

2nd Berlin Conference on Asian Security (Berlin Group)

Berlin, 4/5 October 2007

A conference jointly organised by Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), Berlin, and the Federal Ministry of Defence, Berlin

Discussion Paper

Do Not Cite or Quote without Author's Permission

**CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY STRATEGIES
FOR CONTAINING SOCIAL PROTEST¹**

Murray Scott Tanner

1 After most of the research on this project was completed, the author joined the U.S. Congressional Executive Commission on China. All of the views contained in this article are solely those of the author, and do not necessarily represent those of the CECC, its Commissioners, or staff. The present draft is not for citation, quotation or further attribution without the authors' permission.

SWP

Ludwigkirchplatz 3-4
10719 Berlin
Phone +49 30 880 07-0
Fax +49 30 880 07-100
www.swp-berlin.org

MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE CCP'S SOCIAL STABILITY STRATEGY

During CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao first term, the CCP leadership has developed a multi-pronged long-term strategy aimed at confronting and containing China's high levels of social protest and reinforcing the Party's power over society. The Hu leadership's strategy is based on the thesis that China's decade-long increases in social disorder reflect China's passage into a critical transitional stage of development that the CCP must carefully navigate if it is to survive in power. In his February 2005 major address on forging an "harmonious socialist society," Hu argued that the Party's effectiveness in relieving the causes of these tensions will determine whether China will enjoy continued growth and stability or suffer "economic stagnation and protracted social upheavals." According to Hu, because China has recently surpassed a per capita wealth of US\$ 1,000, it has now entered a developmental stage in which social tensions would inevitably increase.² This assertion, which has long been widely held among Chinese social thinkers, is based on an overly rigid reading of Western social science theory about the relationship between income growth, social conflict, and political unrest in developing countries. Nevertheless, it is widely accepted among Chinese social theorists that a period of social instability is inevitable at this level of economic development, and that the Party must adapt its policies and professionalize its coercive forces to steel itself for this transitional period.

Within this broader social stability strategy we can discern at least two constituent strategies. The first of these elements is a broader political and economic strategy aimed at addressing several of the concrete, underlying policy causes of social tension while also bottling up these tensions and encouraging local officials to deal with them at the local level. The second element, which is the major focus of this paper, is a more narrowly focused internal security strategy. The political and economic strategy reflects in particular the Hu Jintao leadership's recognition that it cannot rely entirely upon coercion to contain social tension, and must address at least some of the underlying political, social, and economic policy roots of rising instability. The writings of Party internal security specialists about how to respond to protest make clear that many of the key elements of the Party's internal security strategy were being debated and accepted as early as 1998-2000, before Hu Jintao came to power. The internal security strategy reflects the leadership's desire to contain the social unrest that it either can not respond to effectively through policy changes, or refuses to address by undertaking more fundamental political reforms.

The political and economic dimension of this strategy offers Chinese citizens a series of policy changes aimed at alleviating many of the intractable social problems and tensions which Beijing believes are major cause of social unrest. A major goal of this broader strategy is to convince China's citizens that the Party Center shares their concerns. Among the most noteworthy policy responses to the causes of unrest undertaken in the past two years have been the following:

² Hu Jintao, "February 19, 2005 Speech at Special Discussion Class for Leading Cadres at the Provincial and Ministerial Levels to Study Issue about Building a Harmonious Socialist Society", Beijing, Xinhua Domestic Service, June 26, 2005, FBIS translation.

- The January 2006 cancellation of China's main agricultural tax to lighten peasant financial burdens.³
- The “new socialist countryside” development policy, including increased rural education and health care investment.⁴
- Increased punishment of officials who illegally seize land and evict citizens from their homes.⁵
- “Petition responsibility systems” which link local officials’ evaluations and promotions to their ability to avoid major unrest in their region and prevent large numbers of citizens from appealing petition cases to provincial capitals or to Beijing.
- High profile anti-corruption campaigns.
- Regional development initiatives such as “Opening up the West” and “Reviving the Northeast.”

