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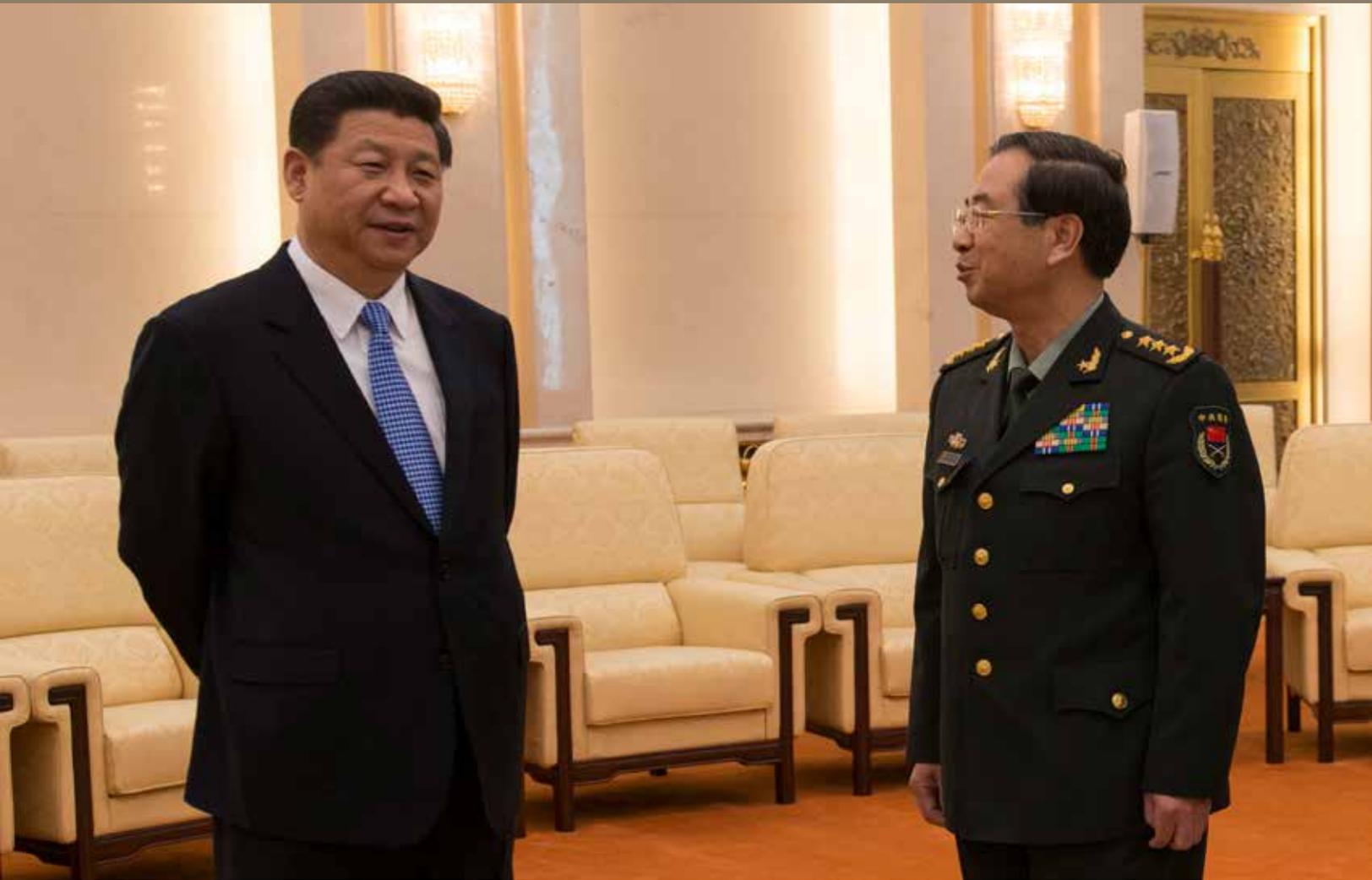


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CHINA STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES 10

Chinese Military Reforms in the Age of Xi Jinping: Drivers, Challenges, and Implications

by Joel Wuthnow and Phillip C. Saunders



Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs
Institute for National Strategic Studies
National Defense University

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Cover photo: President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping and Chinese General Fang Fenghui, Chief of the General Staff, before meeting General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in Beijing, April 23, 2013 (DOD/D. Myles Cullen)

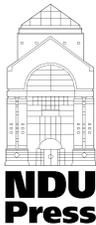
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*Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs
Institute for National Strategic Studies
China Strategic Perspectives, No. 10*

Series Editor: Phillip C. Saunders



National Defense University Press
Washington, D.C.
March 2017

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First printing, March 2017

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Executive Summary

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has embarked on its most wide-ranging and ambitious restructuring since 1949, including major changes to most of its key organizations.

- The general departments were disbanded, new Central Military Commission (CMC) departments created, and a new ground force headquarters established.
- Seven military regions were restructured into five theater commands aligned against regional threats. Commanders will be able to develop joint force packages from army, navy, air force, and conventional missile units within their theaters.
- PLA service headquarters are transitioning to an exclusive focus on “organize, train, and equip” missions and will no longer have a primary role in conducting operations. However, the PLA is still figuring out how the new relationships among the CMC, services, and theaters will work in practice.
- The restructuring will also reduce the size of the PLA by 300,000 soldiers, cutting the ground forces and increasing the size of the navy and air force.

The restructuring reflects the desire to strengthen PLA joint operations capabilities—on land, at sea, in the air, and in the space and cyber domains.

- The centerpiece of the reforms is a new joint command and control structure with nodes at the CMC and theater levels that will coordinate China's responses to regional crises and conduct preparations for wartime operations.
- A Strategic Support Force has been established to provide command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance support to commanders and will oversee space, cyber, and electronic warfare activities. A Joint Logistics Support Force will provide logistics support to units within the theaters.
- The creation of a joint command system complements other recent changes supporting joint operations—including joint training, logistics, and doctrinal development.

The reforms could result in a more adept joint warfighting force, though the PLA will continue to face a number of key hurdles to effective joint operations.

- If the reforms are successful, the PLA could field a joint force more capable of undertaking operations along the contingency spectrum, including high-end operations against the U.S. military, allied forces in the Western Pacific, and Taiwan.
- Key obstacles include continued ground force dominance, interservice rivalry at a time of slowing budget growth, and lack of combat experience for most PLA personnel.
- Several years of joint exercises and training will be needed for PLA officers and units to gain experience in operating under the new system. This could impede China's ability to conduct major combat operations during this period.

Several potential actions would indicate that the PLA is overcoming obstacles to a stronger joint operations capability.

- Useful indicators of progress would include more joint assignments going to non-ground force officers, expansion and deepening of joint training, and evidence that the theater commands are exercising operational control over air, naval, and conventional rocket forces.
- Additional reforms to the officer assignment and military education systems will be announced in 2017, and will play a critical role in cultivating the military leaders necessary to conduct effective joint operations in a restructured PLA.

The reforms are also intended to increase Chairman Xi Jinping's control over the PLA and to reinvigorate Chinese Communist Party (CCP) organs within the military.

- The reforms emphasize Xi's role in making all major decisions, reversing the delegation of authority to the two vice chairmen under Hu Jintao. However, Xi will still have to rely on trusted agents within the PLA to supply military advice and execute decisions.

- The restructuring strengthens supervision of the military by giving auditing, discipline inspection, and military legal mechanisms more independence and having them report directly to the CMC.
- Xi is also trying to increase ideological control by emphasizing the importance of political work and the military's "absolute obedience" to the Party.

Xi Jinping's ability to push through the reforms indicates that he has more authority over the PLA than his recent predecessors.

- Xi has been able to wield sticks and carrots to break the logjam of institutional and personal interests that stymied previous reform efforts.
- The ultimate effectiveness of efforts to strengthen CCP control will depend on Xi's ability to devote sufficient attention to supervising the military and on the loyalty of the officers who will implement the control mechanisms.
- If Xi's leadership falters or if a slowing Chinese economy can no longer provide resources for military modernization, PLA leaders may grow dissatisfied with Xi's efforts to strengthen CCP control over military affairs and to emphasize political ideology.

The restructuring could create new opportunities for U.S.-China military contacts.

- The PLA now has closer counterpart positions for some senior U.S. billets, such as Chief of Staff of the Army. This could provide an opportunity for more productive exchanges.
- The creation of a new joint command system and the role of the theater commanders in directing operations will require adjustments to existing confidence-building and communications measures to ensure that U.S. and Chinese forces can communicate effectively during a crisis.

Introduction

Chinese military modernization has made impressive strides in the past decade.¹ The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has achieved progress in key technological areas, ranging from precision-guided missiles to advanced surface ships and combat aircraft; PLA personnel are more highly trained and skilled, capable of carrying out increasingly complex operations near to and farther away from China's shores; and Chinese military doctrine and strategy have been updated to emphasize modern, joint maneuver warfare on a high-tech battlefield.² This progress has been supported by significant increases in Chinese defense spending every year since 1990.³ Taken together, these changes better enable the PLA to fight what the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) describes as "short-duration, high-intensity regional conflicts."⁴

Yet, as the title of a 2015 RAND report suggests, PLA modernization has been "incomplete."⁵ Among the major weaknesses outlined in that report was the PLA's antiquated organizational structure, which had experienced few major changes since the 1950s. Key problems included the lack of a permanent joint command and control (C2) structure, inadequate central supervision—which bred corruption, lowered morale, and inhibited the development of a professional force—and institutional barriers in the defense research and development (R&D) process.⁶ Prior military reforms made only limited and incremental adjustments to the PLA's structure; more comprehensive reform efforts stalled in the face of bureaucratic resistance.

In late 2015 and early 2016, the PLA sought to correct these problems by enacting a series of major structural reforms. These changes, part of a broader set of national defense reforms being pursued under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, represent the most ambitious, wide-reaching, and important restructuring of the PLA since 1949. Key changes include:

- The four semi-autonomous general departments (responsible for operations, political work, logistics, and armaments/equipment) were disbanded and replaced by 15 functional departments, commissions, and offices within the Central Military Commission (CMC).
- Separate national- and theater-level ground force headquarters were established for the first time. Previously, the general departments served primarily as PLA army headquarters and only secondarily as a joint headquarters, while the seven military regions (MRs) were overwhelmingly focused on ground force affairs.

- The MRs themselves were replaced by five theater commands (TCs), which are responsible for leading joint operations in their respective regions.
- Both a Strategic Support Force (SSF)—responsible for consolidating operations in the information domain, including space, cyber, and electronic warfare—and a Joint Logistics Support Force (JLSF) were created.
- The responsibilities of key PLA components were adjusted so that TCs would concentrate on combat preparations and the service headquarters, which had previously led peacetime operations, would focus on what in the U.S. military are called “organize, train, and equip” missions.

These reforms raise a number of key questions. What has changed in substance, what has changed only superficially, and what has remained the same? How have the functions of different organizations, and the relationships between them, evolved? Why did the PLA choose to adopt these reforms, and why now? What do the reforms mean for China’s neighbors and for the United States? How might the changes affect the PLA’s operational effectiveness, and what obstacles stand in the way?

This study assesses the contents, drivers, and implications of the PLA’s restructuring. It draws on a large volume of Chinese open sources—both authoritative, such as speeches by senior leaders and reports in centrally controlled state media outlets—and non-authoritative, including op-eds and essays by leading PLA analysts. The study also benefits from conversations with senior Chinese military and civilian interlocutors between 2013 and 2016, and from several initial studies on the reforms by researchers outside China.⁷ Although some aspects of the new structure remain unclear, the available data allow for a relatively detailed examination of the reforms and an initial assessment of what they could mean for China, its neighbors, and the United States.

The study is divided into five main sections. The first section reviews the scope of the changes, discussing how the PLA’s organizational chart has changed in the wake of the reforms. The second analyzes the drivers of reform, highlighting three factors: improving the ability of the Chinese military to conduct joint operations, increasing Chinese Communist Party (CCP) supervision of the PLA, and spurring technological innovation and civil-military cooperation. The third section assesses Xi’s political strategy for overcoming resistance to the reforms within the PLA. The fourth section considers the implications of the reforms. The main finding is

that the PLA could be better positioned to conduct a range of operations in multiple domains, though several obstacles will likely continue to pose problems. The fifth discusses the next stages of the reforms and identifies avenues for additional research. The appendices provide further details on leadership changes associated with the reforms, and offer sketches of each of the 15 new CMC departments.

A New PLA Organization

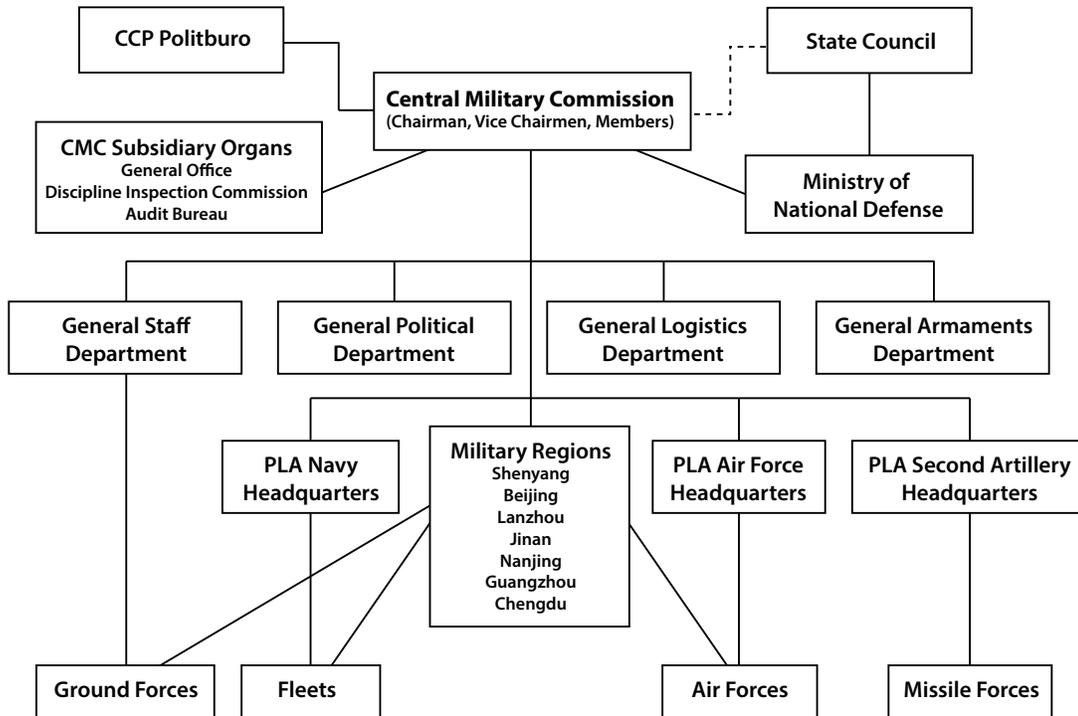
The PLA restructuring resulted in a new organizational chart and redefined authority relations between major components. In some cases, the changes were relatively superficial. For instance, the shift from the Second Artillery Force (SAF) to the Rocket Force appears to have been primarily a change in name only.⁸ In other cases, the reforms were more substantial, as in the balkanization of the former General Staff Department (GSD, also known as the General Staff Headquarters) and the creation of the Strategic Support Force. This section describes the PLA's preexisting organizational structure, reviews the major changes, and concludes with thoughts on how closely the PLA now resembles the U.S. military system.

Background

The PLA's pre-reform structure (depicted in figure 1) was a legacy of the Chinese military's pre- and early post-revolutionary history. Politically, the PLA possessed Leninist features designed to preserve CCP control over military decisionmaking and operations. This system stretched back to the PLA's earliest days and was solidified at the Gutian Party conference in December 1929, which enshrined the principle that the "Party controls the gun." The CMC was established as an arm of the CCP Central Committee and is typically chaired by the Party general-secretary.⁹ Other Leninist features included a dual command system in which unit commanders shared responsibility with political commissars (PCs); Party committees or branches down to the company level that decided matters as diverse as operations, officer selection, expenditures, and personnel management; and discipline inspection commissions that ensured compliance with Party rules and regulations.¹⁰ Most PLA officers (and some enlisted personnel) joined the Party, and loyalty to the CCP and participation in its affairs were a key basis for advancement.

Operationally, the PLA's organization coalesced around a Soviet model in the late 1940s and early 1950s.¹¹ Reflecting the Chinese armed forces' involvement in the Korean conflict from 1950 to 1953 and the influence of Soviet advisors, the structure was geared toward low-tech ground force combat missions. The general departments—which included the GSD, General Political Department (GPD), General Logistics Department (GLD), and General Armament

Figure 1. PLA Structure Prior to Reforms



Department (GAD)—were led by army officers and collectively supervised the ground forces. The MRs were likewise ground force–centric organizations that trained and equipped army units and managed provincial-level military districts. The navy and air force were only nominally integrated into the MR structure and were in practice controlled by service headquarters in Beijing. The SAF, established in 1966 to manage the country’s nuclear and conventional missiles, was thought by outside analysts to have reported directly to the CMC.¹² This structure suited the PLA in Cold War–era operations, such as the 1962 border conflict with India and the 1979 Sino-Vietnam war, which primarily involved the ground forces.

Since the early 1990s, PLA reformers argued for comprehensive changes to the military’s structure. There were two basic reasons. First was the trend of modern warfare toward joint operations, most notably in the maritime and aerospace domains. This required the PLA to rebalance itself from the army to the navy and air force and to institute a joint C2 structure that could integrate the capabilities of all the services as well as command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) assets. The need to conduct effective joint operations in multiple domains only increased as China faced growing security

challenges along its periphery, especially those posed by the Taiwan independence movement; land and maritime territorial disputes with countries such as India, Vietnam, and the Philippines; and potential instability in North Korea. The specter of U.S. military intervention in a regional conflict also required the PLA to adapt to be able to fight wars against a high-end adversary.¹³ Second, the general departments and MRs had amassed too much power and were too poorly supervised, leading to growing financial waste and corruption throughout the force.¹⁴ This, in turn, raised serious concerns about PLA morale, combat readiness, and proficiency. These core problems were accompanied by other structural weaknesses, including a defense R&D system that did not adequately utilize advances in civilian science and technology (S&T).¹⁵

To address these problems, the PLA embarked on a series of institutional reforms during the CMC chairmanships of Jiang Zemin (1989–2004) and Hu Jintao (2004–2012). Important changes included:

- reducing the PLA's size by 500,000 (in 1997) and 200,000 (in 2003)
- establishing a professional noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps (in 1998)
- increasing resources to the navy, air force, and SAF
- making force structure changes at the tactical and operational levels
- restructuring the research, development, and acquisition process
- reducing the number of PLA academic institutions
- establishing a reserve officer training program in civilian universities.¹⁶

However, more fundamental changes to the PLA's C2 and administrative structure eluded reformers. As then-Chief of the General Staff Fu Quanyou observed in 1998, such changes would “inevitably involve the immediate interests of numerous units and individual officers.” He also noted that reformers would have to address “selfish departmentalism” across the PLA.¹⁷ Resistance to change was likely strongest among the potential losers of reform, including the ground forces and general departments. The relative weakness of Jiang and Hu within the military made bureaucratic opposition even harder to overcome.¹⁸

In this context, Xi Jinping launched a renewed effort to revamp the PLA's structure shortly after becoming CMC chairman in November 2012 (after having served for 2 years as a CMC vice chairman under Hu). The outlines of a reform program took shape at the Third Plenum of the 18th Party Congress in November 2013. At this session, the Central Committee decided to pursue a variety of reforms to the PLA's institutions, processes, and systems, including "optimizing" the PLA's leadership system and making progress toward a joint C2 structure.¹⁹ The Third Plenum not only identified key areas of military reform but also sent a powerful message that fundamental organizational changes to the PLA were an important part of China's overall national reforms, and were widely supported by the top CCP leadership. In January 2014, the CMC established a leading small group dedicated to military reform, with Xi as its chairman.²⁰ This group led the process of identifying key weaknesses and developing a blueprint for a new organizational structure.

Meanwhile, Xi and his supporters carried out an effort within the PLA to create favorable political conditions for the pending reforms. This included an anti-corruption campaign focused on both junior and senior officers.²¹ Most prominent were the investigations into former CMC vice chairmen Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong, who were both expelled from the Party and detained, as well as the highly publicized investigation into former GLD deputy director Gu Junshan, whose alleged malfeasance resulted in a suspended death sentence.²² This effort put the military on notice that bureaucratic intransigence would not be tolerated as the reforms got under way. The PLA also carried out a propaganda campaign aimed at generating support for the reforms among rank-and-file personnel. For instance, an August 2014 circular encouraged all servicemembers to "resolutely support reform, actively reinforce reforms, and consciously dedicate themselves to reforms."²³

The first specific announcement tied to the reforms was made at a military parade in Beijing in September 2015, when Xi stated that the PLA's size would be reduced by 300,000 by the end of 2017, bringing total personnel down from 2.3 to 2 million.²⁴ This was followed by the CMC's adoption of a detailed reform plan at a meeting held in November 2015.²⁵ This decision was formalized in a document approved by the CMC and issued on January 1, 2016, titled *Opinions on Deepening Reforms on National Defense and Armed Forces*. This document provided a comprehensive and authoritative blueprint of the overall military reform program.²⁶ It clarified that the major structural reforms (discussed below) would be only the first stage in a 5-year process of reform. Later reforms would address deficiencies in force structure and force composition, the professional military education (PME) system, the military legal system, and other areas. The official completion date for the current reforms is 2020. This coincides with the

end of the 13th 5-year armed forces development plan, which calls for the PLA to emerge as a “first-rate” military power by the end of 2020.²⁷

Major Structural Changes

In contrast to previous reforms, this restructuring involves more comprehensive changes that affect all three major PLA organizational pillars—general departments, MRs, and services. The reforms not only resulted in a significantly revised organizational chart (shown in figure 2) but also redefined the authority relationships between major components. These changes are detailed in the following sections.

