jia Qinglin to TAWLSG vice-chair in March 2003, and asked both CMC Vice-Chair and PB member General Guo Boxiong, and Ms. Liu Yandong, then director of the CCP United Front Department to join this group. Coordination with the foreign ministry was also improved; State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan was then appointed TAWLSG's secretary general.

These trends were confirmed after the Seventeenth Party Congress; the TAWLSG's membership expanded from ten to thirteen, although conflicting reports exist. According to Miller, the TAWLSG, in addition to Hu Jintao, Jia Qinglin and Ms. Liu Yandong now includes four other

top civilian leaders: PB member and Vice-Premier, Wang Qishan; Wang Gang, former director of the CCP General Office and secretary of the working committee of the organs directly under the CCPCC; Liu Yunshan, director of the CCP Propaganda Department and Tang Jiaxuan's successor, Dai Bingguo. From the military, Guo Boxiong and Xiong Guangkai's successor, Ma Xiaotian, continue to represent the PLA in this group. Chen Yunlin, the new ARATS chairman; Wang Yi, his successor at the TAO; Du Qinglin, director of the United Front Department since 2007; and State Security Minister, Geng Huichang also belong (*ex officio*) to the TAWLSG. Although, some reports list additional officials on the membership rolls we can assume that, while perhaps invited to attend some of TAWLSG meetings, they are not official permanent members (Ding 2008). For instance, officials Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, Minister of Commerce Chen Deming, Education Minister Zhou Ji, Party Secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology Li Xuenong, Minister of Transport Li Shenglin and Minister of Agriculture Sun Zhengcai probably attended the first enlarged meeting of the TAWLSG in May 2008.

Despite the unreliability of various reports, we do know that the three major LSGs dealing with foreign and security affairs are closely intertwined: their memberships overlap and vary according to specific meeting agenda.

After Zeng Qinghong took control of the lower-status Central Small Group in charge of Hong Kong and Macau Affairs (*Zhongyang Gang'ao xiaozu*) in 2002, its profile was enhanced; it played a key role in reassessing Beijing's policy towards Hong Kong after the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) crisis in 2003. In November 2007, Xi Jinping replaced Zeng (Miller 2008b: 11) and other members including Ms. Liu Yandong, former director of the CCP United Front Department and now State Councilor (since 2008), and Ling Jihua have since joined. Since Wang Jiaxuan and Ms. Wu Yi sat in this group before 2007, we can presume Dai Bingguo and Wang Qishan are included at present.

Chaired by the Premier (Wen Jiabao), the leading group in charge of finance and economy (*Zhongyang caizheng jingji gongzuo lingdao xiaozu*) helps coordinate the activities of the ministries of commerce and foreign affairs, attempts to resolve the frequent friction erupting between these two agencies (Ding 2008) and supervises the activities of the committee overseeing China's 200 billion USD sovereign-wealth fund (renamed, in October 2007, the China Investment Corporation (CIC)) headed by

former Vice-Minister of Finance Lou Jiwei (Weisman 2008). The group should help to eliminate bureaucratic competition between the People's Bank of China (PBoC) and the MOC which has impeded the establishment of this company.

In May 2005, a Central Energy Leading Small Group (*Zhongyong nengyuan lingdao xiaozu* (CELSG)) was created to better coordinate the domestic and international activities of major government agencies and companies active in this sector. Chaired by Wen Jiabao, it had, at the time, two vice-chairmen – vice-premiers Huang Ju (who died in 2007) and Zeng Peiyan – and 13 additional members, among them: Ma Kai, chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC); Minister of Commerce Bo Xilai; Minister of Foreign Affairs Li Zhaoxing; COSTIND chairman, Zhang Yunchuan; and probably, Ge Zhengfeng the PLA's First Deputy Chief of the General Staff (Qiu 2005). In March 2008, the group's activities were integrated in the National Energy Commission (NEC) set up under the NDRC (as were those of the NDRC Energy Bureau and the China Atomic Energy Administration), killing the hopes of those who had wanted to establish a powerful energy ministry or an "Energy Security National Council".