The fundamental aim of the Party's internal security is to buy the Party time and political space to address these problems, while taking away from citizens the option of large-scale organized political activism or opposition to the Party. Under Hu Jintao, the Party's security specialists have continued an important trend begun under Jiang Zemin—trying to develop more sophisticated, lower violence policing methods that would contain protest while avoiding any popular backlash that could spin out of control. Even more than under Jiang, Hu's leadership emphasizes bottling-up petitioners and protestors in local areas and forcing local officials either to find ways of resolving fundamental problems or repressing unrest.

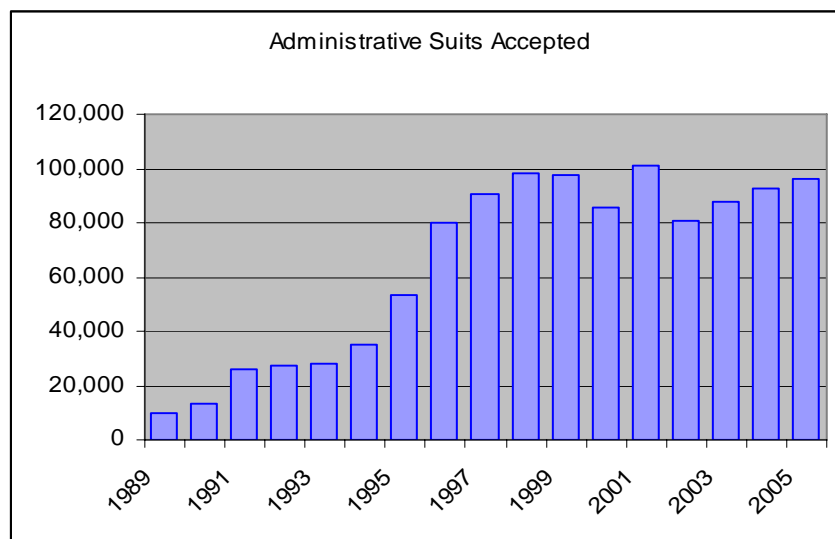
The twin elements of Beijing's social stability strategy create a structure of incentives and risks for citizens. Through the economic and political half of this approach, the Hu government appears aimed at encouraging citizens to keep faith that the Central government really cares about their concerns, and persuade them that the CCP regime is still their best hope for the future. An important aspect of this involves the scape-goating local officials. Citizens are encouraged to believe that the real blame for their problems lies not with the CCP's authoritarian system itself, but with the small number of venal officials who won't obey the law. The internal security strategy aims at getting disgruntled citizens to believe that they have no option but to accept and work with the current CCP system, and that they would still be taking a very dangerous risk to seek such options. The strategy threatens those who try to organize dissent—even formally legal dissent—with serious repression. “Rank and file” protestors also certainly risk detention and punishment. But internal security officials are officially urged to try to avoid alienating the majority of citizens by publicly recognizing the legitimacy of their complaints, and avoiding the use of ham-handed, indiscriminate violence that risks turning small-scale non-violent protests into mass riots.

³ See, for example, Edward Cody, “In Face of Rural Unrest, China Rolls Out Reforms”, Washington Post, January 28, 2006, pg. A1.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ According to China's Ministry of Land and Resources, however, cases of illegal land seizure monitored by the Ministry in 2006 were up by 17.3 percent over 2005, totaling over 130,000 cases, and involving more than 100,000 hectares of land, more than half of which was arable. The Ministry reported that it punished 3,593 officials, including two provincial level officials, for involvement in illegal land confiscations and resale. The report quoted a senior official at the Ministry, Zhang Xinbao, as saying that “The local government-led acquisition ... is still the main form of violation in land use” nationwide. “Illegal Land Use Soars in China” by Li Fangchao in the China Daily, March 21, 2007.

At the same time, the Hu government appears hesitant to offer these aggrieved citizens strengthened institutional avenues through which to voice their grievances and seek redress. Administrative lawsuits, which rose dramatically between 1989 and 2002, fell off and stagnated in recent years. Senior court officials have encouraged local courts to find ways of resolving controversial collective cases that might spark unrest (such as though involving land disputes) informally through arbitration rather than litigation. Lawyers have also been urged to avoid representing such cases. Central government officials claim that mass petitions (xinfang) have declined in the past two years. Hu's government has stepped up efforts to repress not only citizens and groups who advocate fundamental political change (such as, say the China Democratic Party). It is also permitted widespread harassment of those who have tried to use the existing legal and petition systems to defend their rights and interests. As the speeches of Luo Gan, Zhou Yongkang and others make very clear, the Hu Jintao leadership explicitly views such "within-system" activists with suspicion, and openly labels them as potential stalking horses for hostile foreign powers.