Central Military Commission Reforms. While the CMC itself was left intact, the reforms produced a new bureaucratic structure under the CMC’s direct supervision (depicted in figure 3). In particular, on January 11, 2016, Xi announced that the general departments had been disbanded and replaced by 15 functional departments, commissions, and offices under the auspices of the CMC.²⁸ The distinction between these three types of organization is not entirely clear, but it appears that departments carry out operational and supervisory functions for the whole

Figure 2. PLA Structure after Reforms

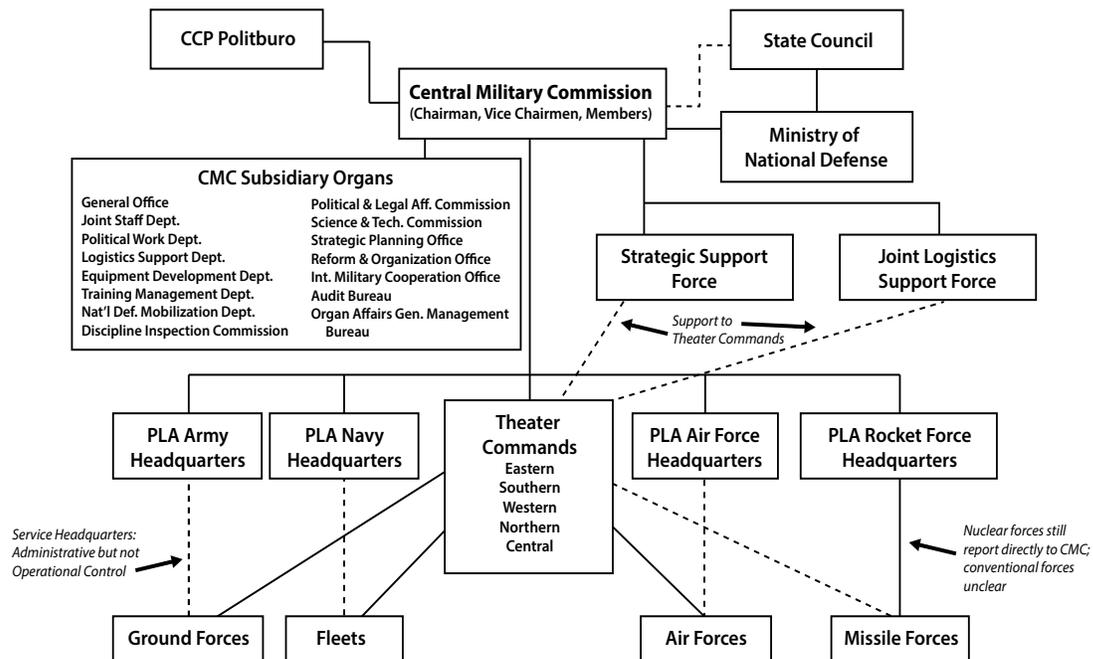
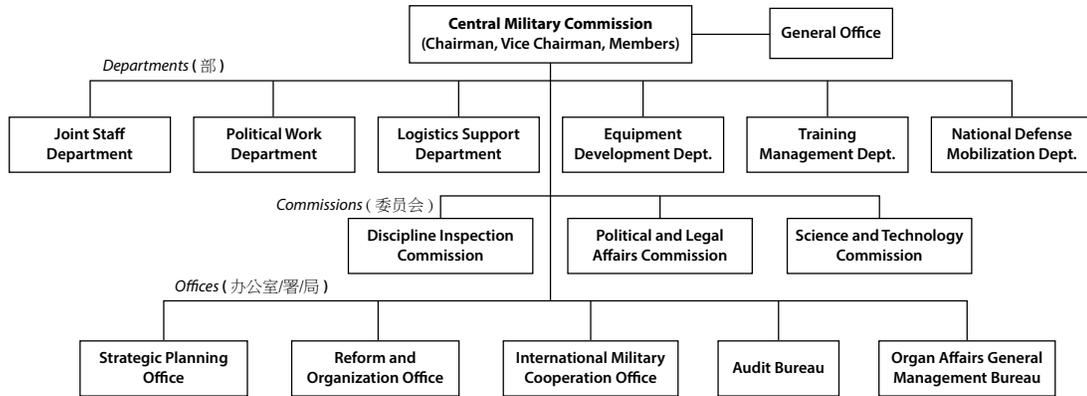


Figure 3. New CMC Organizations



PLA, similar to the former general departments; commissions provide high-level oversight on select issues; and offices perform planning, managerial, and other specialized tasks. The grades of these organizations also vary, with departments and commissions generally higher than offices. Appendix 2 contains more detailed sketches of all 15 organizations.

Surveying the impact of the reforms on the former general departments, it is clear that the most significant changes were made to the former GSD. Its sub-departments responsible for operations and, likely, intelligence analysis (2PLA) were assigned to a new CMC Joint Staff Department (JSD) led by former GSD director Fang Fenghui. However, other GSD sub-departments did not migrate to the JSD and instead became full-fledged departments under the CMC. In particular, the GSD training, mobilization, and strategic planning departments became the Training Management Department, National Defense Mobilization Department, and Strategic Planning Office, respectively.²⁹ Still other functions previously performed by the GSD were assigned to the services: army aviation and other army-related functions (such as the Army Command College) were placed in the new army headquarters, while signals intelligence (3PLA) and electronic warfare (4PLA) likely moved to the new SSF and possibly merged into a single entity.³⁰ Table 1 identifies the confirmed or likely destinations of the former GSD sub-departments.

The organizational impact on the other former general departments was less significant, with the core components of the GPD, GLD, and GAD moving into the formal CMC organization as the Political Work, Logistics Support, and Equipment Development departments, respectively. The directors and PCs of these departments remained the same, and there is no indication that their bureaucratic grades were reduced. However, several notable changes did occur:

Table 1. Destination of Former GSD Sub-Departments

GSD Sub-department	Function	Destination
Operations	Command and control	CMC Joint Staff Department
Intelligence (2PLA)	Intelligence collection, analysis	CMC Joint Staff Department (likely)
Technical (3PLA)	Signals intelligence, cyber operations	SSF (likely)
Informatization (5PLA)	C4ISR systems	SSF (likely)
Strategic Planning	Long-range analysis	CMC Strategic Planning Office
Army Aviation	Army aviation	Army HQ
Military Training	Training, professional military education	CMC Training Management Department
ECM & Radar (4PLA)	Electronic warfare	SSF (likely)
Mobilization	Reserve force, militia, ground force enlisted recruitment	CMC National Defense Mobilization Department; Ground Force recruitment likely moved to Army HQ
Military Affairs	Organizational planning, welfare, enlisted personnel management	CMC Reform and Organization Office, CMC Political Work Department (possible)
Management Support	Logistics support	CMC Organ Affairs General Management Bureau (likely)

Sources: Mark A. Stokes and Ian Easton, “The Chinese People’s Liberation Army General Staff Department: Evolving Organizations and Missions,” in *The PLA as Organization v2.0*, ed. Kevin Pollpeter and Kenneth W. Allen (Vienna, VA: Defense Group, Inc., 2015), 135–160; “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle,” *China Military Online*, January 12, 2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-01/12/content_6854444.htm>.

- The GPD’s oversight of military justice moved to a new CMC Political and Legal Affairs Commission, which will handle military courts and criminal investigations. It also appears to have assumed the GPD’s responsibilities for military counterintelligence.³¹
- The GPD’s role in enforcing discipline among Party members in the PLA transitioned to an expanded CMC Discipline Inspection Commission. This commission will play a key role in the PLA’s ongoing anti-corruption campaign, much as the Central Discipline Inspection Commission (led by Wang Qishan) has helped execute the anti-corruption campaign on the civilian side.

- A number of military academies, such as the GLD's Logistics College and the GAD's Armament College, were transferred to the new CMC Training Management Department.³²
- Some elements of the GLD, such as the former Wuhan Rear Base, were transferred to the JLSF while others (such as the GLD's Finance, Capital Construction, and Hygiene Departments) were moved to the new Logistics Support Department.
- The GAD's Science and Technology Commission was placed under direct CMC oversight.³³ The commission will promote civil-military cooperation in defense R&D and strengthen high-level guidance for the research, development, test, and evaluation system (RDT&E).
- The GAD's responsibilities for repair and maintenance appear not to have been assumed by the Equipment Development Department but instead transferred to the services.³⁴
- A new CMC Organ Affairs General Management Bureau consolidated management support functions of the four general departments (for example, facilities).³⁵
- Some staff from the general departments moved to the new army headquarters to manage ground force political, logistics, and equipment matters.³⁶

Of the 15 CMC departments, the CMC General Office occupies a position of unique importance. This office is listed first in protocol order, ahead of even the successors of the former general departments.³⁷ In the past, the General Office mainly supervised the flow of information to and from CMC members and performed other duties, such as policy research.³⁸ PLA interviewees contend that the General Office will not only continue to carry out these functions on behalf of the CMC but also take on added responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the reforms and ensuring that Xi's (and the CMC's) directives are followed across the expanded CMC bureaucracy.³⁹ Critical to this effort will be the General Office director (currently Lieutenant General Qin Shengxiang), a key confidante and advisor of Xi and the other CMC members.⁴⁰

Service Reforms. Key service-level reforms included establishing national- and theater-level ground force headquarters, renaming the SAF as the PLA Rocket Force and elevating it to full service status, and creating the SSF and the JLSF. These are discussed in turn.⁴¹

Establishing Separate Headquarters for the Army. At the national level, the PLA established an “army leading organ” (陆军领导机关) or headquarters in Beijing. As a result, the ground forces now have their own headquarters on par with the other services, while the JSD and other general department successors were divested of their ground force responsibilities. This meant that some personnel previously assigned to the general departments (such as the Armored Bureau of the former GSD Military Training Department) likely moved to the new army headquarters. Lieutenant General Li Zuocheng, a veteran of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War who most recently served as Chengdu MR commander, was selected as army commander.⁴² Lieutenant General Liu Lei, who was previously the Lanzhou MR PC, became the army PC.

Regionally, the PLA also established separate army headquarters within each of the TCs.⁴³ Like the CMC departments, the TCs will also become “joint” organizations staffed, in principle, by personnel drawn from all the services (roughly analogous to what are called “purple-hatted officers” in the U.S. military). Like its navy, air force, and rocket force counterparts, the theater ground force headquarters will conduct training, maintain combat readiness, and make units available to joint commanders as needed. Theater ground force commanders (identified in table 2) are generally senior officers from the preceding MR.

Renaming and Elevating the Second Artillery Force into a Full Military Service. The SAF was renamed as the PLA Rocket Force (解放军火箭军) and its status was formally elevated from an independent branch of the army (兵种) to a full-fledged service (军种) alongside the army, navy, and air force. SAF commander General Wei Fenghe and PC Lieutenant General Wang Jiasheng retained their positions in the Rocket Force, as did most other senior SAF leaders.⁴⁴

Renaming the SAF and issuing new uniforms and patches was one of the more superficial aspects of the reform. Moving from a branch to a service did not affect the Rocket Force’s grade, which remains at the same level as the other services, and the Rocket Force commander continues to be an ex officio CMC member. Moreover, Xi used the same three-part formula to describe the Rocket Force’s duties as he did when addressing the SAF in 2012, stating that the force is the “core strength of China’s strategic deterrence, the strategic support for the country’s status as a major power, and an important cornerstone safeguarding national security.”⁴⁵ This implied that the Rocket Force would serve essentially the same function as the SAF. Similarly, a PLA spokesman emphasized that the country’s no-first-use nuclear pledge remained intact.⁴⁶ However, a key change is that Rocket Force conventional units will have closer relations with the theater commands; this is discussed in the next section.

Table 2. Army Leadership in Theater Commands

Theater Command	Army Commander	Previous Position
Eastern	LTG Qin Weijiang	Deputy Commander, Nanjing MR
Southern	MG Liu Xiaowu	Chief of Staff, Guangzhou MR
Western	MG He Weidong	Shanghai Garrison Commander
Northern	MG Li Qiaoming	Commander, 41 st Group Army (Guangzhou MR)
Central	MG Shi Luze	Chief of Staff, Beijing MR

Sources: “Army Adjustment and Establishment Completed in Five Theater Commands,” *China Military Online*, February 4, 2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-02/04/content_6890499.htm>; “Southern Theater Command Army Commander, PC Announced, Two Major Generals with Masters Degrees Take the Lead” [南部战区陆军军政主官揭晓 两硕士少将领衔], *Caixin* [财新], February 5, 2016, available at <<http://china.caixin.com/2016-02-05/100907605.html>>; Zhao Lei, “Beijing Garrison Gets a New Commander,” *China Daily*, August 18, 2016, available at <http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-08/18/content_26522904.htm>; “MG Li Qiaoming Becomes Northern Theater Command Ground Force Commander” [李桥铭少将任北部战区陆军司令员], *Caixin* [财新], February 10, 2016, available at <<http://china.caixin.com/2016-02-10/100908458.html>>; “Shi Luze and Wu Shezhou Become Commander, PC of Central Theater Command” [史鲁泽吴社洲任中部战区陆军军政主官], *Caixin* [财新], February 4, 2016, available at <<http://china.caixin.com/2016-02-04/100907394.html>>.

Creating the Strategic Support Force. The PLA also established a new SSF (解放军战略支援部队). Authoritative Chinese sources are consistently vague about the purpose of this organization. Xi stated only that this is a “new type of operational force,” which is a “major growth point of our military’s new-quality combat capability.”⁴⁷ Whether the SSF should be described as a “service” or as some other type of entity is the subject of debate in foreign analysis and Chinese media.⁴⁸ The SSF’s first commander is Lieutenant General Gao Jin, a career SAF officer who most recently served as president of the PLA Academy of Military Science (AMS), where he oversaw the development of joint doctrine, including the publication of the 2013 *Science of Strategy* (战略学), which considers the implications of technological change on the operational arts.⁴⁹ The PC is General Liu Fulian, former PC of the Beijing MR.

Non-authoritative Chinese media reports suggest that the focus of the SSF will be on supporting information operations and providing C4ISR support.⁵⁰ A *People’s Daily* report noted that the force would provide an “information umbrella” for joint forces.⁵¹ Senior Colonel Shao Yongling of the PLA Rocket Force Command College portrayed the SSF as a valuable “force multiplier.”⁵² Retired Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo similarly argued that the SSF will not be a “standalone

force,” but will instead operate in conjunction with the other services.⁵³ He added that the SSF will carry out such tasks as early warning, managing space satellites (including the Beidou navigation satellites), and provide defense in the electromagnetic and cyber domains.⁵⁴ These claims were echoed by PLA interlocutors during discussions in 2016, who also noted that the SSF would play a key role in communications.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, much will remain in the realm of speculation until details on this organization are provided in authoritative sources.

Creating the Joint Logistics Support Force. In September 2016, the PLA announced the creation of another quasi-service called the Joint Logistics Support Force. The origins of this organization lie in the 1990s era reforms to the PLA’s logistics system, which aimed to reduce redundancies by consolidating logistics from the services into joint organizations. This effort included experimentation, notably in the Jinan MR, with theater-based joint logistics departments. Other changes included budgetary and procurement reforms and professionalization of logistics personnel. Nevertheless, the PLA continued to face a number of weaknesses in the logistics sector, including rampant corruption, standardization challenges, lack of sufficient information systems to promote rapid and efficient logistics support, and inadequate synergies between the military logistics system and the civilian economy.⁵⁶

To overcome these challenges, Xi Jinping stated that the JLSF should serve as the “main force” in “strategic battle support missions” and urged it to better integrate logistics support into joint operations.⁵⁷ It will do this by overseeing provision of general purpose supplies to joint commanders at the theater level, although service-specific logistics supplies will continue to be handled within the services. Organizationally, the JLSF is headquartered at the former GLD Wuhan Logistics Base and has subordinate Joint Logistics Support Centers in each of the five new theater commands. These organizations appear to have replaced the previous MR joint logistics departments. Nevertheless, a number of key uncertainties about this organization remain. Key questions include the relationship between the JLSF and CMC Logistics Support Department, and the relationship between the JLSF, theater commands, and service components.

Theater Reforms

At the theater level, the seven MRs (depicted in figure 4) were replaced by five TCs (战区).⁵⁸ Listed in protocol order, these are the Eastern, Southern, Western, Northern, and Central TCs. This change reflected the culmination of a longstanding goal of PLA reformers to gradually transition from an MR system, which was primarily focused on administering the ground forces, to a TC system that would emphasize joint operations.⁵⁹ Indeed, at least as early as 1998, Chinese military strategists had discussed plans to consolidate the MRs into more regionally

focused theater commands (sometimes referred to as “war zones.”)⁶⁰ Chinese sources describe the TCs as the highest joint headquarters within their respective regions, with a primary responsibility for “maintaining peace, deterring wars, and winning battles.”⁶¹ Senior Colonel Wang Xiaohui of the PLA National Defense University (NDU) explains that the TCs will be mainly concerned with conducting joint training during peacetime and will exercise command of theater-based combat forces during wartime.⁶²

According to Chinese sources, the TCs are aligned against specific threats within their respective region or “strategic direction” (战略方向). The Eastern TC, which replaced the Nanjing MR, is focused on the Taiwan Strait and East China Sea. The Southern TC, which succeeded the Guangzhou MR with the apparent additions of the southwestern Yunnan and Guizhou provinces, will take responsibility for the South China Sea. Southern TC commander General Wang Jiaocheng states that his command will “resolutely” defend China’s maritime rights and interests in the region.⁶³ The Northern TC replaced the Shenyang MR with the addition of parts of Inner Mongolia, and is focused on the Korean Peninsula. The Western TC, largely a merger of the Lanzhou and Chengdu MRs, will handle challenges emanating from Central Asia, such as

Figure 4. MR System Boundaries



Source: *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2016), 2.

cross-border terrorism, and safeguard the Sino-Indian border. The Central TC will defend the capital and might provide support to other TCs as needed.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, the geographic boundaries of the new TC system remain somewhat ambiguous. The most authoritative map released as of mid-2016 appeared on the official Web site of *PLA Daily*, but has been disputed by other Chinese media reports.⁶⁵ For instance, there was initially some uncertainty about whether units on the Shandong Peninsula (including the North Sea Fleet) would be allocated to the Central or Northern TC, but it was later clarified to be the latter.⁶⁶ The map also incorrectly showed Yunnan Province as belonging to the Western TC when it in fact belongs to the Southern TC. One important development is that the PLA will no longer maintain regional headquarters in Lanzhou and Jinan, although these two cities will serve as the headquarters for the Western and Northern TC ground forces, respectively. Figure 5, drawn from DOD's 2016 annual report on China, depicts the approximate TC boundaries.

Within the theaters, army, air force, and (where applicable) naval service component commands report through two chains of command. Operationally, they are under the direction of the TC commanders. Administratively, they report to their respective service headquarters in Beijing. The service components in turn exercise operational and administrative control over operational units (group armies, squadrons, naval detachments, and so forth). As with the previous MR system, service component commanders are dual-hatted as TC deputy commanders. The Rocket Force maintains missile bases in each of the TCs, but these have not been identified as having a subordinate relationship with the TC headquarters, and missile base commanders have not been dual-hatted as TC deputy commanders. Geographically, only air force headquarters are located in the same cities as the TC headquarters, while army and naval headquarters are located elsewhere. Those locations are provided in table 3.

