THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

CENTER FOR NORTHEAST ASIAN POLICY STUDIES

and

JOHN L. THORNTON CHINA CENTER

in cooperation with

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF ASIAN RESEARCH

and

THE STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE (SSI)
of the U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

THE "PEOPLE" IN THE PLA: RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND EDUCATION IN CHINA'S 80-YEAR-OLD-MILITARY

The Brookings Institution
Washington, DC
September 17, 2008

[Proceedings prepared from a tape recording by]

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180; Fax (703) 519-7190

WELCOME REMARKS

Richard C. Bush
Senior Fellow and CNAPS Director, The Brookings Institution

Douglas Lovelace
Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College

Rich Ellings
President, The National Bureau of Asian Research

PANEL I PRESENTATIONS

Panel Chair and Overview
Roy Kamphausen, The National Bureau of Asian Research

Trends in Education and Training, 1924-2007: From Whampoa to Nanjing Polytechnic
Thomas Bickford, The CNA Corporation

"True is False, False is True, Virtual is Reality, Reality is Virtual": Technology and Simulation in the Chinese Military Training Revolution
James Mulvenon, Center for Intelligence Research and Analysis

PANEL II PRESENTATIONS

Panel Chair and Overview
Andrew Scobell, Texas A&M University

PLA Officer Accession, Education, and Training
John Corbett, CENTRA Technology, Inc.

Reforming the Officer Corps: Keeping the College Grads In, the Peasants Out, and the Incompetent Down
Kristen Gunness, Navy Special Project

PLA Career Progressions and Policies
Elizabeth Hague, U.S. Department of State

P R O C E E D I N G S

RICHARD BUSH: Good afternoon. My name is Richard Bush. I'm the director of the Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies here at Brookings, and on behalf of my colleague, Ambassador Jeffrey Bader, I'd like to welcome you to this event on *The "People" in the People's Liberation Army: Recruitment, Training, and Education in China's 80-Year-Old Military*. It's our great pleasure and honor to do this event in cooperation with the National Bureau of Asian Research and the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College. This is the second year in a row that we're conducting this collaboration, and we're very pleased to do so. We hope it becomes a tradition. The volume that is going to be discussed today has a very long tradition, and that tradition is well known among PLA scholars.

We're joined today by Ambassador James Lilley, who's been involved in this intellectual effort for some time, and we're pleased to have Jim with us today.

I'm not going to delay the proceedings any further, but I would like to call on Professor Doug Lovelace, who is the director of the Strategic Studies Institute at the War College to say a few words, and then my good friend, Rich Ellings, the president of NBR, and then we'll move to the first panel. That will be chaired by Roy Kamphausen, who is the director of NBR's Washington office, and the two presenters will be Tom Bickford of CNA and James Mulvenon of the Center for Intelligence Research and Analysis.

Professor Lovelace.

DOUG LOVELACE: Thank you very much, Dr. Bush. Let me express on behalf of all of us at the Army War College our sincere thanks to all of you for joining us today for the release of what we think is a very interesting volume on *The "People" in the PLA: Recruitment, Training, and Education in China's Military*.

And, Ambassador Lilley, we're very happy to see you here today and happy that you'll be joining us later this month and we certainly look forward to that.

We certainly want to thank Dr. Bush and the Brookings Center for Northeastern Policy Studies for providing what we think is the perfect forum for this book release, and I will use the same words as Dr. Bush, and that is, the Strategic Studies Institute really feels honored to have worked with the National Bureau of Asian Research and with the many outstanding scholars that the Bureau's been able to gather together to bring to bear on the very unique topics of this year's volume on the PLA; and it truly has been an honor, and we stand in awe of the expertise that went into the making of this volume.

We'd like to thank a few people in addition to Dr. Ellings, President of NBR, for their outstanding efforts in joining with us at the Strategic Studies Institute - or I should say with us joining with them - to produce this volume. Roy Kamphausen has

just been absolutely a superb organizer and ambassador, if you will, for this particular conference effort, and to him goes a great deal of thanks in producing this volume.

We'd also like to thank Sarah Snyder and Travis Tanner of the National Bureau of Asian Research, along with Aileen Chang of Brookings. As you know, any event of this nature is just replete with administrative and logistical tasks that need to be attended to so that the event seems to go flawlessly, as this one appears to be going. That's because of these young people who are behind the scenes making this happen, and we certainly thank them for their efforts.

As you look through this volume, you'll see a particularly impressive list of chapter authors. You'll notice that the topic is somewhat unique in this progeny of books on the People's Liberation Army. We were discussing earlier whether this was the ninth or the tenth book of this nature that we've produced, and it depends on how we're counting, but we've been producing these volumes from conferences at Carlisle Barracks that date back to 1999. So, I think this year's conference will be our ninth up at Carlisle.

And this book - the topic is a little bit narrower than others that we've approached in the past, however still, I believe, provides some very key insights that will have very significant implication for policymakers and military strategists not only here in the United States but abroad as well. The book, of course, is the fruit of a team effort, and many of the team members, as you all know, are among the most noted scholars in this particular field of study anywhere in the world, and you'll see that reflected in the quality of the chapters that comprise this book.

I'd just like to point out that the book is posted to the Strategic Studies Institute's website. If you'll just Google “Strategic Studies Institute,” we will come up number one or number two - or at least that’s what I pay my IT guys to make sure happens when you Google it. But, anyway, the book is available in its entirety as a PDF download free of charge, and so feel free to visit our website and download it or advise others that they can do so also.

Once again, it's been a distinct honor for us at the Strategic Studies Institute to be able to be a partner in this endeavor and to work with such great folks, and we look forward to the future endeavors along these lines and with a long-term relationship with the National Bureau of Asian Research and also with our new partners from the Bush School of Government out of Texas A&M University, whose representative, Dr. Andrew Scobell, before his defection from SSI, was one of us up at Carlisle. But we look forward to that association in the future as well.

At this point, I don't want to take up any more time, because as Dr. Bush mentioned that we want to move on with the program, but I'd like to introduce or at least ask to come to the podium Dr. Richard Ellings from the National Bureau of Asian Research and as he approaches to thank him again for the Bureau's assistance and help and great work in putting this together. Thank you.

RICH ELLINGS: Well, thank you so much, Doug. It's just a tremendous privilege for NBR to partner with you guys and work with folks like Richard to bring this to Washington.

Jim, let me add to the chorus of people. Already everybody's mentioned you, both Richard and Doug. You look great, and it's great to have you here, and we're really excited you're coming next week. So, Jim Lilley. If you understand the history of this conference, you have to understand the importance of this guy. If you understand the history of America's understanding of China more broadly, including so many domestic aspects of the country, including its military, this is one of the most important people if not the most important, so, Jim, fantastic to see you.

Last September it was our privilege to once again partner with SSI in organizing this conference, and this is the second time we've done this. We're real excited about the third coming up.

We're so pleased, Richard, that we could work with you and the Brookings Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies.

And, Jeff, of the John L. Thornton China Center, thank you so much. The transmission of all this thinking into the policy consciousness of Washington is critical, and that's something that we hope to really work on each year and improve upon, and so partnering with you guys is just wonderful, so thank you so much.

Now, Doug, I have to say, also, we really appreciate everything that you guys are doing there and working with us. I know Roy and the gang are so pleased, and so thank you for your personal involvement and leadership there. We really appreciate it.

Welcome, David. We've got a new member of SSI here, I understand, and David Lai is coming board. That's wonderful.

A couple of quick thanks. I mentioned Roy Kamphausen, who directs our office, and Political and Security Studies at NBR. Trav Tanner, I don't think Trav is here right now, but many of you know him, and he's done so much. You mentioned Aileen, I believe, Doug, and I want to also note Sarah Snyder, you may have mentioned her too, of NBR who's handled so much of this.

As I understand it, the history of this conference dates back to 1990. Actually, I thought it even predated that. Maybe there was some nascent thing that happened in the '80s, but anyway apparently 1990. And it is this meeting that we have up there in Carlisle Barracks, a principle meeting where specialists and the PLA get together and bring their collective wisdom to, obviously today, one of the most important subjects in the world, the rise of China, as, I like to argue, is the principle, strategic feature of international relations thus far in the 21st century and argue about some other things. This one, in my view, is absolutely the core one. So, looking at the PLA is extraordinarily important, and so I just want to start off with that point.

We've looked last year in trying to understand, given its missions and so on, what the right size, supposed right size and composition the military might be. This year it's people and obviously measurements, various measurements of military capacity, missions, and so on, are very abstract until you understand the capabilities of the people involved. We've seen this in the performance of militaries time and time again. You add up things, but sometimes those things don't add up to real capability. Understanding the people, the training, the discipline, the organization, the capacity of the organization to communicate, the people matter so much.

Let me just mention to you my first direct run-in with - and I think it was militia not direct PLA - but my first run-in was literally a physical run-in, in middle of June 1980, and I was in Hefei in Anhui Province , and I'd come over to spend the summer. It was my first trip to the PRC. I had looked over the border from Hong Kong and from Macao. I went over on this program, and I was assigned in the vernacular of the day to a *tongzhi* a comrade, and this guy turned out to be a great friend of mine in later years actually starting that summer. But he took me for a walking tour of Hefei, and we entered this city park, and half of it was filled with soldiers in green uniforms with machine guns, rifles, and so on. Now, I had been working as a graduate student on a Hudson Institute project and had been pouring through all kinds of primary sources and so on and on very contemporary matters in China. It's a kind of prelude.

So, I come into this exercise as they're training. Here I am, 1980, clearly not Chinese. As a matter of fact, my hair was blonder and longer at the time. They have rainstorms in China in the summer time and there'd been a rainstorm, so things were kind of muddy, and we started picking our way through these soldiers, who are behind machine guns. I thought, boy, this isn't the Soviet Union, by the way. These guys are somehow calm when they've got some guy who's obviously not one of them walking through them. But anyway, they maintained their concentration on what they were supposed to be doing. We started picking our way through, and as I came up to this one machine gunner, he was crouched and sitting in front of this machine gun, I slipped in the mud and my knee whacked his head. I whacked him in the head with my knee. I thought at this point this was going to be a particularly low point in U.S.-China relations. All he did was take the whack in his head. He did not move, he maintained his seated position, and we continued on and I sweated it out. It was blistering hot and sweltering, but we got beyond there. I survived it, and to this day I do not know whether it was militia. But I did know one thing, that if I look at the PLA then or the militia then compared with today, I know there's been progress.

There was a bullet shortage. Through this Hudson Institute project I'd been aware of the so-called bullet shortage in China, and also some of the training was not up to caliber, and what these guys were doing was they were all aiming at this cutout of a human being on a guide wire across this body of water in the park, and a Chinese guy in a green uniform held on to this cardboard representation of a human and would run along the guide wire back and forth between two trees. Meanwhile, this whole group of guys would take their machine guns and go like this, following, with no bullets, no

firing going on. That was the state of the PLA training, or whatever it was, in 1980. What a contrast today. And what progress that whole society has made.

And so anyway, a little personal sense of training people and so on, and my first experience, my third day ever in the PRC. I just had to tell that story. Great excuse. An audience that might get a kick out of it. Thank you so much everybody.

