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Toward Sovereignty: Zhang Zhidong's Military Strengthening of China, 1884-1901

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**TOWARD SOVEREIGNTY:
ZHANG ZHIDONG'S MILITARY STRENGTHENING
OF CHINA, 1884-1901**

By

Adam Yung-Ho Chang

Accepted in Partial Completion
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Kathleen L. Kitto, Dean of the Graduate School

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Adam Y. Chang

May 9, 2016

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A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By Adam Yung-Ho Chang
March 2016

Abstract

The conventional history of China's late nineteenth-century Self-Strengthening movement charted a failure of military reforms. My research explores this period through the perspective of the prominent governor-general Zhang Zhidong. From 1884-1901, Zhang consistently pursued new military academies and western-style armies aiming to secure the nation against foreign imperialist incursion. At the same time, the governor's understanding of regional differences as well as his increasing experience in military affairs distinctly shaped his effective new military institutions. At the turn of the century, Zhang Zhidong's military apparatus was arguably one of the best in China. In the wider analysis of Chinese military history, the governor's career contrasted with other historical figures by its peripatetic nature and its continuity through the Sino-Japanese War and Boxer Rebellion. Zhang's many jurisdictions showed not only his consistent dedication to military power as a means to national sovereignty, but also created numerous military institutions for study. More importantly, the continuity in the governor's effective military reforms underlined fundamental historical misunderstandings about the nature of late-Qing China. First, Zhang's successful military institutions contended with China's deterioration narrative from 1895 to the dynastic fall in 1911. Second, the reason for historical misinterpretation stemmed from the obscuring of both late-Qing historians' and the historical actors' perceptions by the influences of western imperialism. Ultimately, the study of Zhang Zhidong's military reforms shows a discontinuity in the conventional historical narrative, and thus creates space for increased Chinese agency in their own history.

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All remaining errors are my own.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents and family. My wife, Amy, is my first reader. She always finds the time to proofread my work even while she is wrangling my sons, Brandon and Samuel, trying to give me time to research and write. This thesis would not have been possible without their love and support.

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Introduction

The most primal function of the state is its ability to provide security. The most direct form and tool of security is the military. One way to depict the interactions between states is through the developments and counter-developments in military capabilities. As states' armed forces interact, the resulting evolution in military affairs often takes shape in military reforms or modernization. Such an instance was the Qing Self-Strengthening movement in the latter half of the nineteenth-century. After a series of exchanges with western militaries, most famously the Opium Wars, China started upon the path of military reform in order to match or exceed western military capabilities. During the process of transformation, Chinese officials sought new methods of industry, arms, and training to increase their military efficacy. Chinese men such as Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang, and Zhang Zhidong led these efforts to strengthen the military capabilities of their state.

The reforms resulting from China's nineteenth-century interactions with the west were both similar to and distinctive from other comparable historical moments. The Russian Tsar Peter I's significant military modernization in the early eighteenth-century provides a point of comparison. Peter's initial losses during the Great Northern War against a western power brought to light the limitations of the Russian military and prompted his reforms.¹ The tsar undertook sweeping programs of change including the professionalization of the officer corps, improving the quality of troops through more effective recruiting and training,² as well as increasing the domestic production of modern arms.³ This general series of events in Russia's Petrine era mirrored many facets of the Chinese narrative that would come more than a century

¹ James R. Millar et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, vol. 3 (New York, NY: Macmillan References USA, 2004), 928 and John L. H. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and Society in Russia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 95.

² Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*, 119-121.

³ Millar, *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, III, 1170.

later. In China's case, its losses to western powers in the Opium Wars also spurred professionalization of the officer corps, development of the weapons industry, and reforms to improve the army. However, historians have judged Russian and Chinese reforms very differently. While the Petrine military reforms were successful in establishing Russia as a major European power, China's Self-Strengthening movement was ultimately deemed a failure contributing to the fall of the imperial Chinese state. But is this comparison apt? In finding the answer, a deeper look into the Russian and Chinese reform movements reveals some distinctions between them.

While the Petrine military reforms and the Chinese Self-Strengthening movement instituted many of the same changes under monarchical systems of government, the processes and breadth of the reforms differed. One discrepancy was Peter's inclusion of social-political aspects such as imperially mandated westernization of the Russian elite culture, dress, and education.⁴ In the Chinese case, the Self-Strengthening movement has been conventionally narrated as a "fallacy of halfway westernization" where only new technical knowledge was valued without the accompanying societal or institutional changes.⁵ These two reform movements also took place in disparate places and times, and were exposed to different internal and external forces. Lastly, role of the monarch and central government in promulgating reform differed in the two movements. While Peter's policies emanated from the tsar upon a reluctant gentry, the Self-Strengthening movement in China originated from provincial officials⁶ with

⁴ Peter's reforms included attempts to change the cultural symbols and political base such as the mandates to adopt of clothing, shaving of beards, and use the western calendars. Millar, *Encyclopedia of Russian History*, III, 1169-1171.

⁵ John K. Fairbank, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 217.

⁶ The Qing throne appointed provincial officials within its hierarchy or government. Generally speaking the official administrative structure starts at the top was the emperor, court, and the six boards. Below this is the regional jurisdiction consisting of two provinces headed by a governor-general, also known as a viceroy. Subordinate to the governors-general were the governors of individual provinces. Subordinate to the provinces were

approval from the monarch. Thus, while there were many similarities in the Petrine and Qing reforms, the differences between them also highlighted the uniqueness of the Chinese Self-Strengthening movement.

As the Qing military reforms were predominantly projects headed by provincial officials, a study of the key provincial figures provides the fullest exploration of the developments. The central government's unwillingness to provide military reform directives until after the Boxer Rebellion left military developments to the provinces. Even when the central government finally took up the task of transforming the entirety of the Chinese military, they looked to the advancements already made in the last half of the century by officials like Zhang Zhidong. Thus, studying a Chinese official like Zhang, who sponsored new military institutions in both periods, provides a more complete examination of Chinese military reforms than simply focusing on the central government itself. Zhang Zhidong saw the nineteenth century transformation in military affairs and grasped a need for change. After consideration and with the approval of the throne, Zhang undertook the creation of new military institutions for China.

The State of Late-Qing Military Affairs

To contextualize the reforms of the Self-Strengthening movement, it would be instructive to first understand the prior state of China's military. Since the unification of China under the Kangxi Emperor in the early eighteenth-century, the core Qing military institutions were not significantly altered but were refocused from conquest to keeping internal order.⁷ The state

the circuits, prefectures, and counties at the lowest level of imperially appointed offices. In this study, governors-general such as Zhang Zhidong will be referred to as "governor" unless it is important to differentiate the relative ranks of two officials or jurisdictions. An outline of this structure can be found in R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 56-59. Another useful work outlining the Chinese government structure is Hosea B. Morse, *The Trade and Administration of China* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), 35-61.

⁷ Ralph L. Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1955), 6.

vested its military power in both the military officers created by the military examination system and the two varieties of armed forces—the banner forces and the Green Standard forces. As the Qing dynasty progressed, the officership and military forces became increasingly ineffective as a combat force. Military examinations failed to produce competent and adaptive officers while garrison duty during peacetime deteriorated the capabilities of the military.

The military examination system created Qing military leadership, but did not transform as technology and tactics progressed. In a parallel to the Chinese civil examination system,⁸ the state administered the military examinations on three levels, the local, provincial, and metropolitan. Each of these examinations conferred the same degrees as their civil counterparts – though with the modifier of *wu* (military) added prior to the degree. Military examinations tested the officers’ knowledge of the Chinese military classics, but also focused on technical expertise such as horsemanship and archery. Furthermore, the conventional critique of the civil examinations, specifically the inflexible attention to form and memorization of traditional documents over critical thought, applied to the military examination system as well.⁹ One can see these faults in the examination system even as late as the last two decades of the nineteenth-century when the military examinations continued their focus on archery, bravery, and physical strength.¹⁰ As such, the system was unable to train adaptive and analytical men of talent needed in a military no longer centered around the horse and bow. However, the leadership institutions

⁸ The Chinese civil examination system issued degrees to individuals based upon a state administered literary examination. Literary degrees conferred certain legal privileges but were not hereditary. Most importantly, being a degree holder made one eligible for office. The three major levels of degrees are as follows: prefectural examinations confer the *shengyuan* degree, provincial examinations the *juren*, and national/metropolitan examinations the *jinshi*. By the late-Qing period, it was generally only the *jinshi* degree-holders who were appointed office. See Frederic Wakeman Jr., *The Fall of Imperial China* (New York, New York: The Free Press, 1975), 20-24.

⁹ Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 18.

¹⁰ “Serious Accident at the Military Academy,” *Chinese Times*, October 5, 1889, 635 and “Fracas with a Military Student,” *Chinese Times*, November 11, 1889, 747-748.

were not the only ones fading in the late-Qing military. Just as important as poor officer training were the central government's deteriorating armies.

While Manchu banner forces and Chinese Green Standards effectively conquered China in the early Qing dynasty, their efficacy as a combat army declined when they turned to the task of internal peacekeeping. Banner forces were the traditionally hereditary elite Manchu army that conquered China for the Qing, while the Green Standards were created out of the conquered Chinese armies. These centrally controlled military forces were stationed in the various provinces of the Chinese empire, but were under the command of the *tidu* (Manchu military commanders) of the provinces. They were not under the direct command of the regional governor-generals or provincial governors with the exception of detachments of Green Standard forces for use as constabulary.¹¹ While the system of military organization kept the banner and Green Standard forces loyal to the central Qing Court, it also tied their efficacy directly to the amount of attention given by the throne. Thus as the Qing directed their attentions elsewhere, these centralized military forces declined in effectiveness as training and funding waned and local policing surpassed war-fighting in importance. Culmination of this gradual deterioration was commonly depicted in Chinese history by the inability of the banner and Green Standard forces to combat the Taiping Rebellion from 1850-1864.¹² In order for the Qing dynasty to defeat the Taiping Rebellion, the throne needed to sponsor new military organizations.

The Taiping Rebellion in the middle of the nineteenth-century threatened the rule of the Qing dynasty. During this period of upheaval, China took its first steps toward military westernization. At its height, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom ruled from the city of Nanjing and held sway over the key agricultural and economic regions surrounding the Yangzi River

¹¹ Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 91-92.

¹² Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 22.

Valley.¹³ The banner and Green Standard forces levied against the Taipings proved insufficient to suppress the rival state resulting in the Qing recruitment of new forces to combat the Taiping rebels. Within this context, the Self-Strengthening movement took root. Led by Zeng Guofan and his protégé Li Hongzhang, Qing government officials established local *yongying* (brave battalions) armed with newly purchased western weaponry in order to meet the threat. The brave battalions recruited local provincial soldiers and officers from within the same communities intending to reinforce unit cohesion. These new armies, the most famous being the Xiang and Huai Armies, led to the defeat of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.¹⁴ The impetus of military reform also focused Zeng Guofan and his contemporaries on the importance of developing a western armament industry embodied by the Fuzhou, Tianjin, and Jiangnan Arsenals built during and immediately following the Taiping period.¹⁵ These arsenals and the armies they supplied were the focus of this first phase of military reforms.

As the Taiping Rebellion neared its end, a twenty-six year old official named Zhang Zhidong passed his metropolitan examination in 1863 during the period of initial military reforms. A native of Zhili Province, Zhang came of age and began his career in the era of the Taiping Rebellion and Opium Wars.¹⁶ As such, he was familiar with both the efforts of those officials before him and the challenges faced by China. Furthermore, Zhang's classical Confucian education allows us to study how the Confucian elite perceived and justified their reform efforts. Lastly, Zhang's career took him through the leadership of three separate governor-generalships from 1884 to 1907 with military reforms pursued in each. Through his peripatetic career and its multitude of new military institutions, continuities and changes can be

¹³ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 3rd ed (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 170-171.

¹⁴ Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 169, 175.

¹⁵ Fairbank, *China: A New History*, 212.

¹⁶ Meribeth E. Cameron, "The Public Career of Chang Chih-tung," *Pacific Historical Review* 7, no. 3 (September, 1938): 188.

more easily discerned. Ultimately, the uniqueness of Zhang as both a representative of the prestigious Confucian gentry and a military reformer in three governor-generalships make him an ideal guide to the military transformations during the last years of the Qing Dynasty.

The central questions in my research investigate how Zhang Zhidong perceived the needs of military transformation and how he executed his reforms. In addition, how did Zhang reconcile his identity as a Confucian gentry-scholar with that of a Self-Strengthening military reformer? What were the continuities and differences in the various military reforms Zhang undertook throughout his career? In the larger picture of modern Chinese history, in what ways did the impact of western imperialism affect the process of military reform and historians' analyses of the events? How did the Chinese reformers perceive themselves, the people, and the nation? In the study of Zhang Zhidong's career as a military reformer, he levied Confucian identity as a unifying force in order to create military capability for China. This capability would primarily be focused upon defending the nation from the threats of foreign incursion and imperialism. And while some of Zhang's specific methods in his many military institutions varied, he held to his ultimate purpose to strengthen China's sovereignty against foreign powers. Thus, the questions above both inform this study of late-Qing military reforms and the historical context in which the reforms were pursued.

Frameworks and Themes

Prior to exploring the specifics of Chinese military history in the late Qing, it is beneficial to explore the frameworks and themes under which historians study Chinese history. The first theme to modern Chinese history is western imperialism's effect in China. While late-Qing China escaped direct imperial colonialism from the west, the relationships the Qing formed with

the imperial powers in the nineteenth-century factored into the dynasty's history. Furthermore, the Qing foreign relations with western powers exposed China to the developing national identities of the foreign powers and planted the seed of a new form of national identity on Chinese soil. Simultaneously, the internal geopolitical situation in China sometimes generated a sense of regionalism, or provincialism, in nineteenth-century Chinese history. The influences of imperialism, nationalism, and regionalism as well as the historical paradigms used in Chinese history, thus warrant historiographical consideration.

Paul Cohen's *Discovering History in China*, originally published in 1984, both challenged the traditional approach to modern Chinese history and also highlighted the emergence and need for a "China-centered" approach. Cohen argued that "all three [previous approaches], in one way or another, introduce western-centric distortions into our understanding of nineteenth- and twentieth-century China" and that historians need "a new departure in American writing, which [Cohen] labeled the 'China-centered' approach."¹⁷ Specifically, the author's assessment of historical frameworks of analysis proves useful to this study. First, Cohen identified the earliest fallacy in Chinese historical study as the "western impact-Chinese response" paradigm. This form falsely treated the west as a known quantity and resulted in analysis which overvalued western events by ignoring or relegating Chinese history to only roles relating to western influence.¹⁸ The second and equally faulty pattern of study Cohen identified was the tradition-modernity paradigm. Cohen argued that this paradigm casts the west as the savior from tradition by defining modernity as the "process or combination of processes which the west itself passed through on the way to modernity."¹⁹ Lastly, Cohen addressed the major

¹⁷ Paul Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), xlii, 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.

influence of imperialism in studying Chinese history. While he stated imperialism is the least western-centric of the approaches to Chinese history, it nonetheless is hampered by western tradition. Specifically, those who utilize this framework often minimize the influence of China's internal conditions and overstate the reach of western powers.²⁰ Cohen further argued that applying the imperialist framework to China is difficult because China was not directly colonized by the western powers and at the same time was already colonized by the Manchu Qing Dynasty.²¹ Overall, Cohen promoted a solution to the faults of the western-centric approaches by adopting a "China-centered" approach to Chinese history where China can serve as both impact and response, and the role of western modernity or imperialism is not over exaggerated. Paul Cohen's historical paradigms used to study Chinese history provided frameworks for analysis of the Self-Strengthening historiography and Zhang Zhidong's reforms.

It is generally accepted that there exists a relationship between imperialism and nationalism. Benedict Anderson's seminal work on nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, addressed post-colonial nationalism. Anderson specifically highlighted the tendency of colonial states to transform into nation-states in the twentieth-century, coinciding with the promulgation of nation-states as the norm of the international community.²² Partha Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* provided a more detailed interpretation of post-colonial nationalism. Chatterjee ultimately argued the study of post-colonial nationalism presumes a universal "modernity" separate from cultural identity. The result is an argument that followed closely with Cohen's tradition-modernity paradigm: histories of post-colonial nations tended to

²⁰ Cohen, *Discovering History in China*, 142-143.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 144-145.

²² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 114-115.

inherently accept the imperial power's forms of "modernity."²³ Partha Chatterjee further argued in *The Nation and its Fragments* that post-colonial nationalism formulated its own conceptual space by dividing the world into "material and spiritual,"²⁴ a concept readily employed in the Chinese reform movement. Even though these authors did not specifically address the case of China, their frameworks of nationalism are nonetheless applicable and apparent throughout this study.²⁵ In fact, Zhang Zhidong's effort to equip China with western-style armies not only drew upon nationalism to unify his countrymen, but was also conducted with the express purpose of combatting western imperialism while attempting to maintain distinctly Chinese forms.

Regionalism was another major historical theme historians used to explain the collapse of the Chinese empire. For instance, Ralph Powell asserted the Taiping Rebellion modified the power balance between the emperor and the provincial officials resulting in "a shift in loyalty from the Throne to the army commanders."²⁶ Frederic Wakeman similarly argued the "regional administrative apparatus that Chinese governors like Zeng Guofan, Li Hongzhang, and Zhang Zhidong had... seriously disturbed the original system of provincial checks and balances."²⁷ These historical arguments centered upon the idea that local provincial loyalties started to override Qing and national loyalties. From this assumption, the collapse of the dynasty and the

²³ Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (London: Zed Books, 1986), 30.

²⁴ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6. Chatterjee argued that in the colonial and postcolonial world, cultural identity and issues were moved into the "spiritual realm" resulting in the development of a post-colonial nation that separates itself while using the imperialist "material" forms. My own study reveals a similar development in China with Zhang Zhidong's emphasis on the Chinese "structure" and western "practical use" which strongly parallels Chatterjee's framework founded upon Indian history.

²⁵ Two other works exploring nationalism that also influence this study: Azar Gat argues the perennial nature of nationalism that counters the conventional historiography of nationalism as a modern phenomena in Azar Gat, *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). In addition, Alon Confino explores the negotiations between the local and national collective memory in Alon Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

²⁶ Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 26.

²⁷ Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 230.

resultant failure of nationalism to take root during the warlord era appeared inevitable. However, studies such as Daniel Bays' *China Enters the Twentieth Century* showed some of the faults of the regionalism analysis. Countering the narrative of a growing regional autonomy in the Chinese state, Bays argued Qing government officials acted in unity to support the throne. Instead, the true divide was between the state-appointed officials and unofficial local administration consisting of merchants and gentry degree-holders unable to obtain state jobs.²⁸ In this way, the argument of regionalism loses its state-centric divides and instead moves to a class-centric divide. The disenfranchised merchant and gentry classes held commercial and local power but lacked formal representation in the Qing government. This study of Zhang Zhidong's career is more consistent with Daniel Bays' portrayal of late-Qing regionalism. As we will see, Zhang's repeated obedience to imperial orders to the detriment of his jurisdictions contends with the conventional representation of the Chinese center's growing inability to elicit loyalty from its officials.

Ultimately, historians utilized the influences of imperialism, nationalism, and regionalism to make sense of this turbulent period in Chinese history. Similarly, these themes also provided the historiographical context informing this study. As we will see, Zhang Zhidong's career showed his tendency to break away from the conventional narrative of regionalization while attempting to confront the influences of western imperialism through military reform. Throughout the reform process, Zhang also enunciated a vision of the Chinese nation to unify his countrymen around the throne. The strengthening of China's military capabilities was thus intertwined with Chinese nationalism and the defense of China against western imperialism.

²⁸ Daniel H. Bays, *China Enters the Twentieth Century: Chang Chih-tung and the Issues of a New Age* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978), 5.

Self-Strengthening and Chinese Military Historiography

Modern Chinese history often starts with China's exposure to western imperialism through European trade aspirations. In fact, British imperialism's search for new markets opened China to trade and western extraterritoriality with the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing, which expanded after the Second Opium War in 1860. New imperialist incursions into China were concurrent with several internal rebellions such as the Taiping Rebellion, Nian Rebellion, and the Muslim Revolt put down by the Qing Dynasty. In combatting these rebellions, the dynasty allowed provincial leaders such as Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang to create local armies. Furthermore, as the centralized Qing banner and Green Standard forces proved ineffective against both Chinese rebels and western militaries during the Opium Wars, the new provincial armies adopted western arms and began their steps toward Chinese military modernization.

The history of the Self-Strengthening movement has often minimized the military aspects in favor of its wider economic and political developments. For example, John K. Fairbank's *China: A New History* highlighted the Self-Strengthening movement's focus on projects of education and industry that were often inconsequential, and always at the "initiative of foreigners."²⁹ Similarly, Jonathan Spence's *The Search for Modern China* presented Self-Strengthening as almost exclusively led by Li Hongzhang and focused largely on the "entrepreneurial, educational, and diplomatic" reforms. In fact, the only references to Li's military reforms were his arsenals and a single sentence referencing his military educational institutions in Tianjin.³⁰ In the short section about Zhang Zhidong's efforts, Spence mentioned

²⁹ Fairbank, *China: A New History*, 218-219.

³⁰ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 210-211.

no military reforms of the governor-general. While understandable in a general history, Spence's emphasis on non-military reforms at the expense of military reforms obscured one of the most significant goals of the Self-Strengthening movement. In fact, many of the entrepreneurial and educational enterprises listed by Spence were created with direct military applications in mind. Development of telegraph lines for command and control alongside the railroad developments to supply and transport troops suggest the tendency of infrastructural reforms to support military capacity. Perhaps the fact that most historians saw military reform as a failure informed Spence's treatment of these reforms.

Many prominent historians of China ascribed the failure of the Self-Strengthening movement to the cultural obstructionism of entrenched Chinese tradition. For example, John K. Fairbank argued the "movement of westernization was obstructed at every turn by the ignorance and prejudice of the Confucian literati." Fairbank also dismissed Zhang Zhidong's *ti-yong* (lit. "structure-use") thesis of "Chinese learning as the fundamental structure, western learning for practical use" as "misleading" in its promotion of the "fallacy of halfway westernization."³¹ Fairbank attributed the failure of Self-Strengthening to the ingrained nature of Chinese leadership's resistance to change. Also significant was the fact Fairbank identified Zhang Zhidong as an example of the cultural conservatism in China—an assessment to which many historians also ascribe. Yet, soon after the Boxer Rebellion, Zhang Zhidong was often portrayed as an initiator of reform. Of course, within the previously discussed impact-response paradigm, this analysis follows because Zhang was merely responding to the impact of the Boxer Protocols. But such an analysis also completely ignores the fifteen years of military reforms Zhang had already been pursuing prior to 1900. This narrative also interpreted Zhang's *ti-yong* synthesis as

³¹ Fairbank, *China: A New History*, 217. The *ti-tong* thesis is short for "*zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*," and translates to "Chinese learning as the fundamental structure, western learning for practical use."

a natural “fallacy” because it did not follow along the preconceived notion of western evolutionary development. However, as we will see in Zhang Zhidong’s reforms, his focus on Chinese learning was not only a conscious choice, but also purposed to unify his new western-style armies with the nation. Simply put, Zhang did not pursue the path westerners thought he *should* have, but *chose* a different path that achieved his goal of a western-style military serving China’s needs.