Despite these changes, the leadership of the TCs remains largely dominated by ground force officers. All five current TC commanders (identified in table 4) are army officers—four of them were previous MR commanders who have rotated to new theaters, while a fifth previously served as Beijing MR deputy commander. However, the appointment of North Sea Fleet commander Yuan Yubai as the new Southern TC commander in January 2017 constitutes an important breakthrough for jointness.⁶⁷ Four of the five TC PCs are army officers, while one (Lieutenant General Zhu Fuxi of the Western TC) is currently an air force officer who spent most of his career in the army. Four of the five PCs served as PC of the preceding MR, adding a level of consistency in the context of the rotation of TC commanders. Nevertheless, it is also notable that the TCs are becoming more joint at the deputy commander level. In the pre-reform system, air force and navy officers held only 10 of the 32 MR deputy commander positions, the

Figure 5. Approximate TC Boundaries

Source: *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2016), 2.

minimum possible given air force and navy responsibility for commanding seven MR air forces and three fleets.⁶⁸ Officers from those services currently occupy 16 of 31 deputy commander positions in the five theaters.⁶⁹ TCs remain MR leader-grade organizations, on par with the service headquarters and several CMC departments.⁷⁰

Reforming Lines of Authority

In addition to adjusting the PLA's organizational composition, the restructuring altered the authority relationships between the military's main components. The key development was a formula adopted at the November 2015 CMC reform work meeting that the CMC would provide "general management," the theater commands would focus on operations, and the services would manage force building (军委管总、战区主战、军种主建).⁷¹ This implied a division of authority into two separate chains of command (depicted in figure 6)—an administrative chain, in which authority flows from the CMC to the services to the troops, and an operational chain flowing from the CMC to the TCs to the troops.⁷² In short, service chiefs would focus on organizing, training, and equipping personnel, while the TCs would concentrate on joint training and operations.⁷³

Table 3. Service Components Within the TCs

	Eastern TC	Southern TC	Western TC	Northern TC	Central TC
TC HQ	Nanjing	Guangzhou	Chengdu	Shenyang	Beijing
Army HQ	Fuzhou	Nanning	Lanzhou	Jinan	Shijiazhuang
Group Armies	1 st , 12 th , 31 st	14 th , 41 st , 42 nd	13 th , 21 st , 47 th	16 th , 26 th , 39 th , 40 th	20 th , 27 th , 38 th , 54 th , 65 th
Navy HQ	Ningbo	Zhanjiang	None	Qingdao	None
Navy Fleets	East Sea Fleet	South Sea Fleet	None	North Sea Fleet	None
Air Force HQ	Nanjing	Guangzhou	Chengdu	Shenyang	Beijing
Air Forces	Eastern TC AF (formerly Nanjing Military Region Air Force, MRAF)	Southern TC AF (formerly Guangzhou MRAF)	Western TC AF (merged from Chengdu and Lanzhou MRAFs)	Northern TC AF (formerly Shenyang MRAFs)	Central TC AF (merged from Beijing and Jinan MRAFs)

Sources: “Xi Jinping Presents Flags to Five Theater Commands” [习近平向五大战区授予军旗], *Jinghua Shibao* [京华时报], February 2, 2016, available at <http://epaper.jinghua.cn/html/2016-02/02/content_278482.htm>; “Deployment of 18 Group Armies Completed, What Will the Five Theater Commands Do?” [18个集团军部署完成, 五大战区都在做什么?], *Nanfang Zhoumo* [南方周末], April 17, 2016, available at <http://military.china.com/important/11132797/20160419/22465989_all.html>; Web sites of the five TCs are located at the following addresses: 1) <<http://db.81.cn>>; 2) <<http://nb.81.cn>>; 3) <<http://xb.81.cn>>; 4) <<http://bb.81.cn>>; and 5) <<http://zb.81.cn>>.

In practice, however, there are questions about how exactly this system will function. One issue is whether the service headquarters will retain some degree of operational authority through their operations departments (作战部门). For instance, PLA interviewees contend that routine, single-service operations would continue to be managed by the services rather than by TC commanders.⁷⁴ For instance, it was reported in April 2016 that navy commander Wu Shengli had directed the evacuation of sick Chinese workers from Fiery Cross Reef in the South China Sea, suggesting that the navy headquarters retained at least a limited operational role.⁷⁵ When, and even if, that role will fully transition to the new joint headquarters is unclear. Another issue concerns authority over out-of-area operations, given that TCs only cover terri-

Table 4. TC Leadership

TC	Commander	Previous Position	PC	Previous Position
Eastern	LTG Liu Yuejun	CDR, Lanzhou MR	LTG Zheng Weiping	PC, Nanjing MR
Southern	GEN Wang Jiaocheng	CDR, Shenyang MR	GEN Wei Liang	PC, Guangzhou MR
Western	LTG Zhao Zongqi	CDR, Jinan MR	LTG Zhu Fuxi	PC, Chengdu MR
Northern	LTG Song Puxuan	CDR, Beijing MR	GEN Chu Yimin	PC, Shenyang MR
Central	LTG Han Weiguo	DCDR, Beijing MR	GEN Yin Fanglong	Deputy Director, GPD

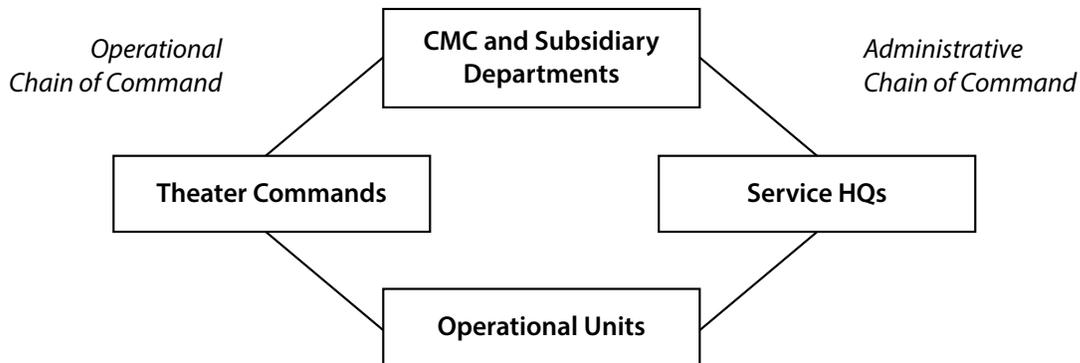
tory within China. As discussed in the next section, the JSD, rather than TCs, will likely take the lead on operations far from China’s borders, such as in the Middle East or the Arctic.

A related development concerns the management of the provincial-level military districts, which in turn supervise reserve, militia, and some active duty forces. Supervision of the military districts was previously handled by the MRs, but under the reforms has shifted to the new CMC National Defense Mobilization Department. An exception concerns the Tibet and Xinjiang military districts, as well as the Beijing Garrison, which will be managed instead by the PLA army headquarters. The deputy director of the Tibet military district political work department described this change as an “elevation of authority” for his command that symbolized the operational focus of PLA forces in the Tibetan Autonomous Region.⁷⁶ This arrangement was also needed because those three organizations have a higher bureaucratic grade than the National Defense Mobilization Department, and thus could not report to it.⁷⁷

Toward an American-Style Structure?

Overall, the reforms suggest that the PLA is moving toward a command structure more closely resembling the U.S. military. In particular, PLA restructuring has drawn comparisons to the U.S. military’s reforms as part of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.⁷⁸ This act resulted in a joint C2 structure for the U.S. military in which authority flows from the President and Secretary of Defense to the commanders of the regional unified combatant commands (CCMDs), who lead forces within their respective theaters.⁷⁹ Service chiefs were given an advisory role, with responsibilities to “organize, train, and equip”

Figure 6. Bifurcation of Authority



troops. This bifurcation of authority appears similar to the evolving PLA distinction between operational and administrative chains of command. Indeed, Chinese analysts have explicitly cited the U.S. C2 system as a useful example worth considering.⁸⁰

Yet PLA reformers drew inspiration from not only the U.S. system but also the examples of several advanced foreign militaries. Former PLA Academy of Military Sciences president Liu Chengjun observed that the services had been removed from the operational chain of command and joint command systems established in both the U.S. and Russian systems.⁸¹ Indeed, a volume published by AMS highlights the structural reforms of the U.S., Russian, Japanese, Indian, British, French, and German armed forces. The book makes clear that joint C2 systems, greater use of C4ISR assets, joint logistics systems, and other developments have been pursued by all of these states, suggesting that it is the changing nature of modern warfighting in general, and not the specific experience of any single country, that informed some of the key themes of the PLA reform.⁸² Senior Colonel Wang Xiaohui of the PLA NDU argues that any model that results in quick C2 and effective force management can be one for China to emulate.⁸³

Given this wide-reaching examination of foreign militaries, it is not surprising that certain aspects of the PLA restructuring more closely resemble non-U.S. systems than they do the U.S. structure post-Goldwater-Nichols. For instance, the TC system is less similar to the U.S. CC-MDs, which span the globe, than to the Russian military district system as it evolved after 2008, which is focused mainly on responding to challenges in Russia's near abroad.⁸⁴ As discussed in the next section, the TCs are likewise aligned against regional threats just beyond China's borders. The new JSD, which will supervise out-of-area operations from Beijing, also lacks a clear cognate in the American system. Instead, this organization more clearly resembles the British

Permanent Joint Headquarters, responsible for directing overseas operations among the army, navy, and air force.⁸⁵

In addition, it is important to note that the PLA has not fundamentally changed in some respects. The PLA remains an essentially Leninist organization whose purpose is to carry out the Party's decisions. This means that the CMC continues to serve as the military's highest decisionmaking organ, along with the infrastructure of Party control throughout the PLA, including the PC system and party committees. PLA interviewees generally agreed that the "dual command system" in which both unit commanders and PCs exercise authority will not be affected by the reforms, though it is likely that training for all officers (including commanders and PCs) will be more oriented toward joint operations.⁸⁶ In addition, Chinese military leadership remains heavily ground force-centric, especially within the new CMC departments and in the TCs. Thus, the restructuring can be seen as a merging of new elements drawn from foreign examples with a traditional structure that has persisted over the last 90 years.

Drivers of Reform

There are arguably three key reasons for the PLA's restructuring. First is improving the ability to conduct joint operations across multiple domains. Second is the desire to improve supervision over a force seen as increasingly corrupt and undisciplined. Third is advancing "civil-military integration," especially in the defense R&D system. These factors are discussed in the following sections.

Strengthening Joint Operations

First, restructuring seeks to enhance the PLA's ability to conduct joint (that is, cross-service) operations in multiple domains.⁸⁷ The PLA's focus on joint operations stretches back to the late Cold War period. During the 1980s and early 1990s, Chinese observers noted that advanced militaries increasingly utilized joint campaigns in a number of regional conflicts. The most notable example was the first Gulf War, in which U.S. forces employed a combination of joint force and advanced systems (such as conventional precision-strike missiles and advanced C4ISR platforms) to defeat the Iraqi armed forces.⁸⁸ Another driver was growing concerns about Taiwan independence, symbolized in the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, which led to added emphasis on joint amphibious, blockade, and firepower operations. The lesson was that China would have to improve its own joint capability in order to compete on the modern battlefield against high-tech adversaries. This led the PLA to develop joint doctrine, create a joint logistics system within the MRs, and carry out cross-service exercises.⁸⁹

The restructuring seeks to strengthen joint operations in several ways: establishing a permanent joint C2 structure, integrating C4ISR support, reducing the dominance of the ground forces, and promoting joint training and logistics. These are discussed in turn.

Establishing a Two-Level Joint C2 Structure

A key challenge inhibiting PLA joint operations was the lack of a permanent joint C2 structure. As noted, prior to the reforms the naval and air force headquarters had a peacetime C2 role, while the SAF was thought to have reported directly to the CMC. Divided command authority meant that non-ground force units were poorly integrated into the MR structure. The commander of a PLA service academy explained that the pre-reform relationship between the services and MRs was essentially, “You don’t listen to me, and I don’t listen to you.”⁹⁰ Doctrinally, joint headquarters would have been established on an ad hoc basis during wartime. These headquarters, likely staffed by officers seconded from the general departments, would then attempt to integrate the activities of all forces in their area of responsibility.⁹¹ PLA analysts noted that this would have delayed the transition from peacetime to wartime operations, and would not have met the criteria of modern warfare to act quickly and decisively.⁹²

Modifying the C2 structure is a centerpiece of the restructuring. The Third Plenum decision called on the PLA to “complete CMC joint operations command organs and theater joint operations command systems.”⁹³ In December 2013, Xi Jinping noted that the PLA “has given much consideration to joint C2, but fundamental problems remain. . . . [E]stablishing a CMC and theater command joint C2 system requires urgency and should not be delayed.”⁹⁴ Xi reiterated this objective in a meeting of senior PLA officers in September 2014, in which he called for the construction of a “new type of command headquarters.”⁹⁵ In November 2015, Xi announced at a CMC meeting on military reform that a “two-level joint operational command system” (两级联合作战指挥体制) would be established, with key decisionmaking nodes at the CMC and theater levels.⁹⁶

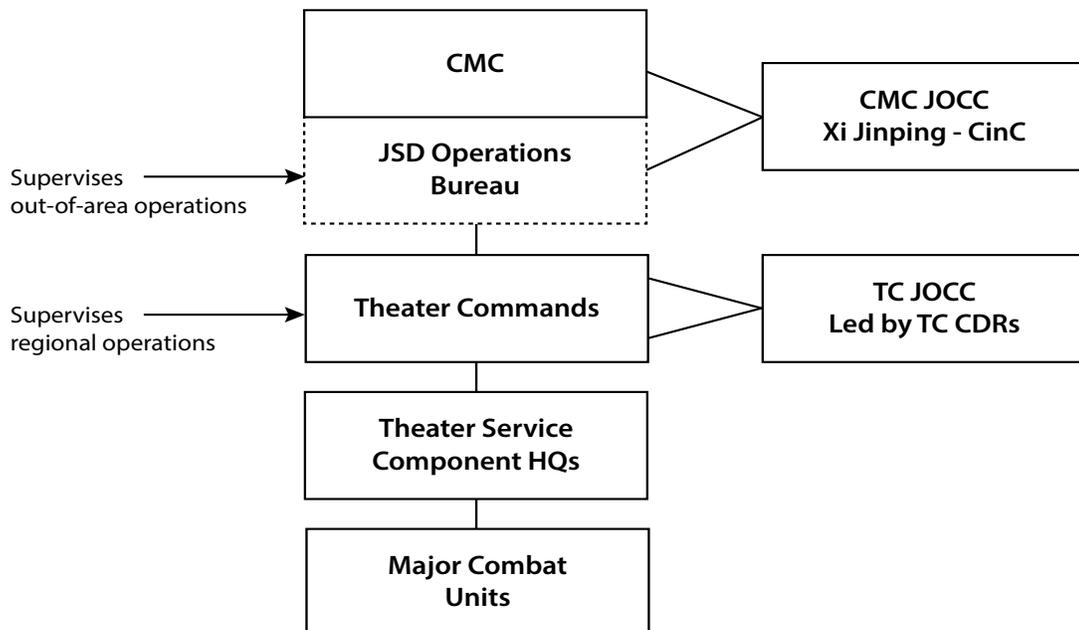
The January 2016 *CMC Opinions on Deepening Reforms on National Defense and Armed Forces* further explained that:

*By adapting to the requirement of integrated joint operation and command, we will establish a sound two-level joint operation and command system between the CMC and the theaters, and build a strategic and operational command system that integrates peace time and war time, that operates in a normal state, that specializes in main operations, and that is lean and highly efficient.*⁹⁷

The decision to establish a permanent joint C2 structure was immediately hailed in Chinese media commentary as resolving a fundamental problem inhibiting joint operations. Senior Captain Zhang Junshe, vice president of the PLA Naval Research Institute, stated that the shift from MRs to TCs would allow a quicker transition to a “war footing.”⁹⁸ A *PLA Daily* report likewise noted that the new C2 mechanism (sketched in figure 7) would allow forces to “quickly shift” to wartime operations without the need to set up a temporary command structure.⁹⁹

At the national level, the CMC will continue to hold the highest command authority.¹⁰⁰ CMC decisions will likely be passed down to the theaters through the JSD, which may perform functions similar to the U.S. Joint Staff J3 (Operations) directorate.¹⁰¹ The CMC (through the JSD) will also likely approve transfers of combat units from one TC to the next in the case of cross-theater training or operations. The JSD will be responsible for other duties associated with joint operations, including developing campaign plans, formulating military strategy, performing combat capability assessments, and ensuring combat readiness (战备建设).¹⁰² The JSD’s Operations Bureau (作战局) will directly supervise out-of-area operations through its Overseas Operations Office (海外行动处).¹⁰³ One PLA interviewee explained that this office would not only oversee peacetime security missions, such as noncombatant evacuations and disaster relief missions, but would also have an unspecified “combat” role.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, in practice it is

Figure 7. Notional PLA Joint C2 Structure



possible that some routine, single-service operations will continue to be carried out by the individual services. One PLA interlocutor suggested that in cases such as anti-piracy operations, the JSD Overseas Operations Office would only play a “planning and coordinating” role.¹⁰⁵

Within the theaters, TC commanders have been assigned operational authority over most combat forces in their areas of responsibility. This is reflected in the new TC emblems, which combine the symbols of the ground, air force, naval, and rocket forces (depicted in figure 8). Peacetime control of naval fleets and theater air forces has been formally transferred from service headquarters to the TCs, though as discussed previously, there is some evidence that services retain at least a limited degree of control over routine operations. Theater commanders also have operational control over active-duty ground forces within their respective regions.¹⁰⁶ Most reserve and militia units will report through military districts to the National Defense Mobilization Department in Beijing, though during a contingency they would likely be allocated to TC commanders. During peacetime, theaters will likely focus on joint training, including testing and improving the joint C2 system at both levels.¹⁰⁷

Given that all Rocket Force units were previously directly controlled by the CMC, it is notable that the TC commanders appear to have some ability to control or at least pass orders to conventional Rocket Force units within their theaters, although the exact nature of this relationship is unclear. Eastern Theater commander Liu Yuejun stated in an interview that his authority extends to Rocket Force units within his area of responsibility.¹⁰⁸ One hundred Rocket Force personnel have also been assigned to TC headquarters as staff officers, where they likely assist in the development of joint operational plans and may play a liaison role.¹⁰⁹ There is also increasing evidence of Rocket Force participation in theater-based joint exercises, a trend that is likely to continue.¹¹⁰

However, evidence suggests weaker integration of Rocket Force units into TC C2 structures. Unlike the army, air force, and navy, no Rocket Force senior officers have been appointed as theater deputy commanders, nor have new theater-level command structures been established for Rocket Force units.¹¹¹ Moreover, the CMC is certain to retain tight control over Rocket Force units with nuclear weapons. At most, TC commanders will have conventional missiles at their disposal. Since most missile bases currently command both conventional and nuclear units, the C2 structure would have to be bifurcated to allow TC commanders access *only* to conventional units or TC orders to conventional Rocket Force units would have to flow through the CMC. How this would work in practice (and the exact nature of TC commanders’ authority over conventional missile units) is not clear.

Figure 8. Theater Command Emblems



Source: “PLA Establishes Five Theater Commands” [解放军建立东南西北中五大战区], *Beijing News* [新京报], February 2, 2016, available at <www.bjnews.com.cn/news/2016/02/02/393483.html>.

Note: Southern TC emblems depicted.

At the heart of the joint C2 system are joint operations command centers (JOCCs; 联合作战指挥中心) that develop operational plans, analyze intelligence, coordinate combat forces, and link higher and lower echelons.¹¹² Prior to the reforms the PLA possessed at least two JOCCs. One was the national command center located in the Western Hills of Beijing.¹¹³ This was reportedly established in August 2014 and operated by the GSD Operations Department (predecessor of the JSD).¹¹⁴ Second was an East China Sea JOCC that helped to coordinate enforcement of China’s East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone, which was announced in November 2013.¹¹⁵ Although details are limited, these centers probably provided the PLA an opportunity to test the infrastructure and systems needed to build a more comprehensive joint C2 structure.

Following the reforms, the PLA quickly unveiled JOCCs at both the CMC and theater level. The national command center was renamed the CMC JOCC (军委联合作战指挥中心). This organization entered the media spotlight when Xi inspected it in April 2016 and was named its “commander-in-chief” (总指挥). This led some observers to conclude that Xi (who was dressed in combat fatigues during the visit) would personally take charge of operations during a crisis.¹¹⁶

However, one PLA interlocutor stated that this was merely a symbolic visit and that, in an actual crisis, Xi would delegate most authority to professional officers, since leading combat is a “general’s job.”¹¹⁷ JOCCs have also been established within all five TCs. Chinese media note that these are staffed by personnel drawn from all the services, including the Rocket Force, who perform 24/7 watch functions, collaborate on developing operational plans, and ensure that all service perspectives are represented.¹¹⁸ Chinese sources also note that the TC JOCCs are equipped to facilitate communications with both theater service component headquarters (such as fleet headquarters) and with the CMC JOCC.¹¹⁹ These communications links are critical because most theater service component headquarters are geographically separated from the theater JOCC.