Next weekend, in Carlisle, we're going to be looking at an extremely important topic, which is PLA missions beyond Taiwan, what kind of missions are contemplated possibly, is there capability for, and not that Taiwan isn't important, but just to get an overall sense of where the PLA is today in a larger strategic context. Great topic, and we look forward to that. Thank you all, and I hope you guys have a great panel here. Thank you.

ROY KAMPHAUSEN: Thank you, Rich. Good afternoon. As said, it was indeed our great privilege to partner with SSI and the year-long process that began with the conference last September and resulted in the volume that you have before you today, and of course we're thrilled to partner with the China Center, Jeff, CNAPS and Richard to release it today and to talk about some of the key findings.

As Rich Ellings mentioned, in past years we've looked at perhaps issues that were considered broader or more strategic in focus, but it's important to remember that the military is much more than simply comprised of its strategic doctrine or the hardware of the systems that it might place in the field, and yet we often forget that the core of any military force, indeed the keys to operational success, is the people themselves who serve -- the people who run the systems, who make the command decisions, who through sheer will accomplish what machines cannot. The people really matter. So, in the volume we attempt to explore these various factors that impact on the human dimension in China's military, and it's our hope that the volume will be useful in advancing the study of this aspect of the field.

It's my privilege to chair the first panel today looking at the history and the current state of PLA education and training and then specifically to examine the issue of technology and simulation. And with me are Drs. Tom Bickford and James Mulvenon, who will present shortly.

But before I turn to Tom Bickford to begin, I wanted to recount another story, and Rich and I didn't coordinate, but this is also a story of 10 or 11 years ago involving NBR board director and author of the foreword to this year's volume, General John Shalikashvili, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The setting was China's National Defense University in the winter of 1998/1999. Former Secretary of Defense, Dr. Bill Perry and General Shali were in Beijing for a Track II security dialogue following Shali's retirement from his position as chairman and Dr. Perry's departure from being SECDEF, and so they were asked to make a presentation at the PLA NDU on the topic of the U.S. revolution in military affairs, of

great interest to PLA counterparts. And as those who may have heard the presentation in the past can attest, they typically began by Dr. Perry discussing the technological routes in the 1970s - stealth technology, development of stealth technology, and others - of what became in the 1980s the American-styled U.S. revolution of military affairs, which was then fully demonstrated in the early 1990s in the Gulf War by the integration of systems that were employed so successfully there.

Well, as you might expect, the audience of PLA field grade officers sat spellbound as Dr. Perry made his presentation, and here they were getting to sit, literally, at the feet of one of the chief architects of how the U.S. military had become so technologically dominant. Well, as they had intended it, Dr. Perry concluded and General Shali strode purposefully to the podium and made the following statement, and I paraphrase, but it astonished the audience. He said, "All of the systems and the means of integration among the systems that we brought on line in the 1980s and the enhancement of joint operations that was manifested in Operation Desert Storm would have been meaningless and we would have failed without the high-quality, well-trained, and highly motivated soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines of the United States military. People are the most important force multiplier."

Well, you could have heard a pin drop in the room. This was clearly not what the audience had anticipated hearing. It was a real eye-opener to them, and yet what they didn't know was that the top leadership of the PLA had already reached a similar conclusion, and programs were already underway to enhance the capability of the people in the PLA -- the officers and soldiers that make up the system. Over time, that process has accelerated, and you'll hear from our panelists today how much, in the intervening decade, has changed in that front.

An important part of that change was to address professional military education, or PME. So, to start our panel, Dr. Tom Bickford of CNA will look at trends in PLA PME over the last 80 years.

Tom begins his chapter with a very nice quote, which I think helps to frame the importance of education to professional military people. He says, "PME - professional military education - provides officers and career NCOs with the intellectual tools, structure, and technological background necessary to constantly update their knowledge throughout their careers. PME, however, can and does mean more than this. PME also provides a common military language and a common methodology towards problem identification and problem solving so essential for joint operations." Tom's chapter is entitled, “Trends in Education and Training 1924 to 2007: from Whampoa to Nanjing Polytechnic.”

Following Tom, Dr. James Mulvenon of the Center for Intelligence Research and Analysis will discuss his findings on the use of simulations, virtual exercises, and other forms of technology-assisted training within the context of the PLA goal to win local wars under conditions of informatization. James, as always, does a terrific job of characterizing the origins of high-tech virtual training and then does a

further great service by describing the variations of this type of training that are currently extent among the PLA in the field. Despite these advances, however, James concludes by saying that verifiable enhancements to PLA operational capability have to be demonstrated in the field and not against, as he says, electrons on the screen. His chapter is entitled, not atypically for him, "True is False, False is True, Virtual is Reality, Reality is Virtual: Technology and Simulation in the Chinese Military Training Revolution."

Our presenters will each speak for 8 to 10 minutes, and then we'll have time for questions before the second panel comes up.

With that, Tom, you're on.

TOM BICKFORD: I'd like to thank Dr. Bush, the Brookings Institution, SSI, and NBR for the opportunity to speak today and also for inviting me to the conference, which was an enjoyable experience.

What I'm going to talk about very briefly today is professional military education - though you stole my perfect quote, so this will definitely be under 10 minutes now - and talk about a few of my conclusions that I have in the chapter.

I want to emphasize just how important professional military education is for China's military modernization efforts. It's absolutely essential if they are going to build a modern military for the 21st century. It does not matter what kind of new weapon systems they acquire, what kind of new technologies they're trying to integrate into their armed forces, what kind of streamlining they do to their organization, or how much funding they get from the central government. And, again, it also doesn't matter if what they do in terms of new strategies and doctrine if they do not have the people to actually execute any of these reforms. Without a strong education system that meets their needs, all of these will be less than optimal.

And, just to pick on the quote that Roy just mentioned about joint operations, joint operations is very new. It is also very essential for the kinds of missions that the PLA hopes to achieve in the future, but that will require an education system that is joint, and I'll talk a little bit more about that towards the end of my presentation.

The chapter covers an 80-year period, and don't worry, I'm not going to start talking about what happened in Whampoa in 1925. Essentially, what I wanted to do is provide a historical context to sort of establish a base for validating what is going on now. Several of the chapters in the book and some of the speakers later today will address some of the current initiatives that they're doing in education and in training, but you also have to put that into a long historical context. Education and the PLA have a long history; and in fact, some of its roots date back even to before there was such a thing as the PLA. Some of the very earliest defense commanders began under a different military education system in Whampoa, which was created by a different regime.

Basically what I want to concentrate on is three general conclusions I came to after looking at all the various twists and turns of the history of military education in PLA. I want to direct most of my comments to that, and if people have questions about the history, we can address them during the Q&A.

The first observation I want to make about the history of military education in China is that PME in China is not necessarily linear. There are some constants. It has always been a Party army. Political education has always been part of the education of professional military officers. There have been a number of changes and twists and discontinuities. How much training time should be devoted to professional issues? How much to political issues? There have also been variations into the extent to which the PLA is willing to learn from the experiences of other officers. For example, in the '30s and in the '50s there's a lot of interest in the Soviet experience; and in the Cultural Revolution period and shortly thereafter, PLA education that existed was in complete isolation from what was going on. Now there's intense interest in how the U.S. performs professional education, how the Europeans do it, and so forth.

One thing I want to stress is while it has an 80-year history, many of the initiatives they're taking now are very, very new, and I want to return to the issue of jointness, which is becoming a feature of their training now. The United States' professional military education system is a product of over a hundred years of history, lots of experience, lots of continuity, building on our experiences, building on lessons at great cost. And, to a large extent, the joint education that we have here is joint in every way and it has been since 1946, and we're still developing, learning, and evolving. The Chinese have been doing it for a lot lesser period. So, one of the things I think that's a take-away here is that many of the things we're talking about are extremely new; some of it is very old, and understanding the difference of that is important for evaluating and assessing what they have accomplished and just how far they have to go.

A second observation they have and closely related to that is that PME in China has always been a work in progress. This is not to mean that the Chinese have no idea where they want to be. You could say that any period in history they have some idea of what kind of military they want, what they want their officers to know how to train them. But they've always been working towards some sort of goal. And then they reassess, reevaluate change, probably due to internal and external changes, but they've always been a work in progress. They're always trying to do something, building to something. There's no period in the last 80 years where the Chinese are saying this is what we want, this is what we have, we're satisfied with it, we can tweak it a little bit. It's always been that every 5 to 10 years there's something new that comes up which causes them to re-change, and I think one of the things we have to really understand is while it's quite impressive just how far they have come.

My story is less entertaining but involves my first experience with the PLA. I think was coming across a military enterprise and the officers involved were trying to get me drunk so I'd buy lots of overpriced souvenirs, which then became the first interview and my first publication on PLA enterprises. It's a very different PLA

now, very different. But they're still a long way away from being where they want to be, and if you look especially in the last 20 years, it's every few years they're reassessing. The first Gulf War, we need to reassess; Kosovo, we need to reassess; current events, Iraq, we need to reassess.

The third point I want to make is that while military concerns are an important driver of development in Chinese military education, we also should be very much aware that it has to be put into a larger political, economic, and social context.

In the chapter I talk a lot about how political imperatives, especially during the Cultural Revolution, change the nature of military education. We shall see whether or not political concerns become an important driver in the future. But I also want to stress the importance of things like social and economic factors. For example, in the '40s and '50s, an enormous amount of education of officers was simple, basic literacy. That's the material they had to work with. They have a very different kind of society now, especially as they try to recruit more officers from the coastal cities. Very different background, very different educational levels, what they can do has changed. The economy certainly has changed and that, again, creates a different sort of material. In the '50s and '60s, they could not have relied on the civilian education system to provide a lot of the officers; now they have one they can, and that is a trend which is increasingly going to be shaping and creating new capabilities but also with one-child family and new problems in terms of getting recruits and retaining recruits at the educational system.

And I think my presentation is under eight minutes, so I'll turn it over to James, who as always is far more entertaining.

JAMES MULVENON: Thank you, Tom. Again, thank you to everyone and to the original organizers of the conference. That reminds me that I still have to do my PowerPoint for the one next weekend.

I particularly appreciated Rich's story, because reading hundreds and hundreds of articles in the Chinese military press on technology and training and informatization late at night, there were many times I wished I was that guy holding that cardboard, and I wished all the people on the other side of the lake were weapons-free with real bullets in the magazine and could end my misery. But as a Catholic I was taught early on that suffering leads to enlightenment. So, let me offer a small piece of the enlightenment that I received in the course of writing this paper.

The goal of the Chinese military, as stated in their official publications, is to win local wars under informatized conditions. We could argue all day over whether you want to translate that as informationalized conditions. I prefer the shorter one if only for economy. But this is a very difficult concept for me to wrap my mind around, and I've spent a lot of time reading a lot of material on what informatization is to try and grasp this idea, because my first reaction is what does that mean? After reading a couple hundred of these articles, I think I came to an enlightenment.

In particular, I should have known better. There was an article three or four years ago where a scholar came in to brief the PLA delegates at the National People's Congress on what informatization was, and in the spirit of all things, all of you who have briefed people in legislative affairs before, the scholar knew he was going to have to really dumb down the concept and explain it very slowly with small words, and so I benefited greatly from that.

