The Northern Sung Dynasty (960 - 1127) was one of the weakest feudal monarchies in medieval China. The main cause for such weakness was the decay in its internal politics, of which military superfluity was one of the most important factors.

The military superfluity in the Northern Sung Dynasty was formed after Chen Tsung (陳誨). However, since the policies of "Strengthen the central government and weaken the local branch" and "Internal protection and external defence" were introduced by Emperor Tai Tsu, its armed forces had tended to become superfluous. Emperor Tai Tsu, by introducing these new policies, had virtually changed the nature of the armed forces from the purpose of defence to internal security and lowered the fighting strength of the armed forces. The subsequent emperors, most of them vacillating and coward, had complied closely to or even overstricted the same policies, thus causing the military superfluity to appear.

First of all, the military systems implemented by the Northern Sung Dynasty were unsound. The entire armed forces was deployed in such a way that half of the number were deployed along the border and the other half were concentrated in the capital region. The former was called Frontier Forces (邊防), while the latter was Imperial Forces (禁旅). The rationale behind such deployment was that the two groups would restrain each other and that no one could have the full power to endanger the safety of the dynasty. The army was then doubled to serve this purpose.

Moreover, in order to prevent the retired soldier from causing trouble in the society, the military service in Sung dynasty was made under life term. Old and weak soldiers were forced to stay on even though they were of no use to the national defence.

The recruitment of soldiers was also not based on the actual need of the defence. In the military recruitment campaign, more emphasis was put on quantity rather than on quality. They even went to the extent of establishing the rewarding and penal system to push forward the recruitment activity. As a result, bad elements of the society and refugees from the areas of drought and other natural calamities were recruited.

The above-mentioned military systems which were constituted in the interest of Sung dynasty, were the internal factors for the creation of military superfluity.
The military incapability of the dynasty also appeared in the way of handling barbarian invasions. Owing to their vacillating nature, the Northern Sung Dynasty adopted a compromised diplomacy. As a result of lacking intensive military training in the army, the ruling dynasty could only succumbed to the more powerful enemies such as the greedy Liao (遼) and the Western Hsia (西夏). Large sums of revenues were used in exchange for peace as they were unable to cope with the enemies. As preparation for war had to be made, the Northern Sung Dynasty had to carry out mass recruitment of people into the army. Thus, the superfluity were immediately created under the stipulation of these circumstances.

The military superfluity was formed in Chen Tsung (陳宗) and flourished in Jen Tsung (欽宗). This continued almost one hundred years and struck heavily on the defence and economy of the nation. In order to tackle this problem, some emperors such as Chen Tsung (陳宗), Jen Tsung (欽宗) and Sheng Tsung (神宗), carried out several military retrenchment campaigns and military reformations. But because of the severity of the problem and the vacillating nature of their policies, Sung dynasty failed to reduce the number of soldiers which was at one time reached the peak of 1,200,000. It seems that leaving it in accordance with its natural developing tendency was the only way out. Till Hui Tsung (徽宗) and Chin Tsung (欽宗) periods, military discipline was deteriorated by Tong Kuan (童貫) and some new military problems were created. It was apparent that the military superfluity corresponded with the decline of the Northern Sung Dynasty to the very end.

In conclusion, the military superfluity was created out of the inefficient military system and the failure of the imperial government to tackle the problem of barbarian invasion. The failure to solve these problems was basically due to the incapability of the ruling dynasty.

In reviewing the developing history of the military superfluity of the Northern Sung Dynasty, we learn that:

1. the problem arised out of the selfishness of the ruling dynasty,
2. the problem worsened as a result of the attitude of cursory and relaxation obtained by the ruling dynasty, and
3. the problem persisted when the ruling dynasty appeared inert and conservative to remedy the situation.

In short, the decrepit nature of the Northern Sung Dynasty was the fatal factor that brought the country to various disasters.