KEY ELEMENTS OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Since the late 1990s, security professionals have quietly conceded that it is no longer possible to deter or quickly suppress all protests. Instead, they aim to contain and manage unrest at levels that do not threaten Party control of society. Specifically, the key elements of their strategy involve keeping protests small-scale and local, and preventing disgruntled citizens from establishing any organized, sustained movement. Their strategy explicitly acknowledges that some protest locations pose greater danger to the Party than others, and aims to protect "keypoint" security targets such as major cities and sensitive Party and government facilities, while struggling to prevent petitioners from taking demands to Beijing and provincial capitals.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the internal security strategy involves gauging the appropriate use of force against protestors. For close to a decade police departments have concentrated on developing crowd control tactics that would minimize the use of violence in order to avoid provoking violent backlashes, but still enable these forces to quickly and decisively disperse and suppress protest when they judge they are presented with escalating levels

of violence or threats to key locations and institutions. But such a balance is hard to strike. And recent events, including the shooting of protestors Guangdong and the rise in police officers dying violently, have touched off a quiet but intense debate among security officials over the appropriate use of deadly force in suppressing demonstrations.⁶

Local Party Control over Anti-Protest Operations

- Official police directives and training materials for handling unrest lay special stress on the need for security departments to accept the “absolute, unified, unconditional” leadership of local Communist Party (and government) officials in handling protest. With regard to anti-protest and anti-riot work, this leadership is officially expected to be very detailed. Police forces are called upon to seek local Party and government permission before taking any crucial measures in responding to unrest, and they keep Party and government leaders closely apprised of their actions. Among the key aspects of their protest response activities for which local security department are expected to obtain local Party and government approval or leadership are their unrest contingency plans, which spell out rules of engagement deployment or security forces and the use of force. Local Party and/or government are also expected to establish “command organs” at the scene to coordinate interagency anti-protest operations. Police are also supposed to obtain both local Party/government and superior-level Police authorization for mobilizing police in riot gear. When police believe non-coercive control measures have failed and a protest risks serious threat to social stability or national security, they must seek permission from “superior managing department” before employing such non-lethal weaponry as water cannons and baton, and may only employ violence, including deadly force, “under the unified leadership and unified command” of the local Party Committee and government.⁷

The Importance of Controlling “Keypoint” Security Objectives

The Party’s internal security strategy is built upon a very strong implicit assumption that the ultimate stability of the regime and the country can probably be ensured so long as security forces are able to protect certain “keypoint” (zhongdian) security targets. At a broader geographical level, keypoints consist of cities and provinces, and regions whose stability the Party leadership believes could have a disproportionate impact on nationwide social and political stability, national security, and national unity. Security keypoints within a city or province include crucial Party, government, military, economic, and especially mass media institutions and other facilities which could have a major impact on the stability or unity of the region if they fell under the control of protestors, ethnic separatists, or even terrorists. Upon their arrival at the scene of a protest, security units are expected to quickly identify and secure any nearby Party, government, military, or mass media installations that might make tempting targets for protestors. Loss of control over such facilities is also one of the important criteria security leaders are supposed to consider in determining whether or not to use coercion, violence, or deadly force in

⁶ Wang Caiyuan, *Quntixing Zhi’an Shijian*, pp. 108-109; Xu, *Quntixing Shijian de Yufang he Chuzhi*, pp. 100-106.