This concept of *xinxihua*, which is the strategic context in which I want to discuss technology-assisted training and simulation, really arises from one of core dilemmas that the PLA faces, which is they have this hybrid force of relatively advanced systems and still relatively primitive systems and trying to figure how to deal with this potentially much higher tech adversary with this hybrid force.

Of course, if you want to read this stuff, you have to wade through all of this dialectical materialism about the Marxist stages of historical development and all sorts of deterministic arguments, and once you sort of scrape away all that lacquer and veneer, what you realize is that whereas the Chinese for the first 10 years or so were reading our RMA [Revolution in Military Affairs] publications - they were absorbing that stuff like crazy - they came to a level of maturity and evolution where they realized that's just not for us. It describes a future digitized force that the delta between where we are right now and what that describes is just too great. We need to come up with a strategy that helps us understand how this hybrid force could potentially be this higher tech adversary.

That's where this concept of informatization comes from. It argues basically, you know, the Gerschenkron notion of late modernization; in other words, economies that modernize later have advantages over the earlier modernizers, because they can basically leap over stages of development. Not stages of technology, stages of development. It's very much like the parts of China that can literally go from dirt to wireless. They don't have to deal with copper and all of the other legacy systems that we have.

And so the Chinese looked around and they said well, we have this information revolution going on within China; we're the world's IT workshop. How can we use these modern information technologies principally in a command, control, C4ISR context? How can we use those to knit together this hybrid force in a way for a networked force, if you will. Informatization sounds a lot closer to net-centric warfare than it does to the RMA, because the argument is networked together with a relatively C4ISR architecture that the sum is greater than the whole of the parts, and that they can get inside the decision loop of the high-tech adversary and potentially still prevail, and so with that as sort of an umbrella, now you can understand why the Chinese are so focused on this idea of informatization, and in particular one part of that that I looked at was informatized training. In other words, how can we use this technology in ways to make up for a number of the deficits that we have?

In particular, the first thing that they had to focus on was that they were still a resource-constrained force, and so I have four main points that I would offer for your attention.

The first is that the reason why the Chinese were so attracted to tech-assisted training was because it really offered them efficiencies that this resource-constrained forced wanted to take advantage of.

In particular, the second point is that it allowed them to raise technical and functional skills in a teaching environment that radically reduced risk to personnel and reduced risk of wear and tear on their equipment. This is still a system that not so long ago, cashiered the chief of staff of their air force because he lost a single SU-27 in training. This is a system that over time, I would argue, has become more risk-acceptant, and more acceptant of casualties and damage to equipment and training, which was a criticism that we all had made years ago. If you're not bleeding then you're not training, and this system seems much more acceptant of that now, but at the same time there's a sense that they have a lot of high-tech equipment that it's still not ubiquitous throughout the force, and so they don't want to needlessly throw away those valuable investments. And so simulation and tech-assisted training allows them to reduce that risk.

Now, the drawback, as they're very clearly aware, is that it's no substitute for training with real equipment and real conditions, and so that's the dilemma that they constantly highlight in the literature on tech-assisted training, is that they know at the end of the day they can't have a high level of confidence in what they know about their own capabilities from that kind of training, and I want to come back to that at the end when I talk about the implications of this.

The third point is that tech-assisted training and online exercises in particular help them solve some critical not only resource problems but some spatial problems. It allows them to cross-train between different units, across vast geographic divides, which is essential if you also then look at how the Chinese are thinking about command and control in a joint conflict has evolved over time. They've gone from a world in which you had seven administrative military regions. Each of those military regions had its own table of organization and equipment, had its own doctrine, had its own separate missions. There was no national unifying doctrine. Each one of those military regions had a very specific set of missions that they had to confront and a specific set of equipment to deal with that. Over time the trend line has been for the PLA to become much more uniform nationally across the force to disseminate doctrine after the ninth five-year plan at the national level and to contemplate scenarios in which units from all of China's military regions or from a subset of China's military regions would come together in an ad hoc way to perform joint operations in a given contingency. But to practice that, they really don't want to have to pay and go through all the pain and agony of shipping those units across military region boundaries and all the, you know, the expenses that go with that. And so online exercising and training allows them to do that kind of cross training.

More interesting to me, just because of my own predilections, it also, the Chinese argue, allows them to facilitate joint experimentation with this command and control, especially one of the core dilemmas that I'm always watching for, which is it's one thing to say that you're going to go to the skip-echelon structure in crisis where you go from an administrative military region system to a war zone system or even to a joint campaign command system; it's another thing to actually do it in practice and to, you know, sort of move all those pieces on the chessboard and to get all those people in the right place and to be able to put together all those ad hoc units and staffs and things like that. They explicitly say the online exercising and tech-assisted training allows them to practice that without all the chaos of actually trying to do it. Now, as anybody knows who's run large organizations, again, that's insufficient, because what happens in real life is that, you know, things always go sideways; things always get fubarred, and so the tech-assisted training doesn't really let them work on that.

My fourth and final point is that the Chinese in particular emphasize the use of online, you know, opposition force or OPFOR exercises to be able to model realistic training against high-tech adversaries. Now, there is a much greater use of physical OPFOR forces in China, and a lot of times blue is allowed to win, which wasn't true in the past, but these online exercises at least help prepare Chinese military units for the idea of operating in a hostile environment with non-cooperative targets. Rich's story is all about cooperative targets and they need to figure out how to deal with non-cooperative targets.

By the way, the Fengyun-1C meteorological satellite was also a cooperative target, just as an aside. It doesn't tell us about their ability to engage non-cooperative targets.

Two implications: One of the frustrating things from my perspective is that online exercises and simulations actually undermine our ability to collect information about Chinese exercises and analyze the relative progress of their military in achieving certain training benchmarks, because they're not the external observables that you would see in training in the field. At the same time, however, I would argue that an emphasis on tech-assisted training and online exercises really raises questions, as I said earlier, about whether the civilian leadership would be as acceptant of the risks of a conflict scenario based only on or based largely on the performance of the Chinese military and simulated environments.

Now, on the one side you could say, you know, we never had a full rehearsal for D-Day so we shouldn't expect that the Chinese are going to do a full rehearsal for some large-scale operation as evidence of their ability to carry out a large-scale operation. We could see it in pieces. They could put those pieces together in novel ways, but it's still a highly risky venture, and it certainly would not be able to communicate a high level of confidence to the leadership. And so the question is to what extent are these simulations and online exercises really preparatory to an even higher tempo training cycle than we saw on the 11th five-year plan, and that's certainly something that we should look for as we move forward. Thank you.

MR. KAMPHAUSEN: Thank you, James.

Well, now's your opportunity to ask questions or offer challenges. We have a little bit under 20 minutes for audience questions or if you would, just identify yourself, raise your hand and then identify yourself when the microphone comes. I actually have a question or two. Maybe this will gender a question from the audience.

Tom, several of your points are related to the idea that the past is not really prologue for the future in terms of PME, that there are varied influences that development doesn't take place in a linear fashion, it's a work in progress, and so forth. What do you anticipate, given where we've come, that we might see in terms of the broad parameters of professional military education? In the second panel, we'll hear about some of the civilian military interaction, and that might be one, but what are some of the other thoughts that come to your mind?

DR. BICKFORD: That's a good question, for which I'm sure I have a very articulate answer.

Just to provide some balance, because it didn't get as well-emphasized as it could have in my presentation, I think there are some continuities. I don't foresee the PLA either as an institutional and certainly not an education moving entirely away from being a Party army. I think in some respects, it will always be a Party institution, though perhaps the nature of political education will change over time, becoming more practical, more oriented to motivation and other such issues. In general, I think that the trajectory that we have right now is moving closer to what we would recognize as professional military education. I would expect to see, based on what they're looking at, to see more courses similar to what we have with much more higher social science content, especially if the PLA is more likely to get involved in peacekeeping operations in the future or other nontraditional security missions if that is indeed where they are going. With the new historic missions concept, I would expect to see that more reflected in education.

One thing that I mentioned very briefly in passing in the original chapter is it's kind of interesting to note that last year they talked about creating courses on how to talk to the foreign military press, which I think might give some indication of where they see their military going and what kinds of interactions they will have, which implies they're thinking ahead to what do we do when we have a very different kind of mission in sort of a traditional defense of the Chinese sovereignty missions, which is what the education has been geared to.

QUESTION: My name Nadia Usaeva with Radio Free Asia. Yesterday I did a story about the PLA's plan in the winter to recruit soldiers among higher education institutions - high school, vocational schools, or even colleges - instead of the old practice of recruiting among rural middle school graduates. Some say among the people I interviewed if the PLA starts to recruit only from the cities or from higher-educated graduates, the soldiers would be softer instead of rural. Do you agree with that?

DR. MULVENON: I'm not sure, but that is a very common complaint: people from the cities are soft, they can't take it. But as James pointed out, the PLA has got a number of different levels, and so to deal with more high-tech things, you really are going to have to recruit a better-educated, more coastal, urban population. But there's still room for the more rustic sort, and, John, you addressed this in your paper. Do you want to touch on that a little?

JOHN CORBETT: I will.

MR. KAMPHAUSEN: Okay, so I don't want to say anything that might steal your thunder on that one.

MR. CORBETT: I also don't understand it. I did a six-year sentence in Los Angeles, so this idea of urban people being soft and people from the countryside being bone-hard just doesn't really resonate with me all that much.

MR. KAMPHAUSEN: Oh, was it Bogart who said there's parts of New York I advise you not to invade?

QUESTION: My name is Cheng Li. I'm with the China Center, and Jim's mentioning that PLA's mission, which is very clear about deterring, limited war or regional war and high technology or informatization. Now this is certainly about Taiwan. Rich talked earlier about beyond Taiwan. Let's assume that China-Taiwan relations improve. Does that mean that the PLA should revise its mission? If that's the case, what do we expect? Is there any serious discussion among the Chinese military or the Chinese civilian leadership about how to revise in line with the recent development?

DR. MULVENON: It's like you were with me as I was working on my paper for tomorrow's meeting. I'm struggling with this idea, because I think over time if you posit, for instance like the economists, that the Taiwan situation is really diminishing in terms of its strategic focus, and we want to think about PLA missions beyond Taiwan, there are some elements in that strategy that will need to be revised, because you'll not only want to have a highly lethal sort of localized air and naval superiority capability, like you would in a Taiwan scenario, but you'll increasingly want to have power projection capability, and this is not some boogieman about global projection, but as China's economic interests expand, the military requirements will expand, there will be an interactive relationship between the acquisition of greater capabilities, which then gives the freedom to assign additional requirements, which then leads to more capabilities and more requirements. There's an interactive nature to the way those things evolve. So, I could imagine the winning local wars part being expanded to defending interests in the periphery that is defined but under informatized conditions I think is always going to be critical, because it's certainly critical to our ability to globally power project.

So in my view, China will become increasingly reliant on an increasingly sophisticated architecture of communication satellites and imagery satellites and other elements of this so-called informatized system, and I think that they understand that that's

a good way of understanding how to organize their force in a relationship between these technologies and how they knit things together. There's nothing about those additional requirements that requires them throwing informatization overboard and replacing it with some sort of pie-in-the-sky RMA idea.