Integrating C4ISR Forces

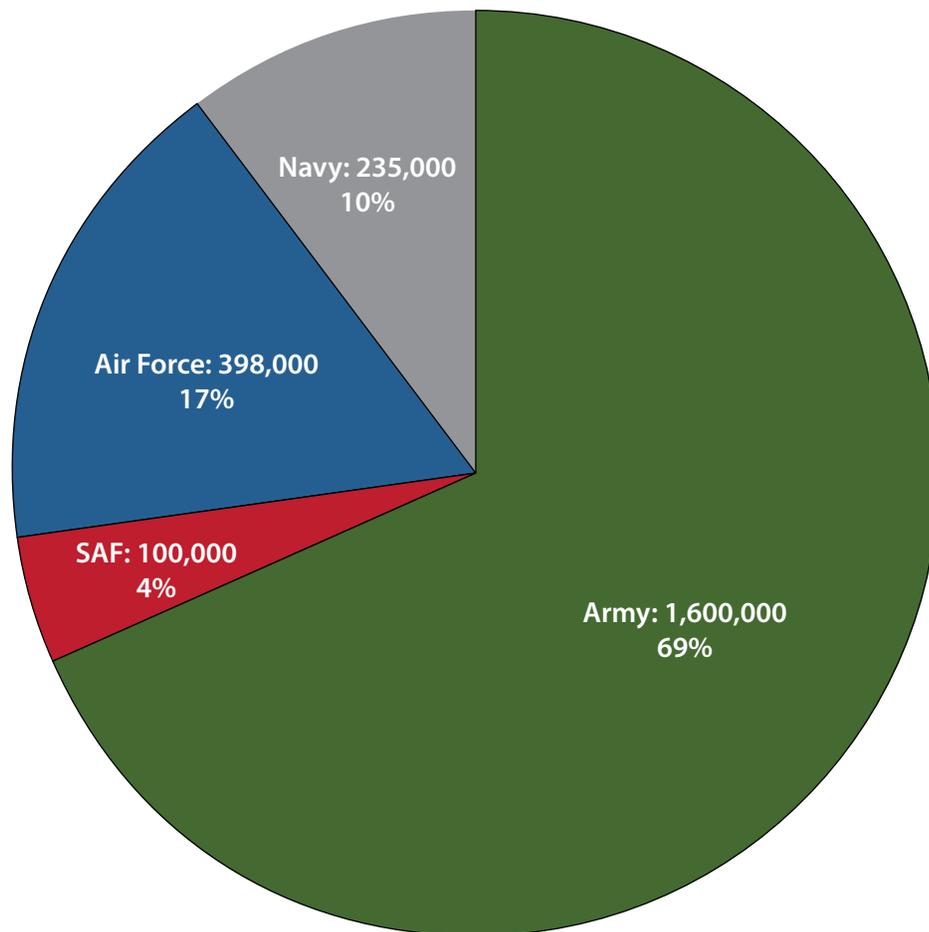
Another emphasis of the reforms is integrating C4ISR capabilities into joint operations. At a broad level, PLA interest in competing in the “information domain” has increased since the 1990s.¹²⁰ This includes both ways to harness information to conduct effective operations and ways to counter adversary information systems in the context of joint campaigns. China’s 2015 defense white paper notes that the military should be able to fight and win “informationized local wars” (信息化局部战争), in which “integrated combat forces will be employed to prevail in system-vs-system operations featuring information dominance, precision strikes, and joint operations.”¹²¹ The 2013 edition of the *Science of Strategy* argues that the PLA should integrate space, cyber, and electronic warfare operations to “paralyze enemy operational systems.”¹²²

A key obstacle has been bureaucratic stovepiping within the PLA that has led to different services relying on different information systems, MRs developing C4ISR capabilities that were incompatible with other MRs, and operations in the information domain being managed by different organizations.¹²³ For instance, the PLA’s cyber network attack, espionage, and defense forces were treated as “separate disciplines” conducted by different former GSD sub-departments, while space operations were carried out by both the GSD and GAD.¹²⁴ A 2015 RAND report suggested that the compartmentalization of the C4ISR system, along with technological weaknesses, could “hamper the speed, reduce the reliability, or otherwise diminish the effectiveness of the PLA’s over-the-horizon targeting capabilities.”¹²⁵

The restructuring seeks to reduce these problems by establishing the SSF. As noted, this organization probably manages space, cyber, and electronic warfare forces, and provides C4ISR support. Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo explains that the SSF will provide “battlefield support” to combat forces in areas ranging from reconnaissance, to navigation, to communications.¹²⁶ A *People’s Daily* report asserts that the SSF could help the PLA conduct operations as complex as the May

2011 U.S. raid on Osama Bin Laden, in which satellites and other advanced systems supported operators.¹²⁷ The SSF might support TC commanders by making centrally managed assets, such as satellites, available during exercises or operations.¹²⁸ However, how the SSF will be integrated into the TC structure is unclear. One way would be to provide guidance and support to the theater-based Technical Reconnaissance Bureaus (技术侦察部) that are responsible for electronic

Figure 9. Relative Size of the PLA Services (2013)



Sources: “Full Text: The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces,” Xinhua, April 16, 2013, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-04/16/c_132312681_2.htm (army, navy, and air force); International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *The Military Balance 2012* (London: IISS, 2012).

warfare, cyber, and other technical missions, though the exact nature of the SSF's organizational relationship with the TCs is unclear.¹²⁹

Reducing Ground Force Dominance

The reforms also seek to improve joint operations by reducing the dominance of the ground forces within the PLA. Historically, the army has been by far the largest of China's services (depicted in figure 9). As a result, most commanders and key staff of the general departments and MRs were army officers. The 2013 edition of the *Science of Strategy* noted that this was not conducive to establishing a joint C2 system, since the perspectives of the other services were not well represented.¹³⁰ Another problem was that the general departments and MRs were preoccupied with managing the ground forces, while supervision of the other services was performed by service headquarters. This reduced the ability of the GSD and MR leadership to focus on joint operations. Li Zuocheng, the PLA's new army commander, argued that in the absence of a separate army headquarters, joint organizations would find it difficult to "shake off" the influence of the ground forces.¹³¹

The reforms attempt to reduce these problems in two ways. First is that the planned downsizing will disproportionately target the ground forces.¹³² While the army will remain the largest service—even if it absorbs the entire 300,000-person cut—the share of personnel from the other services will rise.¹³³ This means that there should be more navy, air force, and Rocket Force officers moving into command and staff roles. One PLA interviewee argued in 2016 that naval officers might even eventually lead maritime-focused TCs (citing the example of the U.S. Pacific Command, which is typically led by a naval officer).¹³⁴ This is the case with Vice Admiral Yuan Yubai's appointment to the Southern TC commander billet. Other key billets, such as TC chief of staff, might also be filled by non-ground force officers. (Notably, the Southern TC chief of staff, Rear Admiral Wei Gang, is already a naval officer.) Second is the creation of national and theater army headquarters, which will free CMC departments and TCs to focus exclusively on joint operations with no need to manage ground force affairs. Nevertheless, a case can be made that army influence will persist and may even increase in some ways despite (or as a result of) the reforms. This is discussed in the next section.

Improving Joint Training and Logistics

The reforms also strengthened two key enablers of joint operations—training and logistics. In recent years, the PLA has increasingly focused on exercises involving multiple branches, services, and MRs in a variety of complex scenarios. Mark Cozad explains that while the PLA

has “gone to great lengths to improve realism and build real capability” in its exercises, there have also been continuing weaknesses, such as cases “in which PLA commanders were not well-versed in the wide range of capabilities at their disposal, failed to coordinate . . . and demonstrated weak command and organization skill.”¹³⁵ For instance, the Stride-2015 exercise, based on a Taiwan scenario, exhibited “poor coordination” between air and land forces.¹³⁶ Another problem was that the PME system offered only limited instruction on joint operations, exposing officers to the subject late in their careers, if at all.¹³⁷

Accordingly, improving the quality of joint training is a theme of the reforms. The Third Plenum decision stated that the PLA would implement reforms of the “joint operations training and support system.”¹³⁸ During a military training conference in December 2013, PLA Chief of the General Staff Fang Fenghui noted the need for an improved joint training system, reforms to training assessments, and a deepening of military academy reforms.¹³⁹ The *CMC Opinions on Deepening Reforms on National Defense and Armed Forces* similarly stated that the PLA would improve its joint training system and enhance joint education within military academies.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, in April 2016, Xi stated that the PLA must address the shortage of officers with a “deep knowledge” of joint operations.¹⁴¹

The reforms aim to improve joint training in two ways. First is by establishing the CMC Training Management Department. This replaced the former GSD Military Training Department, which itself had been created in 2011 in part to enhance joint training.¹⁴² Elevating this organization to a CMC department underscored Xi’s emphasis on training and gave it a stronger mandate to supervise training departments within the TCs and services.¹⁴³ One way that it will do this is by sending inspections teams from its Training Supervision Bureau (训练检查局) to units across the PLA to provide critical assessments of exercises and unit training.¹⁴⁴ This department will also directly supervise a number of PLA academies formerly under the general departments.¹⁴⁵ Second, while not part of the restructuring itself, the broader military reforms include changes to the PME system that include greater emphasis on joint operations. For instance, the PLA NDU has established a course for joint commanders and is exploring ways to partner with theaters and services to improve joint training.¹⁴⁶ Service command colleges will also emphasize joint training for both command and staff officers.¹⁴⁷

Regarding logistics, the reforms build on earlier efforts to establish a joint logistics system in the MRs. Begun in 1999, this system attempted to reduce redundancy by integrating the existing “fragmented” logistics systems of the ground forces, navy, and air force.¹⁴⁸ Despite progress in the 2000s, a number of problems persisted, including limited funding for logistics, lack of standardization, a small corps of professional logisticians, and excessive decentralization.¹⁴⁹

The logistics system was also afflicted with corruption in the purchase and delivery of military supplies, as well as in the sale of PLA-owned land and facilities, illustrated by the investigation and conviction of former GLD deputy director Gu Junshan for malfeasance.¹⁵⁰ To assess these problems, the PLA established a special group for logistics reform in March 2014 under the leadership of GLD director Zhao Keshi.¹⁵¹ In January 2016, the CMC called for an improved logistics system that would be better “adapted to the joint C2 structure.”¹⁵²

The restructuring addressed joint logistics by replacing the GLD with a Logistics Support Department (LSD). As with its predecessor, this department will coordinate with the theaters and services to support joint logistics requirements, similar to the U.S. Joint Staff J4 (Logistics) directorate.¹⁵³ The key change is that the LSD (along with the other successors to the general departments) has been placed within the formal CMC bureaucracy, where it will likely be subject to a greater degree of external supervision. For instance, the PLA Audit Bureau, which had been moved from the GLD to the CMC in November 2014, will have the ability to review accounts and investigate financial irregularities in the supply chain.¹⁵⁴ The new CMC Discipline Inspection Commission will also likely continue to investigate corruption in the logistics system.¹⁵⁵ This could result in a more professional and efficient logistics apparatus supporting joint operations. The reforms also created the JLSE, which will consolidate and strengthen the provision of supplies to operational units within theater commands.

Tightening Political Control

The main political driver of the reform was the desire to tighten political control and supervision of the PLA. On one level, this goal reflects Xi’s general tendency toward centralizing authority throughout the Party-state and his use of the anti-corruption campaign as both a means of rebuilding the Party’s image and as a weapon against opponents. (Xi’s political strategy for the reforms is discussed in the following section.) However, there were also a number of specific political and institutional problems within the PLA that previous administrations failed to correct. This section explains those problems and describes the ways in which the reforms sought to address them.

Xi Jinping and his fellow reformers confronted a variety of political problems within the PLA. One was inadequate supervision of the PLA by top Party leaders. Chinese sources blame Jiang Zemin for elevating corrupt officers such as former CMC vice chairmen Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong to high-level positions and Hu Jintao for his inability to exercise control over them when serving as CMC chairman.¹⁵⁶ A second concern was that PLA political work was inadequate and Party organs within the PLA were ineffective in exercising control. This con-

tributed to concerns about ideological laxity among PLA members, manifested in the waning attractiveness of Marxism and concerns that some might have advocated for the PLA to become a “national” army rather than a Party-army. Xi’s concerns were reportedly piqued by an assessment that the Soviet Communist Party’s loss of power was partly caused by the loss of military support.¹⁵⁷ Third, senior PLA officers in the general departments and the military regions had too much power and were not always responsive to orders from the center. Fourth were weak supervisory mechanisms that were either corrupted (in the case of the promotion system and auditors) or ineffective (Party committees and military courts). Fifth was the weak influence of rules and regulations, which frustrated the PLA’s ability to transform into an “army ruled by law” (依法治军).¹⁵⁸

The reforms include several changes designed to correct these problems. First is enhancing Xi’s personal authority over the PLA. As in other aspects of governance, he has emphasized the need for centralizing authority over the military. The first “basic principle” in the *CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms* is:

*to consolidate and perfect the basic principles and system of the Party’s absolute leadership over the military . . . comprehensively implement the CMC chairmanship responsibility system [军委主席责任制], and ensure that the supreme leadership right and command right of the military are concentrated in the [Communist Party of China] Central Committee and in the CMC.*¹⁵⁹

Observers distinguish the “CMC chairmanship responsibility system” from the so-called CMC vice chairman responsibility system allegedly practiced under Jiang and Hu, where many routine duties were handled by CMC vice chairmen.¹⁶⁰ In contrast, under Xi “all significant issues in national defense and army building [are] planned and decided by the CMC chairman,” and “once the decision has been made, the chairman conducts ‘concentrated unified leadership’ and ‘efficient command’ of the entire military.”¹⁶¹ Although Xi will have to continue to rely on professional military officers for advice and support across a range of issues, the clear emphasis is on strengthening his ability to make the important decisions. This effort to reinforce Party control over the military (and to strengthen Xi’s personal authority) was reinforced by the Sixth Plenum of the 18th Party Congress, held in October 2016, which described Xi for the first time as the “core” of CCP leadership and called upon Party members to “adhere to the centralized and unified leadership of the CCP Central Committee.”¹⁶² Press reports subsequently described senior PLA officers meeting to study the spirit of the Sixth Plenum.¹⁶³

Second is eliminating the general departments and moving most of their functions to the CMC. One *PLA Daily* article argued that the general departments had too much power, served as an independent leadership level, and substituted for the CMC in ways that “undermine the centralized and unified leadership of the CMC.”¹⁶⁴ Changing the general departments into CMC departments reduces the autonomy of their leaders and makes them directly accountable to the CMC chairman. This should increase supervision and improve the flow of information to the top (since the CMC General Office, run by Xi’s trusted aides, will be able to directly task the new CMC departments to provide information).

Third is moving a number of supervision mechanisms such as auditing and discipline inspection to the CMC level, where they can be more independent of potential “command influence” and thus more effective. Until November 2014, the Audit Bureau was under the GLD, which was responsible for most PLA expenditure (and was one of the most corrupt parts of the system).¹⁶⁵ The Discipline Inspection Commission, which had been subordinate to the GPD since 1990, also became a direct report to the CMC, where it will have greater independence and authority. This organization will enforce Party discipline by sending investigation teams to Party units throughout the PLA. In a speech introducing the reforms, Xi stressed the importance of regulating power within the military, stating that “decision-making, enforcement, and supervision powers should be separate and distributed in a manner that ensures they serve as checks and balances on each other but also run in parallel.”¹⁶⁶ A PLA expert argued that the new arrangement would “better safeguard the authority of discipline inspection and auditing departments and ensure that they can independently and fairly exercise their supervision duties.”¹⁶⁷

Fourth is increasing the PLA’s reliance on formal laws and regulations that specify how military leaders should carry out their work. This is described as a shift toward more standardized and systematic work methods that reduce a commander’s autonomy (and the resulting potential for arbitrary or corrupt decisions) and produce “administration according to the law.” This effort is supported by the elevation of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission from the former GPD to the CMC. This commission will promulgate regulations and oversee the military court system.¹⁶⁸ These efforts were formalized in June 2016 with the issuance of the CMC *Opinion on Strengthening the Construction of a Military Law and Regulation System During the Period of Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms*.¹⁶⁹ These changes deepen the process of “regularization” (正规化) of the PLA that has been ongoing since the 1980s but which has been hampered by weaknesses such as the lack of professionalization of military prosecutors, gaps in military legislation, and commanders who think that “their word is law.”¹⁷⁰

Fifth is an increased emphasis on political work to reinforce proper ideological values among the senior officer corps. As early as the 18th Party Congress in November 2012, the CMC reiterated that the PLA must “unswervingly uphold the absolute leadership of the party over the army,” “guarantee absolute loyalty and reliability,” and support the new generation of Party officials under Xi.¹⁷¹ Although this theme can be found in PLA political work stretching back to the 1989 Tiananmen crisis, in which some PLA units refused to obey commands, Xi has emphasized it in a way that his immediate predecessors did not. For instance, loyalty to the Party was a major theme at the October 2014 PLA Political Work Conference at Gutian.¹⁷² The CMC also highlighted the need for *reliable* Party cadres in the army, defined in one document as those who have “resolute” political views, carry out military and political orders “without hesitation,” and are able to resist “incorrect ideological trends.”¹⁷³ Senior PLA officers were required to *bi-aotai*, or publicly pledge their dedication to the Party and its leadership.¹⁷⁴ The Sixth Plenum in October 2016 stressed the importance of socialist norms such as austerity, intra-Party democracy, service to the people, criticism and self-criticism, and upright actions and reinforced the need for all Party members to obey the center. The plenum themes promptly became the basis for political study within the PLA.¹⁷⁵

Enhancing Civil-Military Integration

Another driver of the restructuring is improving “civil-military integration” (CMI; 军民融合), especially in the area of defense R&D.¹⁷⁶ Since the early 2000s, Chinese reformers have sought to achieve synergies by integrating the defense and commercial industrial bases more tightly. This would benefit the PLA, which would have greater access to civilian S&T advances, as well as the civilian economy, which would be able to incorporate dual-use technology initially developed for military purposes.¹⁷⁷ These efforts have been frustrated by several obstacles, including limited information-sharing and poor coordination between the military and civilian research communities, barriers limiting the access of private enterprises into the defense market, and poorly developed CMI policies.¹⁷⁸ A related problem was corruption within the defense R&D and acquisition systems, although its extent has been hard to evaluate.¹⁷⁹

Consequently, improving CMI is a central theme of the Xi Jinping–era reforms. The Third Plenum decision called for promoting joint military and civilian development, perfecting defense innovation systems, and promoting entrance of private civilian firms into the defense sector.¹⁸⁰ Xi reiterated these goals in a CMC reform meeting in November 2015, stating that the focus of reforms should be on “resolving systemic and mechanical issues constraining integrated civil-military development.”¹⁸¹ The *CMC Opinions on Deepening Reforms on National Defense*

and *Armed Forces* likewise noted the need for a development system “led by the state, driven by demand, and unified by market operations.”¹⁸² In March 2016, Xi again called for “coordinated, balanced, and compatible” development of civilian and military resources, noting that this had previously been hindered by a lack of high-level coordination.¹⁸³

The reforms aim to accomplish these goals in several ways. First is moving the Science and Technology Commission (STC) from the GAD to direct CMC supervision. The STC guides weapons R&D and consists of a range of sub-committees that incorporate civilian expertise into the management of technological progress in areas ranging from sensors to explosives to IT systems.¹⁸⁴ Placing the STC under the CMC symbolizes the emphasis being placed on CMI in the reforms and could result in an expansion of its responsibilities. For instance, the STC has reportedly developed an office that will be responsible for promoting defense innovation.¹⁸⁵ This office is apparently modeled on the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, whose research focus and structure Chinese analysts have closely studied.¹⁸⁶

Second is by creating the SSF, which will likewise draw from civilian S&T strengths to develop and employ advanced technology. According to a *People’s Daily* report, the SSF is already sponsoring “multiple strategic projects” involving the joint efforts of industry, civilian research institutes, and military academies. This will make the SSF a “cloud think tank” that serves both military and civilian development.¹⁸⁷ The article further notes that “certain departments” of the SSF are seeking to achieve breakthroughs in “disruptive technologies,” which have a “destructive capability on par with the most advanced international arms.” Yin Zhuo observes that some technologies incorporated into the SSF mission, such as satellite navigation equipment, have dual-use applications and their development will play an “important role” in China’s economic progress.¹⁸⁸

Third is replacing the GAD, which was largely preoccupied with ground force modernization, with a CMC Equipment Development Department (EDD) that will oversee weapons development for the entire PLA and institute reforms to the R&D and procurement systems.¹⁸⁹ The EDD will coordinate with services and theaters to determine priorities and reduce duplicative development. Moreover, since the EDD will be part of the formal CMC bureaucracy, it will likely be subject to more stringent oversight from organizations such as the Audit Bureau, Discipline Inspection Commission, and Politics and Law Commission. This could help to reduce corruption and inefficiency in the defense R&D system. Notably, in January 2014, CMC vice chairman Xu Qiliang observed that weapons research, production, and procurement was one of two major areas (along with the logistics system) requiring “better oversight.”¹⁹⁰

Another aspect of the reforms relevant to CMI is adjusting the national defense mobilization system, including mobilization plans, conscription, and the reserve and militia forces.¹⁹¹ Prior weaknesses in the mobilization system included lax training standards and performance, low levels of IT integration, and inadequate support.¹⁹² In discussing CMI, the Third Plenum decision stated that mobilization structures should be completed and mobilization laws and regulations perfected.¹⁹³ The reforms took a step in this direction by replacing the former GSD Mobilization Department with a new CMC National Defense Mobilization Department, and by placing oversight of the reserves and the provincial-level military districts in this new department. This might enhance supervision of China's mobilization work and result in better and more systematic management of reserve and militia forces.

Political Strategy to Implement the Reforms

PLA reformers have advocated structural reforms since the early 1990s, but previous reform efforts (including some backed by Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao) were stymied by bureaucratic opposition within the PLA. How has Xi Jinping succeeded where his predecessors failed? Xi has employed a number of tools and tactics to pursue the reform goals of building a PLA that can “fight and win informationized wars” by improving its joint operations capability and strengthening CCP control over the PLA. This section describes the elements of Xi's political strategy and the political tools available to pursue his military reform agenda.