⁷ Wang Caiyuan, *Quntixing Zhi’an Shijian*, pp. 85-87, 96-99, 101, 116, 124.; Zhang Shengqian, *Zhi’an Shijian Chuzhi*, pp. 63-67.

suppressing protests.⁸ It should hardly come as a surprise that the city of Beijing and the key facilities there top the list of “security keypoints,” and indeed, Beijing police leaders have virtually boasted in press sources that “as long as the capital is stable, the whole country will be stable” (shoudu wen, quanguo wen). Beijing’s importance is clearly reflected in its police deployments, which are the highest in the nation. Beijing’s ratio of 37 civilian police per 10,000 citizens (as of 2004) is by far the highest in China, and of those cities on which data are available, only Shanghai and Guangzhou, at around 30 per 10,000 citizens, are even close to Beijing. These figures, moreover, do not include Beijing’s deployments of People’s Armed Police, regular PLA, or State Security forces, all of which are believed to be quite large.

Forcing Petitioners Back to Local Levels

Many elements of Hu Jintao’s internal security strategy were, in fact, also used by his predecessors. But one important policy shift during the Hu years has been a significant ratcheting up of the pressure on provincial and local authorities to keep petitioners and protestors bottled up at local levels so that they cannot threaten Party control over Beijing or provincial capitals. Police have been directed to improve monitoring of petitioners and maintain surveillance of key transportation hubs. When petitioners succeed in reaching Beijing, local authorities often dispatch provincial security teams to Beijing to “retrieve” them. Since at least 2002-2003 the MPS has encouraged competition among provincial Public Security Bureaus (PSB) to keep protests bottled-up locally by publishing rankings of provinces by the number of their petitioners who manage to reach Beijing. In the past several years, provincial security officials have been observed lecturing their forces on the successes they have reported in lower their national rank for permitting petitioners to get to the provincial capital.⁹ This policy of bottling up protesters has also been reflected in recent directives on the handling of petitions, administrative lawsuits, and the duties of lawyers in handling group of collective lawsuits. In each case, Party leaders since 2005 have called upon these groups and institutions to avoid handling group cases that could spark protests, and to limit their ability to take their appeals within the system.

Analysts can only speculate as to the Hu administration’s motivation for pressuring local governments to deal with petitioners and protestors locally. Certainly, the desire to protect keypoint cities is one major motivation, as is the desire to ease the administrative burdens the Central government would have to bear if they were forced to deal with increasing numbers of petitioners. Hu may also be trying to combat the tendencies of some local Party leaders to

⁸ Zhang Shengqian, 121.

⁹ “Ten Major Events in Liaoning’s 2004 Public Security Work”, “辽宁公安2004十件大事”. Other reports source this information to Liaoning Fazhi Bao, the Provincial legal affairs paper; Jiaqiang Zonghe Zhili Weihu Shehui Wending Hexie, Zhongguo Zhengwu Xinxi Wang (China Governmental Affairs Information Network); See also the research report by Yao Hengbin (姚恒斌), (Jiangsu Provincial Political Legal Committee Research Office Director), “深入推进平安建设活动努力创造和谐稳定的社会环境” (Deeply Promote Activities for the Construction of Peace, Work Hard to Create and Harmonious and Stable Social Environment), January 27, 2005, at the Jiangsu Academy of Social Sciences website, as of May 30, 2007: http://www.jsass.com.cn/article_show.asp?ArticleID=347; 段守亮 (Duan Shouliang), “浦东新区纠纷解决机制调查与思考”(Investigation and Reflections on the Pudong New District Conflict Mediation System), at the Pudong People’s Court website. “Sichuan sheng xinfang zhidu gaige (Reform of Sichuan’s Letters and Visits System)”, November 16, 2004, posted on a Yunnan Province Communist Party website.

essentially “export” some of their most difficult petition cases to avoid dealing with them. Hu may also believe that by forcing local governments to face their own disgruntled citizens, he may subtly force local officials to undertake the concrete policy measures and political reforms necessary to cope with these challenges.