Finally, in June 2007, it was announced that the State Council had created a working group (represented in official English translations as a LSG) on responses to climate change and the reduction of gas emissions (*Guojia yingdui qibou bianhua he jieneng jianpai gongzuo xiaozu*), headed by Premier Wen Jiabao – with Vice-Premier Zeng Peiyan and State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan serving as deputy directors. The Office of this working group was launched within the NDRC (NDRC 2007). It is likely that Wang Qishan and Dai Bingguo succeeded Zeng and Tang in March 2008. It was later indicated – in September 2007 – that the foreign ministry had established its own LSG in charge of international work on climate change, headed by Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi (Le 2007); however, its scope of action is narrower and its coordination power relatively weak.

This State Council's new small group has a direct impact on China's international commitment in the area of environmental protection in the post-Kyoto Protocol context. But, it remains to be seen how much constraining power it will be able to exert on long-entrenched vested interests and how it will coordinate with the NDRC's energy leading group, another group – at least originally – claiming competence in dealing with global-warming issues.

## The Role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), responsible for day-to-day foreign policy, makes many diplomatic decisions, is a unique source of analyses and information about the outside world, a major source of proposals on policy options and a privileged channel of foreign-policy implementation. Nevertheless, major foreign-policy decisions are made at a higher level, in *power loci* such as the FAWLSG, that include the Foreign Minister and other policy coordinators, starting with the vice-premier or state councilor in charge of foreign affairs – at present, Dai Bingguo (who succeeded both Tang Jiaxuan and Qian Qichen).

The Foreign Ministry's main mission is to manage China's diplomatic, bilateral, and multilateral relations (Yang 1995: 92). Its activities have diversified as China has gradually become more involved and active in an increasing number of multilateral fora (e.g., the United Nations (UN) system, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)). China's growing "diplomatic activism" has mobilized the Foreign Ministry 24 hours per day, forcing it to groom and promote more competent and polyvalent diplomats. The best symbol of such activism has probably been Vice-Foreign Minister Wang Guangya, PRC ambassador to the UN from 2004 to 2008 – a shrewd diplomat whose professionalism has been recognized by many of his Chinese and foreign colleagues.

It is no coincidence that since Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang Zemin as PRC president, the Foreign Minister has been chosen from the ranks of former ambassadors to the US, China's major diplomatic partner (i.e., Li Zhaoxing from 2003 to April 2007 and Yang Jiechi since then). Their predecessors, Tang Jiaxuan and Qian Qichen, were respectively Japan and Russia specialists.

Under Hu, the role of Chinese embassies – aimed at building and improving China's image abroad – have diversified and developed closer links with the host countries' political, economic, and cultural elites in order to (hopefully) better influence, in general, their foreign, and in particular, their China policies. Chinese diplomats no longer shy away from public debate and media attention.

Chinese embassies provide more visible support to Chinese nationals abroad, not only in terms of consular protection and security but, better information concerning business opportunities and connections as well. This new mission has been particularly striking in Africa and Latin

America. Embassies have also been asked to promote China's culture and arts; in that respect, they play an active role in identifying partners for the Ministry of Education's Confucius Institutes (around 250 such institutes had opened by the end of 2008).

In other words, the Foreign Ministry's input in decision making (knowledge, assessments, and professional experience) should not be underestimated. However, the Ministry is only one of a diverse array of bureaucracies influencing major foreign-policy decisions – decisions in which commercial interests play a growing role.

## The Growing Role of the Ministry of Commerce

Since China commenced serious negotiations to join the WTO, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC) has become increasingly involved in foreign-policy decision-making. Renamed the Ministry of Commerce in 2003, this government agency still claims the largest number of WTO economic and legal experts among its ranks; it supervises economic missions opened in Chinese embassies around the world and manages foreign-aid programs abroad (ODA). Therefore, it plays an important role in identifying potential sources of access to energy products and other raw materials, as well as new market and investment opportunities for Chinese companies (in particular, but not exclusively, state companies).