The emphasis of Confucian conservatism also applied to the historiography of military reforms. As mentioned earlier, the historiography of military modernization in late-Qing China often identified the Boxer Rebellion as the trigger for real and effective modern military reform. This also meant the Self-Strengthening movement was perceived as a failure, with the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and the Boxer Rebellion serving as the self-evident proofs. For instance, Cyrus Peake argued meaningful military education reform did not take place until after 1900 due to the conservatism of the Confucian elite.³² Similarly, Knight Biggerstaff’s *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China* argued the conservatism of the “the regular officers of the military forces...fearful of the competition of the modern-trained officers” led to a disproportionately small number of land warfare academies and contributed to the failure of the Sino-Japanese War.³³ Both of these authors assumed the loss of the Sino-Japanese War and Boxer Uprising proved the failure of Self-Strengthening. Current historical assessments of late-Qing military reform also showed the tendency of historians to use the tradition-modernity paradigm identified by Cohen. These historians saw the conservatism of either Qing officials or military officers as the major contributing factor to the failure of the first Sino-Japanese War. In contrasting the modernized Japanese army against the traditional Chinese army, the historical

³² Cyrus H. Peake, *Nationalism and Education in Modern China* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970), 24-25.

³³ Knight Biggerstaff, *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1961), 85-86.

analysis assumed the cultural traditionalism in China naturally lost to Japan's modern force. Furthermore, using China's military defeat as evidence of Self-Strengthening's failure obscured the significant achievements of the Chinese efforts and propagated a fundamental misunderstanding in the nature of late-Qing China.

Allen Fung's 1996 analysis of the military campaigns of the Sino-Japanese War began to overcome the conventional narrative of this Chinese historical period. Instead of arguing from the end result of the Chinese defeat, Fung instead examined the battles themselves in their own context. Fung showed the land campaigns in the Sino-Japanese War were more closely matched than presented by the standard histories.³⁴ Fung further argued the capabilities of the two armies were not significantly imbalanced and many of the battles could have easily resulted in Chinese victories. This analysis implies the gap between the more "traditional" Chinese army and the "modern" Japanese army was overstated and suggested one of two possibilities. First, the Chinese Self-Strengthening movement had created effective military modernization to the point of being a near-peer with the Japanese army. Alternatively, the military efficacy of a "traditional" China was still comparable to the "modernized" Japanese forces, even though the former did not abandon its cultural and structural traditions. In the course of this study, we will find both of these alternatives proved true in many respects, as Zhang Zhidong's reforms westernized the Chinese military while holding on to many aspects of traditional Chinese education. Therefore, Fung's analysis of the first Sino-Japanese War dismantled some of the conventional historical narratives of Self-Strengthening as a complete failure, paving the way for this study.

³⁴ Allen Fung, "Testing the Self-Strengthening: The Chinese Army in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895," *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 4 (October 1996): 1029.

Zhang Zhidong's career did not escape the Self-Strengthening movement's dominant historical account of failure. The same Chinese defeat that invalidated the Self-Strengthening movement also set the course toward the Qing Empire's collapse in 1911. The teleological narrative leading from the Sino-Japanese War to the known collapse obscured the progress of reformers such as Zhang Zhidong in the intervening period. By ignoring Zhang Zhidong's military reforms after the Sino-Japanese War, historians concealed Zhang's very effective and expanding military reforms because it did not align with the teleological narrative leading to the collapse of the Chinese empire. In addition, a historical focus on the governor's educational and literary accomplishment as a symptom of conservatism further masked Zhang's military reforms. The most prominent example is the way historians have utilized and referenced Zhang's political treatise *Quan Xue Pian* (Exhortation to Study). As discussed earlier, this work is often utilized to show the conservative nature of the Chinese elite. But as we move away from the theoretical nature of the reform movement and into the specificities of actions and events, Zhang begins to lose his air of traditionalism. Such an example is Ralph Powell's *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, the seminal English-language work on Chinese military modernization in the late-Qing to the early-warlord era.

Powell detailed the significant reforms undertaken by late-Qing Self-Strengtheners, and in its course, produced one of the most comprehensive works on Zhang Zhidong's military reforms in the English-language historiography. While Powell identified Zhang's early Guangdong Military Academy as one of the two forerunners of the later academies, he also argued the effects of the academies were extremely limited.³⁵ Powell further critiqued the western-style armies by blaming the Chinese leaders' traditionalism and incompetence for the

³⁵ Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 41-42.

loss of the Sino-Japanese War.³⁶ After the failure of the Sino-Japanese War, Powell portrayed Zhang's reforms in the governorship of Liangjiang—or the provinces of Jiangsu, Jiangxi, and Anhui—as the first significant military modernization in China based upon the German tables of organization and fully equipped in the European style. Powell argued these Liangjiang reforms were the basis of Zhang's future military reforms and therefore the governor's later reforms in Huguang—or the provinces of Hubei and Hunan—were simply a smaller version of the Self-Strengthening Army.³⁷ While Powell mentions Zhang's major reform efforts in all of the jurisdictions, he does not weigh them equally nor make connections between them.

The lack of continuity in Powell's assessment of Zhang Zhidong resulted in two key analytical omissions. First, Powell's treatment of Zhang's early reforms in Liangguang—or the provinces of Guangdong and Guangxi—lacked detail and consisted mainly of mentioning the Guangdong Military Academy as an aside to Li Hongzhang's reforms. But as we will see, Zhang Zhidong's Liangguang reforms were the foundation of the governor's military system that he pursued his entire career. Second, the governor's Liangjiang reforms were the most detailed portion of Powell's analysis, while analysis of Zhang Zhidong's Huguang soldiers simply repeated Powell's earlier critique of Li Hongzhang's military as a “case of good troops commanded by unqualified leaders.”³⁸ However, though Zhang's military reforms in Liangjiang were more widely reported in western sources, his reforms in Huguang were in many ways more comprehensive and better refined than those in Liangjiang. These types of oversights showed

³⁶ Ibid., 50.

³⁷ Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 61-62, 69-70. Chinese authors have also attributed a similar primacy to Zhang Zhidong's Nanjing Reforms. For instance, Zhang Yiwen argues that Zhang Zhidong's Self-Strengthening Army in Nanjing was the pinnacle of his military reforms and served as China's first step into a truly modernized military force. Thus, Zhang Yiwen's article is still rooted in the narrative of overemphasis on Zhang's Nanjing tenure at the expense of his Guangzhou and Hubei periods. See Zhang Yiwen, “Zhang Zhidong yu ziqiangjun” (Zhang Zhidong and the Self-Strengthening Army), in Yuan Shuyi, Zou Jincai, eds., *Zhang Zhidong yu Zhongguo jindai hua* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 370.

³⁸ Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 150.

that Powell saw Zhang Zhidong's military reforms as distinct entities without continuity from one region to another. Powell's view of Zhang likely stemmed from his larger focus on Li Hongzhang and Yuan Shikai, who had more stationary careers.

Powell's focus on the reforms of the more famous Li Hongzhang and his successor Yuan Shikai obscured the contributions of Zhang Zhidong. While Yuan was markedly more famous in post-Boxer China, in the late-nineteenth century Zhang already had attained years of reform and service at the governor-general level while Yuan had not yet obtained even a provincial governorship. In addition, Yuan was not a traditional degree holder, but instead purchased his degree and gained prominence through military service in the Huai Army.³⁹ In contrast, Zhang Zhidong was a more traditional gentry-scholar who, despite his literary and Confucian background, vehemently pursued and pioneered military reform in this critical era. Zhang Zhidong also provided continuous governor-generalship service and military reforms starting from his time as the governor of Liangguang in 1884 until his transfer to the capital in 1907. By comparison, Li Hongzhang was removed from governorship service with the loss of the First Sino-Japanese War and Yuan Shikai did not take his first governor-general position until 1902. Zhang's reforms are a better subject for a study of institutional continuity and discontinuity of late-Qing military transformations. Furthermore, Zhang's military reforms spanned decades and thus contended better with the larger historiographical arguments of the impact-response paradigm that saw Chinese reforms as merely fleeting events responding to western impacts. While Powell and the English-language historiography presented an erratic nature to Zhang

³⁹ Purchased degree became commonplace during the late-Qing in order to raise revenue. The state sold degrees that were traditionally only granted through years of study and arguably indoctrination in the Confucian value system. Purchased degree-holders could obtain a degree without participation in the Confucian system, thus making them less strongly bonded to Confucian statecraft and governance.

Zhidong's military projects, the Chinese historiography better portrayed the continuity in the governor's reforms.

Li Xizhu's *Zhang Zhidong yu xinzheng yanjiu* (A Study of Zhang Zhidong and the Late-Qing New Policies) studied the career of Zhang Zhidong and included a chapter on his military reforms. Unlike the English-language analysis, Li's work studied Zhang Zhidong military reforms throughout his career while showing many of the continuities of Zhang's policies. Li ultimately argued Zhang Zhidong was the founding father of modern Chinese military institutions, a role normally attributed to Yuan Shikai.⁴⁰ In this analysis, Li narrated Zhang's establishment of new armies and military academies throughout his career as governor of Liangguang until his death in 1909. Similarly to Powell, Li argued Zhang Zhidong's early reforms in Liangguang were not true reforms as Zhang "did not have awareness of the Chinese-foreign military affairs gap," and the true modernizing reforms "all started from the Jiangnan [Liangjiang] Self-Strengthening Army."⁴¹ However, unlike Powell, Li studied Zhang Zhidong's later reforms in Huguang comprehensively and not just as a smaller extension of the Liangjiang reforms. Li argued the Hubei Military Academy and Hubei Protection Army not only built upon Zhang's reforms in Liangjiang but also further expanded them. These reforms eventually resulted in the adoption of Japanese instructors in addition to Germans that culminated in the creation of a three-tiered military education system⁴² supporting a newly organized Hubei Regular Army."⁴³ Li further asserted Zhang Zhidong's national significance as the father of Chinese military reform with unpublished telegraphs and correspondence highlighting both

⁴⁰ Li Xizhu, *Zhang Zhidong yu xinzheng yanjiu* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2009), 254.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 217-218

⁴² *Ibid.*, 229-233

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 247-251

imperial and provincial requests for his military expertise after the Boxer Rebellion.⁴⁴ Overall, Li's work is the closest to the research of this study. Yet, there remained gaps in both documentation and analysis that Li's work did not address.

While Li effectively argued the continuity and importance of Zhang Zhidong's role as a military reformer, his treatment of early periods remained overly dismissive. In evaluating the Liangguang period, Li depicted Zhang's early reforms as a failure to substantially westernize but did not adequately analyze the continuities binding these early reforms with later periods. In addition, Li's depiction of the Huguang reforms quickly moved to the Hubei Regular Army and three-tiered academy system as the culmination of the governor's military transformation without sufficiently addressing the preceding institutions of the Hubei Protection Army and the Hubei Military Academy. While Li's decision to weight his study toward Zhang's final institutions in Huguang seemed logical, it also misses a key difference between the two periods of Zhang's Huguang reforms. Post-Boxer Rebellion reforms in Huguang, or the provinces of Hubei and Hunan, represented Zhang's compliance with centrally mandated programs more than his own ideas. In contrast, the earlier 1896-1901 reforms in Huguang were solely pursued on his own initiative. The initiative of a Qing official was of paramount importance because it breaks with the impact-response paradigm. In other words, while the Qing-mandated reforms could be analyzed as a Chinese response to the western demands after the Boxer Rebellion, Zhang Zhidong's reforms predated the Qing mandates. Lastly, while Li depicted the influential role of Zhang Zhidong as a father of military reform, he did not assess the effectiveness of the governor's military modernization efforts. Thus, while Li Xizhu's work was highly successful in showing continuities of Zhang's long career as a military reformer, his work also left space for different interpretations.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 237-240.

Zhang Zhidong and Pioneering Military Reform for China

The conventional historical narrative of the Self-Strengthening movement is one of failure. This failure was a result of the Confucian conservatism in Chinese society and ostensibly evident through the loss of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. English-language historiography on military reforms largely concurred with the assessment of failure and did not depict energetic changes until the post-Boxer period. Yet as we delved into the more technical and specific studies of military reform, authors such as Allen Fung, Ralph Powell and Li Xizhu broke with the fundamental misunderstanding of this historical period. These historians began to depict real reforms taking place during this turbulent period, though each author differed in their assessment of the reforms' degree of effectiveness. However, even Powell ignores the many continuities between Zhang's early reforms and the later efforts, just as Li glosses over the differences between the governor's throne-driven and self-initiated reforms. Furthermore, historians often utilize Zhang's "Exhortation to Learning" to show Confucian conservatism, thus placing him with the Qing officialdom who had only undertook reform after the trauma of the Boxer Rebellion.

Contrary to his popular historical persona as a conservative, Zhang Zhidong was instead a pioneer of military change in China. Zhang continued to increase his military knowledge and reform experience throughout his career, often through trial and error. The lessons he learned from undertaking reform, combined with the specificities of his various jurisdictions, often appeared as discontinuities in his military modernization programs. Despite some differences in methods, Zhang Zhidong's peripatetic governor-generalships from 1884-1901 maintained consistent principles embodied by his western-style armies and military academies, all of which

served the prime purpose of securing the nation against imperialist incursion. Yet the western reports overlooked the fact that Zhang promoted loyalty to the Chinese nation through classical Chinese education while simultaneously creating western-style military institutions. Instead, the lens of imperialism tinged western perspectives as they admired Zhang's efforts at modernization but remained ignorant of his efforts to strengthen China through the integration of Chinese classical education and western military institutions.

This argument will be made in three chapters, following Zhang Zhidong's military reform career sequentially until 1900. Chapter One covers Zhang's 1884-1894 reforms at his first governor-generalships in Liangguang and Huguang. During this period the governor formulates the foundations of his comprehensive military reform program, centered upon the western-style army and military academy. Chapter Two examines Zhang's transfer to the Liangjiang tenure from 1894-1896, where he pursues different methods to achieve military capability within the context of the region's financial prosperity. Chapter Three culminates with Zhang's final military reform institutions upon his return to Hubei in 1896. During this tenure, Zhang levies his experiences and precedent from his previous reforms to create a western-style army in an area neither under threat of war as Liangguang nor as financially prosperous as Liangjiang. Institutions of the 1896-1901 Huguang period represent the culmination of Zhang's self-driven efforts at creating western-style militaries before the throne began mandating reforms in 1901 after the Boxer Rebellion.

The narrative generally traces the establishment of the western-style armies and military academies in each governorship and assesses their effectiveness. In addition, these chapters will also explore Zhang's own philosophy and methodologies of military reform. The narrative also shows the numerous continuities of Zhang's modernization efforts from the processes

established in Liangguang to his later reforms in Huguang. Yet at the same time, Zhang Zhidong's continual personal education concerning military reform, as well as the influence of regional financial differences, prompted adjustments in the specific techniques used. The keystone source for the reform narrative and philosophy is the *Zhang Zhidong quanji* (Complete works of Zhang Zhidong) that provides Zhang's own memorials,⁴⁵ instructions, and proclamations in establishing these institutions. Furthermore, this collection is augmented with English translations of memorials from the treaty port newspapers in the *North China Herald* and the *Chinese Times*. Articles in these periodicals show how some westerners saw the Chinese military reforms. Furthermore, various western military and civilian officials—such as the report of the French Officer, Captain Gadoffre and the writings of the Imperial Maritime Customs officials in the *Decennial Reports*—provide their own assessments of the governor's achievements. While the above sources primarily portray either the reform movement or assess it, they are not solely relegated to these areas and often overlap in utility. For example, Zhang Zhidong's own memorials report on his reforms but also provide the governor's assessments of their effectiveness. Similarly, the Imperial Maritime Customs officials' descriptions of their local areas often show details on reform activities not reported in Zhang's memorials.

Throughout the narrative, imperialism influences both western observers as well as Zhang Zhidong's formation of Chinese nationalism. Imperialist intentions of the westerners in China span a wide breadth of forms. Lord Charles Beresford's *The Breakup of China* explicitly shows British intentions to use force in China and is one of the more direct illustrations of western intent. Alternatively, western treaty port newspapers in China often make their arguments silently by excluding elements of Chinese reforms that deviated from their views of

⁴⁵ In the context of Qing dynasty history, memorials are a form of direct communication used between high-level government officials with the emperor and his court. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, A66.

modernization. As a direct response to western imperial incursions into China, Zhang Zhidong almost always justifies his military reforms on the grounds of securing the Chinese nation. In reforming the military, Zhang never abandons his dedication to the Chinese nation, even as he adopts the practical means of the western nations. The governor always roots the western-style military within the context of a Chinese foundation built upon his *ti-yong* formula to build loyalty to the nation. Zhang's sense of nation and national priority also contends with the theme of provincialism in Chinese history. For while the conventional narrative highlights Zhang as one of the officials who establishes regional autonomy at the expense of the throne, the governor's words and actions instead portrays an official who, almost to a fault, dedicates himself to the throne and nation.

Lastly are a few notes on the conventions used in this study. For regional and provincial names, the governor-generalship seat and province will be used interchangeably with the jurisdiction itself. The jurisdiction of Liangguang consisting of Guangdong and Guangxi provinces could be referred to as Guangdong province or Guangzhou city. Similarly the jurisdiction of Liangjiang consisting of Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Anhui provinces could be referred to as Jiangsu or Nanjing, and Huguang as Hubei or Wuhan. Regarding Chinese romanization, I strive to use the modern form of pinyin when writing about Chinese institutions, events, names, and officials. The only exception to this convention is when the term is used in a bibliographic reference and would hinder a search for the source.

Chapter 1: Liangguang, Early Huguang, and the Foundations of Reform

Zhang Zhidong's career as a Qing official started upon his acquisition of the metropolitan jinshi degree in 1863. Upon passing the national level examinations, the Qing court assigned Zhang to various educational positions until his first provincial assignment in 1882 as governor of Shanxi Province. During his time as the Shanxi governor, Zhang memorialized the throne about the issues of the Sino-French War, resulting in his promotion to the governor-generalship of the Liangguang region.¹ Liangguang was Zhang's foundation of military reform for his long official career. There, Zhang established a military academy embodying the *ti-yong*² dichotomy for which he would become so famous. He studied and documented western military capabilities, developed western-style armies, and initiated lasting relationships with German officers. It was also in the Liangguang governorship that Zhang developed the framework for spreading military reforms throughout the army. In other words, the Liangguang tenure was the time in which the newly promoted Governor Zhang developed the comprehensive reform program, centered upon the western-style army and military academy, he pursued for the rest of his career. In these early relationships with the west, Zhang also began to understand their imperialist intentions and attempted to maintain Chinese authority in his military reforms. Even as the environment changed in Zhang's later jurisdictions, the systems and methodologies he established in Liangguang remained at the center of his military reform efforts for the next two decades.

¹ Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period 1644-1912* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), I, 28.

² The *ti-yong* thesis is short for '*zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*' and translates to 'Chinese learning as the fundamental structure, Western learning for practical use.'

As Zhang Zhidong left Shanxi for Liangguang's governor-generalship seat at Guangzhou on 8 May 1884,³ he travelled towards the key Chinese region supporting the logistics of the Sino-French War of 1884-1885. In addition, Guangzhou's strategic coastal position and international importance made the city a major target during periods of hostilities. Yet as Zhang arrived, the state of affairs in Liangguang was less than satisfactory. As both the historical center of international trade and one of the post-Opium War treaty ports, Guangzhou supported a sizable number of western inhabitants from many countries. In fact, as the neutral British inhabitants of Guangdong observed the increasingly tense situation between the Chinese and the French, they provided keen observations on the state of local defenses before Zhang's arrival. For example the local soldiers themselves were not only a "militia of the old-world type, armed with swords and spears and aged and decrepit firelocks [in] extraordinary variety" but also demonstrated poor discipline resulting in troops being rioters one day and "soldiers" the next. Furthermore, Zhang Zhidong's predecessor Zhang Shusheng was observed to be weak and concerned only with preventing disorder by recruiting Chinese rioters into the army.⁴ While the recruitment of the unsavory elements into the army pacified the short term problems, it also showed a significant deficiency in army recruiting standards. These concerns about the state of Guangzhou's defenses echoed similar concerns about the general state of the Chinese military during this decade. In 1889 for example, the emperor still issued imperial edicts to prompt Chinese officials to address the poor state of military affairs across China.⁵ Therefore in Liangguang, Zhang Zhidong gave much attention to military affairs and led a significant reform effort.

³ William Ayers, *Chang Chih-tung and Educational Reform in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 97.

⁴ "Canton and its Defences," *The Times (London)*, November 25, 1884.

⁵ "The Emperor on the Condition of the Army," *The Chinese Times*, November 30, 1889, 763.

A few months after the new governor arrived in Guangzhou, unofficial operations became formal hostilities as the Sino-French War officially started in August of 1884. During the period of increased tensions before official war, Zhang Zhidong worked tirelessly to improve the defenses in his area of operations. As the agents of the Imperial Maritime Customs reported, Zhang's arrival changed the course of military and naval defenses—where “no real progress had been made” until Zhang's arrival in 1884.⁶ Zhang immediately started construction of new fortifications and coastal defenses. The governor's actions eventually improved Guangzhou's defenses to a point where they were a “very serious, perhaps insurmountable, obstacle” for enemy naval forces.⁷ Furthermore, Zhang ordered the General Peng Yulin to keep his western arms when the latter wanted to toss them in the ocean in favor of the spear and bow.⁸ These immediate actions Zhang took not only showed his focus on military affairs at the very outset of his governor-generalship career, but also hinted at his willingness to accept western methods. However Zhang's activities in supporting the Sino-French War were not limited to the fortification of his jurisdiction.

Liangguang played a key role in supporting the ground troops in the Sino-French War, an effort led by Zhang that greatly increased his prestige after the war. During the war, Zhang provided logistical support from his jurisdiction and recommended to the throne new commanders who won several key victories against the French in Annam.⁹ His indirect participation in the ground war provided him the foundational education and experience in western warfare that guided his later military reforms in Liangguang. On the naval front, Zhang's participation was even more active than his role in the land war. In early August 1884,

⁶ Imperial Maritime Customs, *Decennial Reports 1882-1891* (Shanghai, 1983), 574.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 544, 574.

⁸ “Canton and its Defences,” *The Times (London)*, November 25, 1884.

⁹ Cameron, “The Public Career of Chang Chih-tung,” 193.

the imperial court ordered the governors to send ships to reinforce the Fuzhou Naval Yard soon to be attacked by the French. While historians have pointed out the refusal of Li Hongzhang and his northern fleet to comply, an often missed point was Zhang Zhidong's dispatching of two warships in support of the throne's directives.¹⁰ Zhang's willingness to comply with the imperial commands shed light on one of the major themes of late-Qing history.

Zhang's naval actions during the Sino-French War illuminated the complexities of regionalism in Chinese history. While Li Hongzhang's response to the imperial order seemed to support the idea of regionalism, Zhang Zhidong's response highlighted a significant degree of central control. In assessing the different responses, the lines between regionalism and central control blur a little. Ultimately, the naval transfer was the upper limit of Zhang's direct participation in the Sino-French War. While the southern fleet at Fuzhou met its demise later that month, Zhang's willingness to support national-level directives should not be overlooked. Given the conventional narratives of regionalism during this historical period, Zhang's actions during the Sino-French War hinted at his dedication to the greater whole of China—a theme that continued throughout his service.