Embed Military Reforms in a Broader Reform Agenda. Key elements of the military reforms were unveiled in the Third Plenum decision document approved by the Central Committee in November 2013. By embedding the PLA reforms in a broader reform agenda, and elevating the decision mechanism to the Central Committee level (where the power of PLA senior leaders was diffused), Xi made it harder for potential opponents to resist the reforms. As one PLA officer noted, incorporating military reforms into the national reform agenda elevated military reform “to the will of the Party and act of state.”¹⁹⁴ The plenum decision document outlined key aspects of the reforms, sometimes in vague terms that indicated the desired direction of change without providing specific details. This is an effective device for building consensus on the overall reform agenda while deferring divisive internal debates (for example, over which services would gain or lose personnel in the PLA restructuring).

Xi's Personal Involvement in Military Reforms. Xi has used direct involvement in the reform process to demonstrate his personal commitment to making the reforms succeed. Widely considered the most powerful Chinese leader since Deng Xiaoping, Xi has devoted time and attention to military matters in ways that his predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao did

not.¹⁹⁵ For example, in his first 3 years as CMC chairman (November 2012–December 2015), Xi made 53 publicized appearances at military events. During the equivalent period of time from 2004 to 2007, Hu Jintao made only 36 appearances.¹⁹⁶ One nonauthoritative Chinese media report even claims that Xi spends a half day every week at his CMC office, in contrast to Hu Jintao who rarely used his office.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, as Nan Li argues, Xi's more assertive leadership style has allowed him to exert greater influence within the PLA than either Jiang or Hu.¹⁹⁸ As noted, Xi has also highlighted the "CMC chairmanship responsibility system" that emphasizes that he bears ultimate responsibility over all military matters.

Xi has also used his positions as chairman of the CMC and chairman of the CMC leading small group on military reform established in January 2014 to lead efforts to flesh out details of the military restructuring, including chairing meetings to study the feasibility of various options.¹⁹⁹ More than 20 working groups were established under the CMC to research and consider various aspects of the reforms, including extensive consultations with military and civilian units at various levels and more than 150 revisions of the reform plan.²⁰⁰ In November 2015, he chaired the CMC meeting that adopted the detailed reform plan.²⁰¹

Since the reforms were announced, Xi has been personally involved in pushing them forward. One means was making formal speeches to military audiences to launch key elements of the reforms, including a December 27, 2015, speech at the PLA newspaper *Jiefangjun Bao* and a major address on the reforms to CMC and senior PLA leaders at a December 31, 2015, ceremony to establish the army as a separate service, rename the SAF as the Rocket Force and elevate it to full service status, and stand up the SSF.²⁰² Xi met with leaders of the new services and personally awarded them banners to serve as symbols of their services.²⁰³ Xi made a similar appearance and speech at a January 11, 2016, ceremony to establish the reorganized CMC with its new departments, commissions, and offices.²⁰⁴ Xi used these appearances and his photo opportunity at the CMC joint operations command center to highlight the missions and importance of the new services and the reorganized CMC and to reinforce his authority as CMC chairman and his personal commitment to the reforms. Xi also led a 2-day conference on military reform in December 2016 that reaffirmed the need for a smaller, more agile military.²⁰⁵

Since Xi himself cannot be personally involved at all times and in all aspects of the reforms, he has installed trusted agents within the PLA who can ensure that his instructions are followed. One such individual is Lieutenant General Qin Shengxiang, director of the CMC General Office, who was also dual-hatted as director of the new CMC Reform and Organization Office, which has a leading role in formulating reform plans and ensuring implementation.²⁰⁶ Another key figure is Major General Zhong Shaojun, who has been a senior civilian aide to Xi since Xi's

time as Zhejiang Province Party Secretary. When Xi became CMC chairman, Zhong was given a military rank of senior colonel and designated as CMC General Office deputy director and director of Xi Jinping's personal office within the CMC (and was later promoted to major general). His close association to Xi and responsibilities in the General Office likely give him significant influence despite his relatively low formal rank and grade.²⁰⁷

Protect Senior Officers. The PLA organizational restructuring is a major transformation that saw the end of the general departments, transition from seven military regions to five theater commands, and establishment or change in status of three services. Some senior PLA officers stayed in essentially the same jobs under a new organizational structure; others changed to new positions, sometimes in different geographic areas. However, one tacit principle is clear: all senior (MR Leader grade and above) PLA officers were given jobs at their current grades and kept their current ranks. This may be a transitional arrangement that only lasts through the 19th Party Congress in late 2017, but protecting the personal career interests of senior PLA officers (as opposed to forcing officers whose organizations were disestablished to retire early) was an important means of defusing opposition to the reforms from leaders whose organizations would lose personnel, authority, or budget in the reorganization. Refer to appendix 1 for more details on PLA leadership under the reforms.

Compensate Reform Losers. Despite its traditional dominance in numbers and the PLA leadership ranks, the army has lost status, budget share, and end strength relative to the other services in recent years. Since 2004, Chinese defense white papers have emphasized the need for increased funding for the navy, air force, and Second Artillery. "Optimizing the composition of the services and arms of the PLA" has meant reductions in "technologically backward" army units and personnel increases for the other services.²⁰⁸ Most of the 300,000 troops that will be cut from the PLA will come from army ranks, and the army is widely perceived as the likely loser in current PLA organizational reforms.²⁰⁹ Elimination of the general departments and establishment of a new army commander and headquarters reduced the army to bureaucratic equality with the other services. The army also lost direct control of space and cyber units, which were transferred to the new Strategic Support Force.

Nevertheless, the reforms provide compensation that may actually increase the army's power, at least in the short term.²¹⁰ The new joint C2 structure gives theater commanders both wartime and peacetime operational control over army, navy, air force, and potentially conventional Rocket Force units within their areas of responsibility. This significantly expands the authority of theater commanders relative to commanders of the former military regions. All five of the theater commanders and four of the five theater political commissars were ground

force officers, though this balance began to shift with the announcement of a navy admiral as Southern TC commander a year after the reforms. If the army can retain control of most of the theater commander positions (perhaps by arguing that navy and air force officers lack the experience necessary to run large-scale joint operations), army officers will continue to dominate the senior levels of the PLA leadership. Territorially based theaters are not the only possible joint C2 structure; placing a ground force officer in the chain of command of maritime operations in the South China Sea may not have been the most effective operational solution.

Another effort to defuse potential opposition involves ensuring that those officers and NCOs who will lose their positions as part of the 300,000-person downsizing of the PLA will receive the pensions, civilian jobs, and compensation that they are entitled to. Two PLA NDU researchers published an article in *Jiefangjun Bao* warning that salary and pension issues needed to be addressed properly to ensure that military downsizing did not destabilize the military and society.²¹¹ The PLA has learned important lessons from previous force reductions and has codified the benefits that conscripts, NCOs, and officers should receive, which vary based on status, years of service, and how they separate from the PLA.²¹² Challenges include allocating sufficient resources to pay earned benefits, ensuring that local officials fulfill their responsibilities to provide benefits to PLA veterans, and pressuring state-owned enterprises and local government offices to fulfill their responsibility to provide civilian jobs to PLA veterans who are entitled to them. One aspect of the reforms gives responsibility for veterans affairs to the new CMC Organ Affairs General Management Bureau.²¹³ Senior leaders, including Xi, have stressed the importance of local officials fulfilling their obligations to veterans.²¹⁴ While the ultimate effectiveness of these measures remains to be seen, they indicate a desire to take better care of downsized soldiers than in the past.²¹⁵ Protests by disgruntled PLA veterans in front of the Ba Yi building in October 2016 and January 2017 serve as a vivid reminder of the potential for veterans to engage in embarrassing and politically sensitive protests.²¹⁶

Enlist Support from Reform Winners. The navy, air force, and Rocket Force are likely to be the organizational winners of PLA reforms. They have already benefited from an increased share of the PLA budget since 2004, and are likely to be protected from significant force cuts in the 300,000-person downsizing and may even increase their size. Although the army continues to dominate the initial theater command senior leadership and senior CMC staff, the emphasis on jointness in the reforms is likely to create opportunities for the other services. The number of air force and navy officers assigned to theater deputy commander positions may be an early indicator that the other services will increase their policy influence and share of senior officer positions.

Use Threat of Corruption Investigations to Intimidate and Punish Opponents. Investigations into former CMC vice chairmen Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou not only revealed their complicity in corruption on a massive scale, but also confirmed the widespread practice of PLA officers paying large bribes for promotion to senior positions. This suggests that most senior PLA officers are vulnerable to corruption investigations that would reveal their complicity in the pay-to-play promotion system. However, so far anti-corruption investigations have focused primarily on the logistics and political systems (which, along with military district commands, offered the most opportunities for corruption). To date, all current CMC members and senior PLA operational commanders have been spared (with the potential exception of some officers with close ties to Guo, Xu, and the network run by Bo Xilai and Zhou Yongkang). The threat of investigation is a potent tool to intimidate or remove any officers who might obstruct reform efforts or show insufficient loyalty to Xi Jinping.²¹⁷ In December 2016, the PLA confirmed that Deputy Chief of Staff Wang Jianping had been placed under investigation. Wang is the highest ranking active-duty officer to be investigated for corruption.²¹⁸ This sent a further signal that even very senior officers could be subject to punishment for malfeasance.

Use Control over Promotions to Reward Allies and Supporters of Reforms. Guo and Xu were evidently able to extract such large bribes for positions because Hu Jintao was not actively involved in the promotion and selection process, essentially rubber-stamping decisions made by the CMC vice chairmen. Conversely, Xi Jinping appears to be significantly more engaged in the promotion and assignment process, beginning back when he was a civilian vice chairman of the CMC.²¹⁹ Xi's personal involvement in the selection process provides opportunities to place supporters of reforms in key positions and to reward officers with whom he has close ties or who display personal loyalty to his leadership.²²⁰ This approach would be consistent with his broader approach to civilian personnel appointments within the Party and government. The expected reshuffle of senior PLA officers in the run-up to the 19th Party Congress in late 2017 will provide more opportunities to reward allies and supporters of reforms (and to sideline or retire officers less enthusiastic about reform efforts).

This review suggests that Xi has a range of tools at his disposal and appears to be employing them in a reasonably strategic fashion to promote the military reforms. However, some of these tools require his continued personal involvement in order to be effective. This could become a problem if Xi's attention gets drawn away to deal with other pressing challenges.

Implications

Although the military restructuring is still in its early implementation phase, it is not too soon to consider the opportunities and challenges that the restructuring might have for the PLA, the United States, and regional countries. This section assesses the implications of the reforms for PLA operations, for Party control and supervision of the military, and for U.S.-China military relations.

A Stronger Warfighting and Deterrent Force

In the near term, the PLA will likely be preoccupied with putting its new structure into practice and managing related institutional challenges. New organizations such as the SSF and the army headquarters will need time to become fully operational, the new joint C2 structure will have to be tested, and personnel will have to understand and gain experience with their new roles and responsibilities. Other factors adding to organizational flux within the PLA will include the process of downsizing the force by 300,000 personnel by the end of 2017, the unveiling of new policies and regulations as part of the larger reform program, and the rotation of senior leaders at the 19th Party Congress in late 2017.²²¹ Taken together, these changes could prove sufficiently disruptive to reduce the PLA's ability to launch and sustain major combat operations.

However, over the longer term, the PLA reforms could result in a leaner, more effective warfighting organization. The establishment of a permanent joint C2 structure, enhanced joint training within the TCs, a dedicated SSF responsible for operations in the information domain, a JLSF that strengthens the PLA's joint logistics system, and greater resources for the naval and air forces could all give the PLA more confidence and capacity to conduct joint operations in multiple domains. Moreover, if the reforms are successful, the PLA might be able to transition more quickly from peacetime to wartime operations, reducing warning time of an attack. This is particularly relevant to TCs, which are focused on responding quickly to emerging threats around China's periphery.

As a result, the restructuring could lead to new or increasing operational challenges for both U.S. and regional forces. For the United States, the PLA might be able to utilize its new joint C2 structure to conduct more effective operations targeting U.S. forward-deployed forces. The ability to integrate advanced conventional missiles, C4ISR support, and traditional platforms such as submarines and fighter aircraft, could pose particularly serious challenges for U.S. intervening forces, such as carrier strike groups. PLA joint forces could also be used to target U.S. regional bases that may be needed to support operations in the Taiwan Strait, the South or

East China seas, or elsewhere. PLA joint training will likely focus on enhancing the ability of forces from multiple services to carry out these types of “counter-intervention” operations.²²²

Regional forces could also face a more proficient and determined adversary. Maritime states such as Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam might have to contend with a PLA that is better organized, trained, and equipped to conduct joint operations in the maritime and air domains. India could likewise face a more capable opponent both along the Sino-Indian border and in the Indian Ocean region.²²³ Regarding Taiwan, the PLA will likely continue to deploy some of its most advanced capabilities and talented personnel opposite the Taiwan Strait (in what is now the Eastern TC). PLA joint training in this area will likely be focused on operational subjects related to a Taiwan contingency, such amphibious operations, blockades, and joint fire-power strikes.²²⁴

Nevertheless, several factors could impede the PLA’s ability to strengthen its joint warfighting capabilities. First is the continued dominance of the ground forces. Most major PLA organizations remain under the leadership of army officers. This was evident in a group photograph taken of leaders of the new CMC departments in January 2016, in which only 11 of 69 officers were from the navy or air force. According to one foreign analysis, this did not mark an “auspicious start for greater jointness at the most senior levels of the PLA command structure.”²²⁵ Paradoxically, the reforms might even have increased ground force influence by placing naval and air force units under the command of army officers within the TCs, though this was mitigated by the appointment of a naval admiral, Yuan Yubai, as the new Southern TC commander in January 2017.²²⁶

A second problem concerns interservice rivalry. As with any modern joint force, competition for resources and influence might constrain effective cooperation between the different services.²²⁷ For instance, there is evidence of competition between the air force, Rocket Force, and the former GAD related to control of counterspace systems.²²⁸ These tensions could increase as the growth of China’s military spending continues to slow, placing a premium on preserving and demonstrating unique capabilities. Indeed, the reforms might have inadvertently increased the chances for interservice rivalry by instituting an army headquarters. The army commander will be designated with the responsibility for ensuring that army interests will be protected even as the PLA shifts toward a greater emphasis on naval and air force operations.²²⁹ The army commander will likely gain an ex officio seat on the CMC after the next Party congress.²³⁰

Third is the PLA’s lack of major combat experience. All but a few current PLA officers are too young to have experienced China’s last major war with Vietnam in 1979.²³¹ Moreover, some of the key operational lessons from that war, which was primarily a large-scale ground cam-

paign, are unlikely to be applicable to modern joint operations, especially those in the air and sea domains. A PLA spokesman notes that the lack of combat experience is mitigated by the participation of many personnel in UN peacekeeping operations and other peacetime missions, as well as by “realistic” combat training.²³² Nevertheless, the lack of recent combat experience poses several problems, including depriving the PLA of battle-hardened veterans and inhibiting its ability to understand how its structure, leadership, doctrine, and hardware performs under complex real-world conditions, or what is often called the “fog of war.”

Given these uncertainties, it is important to identify possible indicators that these barriers are being overcome and the PLA is achieving progress in joint operations. Those indicators might include any of the following:

- Increased joint training. In the next few years, the PLA will likely attempt to enhance joint operations through increased multiservice training events. This would not only continue the trend toward greater joint training that has been evident for the past several years, but also provide an opportunity to identify and correct problems associated with the new joint C2 structure. Advances could be indicated by air force or naval officers exercising authority over joint task forces during exercises, and by a greater role for joint staff officers in exercise planning and execution. Also worth following is the role of the new CMC Training Management Department, which will play a role in developing joint training standards and monitoring progress.
- A stronger “joint” curriculum. The PLA’s commitment to jointness might also be reflected in the nature of reforms to the PME system. A greater emphasis on joint command could be reflected in a higher level of exposure to mid-career officers, such as those attending the Air Force Command College and Naval Command College, to joint campaign history and doctrine. This might be similar to the U.S. Joint PME Phase 1 requirements, which provides joint training qualifications for mid-level officers. The publication of new PLA training materials focused on joint operations, such as a new edition of the *Science of Campaigns* (战役学) could also suggest an increasing focus on joint education.
- More opportunities for non-ground force officers. As discussed, one of the challenges to greater jointness in the PLA is the continued dominance of ground force officers in key command and staff positions. In the long term, evidence of a shift would include a higher share of non-ground force officers in senior positions, such as TC commanders and CMC

department directors. The leadership reshuffle set to take place at the 19th Party Congress in late 2017 will provide an initial chance to observe such a shift. One might also expect to see greater participation of naval, air force, and Rocket Force officers in key joint training programs, such as the PLA NDU senior-level strategy (“Dragons”) course, and in lower level joint command and staff billets (including TC deputy commanders and chiefs of staff) that might be stepping stones to higher level positions. If the PLA establishes a joint assignment system that designates some positions as joint billets and provides promotion incentives for officers to fill these positions, this would be a significant step toward more jointness.

- Greater authority delegated to the TCs. The reforms sought to promote jointness by creating a new joint C2 system in which TC commanders (and in some cases, the JSD) exercise operational authority over joint forces, and in which the services are assigned an administrative “organize, train, and equip” role. An indicator that this system is becoming more fully operational would be the transfer of routine operational functions, such as oversight of anti-piracy task forces and noncombatant evacuation operations, from the service headquarters to the TCs and JSD. Conversely, the continued exercise of operational command by service chiefs could suggest a delay in the transition to joint command.
- Changing CMC membership. The reforms did not lead to any immediate changes in the CMC’s composition (depicted in table 5). However, changes are likely to be announced at the 19th Party Congress in late 2017. Chinese interlocutors expect that the new PLA army commander will be appointed to the CMC, placing that position on par with the other service chiefs who are ex officio CMC members. It is less clear whether other new positions, such as TC commanders, SSF commander, or leaders of new CMC departments, will be afforded CMC status. Also unclear is whether the former general department directors will retain CMC membership, or whether the new key CMC department leaders (such as the director of the Training Management Department) will be included. A key question will be who within the new CMC will be advocates for interservice collaboration.

A Changing Civil-Military Bargain

The military reforms reveal new information about the current state of civil-military relations in China and highlight areas where civil-military tensions may arise in the future. First, Xi Jinping’s ability to push through a major military restructuring indicates that he exerts greater

Table 5. Current CMC Membership

Name	CMC Role	Other Positions	Service
Xi Jinping	Chairman	CCP General Secretary, President	
GEN Fan Changlong	Vice Chairman	CCP Politburo Member	Army
GEN Xu Qiliang	Vice Chairman	CCP Politburo Member	Air Force
GEN Chang Wanquan	Member	Minister of National Defense	Army
GEN Fang Fenghui	Member	Director, Joint Staff Department	Army
GEN Zhang Yang	Member	Director, Political Work Department	Army
GEN Zhao Keshi	Member	Director, Logistics Support Department	Army
GEN Zhang Youxia	Member	Director, Equipment Development Department	Army
ADM Wu Shengli	Member	Former Navy Commander	Navy
GEN Ma Xiaotian	Member	Air Force Commander	Air Force
GEN Wei Fenghe	Member	Rocket Force Commander	Rocket Force

authority over the PLA than his predecessors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, and that he is willing to intrude into the military's domain when necessary to achieve his objectives. As the discussion of the political strategy indicates, Xi has been able to use a mixture of sticks and carrots to break through the logjam of institutional and personal interests that had stymied previous reform efforts.

A second implication is Xi's determination to increase CCP control over the PLA and his own personal authority over the military. In Huntingtonian terms, the reforms strengthen the Party's "objective control" over the PLA by reinvigorating auditing, discipline inspection, legal, and regulatory mechanisms and ensuring that PLA organizations with these responsibilities have independent channels to report to the CMC. These changes are coupled with efforts to strengthen "subjective control" by emphasizing ideology and the importance of obedience to the CCP and by strengthening the role of the CCP within the military. Xi's personal involvement in decisionmaking and promotions and his installation of trusted allies in the CMC General Office are important means of exerting control. However, these control mechanisms are all being implemented by military officers (rather than by truly independent outside monitors) and their long-term effectiveness will depend on both the loyalty of the officers involved and

on Xi's ability to devote sufficient attention to the task of managing and controlling the military. The PLA remains a self-policing organization, which may limit the effectiveness of objective and subjective control mechanisms on some issues, such as corruption.

A third consideration is the extent to which the reforms and Xi's efforts to strengthen Party control over the military rewrite the bargain governing civil-military relations in China. The "conditional compliance" model developed by Ellis Joffe and refined by James Mulvenon posits that the CCP provides the PLA with resources, status, and a degree of autonomy in exchange for its loyalty to the Party.²³³ In strengthening CCP control and the authority of the CMC chairman, the reforms reduce PLA autonomy and demand ideological loyalty and obedience to the Party's orders. Xi's repeated emphasis on the military's role in the "China Dream" and on the importance of building a military that can fight and win wars articulates goals that command significant support within the PLA leadership. The emphasis on obedience and ideological loyalty is likely less popular, especially given the Party's hypocrisy in pursuing an aggressive anti-corruption campaign while the families of many top CCP leaders have traded on their political connections to build massive fortunes.

Moreover, there is a potential contradiction between the goals of building PLA combat capabilities and emphasizing political education in order to maintain loyalty to the CCP. Every hour spent in political education is an hour taken from training and military tasks. If anti-corruption efforts reduce the ability of less capable military officers to buy senior positions, that is a positive thing for the PLA. But if political reliability outweighs military leadership capabilities as a criterion for promotion, this will have a negative impact on China's ability to create a military capable of fighting and winning informationized wars.