Nevertheless, the international activities of the MOC have encountered a number of obstacles and the division of labour between this ministry and the NDRC is not clearly delineated. National enterprises – in particular the big oil and gas companies – have developed their own strategies, and their interests may not always coincide with the MOC's policy priorities. As previously noted, the new CIC does not report to this ministry, but to the finance and economic leading group therefore, various unresolved bureaucratic rivalries have hindered the MOC's growing role, complicating the game, and lending the leading groups even more importance.

## The Discreet but Effective Role of the CCP/ ID

Created in 1951, the International Liaison Department (now CCP/ ID) – formerly the United Front Department – originally concentrated on developing and managing relations with other communist parties and

third-world liberation movements but was severely weakened by the Sino-Soviet rift and the Cultural Revolution. After 1978, it not only resumed relations with many foreign sister-organizations that had sided with the Soviet Union, but also began establishing links with a diverse array of political parties worldwide. This catch-all policy has allowed the CCP/ ID, today, to entertain relations with more than 400 parties in more than 140 countries. It has also developed contacts with foreign NGOs, and deepened its investigation and analyses regarding the outside world. It cooperates closely with other CCP organs to propagate China's "success story" and foreign-policy discourse. Although, traditionally, it has been headed by a CC member (Wang Jiarui, since March 2003), it plays an important role in dealing with "delicate" countries (e.g., North Korea), and issues (e.g., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) (Shambaugh 2007b).

Dai Bingguo, its director from 1997 to 2003 and a former vice-foreign minister fluent in Russian, contributed to the expansion of its missions, as well as its influence on decision-making bodies. He also intensified the coordination between the CCP/ ID and the Foreign Ministry. Since 2008 (as before 1966 and in the late 1970s and the 1980s), it has been substantiated that the CCP/ ID director has a seat in the FAWLSG, although this official may have joined this leading group earlier. It is worth indicating that Wang Jiaxiang, CCP/ ID director until the Cultural Revolution and member of the CCP Secretariat held a seat in this leading group. His indirect successor, Geng Biao, led the FAWLSG from 1977 to 1982 and Geng's successor, Ji Pengfei (1983-1988) was one of FAWLSG's deputy chairs (Miller 2008b: 8-9; Kampen 1993).

## The Growing Importance of Foreign Propaganda Organs

As China seeks to articulate and strengthen its soft power, the role of foreign-propaganda organs has intensified, their activities becoming more closely coordinated with those of other bureaucracies dealing with the outside world. Foreign-propaganda (*duiwai xuanchuan*) work is managed by a bureau that operates under the CCP Central Propaganda Department (*xuanchuan bu*) – a department officially renamed in 1998 (and only in English) the "Publicity Department" (Brady 2008: 30). Created in 1991, this bureau is publicly presented as the State Council Information Office (*Guowuyuan xinwen bangongshi*) and reports to a LSG in charge of

foreign propaganda (*Zhongyang duiwai xuanchuan lingdao xiaozu*) – probably chaired by Li Changchun, the PBSC member in charge of this sector. The CCP foreign propaganda bureau also coordinates its work with other Party departments (e.g., United Front, International Liaison) and with state organs such as the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Commerce, Culture and Education, the Xinhua News Agency, the Confucius Institutes and CCTV, the Chinese Central Television Company (Brady 2008; Shambaugh 2007a). In January 2009, the Chinese government allocated 6.6 billion USD to the development of a channel in English on the model of Al Jazeera.