I'm always amazed by the interaction between our doctrinal writings and theirs. There seems to be an interesting sort of two or three year lag, and a lot of the areas I look at, like information operations and other things, where two or three years later, the Chinese adopt some variant of what had come before.

And the more I look at informatization and compare it with Admiral Zebrowski's on net-centric warfare, I'm not seeing a lot of daylight there, and so I think we're basically on the same course.

The interesting implication of that is that the Chinese like to argue that the United States is dependent on these information technologies and that these information technologies, like our satellite constellation, are asymmetric vulnerabilities, and, in fact, I would offer for you that that's a blind spot in the sense that over time, they are paradoxically becoming more vulnerable, just as we are, in those realms, and that that kind of discussion about using asymmetric capabilities will become increasingly dangerous to their own capabilities and organization, as they become more reliant on space, as they become more reliant on some of these more advanced IT.

About the rural versus urban people. I don't know much about that, but I do know there's the "only child" problem that a lot of people have been talking about and studying, that only the PLA is going to be comprised of only children very soon. There's been a lot of issues with looking at whether they're more or less trainable. There are complaints about they don't know how to do their own laundry, things like that, so I just wanted to make that comment.

DR. MULVENON: It's the sort of *xiao huang di* problem.

QUESTION: Karin Breitinger, Office of Naval Intelligence. I've got two questions. They recently came out with the OMTE; it's been written about in the paper. If you have any additional information on that, I'd be curious. Also, online training and education, specifics on that. Are you looking at training classes or training as far as what's happening right now – exercises - that type of activity?

DR. MULVENON: Well, I will always gladly cede issues on OMTE to my friends from the Center for Naval Analysis.

On the issue of online training, one of the interesting anecdotes that I didn't mention before was the Chinese military has a version of something that looks very much like the U.S. military's unclassified NIPRNet computer network system.

One of the things they use it for is for online education and distance learning. It was very fascinating during SARS to watch them migrate all of their dependents education to this online framework when their children were not permitted to leave the compounds to actually attend schools, because there was a lockdown for health reasons.

And all of that educational stuff, all that curriculum material, everything, very much like blackboard for those of you who have, you know, kids in school and the teachers always put stuff up on blackboard.com, because for weeks all of those children of PLA dependents got all of their homework and all their learning over the internet.

Later, there was sort of lessons learned about that. That said, we could use the same kind of framework for the troops as well as we could for our kids. And they dramatically increased the amount of curricular content that was then disseminated online.

QUESTION: I'm Katy Oh from the Institute for Defense Analyses. What is the PLA strategic planners' attitude and perception toward the scenarios? Are they using this for national strategic planning and education or training or one of them, or they do it because we are doing it?

DR. MULVENON: I think epistemologically scenarios are just always useful, but there are also contained levels of artificiality. What I always look for is the extent of introspection about the extent to which they understand that these scenarios are simply heuristics for working through problems rather than reality.

Early on, when I was looking at Chinese scenario development and strategic planning and talking to people in the PLA about it, they seemed very wedded to the scenario and very reluctant to break out of this carefully planned scenario.

And so I would confront them with their internal contradictions, and we would engage in the dialectic. What would come forward was that you don't understand. This scenario was chosen for political reasons; therefore, there is a political value ascribed to that scenario that has almost nothing to do with strategic planning or development of doctrine or development of capabilities. So, I'm not letting go of this scenario, and I'm not letting you question this scenario, because it has the stamp of *zhongyang* [the central authority] on it, you know.

Over time, as the demands for having more realistic planning, and frankly the possibility of real conflict across the Taiwan Strait, what I noticed was a relaxation of that rigidity, and a belief that we needed to really start doing some planning against things that might actually happen.

In the case of situations involving North Korea, which are very, very sensitive politically, beginning to talk much more openly about these kinds of scenarios, even to the point where I remember reading once about a scenario where the Chinese

said, well, obviously it's easier for us to defend Dongbei if we're on the North Korean side of the Yalu shooting at people than if we're on our side of the Yalu shooting at people. You know, you wouldn't have seen that five or 10 years ago.

DR. BICKFORD: Now, James, that really kind of brings to mind the question I had, which is the four points that you made.

These are not uniquely true of the PLA. It is true of any military that uses modern IT to leapfrog its limitations or to use tech training to save resources or to solve space issues and so forth. They're not unique to the PLA.

So are there dimensions of this which you think are kind of the best practices approach, or apart from the point you just made, which I think is an important one, about at least at one point the inherent political value of conducting certain scenarios in a simulated fashion, are there other things that are unique to how the PLA is conducting high tech training using simulations and other methods?

DR. MULVENON: Well, I think that they're converging towards something that would be very recognizable to someone in our system. You know, it's asymptotic.

I think for political reasons they may never get there. But what's interesting about it to me, though, is I'm much more interested in reading the criticisms and the self criticisms of these kinds of things in the Chinese literature than I am reading their description of what they think went right, because the criticisms are always much more revealing.

At CIRA, we use vigorous criticism and self-criticism as a management tool and find it's very purifying. It's very cleansing.

So what they offer in the criticism is the idea that they're not actually doing enough criticism, which I find interesting, because as you know, Roy, when you participate in activities and exercises in war games with people in the Department of Defense, what's really amazing is the amount of time spent at the end usually on a hot wash, where you go minute by minute, hour by hour, through everything you did in minute detail, and everyone is encouraged to sort of, you know, just to criticize themselves and others and everything else.

There still is not that spirit within the Chinese military. There's still too much scripting, too much artificiality, too much obeisance, too much flattery, too much banqueting, and not enough actual learning and moving on.

That's what they often complain about amongst themselves, is that while they are doing these things and they are doing them for the right reasons that they're not getting, for political reasons, they're not getting the full value out of them.

MR. KAMPHAUSEN: I think we have time for two more. Ambassador Lilley, can we have you as penultimate question and one more and then we'll take a break.

AMBASSADOR LILLEY: I'm Jim Lilley. I'm unaffiliated. One of the last meetings I attended at Carlisle Barracks, Dennis Blasko gave a presentation, and it was quite a lively one. And it was that the Chinese training were using silhouettes and models of American aircraft - Blackhawks, Apaches, C-141s - as targets. This was the targeting. This was the systems they targeted that makes sense.

But my second part of that question is, how much political indoctrination is there laced through their training that points this out as the enemy which you're going to be facing?

MR. KAMPHAUSEN: The Ambassador was referencing a presentation by Dennis Blasko at a previous Carlisle conference, in which he had highlighted the fact that in the context of Chinese military training that some of the physical targets that were used in the training were actually facsimiles of U.S. military equipment.

And so, that naturally leads to a question about the kinds of political work within the Chinese military that goes along with that; in other words, to read between the lines of the Ambassador's question, in a sense, is the political work directed that the United States is by name the high-tech adversary against which they are training?

I think that it's sometimes confusing when you read Chinese military literature, even the internal literature, because they often speak in these code words about the high-tech enemy. But when they describe the features and characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the high-tech enemy, it's obvious who the high-tech enemy is.

Now, over time, that literature has focused on other adversaries. It's focused on adversaries that sound much more like the Japanese adversaries; that sound like the Indians. But overwhelmingly, the United States, for good or ill, is the high-tech adversary that's being described.

The kind thing you could say is that this is a heuristic, in other words, you might as well train and think about fighting the most capable, the most challenging adversary, and then everything else is a lesser included case. I think it's more driven by the realistic scenario planning that said that the most challenging and most likely situation they could potentially find themselves in would be a conflict with the United States in some sort of a contingency involving Taiwan.

So you can actually go on the Chinese Internet and pull up the websites of the companies that make these decoys and models of F-117s and see the kinds of things that they're using in training.

You can see it if you even go on Google Earth. It's interesting to go over various places in the desert in China where you see squares that are higher satellite resolution. Those squares mean that's where somebody paid for higher satellite imagery resolution, but didn't pay so much to have exclusive access to it.

So you can sort of zoom down, and it's just in the middle of nowhere, and you'll see an airfield that looks suspiciously like CKS Airfield in Taiwan, covered with pockmarks of sub-munitions and then usually you'll see American aircraft facsimiles and other things sitting on the runway as potential targets.

MR. KAMPHAUSEN: The last question, and then we'll take a short break before the second panel.

QUESTION: Scott Harold from RAND. I just want to ask, if I could, about the interaction between China's economy and the training and the increased education levels that the PLA is aiming at.

In particular, my question is, and I guess kind of twofold - first, as the Chinese economy continues to grow and as income levels go up and as the one-child policy, which was already mentioned by Kristen continues to kind of wean down the number of available recruits, is there going to be pressure on the PLA from a recruiting perspective, i.e., they're going to have to pay more to win people over?

Second of all, as they train people, especially if they're training high school graduates or even college graduates, especially if they're doing it in a digitized or informationalized environment, are they not giving these people skill sets which, in an American context, trained fighter pilots end up going up and flying for American Airlines? Is there going to be a similar problem with boat drivers or pilots in the Chinese system, in your view?

MR. KAMPHAUSEN: Tom can take a quick stab at it, and then the second panel is going to really focus on that question in great detail. So maybe a quick overview and then we'll take our break and we'll hear more about it in the second panel?

DR. BICKFORD: One of the things you're saying is a lot more discussion not just of pay, but also benefits, and a whole range of things, because I think even more than recruiting, the biggest problem is going to be retention.

MR. KAMPHAUSEN: Thank you very much. Thanks to our panelists. We'll take a short break and then we'll reconvene with the second panel. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

* * * * * *

DR. BUSH: Ladies and gentlemen, why don't we get going again? We have a lot of ground to cover and only a limited amount of time. James is our best card, and we've played our best card in James. If I could ask you to take your seats, please.

We now move to Panel II. The chair is the very capable Andrew Scobell, who teaches at Texas A&M, otherwise known as the home of the Aggies. My father was an SMU Mustang.

On the panel are John Corbett of CENTRA Technology, Kristen Gunness of Navy Special Projects, and Elizabeth Hague of the State Department. Over to you, Andrew.

DR. SCOBELL: Thank you, Richard. It's good to be here this afternoon. And thanks to Brookings for hosting this event.

For the past 12 months, I've been a faculty member at the George H. W. Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. But I sit before you today wearing my Army War College hat.

For eight years I worked as a research professor at the College's Strategic Studies Institute, and it was in that capacity that I worked closely with my partner in crime Roy Kamphausen and his very capable colleagues at NBR to organize the conference held last September at Carlisle Barracks.

The book we're promoting today, of course, is the outcome of that conference. This year's conference will be held in a week, and I'm happy to say that the Bush School is an institutional partner, along with Army War College and NBR.

I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my successor at the Army War College, Dr. David Lai. David, I look forward to working with you in future conferences. I'd also like to acknowledge my former boss, if he hasn't left to go back to Carlisle yet - Doug Lovelace. He had but the vision to recognize that the value of this endeavor and the wisdom to make a long-term commitment to hosting the PLA conference annually at the Army War College.