For now, Xi Jinping appears to have been successful in imposing his will on the PLA and in forcing needed reforms through. However, the PLA's satisfaction with the revised terms of the civil-military bargain could decline if Xi's leadership falters or if a slowing Chinese economy can no longer provide the resources needed to fuel military modernization. Because top military leaders ritualistically declare their loyalty to Xi and the CCP in their public speeches and writings, it will be easier for outsiders to gauge the PLA's progress in improving its joint operations capability than to assess the actual state of civil military relations.

A New Opportunity for U.S.-China Military Relations

Another implication of the reforms concerns the development of U.S.-China military relations. According to DOD, engaging the PLA provides "opportunities to explore and expand cooperation in areas of mutual interest and to manage competition constructively."²³⁴ Key areas

include senior leader dialogues; practical cooperation, including combined exercises and working-level discussions; and risk-reduction efforts such as confidence-building measures (CBMs) related to maritime and air-to-air encounters. Past exchanges have included contacts with organizations throughout the PLA, including the general departments, services, MRs, and academic institutions, as well as the Ministry of National Defense and CMC.

The PLA reorganization has implications for all aspects of the bilateral military relationship. First, the establishment of new organizations and positions could require adjustments in senior-level engagements. This is most relevant to cases in which the reforms created positions roughly equivalent to those in the U.S. system (see table 6). For instance, the new PLA army commander is a natural counterpart for the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, since both are responsible for training and equipping ground forces. That relationship has already begun to develop with a meeting of the U.S. and Chinese army chiefs in August 2016.²³⁵ The reformed CMC has also created positions similar to directors of several U.S. Joint Staff directorates. In other cases, there might be opportunities for additional dialogue on regional or functional issues. For instance, U.S. CCMD commanders might consider exploring dialogue opportunities with TC commanders, who are responsible for operations around China’s periphery, or with the JSD, responsible for overseas operations.

Second, the restructuring is relevant to practical exchanges and exercises. Those involved in such engagements might encounter representatives of new PLA organizations, such as the

Table 6. Possible Counterparts

Topic	U.S. Leader	PLA Counterpart
Army issues	U.S. Army Chief of Staff	PLA Army Commander
Space, cyber issues	Commander, U.S. Strategic Command	SSF Commander
North Korea	Commander, U.S. Forces Korea	Northern TC Commander
East China Sea	Commander, U.S. Pacific Command	Eastern TC Commander
South China Sea	Commander, U.S. Pacific Command	Southern TC Commander
MENA region	Commander, U.S. Central Command	Director, Joint Staff Department
Training, PME	Director, Joint Force Development (J7)	Director, Training Management Department
Logistics	Director, Logistics (J4)	Director, Logistics Support Department
Strategic Plans	Director, Strategic Plans and Policy (J5)	Director, Joint Staff Department

army headquarters or the JSD Overseas Operations Office, and will need to understand the roles and authority of their new interlocutors. PME exchanges, including those between the PLA and U.S. national defense universities, will also be affected to the extent that Chinese delegations are more focused on exchanging ideas on topics emphasized by the reforms, including joint operations. There will also likely be further implications for working-level exchanges in the coming years as the PLA adjusts its force structure as part of the larger reform program. These changes could create opportunities for combined exercises and interactions, though what those might be remains to be seen.

Third, the reforms require a reassessment of CBMs and crisis management procedures. This is particularly relevant in light of recent agreements, such as the establishment of a Defense Telephone Link that could be used to share information during a crisis.²³⁶ The creation of a joint C2 structure means that new organizations and individuals will play a role in crisis response. Overseas crises will likely be coordinated through the JSD, while TCs will likely play a key role in overseeing responses to crises around China's periphery, including in the South and East China seas. Thus, there is a need to decide whether the reforms require any changes to existing CBMs (such as hotlines), or whether new agreements are needed to ensure timely and accurate communication during a crisis.

Next Steps and Areas for Further Research

The structural changes announced in late 2015 and 2016 represent only the initial phase of a 5-year reform agenda. The *CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms* contains a specific timetable for additional reform areas through 2020, which is summarized in table 7. This section previews key changes that are anticipated in the next stages of reform, and then identifies several areas for continued research.²³⁷

Force Structure and Composition. One area of further reform concerns changes to the PLA's force structure and force composition. A key focus will likely be reducing and streamlining the organization of the PLA ground forces. Speculation in Hong Kong media suggested that the PLA's 18 group armies could be converted into a number of smaller, more agile divisions. Although the details remain uncertain, this type of shift would be consistent with a long-term trend toward a more deployable, combat-focused ground force that would be better suited for modern combined arms and joint operations.²³⁸ Moreover, the ground forces are expected to bear the large majority of the planned 300,000-person downsizing, set for completion by the end of 2017. Those cuts will focus on "troops equipped with outdated armaments, administra-

Table 7. PLA Reform Agenda Through 2020

Reform Area (English)	Reform Area (Chinese)	Topics	Target Completion
Leadership Management System	领导管理体制	Reforms to CMC departments, military services, logistics system, equipment development system	2015
Joint C2 System	联合作战指挥体制	Establish two-level joint command system, reform joint training, establish theater commands	2015
Military Scale Structure	军队规模结构	Reduce force size by 300,000, reduce noncombat personnel, reduce officer billets, phase out old equipment	2016
Force Composition	部队编成	Adjust force structure, optimize reserve force, reduce militias	2016
Cultivating New-Type Military Talent	新型军事人才培养	Enhance PME	2016
People's Armed Police (PA) Command and Control System (C2) and Force Composition	武装警察部队指挥管理体制和力量结构	Adjust PAP C2 and force structure	2016
Policy System	政策制度	Reform personnel system, budget management, procurement system, salary and welfare system	2017–2020
Developing Civil-Military Integration	军民融合发展	Enhance management of civilian-military integration	2017–2020
Military Legal System	军事法治体系	Reform military regulations and the military justice system	No date provided

Source: CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms [中央军委关于深化国防和军队改革的意见], Xinhua, January 1, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2016-01/01/c_1117646695.htm>.

tive staff, and non-combatant personnel.”²³⁹ By contrast, the navy, air force, and Rocket Force are likely to grow in size relative to the army and could add additional end strength.

Professional Military Education. Another area of reform concerns changes to the PME system. Weaknesses in officer education and training have long been highlighted in official PLA media. One recent formula describing these shortcomings is the “the five cannots” (五个不能, referring to commanders who cannot judge the situation, understand the intention of higher echelons, make operational decisions, deploy troops, and deal with unexpected situations).²⁴⁰ In particular, the PLA recognizes that it has a paucity of highly qualified joint commanders—who are needed to provide the human capital for effective joint operations. At an inspection tour of the PLA NDU in March 2016, Xi Jinping indicated that changes to the PME teaching and research agenda would be made to emphasize joint operations.²⁴¹ Specific changes were not immediately revealed, but could include earlier exposure to joint operations concepts and curriculum changes that put added emphasis on joint command.²⁴²

Personnel Policies. The PLA is also likely to overhaul its human resource system. Under the current system, officers simultaneously hold 1 of 10 ranks and 1 of 15 grades (meaning that there are multiple grades for each rank). Grades are the more important determinant of seniority, benefits, and career progression. In December 2016, China announced that it would implement a “rank-centered military officer system,” in which rank would play a more important career development role.²⁴³ Specifically, Chinese sources expected that there would be only one rank available for each position.²⁴⁴ The PLA could also be wrestling with changes that would complement the new joint operations system. Interviewees discuss a forthcoming “rotational” assignment system in which officers will rotate among different TCs, service headquarters, and CMC departments (as opposed to spending the majority of their career in one region). However, it is unclear whether the PLA will adopt a formal joint billet system or make joint experience a requirement for promotion.²⁴⁵

Military Laws and Regulations. Since the 1980s, the PLA has undertaken efforts to institute laws and rules governing military activities. The emphasis was on “regularizing” behavior in order to prevent abuses of power and promote better management. Hence, the Party restored military ranks (which had been eliminated during the Cultural Revolution) in the late 1980s, and issued guidelines in areas such as recruitment, promotions, retirement, procurement, and auditing.²⁴⁶ However, this process was frustrated by problems such as lack of professionalization of military courts and prosecutors, gaps in military legislation, and, perhaps more seriously, commanders who think that “their word is law.”²⁴⁷ As part of the Xi-era reforms, the PLA has already begun to strengthen relevant laws and regulations. In December 2016, for instance,

the military announced new auditing regulations and strengthened the power of auditors to investigate and penalize infractions.²⁴⁸

The reforms also raise a number of intriguing questions about the nature of authority in the PLA and the roles and functions of particular organizations. Further research will be needed to fully address these questions, which include the following:

- Division of authority within the joint C2 system. Chinese sources have not clearly defined the division of authority between the national and theater levels of the new joint C2 structure. The formula that the TCs are “mainly responsible for operations” leaves the impression that they will have broad discretion to develop and implement operational plans, similar to U.S. CCMDs. However, this leaves unanswered several key questions, such as how TC commanders will coordinate with the CMC, who will make key decisions at the strategic and operational levels, and what role the JSD (and its director) will play in the new system. Over the next few years, joint training and exercises will probably attempt to resolve these types of questions.
- Service component–TC coordination. Theater-level ground force and naval headquarters, as well as Rocket Force bases, are not collocated with TC headquarters (not unlike the situation in most of the U.S. regional CCMDs).²⁴⁹ This raises the question of how the TCs and services will coordinate both in a “steady-state” environment and during a contingency. Authoritative PRC media reporting suggests that one function of the new TC JOCCs is maintaining communications links with the service component headquarters, and that the centers will have personnel assigned to them from all the services.²⁵⁰ But more information on this relationship would be helpful in gauging how TCs will exercise operational control over units.
- Rocket Force C2 and scope of authority. Although authoritative Chinese sources emphasize consistency in the transition from SAF to the Rocket Force, it remains to be seen whether and how the migration of operational authority from service chiefs to theater commanders will affect the Rocket Force. Will Rocket Force commanders eventually have a formal role in the TC structure (for example, serving as dual-hatted theater deputy commanders alongside counterparts from other services)? How will theater commanders exercise operational authority over land-based conventional missile forces?²⁵¹ Any changes

could significantly alter the previous arrangement in which command and control over the SAF was highly centralized in the hands of the CMC.²⁵²

- Role of the SSF. TC commanders have been granted operational authority over army, navy, air force, and potentially conventional missile units within their area of responsibility. Less clear is the role of the SSF in the theaters. One indicator suggesting that the SSF is less well integrated in the theater commands is a *PLA Daily* report on the Eastern TC JOCC, which notes that personnel from all the services *except* the SSF were involved in the center's operations.²⁵³ Will the SSF headquarters in Beijing assign personnel and assets to the TCs on an ad hoc basis, or will the SSF maintain permanent units within the theaters? Answers would help clarify the nature, purpose, and organization of the SSF.

- Role of the JLSF. The Joint Logistics Support Force was announced in September 2016, after most of the other elements of the organizational restructuring were put into place. It is unclear which elements of the former GLD have moved into the CMC Logistics Support Department, which are now part of the army headquarters or the theater service component headquarters, and which are now part of the JLSF. A number of questions remain about relationship of the JLSF to the CMC Logistics Support Department, TCs, and service components and units within the theaters.²⁵⁴

- Xi's role. At face value, the reforms strengthen Xi's influence by emphasizing the "CMC chairmanship responsibility system," promoting Xi's thoughts and speeches on military issues, and naming him as commander in chief of the CMC JOCC. Yet it remains unclear how personally involved Xi is in the decisionmaking process, who his trusted military advisors are, and how he wields authority. It is also unclear what Xi's role would be in the event of a crisis relative to the CMC and Politburo Standing Committee. Insight into these questions would be useful in determining whether elite PLA decisionmaking will remain collective and institutionalized, or if (and in what ways) it is reverting to a more personalistic system driven primarily by the top leader's preferences and views.²⁵⁵

- Supervisory organizations. A key to the success of the reforms will be the effectiveness of three supervisory organizations within the CMC: the Audit Bureau, Political and Legal Affairs Commission, and Discipline Inspection Commission (see appendix 2 for details). If successful, these organizations could address problems such as financial waste, illegal

behavior, and corruption, especially in parts of the force especially prone to these problems (such as the former general departments). Complementing these organizations will be an overhaul of military laws and regulations.²⁵⁶ Yet the question remains: How effective will these reforms be in the context of a military that has been afflicted with widespread and long-term corruption? Details on the structure, operations, and results of these organizations will help answer this question.

■ Civilian oversight of the PLA. Whether the CMC reforms will strengthen civilian control over the PLA is an open question. The fact that the reforms were inaugurated at the Third Plenum in November 2013 signified that military reforms are an integral part of the national reform program and the legitimate business of the CCP Central Committee. But how civilian authorities, apart from Xi, might actually play a role in supervising PLA activities remains vague. One avenue would be through the development of institutional linkages between the CMC Political and Legal Affairs and Discipline Inspection commissions and their Central Committee counterparts. An indication of such linkages would be the seconding of staff from the civilian organizations to the CMC.

Conclusion

It is ironic that the PLA has executed its sweeping structural transformation just as the U.S. Congress and DOD are contemplating updates to the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Those may include reforms to the C2 system, CCMDs, acquisition process, and joint training guidelines.²⁵⁷ Although these proposed changes are relatively modest in comparison to the recent restructuring of the PLA, in both cases national leaders are wrestling with the question of how to improve efficiency and force management at a time of evolving strategic challenges and limited resources. For China, the lesson is that there is no real end point to reform, despite the official 2020 target completion date.²⁵⁸ Even if the analogy is inexact, China's "Goldwater Nichols" will itself need to be continually reevaluated and updated. That task will require a sustained commitment from Xi and his successor—and by those in the PLA tasked with bringing the reform vision into reality.

Appendix 1. Leadership

The PLA reforms resulted in a major reshuffling of senior People's Liberation Army (PLA) officers. While some senior PLA officers retain similar positions in the new organization, others were transferred to new posts. Details can be found in the table. Notable developments included:

- The four general department directors became directors of the successor Central Military Committee (CMC) departments (that is, Joint Staff, Political Work, Logistics Support, and Equipment Development). All remain CMC members.
- Directors of several CMC departments (such as the General Office and Audit Bureau) remain the same.
- Two Military Region (MR) deputy commanders became CMC department directors (for Training Management and National Defense Mobilization).
- Four of five theater commanders were former MR commanders, but all of them moved to different geographic regions. One theater commander is a former MR deputy commander.
- Four of five MR political commissars (PCs) became PCs of the successor theater commands (that is, in the same geographic region).
- The army is led by the former Chengdu MR commander and the PC from the Lanzhou MR.
- The Strategic Support Force is commanded by the former commandant of the PLA Academy of Military Science. Its PC is the former Beijing MR PC.

These assignments appear to reflect a transitional arrangement in which senior officers have retained their ranks and moved to new positions at an appropriate grade level. No senior officers were observed to have been dismissed from service as part of the restructuring. However, this is likely only a temporary situation, with important changes due at the 19th Party Congress in late 2017. By that time, many senior officers will have reached retirement age (65 for

Table. Confirmed Leadership of New PLA Organizations

Name (EN)	Name (CH)	Position	Previous Position	Service
CMC Departments, Commissions, and Offices				
General Office (办公厅)				
LTG Qin Shengxiang	秦生祥	Director	Same Position	Army
Joint Staff Department (联合参谋部)				
GEN Fang Fenghui	房峰辉	Chief of Staff; CMC Member	Chief of the General Staff, GSD; CMC Member	Army
Political Work Department (政治工作部)				
GEN Zhang Yang	张阳	Director; CMC Member	Director, GPD; CMC Member	Army
Logistics Support Department (后勤保障部)				
GEN Zhao Keshi	赵克石	Director; CMC Member	Director, GLD; CMC Member	Army
Equipment Development Department (装备发展部)				
GEN Zhang Youxia	张又侠	Director; CMC Member	Director, GAD; CMC Member	Army
GEN Wang Hongyao	王洪尧	PC	PC, GAD	Army
Training Management Department (训练管理部)				
LTG Zheng He	郑和	Director	Deputy Commander, Chengdu MR	Army
MG Zhang Shengmin	张升民	PC	Director, Second Artillery Political Department	Rocket Force
National Defense Mobilization Department (国防动员部)				
MG Sheng Bin	盛斌	Director	Deputy Commander, Shenyang MR	Army
MG Zhu Shengling	朱生岭	PC	Director, Nanjing MR Political Department	Army

Table. Confirmed Leadership of New PLA Organizations, cont.

Name (EN)	Name (CH)	Position	Previous Position	Service
Discipline Inspection Commission (纪律检查委员会)				
GEN Du Jincai	杜金才	Secretary General	GPD Deputy Director; Secretary General, GPD Discipline Inspection Commission	Army
Political and Legal Affairs Commission (政治法律委员会)				
LTG Li Xiaofeng	李晓峰	Secretary General	Chief Procurator, Military Prosecutor Office	Army
Science and Technology Commission (科学技术委员会)				
LTG Liu Guozhi	刘国治	Director	Deputy Director, GAD; Director, GAD S&T Commission	Army
Strategic Planning Office (战略规划办公室)				
MG Wang Huiqing	王辉青	Director	Director, GSD Strategic Planning Department	Army
Reform and Organization Office (改革和编制办公室)				
MG Wang Chengzhi	王成志	Director	PC, GPD Direct Work Department	Army
International Military Cooperation Office (国际军事合作办公室)				
RADM Guan Youfei	关友飞	Director	Director, MND FAO	Navy
Audit Bureau (审计署)				
MG Guo Chunfu	郭春富	Director	Same Position	Army

Table. Confirmed Leadership of New PLA Organizations, cont.

Name (EN)	Name (CH)	Position	Previous Position	Service
Organ Affairs General Management Bureau (机关事务管理总局)				
MG Liu Zhiming	刘志明	Director	Director, Shenyang MR Joint Logistics Department	Army
Services				
PLA Army (解放军陆军)				
LTG Li Zuocheng	李作成	Commander	Commander, Chengdu MR	Army
LTG Liu Lei	刘雷	PC	PC, Lanzhou MR	Army
PLA Rocket Force (解放军火箭军)				
GEN Wei Fenghe	魏凤和	Commander	Commander, SAF	Rocket Force
LTG Wang Jiasheng	王家胜	PC	PC, SAF	Rocket Force
PLA Strategic Support Force (解放军战略支援部队)				
LTG Gao Jin	高津	Commander	Commandant, AMS	Rocket Force*
GEN Liu Fulian	刘福连	PC	PC, Beijing MR	Army
Theater Commands				
Eastern Theater Command (东部战区)				
LTG Liu Yuejun	刘粤军	Commander	Commander, Lanzhou MR	Army
LTG Zheng Weiping	郑卫平	PC	PC, Nanjing MR	Army
Southern Theater Command (南部战区)				
VADM Yuan Yubai	袁誉柏	Commander (01/17-)	Commander, North Sea Fleet	Navy
GEN Wang Jiaocheng	王教成	Commander (01/16-12/16)	Commander, Shenyang MR	Army
GEN Wei Liang	魏亮	PC	PC, Guangzhou MR	Army

Table. Confirmed Leadership of New PLA Organizations, cont.

Name (EN)	Name (CH)	Position	Previous Position	Service
Western Theater Command (西部战区)				
LTG Zhao Zongqi	赵宗岐	Commander	Commander, Jinan MR	Army
LTG Zhu Fuxi	朱福熙	PC	PC, Chengdu MR	Air Force
Northern Theater Command (北部战区)				
LTG Song Puxuan	宋普选	Commander	Commander, Beijing MR	Army
GEN Chu Yimin	褚益民	PC	PC, Shenyang MR	Army
Central Theater Command (中部战区)				
LTG Han Weiguo	韩卫国	Commander	Deputy Commander, Beijing MR	Army
GEN Yin Fanglong	殷方龙	PC	Deputy Director, GPD	Army

Sources: “Leaders of One CMC Office, Six CMC Departments, Three CMC Commissions, and Service Commanders and Political Commissars Confirmed” [军委一厅六部三委负责人及军种司令政委确定], Xinhua, February 1, 2016, available at <http://news.china.com.cn/2016-02/02/content_37713482.htm>; “Directors of Newly Established 15 CMC Functional Departments Revealed” [中央军委新设15个职能部门负责人曝光], *People’s Daily Overseas Edition* [人民日报海外版], January 12, 2016, available at <<http://mil.zijing.org/2016/0112/680723.shtml>>.