## The Role of the Think Tanks

The role of “think tanks”, or international relations and strategic studies research institutes, has been hard to evaluate under Hu Jintao (Shambaugh 2002: 575-596; Liao 2006). Their number is steadily increasing, although the major and most influential ones have been well established and identified for some time (at least since the late 1990s). Some think tanks are officially associated with a Party organization (e.g., the Central Party School’s Institute of Strategic Studies); the government (e.g., China Academy of Social Science, CASS – various area study institutes); the Foreign Ministry (e.g., the Chinese Institute for International Studies, CIIS); the Ministry of State Security (e.g., the Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations, CICIR) or the PLA (e.g., the Chinese Institute for International Strategic Studies, CIISS – still chaired in 2009 by Xiong Guangkai).

Outside of Beijing, the main research center is probably the Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS); headed by Yang Jiemian, the foreign minister’s younger brother, it claims a special influence on China’s foreign policy.

Most of these think tanks are closely linked to the authorities and involved more in policy-oriented analyses than in academic research.

Although international study institutes located in universities (e.g., Beida, Qinghua, Fudan in Shanghai or Zhongshan in Guangdong) or social-science research centers (such as the CASS and provincial ASS) enjoy more autonomy, their staff is often more inclined to provide advice to the “powers that be” than to embark upon true academic and theoretical work. This applies, for instance, to Beijing University’s School of International Studies headed by Wang Jisi – a well-known US special-

ist and adviser to the current government – and to Fudan University’s Institute of American Studies run by Shen Dingli.

Some local institutes have developed a particular area specialty like Zhongshan University’s Institute for Southeast Asian Studies or Xiamen University’s Institute of Taiwan Studies. However, it remains to be seen to what extent these institutes can influence decision making in their respective areas of expertise.

Chinese academics are often prone to claim a sometimes greatly exaggerated capacity to influence decision-making (not only in the domain of foreign policy). In view of Chinese bureaucracies’ *modus operandi*, it is fair to assume that experts are able to influence decisions primarily within their own governmental system (*xitong*) – the Party school, the Foreign Ministry, the PLA, etc.

A few recognized scholars (e.g., Wang Jisi) are now, occasionally, invited to present their views at expanded CCP PB meetings: this is a new development favoured by Hu Jintao and the current leadership. As in other countries, these experts generally offer analyses that potentially inform or orient decisions, but by definition, do not replace them.

Finally, the respective influence of each think tank evolves according to its current connections to the political leadership. For example, Jiang Zemin consulted Wu Jianmin – ex-ambassador to France and president of China’s Foreign Affairs University until 2008 – more than had Hu Jintao. Similarly, Zheng Bijian, and his Reform Forum (*Gaige kaifang luntan*) advised Hu until spring 2004, but after Zheng’s “peaceful rise” (*heping jueqi*) concept was abandoned, their influence gradually faded.

The community of international-affairs experts continues to develop and professionalize under Hu Jintao; today, to a greater extent than in the past, they inform the CCP leadership. However, we do need to remain cautious about the veritable extent of their influence on foreign- and security-policy decision making (Zhao 2005).

## The Increasing Role of Local Governments in International Affairs

As in all centralized and one-party states, foreign and security policy-making is supposed to originate exclusively with the central government’s top leadership. However, under Hu Jintao, local governments – and in particular authorities at the provincial and larger city level – are

developing their own international links. The best illustration of this is the blossoming of sister-city agreements signed with foreign metropolises.

Chinese localities' respective foreign policies do not necessarily clash with Beijing's. For one thing, the central government's main agencies dealing with foreign countries (the MOFA, MOC, CCP/ ID, State Security, TAO, et al.) are represented locally and ensure that official policies are understood and uniformly implemented. But, localities are also increasingly considered and utilized as "partners" or "subsidiaries" in relations with specific regions or countries (Cheung and Tang 2001). For instance, the close connection between Guangdong and Southeast Asia (home to large numbers of overseas Chinese originating from Guangdong); Fujian and Taiwan; even Manchurian cities (e.g., Shenyang and Dalian) and Japan and Korea have been capitalized upon to boost China's interests and outreach.