As the Sino-French War concluded in favor of the French in 1885, Zhang Zhidong had already been at the helm in Liangguang for a year. During this year, he focused on the material efforts of supporting the war, fortifying his defenses against attack, and supporting the Qing southern navy. Through these actions Zhang gained valuable experience about the nature of warfare and the military capacity of his jurisdiction. In addition, his actions during this period of turmoil hinted at a sense of loyalty to the throne and nation at the heart of his actions. While these experiences were of tactical and operational warfare, his reflections upon the war informed

¹⁰ Lloyd E. Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins: China's Search for a Policy during the Sino-French Controversy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 157.

his military reform philosophy and methodology during the next four years of leadership in Liangguang.

New Methods of Warfare: The Guangdong Victorious Army

After the conclusion of the Sino-French War in June of 1885, Zhang Zhidong set upon reforming the military forces of Liangguang. These early military reforms were the least documented of all of Zhang's governor-generalships. Zhang's own memorials directly pertaining to military reform consisted of one for the Guangdong Victorious Army and another for the Guangdong Military Academy. The only other of Zhang's memorials relating to his military reform effort was his report on the recruitment of German officers to support his new institutions. Assessments of these early reforms were similarly lacking, with only a short paragraph in the Imperial Maritime Customs in an overall report on Guangzhou. The shortage of sources during the Liangguang period resulted in analysis focusing heavily on Zhang's memorials, and as such, lacks confirmation and assessments from either Zhang himself through multiple memorials or outside sources.

Zhang Zhidong's first military reform memorial was submitted on 7 July 1885, when Zhang memorialized the throne to formalize his program for establishing a western-style army in Guangdong. The memorial focused on his plan for creating the new army and his justification in why the army was needed. While historians have cited this memorial to show the existence of the new army, few have studied Zhang intentions of *why* and *how* he developed the new institution. It was based on the lessons Zhang learned from the Sino-French War that prompted his modernization of Chinese forces via adoption of western techniques and stringent recruiting to improve efficacy. In the reform process, Zhang used German instructors to drill his new army

and disseminated the new training through a small nucleus of trained troops. This was Zhang's first foray into establishing the western-style military, a force he named the Guangdong Victorious Army.

Zhang Zhidong studiously observed the events of the Sino-French War in order to apply the lessons-learned to his reforms. In studying western land warfare, Zhang identified several crucial advantages of the western military over the Chinese: artillery and machine gun support to provide concentrated firepower, engineers to provide combat mobility, and the hardiness of individuals soldiers who were able to fight with heavy combat loads.¹¹ In other words, one of the prime areas of reform Zhang identified was improving the Chinese army's ability to maneuver and concentrate combat power like the western forces he observed. Focus on soldier hardiness and combat engineering would increase the mobility required to concentrate troops rapidly. Furthermore, the technical aspects of artillery and machine gun fire would allow for concentration of combat power even without numerical superiority in troops. More importantly, Zhang did not underestimate the difficulty with which these tenets could be realized. Zhang stated that to achieve "accurate artillery, rifle marksmanship, fortifications, training is essential, [and] that these military techniques can only be trained in peacetime."¹² The governor recognized the skills expected of modern soldiers were not ones that could be learned quickly. The old Chinese methods of recruiting and training new soldiers in times of war, as used earlier in the Self-Strengthening brave battalions, were largely ineffective in modern warfare against a western power. Zhang directly reflects upon this point by highlighting the *Huai jun* (Huai Army) as an example of an army armed with western weaponry but not trained effectively on the use of

¹¹ Zhang Zhidong, "Jiaolian Guang Shengjun zhuan xi yan zhan pian (Educating the Guangdong Victorious Army in western warfare)," *Zhang Zhidong quanji* (Complete works of Zhang Zhidong), ed. Yuan Shuyi, Sun Huafeng, Li Bingxin, I, 313.

¹² *Ibid.*

their armaments.¹³ In establishing his own Guangdong Victorious Army, Zhang both armed and trained troops to form the standing peacetime army required to cultivate military competence.

For Zhang's new army, he selected the Guangdong Victorious Army's 5th Battalion as the core and quickly established strict recruitment standards for the soldiers. Looking at his earlier assessment on the hardiness of western soldiers, it was no surprise that the recruiting standards of the new battalion required the "strong and fit, who can accept the constraints of heavy work and hardship."¹⁴ While the standards described in this memorial were not as detailed as those in his later armies, the main intent of physically fit soldiers capable of hard labor was the central tenet of recruitment. In fact, the differences between the early and those later requirements were the specifications of how these traits were to be achieved—namely with higher soldiers' pay in his later armies. Aside from physical standards, Zhang's recruitment of forces included a new characteristic that carried throughout his later reforms, widespread recruitment. The governor wanted the recruitment of new soldiers to expand beyond the traditional bounds of his jurisdictional provinces, and not be limited to any specific group or family. All families from any province could apply to join the Guangdong Victorious Army.¹⁵ Though we do not know the exact number of men from other provinces, the policy itself differentiated the new army from those traditional Chinese forces recruited by regional affiliation. In casting a wide net of recruitment, the governor was effectively gathering the most fit and talented across as large an area as possible for his new army. Zhang's stringent recruiting criteria combined with an multi-provincial recruitment attempted to rectify the problems of poor human material in forming the base of the new army.

¹³ Zhang Zhidong, "Jiaolian Guang Shengjun zhuan xi yan zhan pian (Educating the Guangdong Victorious Army in western warfare)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 313.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 313-314.

Beyond the human capital he desired, Zhang Zhidong also highlighted the technological and training improvements required of the Guangdong Victorious Army. Specifically, he had already made purchases from the German Krupp Company for both artillery and rifles to issue to the 5th Battalion. To address China's inferior military technology, Zhang harshly criticized the old methods and forbade the use of swords in the new army, a practice that many of the Qing generals advocated.¹⁶ In replacing weapons, the governor was also abandoning the old methods which he knew had no role in a modern military. But as Zhang had argued earlier, new weapons without new training would not improve military capability.

In order to meet the requirements of training his army, Zhang referred to his own earlier request to hire German officers placed through the Chinese minister to Germany, He Xianchi. In this memorial, Zhang explained his reasoning for using German officers. First, they were all competent officers and graduates of military academies. In addition, the governor assessed the Germans as the most elite of the western militaries. Lastly, in considering the German disposition toward the Chinese, Zhang perceived the Germans as the “most amicable [foreigners] to China” and described their continued support to China even during the Sino-French War. Ultimately, these led Zhang to conclude that of the westerners, only Germans were trustworthy.¹⁷ While the German goodwill Zhang perceived was more likely a result of European political tensions between the Germans and the French, his other reason for hiring German officers were sound: after the Napoleonic Wars, the German army and its new general staff system made it the premier professional military force in Europe. The German victory over the French in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 served as a testament to their military prowess for Zhang. The governor then detailed the German ministry's approval of his request and that all three German

¹⁶ Zhang Zhidong, “Jiaolian Guang Shengjun zhuan xi yan zhan pian (Educating the Guangdong Victorious Army in western warfare),” *ZZDQJ*, I, 314.

¹⁷ Zhang Zhidong, “Gumu De bian pian (Recruiting German officers),” *ZZDQJ*, I, 314.

officers had arrived by October of 1884 to start training the army.¹⁸ Thus began a military relationship with the Germans that would continue throughout the governor's career.

The German officers instructed the Guangdong Victorious Army according to the western methods but under Zhang's guidance. The governor specifically detailed the curriculum to consist of "artillery accuracy, marksmanship, dispersed squad movements, night warfare, rapid movement, crossing moats and mountain warfare."¹⁹ These tasks specifically addressed the weaknesses of the Chinese army Zhang highlighted earlier—its lack of combat mobility and the inability to concentrate firepower. Yet more than just the technical and tactical skills, Zhang also realized the importance of imparting stronger discipline upon his soldiers and instructed the foreign officers to inculcate his troops in "composure and strictness."²⁰ Zhang intended the Germans to train his army not only in technical operations of modern firearms but also imbue it with the strict discipline required to create a capable military force. Lastly, the governor also proposed a role for the Germans in time of war. In his memorial to the emperor, he received approval to confer upon the German officers Chinese military rank and these officers, it was assumed, would command Chinese soldiers in war if Chinese officers were not yet trained.²¹ While this situation never materialized, Zhang's openness to the possibility of German commanders for his army foreshadowed his later reforms at Nanjing. Zhang did not merely establish the regulations and set the army to its task. As he understood the dead weight of tradition upon the military institutions, Zhang showed a personal interest and played an active role in supervising his reforms.

¹⁸ Zhang Zhidong, "Gumu De bian pian (Recruiting German officers)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 315.

¹⁹ Zhang Zhidong, "Jiaolian Guang Shengjun zhuan xi yan zhan pian (Educating the Guangdong Victorious Army in western warfare)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 313.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 313.

²¹ Zhang Zhidong, "Gumu De bian pian (Recruiting German officers)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 315.

Zhang's memorials detail the personal responsibility in the reform process he took. First and foremost, as the patron of the foreign officers, Zhang took it upon himself to personally interview each of the officers and assign them the curriculum most appropriate to their education and experience.²² Upon the commencement of training, Zhang would personally inspect the army every two weeks to assess its progress and to ensure the "old-style dead regulations" would not be used again.²³ This level of supervision from the governor-general responsible for two provinces highlighted the significance of the military reforms in Zhang Zhidong's mind. Zhang's inspections also served another purpose: he planned to use the newly trained troops as the nucleus to create new western-armed and trained battalions.²⁴ The method of using a small core of trained troops to disseminate western training had both negative and positive implications when compared to a more wide-spread training program. On the one hand, this method was likely to be both slower and risk miscommunication as the training was passed from unit to unit. On the other hand, sequential training would require fewer foreign instructors and hence reduce expenses. The costs were not insignificant as Zhang's contract with the German officers required him to pay each three thousand six hundred taels²⁵ a year while providing room and board.²⁶ Comparatively, the senior ranking Chinese officer in Zhang's later Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army was paid six hundred taels a year, while the Chinese soldier received about sixty taels a year.²⁷ A German instructor's salary was at least sixty-fold of the Chinese soldiers

²² Zhang Zhidong, "Gumu De bian pian (Recruiting German officers)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 315.

²³ Zhang Zhidong, "Jiaolian Guang Shengjun zhuan xi yan zhan pian (Educating the Guangdong Victorious Army in western warfare)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 314.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 314.

²⁵ A tael is a Chinese monetary unit in the Qing dynasty. Strictly speaking the tael is a measure of weight that is commonly used as a measurement of silver currency in the Qing dynasty. While the weight itself varied by location in China, it was generally measured at around 550 grains, or approximately 36 grams. The intricacies and differences in various silver taels are explored in Morse, *The Trade and Administration of China*, 162-182.

²⁶ Zhang Zhidong, "Gumu De bian pian (Recruiting German officers)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 314.

²⁷ Zhang Yiwen, "Zhang Zhidong yu Ziqiang jun (Zhang Zhidong and the Self-Strengthening Army)," 374. While salaries of Zhang's Chinese soldiers were high, it remained lower than even the traditional Qing officers'

and six-fold of the most senior Chinese officer. This figure is even more telling when one recognizes the fact that Zhang's army was significantly better paid than other Chinese soldiers. In addition to the financial costs, these early western-style military reforms were still uncharted territory for Zhang. Thus, the sequential method gave him time to assess the reforms prior to committing other troops and more funds to the new methods. Ultimately, the financial cost was likely most pressing for Zhang, especially as he continued the use of small-nucleus based training later during his tenure at the financially strapped jurisdiction of Huguang.

While short-term cost reduction was achieved by small-nucleus based training, the more effective long-term solution involved training competent Chinese military officers able to lead their own soldiers. This fact was not lost on Zhang Zhidong, as the second part of his military reforms in every jurisdiction focused on the education of officers. In training officers who understood western warfare's technology, requirements, and training, Zhang could not only save on long term costs but also ensure his newly trained armies had effective combat leadership. The root of officer training was the military academy.

Integrating East and West: The Guangdong Military Academy

Zhang Zhidong founded the second military academy in China in 1887, two years after Li Hongzhang's Tianjin Military Academy. Zhang's Guangdong Military Academy had the benefit of drawing on the precedence of the Li's earlier academy. In practice, however, Zhang's school was very different. While the Tianjin Military Academy focused solely on western drill and

salaries. Under Qing pay scales, the lowest ranking military officer was issued a total of 125.9 taels a year when considering both salary and allowances. See Chang Chung-li, *The Income of the Chinese Gentry* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), 13-15.

technical knowledge without any component of Confucian education,²⁸ Zhang brought the two together in his military academy. In Liangguang Governor Zhang sought to ensure the continuation of classical Chinese education for his cadets by integrating it with the new western-style military education. In fact, Zhang's focus on traditional educational endeavors combined with the new military education served as an early form of his *ti-yong* thesis embodied by his famous *Quan Xue Pian*. This early practical form of Zhang's "Chinese learning as the foundation and western learning for practical use" informed the curriculum and admissions requirements of his military academies in his later jurisdictions. Ultimately, the officers trained in Zhang's military academies were to serve as not only competent leaders, but also as loyal Confucian servants of the throne.

In addition to the stringent physical hardship criteria used for recruiting the Guangdong Victorious Army, Zhang Zhidong's admission criteria to the Guangdong Military Academy also sought applicants with baseline western knowledge and Chinese literary education. Specifically, Zhang recruited from various institutions including western-style schools in Guangdong as well as drawing from a pool of the "literary men" and army officers who had already obtained degrees. The governor further detailed the reasons for the broad admission criterion in finding "those having mastered some Western language and mathematics...experienced soldiers' hardships...and have studied [Chinese literature] and are capable of writing essays."²⁹ The governor's admissions requirements blended Confucian classical education with the hardship of western military training and basic western elementary education. However, it was unlikely that any single student met all of the requirements. As such, Zhang instead allotted separate slots for

²⁸ The translation of Li Hongzhang's memorial can be found in Peake, *Nationalism and Education in Modern China*, 10-11.

²⁹ Zhang Zhidong, "Chuangban shui lu si xuetang zhe (Establishing the Naval and Military Academy)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 575; an English translation is also available in "Memorial on Naval and Military Schools," *Chinese Times*, October 1, 1887, 790-791.

admission from each of these categories. Of the seventy total slots, thirty were allotted to students from western-style schools, twenty from the army, and twenty from the literary men.³⁰ With all students, Zhang established the requirement for them to have mastered the essentials in their previous fields to be admitted into the military academy. While these students would come from different backgrounds, their shared experience and education at the Guangdong Military Academy sought to unite those with diverse experiences into a new western officer corp. However, it is also easy to see how these diverse backgrounds would create difficulty in education when the baseline knowledge between the three groups varied so widely. Even Zhang's own memorial pointed to the difficulty the army and literary cadets had due to their scant western-language background, which he remedied with classroom translators.³¹ Even while acknowledging these issues, Zhang nonetheless ensured that cadets from the Chinese literary and army backgrounds were given more than half of the slots in his new institution. Zhang's insistence on using those with traditional Chinese military and literary backgrounds in his schools would continue throughout his later academies.

Zhang Zhidong forged a further synthesis of western and Chinese thought in his curriculum. Concerning western education, Zhang's Guangdong Military Academy tasked foreign officers to teach German, and topics such as cavalry, artillery, and infantry training.³² An additional professor was also hired to teach mathematics and drilling as well.³³ These general efforts brought the military academy in line with the basic combat branches of western armies. However, absent from the Military Academy branches was the engineer functions Zhang highlighted in his Guangdong Victorious Army. While Zhang detailed the Guangdong

³⁰ Zhang Zhidong, "Chuangban shui lu si xuetang zhe (Establishing the Naval and Military Academy)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 575.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 576.

Victorious Army's ability to perform combat engineering tasks, he did not see the need to train his officers for the same. Zhang's omission of the engineering tasks of the army and focus on combat branches for his officers represented his understanding of the combat engineering's nature. Specifically, the governor knew of its importance by including it in his army, but did not perceive it as an especially technical branch requiring officer leadership—an assessment he changed later during his next set of reforms. In addition to training cadets in the three European combat arms curriculum, Zhang required the cadets to serve in the Guangdong Victorious Army and gain troop leading experience immediately after their academy training. But for Zhang, western education without Chinese foundation was not enough.

The governor further established Chinese classical education on top of the western curriculum. "Early every morning, the students shall all review the *Four Books and Five Classics* for about an hour" and on Sundays they will "assemble together to review the classics and histories and write discourse and essays [on] literature, history, and military science of China.... so they may not lose their fundamental knowledge."³⁴ The inclusion of classic Chinese literary and military education clearly revealed Zhang's emphasis on traditional academics. Zhang's policies on the imperial examinations were just as telling of his beliefs. While Li Hongzhang's Tianjin Military Academy forbade participation in the imperial examinations,³⁵ Zhang Zhidong's Guangdong Military Academy specifically authorized the cadets to attempt the examinations. Zhang's memorial stated that "students who during their terms of study wish to participate in the civil and military competitive examinations shall be accorded the privilege."³⁶

³⁴ Zhang Zhidong, "Chuangban shui lu si xuetang zhe (Establishing the Naval and Military Academy)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 575.

³⁵ "The New Military College at Tientsin," *North China Herald*, April 13, 1887, 417.

³⁶ Zhang Zhidong, "Chuangban shui lu si xuetang zhe (Establishing the Naval and Military Academy)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 575.

By allowing his cadets to take the civil and military examinations, Zhang reinforced the importance of the Confucian education. The dichotomy of Western military education during the day combined with pre-class and Sunday study of the classics exemplified Zhang's *ti-yong* methodology. In the larger context of Confucian ideology and state, Zhang argued against the elite notion one had to be either classical *or* modern by showing them that their sons can serve in a military academy that was both Confucian *and* modern. Practically, by merging western military developments with Chinese education, Zhang hoped to imbue officers with the values of the Chinese state while preparing them for the new forms of warfare China was experiencing.

Zhang Zhidong's Guangdong Military Academy represented the principles of military reform he espoused. In recruiting, he selected cadets who were capable of enduring the hardship of western drill, educated in basic western language, and rooted firmly in Confucian values. While he was unable to find men meeting all these criteria, the governor did find men who met each of these criteria and admitted them to his new institution in the hope of uniting their respective contributions. Zhang further blended the Chinese and western military education through his established curriculum. For the Guangdong Military Academy taught both western military education as well as the Chinese literary and military classics. In establishing the first of his schools, he set for himself the principles of admissions and curriculum he would repeat throughout his career.

Liangguang Assessment

During Zhang Zhidong's governor-generalship career, the progress he made in Guangdong was the least recorded. The only documented assessment of his reforms in Liangguang was a small paragraph in the Imperial Maritime Customs concerning the status of

Guangzhou. There was little mention of any assessment of the military academy other than its existence and curriculum previously covered.³⁷ This absence of material may have been due to the short year and a half operation of the academy prior to Zhang's transfer to his next assignment. As William Ayers pointed out in his own assessment of the Guangdong Military Academy, the following governor-general who assumed the Liangguang responsibilities fully dismantled Zhang's military reforms and institutions by 1892.³⁸ However, even though the Liangguang's military academy operated for only a short period, Zhang Zhidong not only gained valuable experience in creating western military institutions, but could later draw upon these early graduates for his later reform projects.

Even as early as this Liangguang tenure, Zhang Zhidong did not perceive his military reforms as the transformation of China into a western nation, but instead the learning from their methods while distrusting foreign intentions. The governor's assessment of the Germans as the only trustworthy western nation who "never used the [Sino-French] war as an excuse not to assist us" also revealed his distrust of the west as a whole.³⁹ By showing the Germans as the most amicable and trustworthy, he implied that other westerners were not. Furthermore, even though Zhang saw the Germans as the most honest of the westerners, Zhang nonetheless took measures to safeguard their loyalty and service to China. In his 1885 memorial to the throne, Zhang asked the emperor to assign the German officers not only Chinese rank but to authorize Chinese military uniforms and tassels for the Germans to wear. Zhang envisioned the Germans directly serving as Chinese officers if the need arose, and the emperor approved his request.⁴⁰ While there did not appear to be any records of Germans actually donning the Chinese military

³⁷ Imperial Maritime Customs, *Decennial Reports 1882-1891*, 576.

³⁸ Ayers, *Chang Chih-tung and Educational Reform in China*, 113.

³⁹ Zhang Zhidong, "Gumu De bian pian (Recruiting German officers)," *ZZDQJ*, I, 314.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 314-315.

uniforms and tassels of rank, Zhang's request itself showed an attempt to place the Germans under the Chinese institutional command. As no records were found of Germans accepting or wearing the Chinese uniforms, these early methods likely were not successful. By the time Zhang established his next western-style army, he had foregone the Chinese uniforms and rank for different methods of control.

The assessment of the Guangdong Victorious Army itself was one of mixed results. While the improvement in training and foreign drill was noted, the "equipment and arming of the land forces are far from uniform."⁴¹ The problem of uniform weaponry could have created significant sustainment drawbacks resulting in the loss of operational and tactical capability. For example, if an infantry company carried three different types of rifles they also had to carry three different type of ammunition. Diverse weaponry thus created supply challenges in purchasing ammunition, weapons, and maintenance support from multiple sources. More importantly were the tactical ramifications. If a third of a company ran out of their type of ammunition, the unit could not cross-load supplies—effectively reducing the combat power of a company even though it may not have suffered any casualties.

However, Zhang did make some initial efforts to promote uniform armaments though his purchase request to the Krupp Company discussed earlier. The Imperial Maritime Customs report noted the governor's purchase when they reported that some German Mauser rifles were being provided to some troops.⁴² It stands to reason that these troops were likely the Guangdong Victorious Army 5th Battalion Zhang Zhidong was training and equipping. But even with the additional equipment bought from Krupp, it appeared the Guangdong Victorious Army was far from uniformly equipped. One factor contributing to this deficiency was likely the inability of

⁴¹ Imperial Maritime Customs, *Decennial Reports 1882-1891*, 576.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 576.

Zhang Zhidong to produce his own armaments in Liangguang, as there were no weapons manufacturing arsenals within his jurisdiction. In his next set of reforms, Zhang would address the shortfall of weapons production in Liangguang and its effects on military capacity. It is no surprise that when the throne reassigned Zhang Zhidong to Huguang in 1889, one of his first acts was to build an arsenal in order to produce modern weapons in his own jurisdiction.

Early Military Reforms of the Iron Works and Arsenal

The Qing Court reassigned Zhang Zhidong to his new position as governor of Huguang in 1889 based on his recommendation to construct the Beijing-Hankou Railway. Zhang's first tenure in Huguang lasted from 1889 to 1894 when he was transferred to the more economically prosperous Liangjiang jurisdiction during the Sino-Japanese War. During Zhang's initial tenure in Huguang, the conventional historical narrative focused upon his achievements in industry—specifically his creation of the Hanyang Iron and Steel Works in Hubei.⁴³ Historians' descriptions of Zhang's industrial and economic progress of the early Huguang period often came at the expense of exploring his military reforms. In fact, William Ayers attributed the perceived lull in Zhang's military reforms to “feelings of false security [created] by the relative quiet prevailing then in foreign relations.”⁴⁴ Although the relative peace likely had a role in Zhang's pause of military modernization, the context of the governor's reform experiences in Liangguang provided an alternative explanation. In managing his Guangdong Victorious Army, Zhang saw his inability to equip his army uniformly using only purchases of western armaments. Furthermore, Zhang's primary purpose in Hubei—to establish the railway—was first and foremost founded upon the security concerns of the nation. With imperial approval, in Huguang

⁴³ Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 29.