DEVELOPING LOW VIOLENCE ANTI-PROTEST TACTICS

For several years, one of the fundamental principles of anti-protest work emphasized in police directives and training materials has been to urge security departments to develop their capacity to contain, manage, and defuse protests with minimal violence in order to avoid accidentally provoking a crowd into a violent backlash. A key component of this strategy has been observing the so-called “Three Cautions”—to “cautiously use police power, cautiously use weapons and police equipment, and cautiously use coercive tactics.” The MPS has directed anti-protest units to greatly broaden their repertoire of crowd control tactics, including, whenever possible, the use of crowd containment and isolation. Police are urged, upon arrival at the scene, to learn to evaluate crowds and look first for opportunities to disperse them with minimal confrontation and escalation. Toward this end, once police forces have successfully contained and isolated a crowd, they are also encouraged to first bring the “chief responsible persons” of the unit where the protest took place to the scene and urge these leaders to talk with protestor representative to resolve the underlying dispute. Alternatively, police are directed to use “persuasion and education” and psychological operations against crowds, all focused on dissolving the unity of protestors, dividing and conquering, or convincing them that they are being used and misled by their leaders. If more persuasive tactics do not work, police are urged to use deterrence and intimidation, including the deployment and display of overwhelming numbers of well-equipped forces, to persuade the crowd that the police ultimately have the upper hand.

At the same time, police units are constantly reminded that using force “cautiously” does not mean never using force at all. But one of the dangerous ambiguities in the available police materials on controlling protest is that they do not provide very clear principles or directives about the circumstances under which violence should be used, other than the relatively obvious criteria that rioting, arson, destruction of property and occupation of key buildings is not to be tolerated. Rather, Central officials place a great deal of the risk of exercising judgment and discretion upon local level security officials, although they are ordered to first obtain authorization from relevant local Party and government leaders before using violence.

The Dongzhou Killings and Debates Over the Use of Deadly Force

Nearly two years after the December 2005 police slaying of between six and twenty protestors in Dongzhou, Guangdong, there is evidence that this incident has helped quietly opened debates among security experts concerning the appropriate use of violence in crowd control. By 2006, at least a few security officials were beginning to argue publicly that Chinese police were facing a rapid increase in violent attacks from violent criminals and others, and that Chinese police regulations and weapons training were making many officers too hesitant to fire their weapons in response to criminal assaults. In an April 4, 2006 meeting, a senior security official in Guangzhou City, Zhang Guifang, called on police to dare to fire their weapons when

they encounter resistance from hardcore criminals.¹⁰ Although reports of Zhang's remarks did not explicitly note the use of weapons against mass protests, other sources inspired by Zhang's remarks have.¹¹

But other police officials and analysts insisted that in the case of mass protest, police needed to even more cautious in using force in order to avoid causing small-scale popular protests to spin out of control or harming China's international reputation. Writing in the pages of the Ministry of Public Security's chief theoretical journal *Gongan Yanjiu*, Guangdong Public Security Chief Liang Guoju endorse a level of restraint that exceeded even available official Central sources direct for the use of deadly force.¹²

“...[in] handling mass incidents, we absolutely must not carry weapons of the type that could wound or slay people, and at absolutely no time should we open fire on the masses. This is an iron rule of discipline that public security organs must follow while handling incidents of unrest.”¹³

Liang's absolute prohibition is not only at odds with his Guangzhou subordinate Zhang Guifang, it is also more strict than language on the use of deadly force employed in some Chinese police regulations and training manuals. First-line anti-protest forces are not supposed to carry guns, but that second line forces “are permitted to carry the necessary police weapons and equipment”. In the event a demonstration turns into the outbreak of “serious beating, smashing, looting and similar violent criminal activity,” police may be authorized to use these weapons once they have received permission of the command station on the scene, which is supposed to include local or higher level Party, government, and police officials.¹⁴ Clearly, security leaders are far from resolving one of their most fundamental dilemmas: whether it is more dangerous to risk letting violent protestors get out of control by not opening fire on them; or whether the greater danger lies in using deadly force and running the risk of enraging a crowd into a city-wide riot.

STRENGTHENING INTELLIGENCE SOURCES

For several years now China's public security departments have expressed deepening concern about being caught off-guard by the “suddenness” of mass protests. These departments have been directed to find ways of reviving and strengthening both their overt and covert sources of social information sources.¹⁵ This includes identifying the leaders and organizers of protests and

¹⁰ Fang Kuai, “Naozi Qianwan Bie Fare” (Absolutely Do Not Become Hot-headed), *Shiping*, September 2006, pg. 20.