As was earlier mentioned, the first annual conference was held at Carlisle Barracks in 1999. Of course, it was following in the footsteps of conferences, earlier conferences organized by Ambassador Lilley. I was privileged to have been associated with the first event and each subsequent one.

A record that I'm extremely proud of is the fact that within 12 months of every event, we have published and edited volumes of papers from that conference. So this is in keeping in that tradition. In my unbiased opinion, the conferences and edited volumes just keep getting better and better. For example, the volume we're releasing today is the first one that has Chinese characters in it.

You may say “whoopdy-do, big deal.” They do say words similar to that down in Texas, but I think it's significant because it makes it more useful as a reference tool, as a research tool for scholars and analysts and decision-makers who are working China and the Chinese military.

Now before I turn it over to the three authors on this panel, I'd like to raise a question about an event that occurred in China after the chapters in this volume were completed.

Flying up to Washington yesterday from Houston, coming out of a natural disaster zone, I reflected on the role of the PLA in responding to another natural disaster early this year; of course, I'm referring to Sichuan earthquake.

I know that a number of today’s panelists have commented publicly on the Chinese military's disaster relief efforts, but I wonder if there is anything that can be gleaned from the military's performance in the massive tragedy that specifically tells us something about the people in the PLA. That is, what can we tell from what the PLA’s response to the Sichuan earthquake, what does it tell us, if anything, about the caliber of people in the PLA, their training, their skills?

After all, as one astute observer of the PLA remarked to me about a month after the earthquake, he said the response was “the closest thing to full military mobilization in China that we've seen in many years.”

So I know that the panelists realized ahead of time they had very limited minutes to speak, so they probably already prepared remarks. But if that's the case and they don't have time to address this question, maybe we can return to it in the Q&A.

Without any further pontification, I’ll turn it over the panelists, and we’ll go in the order that they're listed with John Corbett first, then Kristen Gunness, and then Elizabeth Hague at the end. Sorry. A Texas moment. John?

MR. CORBETT: Thank you very much. Like the previous speakers, thank you very much to the sponsors. I very much appreciated the invitation to participate in this book, the many PLA conferences that I've been to. I’m looking forward to going up to the War College again at the end of the month.

I’m representing the team that wrote this paper. It was a group effort consisting of Ed O’Dowd, David Chen, and myself. Ed? Ed’s not here. If there are any mistakes, errors, problems with the paper or the facts or anything else like that, it belongs to Ed O’Dowd. David Chen and I did a really good job with the rest of it.

[Laughter]

As is often the case, based on the work that all of the writing team does as defense contractors, I've got to open with a disclaimer. The views in this paper and what

I'm saying today represent my own views and those of the authors, not the official position of the U.S. government, DNI, U.S. Marine Corps, or CENTRA Technology.

So I've got that out of the way. Thank you.

The title of our chapter, "Building the Fighting Strength: PLA Officer Accession, Education, Training and Utilization" - there's a whole lot of words in there, but they reflect our views that developing effective leaders is one of the fundamental requirements of building an effective modern military system.

Without a competent officer corps able to handle the physical, mental, and intellectual challenges and demands of modern warfare, military modernization will be meaningless in any system. Tom and Roy in their introduction sort of alluded to that same point. It's a human element that's critical.

So while officer accession may not be the most exciting subject, we believe the topic is extremely important and actually more important that the PLA recognizes that recruiting and training new officers is a critical part of its ongoing military modernization process.

In 2003, the Chairman of the Chinese Central Military Commission, Jiang Zemin, at the 50th anniversary of the National University of Defense Technology, reinforced that point. He said, "The key to strengthening national defense and military modernization is fostering and bringing up a large batch of high-quality, new model, talented military personnel."

And parallel with that, he said further, "The PLA must have the military academies succeed in becoming the cradles for developing high-quality, talented military personnel, the foundations of new technology and military theory innovation." That's essentially what the process of recruiting into the officer corps is all about.

So to this end, the PLA has invested in a series of programs to build its military officer corps into a more capable, more highly educated officer corps than actually is today's PLA.

In recent years, it has reformed the accession system, the education and training system, and utilization policies and programs - a pretty broad range of reforms. Part of this has been closing down and consolidating military academies, at the same time expanding the role of civilian universities and the process of getting officers into the PLA. And so our chapter examines the various components of this officer accession process.

The reform, that of consolidating and improving the quality of the military schools, has been actively going on for 20 years. It's been part of the force reduction system, and it's been very much focused on establishing new educational requirements for promotion, to codify the efforts to reform the officer education system.

The PLA leadership recognizes that the continuing, if not growing, need for technically proficient and academically credentialed officers is critical. The PLA leadership also has recognized that the capacity of the Chinese military academies, which is the traditional source of the officers for the PLA, to produce leaders is still very limited. This had led them in recent years to experiment with innovative methods of exploiting the civilian institutions and universities of higher learning and recruiting civilian graduates into the PLA officer corps.

So we have two sources of new officers for the PLA primarily, those who are trained and educated and graduate from the PLA military academy system, which is the traditional way, and those who entered the officer corps directly from the civilian universities, either as being recruited directly because they had the specialties that the PLA wants or because they have been participating in the National Defense Student Program, which I'll talk about in a few minutes.

In 2000, the State Council and the CMC [Central Military Commission] formally set about the current policies that authorize recruiting from the civilian universities. This was a drastic change in mindset for the PLA of how to get their officers.

These policies clearly recognized that the inadequacy of the military school system as the sole source of officers for the PLA and the inability of those schools to provide officers that can meet the PLA needs for military modernization.

There was also a third method of recruiting officers in place, and that was direct promotions from the ranks. That pretty much has stopped since about 2000, 2001. They just don't do that anymore.

As part of our research, we were looking at how many officers there are and how many they're training. The PLA doesn't provide precise numbers, but our estimates, based on the Chinese language reporting of military press, indicates to us that approximately half of the new PLA officers now come from PLA academies, and half from universities.

A decade ago, it was 99 percent from the academies and very, very few from the universities. Based on the sources that we had, we had estimated that the PLA is capable within their academic system, of producing about 29,000 officers, new officers, a year that feeds their 2.3 million-man military force.

So, at any given time, that's about 10,000 students who are graduating, who originated in being recruited directly from high schools; about 5,000 that were recruited directly from PLA units. These 15,000 pretty much attend the PLA military academies. There are about 30 military academies in the PLA, and 20 in the People's Armed Police that provide this basic officer-level education; and about 11,000 who are recruited from high school into the National Defense University Program, the National Defense Student Program.

There are also about 3,000 a year that the PLA units, particularly advanced technology units such as the 2nd Artillery and the Air Force, reach directly down into university programs to recruit people who have technical skills that they need.

Traditionally these military academies, as I have said, were the primary educational institutions. As recently as 2003, there were about 95 PLA schools. In the subsequent years, they've been reducing and consolidating those schools, so that now that there are about 67 schools.

So that's 28 schools that have been closed down or consolidated or moved over -- transferred over to the civilians.

The PLA schools remain one critical point of getting the officers, and the other is the National Defense Student Program, which is roughly analogous to our U.S. Reserve Officer training corps program. They go to the university. They do similar military training in the university, but then they go out and get more training after they graduate. This program began seriously around 2000. By 2006, there were over 40,000 students enrolled in the program. And in 2007, they were going to enroll another 11,000 students into the program. And there were 116 different universities that were providing this ROTC-type training inside China, and that number is increasing. So these are, in my view, pretty revolutionary changes in terms of the thinking and the way the PLA goes about getting its officers.

It's not surprising, but there's a plan behind how to do this. They have quotas. We were able to find specifically in the military regional newspapers that in the spring, the PLA will go out and say within military regions which specialties they want to fill, what schools the officers will be trained in, and what numbers they are. And that will go out to the PLA units for the program that recruits directly from the PLA enlisted ranks into the officer corps.

About 90 days later, usually around August, the papers will then announce who's been selected and recruited into those programs. Now, we were able to see this clearly in the Jinan military region and the Nanjing Military Region, and we believe that this is probably going on in the rest of the PLA.

We would think and we posit that there is a similar type of quota and specialization system that goes and recruits – guides the recruiting – from high schools into the PLA schools, although we couldn't document that. And we couldn't find any indication at all to help us explain what kind of quota or system that went into the National Defense Student Program that guided how many students go into the universities there.

The chapter also talks about the academic programs. A key point here is that most of the PLA's school programs for their officers now are becoming four-year programs. They are designed so they so much looked like a civilian four-year program,

but the reality is they have not yet got to the quality, the content, and the capability of these civilian four-year programs.

Part of the reforms is also to upgrade the training and education that goes on in those programs. In the chapter, we describe in some excruciating detail course content and types of programs, two-, three-, and four-year programs in various schools that are there. We also attempted to address how well the students from the civilian universities are assimilated into the PLA. This is a new concept that's going on. And so it's really an area of concern.

There are transition problems, and not surprisingly they find a lot in the PLA complain about the way in which the officers who don't go through the formal PLA training programs are integrated with the units. And some of the criticisms we talked about before, how our city kids are not physically strong, but they do have very good PT programs in the PLA, so physical strength comes after a period of time.

Most of us who have traveled and been to China and dealt with the PLA can pretty much attest to that in the junior ranks, not at the senior officer corps, though. It's difficult to communicate with the fellow soldiers. They have trouble accepting criticism. They're aloof from their other soldiers. The college graduates are not sufficiently interested in politics – particularly the PLA politics, the ideological politics that go with the PLA unit. And they really don't have the same sense of group solidarity and willingness to sacrifice for the group.

On the other hand, they have gained some very strong positive points out of these programs. They learn faster, particularly in the technological areas. They're better creative thinkers. And they are much more concerned with being efficient and working effectively.

So where does this leave the PLA? You know, as an institution, the PLA faces very serious personnel challenges. For example, as the ranks of college-educated officers increase, the character and the culture of the PLA officer corps will also change. They aren't going to be the illiterate ones that were there in the '60s and '70s in the officer corps.

Values, the sense of history, priorities, and attitudes towards even the Chinese Communist Party are going to change and evolve over time, and the PLA is going to have to deal with that. At the same time, the PLA is going to have major challenges in attracting the right people with the right skills to do the more advanced technological jobs that are out there and just to fill the ranks of the PLA, and then figure out, once they've attracted them, how they're going to retain them.

To do this, they're going to have to be increasingly innovative, both in recruiting and in retention programs. And, as pointed out in a couple of places in the chapter, there are indications that the PLA can be innovative in how it recruits and how it

develops. The changing dependency upon graduates from the civilian education, on the civilian university system is a major indicator of this.

The bottom line, though, is that while the PLA has made a lot of progress in reforming its officer accession and training programs, a lot of work remains to be done. They have lots of challenges. Thanks.

DR. SCOBELL: Thank you, John. Next we turn to Kristen Gunness to summarize an overview of her chapter titled "Reforming the Officer Corps."

KRISTEN GUNNESS: Thank you. Before starting, I'd like to thank Roy Kamphausen, Andrew Scobell, and Richard Bush for inviting me to speak today, as well Sarah Snyder and the Brookings folks for organizing this event.

I'd also like to acknowledge the co-author of this chapter in the book, Mr. Fred Vellucci, who is not in the audience, but whom you should feel free to contact if you have questions as well.