Under Hu, border areas have revealed themselves more difficult to instrumentalize for the promotion of Beijing's foreign and security policy than was originally thought. With the notable exception of Guangxi's Zhuang ethnic group, whose cultural proximity to Thailand (and, in particular, the Thai language), is considered an asset, many minorities have created problems with neighbouring countries. Tibet is probably the best-known example of such difficulties, not only with India, but Nepal as well. Similarly, although Xinjiang has been encouraged to develop trade relations with Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries, the Uyghur elite cannot be relied upon to consolidate China's relations with this region – home to Uyghur communities and a number of refugees who are occasionally involved, albeit discreetly, in political activities. Even the Mongols (a minority in Inner Mongolia) have rarely been used as "go-betweens" with the Republic of Mongolia, a democratic regime that, in spite of growing economic exchange, is very much afraid of China's imagined irredentism.

However, these border areas constitute exceptions to the rule since, under Hu, China's localities have been encouraged to contribute more to the country's internationalization and foreign-policy implementation. Coastal areas have taken particular advantage of this new policy, helping to frame a more "liberal foreign economic policy" at the national level (Chen 2005).

## Tensions and Contradictions in Decision-making

The current Chinese foreign- and security-policy system seems to offer a pattern of well-coordinated bureaucracies feeding the top decision-makers with accurate information and implementing their policies in good order. The reality is of course more complex. And in the last few years there have been several, and perhaps increasing, cases of uncoordinated decisions in this realm. The CCP leadership's repeated efforts to encourage manifestations of nationalism have also had a deleterious impact on foreign-policy decision making.

Bureaucratic tensions are inevitable and the effectiveness of any governmental system rests, precisely, in its ability to put together coordination mechanisms capable of resolving such tensions or conflicts of interests. In Hu's China, the LSGs fulfill this task, on the whole, rather satisfactorily. Nevertheless, certain major fault lines have not been bridged – on the contrary – they seem to have widened. Probably, we should differentiate between two types of contradiction: those accepted or tolerated by the government, and those that it attempts, but is unable to resolve, sabotaged by its own organizational model.

The former category concerns mainly the particular international interests defended by specific national companies – or even localities. One of the best examples is that of China's oil companies (i.e., the China National Petroleum Company (CNPC), China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation (Sinopec), and the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) who have developed a strategy which more closely follows industrial than state logic. Of course, the acquisition of certain foreign oil companies' shares or oil fields has occasionally been perceived as a pursuit of strategic interests. Chinese oil companies have, however, generally benefited from a great degree of autonomy; hence their opposition to the creation of an energy ministry. They base most of their business decisions on the principle of profit maximization and the need to expand in order to compete with the world's majors. This autonomy has its downside: the establishment (in 2005) of an energy leading group did not preclude CNOOC, unaware of the sensitive diplomatico-strategic dimensions of the deal, from trying to acquire Union Oil Company of California (UNOCAL) – an American oil company – in order to boost its off-shore drilling technical capacity. It can be argued that the UNOCAL-bid fiasco was due to a lack of foreign-ministry input in the initial discussions. CNOOC had to withdraw its acquisition offer in or-

der to calm the political fever on Capitol Hill under belated pressure from Chinese diplomats and, in all probability, top leaders.

Here we touch upon the second category of contradiction, those that Chinese authorities would like to better control. Three types of tensions dominate the institutional landscape: diplomatic vs. commercial, diplomatic vs. military, and commercial vs. military.

Tensions between “diplomats” and “merchants” are the easiest to assuage. As we have seen, while there is no diplomatic representation in the financial and economic leading group, since 2008 (at least) the MOC belongs to the FAWLSG. It remains to be seen, however, whether this improved coordination will allow the Chinese Government to overcome all the difficulties of fashioning a coherent policy in international trade fora, such as the WTO or the Doha Round.