¹¹ Liu Rongfu and Zhao Xiangyang, “On the Goals, Contents and Methods for Strengthening the Handgun Training and Education of the Police,” *Guangzhou Shi Gongan Guanli Ganbu Xueyuan Xuebao* (Journal of the Guangzhou City Public Security Management Cadres Academy), Vol. 2, No. 2, Summer 2006, pp. 39-40.

¹² Liang Guoju, “Guanyu Yufang he Chuzhi Quntixing Shijian de Sikao”, (Reflections on the Prevention and Handling of Public Order Incidents), *Gongan Yanjiu* (Policing Studies), 2006, No. 5, pp. 9-14. *Gongan Yanjiu* is officially managed by the MPS, through the Ministry's Number Four Research Institute, which leads theoretical studies of policing policy. The Research Institute and the journal's editorial offices are located inside the campus of the People's Public Security University in the Muxidi Nanli section of West/Southwest Beijing. Its web address is www.policingstudies.com.

¹³ Liang Guoju, pg. 14.

¹⁴ Xu Nailong, et al, *Quntixing Shijian de Yufang he Chuzhi* (Preventing and Handling Mass Incidents), Beijing: Chinese People's Public Security University Press, 2003, esp. pp. 111-115.

¹⁵ Xu Nailong, 94-96.

to try to undermine their unity through open and covert operations. Police analyses from China's far western regions, for example, called on police to do a better job of infiltrating temples and mosques, and developing networks of "secret...friends" among religious leaders.¹⁶ Police sources have also stressed the need to strengthen infiltration of organizations "outside China's borders" that are believed to support unrest and ethno-religious groups in China.¹⁷

TARGETING "RIGHTS DEFENDERS"

An important aspect of police efforts to deny petitioners and protestors the resources to organize has been the crack down on "rights defenders"—the itinerant lawyers, activists and organizers. Although quite a few limit their activism in their local regions and provinces, a surprising number have traveled rather widely across the country dispensing organizational advice and legal representation to citizen groups struggling with recalcitrant local officials. The emergence of such free-floating protest advisors is unprecedented in post-1949 China and represents a serious challenge to the CCP's organizational grip on society. Party leaders launched a wide-ranging attack against these activists in 2006, accusing many of having secret connections to foreign and domestic groups hostile to the Party's grip on power. Speaking in June 2006 Politburo Standing Committee member and leader of internal security work Luo Gan accused the "rights protectors" of harboring secret designs to overthrow the CCP, according to Western press sources.¹⁸