Finally, like John, as a card-carrying civilian, I need to make the standard disclaimer that this talk is based on work I did while I was at CNA and does not reflect my views as a member of the Navy Staff or those of the U.S. government.

For Western observers of China security affairs and for analysts of the PLA, I cannot think of a more timely topic than the one we are discussing today or of a more opportune time for this collection of excellent papers on the PLA's personnel reforms to be published.

Why is personnel reform in the PLA such important topic? Because, potentially more than the capabilities the Chinese military is acquiring or the institutional forms it is enacting, it is the people in the PLA that will either enable or constrain that military from achieving its goals.

After all, it is people who will operate the modern weapons and equipment the PLA is fielding, write the new doctrines, and implement the reforms. Anything the PLA hopes to become will hinge as heavily on its ability to attract, educate, training, and retain the right type of soldier, NCO, and officer, as it will on budgets, platforms, weapons, and military theory.

Without attempting to understand the people in the PLA, our efforts to understand Chinese defense modernization are incomplete.

Having a more adaptable, better trained, and higher educated officer and NCO corps is particularly crucial at this juncture in time, as the Chinese military is increasingly being called upon to perform missions beyond its traditional purview, such as peacekeeping, search and rescue operations, and potentially protecting Chinese citizens abroad in some of the world's roughest neighborhoods.

As the PLA becomes a military with an increasingly global reach, having the right people in the right positions has become even more critical to the success of operations abroad.

The PLA leadership knows the importance of personnel reform and has known it for a long time. There is nothing new about the PLA's attempts to reform its officer corps and to build a more educated professional force.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the PLA has undergone several periods during which it strove to achieve higher levels of professional competence. The difference today is that the external environment in which the PLA is operating and in which its military modernization is taking place is now conducive to these reforms taking root.

In addition, China's current domestic environment is providing the PLA with an unprecedented period of stability, economic growth, and financial and human resources with which to accomplish its aspirations. And this has directly impacted its ability to implement personnel reform.

China's booming economy adds to the increasing levels of funding the PLA needs to attract and retain better educated personnel, provide increased training and educational opportunities for its officers and NCOs, as well as purchase the new equipment and technologies the PLA needs for its future modern officer corps.

An increasingly educated Chinese civilian population and continued advances by the civilian education system, particularly in the areas of science and technology, have created a broader, richer pool of candidates from which the PLA can draw.

This same socio-economic change in China has also presented a double edged sword for the PLA in the area of personnel reform. The same economy that is supporting PLA modernization, especially the private sector, now provides stiff competition to the PLA in attracting the best and brightest of China's youth to its officer corps, and provides challenges to the retention of the military's most talented officers.

Given the relatively new domestic and global context in which the PLA is now operating, PLA leaders have enacted a program of personnel reform that is widespread and all encompassing. While I don't have time today to get into the details, permit me to highlight a few critical aspects of the PLA's reforms.

First, the PLA assessed that it needed a new type of officer. This new type of officer would ideally possess scientific and technical knowledge, political awareness, versatility, creativity, and efficiency. In addition, officers should have both operational and managerial experience, a high degree of military professionalism, a well-developed ability to think strategically, and the confidence to lead troops.

In sum, the PLA now seeks officers who have science and technology know-how, can work as team players, and are prepared to think about, understand, and adapt to the changing nature of modern warfare.

To accomplish this, the PLA has focused on three key areas. First, it had downsized the force to rid the military of dead weight, particularly in the officer corps. This has required mass de-mobilizations, three since 1985, which have reduced the force by 1.7 million.

In addition, the PLA has instituted an up or out policy and now has mandatory retirement ages for officers.

Second, the PLA has focused on recruiting, developing, and retaining educated military professionals in the officer corps. It has improved the officer recruitment process by establishing formal channels with civilian universities that enable the PLA to select from a larger, more diverse pool of candidates.

The PLA has revised the active-duty officers law, which now stipulates that all officer candidates must undergo professional military education prior to accession to the PLA officer corps and prior to promotions to the next level.

While the PLA has been contemplating this requirement for some time, it could only recently began to implement it because of the 500,000 man reduction of 1997, which decreased the number of officer billets to fill, and because of the PLA's increased use of the civilian education system to supplement officer training at military academies, which alleviated some of the strain on the PME system and allowed for more officers to be trained at one time.

The PLA has made a concerted effort to raise salaries and improve officers' standard of living, with the hopes of improving retention. It has also streamlined and standardized its officer evaluation process, with the goal of better identifying who should be promoted, as well as getting the right people into the right positions.

In particular, the PLA appears to be addressing the lack of a quantitative basis for officer evaluations by requiring, on a trial basis, that officers in some units be evaluated through a combination of both performance and examinations in relevant subjects, such as military technology, foreign languages, and computer science.

Finally, the PLA is focusing on developing a more skilled NCO corps. This has been a two-step approach involving a reallocation of resources, versus decreased investment in training enlisteds and increased investment in training NCOs. In 2005, the PLA's four general departments stipulated that individuals selected as NCOs must have a specified level of education and must go to military academies for training.

In addition, the NCO selection and promotion process has also undergone significant change. The PLA has promulgated several laws and regulations in the past five years in an effort to standardize the procedures and selection into and promotions within the NCO core, including presenting more stringent requirements and a strict quota system for NCO selection and assignment.

I realize I'm almost out of time, but let me close with this. When it comes to personnel reform, the stakes are high for the PLA. The key to success for the PLA's entire modernization program will depend on its finding and keeping the high tech soldiers capable of enabling its transformation. This is not easy and the price of failure is high.

On that note, while there is a wealth of PLA published data on personnel reform, there is little to indicate the yard sticks by which the PLA measures success in this area. Thus, it is difficult for western observers to discern to the level to which the PLA is actually succeeding in its personnel reform, as well as the level to which it thinks it is succeeding.

Finally, we should not take for granted the Chinese ability to learn and adapt when necessary. As legendary film maker, Zhang Yimou, the inventor of the Olympics Opening Ceremony, said in a recent interview with the press, "we can work very hard, we can withstand lots of bitterness, we can achieve in one week what you can achieve in two months." How successfully that industriousness is employed in the PLA remains to be seen. Thank you.

DR. SCOBELL: Thank you, Kristen. Next we have Elizabeth Hague, who will discuss PLA career progressions and policies. Elizabeth, can you give us an overview of your chapter, please?

MS. HAGUE: Okay. I also have to tell you that I wrote this paper before I joined the State Department, where I now work, and I'm speaking today completely in a personal capacity. My views are my own and do not represent those of the United States State Department.

The chapter that I wrote for this conference covers PLA progressions, career progressions and policies. And I base my findings on available biographic data on career paths of many officers. I also looked at some case studies, and very importantly, I looked very closely at some regulations that the PLA has for career progressions and how those differ based on operational, political, logistic, armament, and technical career tracks, kind of the main career tracks that you can take as an officer in the PLA.

I also examined whether there were differences in career progressions and promotions of ethnic minorities. My paper goes into all of these in great detail. So if you want to look in more detail, you can look at the chapter, including names and lots and lots of examples. But for the purposes of this discussion, I'm just going to quickly kind of highlight some of the key findings.

The first finding was that the system is fairly regularized in contrast to, let's say, 20 years ago. It's becoming increasingly regularized. And certainly, the 2000 regulations, active duty regulations on career progressions did a lot to further that regularization and institutionalization. But by regularized, I really mean that there is a set of rules for recruitment, for training, for education, the age of an officer, time and position for each officer in their career track at each level, etc. This means that the age of an officer, for example, can be a very basic statistic, but also very analytically useful way of determining whether an officer will move on soon, you know, either due to promotion, because he has to be promoted, as one of my colleagues just mentioned, or else due to age limits or else time and position. They generally can't be in a position for more than a certain amount of time either.

Because this is the case, examining PLA's regulations can be extremely useful for understanding the usual career progression and changes in the PLA. Nevertheless, this is not to say that career progressions are predictable, especially when it involves individuals' promotions to specific positions.

Specific criteria for promotion and what's desirable changes as the PLA modernizes. Therefore, different people with different backgrounds might be selected at a given time for a specific position depending on what the PLA needs. So there is a little bit more flexibility. You don't just look at PLA career progressions as kind of a predictive tool, but it can be pretty useful for seeing general trends. Most importantly, like in our system, out of all the officers that do follow those regulations and do everything that's required, punch all the right tickets, still only a very small percentage end up making it to the top.

Climbing to the top can be due to all kinds of factors that go beyond regulations, things like personality, charisma, connections, political correction, I mean being politically correct, and, of course, important contributions to national security. And actually, this is laid out quite explicitly in the regulations, particularly in the very areas that the PLA, a changing body, is trying to improve.

Now, one thing I'd really like to emphasize is that having a successful career does not mean necessarily climbing to the top, and neither is it necessarily the most important thing for understanding the PLA.

I would argue that things that are happening at the grassroots level in a lot of cases are more important than the general officers that were promoted, beginning 30 years ago. They have had a long career, but a lot of the really big changes that are happening in PLA happen actually at the lower levels. Technical officers are a pretty good example. They're frequently profiled in the PLA pictorial, for example, for their achievements, and that's clearly a sign that they have been very successful, but it's not necessarily a sign that they're going to be promoted all the way up to the top, but they are very, very important for the PLA's modernization.

Geographic mobility - officers still tend to stay in the same geographic region until they reach a fairly senior level, after which they rotate to other geographic positions, and this has not really changed very significantly over the years.

The second thing that I want to kind of go into is the fact that positions are fluid, something that I just now alluded to. Regulations actually do dictate this, as I noted earlier, because officers have to move every few years to another position, and this brings in new ideas, new people for the PLA modernization. There are exceptions for continuity purposes and for other reasons, but they tend to be pretty notably exceptions to the regulations. And overall, if you see the fluidity of people selected and their backgrounds, it gives us a window into the PLA's evolving modernization priorities, which are changing, and what the PLA values in their people. Some examples: pretty consistently over the years officers in the operational track, one of the five tracks that I mentioned earlier, tend to do pretty well if they have backgrounds in training.

Having had backgrounds in training, they could have different specializations, and those specializations may reflect things that are going on in the PLA now. So, for example, things that are kind of hot topics, areas that the PLA is really trying to modernize in, such as information operations, could be areas in which people who have those backgrounds may later be promoted to fairly prominent positions, and this actually has happened.

And if a certain military region, for example, is trying to work on major equipment upgrades, it's not surprising to see someone with an armaments background rotating to a position in that military region, and this has happened, for example, in the Nanjing Military Region, which is right across from Taiwan. So those are just some examples of how you can kind of match those personnel changes up with PLA modernization priorities. Another finding is that there is an ideal that exists to have crossover between tracks more than in the past, and I'm talking, again, about those different career tracks that I mentioned earlier, and to raise the desirability of technical officer positions, which I mentioned earlier, are very important to the PLA's modernization, but they have not historically been the most sought after positions in the PLA.

The PLA really needs technical officers, especially university graduates with engineering degrees, as a couple of my co-panelists have alluded to, to fulfill some very technically challenging parts of the modernization program.