⁴⁴ Ayers, *Chang Chih-tung and Educational Reform in China*, 113.

Zhang sought to improve conditions for later military reforms by first establishing the Hubei Arsenal in conjunction with the Iron and Steel Works. Both of these industries produced components essential to strengthening the military capabilities of the nation—the transportation and sustainment of armies through railways as well as the uniform and modern armament of troops through arsenals.

Zhang's justifications to construct trunk railways highlighted the national security mindset of the governor in his early Huguang years. In his 1889 memorial arguing for construction of the Beijing-Hankou railway, military reasons were among the foremost of concerns. Amongst the many advantages to railways, Zhang highlighted the importance of the proposed railway to rapidly transfer troops between the northern and southern regions of China. The governor also argued the interior railways would not allow foreign invaders easy access, as it did not touch any ports of debarkation from which foreign troops would land.⁴⁵ Zhang's argument for railway construction focused considerably on the military issues of the day. Not only did Zhang ensure any foreign invaders would not have access to China's transportation network but he primarily saw the purposes of the railway as a means of rapid mobilization of soldiers. Simply put, construction of the trunk lines hindered the mobility of invading armies while providing Chinese forces the operational advantage of interior lines of communication. In other words, the governor's argument for railways aimed at the overall goal of rapid concentration of forces like his rationales in establishing Guangdong Victorious Army reforms. While the reforms of the army itself focused on tactical combat—the troops ability to maneuver quickly and concentrate firepower—the railway proposal focused on the operational ability to mobilize and concentrate armies to meet the enemy threat. Furthermore, Zhang Zhidong's argument for the Beijing-Hankou railway also highlighted a national context of development that

⁴⁵ Cameron, "The Public Career of Chang Chih-tung," 196.

contended with late-Qing regionalism. The fact that Zhang's memorial made his argument on a *national* security platform showed his focus beyond just the security of his jurisdiction. In addition, the Beijing-Hankou railway crossed provincial boundaries, eliciting another national aspect to Zhang's recommendations. Zhang wanted a railway that did not strengthen one province in lieu of another but improved China as a whole so that it could combat foreign incursions. With this justification in mind, Zhang's transfer to Huguang to create the Hanyang Iron and Steel Works that would support the railway looks less like a governor ignoring military matters during a time of peace in order to consolidate regional power. Instead, Zhang's actions instead represented an official who understood the operational requirements of war on a national scale.

While the Hanyang Iron and Steel Works undoubtedly supported the railway construction as its foremost purpose, its ancillary functions were equally important. An often ignored aspect of Zhang's industrial developments was the Hubei Arsenal section of the works. The Hankou customs commissioner in 1891, R.B. Moorhead, reported the arsenal was under construction and soon able to produce an annual quantity of a hundred artillery pieces, fifteen thousand rifles, and their associated ammunition "of the newest description."⁴⁶ Less than two years after Zhang's transfer from Liangguang, he had already established the manufacturing basis needed to supply Huguang with modern armaments. Production figures in R.B. Moorhead's next report in 1901 showed the Hubei arsenal churning out about thirty Mauser rifles and five artillery of modern make every day.⁴⁷ While a little short of Moorhead's initial estimates in 1891, the Hubei Arsenal still produced over ten thousand rifles a year. More importantly, these rifles were not only of

⁴⁶ Imperial Maritime Customs, *Decennial Reports 1882-1891*, 190.

⁴⁷ Imperial Maritime Customs, *Decennial Reports 1892-1901* (Shanghai, 1904), 306.

modern make, but also addressed the problems of armament uniformity Zhang experienced in his Guangdong Victorious Army.

In his first six-year tenure as the governor of Huguang, Zhang Zhidong attempted to create an industrial and infrastructural base for the military. While the railway construction reform was eventually shelved due to budgetary issues until after the Sino-Japanese War, Zhang's intention to create cross-provincial rapid military transportation was nonetheless apparent. In fact, the governor's infrastructural objectives of connecting Hubei and Beijing showed Zhang Zhidong's thinking on a scale beyond the provincial or regional scale. Instead, by submitting the memorial that resulted in his transfer, Zhang was willing to tie his career to his Hanyang Iron and Steel Works, the Beijing-Hankou railway, and military transportation capability for China. The goal of the project was not one pertaining only to his jurisdiction but a fundamental objective needed to provide national security for the Qing state. Yet transportation alone was not enough. From his experience in Liangguang, Zhang recognized the need for domestic armament manufacturing and new methods to assert Chinese authority over foreign officers. During Zhang's first years as the Huguang governor, he set the grounds for future reforms by constructing the Hubei Arsenal capable of supporting armies with modern western rifles and artillery pieces. Unfortunately, before Zhang could create any new armies or military academies, the First Sino-Japanese war erupted in 1894. As a result of the hostilities, the Qing court shifted the Liangjiang governor north and transferred Zhang Zhidong to serve in his stead.

Chapter 2: Liangjiang's Financial Prosperity and Military Reforms

The Sino-Japanese War commenced in July of 1894 in Korea. After an early Japanese naval victory in September of 1894, Japanese land forces proceeded into northern Chinese territory the following month. During these initial battles with the Japanese in Korea, the Qing Court attempted to assemble its most talented officials into key positions. As Li Hongzhang's forces carried out the fighting in the north, the throne summoned the Liangjiang governor Liu Kunyi to Beijing to support the war and placed Zhang Zhidong in command of Liu's prosperous Yangzi jurisdiction.¹ At the time of Zhang's transfer, the Chinese forces already suffered defeats but still retained significant naval and land forces at the heavily defended port of Weihaiwei. However, in the spring of 1895, Japan's victories over port's defenses and Liu's forces in Manchuria opened two separate routes directly to the Chinese capital. The new Japanese threat to Beijing forced the Qing court to sue for peace or risk their regime.² Of the reasons for the Chinese defeat, one of the most telling was the inability of the Qing court to rapidly mobilize forces across the empire to be effective against the oncoming Japanese. In fact, even though active hostilities lasted over six months, "only Li Hongzhang's North China army and fleet were involved."³ It appeared the Qing court's shelving of Zhang Zhidong's Beijing-Hankou railway had significant unintended consequences. Connections between the Chinese inability to mobilize southern forces in the Sino-Japanese War and the Beijing's shelving of railway projects did not elude Zhang. In fact, as Zhang Zhidong reflected upon the war as the governor of Liangjiang, the trunk lines he advocated earlier were one of the many reforms he recommended.

The Sino-Japanese War reinforced Zhang Zhidong's thinking in his past ten years of military reforms and informed his tenure in Liangjiang. In Zhang's June 1895 memorial to the

¹ Bays, *China Enters the Twentieth Century*, 11-12.

² Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 214; Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 192.

³ Fairbank, *China: A New History*, 220.

court, he listed nine major points of concern.⁴ While Zhang's first points advocating naval and military reform were predictably based on the defeat of Chinese forces, his later points provided deeper insight into the sources of Chinese weakness. In Zhang's third point, he again argued for the construction of interior trunk railways. He used the same justifications we have seen earlier in his 1889 memorial by reiterating the military importance of timely troop and supply transport. The governor also continued to sponsor the ideas of western-drilled armies and military academies as the key to creating an effective army, while encouraging the establishment of arsenals to equip China's armies.⁵ Of the nine points Zhang made in this memorial, six of them directly related to the issues of national defense. In formulating these ideas, Zhang returned to the methods he established during his tenure in Liangguang and his first Huguang tenure. Furthermore, Zhang directly identified western imperialist incursions as the reason for his recommendations by stating that reforms were necessary "in order to defeat the westerners."⁶ The governor recommended the creation of western military institutions as the basis of national power needed to fend off western imperialism.

The renewed attention on military affairs due to the Sino-Japanese War, supported by the prosperous economic conditions of the Liangjiang area, helped Zhang turn his ideas into action. During Zhang's sixteen-month tenure⁷ as governor of Liangjiang, he took actions on all tenets of

⁴ Zhang listed nine areas needing reform, as follows: army reform, navy reform, railroad construction, establishing arsenals, opening academies, establishing businesses, establishing industries, education abroad, building an contingency capital. Zhang Zhidong, "Yu qing xiu bei chu cai zhe (Suggestions to cultivate, prepare, and store human talent)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 989-1001.

⁵ *Ibid.* Zhang's recommendations for army reform can be found on pages 990-992, arsenal building on pages 994-996, and military academy preparations on pages 991 and 996.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 995.

⁷ There is some minor discrepancy in the historiography regarding the date Zhang left the Liangjiang governorship. However, most sources agree that Zhang served from November 1894 to February of 1896. See Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 29; Ayers, *Chang Chih-tung and Educational Reform in China*, 113; Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 69; Bays, *China Enters the Twentieth Century*, 13. Most directly, the *North China Herald* outpost correspondent from Nanjing reported, "today Chang Chih-tung [Zhang Zhidong] leaves for Wuchang [Wuhan]. He will stop at Wuhu enroute" in "Nanking [Nanjing]," *North China Herald*, March 6, 1896, 355.

his military reform program. Zhang built a new western-style army commanded by German officers serving under the authority of a Chinese official. To lead the new army, Zhang again established a military academy to cultivate human talent that was not only competent in western warfare but also rooted in Chinese classical education. Furthermore, Zhang's reforms during this turbulent period of Chinese history did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries, especially westerners. In fact, his Liangjiang period's military reforms were the most prominent to both westerners at the time and historians in retrospect. Yet even while the military reforms received significant western attention, the fact that Zhang's new military institutions served as the national security bulwark against foreign imperialist incursions eluded the western observers.

Nanjing's German-led Army: The Self-Strengthening Army

As with Liangguang after the Sino-French War, the Sino-Japanese War similarly highlighted the immediate need for a standing western-style army. Like the documentation of the Liangguang period, Zhang largely detailed his military reforms in Liangjiang in two memorials, one for the army and one for the military academy. Zhang undertook the first and most historically prominent of his military reforms in June of 1895 by creating a new western-style army known as the Nanjing *Ziqiang jun* (Self-Strengthening Army).⁸ In recruiting intelligent and physically fit soldiers and instructing the army in western techniques and combat mobility, Zhang followed the earlier model he established with the Guangdong Victorious Army. Zhang also used the training distribution methods he first developed in Liangguang. However, the financial prosperity of the Liangjiang region made available to Zhang more resources with which to create his Self-Strengthening Army.

⁸ Zhang Zhidong, "Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1052.

The Liangjiang area was the economic and agricultural heartland of the Yangzi Valley. Adding to the abundance of the region was significant western investment that not only spurred economic growth but directly added to government wealth through taxes collected by the Imperial Maritime Customs office.⁹ Liangjiang's geography and the western influence made it one of the wealthiest regions in the empire. The area's abundance was not lost on Zhang Zhidong. The governor acknowledged the Self-Strengthening Army was made possible by Liangjiang's prosperity that allowed him to finance initiatives with provincial revenues.¹⁰ Zhang first utilized this wealth to hire more German instructors to train his armies. Compared to the seven foreign officers hired in Liangguang, Zhang increased his foreign staffing fivefold to a total of thirty-five German officers.¹¹ The additional instructors allowed Zhang to more rapidly create a larger army. In fact, Zhang planned for the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army with a troop strength of ten thousand men.¹² By using Liangjiang's additional finances to fund large scale training efforts, Zhang wanted to quickly create an army large enough to defend China's sovereignty. Zhang's ability to quickly train thousands of soldiers in western drill should not be overlooked, especially when compared to his later Hubei reforms. As will be seen later, the number of western-trained troops Nanjing trained in six months took Zhang's Hubei army more than four years to match. In addition, Zhang's ability to hire more German officers allowed him to assign them new and different roles beyond simply training the army.

⁹ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 195.

¹⁰ Zhang Zhidong, "Sheli hujun ying, gongchengdui lianxi yangcao bing caiying di xiang zhe (Establishing Protection Battalion, Engineer Squad practicing in Western drill by dismissing former battalions for pay)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1175.

¹¹ "Chang Chih-tung's Army," *North China Herald*, January 24, 1896, 139; Furthermore, the costs of the German officers were significant, as each German officer was paid 2772-3960 taels a year in salary. In comparison, the Chinese deputy officers of the same unit received 288-600 taels a year. Zhang Yiwen, "Zhang Zhidong yu Ziqianjun (Zhang Zhidong and the Self-Strengthening Army)," 374.

¹² At the actual time Zhang wrote the memorial, the Self-Strengthening Army had a strength of 2,860. Zhang Zhidong, "Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1052, 1054.

The German officers quickly went to work under Zhang Zhidong's guidelines training the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army. In formulating their roles, Zhang initially drew upon his experiences in Liangguang and organized his new forces along similar lines, modeled heavily on the German army structure. By the time of his memorial of December of 1895, Zhang had already trained over a quarter of the projected total army consisting of eight infantry battalions, two cavalry battalions, two artillery battalions, and one engineer battalion.¹³ As in Liangguang, Zhang again planned the forces along the western organization of combat branches and trained them accordingly. But in Liangjiang, Zhang also formally established a combat engineer battalion to enhance the mobility of the new army at Nanjing. While Zhang touched on engineering tasks in Guangzhou, his organization of the Self-Strengthening Army showed his increasingly sophisticated understanding of western warfare and the increased importance of the mobility provided by more specialized combat engineers.

In recruiting soldiers, Zhang also reinforced the same Guangdong recruiting requirements of hardy soldiers for the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army. Zhang required troops to be "between sixteen and twenty years of age with strong bodies...and able to endure western training." In fact, Zhang's memorial pointed out that many of the soldiers originally recruited did not take his warning seriously, resulting in their inability to endure the strenuousness of western drill.¹⁴ One of the officials further reported the "first-class" fighting men of the new army were not only physically fit but also literate—an impressive achievement considering

¹³ Zhang Zhidong, "Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1054.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1053.

China's ten percent literacy rate at the time.¹⁵ However, these high recruiting standards understandably made it more difficult to attract and retain soldiers without additional incentives.

In order to improve the quality of recruits and ensure their commitment, Zhang settled upon the solution of raising the pay. The basic soldier pay in the Self-Strengthening Army amounted to about five taels per month, with incentive pay if they performed well.¹⁶ Zhang also ensured soldiers' uniforms, lodging, and billeting would not be deducted from their pay as was practice in traditional Chinese armies. Furthermore, the Germans and Chinese officers would issue the increased salaries jointly.¹⁷ By enforcing a joint issue of pay, Zhang attempted to check the corruption endemic among many traditional Chinese military units. The solution of both increasing soldier pay and using German officers to jointly issue the money was only possible due to the larger financial capacity of the Liangjiang region. Without the money, Zhang would have faced a difficult choice of either decreasing the size of the Self-Strengthening Army or paying the soldiers less—both of which would have undermined his goals. Similarly, if there were only one or two foreign officers hired, they likely would not have had the presence in a ten thousand man army to help oversee pay issuance. The greater availability of German officers allowed them to take a greater role than before and increased the scope of their assignments beyond simply training soldiers.

¹⁵ Shen Tun-Ho [Dunhe], *Recollections of a Chinese Official*, ed. L.D. (Shanghai: Reprinted from the North China Herald, 1903), 4. Because Shen's literacy rate assessment for this period seems low, he is likely referring to classical Chinese literacy and not functional literacy as practiced by Chinese merchants, clerks, and to a lesser extent, villagers. Functional literacy was estimated at about thirty to forty-five percent during the Qing dynasty. See Evelyn Sakakida Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979), 23.

¹⁶ Zhang Yiwen, "Zhang Zhidong yu Ziqianjun (Zhang Zhidong and the Self-Strengthening Army)," 374; Zhang Zhidong, "Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1054.

¹⁷ Zhang Zhidong, "Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1054.

With more German officers at his disposal, Zhang assigned them to command all the battalion and companies of the Self-Strengthening Army. German officers' new roles served a twofold purpose for the governor. First, Zhang wanted to "shame" the old Chinese officers in the traditional units and encourage them to conform to western training methods.¹⁸ Zhang's awarding of command to foreign officers should not be perceived as a lack of confidence in the potential of Chinese officers or differences in inherent talent. Instead, it showed Zhang's assessment of abilities of the current Chinese officers that led the traditional armies in Liangjiang. The governor utilized the German officers to create immediate combat leadership in the Self-Strengthening Army, but ultimately expected the Chinese deputies to assume command after gaining the necessary experience.¹⁹ Thus Zhang's second purpose of having the Germans command was to allow his Chinese officers an apprenticeship to the foreign officers in order to improve their own proficiency. Zhang's decision to use German commanders and Chinese deputies also served to reinforce his message to the officers of the traditional military establishment in China. The governor selected the deputy commanders not from the ranks of the traditional officers in Liangjiang but from graduates of his own Guangdong Military Academy and Li Hongzhang's Tianjin Military Academy.²⁰ Zhang thereby took advantage of the small achievements of his short-lived Guangdong Military Academy to reinforce and bring continuity to his reforms at Nanjing. These officers, already having a base of western military knowledge, would prove the most apt at gaining the experience necessary to eventually shift the army to Chinese leadership.

¹⁸ Zhang Zhidong, "Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1053.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1054.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Zhang's willingness to utilize the German officers in command should not be construed as a blind acceptance of German good intentions. Similar to his earlier attempts in Liangguang to co-opt German officers for imperial Chinese service, in Nanjing Zhang Zhidong tried new and more direct methods of exercising Chinese authority over the foreign officers. Not only were Zhang's earlier methods likely not successful, but the German officers' command roles in the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army required more direct Chinese oversight. As such, Zhang simply had the Germans answer to a Chinese official he assigned over them.²¹ That official was Shen Dunhe. Shen, a native of Zhejiang province who received western-style education in both China and England, initially served as an interpreter in the Shanghai mixed courts. In 1881, he came to governor-general Liu Kunyi's attention and started working in military institutions in central and southern China, including the Jiangnan Arsenal and the Nanjing Naval Academy.²² Liu's transfer from the Liangjiang jurisdiction in support of the Sino-Japanese War allowed Zhang Zhidong to retain Shen's services. Shen thus came to serve as the Chinese official tasked with overseeing the Self-Strengthening Army's creation and training.

When Shen's training of the initial force was complete, Zhang again proceeded with a small-nucleus force model to disseminate training to the remainder of the army. From the original thirteen battalions trained, Zhang then planned to distribute their members into thirty battalions to use as the trained nucleus of the larger force.²³ If the funds allowed, he would continue the process until he reached the projected troop strength of ten thousand soldiers.

German officers would slowly be withdrawn from the command positions when the Chinese

²¹ Zhang Zhidong, "Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1054.

²² Biographical information for Shen Dunhe was compiled from the following sources: *Shinmatsu minsho Chugoku kanshin jinmeiroku* (Biographical Dictionary of gentry and officials of the late Qing and early Republic), comp. Tahara Tennan (Beijing: Chugoku kenkyuka, 1918), 186; "The Imperial Naval College at Nanking [Nanjing]," *North China Herald*, November 18, 1892, 747; Shen, *Recollections of a Chinese Official*, 1-2.

²³ Zhang Zhidong, "Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1053.

officers finished their apprenticeship phases and moved into the commands.²⁴ The ultimate goal of Zhang's Self-Strengthening Army was to serve the security needs of the throne and nation. Zhang directly tied the throne to his reforms in stating his desire that these new soldiers would "become an effective Self-Strengthening Army for the emperor's will."²⁵ Similarly, Zhang consistently appealed to the emperor's authority in later memorials, thereby always ensuring his actions met imperial intent.²⁶ Zhang's dedication to the throne stemmed from his classical Confucian identity that promoted loyal service to the emperor. The classical role of the educated civilian officials extended to his views of the military officials as well. In training military officers, their Chinese education must continue to be integrated within the western-style military academies.

Regional Prosperity: Nanjing's Military Academy and Railroad Academy

The Nanjing Military Academy built upon the model of the Guangdong Military Academy. At the new school, the governor continued recruiting cadets who were physically fit enough to endure hardship, but also possessed the literary talents of classical education. Zhang also retained a western curriculum to be taught by the five German officers assigned to the Nanjing Military Academy. Yet differences also existed between the Nanjing and Guangdong military schools. The Nanjing academy memorial included a provision for a railroad academy

²⁴ Zhang Zhidong, "Yu qing xiu bei chu cai zhe (Suggestions to cultivate, prepare, and store human talent)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 991.

²⁵ Zhang Zhidong, "Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1055.

²⁶ A few examples of Zhang's constant grounding of his actions in the throne's authority: the prefacing of his reports with "already approved by his majesty" to justify his memorial and actions in Zhang Zhidong, "Sheli hujun ying, gongchengdui lianxi yangcao bing caiying di xiang zhe (Establishing Protection Battalion, Engineer Squad practicing in Western drill by dismissing former battalions for pay)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1175; or "his majesty has told us to train our troops" and I am reporting back with my results in Zhang Zhidong, "Qian tian lian jingbing zhe (Increasing training of crack troops)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1272; and in his reports on the Hubei Military Academy was couched as "according to your majesty's decree to train army, rectify navy, and establish academy immediately" in Zhang Zhidong, "Sheli wubei xuetang zhe (Establishing the military academy)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1226.

supporting Zhang's justifications shown earlier. With the experience Zhang gained in Guangdong, his ability to detail his training intentions improved and now included the establishment of combat engineers omitted from the Guangdong Military Academy. However, while Zhang's recruitment criteria still emphasized his synthesis of Chinese foundation and western practical use, his curriculum no longer explicitly required the study of classical texts. The exclusion of Chinese education from the curriculum suggested a rebalancing of the Chinese foundational learning to a greater western-oriented emphasis.

The admittance criteria of the Nanjing Military Academy showed Zhang's desire for integrating Chinese foundation and western techniques remained intact, even if re-balanced. In fact, these requirements were identical in intent as those of the Guangdong Military Academy. First, Zhang's military academy again attempted to cast a wide net of entry by not restricting applicants to only the home province.²⁷ Zhang also continued emphasis on physical fitness, literary education, and understanding of the classical cardinal principles.²⁸ However, Nanjing did not have the pool of graduates who already possessed western-style education like those Zhang drew from within Guangzhou. Instead he relied upon the academy curriculum for basic western education. As in Guangdong, the governor established the need for skills in basic mathematical calculations and fluency in the German language as the foundation of military education. Zhang argued the technical nature of western warfare warranted study of mathematics, especially in the artillery branch. Furthermore, Zhang wished to prevent any stagnation in the Chinese officer corps as military technology and doctrine developed. To this end, the governor saw facility in the German language as the tool which would allow Chinese officers to remain current with the

²⁷ While not explicit in the military academy memorial, this fact is seen in Lord Charles Beresford later visit to the Nanjing Military Academy when he commented that many of the students were not from Liangjiang, but Hunan. Charles Beresford, *The Break-up of China* (New York: Harper, 1899), 112.