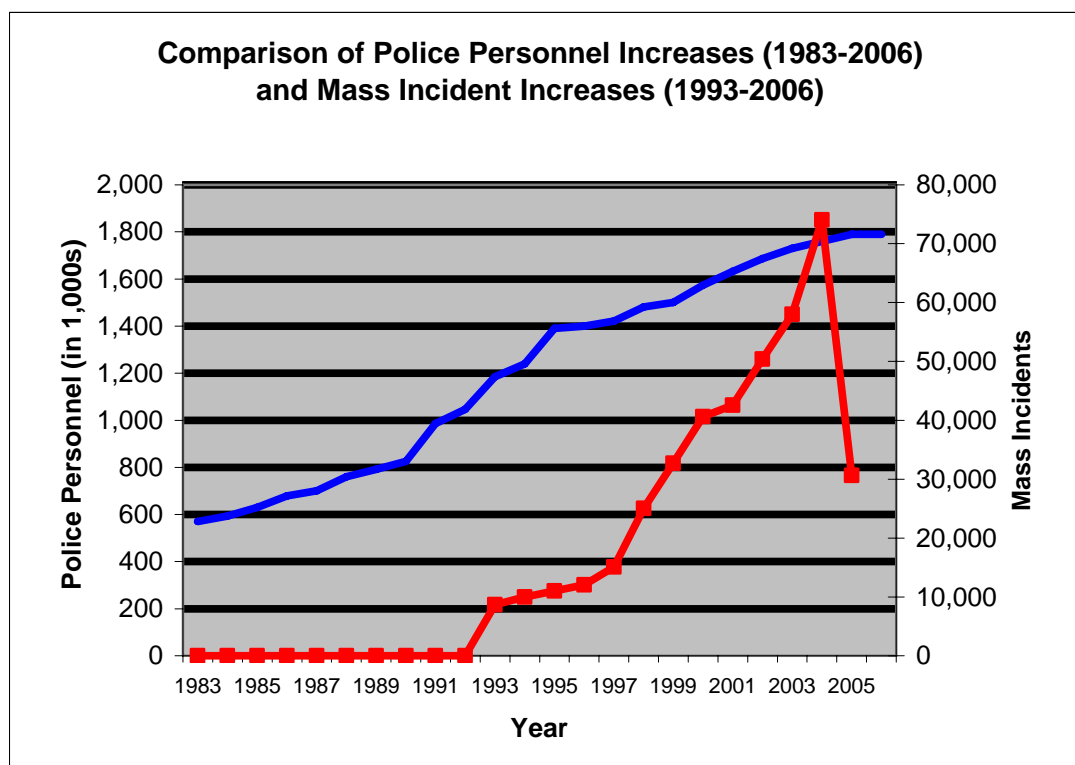
STRENGTHENING POLICE RESOURCES FOR ANTI-PROTEST OPERATIONS

The rapid rise in protests, coinciding with roughly parallel increases in criminal cases and other social order incidents, have greatly increased the burdens on the personnel and other resources of security units. Available evidence does not indicate that China's security forces have undertaken a major overall increase in personnel as part of their response to the rise in protests since the mid-to late-1990s. Figure 5.1 below graphs the increases in public security police personnel and mass incidents in recent years, and allows us to compare their increases from year to year. As this data demonstrate, Public Security police forces have increased steadily over the past 20 years, but they underwent their sharpest increase in the five years immediately following Tiananmen. Personnel increases have continued since the mid-1990s when reported protest incidents have rising most rapidly, but at a diminished pace. The claimed major decreases in protests in the past year and a half, moreover, were not preceded by any major increase in police forces. Statistics on year-on-year personnel increases in the People's Armed Police, unfortunately, are not available in openly circulating Chinese or other sources, and so this topic cannot be addressed in detail in this report.

¹⁶ Wang Zhimin (王志敏), "对西部大开发中如何维护社会稳定提供优质服务的思考" (Thoughts on How to Maintain Social Stability and Provide Excellent Service in the Process of Developing the West), in Police Science Society of China, ed., 西部大开发与公安工作论文集 (Collected Essays on Public Security Work in the Great Opening of the Western Regions), Beijing: Chinese People's Public Security University Press, 2002, pp. 251- 257.

¹⁷ Wang Zhimin, op. cit.; Also, Guonei Anquan Baoweixue Jiaocheng (Curriculum on Domestic Security Protection), (Beijing, Qunzhong Chubanshe, pp. 167-171;

¹⁸ Chris Buckley, "China arrests dissident lawyer for subversion", Reuters, October 12, 2006; Also Human Rights in China, Trends Bulletin: Setback for the Rule of Law—Lawyers Under Attack in China, August 28, 2006.



Source: Ministry of Public Security Official Figures. 1983-2003 police personnel figures from Qin Liqiang, *Shehui Wending de Anquanfa: Zhongguo Fanzui Yujing yu Shehui Zhi'an Pingjia* (The Safety Valve of Social Stability: Crime Forecasting and Social Order Evaluation in China) (Beijing, Zhongguo Renmin Gong'an Daxue Chubanshe, 2004), pg. 54-55. According to several sources, the MPS collected no figures on "mass incidents" before 1993.