One example: a newspaper announced that technical officers would be given a chance to command units, an enticement to university graduates to become technical officers rather than gravitating all towards those very popular operational positions. Another finding, the PLA is experimenting with joint service appointments, but generally these also remain an idea rather than a widespread practice since they are not widespread throughout the PLA and they are not in the career progressions of most PLA officers. They tend to be fairly small-scale experiments, but they're noticeable,

often highly publicized, and I think that we're going to be seeing a lot more of those, as well.

The final thing that I did in the paper was to look at some ethnic minorities, to see if there was an affirmative action policy for ethnic minorities in the PLA. What I found briefly was that ethnic minorities on the whole are not very well integrated in the PLA despite some preferential policies.

For example, there are programs to encourage more minority officers to have university educations, but that's actually pretty consistent with overall attempts to have officers in general have more university educations.

And one thing I just want to say very quickly is: it's not always easy to see who actually is an ethnic minority in China with the exception of Xinjiang or Tibet, because often the names are pretty similar. The other thing about the minorities is that they don't tend to be very well integrated into the PLA as a whole. A lot of times they tend to be – well, I'm talking particularly about the Xinjiang and Tibet officers; they do tend to be kind of localized in the areas that they are from, and I think that's in part because they are needed the most there.

So conclusions, just very, very quickly: understanding PLA progressions is very important for understanding the PLA. I do want to emphasize, though, the regulations are not the final word. They tend to be pretty stagnant, they don't change very quickly.

The last really big overhaul of these was in 2000, and as you know, the PLA has changed a lot since then, so you need to look a little bit beyond that and see who's where, what their backgrounds are, and in a lot of cases, looking a little bit further down than just the senior officer core, who have come up through, over decades rather than in recent years. I feel that that's where a lot of the real dynamism of the PLA exists.

We will see a lot more cross-fertilization across career tracks, for example, armament tracks and operational tracks, operational tracks and logistics tracks, and a lot more joint assignments, but these practices are not actually formally introduced into the regulations yet. Thank you.

DR. SCOBELL: Thank you, Elizabeth. Now we can open it up. I think we've got about 25 minutes for questions. Yes, sir.

QUESTION: I think a question for any of you or all of you is a question about foreign education, as we know that one of the most important developments in an officer's education is to study abroad. From time to time, we learn from the Chinese media that this huge number – I think – that 90 percent of army-level officers study abroad.

Now, I have a two part questions: one is that, what do we know about the foreign studies, in terms of where do they go, what do they study, how long they stay overseas; and secondly, in your view, what's the policy recommendation for the U.S.? Should we open the door for them or should we close the door for them?

DR. SCOBELL: A quick clarification; did you say 90 percent? That doesn't sound accurate to me. I don't know.

SPEAKER: (off mike) This is the – 90 percent army-level, yes.

MS. HAGUE: I would just venture to say that the key is foreign exposure. That's not studying abroad necessarily, that could be a ten-day trip somewhere. And there's a lot more travel. There's also a lot more study abroad experience. It's another area; I mentioned things like joint operations and I mentioned cross fertilization that haven't been quite integrated into the PLA regulations, but they are the kind of things that the PLA is trying to do more.

Study abroad, you have these young officers that go abroad and they get some experience and they bring it back, and that is definitely a positive for their career in terms of experience.

MS. GUNNESS: Another part to your question is – I know that only recently PLA leaders have actually had a fair amount of experience abroad and with foreigners and that's also changing the dynamics, that's another part to that. I don't know about the level of interaction, but I do know that when the PLA remodeled its PME system or assessed that its PME system wasn't working in the '90s, one of the things it did was send people over here to study ours, and a lot of the changes that they've made have been modeled off of our PME system, so that's one part of an answer to your question.

DR. SCOBELL: Just to piggyback on that, that comes out quite nicely in Paul Godwin's chapter. Unfortunately Paul is not here today, but his chapter, looking at, I think it's mainly at PLA NDU. They modeled it explicitly on our NDU, so that's a perfect example of what Kristen is talking about.

MR. CORBETT: The numbers are suspect, and so is, as you pointed out, the definition of what studying abroad. Researchers from their National Defense University's Academy of Military Science and folks in their intelligence system have studied, for a good two decades, been regularly sent abroad for study programs, both in foreign military universities. The military school in the United Kingdom has had Chinese officers studying in there for about 20 years or so, for example. There's also a number in the technical field that go and study. I just find it a little bit hard to say – I wouldn't accept that 90 percent of the *junji*-level [army-level] officers have actually studied abroad. They may have been abroad, and that's a very different thing. It's increasing, though, that's probably the main point, and will be more characteristic of officers in the future.

QUESTION: What's the policy recommendation for the U.S.?

MR. CORBETT: If they meet the qualifications to come to any of our civilian universities, more power to them, let them come.

DR. SCOBELL: And some of them do come, as visiting scholars and so on, so that should be encouraged. In fact, any overseas experiences by Chinese officers should be encouraged, because the more cosmopolitan they become, I think the better understanding they'll have of the world and China's role and the PLA's role in it. Maybe the other panelists might disagree with me, but I would still say perhaps the best way to characterize China's military leadership is as technonationalist, meaning they're increasingly technologically sophisticated, educated, focused on the technology element and very nationalistic.

Of course, military officers in any service tend to be quite nationalistic, more nationalistic than typical ordinary civilians in any given society, and that's definitely true in the PLA. So given that, I think all the more exposure they can get, experiences abroad, the better to have a more nuanced, sophisticated approach to the world and China's place in it.

MS. GUNNESS: I teach at the Naval Academy. I think I have some perspective to that question raised. I think the PLA is facing some kind of a profound ambivalence towards this. On one hand, they have to open up to access more information. On the other hand, they have to send people to know this information. I think openness is good, they want it, but they also want to control the openness. So once openness is controlled, it's not open anymore. And I think this is very interesting. For example, in Annapolis, we have very strong interest to engage the Chinese Naval Academy. We invited them to join us, but year after year, they couldn't do it because the system restricts them. It's not the Chinese Navy, per se, it's some policies.

I went with my bosses to China, and we had some negotiations with them. It turns out they would never send their navy to Annapolis, because it's not safe.

And actually, that's not really the real concern. If you really know their system – we spent a couple days and we saw the system – it's completely incompatible with what we have here. They spend so much time each day going through this etiological thing, and there are simulations that – talking about was so much target on the U.S., the best upon the scenario, not necessarily because of something political – but it's just reality.

So it's a very closed system, but they know a lot about what's going on in the world. The compound is very open inside but beyond the compound, that's what they're not supposed to cross. They want to send their senior officers here to Annapolis, and we say we're not training for senior officers; we're training for junior officers. So I say that there is ambivalence. If you talk in terms of education, they have a strong desire

to send people abroad, but at the decision-making level at the top, there's a rule that, say, a certain level of people must study abroad, including the junior officers.

We have, in Annapolis, foreigners from all over the world; we're a completely open system in that regard. So people from Lithuania, people from, not Bolivia, even people from Singapore, Taiwan, I mean they're welcome to come over here, and their leadership come to visit us every year, and they express that kind of thing, but then somehow it never happened, so I think there's some ambivalence in that regard, and I wonder if that registers in any of your research at all.

MR. CORBETT: A little bit of it registered in the research, but some of it is also in experience. One of the things, the aspect you mentioned, that the Chinese Navy would not send cadets or midshipmen to Annapolis, and you also mentioned that you have students from Taiwan and Singapore that could be there. One of the policy issues that comes up is that from the Chinese side, as long as Taiwan is present, they're not going to send a full-time student, so there's a matter outside of the analysis of the academic programs that comes to bear on this issue. When you go to West Point, the U.S. Military Academy, there are cadet level exchange programs between West Point cadets and the Nanjing Polytechnic Institute, where they have visits and go back and forth, so there is exposure to them and ongoing exchange programs. But there again, there aren't any PLA cadets at the military academy.

Those are high level decisions that are affected by national level policy and principals, and that affects whatever level, if you talk about the U.S. military's professional military education system, PLA participation in any of our schools starts off with that type of issue: how does it fit in the national level issue, and then you get into things like, do the curriculums match, are their certifications the same, if we send an officer to their National Defense University for a year, will he go to and learn from their programs, or will that officer be in an isolated international student program, will they send their officer to ours, and when we send our officers to their war college level programs abroad? We go through a process to compare curriculums so that the officers get certified as getting that level of military education. And so there's a couple issues, and we hear it in the political realm – the transparency and reciprocity – but there are specific requirements that need to be made on both sides, from both systems, that get in the way of doing that very freely.

MS. HAGUE: On the theme of transparency and reciprocity, which is really what this becomes about in the end, I'm always talking to people in the Pentagon about that, because that issue comes up a lot, and I keep explaining to people that the PLA are not transparent with each other much of the time.

Andrew and I and a couple other people rode the train with the PLA to Luoyang last year and attended a conference there, and I was amazed just watching the interaction of the PLA with each other.

It's a system that's built somewhat on fear, and there's not a lot of transparency even among themselves. And so it's just interesting to take that level of interaction and bring it into a foreign audience, just a point to make on that.

MS. GUNNESS: I don't really have too much to add. One thing I would say is that it's a changing military, and maybe at the younger levels there's more emphasis on study abroad or visiting abroad, but this military is fundamentally pretty insular still.

AMBASSADOR LILLEY: Could I raise a question again? This dates me, but I want to go back to the ghost of Chinese military past. And, of course, we were brought up in the era of warlordism and regionalism. You spoke on regionalism, and the Shandong Faction that was the powerhouse ten years ago, and I wonder how much of this factionalism, regionalism and tribal identification exists in the PLA today?

We have reports of the PLA's Navy, at least, with links to smuggling in the South China Sea, massive corruption reports. We also have the reports done in the 1970's, of people getting very fed up with the military and calling them fat, lazy, and disjointed, and this criticism comes in, and I just wondered if you would comment on whether with all the talk about good schools and rising up, whether this tribalism, factionalism and networks exist in terms of promotion. I'm just reminded of one anecdote when I was on a train in China of having an old, obviously senior military officer that looked like a toad disappear into a compartment with two very good looking assistants, slam the door, and we didn't see them for the rest of the day.

In other words, this kind of thing perhaps goes on in the PLA. Could you comment on the realities that I'm talking about, particularly the influences of the past in terms of the – I know that China has broken the regionalism through centralization, and technology, and officer corps, and education, all these things, you mentioned that, but aren't there these old trends in there that are very hard to put down?

MS. HAGUE: Cheng Li can give a much better answer than I would to this question. But I would say absolutely, there still exists factionalism, and the Chinese call it *guanxi* – the network of old friends and family is still essential to being promoted. And I know Cheng Li has talked a lot about "princelings" and that who you're connected with very much matters as to where you end up, so it is still alive and well in Chinese culture and in general still today and in the PLA, as well.

MS. GUNNESS: I want to add to that that, yes, that is one of those intangible things for getting promoted. You can follow the regulations to the tee, but if you don't know somebody, if you don't have a good mentor, you're probably not going to be promoted. It's just one of those facts, and it's probably true in a lot of places.