²⁸ Zhang Zhidong, "Chaungshe lujun xuetang ji tielu xuetang zhe (Creating the Military Academy and Railroad Academy)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1089.

latest military developments in Europe.²⁹ By focusing on elementary education, Zhang trained his graduates with not just the specific technical skills needed to serve in the army of their day. Instead, his graduates were equipped to learn and grow with the future evolutions of military science.

Zhang pursued the same organizational structure in military education that he used in his previous military reforms. The governor divided academy training into basic western branches including the infantry, artillery, and cavalry—but now also added the engineers. In the Nanjing Military Academy, the governor could further detail the curriculum to specifically include “the study of the art of war including the arraying forces, terrain analysis, surveying, mapping, mathematics, encampments, engineering bridges and roads, learning cavalry, infantry, and artillery tactics.”³⁰ Compared to his earlier Guangdong Military Academy memorial, the specificity of this memorial showed Zhang Zhidong’s increasingly sophisticated understanding of western warfare. The most evident example is the addition of combat engineering as the fourth basic branch of training in the Nanjing academy. This addition mirrored the new engineer battalion in the Self-Strengthening Army. While Zhang mentioned the importance of engineering tasks in Liangguang, he did not organize a formal combat engineering branch with associated officer education in his earlier reforms. With the advent of the engineering branch and education in Liangjiang, Zhang further emphasized the combat maneuverability and operational mobility underlying his military reforms. Therefore the study of the Liangjiang period within the context of the earlier Liangguang reforms showed Zhang’s expanded knowledge of western warfare, allowing him to describe his consistent reform intent in significantly more detail.

²⁹ Zhang Zhidong, “Chaungshe lujun xuetang ji tielu xuetang zhe (Creating the Military Academy and Railroad Academy),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1089.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1089.

Zhang justified the criticality of the western-style military academy with prior arguments made in Liangguang as well as using the Guangdong Military Academy itself as a precedent. First, Zhang repeated the argument that the German army systems were the best and their officers were trained in academies. However, in Nanjing Zhang exemplified the Guangdong Military Academy as “clear proof” of the effectiveness of the new institutions: while Guangdong Military Academy graduates were few, those same graduates now served with distinction in the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army.³¹ By using the Liangguang accomplishments as evidence, Zhang advocated for the continuation of western education by again establishing military academies.

One of the key aspects of Zhang’s military academy reform was its national purview. Zhang’s memorial to the throne did not only justify his own military academy, but recommended the “wide establishment of military academies” across China.³² In pushing for the establishment of multiple military academies to train talent, the governor was looking at the problem of defense not from a provincial prospective, but from a national one. Furthermore, in Zhang’s estimation, Chinese officers’ identity and prime purpose tied directly to their service of the nation. The Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army memorial that earlier expressed a throne-centered nation to do the “emperor’s will,” also showed the army as part of greater national service. In the same vein, Zhang’s ideals for the Self-Strengthening Army’s officers required them to have “heart for the nation” that overrode any personal interests.³³ Zhang’s juxtaposition of self and nation stressed the value of self-sacrifice. By highlighting these values of duty to nation and sacrifice in his

³¹ Zhang Zhidong, “Chaungshe lujun xuetang ji tielu xuetang zhe (Creating the Military Academy and Railroad Academy),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1089.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Zhang Zhidong, “Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1053. In this instance, Zhang used the term “*guo*” only, which does leave some ambiguity as to whether it was intended as “*Zhongguo*” or “*guojia*”. However, in either case, the context clearly established the meaning of the term as nation.

military reforms, Zhang articulated a concept of nation requiring the service of its people. Even when serving as a regional official, Zhang perceived military problems in national terms during his time in Nanjing and would continue to do so throughout the rest of his career.

The most prominent difference between the Nanjing Military Academy and its predecessor in Guangdong was the attachment of the Nanjing Railroad Academy to the grounds. While Zhang's tenure in Huguang focused largely on the construction of the railway, the Liangjiang governorship did not undertake such a project before his arrival. As Zhang repeatedly argued before, the railway was vital infrastructure to the military. In establishing the Railroad Academy, Zhang repeated his argument, this time placing Germany in the spotlight: "In Germany there are thousands of personnel to manage the railroads, and over a hundred thousand miles of track...essential to the country's military capacity."³⁴ By comparison, China had only attempted small-scale experiments with railway construction between his earlier shelved Hubei project and Li Hongzhang's short railroad in Zhili.

The deficiency in railways created two problems. First, as he previously mentioned, the lack of lines of communication and support created significant problems for military logistics and mobilization. Second, China lacked the human talent to build and operate these rails. Zhang's proposal for the Nanjing Railroad Academy looked to solve these problems. He would hire three western railroad instructors to train ninety students for an operating cost of about twenty thousand taels a year.³⁵ These students would be the basis of Chinese expertise in railway construction and would serve to build China's railroad network.

³⁴ Zhang Zhidong, "Chaungshe lujun xuetang ji tielu xuetang zhe (Creating the Military Academy and Railroad Academy)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1090.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

The cost of the railroad academy was not insignificant, especially when added to the forty thousand tael annual operating expense of the Nanjing Military Academy.³⁶ As will be explored in Chapter Three, the Nanjing Military Academy's higher operational costs allowed it to maintain a classroom ratio half of Zhang's later Hubei Military Academy. Therefore, without the commercial and economic prosperity of the Liangjiang region, Zhang would likely not have achieved these relatively large scale reforms. In fact, in his budgeting for the Nanjing academies, he specifically showed the ability of the Liangjiang Imperial Maritime Customs to supply the budget. Zhang also sought to tap into the wealth of Liangjiang by directing his subordinates to requisition donations from the local stores and businesses.³⁷ The large customs budget and exploitation of the local businesses in the Liangjiang region gave Zhang a unique ability to fund his military reforms during this period. However, the lack of similar financial capacity when the governor transferred back to Hubei would necessitate some changes to his reforms.

Liangjiang Assessment

In assessing Zhang's reforms during his Liangjiang governorship, we can see an improvement from Liangguang. The increased size and prominence of the military westernization undertaken in Nanjing created a wider knowledge of these reforms, despite his short tenure. In fact, for the Liangjiang period of Zhang's career, there are both Chinese and Western assessments of his programs, both of which give his reforms a generally satisfactory evaluation. Yet to achieve a deeper understanding of the assessments, one must also account for the shaping presence of western imperialism. Lord Charles Beresford, as a representative of the

³⁶ Zhang Zhidong, "Chaungshe lujun xuetang ji tielu xuetang zhe (Creating the Military Academy and Railroad Academy)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1090.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

British Board of Commerce, wrote *The Break-Up of China* detailing his assessment of the Chinese situation in 1898, including an assessment of the Self-Strengthening Army and Nanjing Military Academy. While Beresford provided western assessments of military efficacy, he did so while directly expressing British imperialist intent. Unfortunately, the Chinese assessments of this period while positive, were generic and unable to counterbalance imperialist perspectives of the western reports.

Shen Dunhe, the Chinese official Zhang charged with the Self-Strengthening Army, emphasized its elite nature. Shen wrote that Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army not only trained heavily under the western drill and organization but “commenced drill with first class fighting material as basis” due to the stringent recruiting criteria.³⁸ Zhang Zhidong assessed that after six months of “western junior officers serving as instructors...they march in step, have rifle and artillery adeptness, and are rather impressive.”³⁹ He also commented generally that the “training had already been very effective,” which was why he wanted to continue training more soldiers until he reached the goal of ten thousand.⁴⁰ These evaluations, while positive, did not contain much detail about what was being evaluated or how it was being assessed. Additionally, there was little information on the results of the Nanjing Military Academy from the Chinese sources. However, while Zhang and Shen’s evaluations lacked a certain amount of detail they provided other insights into Zhang’s reforms, specifically the results of Zhang’s attempts to shame the traditional officers with his western-style armies.

Shen’s assessment of the Self-Strengthening Army showed the unintended hostilities Zhang’s policies in Nanjing created. In June of 1896, shortly after Zhang’s departure, the

³⁸ Shen, *Recollections of a Chinese Official*, 4.

³⁹ Zhang Zhidong, “Hujun qianying diao e jiaolian pian (Protection Army lead battalion transferred to Hubei for training),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1103.

⁴⁰ Zhang Zhidong, “Xuan mu Xinjun chuang lian yang cao zhe (Selection and Recruitment of the New Army for Western Training),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1052.

jealousy toward the men in the German-led brigade displayed by ordinary Chinese troops and officers resulted in an altercation: Chinese troops, armed with traditional swords and spears, attacked a company of the Self-Strengthening Army during training.⁴¹ Shen's description of the event exposed the unintended consequences of Zhang's policy. Instead of causing shame for the older forces and changing their mindset, Zhang inadvertently caused anger and jealousy resulting in violence against the western-style army. While the major events occurred after Zhang's return to Wuhan, the governor kept track of the Self-Strengthening Army⁴² even as he undertook reforming the Huguang military apparatus. Thus, these policies would guide Zhang as he proceeded back to Wuhan. Unfortunately, the altercation resulted in a series of decisions by the returned Governor Liu Kunyi that effectively halted any progress of the Self-Strengthening Army. Liu first moved the Self-Strengthening Army to Wusong in order to separate them from the banner and Green Standard forces, with Shen Dunhe remaining as Chinese overseer. As the French military observer Captain Gadoffre also noted, Liu not only stopped Zhang's planned expansion of the Self-Strengthening Army, but in May of 1898 allowed the German officers' contracts to expire.⁴³ While Liu did not dismantle the Nanjing reforms as Zhang's successor did in Liangguang, Liu's actions still effectively stopped any progress in the Self-Strengthening Army and kept its capabilities at the level established by Zhang Zhidong. However, the

⁴¹ Shen, *Recollections of a Chinese Official*, 4. The *North China Herald* also reported the attacks against the Self-Strengthening Army and their German officers in "Nanking [Nanjing]" *North China Herald*, June 5, 1896, 883. These events also had enough of a lasting impact to be mentioned in CAPT Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," trans. MAJ Jas Rockwell, *Journal of the United States Infantry Association* (July 1904): 112-113. Ayers also presents Liu Kunyi's documentation of this event in *Chang Chih-tung and Educational Reform in China*, 114.

⁴² Even two years after his departure in February of 1898, Zhang Zhidong continued to memorialize the throne and write Liu Kunyi regarding the training and status of the Self-Strengthening Army. He even went as far as calculating the funds and allocations in Liangjiang needed to expand an army no longer under his control. See Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 66.

⁴³ Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," 112-113.

foundations Zhang set were strong. Even when westerners visited a year later, it was still seen as a model fighting force.

Overall, Lord Beresford's evaluations of the Self-Strengthening Army were very positive. The fact that his positive assessment occurred in 1899, when Governor Liu Kunyi had already stopped further progress of Zhang's reforms, showed the depth and lasting impact of Zhang's reforms. In observing both the drill and battlefield maneuver of the Self-Strengthening Army, now moved to Wusong, Lord Beresford commented that the three thousand men "were a fine lot of men, well turned out and well drilled. They had been drilled by German Officers, who had left."⁴⁴ While Lord Beresford did not refer to the Self-Strengthening Army by name, nor understand the extent of Zhang's involvement, his report nonetheless reflected the combat capabilities of the brigade. In fact, as Captain Gadoffre later commented, the Self-Strengthening Brigade was eventually transferred to Yuan Shikai at Baoding and formed the well trained core of the northern forces.⁴⁵ The transfer of Zhang's hard work to other governors foreshadowed the many future instances where the armies and officers Zhang trained would be transferred by imperial command to other officials.

Lord Beresford's visit also allowed him to observe and comment upon the Nanjing Military Academy's instruction and drill. Beresford identified the academy in Nanjing as an "instance of what may be done by the Chinese if properly organized."⁴⁶ Not only were the cadets well drilled during his evaluation, but they were also armed with modern German Mauser rifles. Yet even in his positive assessment, Lord Beresford also inadvertently commented on the

⁴⁴ Beresford, *The Break-up of China*, 277. Note that Lord Beresford did not report on the Self-Strengthening Army by name, but as part of his tour of the "Kiangzin [Jiangyin]" area in the vicinity of Wusong. While Beresford does not specifically identify Wusong or the Self-Strengthening Army by name, an inference can be made that the three-thousand German-trained men he reviewed near the Wusong area was the Self-Strengthening Army, as there were no other reports of German drilled soldiers serving in the vicinity during this period.

⁴⁵ Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," 113; Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 127.

⁴⁶ Beresford, *The Break-up of China*, 112.

attitude of Liu Kunyi toward the institutions when stating the cadets were “instructed by a Chinese officer, who had originally been taught by a German.”⁴⁷ Indirectly, Lord Beresford again highlighted Liu’s decision to allow the German contract to expire, thus slowing reform in the military academy as well as the Self-Strengthening Army.

While Lord Beresford’s report assessed the Self-Strengthening Army and Nanjing Military Academy, they also showed the direct imperialist intentions of the west in China. His focus on the tangled relationship between trade and military action portrayed a self-delusion that his mission served the interests of China instead of furthering western domination. First and foremost, Beresford did not see his intentions in China as an effort to expand imperial influence. Quite the contrary, he “pointed out that the British people had no desire whatsoever to dominate China, either by control of the military or by any other method [and] that it was the interest of the great trading nations to maintain the integrity of the Chinese Empire.”⁴⁸ Taken at face value, it appeared Beresford and the British only wished only to promote healthy trade relations with China and did not harbor any colonial intentions.

In reality, the economic interests of Great Britain were intertwined with a need for imperialist domination. Lord Beresford’s early discussion with the Chinese foreign affairs department, or *Zongli Yamen*, made this point abundantly clear. In these discussions he stated the British had a sixty-four percent stake in foreign trade in China and needed to secure their commerce. To this end, he recommended putting Chinese forces “under a British officer for drill and organization,” and “organizing the Chinese army under foreign officers, in order to give that police security which countries trading with China have a right to expect.”⁴⁹ In fact, when speaking with the governor of Sichuan, Beresford raised the stakes by stating “it was the right of

⁴⁷ Beresford, *The Break-up of China*, 112.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-8, 263.

foreign countries to demand for the protection of their trade and commerce,” and if China did not provide the security then “she was certain to fall to pieces, and... [be] split up into European provinces.”⁵⁰ With this statement as perspective, it is hard to see how Beresford’s trip could be viewed as anything other than a threat against Chinese sovereignty. In recommending an expanded military to secure commerce, Beresford not only used trade as the justification for imperialism but backed his argument with the threat to directly colonize China. The concluding remark within his own report best summarized the crux of British imperialist intent by stating the British “choice with regard to the Chinese Empire is simple—we may choose to wreck it or we may choose to restore it.”⁵¹ Nowhere in the British perspective did Chinese sovereignty enter into consideration. Instead, the statement clearly showed the British viewed themselves as the source of agency in China—not the Chinese themselves.

Beresford and Gadoffre saw the Chinese situation through an imperialist worldview. These men’s perceptions of Liu Kunyi’s expiration of the German contract as a sign of his distaste for the new western-style armies highlighted the western outlook. While Beresford indirectly referred to the German contract expiration, Gadoffre directly addressed the issue and attributed fault to Liu being “opposed to the direct instruction of his troops by German officers.”⁵² Yet Liu may have instead been executing a part of Zhang Zhidong’s intent for the Self-Strengthening Army. While Liu Kunyi did not progress to the ten thousand men envisioned by Zhang, he also did not disband Zhang’s army. In fact, the Self-Strengthening Army maintained its integrity even after the German contracts expired. It is also likely the departure of

⁵⁰ Beresford, *The Break-up of China*, 97; Beresford’s recommendations of the British-led Army in China was recommended to not only the *Zongli yamen*, or Chinese foreign affairs department, but also various governors and governor-generals as follows: Huguang, *ibid.*, 157-8; Minzhe, *ibid.*, 176; Sichuan, *ibid.*, 97; Liangjiang, *ibid.*, 108; Guangdong, *ibid.*, 263.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 457.

⁵² Gadoffre, “Chinese Troops and Their Instructors,” 113.

the Germans meant the Chinese deputies assumed command of the Self-Strengthening Army, just as Zhang Zhidong originally intended. Liu's actions can thus be reasonably perceived as somewhat supporting Zhang's ideas, though not following the letter of his program. More importantly, Beresford and Gadoffre's negative focus on Liu's contract lapse highlighted the difference in western imperialist perspectives.

Areas which did not receive as much attention in Zhang's memorials from Liangjiang were weapons manufacturing and arsenals. Though Lord Beresford's assessment of the uniform armament of the cadets at the Nanjing Military Academy hinted at the ability of Zhang to arm his forces, he also attributed it to foreign purchase and not native Chinese production. There are a few possible explanations for the discrepancy. While Liangjiang's financial prosperity likely allowed Zhang to conduct more purchases of weapons in order to quickly arm his troops, that logic likely covered the real reason behind the lack of arsenal construction. The more likely reason for the lack of sources on arsenals can be attributed to the fact that the Liangjiang region already possessed the Jiangnan Arsenal at Shanghai, built in 1865 under Zeng Guofan and his protégé Li Hongzhang.⁵³ In fact, as Zhang was leaving for Wuhan in 1896, the *North China Herald* reported a dispute between Zhang and the imperial Board of War about who possessed jurisdiction over the Jiangnan arsenal.⁵⁴ The fact that Zhang was arguing to retain use and ownership of the arsenal showed his interest in weapons manufacturing during his time at Nanjing. It also implied Zhang had been utilizing the Jiangnan Arsenal to supply his western-style army and military academy. Thus, it is likely the scarcity of information on arsenal activity

⁵³ David Pong et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Modern China* (Farmington Hills, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2009), I, 461; *ibid.*, IV, 141. Also see Biggerstaff, *The Earliest Modern Government Schools in China*, 165-166 for further details on the origins of the Jiangnan Arsenal.

⁵⁴ "The Kiangnan [Jiangnan] Arsenal," *North China Herald*, January 24, 1896, 139.

during the Liangjiang period was due to the preexistence of a weapons industry in Liangjiang rather than the inattention of the governor.

Zhang Zhidong's service as the Liangjiang governor continued the military reforms he started in Liangguang and early Huguang. Zhang persisted in selective recruitment and training of western-style armies, establishment of western military academies, and focused upon the importance of operational mobility through railway construction. At the same time, Zhang's increasingly sophisticated knowledge on western military affairs allowed him to elaborate further on the specific techniques and military capacities he desired. Financial prosperity in the Liangjiang region also opened new options for Zhang for reforming the army, such as the creation of significantly larger units, utilization of German officers to command, and increasing soldier pay to draw better recruits. Yet one of the disjunctures during the Liangjiang period of reform was Zhang's lesser emphasis on classical Chinese education in the Nanjing Military Academy. While he still recruited from those with Chinese literary backgrounds, his curriculum at Nanjing did not explicitly include the classical Chinese texts. If the Nanjing institutions were the last of Zhang's reforms, one might have concluded his abandonment of the "*Ti*" in his *ti-yong* formulation. However, even before Liu Kunyi returned to Liangjiang, Governor Zhang Zhidong was already planning the new military reforms for his own governorship in Huguang.

Chapter 3: Late Huguang and Zhang's Zenith

Zhang Zhidong left his office at Nanjing in late February of 1896 after Liu Kunyi's return to his post. Among the reasons for Zhang's reassignment was the imperial re-approval of the previously shelved Beijing-Hankou railway project.¹ The conflict of the Sino-Japanese War showed the inability of Chinese infrastructure to quickly mobilize China's military forces to the north. With the transportation weakness now readily apparent, the throne once again assigned Zhang Zhidong to pursue interior trunk lines from Hubei. Zhang himself saw the critical linkage between the army and railway by remarking that "Hubei is upriver at the Changjiang [Yangzi], and is thus a strategic junction between north and south...which will be a node of the railroad that is very important militarily."² Yet even before the governor proceeded back to his former jurisdiction to oversee railway development, he had already started coordinating military reforms from his Nanjing office.

Expecting an imminent transfer in late 1895, Zhang issued instructions to the Hubei governor for his new military projects.³ As Zhang arrived back at his Huguang governorship seat of Wuhan in March of 1896, work had already begun according to his instructions. The governor's military focus was clear to even the foreign inhabitants of the city. Upon his arrival in Wuhan, a *North China Herald* correspondent reported that foreign drilled soldiers from the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army accompanied Zhang Zhidong to Wuhan.⁴ By using this small part of the Self-Strengthening Army as a core of trained soldiers, Zhang broadened his small-nucleus training dissemination to include a cross-provincial character. The group of Nanjing

¹ "News Summary," *North China Herald*, November 23, 1895, 847; Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 29.

² Zhang Zhidong, "Sheli wubei xuetang zhe (Establishing the military academy)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1226.

³ The Hubei governor, Tan Jixun acted as the Huguang governor-general during Zhang Zhidong's absence. Zhang stated he had already sent him instructions regarding western-style army reform in his December 1895 memorial. Zhang Zhidong, "Hujun qianying diao e jiaolian pian (Protection Army lead battalion transferred to Hubei for training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1103.

⁴ "Wuchang," *North China Herald*, March 20, 1896, 448.

soldiers formed the center of the new army Zhang envisioned for Huguang. Furthermore, the governor's earlier work in establishing the Hubei arsenal bore fruit by his return, with the Hanyang arsenal producing as many as "30 Mauser rifles and five quick-firing guns" per day, utilizing the metals from his nearby iron works.⁵ With the armaments and a core of trained soldiers to start his western-style army in Huguang, Zhang was ready to establish the new Hubei Protection Army.

As he had done previously, Zhang quickly followed this building up of a new western-style army with the establishment of a military academy. The Hubei Military Academy not only continued to use German instructors and western military curriculum but returned explicitly to the Chinese classical curriculum embodying Zhang's *ti-yong* formula. Yet as western observers such as Beresford and Gadoffre assessed Zhang's military reforms they were unable to escape their euro-centric perspective in their evaluations of the orient. Western newspapers most effectively concealed imperialism's influence through selective translation and reporting of Zhang's military reforms. Choices made by foreign journalists tacitly highlighted the importance of western elements over Chinese, thereby hiding from view the governor's goal of building an officer corps with a background in with both Chinese and western-style education to lead the new army.

Ultimately, during Zhang Zhidong's second tour in Huguang he achieved the zenith of his military programs; this tour also provided the widest breadth and depth of primary source materials. At the core, the governor's methods and institutions continued undisturbed until the Qing court mandated reforms after the Boxer Rebellion. However, just because Zhang relied upon the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army as a foundation, it did not mean his decisions in

⁵ Imperial Maritime Customs, *Decennial Reports 1892-1901*, 306; Beresford, *The Break-up of China*, 299; Captain Gadoffre also later specified the Hanyang arsenal was producing the modern 1888 model Mauser rifle as well as rapid-fire guns in German fashion in Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," 125.

Huguang were identical to those in Liangjiang. The Huguang region was not as financially prosperous as the provinces of Liangjiang. Thus while Zhang continued his reforms, he had to settle for transformations on a much smaller scale and with a longer timeline that only gradually progressed toward an effective military capability.

