

# Embedding Militarized Socialism: The Sociogenesis of The Post-Revolutionary Statecraft in China (1946-1959)

## Abstract

Between 1946 and 1953, the Chinese socialist elites transformed their military apparatus into the basis of the Leninist state in two radically different ways. In the Southwestern region, units from the Second Field Army were broken down into regional commands and local state apparatuses for counterinsurgency operations; former officers became provincial councilors. In the Northeastern region and Korea, units from the Third Field Army, Fourth Field Army, and Railway Troops were recomposed into unified military-industrial apparatuses; out of the logistical commands came the actual ministries of heavy industries.

This paper seeks to solve the two main riddles of the socialist warfare state in this historic process. What led the Chinese socialist elites to build the Leninist state in two radically different ways, ranging from localized initiatives of popular incorporation and militia mobilization for counterinsurgency to centralized efforts to develop technical resources and operational arts of combined-arms warfare? How and why did the specific timings and patterns of state formation differ?

Drawing on recently declassified military documents, I argue that differences in elites' operational experiences between 1946 and 1953 critically affected their subsequent understanding of socialist statecraft. The varying approaches to statecraft within the military apparatus were acted out in the common ideological arena of the socialist faith. Military officers and party officials who participated in the high-intensity army-to-army operations decided to institutionalize centralized administration for rapid transportation, industrial firepower, and planned economy as the foundation of socialist modernization. In contrast, the ones who planned and executed the counterinsurgency operations articulated mass mobilization and peasant militias as the constitutive elements of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Post-revolutionary state formation is also influenced by geopolitical and economic interests. The effects of these additional mechanisms were typically mediated by the internal dynamics of the semi-autonomous militarized apparatus.

## Explanandum

Variations in approaches to socialist statecraft

Socialist statecraft: the ability to neutralize threats and consolidate the Leninist State

- Centralized bureaucracy for technocratic planning
- Localized apparatuses for popular incorporation and mass mobilization

## Explanans

Variations in elites' operational experiences to deal with existential insecurity.

## Mechanisms

Variations in existential insecurities influenced approaches to socialist statecraft in three different ways.

Mentalities: Officers and political commissars tried to maintain an expedient logic of revolutionary warfare but were forced by changing types of threats to act contingently and instrumentally

- First, they engendered attempts to tame uncertainty:
  - a technocratic mentality
    - The officers were forced to learn the operational art of combined-arms warfare, in which artillery, armor, intelligence, infantry, air defense, and logistical support are all coordinated for maximum effect.
  - a guerrilla mentality
    - the skills of popular incorporation, in which peasant militias, localized mobilization, and state-led movements are essential.
- Authoritative decision-making

Second, the existence of different types of threats encouraged elites to modify pre-existing command-and-control structures.

- A concentrated decisionist conception of the use of force with centralized logistical support
- A localized delegation of the use of force with decentralized logistical support

- Administrative procedures

Last but not least, the varied responses to different threats compelled elites to routinize their modified command-and-control structures into bureaucratized administration.

## Alternative Hypothesis

- The Chinese approaches to socialist statecraft are shaped by Soviet influences
  - In neither case, the approach is constructed under the command of Soviet military and technical advisers
- War-making practices will invariably lead to state centralization (the ones that failed to centralize were outcompeted)
  - This thesis rests upon the assumption that a linear increase in the intensity of war between regular forces is one of the main drivers of state formation.