It is trickier to lessen the contradictions between diplomats and soldiers, and merchants and soldiers, because of the PLA’s lingering isolation and that of the military institutions as a whole. Dai Bingguo’s promotion in 2005 to Office Director of both the national security and the foreign affairs leading groups was motivated by the desire for better coordination with the military. But, obviously, this was not sufficient. Since Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang Zemin at the CMC, there have been several examples of a “disconnect” between the PLA and the government. For instance, in January 2007, an anti-satellite test was conducted by the Second Artillery without advance warning to the Foreign Ministry – which, in turn, failed to adopt a successful strategy for managing the US’ and other foreign countries’ reactions to the impromptu and risky destruction of an old meteorological satellite (provoking the dissemination of over a thousand bits of debris). We presume that Hu authorized the test, but he apparently failed to include the FAWLSG, and perhaps even the PBSC, in the loop.

Later that year (2007), just before Thanksgiving, Beijing denied the US aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk* – at the eleventh hour – authorization to make a port call in Hong Kong; it provided no reason to Washington although observers speculated that China was unhappy about the US’ recent arms sales to Taiwan, and its lack of pressure on Chen Shui-bian to call off his March 2008 referendum on Taiwan’s entry to the UN. The decision was obviously made by the top CCP leadership after the Foreign Ministry, that usually manages port calls in Hong Kong, had already given the US Seventh Fleet its green light to dock (and the sailors’ relatives had already flown to Hong Kong). Again the Foreign Ministry

demonstrated weakness in a decision-making process that probably involved not only the CMC, but perhaps the PBSC and the FAWLSG, though we can only speculate about the actual power locus/ loci and identity of the leaders responsible for the second decision.

Of lesser importance, but still somewhat troublesome, the Chinese government and diplomats have been keen to commit more PKO troops to UN-sponsored missions. However this has sometimes been done without having previously consulted the PLA about either the number or readiness level of available (particularly English-speaking) officers and soldiers. In September 2006, China was slated to dispatch a thousand men to southern Lebanon; eventually, only 350 transportation and medical-service PLA troops joined the UNIFIL (interview 2007a).

Although, under Hu and because of intense US pressure, the Chinese government has shown a stronger willingness to better control nuclear- and conventional-arms proliferation and exports, some PLA-controlled companies continue to sell weapons, in particular light arms, to unreliable intermediaries or final users, but it can be argued that these decisions have been motivated by business rather than strategic interests. It is true that China's large-arms deals (e.g., with Sudan, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe) are closely managed and controlled by the government; they are a deliberate element of China's assistance and foreign policy. However, the "soldier" does not appear to always be able to impose its view on the "merchant". While national-security or interest considerations have influenced some major business decisions made by Chinese national companies, the CCP leadership is not a Big Brother capable of controlling each move made by each pawn on the country's chessboard.

Any discussion of the degree to which nationalism influences foreign- and security-policy decision-making processes may take us beyond the limits of this article. Suffice it to say here that the CCP leadership under Hu Jintao has been tempted, probably more than it was under Jiang Zemin, to instrumentalize nationalism as a form of leverage against certain foreign countries; this has been particularly true of China's relations with Japan, the USA, the European Union and – more recently – France (Hao and Su 2005).

While national sentiment is endemic to Chinese society, its utilization for political purposes has generally been orchestrated by the Chinese authorities, with the assistance of the propaganda departments and the security apparatus. These government agencies are in a position to control and orient internet debate in order to create a virtual "public opin-

ion” thus serving the CCP leadership’s interests. There was evidence of just such involvement in the 2005 anti-Japan demonstrations and the spring 2008 anti-French boycott movement (allegedly led by public security agents) against Carrefour supermarkets (interviews 2008). In contrast, it is striking how little impact China’s public opinion has had on Beijing’s changing Taiwan policy (Cabestan 2009); more recently the Sino-Japanese deal on shared oil exploitation in the East China Sea has triggered surprisingly few protests in China. This does not prevent the Chinese Government from capitalizing on extreme-nationalist views (while ostensibly keeping its distance from them) in order to strengthen its bargaining power with its major partners.