Deliberate Progression: The Hubei Protection Army⁶

Funding issues for Zhang's reforms back in Hubei were evident from the onset. In fact, Zhang directly compared the "insufficiency of the Hubei province treasury, without ability to hire western junior officers" to the Liangjiang's "twelve new army battalions, all utilizing western junior officers...with ease" and no financial issues.⁷ The difference in resources of the two regions led to Zhang's request to transfer one of the twelve Nanjing battalions to Huguang. This transferred battalion served as the trained core of his Hubei Protection Army and included a handful of German officers. Yet even with the transfer of Chinese soldiers and German instructors, the costs associated with these western-style armies were still high.

Sent from Nanjing prior to his departure, Zhang's memorial of 5 February 1896 already showed both his funding concerns and his proposed solutions. Specifically, Zhang instructed the Hubei governor to dismiss two battalions of the original Hubei forces to pay for the one incoming Nanjing battalion.⁸ The fact that Zhang had to dismiss two older battalions in order to fund a single western-style battalion into Hubei depicted both the financial state of the Huguang

⁶ While not many, there are a few mentions of this military organization in the English bibliography. The few historians who mentioned this force either leave it unnamed (Powell) or sometimes translated its name as the Hubei Defense Force (Ayers). Instead, I prefer the translation of the Chinese *E hu jun* (鄂护军) as the Hubei Protection Army. This translation provides more accuracy and continuity with previous translations of the Guangdong Victorious Army (*Guang shen jun* 广胜军) and Self-Strengthening Army (*Zi qiang jun* 自强军) where the term *jun* was translated to "army" and not "force." Furthermore, "defense" translates more directly to 防 *fang* while protection translates better to 护 *hu*. Thus my use of Hubei Protection Army for *E hu jun* (鄂护军).

⁷ Zhang Zhidong, "Hujun qianying diao e jiaolian pian (Protection Army lead battalion transferred to Hubei for training)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1103.

⁸ *Ibid.*

region as well as the increased cost burden of the western-style armies. While the two-to-one ratio of costs was not exact, the generally higher costs associated with the new armies reappeared throughout Zhang's tenure. Later that year, when Zhang expanded the core Hubei Protection Army from the single transferred battalion to two battalions, he had to dismiss three additional battalions—the Wufang, Wugang, and Zhengnan—to fund it.⁹ The repeated discharging of older forces showed Zhang's method of reducing provincial expenses as one of the key approaches to obtain funds for the western-style army.

In addition to dismissing traditional forces, Zhang operated within the limited finances of Huguang by altering the use of his small-nucleus training in two ways that were distinct from the earlier forms. First, Zhang recognized the Huguang finances “made it impossible to train all battalions at once, and therefore under the constraints of finance we will first train two battalions and the engineer company, that will slowly increase.”¹⁰ The governor directly acknowledged his intention to start with only two battalions as the Hubei Protection Army instead of the twelve battalions he initially started with in Liangjiang. Along with starting smaller, Zhang also saw the Huguang reforms as a slower process that would continue to expand as funding became available in his jurisdiction. By leveraging both a smaller initial force and longer timeline, Zhang could continue his small-nucleus mechanism of training even while facing financial constraint.

Zhang further utilized cross-provincial transfers from Nanjing in order to achieve quicker results in Hubei. As alluded to earlier, Zhang transferred one of the battalions of the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army with him back to Huguang as the core of the new Hubei Protection Army. In Zhang's memorial before his official transfer, he had already stated his intentions to

⁹ Zhang Zhidong, “Sheli hujun ying, gongchengdui lianxi yangcao bing caiying di xiang zhe (Establishing Protection Battalion, Engineer Squad practicing in Western drill by dismissing former battalions for pay),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1175.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1175.

transfer the Nanjing “forward battalion’s five hundred men...to Hubei, and transfer [western] instruction, with the intention of reforming the entrenched practice” of the army there.¹¹ These well-disciplined soldiers were especially required in Hubei because the traditional Chinese forces were in a state of disarray. The *North China Herald’s* foreign correspondent described the local soldiers as wearing “loose red or blue jackets, armed with a rusty rifle, or it may be a water pipe.”¹² Interestingly, the correspondent did not see a need to reform the army, commenting that the old Hunan and Hubei soldiers were “more friendly” than the new disciplined soldiers from Nanjing. Of course, the governor was not interested in how friendly his soldiers were to the locals, but their military efficacy. To increase capability and size of the organization in May of 1896, Zhang split the original Self-Strengthening Army’s single battalion into a forward and rear battalion by “recruiting more troops to fill both battalions to further train in western-style warfare.”¹³ Zhang expanded the five hundred transferred soldiers to form the two new Hubei Protection Army battalions numbering a thousand soldiers.

To man the new army, the governor relied upon his well-practiced methods of selective recruiting. As Zhang’s primary funding came from dismissing the traditional Chinese forces, he also critiqued the old recruiting and training methods. Not only did the “Green Standard and brave battalions have many bad habits that make them difficult to train” the practice of “last minute recruiting of tens or hundreds of battalions” previously used was no longer effective in modern warfare.¹⁴ This statement harkens back to Zhang’s 1885 justifications when establishing the Guangdong Victorious Army, when the governor argued competence in modern warfare

¹¹ Zhang Zhidong, “Hujun qianying diao e jiaolian pian (Protection Army lead battalion transferred to Hubei for training),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1103.

¹² “Wuchang,” *North China Herald*, March 20, 1896, 448.

¹³ Zhang Zhidong, “Sheli hujun ying, gongchengdui lianxi yangcao bing caiying di xiang zhe (Establishing Protection Battalion, Engineer Squad practicing in Western drill by dismissing former battalions for pay),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1175.

¹⁴ Zhang Zhidong, “Qian tian lian jingbing zhe (Increasing training of crack troops),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1272.

centered upon strenuous peacetime training that was unachievable through mass wartime recruiting. Furthermore, just as in his earlier requirements in Liangguang and Liangjiang, Zhang selected only soldiers from good men with strong physiques and a willingness to endure the hardships of western-style training.¹⁵ But as he learned in Nanjing, Zhang also knew recruiting the best soldiers required better pay. To this end, Zhang continued the monetary incentive in Hubei, first adopted in Nanjing, by increasing the pay of Hubei troops along with providing uniforms and billeting.¹⁶ Because these costs contributed to the higher operational expenses of western-style armies, Zhang had to accept slower reforms. By starting with the smaller two battalion force and allowing more time to train his new army in Hubei, Zhang could spread the costs of training across a longer period, without detrimental effects to the end product. Simply put, Zhang initially accepted a lower quantity of soldiers in order to nurture a higher quality fighting force.

In training the Hubei Protection Army, Zhang relied not only on the German officers, but also continued to employ Chinese academy graduates. Zhang's transfer of the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army battalion included five of the thirty-five German officers who served in Liangjiang.¹⁷ These officers could immediately start training his army while Zhang negotiated new contracts with Germans to serve in Huguang. The arrival of the new foreigners to Wuhan did not go unnoticed by the international community. As the *North China Herald* correspondent reported in July of 1896, "for some weeks a German officer...has been busy drilling the troops the viceroy [governor] brought with him from Nanking [Nanjing]."¹⁸ Along with German

¹⁵ Zhang Zhidong, "Qian tian lian jingbing zhe (Increasing training of crack troops)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1272.

¹⁶ Zhang Zhidong, "Sheli hujun ying, gongchengdui lianxi yangcao bing caiying di xiang zhe (Establishing Protection Battalion, Engineer Squad practicing in Western drill by dismissing former battalions for pay)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1175; Captain Gadoffre's report further delineated the pay scale ranging from four taels a month for a private to fifteen taels a month for a non-commissioned officer. See Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," 118.

¹⁷ Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," 114.

¹⁸ "Wuchang," *North China Herald*, July 17, 1896, 101.

officers, Zhang did not overlook the continued use of Chinese academy officers. Just as in Nanjing, Zhang recruited from the Tianjin and Guangdong Military Academies to enhance Chinese leadership experience by using them as assistants in Hubei.¹⁹ At first, it may seem odd that Nanjing Military Academy graduates were not recruited to Hubei. However their absence was explained at the time of Zhang's transfer: the Nanjing school was just established and had not yet produced graduates. Thus, it was the Chinese graduates of the older military academies and the transferred German officers who trained the Hubei Protection Army.

The curriculum of Zhang's new western-style army in Hubei did not change from those established in previous armies. The Hubei Protection Army continued to train in "western cavalry, infantry, artillery methods, and how to utilize weaponry and ammunitions, weapons management maintenance, and engineer, bridging, mapping."²⁰ These tasks again aligned with the original three combat arms branches Zhang established for the Guangdong Victorious Army and the combat engineers he added in Nanjing. Just as Zhang had learned from his Guangdong experiences, he also continued educating himself through his Nanjing tenure. By his return to Hubei, he had a more detailed understanding of western-style warfare. An example of such was his intensified focus on the engineering requirements for the Hubei Protection Army. Zhang wanted the combat engineers to not only build "bridges, repair roads, and conduct construction... but they also needed to understand the weaponry and military matters.... Thus, the engineers are like the infantry and equal in importance."²¹ In this way, Zhang who continued to ascribe to mobility as a central tenet of western-style warfare, continued to promote of combat engineering as practiced by European armies.

¹⁹ Zhang Zhidong, "Sheli hujun ying, gongchengdui lianxi yangcao bing caiying di xiang zhe (Establishing Protection Battalion, Engineer Squad practicing in Western drill by dismissing former battalions for pay)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1175.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1176.

Zhang's development of the Hubei Protection Army did not break any new ground from his previous reforms. He continued to emphasize western-style organization of combat forces focusing on maneuverability and concentration of firepower. However, the financial situation in Huguang did further push the governor to develop creative solutions through refinement of his methods. Zhang not only took the longer timeframe to spread costs, but also more directly leveraged Liangjiang's resources by transferring a Self-Strengthening Army unit and the German officers training it. In having to pay for the higher operational costs of western-style armies, the governor forcibly dismissed traditional Chinese forces, which he deemed largely ineffective in modern warfare. Zhang's 1896 methods of disbanding traditional Chinese soldiers to free up finances set a model for later and more prominent reformers such as Yuan Shikai. When Yuan sought funds for his own western-style army after 1900, he eventually adopted Zhang Zhidong's methods of dismissing legacy formations.²² Of course, the funding and establishment of new armies would be ineffective without the proper leadership. Therefore in Zhang's 1896 instructions to academy superintendent Wang Bing'en, the governor again stated his belief that "in training troops, you must also train officers, and with the training of officers, one must rely solely upon the military academies."²³

Embodying Ti-Yong: The Hubei Military Academy

Zhang Zhidong started planning the Hubei Military Academy immediately upon his arrival back at Wuhan. The prominence of his new institution in Hubei spread among not only the Chinese but also the foreign correspondents, who caught word of the academy as early as 27

²² Odoric Y.K. Wou, "Financing the New Army: Yuan Shih-k'ai [Shikai] and the Peiyang [Beiyang] Army," *Asian Profile* 2 no. 4 (August, 1983): 347-9.

²³ Zhang Zhidong, "Zha wei Wang Bing'en deng chouban wubei xuetaang (Appointment of Wang Bing'en to establish the military academy)," *ZZDQJ*, V, 3293.

March 1896.²⁴ In establishing the Hubei Military Academy, Zhang could now draw upon the historical precedence of not only the Tianjin and Guangdong Academies, but also the Nanjing Military Academy. In Zhang's instructions to Wang Bing'en, the governor detailed the importance of Tianjin, Guangdong, and Nanjing Military Academies to the developing military reforms.²⁵ To Zhang, the military academy represented the core of cultivating military talent and creating loyal military officers to lead the new western-style armies for China. The governor again contracted for the German officers to instruct the cadets, though in Hubei he also used Guangdong and Tianjin academy graduates. Zhang also further emphasized the *ti-yong* formula in the Hubei Military Academy's recruitment and curriculum. But just as with his Hubei Protection Army, the financial constraints of the jurisdiction shaped the depth and methods used for officer education.

German officers not only trained the Hubei Protection Army but also continued to educate Zhang's officer corps, though they did so in reduced numbers due to the tighter finances. Before Zhang could establish new contracts for military academy instructors, the governor used the officers transferred from Nanjing to temporarily fill the gap.²⁶ In the early summer of 1896, Zhang negotiated a new German contract for instructors for the Hubei Military Academy. Terms of the contract "invited German officers...to Hubei to serve as Military Academy instructors.... the Officer-in-charge Falegenhan and deputy Genci, on the 5th month and ninth day signed the contract."²⁷ Even with only two German officers at the military academy, Zhang nonetheless

²⁴ "Wuchang," *North China Herald*, March 27, 1896, 489. The *North China Herald* correspondent reported "It is not many days since the Viceroy [Governor] Chang Chih-tung [Zhang Zhidong] arrived and already his proposed schemes are topic of general conversation...one of his first sets will be to found a military college called the Wu pei shiu t'ang [Wubei xuetang]."

²⁵ Zhang Zhidong, "Zha wei Wang Bing'en deng chouban wubeixuetang (Appointment of Wang Bing'en to establish the military academy)," *ZZDQJ*, V, 3293.

²⁶ "Wuchang," *North China Herald*, March 27, 1896, 489.

²⁷ Note these names are translated from the Chinese phonetic pronunciations and do not re-translate effectively back into German. Zhang Zhidong, "Zha wubei xuetang xu dacheng zi song ding ding Hubei wubei

continued his pattern of establishing Chinese authority over the foreign officers. In Huguang Zhang again followed the precedence of assigning a Chinese official to oversee the German officers. In the Hubei Military Academy, Zhang Zhidong's contract with the German instructors specified their subordination to the Chinese academy superintendent.²⁸ Zhang's attempts to subordinate the Germans directly to Chinese authority showed that even in his use of the most "trustworthy" Germans, the control of Chinese authority always took precedence.

The hiring of two German officers for the Hubei Military Academy, as opposed to the five in Nanjing, was again a result of the financial situation in Huguang. Costs of hiring the two German officers totaled approximately nine hundred and fifty taels a month. On top of room and board, Falegenhan who served as the commandant received about five-hundred-and-fifty taels per month and the instructor Genci received about four hundred taels per month.²⁹ Comparing the German salaries with the pay of the Hubei Protection Army, which ranged from four to fifteen taels a month,³⁰ the foreign officers made as much as thirty-five times the salary of a Chinese soldier. Effects of these costs can be further highlighted by the class ratio of each of the academies. While the Nanjing Military Academy had five German instructors for one hundred and fifty cadets,³¹ the Hubei Military Academy had two German instructors to instruct one hundred and twenty cadets.³² The class ratio difference between the Nanjing and Hubei Academies were twofold (30:1 vs. 60:1). However, Zhang attempted to offset the decrease in

xuetang jiaoxi de yuan hetong (Military Academy minister Xu delivers Hubei Military Academy German instructors contract, enclosed)," *ZZDQJ*, V, 3297.

²⁸ Zhang Zhidong, "Zha wubei xuetang xu dacheng zi song ding ding Hubei wubei xuetang jiaoxi de yuan hetong (Military Academy minister Xu delivers Hubei Military Academy German instructors contract, enclosed)," *ZZDQJ*, V, 3298.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3299. Exchange rate used for marks to taels were from the North China Herald published rates for the summer of 1896, "Exchange," *North China Herald*, June 5, 1896, 909.

³⁰ Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," 118.

³¹ Zhang Zhidong, "Chaungshe lujun xuetang ji tielu xuetang zhe (Creating the Military Academy and Railroad Academy)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1089.

³² Zhang Zhidong, "Zhaokao wubei xuesheng shi, bing zhangcheng (Proclamation for admittance examinations of military academy students, with regulations)," *ZZDQJ*, VI, 4892.

western instructors by creating new roles for the western-trained Chinese military academy graduates at the Hubei Military Academy.

In the instructions to Wang Bing'en, Zhang directed Wang to recruit and utilize the former Guangdong and Tianjin Military Academy students in the new academy. Specifically, these Chinese graduates would pair with the German officers and assist with both translations and military instruction.³³ First and foremost, the use of Chinese instructors helped address the shortage of German officers in Wuhan. Zhang further outlined the role of the Chinese instructors in the Hubei Military Academy's chain-of-command. In dividing up the duties and responsibilities between the German commandant and Chinese supervisor, it was the German commandant who was placed in charge of the former academy graduates.³⁴ The assignment of the Chinese academy graduates under German control suggests the role of the former as critical to instruction and not administration. But increasing the use of former Chinese military academy graduates under German command did more than meet the shortage of German officers. In fact, by allowing the Chinese officers to serve as assistant instructors, Zhang created Chinese officers who could instruct future generations. In other words, in assigning the former Chinese academy graduates to serve as instructors in the new Hubei school, Zhang slowly decreased the Chinese reliance on foreign officers.

The Hubei Military Academy's admissions process represented Zhang Zhidong's continued dedication to the *ti-yong* formulation of officer education. Yet the western accounts of the entrance proclamations largely ignored the foundational Chinese aspects of Zhang's requirements. For instance, the *North China Herald* published the standard western

³³ Zhang Zhidong, "Zha wei Wang Bing'en deng chouban wubeixuetang (Appointment of Wang Bing'en to establish the military academy)," *ZZDQJ*, V, 3293.

³⁴ Zhang Zhidong, "Zhafa wubei xuetang jicheng ba tiao, fu dan (Issuing Military Academy regulations in eight articles, enclosed)," *ZZDQJ*, V, 3347.

requirements of “fifteen to nineteen years of age...chosen according to their height and physical strength” but does not mention the importance of Chinese education and civil-military degrees.³⁵ In contrast, Zhang Zhidong’s requirements not only demanded physical strength but also embodied his desire “to train military officer talent” by recruiting “students who are officers or from the educated literati, to enroll and train, this way they will learn faster and to better effects.”³⁶ The discrepancy between Zhang’s account and the western one hinted at the mentality of the western observers. Foreigners did not see value in Chinese educational requirements and accordingly did not report them in their correspondence. Western omissions were even more apparent when seen in contrast to Zhang’s academy entrance proclamation. The governor explicitly outlined the requirements of “having Chinese literary foundations...with unity and coherence in writing and understanding” and “good physiques and motivation.”³⁷ Zhang’s entrance proclamation clearly described requirements of both the physical prowess necessary in western militaries as well as Chinese classical education that went unreported in the western accounts.

Zhang’s entrance requirements also showed other continuities with his earlier academies. For instance, Zhang did not discriminate based on provincial origin and accepted qualified candidates regardless of which province they were from.³⁸ In addition, similar to his recruitment incentives for the western-style armies, Zhang also levied pay as an incentive at the Hubei Military Academy. By setting the cadet salary at “4 taels per month” with room and board,

³⁵ “Wuchang,” *North China Herald*, March 27, 1896, 489.

³⁶ Zhang Zhidong, “Zha wei Wang Bing’en deng chouban wubei xuetang (Appointment of Wang Bing’en to establish the military academy),” *ZZDQJ*, V, 3293.

³⁷ Zhang Zhidong, “Zhaokao wubei xuesheng shi, bing zhangcheng (Proclamation for admittance examinations of military academy students, with regulations),” *ZZDQJ*, VI, 4892; Zhang Zhidong, “Zha wei Wang Bing’en deng chouban wubeixuetang (Appointment of Wang Bing’en to establish the military academy),” *ZZDQJ*, V, 3293.

³⁸ Zhang Zhidong, “Zha wei Wang Bing’en deng chouban wubeixuetang (Appointment of Wang Bing’en to establish the military academy),” *ZZDQJ*, V, 3292.

Zhang “hoped for the students to become human talent, and become useful.”³⁹ However, Zhang Zhidong did not expect the tremendous response to his initial entrance proclamation.

Zhang’s initial entrance proclamation stated there were only one hundred and twenty slots for students at the academy.⁴⁰ The applicants exceeded four thousand.⁴¹ The extreme interest in the academy not only surprised Zhang, but also caught the attention of westerners. However, the foreign report of this event showed yet another difference in the Chinese actions and the western interpretations. The *North China Herald* correspondent attributed the enormous number of applicants to the monetary incentive, which was quickly dissipated when they found out students “would have to dress in short coats with tight sleeves and would have to drill and carry rifles.”⁴² In other words, the western observer argued drill and wearing uniforms was too hard for the Chinese applicants resulting in the withdrawal of their applications. In reality, Zhang’s second proclamation instead showed the reality of how the governor eliminated excess candidates. Far from applicants withdrawing due to hardship, Zhang instituted more stringent literary and age criteria on the candidates. Zhang proclaimed “if you don’t have a degree, and if your family is not well established, or if you are older than 40 years old, you cannot register for

³⁹ Zhang Zhidong, “Zhaokao wubei xuesheng shi, bing zhangcheng (Proclamation for admittance examinations of military academy students, with regulations),” *ZZDQJ*, VI, 4892. Furthermore, Zhang again required the pay to be jointly issued by the German and Chinese officers similar to his procedures established in Nanjing to prevent corruption, “Every month students’ salaries, will be decided by the supervisor on issuance location and time and jointly in the [German] commandant’s presence issued [to students]” in Zhang Zhidong, “Zhafa wubei xuetao jicheng ba tiao, fu dan (Issuing Military Academy regulations in eight articles, enclosed),” *ZZDQJ*, V, 3347.

⁴⁰ Zhang Zhidong, “Zhaokao wubei xuesheng shi, bing zhangcheng (Proclamation for admittance examinations of military academy students, with regulations),” *ZZDQJ*, VI, 4892.

⁴¹ Zhang Zhidong, “Xiao yu baokao wubei xuesheng shi (Proclamation of explicit instructions to entering examinations for military academy students),” *ZZDQJ*, VI, 4894. In comparison, Li Hongzhang’s Tianjin Military Academy attracted ninety four candidates for forty seats. While Li’s academy drew significant interest, it was not in the same scale as the response to Zhang’s Hubei Military Academy in 1896, “Entrance Examinations at the Tientsin Military School,” *Chinese Times*, April 30, 1887, 408.

⁴² “Wuchang,” *North China Herald*, December 31, 1896, 1137.

the examination.”⁴³ Zhang’s method of selection in the midst of a sea of applicants gave insight into his priorities for the future military officers. By limiting applicants to only degree-holders, Zhang emphasized the core values of classical education and government degrees. The western observer’s omission of Zhang’s new criteria suggested a tacit dismissal of Chinese classical education’s value in the western perspective. The governor’s focus on building an officer corps who could practice western-style warfare while grounded in Chinese roots was almost invisible to western observers. Furthermore, Zhang’s embodiment of the *ti-yong* formula occurred in not just recruitment, but also in the curriculum of the military academy itself.

Zhang’s curriculum outline for the Hubei Military Academy also emphasized the importance of integrating Chinese classical education and western methods of warfare. In Zhang’s contract with the German officers, he established the western curriculum he had used in the past, including “cavalry, infantry, artillery warfare and also weaponry, tactical methods and artillery, engineer calculations, and terrain.”⁴⁴ In the western curriculum, there was little deviation from Zhang’s past academies. However, the key difference between Zhang’s curriculum for Hubei and Nanjing—and a return to the ideas in his Guangdong curriculum—was his explicit call for classical Chinese studies. In Hubei Zhang desired not just the western curriculum, but that there “also be study of the *Four Books* and Chinese military history, this is to solidify classical Chinese learning as foundation.”⁴⁵ With this wording, Zhang was directly referencing the *ti-yong* formulation in the military education context. Zhang’s care to teach both foundation and practice also surfaced structurally in his guidance on western education. Similar

⁴³ Zhang Zhidong, “Xiao yu baokao wubei xuesheng shi (Proclamation of explicit instructions to entering examinations for military academy students),” *ZZDQJ*, VI, 4894.