I think some of it has broken down. There are more ways to have connections in China now; it's not only based on regionalism. Like in Whitson's time, it was predominantly regionalism. However, having said that, if you're a PLA officer,

particularly in the army, and you're coming through the military region system, you do stay in that military region for maybe the first 20 years until you're at a pretty senior level, before you start being required to change out.

Now, there are exceptions to that. You have people who transfer out at earlier ages, but the general rule is that most people don't really start having a lot of geographic mobility until they are at a pretty senior level.

MR. CORBETT: It's always a challenging question to know exactly where they are and which of the reports to give credence to. That list of things that you said, Mr. Ambassador, at one point in time they were all in effect. The smuggling did take place, the corruption took place, Deng Xiaoping, in my view, set up the invasion – the counter attack against Vietnam in '78 to clearly demonstrate that the PLA was fat, lazy, incompetent, and not prepared to do things, and he used that as a launching point for reforms.

I think it has changed quite a bit, and I would add with regularization and with other things that have gone through, that there are different characteristics in terms of what one has to do to get promoted and what the relationships are, so that Whitson's Field Army theories left over from the Civil War have pretty much faded away, and I think that was pretty much gone by the early '90s.

But you still have the various career paths, the command track, logistics policy track that has people that go up a career path, and they develop relationships. You still have the military regions up and to the point that an officer becomes a flag officer, a major general, makes the jump from senior colonel to major general, he's pretty much in your line units, he pretty much stays in the same stovepipe, he'll be in the same division all the way up until he gets major general and moves maybe between a group army inside a military region, and at that point is probably the first time, for the most part, that they move off to another area.

We see some exceptions, but broadly, that's the way it is. Within that you have sponsors, you have mentors, you have people that you've moved up in your careers with. I ask myself sometimes in looking at it, what is the politicization of a process that gets a person promoted from senior colonel to flag rank major general in the PLA, and in a professional military like the U.S. military, is there a level of politics, of *guanxi*, of the association of common experiences, as well as your education track, that affects who gets promoted from colonel to brigadier general, that goes into it in our system?

That does take place. I think it's a, if you will, a cleaner system than it was 20 years ago, but there's still lots of interpersonal relationships that go into the dynamic of who gets promoted and how successfully you move up, and then even higher when you get to lieutenant generals and up into the full general, clearly, you have a level of politics that goes into the political loyalty to the head of the party and to the senior membership of the Central Military Commission.

DR. SCOBELL: You've been very patient. I've got an interjection from my colleague, but then I'm going to go to the three people over here who have their hands raised. And what I'll do, since we're running towards the end, after Roy Kamphausen interjects, maybe I can take each of your questions in quick succession, and then we'll get a response to all three. So Roy –

MR. KAMPHAUSEN: Thank you. Our colleagues on the panel have talked about changes in culture. I think it's still the case that some of the structures that remain do facilitate tight networks that continue to endure. I believe it's still the case that PLA officers at the senior level have what we call a 360 degree personnel evaluation, in which their senior, their subordinates, and their colleagues all contribute to the annual evaluation, so that creates several phenomena, one of which is, you develop a tight network around you, and it's sort of a self-re-enforcing process and ensures that a go-along, get-along, everyone-gets-promoted kind of phenomenon occurs. But I don't think we should think completely cynically at all, so I think it tends to result in a tight network that, as those senior officers get transferred between military regions, they also bring a network with them that allows them to flourish in their new location.

Interestingly, it was just a year or so ago that a U.S. Army officer at the War College wrote that the U.S. Army ought to go to a very similar system, which is so counter cultural to the way so many were raised, but the idea that your senior, your subordinates, and your peers would contribute to your evaluation at one point was something we regarded as anathema and now it's even being considered in our own system.

DR. SCOBELL: All right. I'm going to reverse my plan and go with four people, because this gentleman here had his hand up, too, and I missed him. So please, can you be very brief, state your question very quickly, and then we'll move on to the next person.

QUESTION: Thank you. I'm Colonel Hans van der Louw from the Netherlands. I'm both a graduate of the Naval College and the War College, the latter recently, and I just want to respond to your comment on the War College's 360 degree evaluations. I participated in that, so the culture is already there, just to state the facts. So it's not totally different from your point of view. If you allow me, while I still have the microphone, a very short question on NCO core. I recently read a very hilarious article on a group of American NCOs who went to China and tried to engage with their counterparts. And I think they found it very difficult from both sides. Now, we in the Netherlands, we have an NCO core as models to yours, and we call them leaders, experts, and instructors. Would you qualify the Chinese NCO core similar to that?

QUESTION: Major Kevin Koerner and I'm with Army Staff. I do Army international affairs, and I actually am involved in the allocation of these military education slots at the Army school, so I just had a couple practical comments with regard – in answering your question, sir.

First of all, two issues that we concern ourselves with very much is, the slots are allocated on a global basis, so geopolitical concerns definitely come into play, because there's a limited quota of the number of slots and which countries we would offer slots to. That is a policy decision, and OSD ultimately is involved very much with regard to China's allocation of slots. And the second thing, that is a legal constraint that we operate under, under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2000, 12 categories of engagement with China that are constraining to us. One of those, for example, is advanced war fighting techniques. And the combined general staff school at Fort Leavenworth is called the Advanced War Fighting Core, so it would be very difficult for us, under that legal constraint, to offer a slot to a Chinese military service member.

QUESTION: I have a question. North Korean military were trained in China by the PLA, and in the structure I saw – in the structure of the North Korean Army, there is a unit within it, a political unit all the time, just teaching politically, and also propaganda operations, and I am curious to know, what kind of political studies are offered in the PLA now? Given that it's more technical and national in nature, but what kind of content do they teach within the PLA? The content of their education, political education, is it more toward the "friend" relations around neighboring nations, or competition with U.S. military or Russian – what's the relationship anyhow and the political education content?

DR. SCOBELL: Thank you for your question. Last, but not least.

QUESTION: I'm Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Leonard. I'll soon be training to become an assistant attaché to China, and I have one question concerning the types and the level of education between the Army, Navy, and the Air Force. Do you see any trends and differences between the different, you know, parts of the PLA?

DR. SCOBELL: Thank you. Can we start with Elizabeth and work our way down, and you can pick and choose, you can cherry pick.

MS. HAGUE: In terms of the types and level of education, Army, Navy, and Air Force, I didn't look specifically at that, but I think the key thing is looking at, not necessarily services, but looking at types of units that the PLA is interested in. So, for example, the Second Artillery, you're going to have a lot of technical officers, you're going to have a lot of people with certain types of training that will be filling some of those units, missile units.

And the same thing would go for the Air Force and the Navy and the Army. Depending on what kind of mission that unit has, there probably are going to be more people. Let's say that unit has some new equipment that requires a certain type of expertise to set the system up for maintenance and requires some technical expertise, it's more likely that you're going to have a higher level of education.

Having said that, one thing that a lot of units seem to do in the PLA is to bring in outside experts to come in and train up their people. And I'm not sure that they

did that before. I don't have the longevity on this issue to speak to that, but I am under the impression that that's a fairly new phenomenon.

MS. GUNNESS: I don't know specifically what types of courses they are teaching in the PLA right now, but I do know that in their interaction with the civilian education system, they're pulling students from the hard sciences, like biochemistry, and of course, the IT sector, because they need people with that type of background to be able to train them into this new type of officer that I was talking about earlier.

So it's definitely focused on the sciences. I have heard that in an effort to get people to think creatively, they're doing a lot more simulation techniques, and James talked about that a little bit, too, but more simulation techniques, more computer simulation to present people with different environments and help them think creatively.

I also wanted to address Andrew's initial question about the disaster response to the earthquake and what that means about the PLA. I think it definitely speaks to a better level of PLA readiness than we have seen in past disasters, like with the snow storms that happened recently. The PLA was, I thought, fairly quick in going in and fairly efficient in what they did. And not to make this into a PR issue, but it also speaks to the bureaucratic apparatus between the party and the Army, because to PRC leadership, that was a crucial moment, when they really needed to do things right in assisting the people in the aftermath of the earthquake because the world was watching, and this was a big PR moment, and the PLA was rolled into that. It was a big part of that, and it was a big part of making that the success that it was.

MR. CORBETT: A real quick partial answer on the NCO core. The place where I've seen a clear presence of NCOs is more likely in the technological and technical types of units, the experts, I would call them. They talk about making NCO leaders, but I haven't seen that really taking place very well yet; it's still a work in progress. And I have no information at all on whether they form an NCO cadre of that, but there clearly are in the technical side of things.

Concerning the political education content, I really don't – I haven't focused on that and seen that, it's a very good question. Clearly, there's heavy political content in our look at the schools where the officers are trained and also in the transition between the National Defense students into – from graduating from college and going into the units. They all had a political education component that was in there, regardless of what the programs were, but I don't know specifically what the content was. A comment on the service specific training; really not surprisingly, the service school systems, whether Navy, Air Force, Second Artillery, or the – within the ground forces, they structure along infantry, armor artillery and those types of things, that are still, in my view, very heavily service specific capabilities: how to operate a ship, drive a ship, maneuver a ship, do that type of thing, and the same with units.

They're beginning to talk about the joint component, but in terms of the curriculum containing a truly joint training component, that's very much in the development phase at this point right now.

Since you brought up earthquakes, add one side to that. I mean there's a good news, bad news types of things, quick decision-making, quick – within the national level infrastructure, quick establishment of command and control system, getting the orders down, extremely fast mobilization and movement of units and forces from all over the country.

On the other hand, for a force that's trying to be capable to do local warfare in an informatized situation, they had lots of challenges - communications didn't work, the units didn't have the equipment to go in and do the type of heavy rescue work that needed to be done, and so there were severe limitations in terms of the sort of training of the units and the types of equipment they had and the ability to communicate to do that.

But the other side of that, within that, though, is a general comment: in terms of the spirit, the perseverance, the dedication, the hard work, the sacrifice of the PLA soldiers has been pretty universal in terms of positive praise for the earthquake operation. So there's some good news types of things and some bad news types of things that were in there.

DR. SCOBELL: Just two quick comments, one to add about the earthquake response. I was talking to PLA people in Beijing a month after the earthquake, and I asked them how they assessed their after action report on their performance, and they were pretty proud of their performance. But following from what John said, they were frustrated by their lack of capabilities. For example, way too few helicopters, so it really slowed their ability to get to the disaster areas. One quick response on the political indoctrination; my sense is, from the research that I've done, although I haven't looked specifically at the syllabi for Chinese PMEs, but this political indoctrination is essentially instrumental, it doesn't have any substance. In other words, they're not taught about Marxism and the ins and outs of these things, or indoctrinated in Communist principles. They're simply told: obey the Communist Party, you are the Party's army, period, and so that, I think, is the extent of it and that's drummed into them. So thank you to all the panelists, and thank you for some excellent questions.

DR. BUSH: On behalf of Brookings, I'd like to thank you all for coming. Thank you to NBR, Rich Ellings has left, the Army War College, and Professor Lovelace. Particular thanks to Roy Kamphausen and Andrew Scobell. Rich Ellings asked me to convey his thanks to you. Thanks to all the panelists for their outstanding presentations and provoking a great discussion. We'll see you next year.

* * * * *