*Unclear if service affiliation will change.

officers through MR Leader grade, and 70 for CMC members, with possible exceptions).²⁵⁹ New officers will be moved into key billets. The CMC will likely include the new army commander and perhaps the new Strategic Support Force commander. Whether CMC department directors will gain or lose CMC membership remains to be seen.²⁶⁰

Of note, the current leadership of the CMC departments and theater commands remains predominantly composed of officers from the ground forces. Notable exceptions include the Strategic Support Force commander, who is a former Second Artillery Force officer, and the Western Theater Command PC, who is an air force officer (but spent most of his career in the army). A new Southern theater command (TC) commander, Vice Admiral Yuan Yubai, appointed in January 2017, represented the first TC commander not drawn from the ground forces. The identities of lower level officers have generally not been announced, but many of these

are likely mostly ground force officers as well, especially within the CMC departments.²⁶¹ An important test of whether or not the PLA will be able to develop a genuine joint force will be the ability of officers from other services to assume leadership roles in the CMC departments and theater commands. The assignment of non-ground force officers as TC commanders, for example, would indicate progress in developing “jointness” in the PLA. Of the current 31 deputy theater commanders, 10 are air force officers and 6 are naval officers.²⁶²

Appendix 2. Central Military Committee Departments

This appendix describes the functions of the new Central Military Committee (CMC) departments, commissions, and offices that were announced on January 11, 2016. These are presented in the protocol order provided by authoritative People's Republic China (PRC) media accounts.²⁶³

Departments (部/厅)

General Office (办公厅). The CMC will retain a General Office. This is a deputy Military Region (MR) Leader-grade organization with responsibilities for managing information flows between CMC members and subsidiary departments, providing advice, and performing other duties, such as conducting policy research.²⁶⁴ Authoritative Chinese sources place the General Office ahead of all other CMC departments, including those led by former general department directors (that is, Joint Staff, Political Work, Logistics Support, and Equipment Development). This placement underscores the bureaucratic importance of the office in coordinating between other CMC departments and CMC members. The director of the office remains Lieutenant General Qin Shengxiang (秦生祥), a People's Liberation Army (PLA) political officer who previously served as director of the General Political Department (GPD) Organization Department. He has held the position since 2012.²⁶⁵ A key deputy is Major General Zhong Shaojun (钟绍军), who previously served as a civilian secretary (秘书) to Xi Jinping during provincial posts in Zhejiang and Shanghai.²⁶⁶ A notable change to the internal structure of the General Office is the move of the former General Office Foreign Affairs Office (FAO), which doubled as the Ministry of National Defense (MND) FAO, to a separate CMC department.

Joint Staff Department (联合参谋部). The Joint Staff Department (JSD) is responsible for command and control, "combat command support" (作战指挥保障), campaign planning, formulating military strategy, organizing joint training, performing combat capability assessments, and working to ensure combat readiness (战备建设).²⁶⁷ Thus, the department will perform many of the functions of the former General Staff Department's (GSD's) Operations Department (总参作战部).²⁶⁸ The organization could play a significant role in the evolving two-level joint command and control (C2) structure by serving as the institutional link between the CMC members and the five theater commands. However, past studies have indicated that the Communications and War Readiness Office of the CMC General Office has also played a C2 role.²⁶⁹ Thus, uncertainties remain about how the CMC will pass instructions to theater commanders during a crisis. The JSD also contains a new Overseas Operations Office (海外行

动处), which PLA interviewees suggest will play a role in “planning and coordination” for out-of-area operations, such as anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.²⁷⁰ Its director is former GSD chief of the general staff General Fang Fenghui (房峰辉), who remains a CMC member.²⁷¹

Political Work Department (政治工作部). The Political Work Department performs the duties of the previous GPD, including political education, “human resources management,” and overseeing Party organizations within the military. Some have speculated that the Political Work Department might assume the responsibilities of the former GSD Military Affairs Department for enlisted personnel management.²⁷² This department will be instrumental in strengthening the Party’s “absolute leadership” over the military, which has been a consistent theme of the reforms.²⁷³ Its director is former GPD director General Zhang Yang (张阳), who continues to hold his post as a CMC member.²⁷⁴

Logistics Support Department (后勤保障部). Next in protocol order is the Logistics Support Department, which is responsible for overseeing logistics support, setting standards, performing inspections, and carrying out other duties previously entrusted to the General Logistics Department (GLD).²⁷⁵ The former GLD’s Audit Bureau, which was transferred to the CMC in November 2014, will remain under direct CMC supervision (discussed below). A key focus of the new department will probably be on improving logistics support for joint operations, which has been an objective for several years.²⁷⁶ The relationship between the Logistics Support Department, Joint Logistics Support Force, services, and theater commands remains a key question. Its director is General Zhao Keshi (赵克石), who previously served as GLD director and remains a CMC member.²⁷⁷ General Zhao is expected to retire at the 19th Party Congress in late 2017, when he will be 70. The Logistics Support Department political commissar (PC) has not been announced; General Liu Yuan (刘源), the former GLD PC who had played an instrumental role in the anti-corruption campaign, retired in December 2015.²⁷⁸

Equipment Development Department (装备发展部). Like the former General Armament Department (GAD), the Equipment Development Department will perform research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E) functions, and will oversee procurement management and information systems building (信息系统建设) for the armed forces. However, the GAD’s Science and Technology Commission, which has been a nexus of civil-military cooperation on defense technological issues, will not migrate to the Equipment Development Department and will instead be placed directly under the CMC (more below). According to the MND, the PLA aims for a division of labor in RDT&E between the new CMC department, services, and theater commands, but how this will work in practice is unclear.²⁷⁹ The director is General Zhang Youxia (张又侠), who previously headed the GAD and is a member of the CMC.²⁸⁰ The PC is

former GAD PC General Wang Hongyao (王洪尧). Born in 1951, Wang will reach retirement age by the 19th Party Congress.

Training Management Department (训练管理部). The Training Management Department is responsible for overseeing training and professional military education, and will likely coordinate with the JSD, theater commands, and services to develop joint training requirements and assess training programs. It replaces the former GSD Military Training Department (总参军训部), a second-level (Corps Leader-grade) department stood up in 2011.²⁸¹ Establishing a training department under direct CMC supervision underscores the importance of strengthening “realistic” joint training across the PLA.²⁸² Discussions with PLA officers suggest that the department will not have oversight over the PLA National Defense University, Academy of Military Science, or National University of Defense Technology, which will remain under the direct supervision of the CMC.²⁸³ The director is Lieutenant General Zheng He (郑和), who has been deputy commander of the Chengdu MR since July 2015 and was earlier the director of the GSD Military Training Department. The PC is MG Zhang Shengmin (张升民), former head of the Second Artillery Corps Political Department.

National Defense Mobilization Department (国防动员部). The National Defense Mobilization Department has oversight over the reserve forces and the provincial military commands (省军区), which had previously been a function of the MRs.²⁸⁴ This department succeeds the former GSD Mobilization Department (总参动员部), a second-level (Corps Leader-grade) department. Elevating mobilization to a separate CMC department highlights the importance of “civil-military integration,” given the office’s oversight over reserve force and mobilization planning.²⁸⁵ The director is Major General Sheng Bin (盛斌), who was previously deputy commander of the Shenyang MR, while its PC is Major General Zhu Shengling (朱生岭), former director of the Nanjing MR Political Department.

Commissions (委员会)

Discipline Inspection Commission (纪律检查委员会). The CMC Discipline Inspection Commission is responsible for enforcing Party discipline within the PLA, including conducting investigations of suspected corrupt personnel. Its mission parallels that of the civilian Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC), which has played a prominent role in China’s anti-corruption campaign since late 2012. Although Chinese sources describe this commission as “new,”²⁸⁶ the CMC established a discipline inspection commission in November 1980.²⁸⁷ That commission was transferred to the GPD in 1990; thus, the reforms have brought it back under the direct oversight of the CMC. A key question concerns the relationships between

the Discipline Inspection Commission, Political Work Department, and CDIC in carrying out anti-corruption investigations. Its secretary general is General Du Jincai (杜金才), previously a GPD deputy director in charge of the discipline inspection commission. General Du will reach retirement age by the 19th Party Congress.

Political and Legal Affairs Commission (政法委员会). The GPD Political and Legal Affairs Commission, originally established as the Political and Legal Affairs Leading Small Group in 1982, was transferred to the CMC. This organization will establish regulations and legal norms to improve the administration and supervision of the PLA—what the Chinese armed forces call “regularization” (正规化).²⁸⁸ It will also “prevent, investigate, and deal with” criminal activities in the military.²⁸⁹ Centralizing the military’s legal system under the CMC will reduce the potential for interference with the enforcement of laws and regulations at lower levels. The organizational parallels the civilian Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, formerly under Zhou Yongkang, which supervises the legal and police systems. The secretary general of the CMC Political and Legal Affairs Commission is Lieutenant General Li Xiaofeng (李晓峰) who previously served as the PLA’s chief procurator.

Science and Technology Commission (科学技术委员会). The PLA’s Science and Technology Commission, previously an MR Leader–grade organization within the GAD, has been placed directly under the CMC.²⁹⁰ The commission will continue to be responsible for guiding and advising PLA leadership on weapons development and serving as a nexus for collaboration between the armed forces and defense industry.²⁹¹ Moving the commission to direct CMC oversight highlights the importance of civil-military integration to the PLA, a theme of the larger reforms. The commission is chaired by Lieutenant General Liu Guozhi (刘国治), who previously headed the GAD Science and Technology Commission.²⁹² Liu has a Ph.D. in physics from Tsinghua University and is regarded as an expert in accelerator physics and high-power microwave technology.²⁹³

Offices (办公室/署/总局)

Strategic Planning Office (战略规划办公室). The Strategic Planning Office is responsible for centralizing authority over “military strategic planning.”²⁹⁴ It replaces the GSD Strategic Planning Department, a Corps Leader–grade organization that had been established in 2011 and reportedly undertook functions such as long-term strategic analysis, resource allocation analysis, and organizational reform analysis.²⁹⁵ That department also carried out exchanges with the U.S. Joint Staff J5 (Strategic Plans and Policy) directorate. The new CMC department may continue to perform some of these roles, although organizational issues appear more likely to be

addressed within the CMC Reform and Organization Office (see below). The director is Major General Wang Huiqing (王辉青), who was previously director of the GSD Strategic Planning Department.

Reform and Organization Office (改革和编制办公室). The Reform and Organization Office is responsible for coordinating military reforms and managing the PLA's organizational structure.²⁹⁶ The organization is likely to coordinate closely with the CMC's military reform leading small group (中央军委深化国防和军队改革领导小组), which was established in 2014 to provide guidance for the entire military reform process that will be carried out through 2020.²⁹⁷ It appears to replace some functions of the former GSD Military Affairs Department (总参军务部), a Corps Leader-grade organization responsible for organizational planning.²⁹⁸ It may also acquire some responsibilities from the former GSD Strategic Planning Department related to organizational transformation. The original director of this office was Major General Wang Chengzhi (王成志), former director of the GPD Direct Work Department (总政直属工作部). In August 2016, it was announced that the new director would be Lieutenant General Qin Shengxiang, dual-hatted as director of the CMC General Office.²⁹⁹

International Military Cooperation Office (国际军事合作办公室). The CMC International Military Cooperation Office is responsible for managing foreign military exchanges and cooperation, and supervising foreign affairs work throughout the PLA.³⁰⁰ It replaces the previous MND FAO (国防部外事办公室), a Corps Leader-grade organization that doubled as the CMC General Office Foreign Affairs Office. However, the MND Information Affairs Bureau (国防部新闻事务局), part of the former FAO that conducts news briefings, appears to remain within MND. Establishing a separate office for foreign affairs under direct CMC oversight underscores the importance of military diplomacy, which has been an emphasis of Xi Jinping.³⁰¹ The director of the International Military Cooperation Office is Rear Admiral Guan Youfei (关友飞), who previously headed the MND Foreign Affairs Office.³⁰²

Audit Bureau (审计署). The Audit Bureau is responsible for conducting audits of PLA finances and supervising the military's audit system.³⁰³ This office was established in 1985 within the CMC, placed within the GLD in 1992, and returned to the CMC in November 2014.³⁰⁴ Like the Discipline Inspection Commission, the Audit Bureau will send inspection teams to units throughout the PLA to ensure compliance with rules and root out corruption.³⁰⁵ The director remains Major General Guo Chunfu (郭春富), who assumed his current position in December 2015.³⁰⁶

Organ Affairs General Management Bureau (机关事务管理总部). This is a new organization responsible for providing administrative support to CMC departments and subsidiary

organs.³⁰⁷ The office appears to have been a result of a merger between the former GSD Management Support Department (总参管理保障部), a Corps Leader-grade organization that served a logistics function (for example, facilities management), and similar offices from the other general departments.³⁰⁸ One role of the office will be “cutting support units and personnel” (减少保障机构和人员), which suggests that it will play a role in implementing the planned force reduction of 300,000 PLA personnel by the end of 2017.³⁰⁹ The director is Major General Liu Zhiming (刘志明), former head of the Shenyang MR Joint Logistics Department.

Acknowledgments

Kenneth Allen, Dennis Blasko, David Helvey, T.X. Hammes, Frank Hoffman, Alexander Huang, and Dennis Wilder all provided useful comments and feedback on earlier drafts. John Chen and David Logan provided valuable research assistance. Major David H. Bradley, USA, Major Jason K. Halub, USA, Miles Saunders, John Van Oudenaren, and Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Voss, USAFR, helped proofread the paper. Special thanks to Alexandra E. Utsey and Dr. John J. Church for assistance with graphics.

Notes

¹ For an overview, see *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2015* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense [DOD], 2015).

² See David M. Finkelstein and James Mulvenon, ed., *China's Revolution in Doctrinal Affairs* (Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analyses [CNA], 2005).

³ For an excellent analysis, see Adam P. Liff and Andrew S. Erickson, "Demystifying China's Defence Spending: Less Mysterious in the Aggregate," *The China Quarterly*, no. 216 (December 2013), 805–830.

⁴ *Annual Report to Congress, 2015*, i.

⁵ Michael S. Chase et al., *China's Incomplete Military Transformation* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2015).

⁶ Brian Lafferty, Aaron Shraberg, and Morgan Clemens, "China's Civil-Military Integration," SITC Research Brief 2013-10, January 2013.

⁷ Previous studies include Phillip C. Saunders and Joel Wuthnow, *China's Goldwater-Nichols? Assessing PLA Organizational Reforms*, INSS Strategic Forum 294 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, April 2016), available at <<http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-294.pdf>>; David M. Finkelstein, *Initial Thoughts on the Reorganization and Reform of the PLA* (Arlington, VA: CNA, 2016), available at <www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DOP-2016-U-012560-Final.pdf>; Kenneth Allen, Dennis Blasko, and John F. Corbett, "The PLA's New Organizational Structure: What Is Known, Unknown, and Speculation (Part 1)," *China Brief* 16, no. 3 (February 4, 2016), available at <www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45069&no_cache=1#.VxfOffnR_RY>; Manoj Joshi, "Xi Jinping and PLA Reform," *ORF Occasional Paper*, February 12, 2016, available at <www.orfonline.org/research/xi-jinping-and-pla-reform/>; and Anthony H. Cordesman, *Chinese Military Organization and Reform*, Center for Strategic and International Studies Report, August 1, 2016, available at <www.csis.org/analysis/chinese-military-organization-and-reform>. Also see the special section on Chinese military reform in *Joint Force Quarterly* 83 (4th Quarter 2016); and Dennis J. Blasko, "Integrating the Services and Harnessing the Military Area Commands," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 39, no. 5–6 (October 2016), 685–708.

⁸ See David Logan, "PLA Reforms and China's Nuclear Forces," *Joint Force Quarterly* 83 (4th Quarter 2016), 57–62.

⁹ For an overview, see Kenneth W. Allen, "Introduction to the PLA's Organizational Reforms: 2000–2012," in *The PLA as Organization v2.0*, ed. Kevin Pollpeter and Kenneth W. Allen (Vienna, VA: Defense Group, Inc., 2015), 12–78. In 1982, a Central Military Commission (CMC) was established under the State Council, but its membership is identical to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) CMC.

¹⁰ For details, see Alison A. Kaufman and Peter W. Mackenzie, *Field Guide: The Culture of the Chinese People's Liberation Army* (Arlington, VA: CNA, 2009), 25.

¹¹ David L. Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

¹² For a discussion, see Bates Gill, James C. Mulvenon, and Mark Stokes, "The Chinese Second Artillery Corps: Transition to Credible Deterrence," in *The People's Liberation Army as Organization*,

Reference Volume v1.0, ed. James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N.D. Yang (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), 510–586.

¹³ For a discussion of China's global interests, see Phillip C. Saunders, *China's Global Activism: Strategy, Drivers, and Tools* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2006); and David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁴ For a discussion, see Peng Wang, "Military Corruption in China: The Role of *Guanxi* in the Buying and Selling of Military Positions," *The China Quarterly*, no. 228 (2016), 970–991.

¹⁵ For an excellent overview, see Evan S. Medeiros et al., *A New Direction for China's Defense Industry* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2005).

¹⁶ For an excellent overview, see Kenneth W. Allen et al., *Institutional Reforms of the Chinese People's Liberation Army: Overview and Challenges* (Arlington, VA: CNA, 2002).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 67–68.

¹⁸ See, for instance, Minnie Chan, "Hu Jintao's Weak Grip on China's Army Inspired Xi Jinping's Military Shake-up: Sources," *South China Morning Post*, March 11, 2015, available at <www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1734663/hu-jintaos-weak-grip-chinas-army-inspired-president-xi-jinpings-military>.

¹⁹ "CCP Central Committee Decision on Deepening of Reforms for Major Issues" [中共中央关于全面深化改革若干重大问题的决定], Xinhua, November 15, 2013, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-11/15/c_118164235.htm>.

²⁰ "China's Reform Leading Group Holds First Meeting," Xinhua, January 22, 2014, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-01/22/c_133066240.htm>.

²¹ For details, see Yin Pumin, "War on Graft," *Beijing Review*, March 12, 2015, available at <www.bjreview.com.cn/nation/txt/2015-03/09/content_675435_2.htm>.

²² "Former Military Leader Guo Boxiong Expelled from CCP, to Face Justice," Xinhua, July 30, 2015, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-07/30/c_134464728.htm>; "PLA Backs Corruption Probe into Xu Caihou," Xinhua, July 31, 2014, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2014-07/31/content_6073368.htm>; "China's Disgraced PLA General Gu Junshan Given Suspended Death Sentence for Corruption," *South China Morning Post*, August 10, 2015, available at <www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1848264/chinas-disgraced-pla-general-gu-junshan-given-suspended>.

²³ According to *PLA Daily*, the outline was released to members of both the military and the People's Armed Police. "Resolutely Support Reform, Proactively Reinforce Reform, and Consciously Dedicate Oneself to Reform" [坚决拥护改革积极支持改革自觉投身改革], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], August 11, 2014, available at <http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/n2014/tp/content_6087746.htm>.

²⁴ "China to Cut Troops by 300,000: Xi," Xinhua, September 3, 2015, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-09/03/c_134583730.htm>. For an analysis, see John Chen, "Downsizing the PLA, Part 1: Military Discharge and Resettlement Policy, Past and Present," *China Brief* 16, no. 16 (October 26, 2016), 20–26; and John Chen, "Downsizing the PLA, Part 2: Military Discharge and Resettlement Policy, Past and Present," *China Brief* 16, no. 17 (November 11, 2016).

²⁵ "At CMC Reform Work Meeting, Xi Jinping Stresses: Comprehensively Implement Reform and Military Strengthening Strategy, Resolutely Take Path to Strong Military with Chinese Charac-

teristics” [习近平在中央军委改革工作会议上强调全面实施改革强军战略坚定不移走中国特色强军之路], Xinhua, November 26, 2015, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-11/26/c_1117274869.htm>.

²⁶ *CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms* [中央军委关于深化国防和军队改革的意见], Xinhua, January 1, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2016-01/01/c_1117646695.htm>.

²⁷ “CMC Promulgates 13th Development Plan for the Armed Forces” [中央军委颁发 ‘军队建设发展 “十三五”规划纲要’], Xinhua, May 12, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-05/12/c_1118855988.htm>.

²⁸ “Xi Jinping: Stress Politics, Strive for Winning, Render Service, Play an Exemplary Role, Endeavor to Build the CMC Organ with ‘Four Iron Qualities,’” Xinhua, January 11, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-01/11/c_1117739283.htm>.

²⁹ PLA English-language media have also referred to the Training Management Department as the “Training and Administration Department.”

³⁰ “Expert: PLA Strategic Support Force a Key to Win Wars,” *PLA Daily*, January 6, 2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/pla-daily-commentary/2016-01/06/content_6846500.htm>. For an analysis, see John Costello, “The Strategic Support Force: China’s Information Warfare Service,” *China Brief* 16, no. 3 (February 8, 2016), available at <www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45075&no_cache=1#.VxjQwfnR_rc>; and John Costello, “The Strategic Support Force: Update and Overview,” *China Brief* 16, no. 19 (December 21, 2016), available at <<https://jamestown.org/program/strategic-support-force-update-overview/>>.

³¹ Specifically, the previous director of the GPD Security Department (总政治部保卫局) became a deputy secretary general of the CMC Political and Legal Affairs Commission, suggesting that counterintelligence was placed with the latter. See “Former GPD Security Department Deputy Director Lu Chungeng Appointed Director of the CMC Political and Legal Affairs Commission Comprehensive Bureau” [原总政保卫部副部长陆春耕出任军委政法委综合局局长], *The Paper* [彭派], August 31, 2016, available at <www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1522183>.

³² Nan Li, “Xi Jinping and PLA Restructuring,” paper presented at the 2016 CAPS-RAND-NDU Conference on the People’s Liberation Army, November 19, 2016.