⁴⁴ Zhang Zhidong, “Zha wubei xuetao xu dacheng zi song ding ding Hubei wubei xuetao jiaoxi de yuan hetong (Military Academy minister Xu delivers Hubei Military Academy German instructors contract, enclosed),” *ZZDQJ*, V, 3298.

⁴⁵ Zhang stated the education should be *yi gu zhongxue zhi gen di* (lit. with classical Chinese learning as the root foundation). See Zhang Zhidong, “Sheli wubei xuetao zhe (Establishing the military academy),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1228.

to Zhang's larger enunciation of Chinese structure and western practice, he also saw the "classroom teaching principles, and the drill field practicing the principles taught."⁴⁶ But just because one was competent in the practical aspects of drill did not mean the principles, or fundamental structures, were learned. Zhang understood that "in doing these things, we must understand the principles to have any real effect."⁴⁷ While Zhang was referring to the principles and practices of western-style warfare, his conception also seemed an outgrowth of the *ti-yong* formulation he espoused. The Chinese officer corps needed the principles of Chinese society and state thoroughly ingrained through classical education. If not, then any western practices learned would not matter. For even the most competent officers, if not dedicated to serving the state, would not strengthen China's ability to defend its national sovereignty.

The Hubei Military Academy represented Zhang's ultimate embodiment of loyal Chinese officers competently practicing western-style warfare. Zhang saw no contradiction in his support of Chinese classical education while simultaneously westernizing the military apparatus. In fact, Zhang saw both sides of the education as essential for national defense. Even as the governor juggled the various aspects of Chinese and western curriculum alongside his industrial reforms in Hubei, he found time to personally supervise the Hubei Military Academy. Not only would all reports be sent to him in a timely manner, but he personally conducted quarterly examinations of the cadets progress at least once a year.⁴⁸ With the amount of attention Zhang Zhidong dedicated to the military institutions in Hubei, it is no wonder his forces were ultimately assessed as one of, if not the, premier army in China.

⁴⁶ Zhang Zhidong, "Sheli wubei xuetang zhe (Establishing the military academy)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1227.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Zhang Zhidong, "Zhafa wubei xuetang jicheng ba tiao, fu dan (Issuing Military Academy regulations in eight articles, enclosed)," *ZZDQJ*, V, 3346.

Huguang Assessment

The overall assessments of Zhang Zhidong's new military institutions in Huguang showed Zhang's force as one of the best in China. While western observers still found faults, they nonetheless evaluated Zhang's reformed military institutions positively. Captain Gadoffre of the French Army provided one of the most detailed assessments of Zhang's Huguang military institutions during his visit. Gadoffre, as well as other observers, saw Zhang's military system in Huguang was "the most important of all China."⁴⁹ The Chinese assessment of the governor's forces was equally encouraging. Ultimately, both the Chinese and western assessments of the Huguang military apparatus showed Zhang's successful establishment of a western-style army uniformly equipped, trained upon the western model, and capable of modern warfare. However, even while western observers saw an impressive military force, their inability to escape the worldview of imperialism resulted in significant questioning of the Chinese officer corps' ability to lead the new army.

Zhang's reform of western-style armies culminated in the Hubei Protection Army. Most of the observations from the western observers suggest the competence of these Hubei troops. Lieutenant Brandon of the British Royal Navy visited Zhang's troops in 1900 and observed three thousand troops who were all "armed with modern weapons... manufactured at the Hanyang arsenal."⁵⁰ The British assessment not only commented on the uniformity of weapons Zhang provided through his Hanyang arsenal, but also the growth of Zhang's soldiers in the four years since 1896. In fact, while Lieutenant Brandon observed three thousand soldiers drill, a 1900 *North China Herald* report counted ten thousand soldiers in Zhang Zhidong's Hubei Protection

⁴⁹ Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," 122; furthermore, General Frey assessed the Wuchang garrison a few years later in 1904 equally favorably, especially Zhang's engineers. See David Bonavia, *China's Warlords* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 32-33.

⁵⁰ Lieutenant Brandon can be found quoted in Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 119-120.

Army.⁵¹ This showed that while Zhang's process of creating new armies was slower in Hubei, in four years, he was still able to train at least the three thousand soldiers he had in the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army. Imperial Maritime Customs reports offered another qualitative evaluation of Zhang's troops through the Yichang training camp in Hubei. The customs officer reported favorably on the "cleanliness, discipline, instruction, and exercise...[and the] high state of efficiency" of the new Chinese soldiers while also stressing their particularly "hardy-looking, active, muscular" nature.⁵² This report not only showed Zhang's effectiveness in carrying out his high recruitment standards but also the new training program's ability to enforce western-style discipline and drill.

Captain Gadoffre in 1902 also reported the increased size of Zhang's Hubei Protection Army and that it was performing admirably. Gadoffre was impressed with the training of the Hubei Protection army, who were drilled "according the European methods [and were in] every way remarkable."⁵³ However, not only did Zhang's training of the new western-style army pay off, his armament support industry similarly succeeded in achieving uniform armaments manufactured domestically by the Chinese. Captain Gadoffre's report further added to Lieutenant Brandon's in specifying that Zhang's forces used the 1888 Mauser rifle currently being used in the German army.⁵⁴ Of course, not all assessments of Zhang's army were positive. Captain Gadoffre himself also pointed out the Chinese troops could use more target practice to increase their shooting accuracy. Another critic of the Hubei Protection Army was Lord Charles Beresford. In his 1898-1899 trip to China, Beresford described Zhang's army as "very well drilled [and] well armed with the newest German pattern Mauser rifle," but also doubted Zhang's

⁵¹ "Wuchang," *North China Herald*, October 17, 1900, 819.

⁵² Imperial Maritime Customs, *Decennial Reports 1892-1901*, 206.

⁵³ Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," 126-127.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 120.

actual troop strength as he only saw four hundred and fifty soldiers. Beresford further criticized the poor condition of Zhang's cavalry troops and the resulting lack of horse-drawn artillery.⁵⁵ As we saw in other reports earlier, the doubt of Zhang's actual troop strength was likely unfounded. However, the other criticisms regarding firing practice and horse-drawn artillery of the Hubei Protection Army pointed to a funding shortage more than lack of desire to reform. Equipping, drilling, and disciplining men required mainly time, but horses or regular firing required constant consumption of material and money. While not an excuse for ignoring these aspects, more intensive pursuit of target practice or horse-drawn artillery would have likely significantly increased the already high operating costs of Zhang's Hubei Protection Army.

Captain Gadoffre was not ignorant of the British imperialist intentions expressed by Lord Beresford shown in Chapter Two. The French captain argued the British and the German military interests in China were merely to "make known their products and to give impulse to their commerce," and the west was specifically not "interested in the solid foundation of Chinese power."⁵⁶ Gadoffre highlighted not only western imperialist interests in China, but also the usage of trade as justification. His statement also exposed the westerners disinterest in supporting a Chinese army who could effectively defend China, but instead wanted the Chinese army to serve western economic interests. Based on the intentions stated in Lord Beresford's own report, Gadoffre's assessment appeared accurate to western intent.

While the western observers commented directly on the efficacy of the Hubei Protection Army, direct Chinese assessments of the forces were harder to find. However, the imperial decrees and orders issued when the Chinese throne needed military capability hinted at the Chinese assessments of Zhang's forces. For instance, when a revolt broke out in Guangxi

⁵⁵ Beresford, *The Break-up of China*, 176.

⁵⁶ CAPT Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors, Concluded," trans. MAJ Jas Rockwell, *Journal of the United States Infantry Association* (October 1904): 128.

province in 1903 the throne turned to Zhang's Hubei forces to quell the disorder.⁵⁷ Another transfer followed the Guangxi transfer in 1904 resulting in two thousand five hundred of Zhang's modernized troops moving to Zhili province to buttress capital defenses. One of Zhili's local magistrates also highlighted the quality of Zhang's army by expressing his relief when seeing the Hubei troops were well disciplined, literate, and "perfectly under control."⁵⁸ These transfers not only showed the ineffectiveness of the traditional forces in other provinces—by which time the Guangdong Victorious Army effectively ceased to exist—but also Zhang's forces as one of the only reliably effective armies in the Chinese empire. Unfortunately for Zhang, the transfer of eight of his battalions drained his hard work from his own jurisdiction. In addition to transferring troops, the throne also sought Zhang's opinions on how to achieve military reforms after the crisis of the Boxer Rebellion.⁵⁹ While neither the transfer of soldiers nor the throne requesting his advice directly assessed the effects of Zhang's Hubei reforms, they showed the throne's valuation of Zhang's western-style armies and their capability to protect the nation.

The transfers of Zhang's western-style armies and officers also exemplified his prioritization of national concerns over the regional. Zhang first showed his repeated willingness to sacrifice his regional capabilities on behalf of the empire in the Sino-French War when he obeyed the national directives issued by the throne to dispatch his warships to Fujian.⁶⁰ In contrast, Li Hongzhang in the north instead responded to imperial instructions with excuses and

⁵⁷ Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 156.

⁵⁸ "Tungchou, Chili [Tongzhou, Zhili]," *North China Herald*, May 6, 1904, 964.

⁵⁹ Zhang Zhidong, "Ni bian Hubei chang beijun zhi zhe (Drafting of the Hubei Regular Army regulations)," *ZZDQJ*, III, 1617. The Hubei Regular army emerged from the Hubei Protection Army after Zhang transformed the army in accordance with imperial decrees of 1902. Another memorial showed similar responses from Zhang regarding officer training in Zhang Zhidong, "Hui zou zunzhi xunlian ge sheng jiangmu niding jianyi zhangcheng zhe (Memorial obeying the emperor's decree to train each provinces' officers with recommended draft regulations)," *ZZDQJ*, III, 1538-1542.

⁶⁰ Eastman, *Throne and Mandarins*, 157.

delays in order to preserve his own regional naval forces.⁶¹ Zhang's dedication to nation at expense of self continued even in his Huguang tenure where he obeyed various imperial orders to hand over his western-style military to other governors. Zhang's 1903 and 1904 transfers of troops to Guangxi and Tianjin, discussed above, further exemplified the governor's loyalty to nation. Furthermore, in 1904, Zhang was also ordered to send not only his soldiers but his Hubei Military Academy officers to Tianjin.⁶² Ultimately, these orders stripped a good portion of the military capacity Zhang built in his Huguang jurisdiction, but he nonetheless obeyed with little resistance. Zhang's continued sacrifice of regional assets in favor of national directives ran counter to the conventional narrative of provincialism in China. Instead, Zhang's actions showed a regional official who not only understood the national perspectives, but was willing to sacrifice provincial strength for the betterment of the nation. Zhang Zhidong's worldview thereby focused on China as a whole as the desired objective of national strengthening for his military reforms.

While Zhang did not provide personal assessments of the Hubei Protection Army's efficacy, he did specify his reasons for establishing the army. As seen in Nanjing, Zhang created military institutions to defend China against foreign incursions, and his Hubei reforms were no exception. During the 1897 Hubei reforms Zhang stated, "only by step-by-step progress can our armies become strong and restrain the foreigner's insults and engulfment."⁶³ Therefore Zhang's attitude toward military reform was always tied to the defeat of foreign incursions onto Chinese sovereignty. Zhang's need to defeat western imperialist influence in China resulted in his military reforms but also exposed his wider perspective on the overall state of affairs in China.

⁶¹ Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 190.

⁶² "Tungchou, Chili [Tongzhou, Zhili]," *North China Herald*, May 6, 1904, 964; Zhang Zhidong, "Zhi jing liangbing chu tianjin yuan gongbao (To the Commission for Army Reorganization in Beijing, and Yuan Gongbao [Shikai] in Tianjin)," *ZZDQJ*, XI, 9132.

⁶³ Zhang Zhidong, "Qian tian lian jingbing zhe (Increasing training of crack troops)," *ZZDQJ*, II, 1272.

The governor clearly did not accept the west's argument that it had no wish to dominate China. Instead, Zhang saw imperialist influences gradually creeping further into China and sought to arm the nation to combat it.

Compared with the Hubei Protection Army, the assessment of the Hubei Military Academy was one of mixed results. Chinese assessments, while still mainly indirect, seemed largely positive. However, the western evaluation provided by Captain Gadoffre depicted the governor's officers as the key weakness in Zhang's military institutions, highlighted by the military academy. Yet Gadoffre's views were also heavily tinged by western imperialism. In Gadoffre's own words after watching Chinese maneuvers, Zhang's army had "quite good soldiers commanded by indifferent officers."⁶⁴ In judging the Chinese officers' indifference, Gadoffre did not blame the institution of the military academy itself or the German instructors, but the Chinese cultural background. While not attributing the defect to Zhang, the French Captain blamed the entrance examination and its focus on "Chinese literature" as well as the "Chinese professors [who] have the charge of certain courses not exclusively military."⁶⁵ Gadoffre believed the focus on classical Chinese education to be a detriment to officer education. However, Gadoffre clearly could not understand Zhang's purpose of using classical Chinese education to promote loyalty to the state, a result of his inability to detach himself from the imperialist views.

Gadoffre was not alone in his evaluations of the detrimental influence of Chinese educational conservatism. The *North China Herald's* western correspondents and contributors generally shared and accepted Gadoffre's viewpoint. This can be seen in an 1895 article arguing the "futility of the present system of literary examinations" as the main reason for China's

⁶⁴ Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors, Concluded," 121.

⁶⁵ Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," 121-2.

weakness.⁶⁶ However, the western contributors also took more indirect means of expressing their distaste for Chinese education. Instead of directly attacking the Chinese literary education, reporters who translated or reported on Zhang Zhidong's military reforms misinterpreted or selectively translated its tenets. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the reports of Zhang's entrance requirements to the Hubei military academy omitted Zhang's pursuit of Chinese literary and military degree-holders in the application process.⁶⁷ Similarly, when Zhang reduced the number of applicants, the *North China Herald* attributed the drop due to western training being "too hard" for the Chinese, even though in reality Zhang tightened criteria to only include degree-holders.⁶⁸ By ignoring the real reason the Chinese applicants withdrew their applications, the western reporters effectively dismissed the purpose of Zhang's second proclamation. The result had implications beyond simple western ignorance of the literary education criteria and degree-only restriction of applicants. More significantly, the western readers not only missed Zhang's intent in making these decisions but did not know these decisions were ever necessary in the first place. By obscuring the Chinese justifications, the western newspapers created a more subtle dismissal of Chinese classical education. Instead of arguing outright against perceived Chinese defects, the foreign reports ignored the details of Zhang's military reforms that did not follow the known evolutionary path to western modernity.

Gadoffre's views on the effectiveness of the Hubei Military Academy's German instructors also illustrated imperialism's influence on his assessments, especially when compared to his evaluations of Chinese and Japanese officers. In addition to blaming the inherent nature of

⁶⁶ "The Stirring of China," *North China Herald*, July 26, 1895, 133.

⁶⁷ "Wuchang," *North China Herald*, March 27, 1896, 489; Zhang Zhidong, "Zha wei Wang Bing'en deng chouban wubeixuetang (Appointment of Wang Bing'en to establish the military academy)," *ZZDQJ*, V, 3293.

⁶⁸ "Wuchang," *North China Herald*, December 31, 1896, 1137; Zhang Zhidong, "Xiao yu baokao wubei xuesheng shi (Proclamation of explicit instructions to entering examinations for military academy students)," *ZZDQJ*, VI, 4894.

Chinese education for the officers' deficiencies, the French captain simultaneously praised the "German instructors who founded this school have none the less the great merit of setting on foot an institution that works well."⁶⁹ Gadoffre assumed the Chinese students were to blame for their own deficiencies, even though the German instructors had an equal if not greater responsibility for the quality of education the academy provided. In attributing fault to the Chinese, Gadoffre justified the west as the beneficial force of imperialism attempting to teach the indifferent Chinese cadets. Gadoffre's positive evaluations of German instructors especially contrasted with his negative assessment of the non-commissioned officer school established later and instructed by the Japanese. In the assessment of the non-European school Gadoffre found fault in the instructors and students, both showing "all the symptoms of a failure."⁷⁰ While Gadoffre assessed both military institutions as providing an unsatisfactory product, it was only the western instructors who garnered his praise. The difference in the French captain's assessment of both the Japanese instructors and the Chinese students represented the powerful influence of western imperialism on thought. Even a keen observer like Gadoffre, who readily perceived the imperial intentions in other westerners, was unable to escape western-centric assumptions within the environment of imperialism.

The Chinese appraisal of the military academy was more positive than the west's assessment. In December of 1897, Zhang reported the "students are progressing well.... We are pleased; this [education] can transform them into talented officers for the army."⁷¹ This evaluation showed Zhang's overall satisfaction with the first year of military academy operations. Just as with the Hubei Protection Army, the imperial decrees that followed the Boxer

⁶⁹ Gadoffre, "Chinese Troops and Their Instructors," 123.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁷¹ Zhang Zhidong, "Zha wubei xuetang zhong jiaoxi Falegenhan hui xuetang jiao xi (Military academy's commandant Falegenhan returns to the academy to instruct)," *ZZDQJ*, V, 3545.

Rebellion showed the imperial Chinese assessment of Zhang's military education reforms. As mentioned above, the court ordered Zhang's Hubei Military Academy officers to Tianjin to serve under Yuan Shikai.⁷² This transfer depicted the importance and direct impact of the officers Zhang trained. Another significant sign of the prestige of Zhang's Hubei Military Academy appeared in 1903, when Zhang responded to Yuan's request for advice in building his own military academy.⁷³ Established in 1904, historians often credited the famous Baoding Military Academy as the first modern Chinese military academy and also the origin of the post-Qing warlords. In the greater scheme of Qing politics, these transfers emerged from Yuan Shikai's attempts to consolidate military power in the early years of the twentieth century. The 1901 transfer of Zhang's former Self-Strengthening Army and the 1904 Hubei officer transfer to Yuan demonstrated the latter's appetite for control of the new western-style armies in China.

Contextualizing *Quan Xue Pian* in military reform

While Zhang was busy establishing the Hubei Protection Army and Hubei Military Academy, he also published his most famous work, *Quan Xue Pian* (Exhortation to Study). In early 1898, Zhang's treatise on reform was sent to the throne and then distributed to high provincial officials.⁷⁴ As discussed above, historians such as John K. Fairbank have often interpreted the *ti-yong* formula as a representation of Chinese conservatism because it promoted

⁷² Zhang Zhidong, "Zhi jing liangbing chu tianjin yuan gongbao (To the Commission for Army Reorganization in Beijing, and Yuan Gongbao [Shikai] in Tianjin)," *ZZDQJ*, XI, 9132.

⁷³ Zhang Zhidong, "Zhi tianjin yuan gongbao (To Yuan Gongbao [Shikai] in Tianjin)," *ZZDQJ*, XI, 9016-9018.

⁷⁴ Ssu-yu Teng and John K. Fairbank, *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey 1839-1923* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954. Reprint, New York: Atheneum, 1967), 164. Also note that there is some discussion on whether Zhang drafted *Quan Xue Pian* or just sponsored it with his name (See Li, *Zhang Zhidong yu xinzheng yanjiu*, 53, n2). For my purposes, it does not matter whether Zhang actually wrote the work himself as he sponsored it, placed his name on the document and supported the ideas contained within.

a “fallacy of halfway westernization.”⁷⁵ Yet as we have seen throughout Zhang’s career as a military reformer, this interpretation of the *ti-yong* dichotomy did not accurately represent his programs of reform. Zhang’s promotion of Chinese foundational education paralleled Chatterjee’s “spiritual” essence in the context of Indian nationalism.⁷⁶ Thus, in pursuing the practical usages of western-style militaries with foundations in Chinese education, Zhang formulated a Chinese nation that preserved its essence while pursuing the “material” forms of the west. This integrated form of national strength started with military reform projects that were required to regain national sovereignty against the incursions of foreign imperialism. Within this context, *Quan Xue Pian* seemed less a work about moderating reform and more a guideline on how to achieve true national sovereignty in China.

Zhang’s argument in *Quan Xue Pian*, that centralization of political power is the first step in obtaining national sovereignty, represented an extension of ideas the governor first expressed in his military reforms. First, the governor recognized “nowadays China is indeed neither impressive nor powerful.” To rectify this situation, Zhang proposed that China should not look to democracy, but instead to the “spiritual power of the court toward uniting the strength of the entire country.”⁷⁷ Simply put, Zhang stated that to gain the sovereignty of the entire nation, China must rely first on the central government. Zhang also acknowledged that strengthening China required the pursuit of western knowledge. But for Zhang the pursuit of western knowledge must only follow after Chinese knowledge has already been established. He reasoned that classical Chinese education was needed to reinforce the purposes of the Chinese nation and prevent those who acquire western strength from becoming either useless to the empire or even

⁷⁵ Fairbank, *China: A New History*, 217.

⁷⁶ Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 6.

⁷⁷ Teng and Fairbank, *China’s Response to the West*, 167-168.

worse – “rebellious leaders.”⁷⁸ These assertions linked closely with Zhang’s principles in military reform as early as Liangguang. In emphasizing classical Chinese education in his military leaders, Zhang wanted to ensure that the western-style militaries he created served the nation. The strong emphasis that Zhang once again placed on the *ti-yong* formation of officer education starting in 1896 in Huguang further contextualized *Quan Xue Pian* with his military reforms. In fact, in the tenth chapter Zhang’s treatise, he specifically listed his ideas on military reform. Unsurprisingly, the governor promoted the ideas of western-style armies and military academies founded upon classical Chinese education.⁷⁹ The military reform chapter thus appeared to be a compilation of Zhang’s military reform ideas dating as far back as Liangguang, just as the earlier chapters reflected Zhang’s notions of anti-imperialism and nationalism. Even though *Quan Xue Pian* reflected many of Zhang’s ideas formulated earlier, some segments of his military reforms were becoming increasingly difficult to support as the diplomatic environment in China changed in 1898.

The Qingdao incident placed Zhang’s reliance on the Germans in disfavor with the court and populace at large. When two German missionaries died in Shandong Province, the Germans responded by occupying the city of Qingdao through the concession treaty of 6 March 1898.⁸⁰ The Germans proceeded to establish their colony on Qing territory and thus entered an increasingly dominating relationship with the Chinese. Substantial growth of German imperialism in China may have explained why the Newly Created Army that Yuan Shikai helped

⁷⁸ Teng and Fairbank, *China’s Response to the West*, 169.

⁷⁹ Zhang Zhidong, *Quan Xue Pian* (Taipei Xian Yonghe Zhen: Wenhai chubanshe, 1967), 147-149. Zhang Zhidong’s chapter ten covers his military reform program. He continued to promote the need to rely upon Chinese classics and history while adopting western methods, emphasizing the western-style organization of infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineers. Furthermore, he continued to espouse the military academy as the institution needed to cultivate military talent. Note that Samuel Woodbridge’s translation of chapter ten in *China’s Only Hope* is a completely different document than that of Zhang’s in the Taiwan reprint cited here. See Zhang Zhidong, *China’s Only Hope: An Appeal*, trans. Samuel I. Woodbridge (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900).