This double game is hardly new and is a reminder of Ci Xi’s ambivalent attitude towards the Boxers at the turn of the past century. In any event, this use of nationalism to serve China’s interests is not particular to any specific bureaucratic system, such as the PLA or the security apparatus. It is an across-the-board temptation, affecting even diplomats and scholars, and depends more on China’s circumstances or stake in events at any particular moment than on anything else. However, the “merchant” bureaucratic constituency is generally less enthusiastic; since China’s rise depends much more on its continued internationalization than on the protection of its perceived national interests, on the whole, any exaggerated use of nationalism as a strategy may prove to be a double-edge sword and therefore short-lived.

## Conclusion

Like other countries, China relies on multiple and complex organizations to make and carry out its foreign and security policy. Under Hu Jintao, China’s global rise and growing involvement in world affairs have necessitated better coordination of various facets of the country’s international discourse and activity (Lai 2005). This need has been partly addressed, due, principally, to the growing role and number of specialized LSGs. However, much remains to be done. The CCP’s inability to establish a genuine civilian-military national security council underscores the rigidity and the complexity of current political structures, and in final analysis, the one-party-led political system.

Are the foreign- and security-policy decision-making processes under Hu Jintao so different from those of Jiang Zemin and his predecessors? First of all, this short analysis tends to demonstrate my initial hy-

pothesis: an important evolution did take place after Jiang succeeded Deng Xiaoping in the 1990s. The number of decision-making loci in foreign and security policy has continued to increase since but, simply by retaining previous patterns, while simultaneously adding bureaucracies within certain economic agencies (Zeng 2007). This dissemination of decision-making centers has required increased coordination between the three categories of foreign and security policy decision-makers: diplomats, merchants, and soldiers. However, for the time being no new initiatives (with the possible exception of Dai Bingguo's dual role) truly alter the traditional lines separating the PRC's bureaucratic systems (*xì-tóng*). Probably the influence of Chinese culture and the literati's (*wen*) principled superiority over the military (*wu*) accounts for such conservatism. In Taiwan, the so-called National Security Council resembles the think tank model more than that of the US' NSC (which produces critical foreign- and security-policy decisions). But this rigidity also stems from the CCP Soviet-inspired tradition, seemingly the only possible recipe for coordination: a taste for secrecy, on one hand, and a penchant for power centralization, on the other.

Though it has become easier to analyze the decision-making processes in Jiang's and Hu's China, one could hardly characterize these processes as transparent. The public are privy neither to the PBSC's meeting schedules nor their agenda; the leading groups are only occasionally mentioned in the media, and their status and role in decision making remains murky; a picture of the interaction between the Foreign Ministry and the CCP/ ID appears both sketchy and troubled, due – in part – to the great degree of secrecy surrounding the CCP/ ID's activities.

Centralization of decision making continues to be – at least on paper and in terms of political principles – the CCP leadership's rote answer to the need for better coordination. Perhaps the best illustration of this centralization is that the General Secretary-Commander in Chief persists as the only link between the Party and the Army; obviously, this is a weak link in the chain of command. While centralizing decision making is inevitable in any modern (and nuclear-powered) country, the lack of horizontal and regular exchanges at various levels between the PLA and the governmental agencies (in other words, below the NSWLSG and TAWLSG level) continues to be a direct source of bitterness, faux pas and – occasionally – incoherence, inconsistency, and dysfunction. To date, except at the uppermost levels of the PBSC, and to some extent in

the specialized leading groups, Chinese officials from different governmental agencies do not communicate. This compartmentalization is not only outdated and out of step with today's world, but also China's current needs, in terms of foreign and security policy decision-making, at the very moment when soft-security issues (health, environment, social stability, and cohesion) have become so prominent.

The steady increase of de facto decision-making loci in foreign and security policy clearly compels the Party leadership to contemplate the establishment of additional horizontal coordination structures within both the central and local governments. Will Hu be able to outdo Jiang on that front? It's hard to tell, although increasingly professional diplomats, soldiers, and merchants cohabit and need to cooperate more often within the Chinese political system.

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