Instead of an overall increase in police personnel since the late 1990s, security forces have responded to unrest by making a number of efforts to improve their overall street presence. They have also expanded their specialized units. Chief among these personnel changes is the ongoing establishment of more specialized anti-protest units, in particular the civilian Public Security anti-riot (*fangbaojing*), patrol (*xunjing*), and special police (*tejing*) units. To strengthen organization and discipline, the MPS has undertaken a major five year plan (2004-2008) of police professionalization. One key goal of this plan has been to redistribute the personnel in police departments at and below the county level, where the great majority of police are concentrated. All provinces have been ordered to redeploy large numbers of police away from desk jobs, and raise the percentage of police assigned to street duty to 85 percent from the 50 percent figure common in many departments today.¹⁹ To strengthen their specialized resources for dealing quickly and professionally with unrest, a number of major cities have recently established or expanded rapid reaction "anti-riot/anti-terror" units within their local public security departments. These units are distinct from and in addition to PAP anti-riot units. Recruits for these elite units are supposed to be young, loyal, physically and psychologically fit officers who can maintain discipline while confronting angry crowds, but are also capable of swift, effective suppression

¹⁹ See, for example, *Chongqing Wanbao* (online), January 16, 2005.

operations if need be.²⁰ During the past two years, anti-riot units of around 500 personnel have been noted in the following cities:

Anti-Riot Personnel in Major Cities

City	Personnel
Beijing	600
Shanghai	600
Chongqing	500
Tianjin	500
Zhenzhou	500
Guangzhou	400

Sources: Xinhua News Agency, “Zhengzhou Gong’an Tejing Zhidui Chengli (The Zhengzhou Public Security Special Police Detachment is Established)”, August 18, 2005; Jilin Shengwei, “Sheng zhengfu fachu tongzhi yaoqiu nian di wancheng tejing dui zujian renwu” (The Jilin Provincial Party Committee and Government Issue a Directive Ordering that Responsibilities for Organizing Special Police Brigades Must be Completed by Year’s End), China Police Network, June 29, 2005.

ASSESSING BEIJING’S STRATEGY: STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND UNTESTED ASSUMPTIONS

The central goal of Beijing’s two-pronged social stability strategy is to permit the CCP to emerge with its grip on power intact from what it expects will be a very dangerous transitional stage in its development. One half of this strategy involves pursuing social and economic policies aimed at resolving or defusing several of the major problems that spark unrest. The other half involves an internal security strategy aimed at keeping a lid on any residual unrest that Beijing’s policy responses cannot avert. In particular, the security strategy aims to avoid unprofessional violence by security forces that could provoke large-scale popular backlash, and to prevent scattered, small-scale unrest from coalescing into an organized movement that could threaten CCP power.

This two-pronged strategy demonstrates a tough-minded willingness to distinguish between the chronic, small-scale outbreaks of protest that are inevitable in any rapidly developing country, and the kind of organized opposition or society-wide protest movement could threaten the Party’s hold on power or its capacity to govern. The strategy reflects an apparent confidence that even if it cannot stop all unrest, the Party can certainly prevent unrest from turning into a serious threat by driving wedges between average citizens and politically active organizers. The essence of this “wedge” strategy is for the Party to appear to seriously address widespread social problems and show restraint in dealing with rank-and-file disgruntled citizens, while actively isolating and repressing would-be organizers of protest movements. Hu Jintao is apparently

²⁰ This data and the figures in Table 5.1 are from the following sources: Xinhua News Agency, “Zhengzhou Gong’an Tejing Zhidui Chengli (The Zhengzhou Public Security Special Police Detachment is Established)”, August 18, 2005; Jilin Shengwei, “Sheng zhengfu fachu tongzhi yaoqiu nian di wancheng tejing dui zujian renwu” (The Jilin Provincial Party Committee and Government Issue a Directive Ordering that Responsibilities for Organizing Special Police Brigades Must be Completed by Year’s End), China Police Network, June 29, 2005.

gambling that if the Party pursues all elements of this strategy effectively, there will be no need for it to adopt fundamental political reforms that would further dilute its power.

Beijing strategy reflects a very deliberate 18-year effort to learn from the West and from the failure of the European Leninist countries and other authoritarian systems. Party analysts and security experts have carefully assimilated the lessons Western political scientists drew from the collapse of European Leninism—especially the importance of the Party controlling citizen organizations, NGOs or “civil society. They have also studied the lessons that law enforcement experts have developed concerning how to contain and defuse mass protest in advanced urban societies. When one compares today’s official Chinese police doctrine for handling unrest with anti-protest strategies of a decade ago, the increase in tough mindedness, sophistication, and global comparative understanding is apparent.