⁸⁰ Pong, *Encyclopedia of Modern China*, III, 146.

organize followed closer to the Japanese model than the German model Zhang had promoted. The shift in Yuan's military model altered China's road to military modernization as Yuan's stature and influence increased after 1900. Another impact of the German Qingdao concession was the resultant frantic effort of other European powers to acquire their own concessions in China, dubbed historically as the "Scramble for Concessions." The increasing foreign presence, in conjunction with famine, spurred a strong sense of popular anti-imperialism in China.⁸¹ Thus, in the winter of 1898 the initial disturbances of the Boxer Uprising began and eventually resulted in the last military defeat of Qing China by the western powers.

⁸¹ Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 207-208, 216.

Conclusion

From Liangguang to Huguang, Zhang Zhidong pursued consistent military reform processes to secure the nation against foreign incursion. At the same time, Zhang's increasing knowledge of military affairs and regional distinctions shaped the specific techniques he applied. Following the Sino-French War of 1884, Zhang's Liangguang tenure was the first iteration of his comprehensive military reform program. This program integrated the Chinese essence within the institutions of the western-style army and military academy. However, Zhang learned from this early experience that effective military capability also required arsenals to create uniform weaponry and railroads to support mobilization. Thus as the throne ordered Zhang Zhidong's 1889 transfer to Hubei, he first set the foundations for future military institutions by creating the Hubei Arsenal and laying the groundwork for the Beijing-Hankou railway. Even though Zhang did not initially establish western-style armies or academies in Hubei, his chance to create new military institutions emerged with the onset of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894.

After Zhang's 1894 transfer to Liangjiang, he exploited this more prosperous region to create the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army, the Nanjing Military Academy, and Nanjing Railroad Academy. Increased funding in Nanjing also allowed Zhang to experiment with methods such as hiring more German officers while also increasing pay for the army. Zhang carried the tools he acquired in his Nanjing experience with him as he returned to Huguang in 1896. This tour served as the culmination of his ideas on military reform, knowledge, and experience. In Hubei, he continued the higher pay to attract better soldiers but had to extend the training timeline, disband traditional soldiers, and reduce the number of German officers in order to reduce costs. However, Zhang mitigated the effects of the reduction by employing the Chinese Guangdong and Tianjin Military Academy graduates to train both his Hubei Protection Army and teach at the Hubei Military Academy. In the Hubei reforms, Zhang adopted from

Nanjing what he believed was financially feasible in the less affluent region of Hubei. The new military academy and western-style army ultimately matched if not surpassed the results of his earlier reforms. In fact, at the turn of the century before Yuan Shikai's Zhili governorship and military reforms began, Zhang's military institutions were quite possibly the best in all China.

Boxer Rebellion and Aftermath

The Boxer Rebellion prompted the throne to begin to centralize reform initiatives in general and military reforms in particular. Failure of the Chinese imperial forces to stand against the Allied Expedition, the resulting punitive expeditions, and the reduction of Qing sovereignty in the Boxer Protocol finally spurred the court to pursue centralized military reforms.

Unfortunately, as the Qing started throne-driven military reforms, the new Boxer Indemnities combined with the Sino-Japanese War indemnities burdened the Qing with an estimated payments of 45,000,000 taels every year.¹ Comparing this figure with the approximate annual revenue of 102,924,000 taels at the end of the nineteenth century,² the war indemnities themselves amounted to almost forty-four percent. Just as Zhang Zhidong's limited finances in Huguang affected the techniques of reform, the war indemnities similarly affected the Qing dynasty's centralized military modernization program.

At the time of the Boxer Rebellion, Zhang Zhidong was the foremost military modernizer with continuous service at the governor-general level, as Yuan Shikai had not yet been appointed to his first governor-generalship. Thus, when the Qing court began reforms as early as 1901,³ Zhang Zhidong appeared at the forefront of military reform in China. This fact was soon to change. As Yuan Shikai reached the highest levels of regional authority as the governor-general

¹ Morse, *The Trade and Administration of China*, 327.

² *Ibid.*, 129.

³ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 242-243.

of Zhili in 1902, he not only inherited Li Hongzhang's military institutions but also was closer—in both proximity and personal relations—to the throne than Zhang Zhidong.⁴ As such, when the *Lianbing chu* (Commission for Army Reorganization) was institutionally established in 1903, Yuan served as its assistant director and his voice was now playing a principal role in China's military reforms.⁵ Zhang Zhidong, on the other hand, was not officially a part of the central state military organization. As a result, the influence of Yuan Shikai's input on military affairs began to gain more traction at court than that of Zhang Zhidong. Thus as imperial mandates were issued from the Commission for Army Reorganization, the orders gradually reflected less of Zhang's ideas and philosophies toward military reform. As these mandates emerged from the new department, Zhang obeyed and reorganized his armies and military academies in accordance with the prescribed measures. His obedience to the throne while commanding one of the finest fighting forces in China was a testament to Zhang's dedication to the nation, challenging the conventional historical narrative of late-Qing provincial autonomy and the rise of personal armies.

The mandates issued by the Commission for Army Reorganization did take into account some of Zhang Zhidong's reform programs but also differed in several ways. Some of the reasoning could be attributed the Boxer Indemnity, as the Commission for Army Reorganization searched for methods to create military capabilities without extraordinary expenses. One of the results was the larger reliance on the Japanese military model Yuan favored over Zhang's

⁴ Yuan's relationship with the Empress Dowager Cixi started with his support of her in the 1898 coup against the Guangxu emperor and was represented "by the honors which the Empress-Dowager bestowed upon him" including official positions and privileges in 1899 not usually given to an official of his rank. Furthermore, as Yuan had "proved his personal loyalty to the Empress-Dowager, Yuan enjoyed her confidence and gratitude...he remained a favorite of the Empress Dowager." Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 98, 123, 138-9. Frederick Wakeman also highlighted Yuan's political ties to the Empress Dowager Cixi in Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 231.

⁵ Wou, "Financing the New Army: Yuan Shih-k'ai [Shikai] and the Peiyang [Beiyang] Army," 347 and Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 167.

preferred German model.⁶ Using the Japanese to train the Chinese army provided first and foremost a financial savings, as the geographical proximity lowered logistical costs and Japanese officers were cheaper to hire than the Europeans. The shared lineage of Asian culture also had the advantage of making the Japanese instruction seem slightly less foreign for the Chinese soldiers.⁷ When the throne decided upon models for both army organization and officer education, they significantly relied upon the Japanese military organization.⁸ As should be no surprise, Zhang's faithfulness to the throne resulted in his adoption of these central methods, though they did not strictly follow his own recommendations.

As the throne began to centrally plan military reforms after the Boxer Rebellion, Zhang had to transform his military institutions to comply with the new imperial models. From 1903-1904, Zhang Zhidong transformed his Hubei Protection Army into the Regular Army in accordance with the new guidelines from the center.⁹ Zhang also reorganized his Hubei Military Academy to the three-tiered system proposed by the commission. To comply with the central mandates, the governor transformed his Hubei Military Academy into the Advanced Military Academy in 1904 and established a variety of intermediate and elementary military schools.¹⁰ Zhang's willingness to accept and faithfully execute the central reform programs also showed that building Chinese national strength was the all-important objective of his military reforms. When the throne began its march toward military modernization, the national priority overrode

⁶ Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 173.

⁷ Bruce A. Elleman, *Modern Chinese Warfare, 1795-1989* (London: Routledge, 2001), 139.

⁸ As Li Xizhu pointed out in his work, not only did the Commission for Army Reorganization hire Japanese instructors and enforce the three-tiered school system the Japanese used, but also expanded study abroad programs of Chinese officers in Japan. Li, *Zhang Zhidong yu xinzheng yanjiu*, 224, 228, 236.

⁹ See Zhang Zhidong, "Ni bian Hubei chang beijun zhi zhe (Drafting of the Hubei Regular Army regulations)," *ZZDQJ*, III, 1617-1624 and Zhang Zhidong, "Hui zou zunzhi xunlian ge sheng jiangmu niding jianyi zhangcheng zhe (Memorial obeying the emperor's decree to train each province's officers with recommended draft regulations)," *ZZDQJ*, III, 1538-1542; Ralph Powell also noted Zhang's willingness to comply with central directives in Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 220.

¹⁰ Li, *Zhang Zhidong yu xinzheng yanjiu*, 231-233.

Zhang's personal attachments to any of the methods he devised. Simply put, Zhang did not bicker over how China reformed the military, just as long as China continued along the path towards military modernization and the recovery of full national sovereignty. However, Zhang's acceptance of the centrally-driven military reforms also meant the new Huguang military institutions began to lose the characteristics with which Zhang had imbued his reforms over the last two decades.

Gaps and Further Research

In the course of this research there were gaps in both sources and analysis deserving of future attention. The first of these is the imbalance of source material to historical analysis during the Huguang period after 1896. Chinese and English primary sources were numerous during this period, but the English-language histories often minimize or ignore Zhang's military reform efforts. Similarly the limited amount of source material for the Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army and Nanjing Military Academy received a disproportionately large amount of historical attention.¹¹ Several possibilities could explain the discrepancy. First, as I have argued, Zhang Zhidong's willingness to submit to the imperially mandated reforms after the Boxer Rebellion diluted his contributions into the centralized military reforms of the Qing dynasty. Historians tended to focus upon the centrally driven Post-Boxer reforms and thus ignore Zhang's Zhidong's 1896-1901 reforms as largely extraneous. Second, the post-Boxer reforms also coincided with the rise of Yuan Shikai as a dominant political figure whose

¹¹ This point can be seen in a quick survey of the historical writings of this period. Of the historical accounts only Li and Powell presents Zhang Zhidong's military reforms in Hubei and Nanjing as equally important—Powell is the only western author to do so. In contrast, Wakeman depicted Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army with no mention of Hubei's forces, while Ayers disproportionately depicted Zhang's Nanjing Self-Strengthening Army over the Hubei Protection Army. As mentioned in the introduction, many of the other authors such as Spence and Fairbank give little to no mention of Zhang Zhidong's role in military reform at all.

influence expanded beyond the Qing dynasty's collapse. Yuan's increased stature and his continuity into the republic period also made him a more fitting target in studies of the dynastic collapse and transition into the republic period. As a way to avoid the overlap of Zhang's career into these two major changes of China's political landscape, historians have therefore over-emphasized Zhang Zhidong's military reforms in the earlier Nanjing period—despite the fact that Zhang's military reforms expanded for another decade after Nanjing. Lastly, the overall trend of the Chinese historical narrative from 1895-1911 also influenced the military reform analysis.

Many historians have marked the Chinese loss of the Sino-Japanese War of 1895 as a turning point in Chinese history. In this historical account, the Chinese defeat invalidated the Self-Strengthening movement and set the course toward the collapse of the Qing Empire. The teleological narrative leading from the Sino-Japanese War to the known 1911 collapse obscured any progress reformers such as Zhang Zhidong made in the intervening period. Furthermore, Zhang's national purview and loyalty to the throne did not fit into the conventional analysis of provincial autonomy undermining the Chinese center. Instead, historians have focused upon power-hungry figures like Yuan Shikai as representative of Chinese officialdom, even though Yuan's own career path was non-traditional.¹² Men like Yuan better fit into the narrative of growing regional power and Qing collapse. Similarly, by ignoring Zhang Zhidong's Hubei military reforms, historians conceal Zhang's very effective and expanding military apparatus because it did not align with the teleological narrative leading to the 1911 Qing collapse.

Another area for additional research is Zhang Zhidong's career as the Liangjiang governor. Whereas Zhang's time at Hubei and Nanjing received either contemporary or

¹² Yuan Shikai's career was non-traditional as it consisted predominantly of military assignments. Furthermore, Yuan was also a purchased degree holder, and as such did not undergo the traditional Confucian inculcation and examinations.

historical attention respectively, the governor's time at Guangdong received neither. Instead, the Guangdong Victorious Army and Guangdong Military Academy appeared to have attracted little interest from the west. On the Chinese side, Zhang Zhidong himself wrote the only two pieces of documentation on these military institutions. The most likely explanation is the short-lived nature of Zhang's Liangguang reforms, as after his departure in 1889, the following governor-general actively worked to dismantle his efforts.¹³ The lack of sources likely affected the current historical analysis, or lack thereof, of the Liangguang period. Yet we also saw the important effects of the Liangguang periods, as Zhang continued to utilize both the precedence of the Guangdong Military Academy as well as its graduates throughout his later military institutions. More research into these early reforms can also provide additional details into Zhang Zhidong's conception of reforms in his first governor-generalship, and perhaps more fully explain the effects of the early reforms on the remainder of his career. Thus the importance of this understudied period leaves much room for future work, especially in little-used Chinese primary sources.

In the same vein as the Liangguang research, a more comprehensive study into Zhang's Zhidong earlier career could also change the way we view the governor's reforms. For instance, while Zhang's governor-generalship career began in Liangguang, he served as a provincial governor in Shanxi from 1882-1884. Even though a governor's authority differed than that of a governor-general, one suspects that Zhang already started some smaller efforts at provincial military reform in Shanxi. A cursory look at Zhang's Shanxi tenure shows the attention he gave to the increasing military tensions with France in 1882 and the creation of schools and iron

¹³ Ayers, *Chang Chih-tung and Educational Reform in China*, 113.

works in Shanxi that may relate to his later reforms.¹⁴ Another path of study would be analyzing how and whether Zhang's time as a provincial director of education starting in 1867 and Hanlin academician starting in 1877 affected his thoughts on military reform. While these early assignments were in the educational and intellectual realm, they were likely formative experiences in Zhang's developing worldview. Further research along this line could show an earlier start to Zhang Zhidong's reforms and thus further contend with the impact-response paradigm used in Chinese history. While this study argued that Zhang Zhidong pursued national strength through military reform continually throughout his career, it does not fully refute the possibility that Zhang's reforms were partially a response to western driven events. In fact, during the period studied, Zhang's military reforms followed closely the military defeats in both Liangguang and Liangjiang. The only exception to this trend is the Huguang period. Therefore, although Zhang pursued national strength throughout periods of war and peace, the preponderance of evidence during the period studied nonetheless suggested the governor's military reforms were driven by his response to the west. However, if Zhang's ideas concerning military reforms could be traced back to Shanxi or earlier, then a stronger argument against the impact-response paradigm of Chinese history could be made.

Another important aspect warranting additional research was what was left out of Zhang's military reforms. One of the institutions Zhang neglected was the general staff, which Yuan Shikai pioneered in China. Starting in 1902 with his assignment as governor of Zhili, Yuan established the Department of Military Administration to provide the higher level military

¹⁴ Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 28. Furthermore, the Chinese language historiography provides more detail regarding Zhang's Shanxi tenure, including Li Xizhu's short overview in *Zhang Zhidong yu xinzheng yanjiu*, 43-45. A Chinese language work focusing more exclusively on Zhang's Shanxi tenure is Chen Cungong's article, which details the Zhang's military demobilization in Shanxi as well as gunpowder manufacturing. See Chen Cungong, "Zhang Zhidong zai Shanxi" (Zhang Zhidong at Shanxi), *Shanxi wen xian* no. 7 (1990): 24-25.

planning, preparation, and training for his soldiers.¹⁵ While Zhang Zhidong trained armies, he did not appear to take it upon himself to organize the higher level command structures in accordance with the western models. Another area Zhang largely ignored in his military institutions was logistical reforms. As seen in his consistent promotion of the railways, Zhang understood the importance of supply and transportation for mobilization and lines of support. Yet the governor curiously never organized a logistics branch to his new armies. In his Hubei Protection Army, Zhang continued to use traditional-style Chinese camp followers to provide the necessary supplies.¹⁶ The lack of technical logistics expertise may not have been readily apparent to Zhang, as extensive sustainment problems would only have emerged in extended campaigns—a task in which his troops never took part. In the end, while Zhang Zhidong’s military reforms created effective western-style armies, it only did so on a tactical level. The operational functions of logistics and higher-level force management did not appear to be a focus of Zhang’s programs.

Historical Impact of Zhang Zhidong’s Reforms

Zhang Zhidong’s military reform efforts from 1884-1901 progressed upon consistent principles. The impact of Zhang Zhidong’s military reforms extended beyond the armies and military academies. Zhang’s influence even stretched beyond Yuan Shikai’s own military power, from which much appeared to have been consolidated from Zhang’s western-style forces and officers. More difficult to discern was whether Zhang met his objectives of creating an effective combat force for China. Part of this is due to the difficulty of piercing the western-

¹⁵ Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 141.

¹⁶ Zhang Zhidong, “Sheli hujun ying, gongchengdui lianxi yangcao bing caiying di xiang zhe (Establishing Protection Battalion, Engineer Squad practicing in Western drill by dismissing former battalions for pay),” *ZZDQJ*, II, 1175-1176.

centric perspectives which were prevalent in western evaluations. While westerners were in the best position to see how closely Zhang's western-style armies came to their own experiences, the imperialist relationships they participated in also limited their visibility on broader Chinese aims. Both contemporary western historians and historical observers have difficulty penetrating Zhang's intent of creating not just a western-style army, but a western-style army imbued with the essence of loyalty to the Chinese nation. Inability of westerners to distinguish the difference resulted in the ideological dismissal of any elements of Chinese education in Zhang's military academies or armies. Further complicating the analysis was the Hubei army's role in bringing about the fall of the Qing Dynasty. Though Zhang no longer exercised authority in Hubei after his 1907 assignment to Minister of Education until his death on 4 October 1909,¹⁷ Hubei's western-style armies continued to act upon Chinese history.

One of the most direct impacts of Zhang's military apparatus was its participation in the Chinese Revolution. Two years after Zhang's death, his former armies were in fact the first direct participants in revolution when they mutinied against the new Huguang governor on 10 October 1911.¹⁸ Though the western-style army's quick capture of the Hubei Arsenal and elimination of Manchu Banner forces in the city demonstrated their military competence, the rebellion also revealed the limited reach of Zhang's military reforms. As we have seen, Zhang tried to imbue his military, especially officers, with classical Chinese education promoting loyalty to the throne. Yet the Wuhan Uprising in 1911 showed Zhang's new army institutions were one of the first to break with Chinese state authority. The lack of loyalty naturally leads to questions of how well Zhang's *ti-yong* focus on officer education actually worked. How much of officer loyalty was based upon Zhang's own stature and personal enforcement, and how much

¹⁷ Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 31.

¹⁸ Wakeman, *The Fall of Imperial China*, 249.

of it grew from the institutional systems established? What other factors after the change of authority in 1907 influenced the decision of Zhang's former army to teeter towards revolution? The fact that Zhang's same army and institutions in 1907 rebelled against the Qing in 1911, imply possible relationships between the governor's and revolution. Therefore just as Zhang's early career would illuminate the origins of his military reforms, further research into the post-Zhang period of the Hubei Army would depict the reach and longevity of Zhang's influence. Aside from the immediate impacts of the Wuhan uprising, Zhang's military reforms also help us better understand the wider arcs of Chinese history.

The narrative of a weakening Qing state after the Sino-Japanese War and Boxer Rebellion is prominent in Chinese history. Yet as Allen Fung showed, the land campaigns in the Sino-Japanese War were more closely matched than presented by the conventional history.¹⁹ My study adds to Fung's assessment by showing Zhang Zhidong, in fact, further strengthened Chinese military capability, arguably more effectively than Li Hongzhang's forces who participated in the Sino-Japanese War. Qing military reforms undertaken by the Commission for Army Reorganization and the establishment of the national army organization improved Chinese military capability even more from a national level.²⁰ While limitations and shortfalls undoubtedly existed for all of these new institutions, they nonetheless demonstrated a rapid modernization of the Chinese military. However after the Boxer Rebellion, none of the Chinese forces had the opportunity to prove their effectiveness by engaging western militaries. A possibility does exist for a study of the Qing's successful 1910-1911 campaign in Tibet²¹ that could provide limited combat assessments of the western-style armies' efficacy. It would also be enlightening to see if any of the Qing forces levied in the Tibet campaign involved either

¹⁹ Fung, "Testing the Self-Strengthening," 1029.

²⁰ Powell, *The Rise of Chinese Military Power*, 242.

²¹ Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 243.

Huguang forces or Yuan's Beiyang Army. Unfortunately, neither Zhang's forces nor the new Qing armies had an opportunity to demonstrate their progress through combat with the west.

The study of Zhang Zhidong's military reforms changes the way we view late-Qing history. First, by successfully creating western-style armies in the late-Qing, Zhang's military reforms challenged the conventional historical narrative of an inevitably weakening Chinese state. Instead of a gradual inevitable decline into collapse that stripped Chinese reformers of agency, the military reforms showed an ever-increasing expertise in the Chinese military. Second, the way Zhang Zhidong faithfully implemented reforms also contended with the idea that the late-Qing Chinese center was unable to elicit loyalty from its provincial officials. Zhang Zhidong's personal loyalty to the throne and his attempts to imbue military academies with the same sought to strengthen the center of power in China. In questioning the historical narrative of weakening Qing state power and increasing regionalism, the door opens to more complex analysis of imperial China's last years. For if the Qing dynasty had already strengthened its military and continued to elicit support from its officials, what were the ultimate reasons for its collapse? In answering this question, Zhang Zhidong's own career in military reform helps reduce the force of conventional narratives, and in its place, create space for the study of new ones where the Chinese once again exercise agency in their own history.

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ZZDQJ. See Zhang Zhidong. *Zhang Zhidong quanji*.

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Character List

The following list represents the Chinese words used in this study, excluding bibliographic citations. In accordance with Chinese history style conventions, proper nouns and words used with great frequency were not italicized within the text. The characters below are provided alphabetically in pinyin and simplified Chinese.

Anhui 安徽	<i>jinshi</i> 进士
E hu jun 鄂护军	<i>juren</i> 举人
Fuzhou 福州	Li Hongzhang 李鸿章
Guangdong 广东	Lianbing chu 练兵处
Guang sheng jun 广胜军	Liangguang 两广
Guangdong shui lu shi xuetang 广东水陆师学堂	Liangjiang 两江
Guangxi 广西	Liu Kunyi 刘坤一
Guangzhou 广州	Nanjing 南京
Hankou 汉口	Nanjing lujun xuetang 南京陆军学堂
Hanyang 汉阳	Nanjing Ziqiang jun 南京自强军
Huaijun 淮军	Qing 清
Hubei 湖北 (E 鄂)	<i>Quan Xue Pian</i> 劝学篇
Hubei Wubei xuetang 湖北武备学堂	Shanxi 山西
Huguang 湖广	Shen Dunhe 沈敦和
Hunan 湖南	<i>shengyuan</i> 生员
Jiangnan 江南	Taiping 太平
Jiangsu 江苏	<i>tidu</i> 提督
Jiangxi 江西	Wang Bing'en 王秉恩
	Weihaiwei 威海卫

wu 武

Wuchang 武昌

Wuhan 武汉

Xiangjun 湘军

yi gu zhongxue zhi gen di 以固中学之根底

Yichang 宜昌

yongying 勇营

Yuan Shikai 袁世凯

Zeng Guofan 曾国藩

Zhang Zhidong 张之洞

Zhili 直隶

zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong 中学为体,
西学为用 (*ti-yong* 体用)

Ziqiang jun 自强军

Zongli yamen 总理衙门