³³ For details, see Kevin Pollpeter and Amy Chang, “General Armament Department,” in *The PLA as Organization v2.0*, 228–231.

³⁴ The authors thank Dennis Blasko for pointing this out.

³⁵ Allen, Blasko, and Corbett, “(Part 1).”

³⁶ For instance, Major General Chi Xingbei, former PC of the GAD Scientific Research and Purchasing Department, became PC of the PLA Army Logistics Department.

³⁷ This fact should not be over-interpreted; Chinese interlocutors emphasize that general offices (whether of the State Council or the CCP Central Committee) are always listed first in precedence.

³⁸ Tai Ming Cheung, “The Riddle in the Middle: China’s Central Military Commission in the Twenty-first Century,” in *PLA Influence on China’s National Security Policymaking*, ed. Phillip C. Saunders and Andrew Scobell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 90–92.

³⁹ Interviews, 2016.

⁴⁰ Cheng Li, “Promoting ‘Young Guards’: The Recent High Turnover in the PLA Leadership (Part III: Personal and Political),” *China Leadership Monitor* 50 (Summer 2016), 6.

⁴¹ “Central Military Commission Opinion on Deepening National Defense and Armed Force Reforms” [中央军委关于深化国防和军队改革的意见], *Xinhua*, January 1, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2016-01/01/c_1117646695.htm>.

⁴² “Li Zuocheng’s First Media Appearance as the PLA’s First Ground Force Commander” [出任首任陆军司令员后，李作成首次接受媒体专访], *People’s Daily* [人民日报], January 31, 2016, available at <http://news.ifeng.com/a/20160130/47302756_0.shtml>.

⁴³ “The Eastern Theater Army Gathers All Elite Forces in the Eastern Region, Possesses the Most Advanced Equipment” [东部战区陆军整合东部精锐力量 列装最先进装备], *Global Times* [环球时报], February 3, 2016, available at <<http://mil.huanqiu.com/observation/2016-02/8496145.html>>.

⁴⁴ One apparent change was the appointment of Major General Fang Xiang as head of the Rocket Force Political Work Department. Fang was previously assigned to the People’s Armed Police. See “Nan Du Reveals First Rocket Force 11-Person Leadership Team, 1 Person Enters from Outside” [南都披露火箭军首任11人领导班子 1人由外单位调入], *Nanfang Dushi Bao* [南方都市报], January 4, 2016, available at <<http://news.oeeee.com/html/201601/04/352197.html>>.

⁴⁵ “Establishment Ceremony Held in Beijing for Army Leading Organ, Rocket Force, Strategic Support Force” [陆军领导机构火箭军战略支援部队成立大会在京举行], *Xinhua*, January 1, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-01/01/c_1117646667.htm>; “Xi Jinping Calls for Powerful Missile Force,” *Xinhua*, December 5, 2012, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-12/05/c_132021964.htm>.

⁴⁶ “China’s Nuclear Policy, Strategy Consistent: Spokesperson,” *Xinhua*, January 1, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/01/c_134970409.htm>.

⁴⁷ “Establishment Ceremony Held in Beijing.”

⁴⁸ Some U.S. analysts contend that the SSF is not a service, since its formal title does not include the character *jun* [军]. See Allen, Blasko, and Corbett, “(Part 1).” However, there is ambiguity about the SSF’s status as some authoritative Chinese sources refer to it as a “service” [军种]. See, for instance, “Services Such as the Rocket Force and Strategic Support Force [Conduct] Joint Readiness [Drills] During Spring Festival” [火箭军、战略支援部队等军种春节联合战备], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], February 10, 2016, available at <<http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0210/c1011-28118502.html>>.

⁴⁹ For a discussion, see Joe McReynolds, “China’s Evolving Perspectives on Network Warfare: Lessons from the Science of Military Strategy,” *China Brief* 15, no. 8 (April 16, 2015), available at <www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=43798#.Vz3Y9vnR_RY>.

⁵⁰ “More Advanced than the U.S. System! A Brilliant Future for China’s Building the Strategic Support Force” [比美军体系更先进！中国建战略支援部队大有可为], *China Online* [中华网], January 3, 2016, available at <<http://military.china.com/wemedia/11173748/20160103/21063720.html>>. For a discussion of Chinese strategic thinking on the information domain, see Kevin Pollpeter, “Controlling the Information Domain: Space, Cyber, and Electronic Warfare,” in *Strategic Asia 2012-2013: China’s Military Challenge*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis and Travis Tanner (Seattle, WA: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012), 163–196.

⁵¹“Demystifying Our Army’s First Strategic Support Force” [揭秘我军首支战略支援部队], *People’s Daily* [人民日报], January 24, 2016, available at <http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2016-01/24/nw.D110000renmrb_20160124_1-06.htm>.

⁵²Weibo Account of Senior Colonel Shao Yongling, January 1, 2016.

⁵³“Expert: The Strategic Support Force Is a Key to Winning throughout the Course of Operations” [专家：战略支援队将贯穿作战全过程是致胜关键], *People’s Daily Online* [人民网], January 5, 2016, available at <<http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0105/c1011-28011251.html>>.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Interviews, 2016.

⁵⁶For a discussion, see Leigh Ann Luce and Erin Richter, “Handling Logistics in a Reformed PLA: The Long March Towards Joint Logistics,” paper presented at the CAPS-RAND-NDU Conference on the People’s Liberation Army, November 19, 2016.

⁵⁷“China Sets Up Joint Logistics Force, Xi Confers Flag,” Xinhua, September 13, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-09/13/c_135685473.htm>.

⁵⁸“China’s Military Regrouped into Five PLA Theater Commands,” Xinhua, February 1, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-02/01/c_135065429.htm>. The term 战区 has been translated into English in several ways, including “theater commands,” “war zones,” and “strategic regions.” This report follows official PRC English language reports in translating the term as “theater commands.”

⁵⁹Kenneth W. Allen et al., *Institutional Reforms of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army: Overview and Challenges* (Arlington, VA: CNA, 2002), 32–34.

⁶⁰Dennis J. Blasko, “A New Force Structure,” in *The People’s Liberation Army in the Information Age*, ed. James C. Mulvenon and Richard H. Yang (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999), 284.

⁶¹“Spokesperson: PLA’s Theater Commands Adjustment and Establishment Accomplished,” *China Military Online*, February 2, 2016, available at <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/DefenseNews/2016-02/02/content_4639118.htm>.

⁶²Wang Xiaohui [王晓辉], “What Types of Strategic Preparations Must China’s Military Undertake?” [中国军队要做哪些战略准备], *Southern Weekend* [南方周末], September 11, 2015, available at <<http://www.infzm.com/content/111700>>. Senior Colonel Wang is deputy director of the PLA NDU’s Strategic Research Department.

⁶³“Forging a Strong and Comprehensive Joint Operations Command Structure” [锻造全面过硬的联合作战指挥机构], *Renmin Ribao* [人民日报], February 28, 2016, available at <<http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0228/c1011-28155506.html>>.

⁶⁴Interviews, 2016.

⁶⁵“Army Adjustment and Establishment Completed in Five Theater Commands,” *China Military Online*, February 4, 2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-02/04/content_6890499.htm>. Of note, this map should not be treated as definitive. A report in the *Beijing Youth Daily* states that the map is “ambiguous,” and potentially contains inaccuracies, such as depicting Yunnan Province as belonging to the Western TC, when in fact some media reports place Yunnan in the Southern TC. The article states that the map should be used only for “reference” purposes and not treated as definitive of actual geographic boundaries. See “Designation of the

Five Theater Commands: Your Home Is Under the Protection of Which Theater Command?" [五大战区划设: 你的家乡在哪个战区的保护之下], *Beijing Youth Daily Online* [北青网], February 10, 2016, available at <<http://news.qq.com/a/20160210/005411.htm>>.

⁶⁶ There is some ambiguity about whether the Shandong Peninsula (and the North Sea Fleet, based in Qingdao) is assigned to the Central or Northern TC. The map included on the PLA's official Web site appears to show Shandong included in the Northern TC. See also "Decoding the Military Reform: The North Sea Fleet Belongs to the Northern Theater Command, the Rocket Force Is Directly under the Central Military Commission" [军改解读: 北海舰队属北部战区 火箭军直属军委], *Global Times* [环球时报], February 5, 2016, available at <<http://mil.huanqiu.com/observation/2016-02/8510312.html>>. However, another popular but nonauthoritative newspaper report depicts the North Sea Fleet as part of the Central TC. See "Xi Jinping Presents Flags to Five Theater Commands" [习近平向五大战区授予军旗], *Jinghua Shibao* [京华时报], February 2, 2016, available at <http://epaper.jinghua.cn/html/2016-02/02/content_278482.htm>.

⁶⁷ Minnie Chan and Choi Chi-yuk, "Navy Man Tipped to Command PLA's Key Southern Region," *South China Morning Post*, January 13, 2017.

⁶⁸ *Directory of PRC Military Personalities March 2014*.

⁶⁹ *Directory of PRC Military Personalities March 2016*.

⁷⁰ For a discussion of potential changes to PLA ranks and grades, see Kenneth Allen, Dennis J. Blasko, and John Corbett, "The PLA's New Organizational Structure: What Is Known, Unknown, and Speculation (Part 2)," *China Brief* 16, no 4 (February 23, 2016), available at <http://www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45124#.VucB5uLR_RY>. After the reforms, the name of this grade transitioned from "MR Leader" to "TC Leader" [战区级].

⁷¹ "Central Military Commission Opinion on Deepening National Defense and Armed Force Reforms."

⁷² "Army Adjustment and Establishment Completed in Five Theater Commands," *PLA Daily*, February 4, 2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-02/04/content_6890499.htm>.

⁷³ Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, March 25, 2013), available at <www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Interview, 2016.

⁷⁵ "PLA Carries Out Historic Medical Mission in South China Sea," *China Daily*, April 18, 2016, available at <www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-04/18/content_24623939.htm>.

⁷⁶ "China Raises Tibet Military Command's Power Rank," *Global Times*, May 13, 2016, available at <www.globaltimes.cn/content/982843.shtml>.

⁷⁷ The authors thank Kenneth Allen for this insight.

⁷⁸ Finkelstein, "Initial Thoughts on the Reorganization and Reform of the PLA," 18; James C. Mulvenon, "China's 'Goldwater-Nichols'? The Long-Awaited PLA Reorganization Has Finally Arrived," *China Leadership Monitor* 49 (Winter 2016); Saunders and Wuthnow, "China's Goldwater-Nichols?" 3–5. For a discussion of the contents and impact of the Goldwater-Nichols Act on the U.S. military, see James R. Locher III, "Taking Stock of Goldwater-Nichols," *Joint Force Quarterly* 13 (Fall 1996), 10–16; James R. Locher III, "Has It Worked? The Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act," *Naval War College*

Review 54, no. 4 (Autumn 2001), 95–115; and James R. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2002).

⁷⁹ For the formal delineation of responsibilities, see Joint Publication 1, especially II-9, which defines the operational and administrative command relationships in the U.S. military.

⁸⁰ This phenomenon is known as “institutional isomorphism” in the sociology literature. See Paul J. Dimaggio and Walter W. Powell, “The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields,” *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (April 1983), 147–160.

⁸¹ “Seizing Opportunities to Speed the Pace of Reforms Affects the Development and Future of Army Building” [抓住时机加快改革步伐关系军队发展和未来], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], May 28, 2014, available at <<http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2014/0528/c83083-25075239.html>>.

⁸² Wang Weixing, ed., *Research on the Development of In-Depth Reforms of Foreign Militaries* [外国军事改革深入发展研究] (Beijing: Academy of Military Sciences Press, 2014).

⁸³ Wang Xiaohui, “What Strategic Preparations Must the PLA Take in a Period of Transition?” [转型期中国军队要做哪些战略准备], *National Defense Reference* [国防参考], October 27, 2015, available at <www.81.cn/jmywyl/2015-10/27/content_6741609.htm>.

⁸⁴ For an excellent analysis, see Yevgen Sautin, “The Influence of Russian Military Reform on PLA Reorganization,” *China Brief* 16, no. 6 (March 28, 2016), available at <www.jamestown.org/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45236#.VzzyI_nR_RY>.

⁸⁵ For a discussion, see Joel Wuthnow, “A Brave New World for Chinese Joint Operations,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, forthcoming.

⁸⁶ Interviews, 2016; PLA service academy delegation visit to U.S. NDU, 2016.

⁸⁷ Chinese sources often refer to “joint” (联合) operations to describe not only cross-service, but also combined arms and international operations. The term is used here to apply only to cross-service operations.

⁸⁸ Dean Cheng, “Chinese Lessons from the Gulf Wars,” in *Chinese Lessons from Other Peoples’ Wars*, ed. Andrew Scobell, David Lai, and Roy Kamphausen (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 153–200.

⁸⁹ See Wuthnow, “A Brave New World for Chinese Joint Operations”; Allen et al., *Institutional Reforms of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army: Overview and Challenges* (Arlington, VA: CNA, 2002); Dean Cheng, “*Zhanyixue* and Joint Campaigns,” in *China’s Revolution in Doctrinal Affairs*, ed. James C. Mulvenon and David M. Finkelstein (Arlington, VA: CNA, 2005); Wanda Ayuso and Lonnie Henley, “Aspiring to Jointness: PLA Training, Exercises, and Doctrine, 2008-2012,” in *Assessing the People’s Liberation Army in the Hu Jintao Era*, ed. Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Travis Tanner (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2014), 171–205; and Mark Cozad, “PLA Joint Training and Implications for Future Expeditionary Capabilities,” testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, January 21, 2016, available at <www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT451/RAND_CT451.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Visit by a PLA service academy delegation to NDU, April 2016.

⁹¹ For an overview, see Dean Cheng, “The PLA’s Wartime Structure,” in *PLA as Organization v2.0*, 453–476.

⁹² Wang Xiaohui, “What Types of Strategic Preparations Must China’s Military Undertake?” [中国军队要做哪些战略准备], *Southern Weekend* [南方周末], September 11, 2015, available at <www.infzm.com/content/111700>.

⁹³ “CPC Central Committee Decision on Deepening of Reforms for Major Issues.”

⁹⁴ “Xi Jinping: Build a Modern Military Power System with Chinese Characteristics” [习近平: 构建中国特色现代军事力量体系], *People’s Daily* [人民日报], August 31, 2014, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2014-08/31/c_1112295195_2.htm>. The article provides quotes from Xi’s remarks on military reform made on December 27, 2013.

⁹⁵ *NIDS China Security Report 2016* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2016), 62–63.

⁹⁶ “At CMC Reform Work Meeting, Xi Jinping Stresses.”

⁹⁷ *CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms*.

⁹⁸ “Zhang Junshe: Creating New Theaters Better Protects National Sovereignty” [张军社: 重新划设战区可更好维护国家主权], China National Radio, February 4, 2016, available at <http://military.cnr.cn/gz/20160201/t20160201_521303310.html>. Senior Captain Zhang is vice president of the PLA Naval Research Institute.

⁹⁹ “Army Adjustment and Establishment Completed in Five Theater Commands,” *China Military Online*, February 4, 2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-02/04/content_6890499.htm>.

¹⁰⁰ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle,” *China Military Online*, January 12, 2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-01/12/content_6854444.htm>.

¹⁰¹ The J3 is responsible for relaying communications between the President and Secretary of Defense to CCMD commanders regarding current operations and plans. See <www.jcs.mil/Directorates/J3%7COperations.aspx>.

¹⁰² “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

¹⁰³ “Defense Ministry’s Regular Press Conference on Mar. 31,” PRC Ministry of National Defense, March 31, 2016, available at <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/DefenseNews/2016-03/31/content_4648193.htm>.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, 2016. In addition, the office helps to plan and carry out international exercises. See “PLA Sets Up Overseas Operations Office to Strengthen Overseas Rapid Reaction,” *China Military Online*, March 25, 2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/pla-daily-commentary/2016-03/25/content_6977517.htm>.

¹⁰⁵ Discussion with midlevel PLA officer, October 2016.

¹⁰⁶ This is reflected in the Southern TC commander’s comments that the TCs have authority over “all types of national defense mobilization forces” (各种国防动员力量) within their area of responsibility. See “Southern Theater Commander: Safeguarding South China Sea Rights and Interests Is Our Most Important Mission” [南部战区司令员: 维护南海权益是最重要使命], *People’s Daily* [人民日报], February 28, 2016, available at <www.chinanews.com/mil/2016/02-28/7775861.shtml>.

¹⁰⁷ Joint C2 has been a focus of several recent major PLA exercises. For details, see Cozad, “PLA Joint Training and Implications for Future Expeditionary Capabilities.”

¹⁰⁸ “Transcript of Eastern Theater Commander Liu Yuejun’s Interview” [东部战区司令员刘粤军访谈录], *China Military Online* [中国军网], March 3, 2016, available at <<http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/>>

zhuanti/content/2016-03/04/content_6940918.htm>.

¹⁰⁹“Starting with a New Style under Fluttering Red Combat Flags: Observations on the New Theater Commands” [开局新风起 猎猎战旗红：东南西北中五战区成立伊始见闻], Xinhua Online [新华网], February 2, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-02/02/c_1117973365.htm>; and Zhang Hui, “PLA Rocket Force Names 100 Officers to Commands,” *Global Times*, April 12, 2016, available at <www.globaltimes.cn/content/978291.shtml>.

¹¹⁰ However, note that one report of Rocket Force training orders a RF battalion to “cooperate with theater command units to carry out firepower strikes.” The phrase “cooperate with” implies that RF units might not be under direct control of the theater. See Duan Jiangshan and Feng Lei, “Rocket Force Base Organizes Assembly Training for Battalion-Level Commanders” [火箭军墨某基地组织营级指挥员集训], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], March 17, 2016, available at <www.81.cn/jfjmap/content/2016-03/17/content_138031.htm>.

¹¹¹ One reason is that missile base commanders are corps-level officers, while TC-based army, air force, and naval service component commanders are MR Deputy Leader-grade officers. The authors thank Dennis Blasko for this insight.

¹¹² “Starting with a New Style under Fluttering Red Combat Flags.”

¹¹³ This center was reportedly constructed in the 1950s and designated as a command center in the event of a nuclear attack. It gained attention when the PLA denied a request by then U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to visit the facility. See “China’s Military Center Off-Limits,” *Washington Times*, October 14, 2005, available at <www.washingtontimes.com/news/2005/oct/14/20051014-114525-9990r/?page=all>.

¹¹⁴ “Chinese Military Set up Joint Operations Command Center: Sources,” Kyodo, August 7, 2014, available at <www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/08/07/asia-pacific/chinese-military-set-joint-operations-command-center-sources/#.VsMI-vnR_IU>.

¹¹⁵ Harry Kazianis, “The Strategy Behind China’s ADIZ in the East China Sea,” *Asia Times*, March 17, 2016, available at <<http://atimes.com/2016/03/the-strategy-behind-chinas-adiz-in-the-east-china-sea/>>.

¹¹⁶ Austin Ramzy, “China’s President, Xi Jinping, Gains a New Title: Commander in Chief,” *New York Times*, April 21, 2016, available at <www.nytimes.com/2016/04/22/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-military-commander.html>.

¹¹⁷ Interview, 2016.

¹¹⁸ “Starting with a New Style under Fluttering Red Combat Flags.”

¹¹⁹ “Xi Jinping Inspects CMC Joint Operations Command Center” [习近平视察军委联合作战指挥中心], China Central Television Online [央视网], April 20, 2016, available at <<http://news.sina.com.cn/c/nd/2016-04-20/doc-ixrpxvea1017691.shtml>>; “Starting with a New Style under Fluttering Red Combat Flags.”

¹²⁰ For a discussion, see Cortez Cooper, “Joint Anti-Access Operations: China’s ‘System-of-Systems’ Approach,” testimony for the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, January 11, available at <www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/2011/RAND_CT356.pdf>.

¹²¹ *China’s Military Strategy* [中国军事战略], PRC State Council Information Office, May 2015, available at <www.mod.gov.cn/affair/2015-05/26/content_4588132.htm>.

¹²² Costello, “The Strategic Support Force: China’s Information Warfare Service”; and Costello, “The Strategic Support Force: Update and Overview.”

¹²³ Kevin Pollpeter, “Towards an Integrative C4ISR System: Informationization and Joint Operations in the People’s Liberation Army,” in *The PLA at Home and Abroad: Assessing the Operational Capabilities of China’s Military*, ed. Roy Kamphausen et al. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), 193–236.

¹²⁴ Costello, “The Strategic Support Force: China’s Information Warfare Service”; and Costello, “The Strategic Support Force: Update and Overview.”

¹²⁵ Chase et al., 116.

¹²⁶ “Expert: The Strategic Support Force Is a Key to Winning Throughout the Course of Operations” [专家：战略支援队将贯穿作战全过程是致胜关键], *People’s Daily Online* [人民网], January 5, 2016, available at <<http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0105/c1011-28011251.html>>.

¹²⁷ “Demystifying Our Army’s First Strategic Support Force” [揭秘我军首支战略支援部队], *People’s Daily* [人民日报], January 24, 2016, available at <http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2016-01/24/nw.D110000renmrb_20160124_1-06.htm>.

¹²⁸ For an overview of centrally managed assets in the pre-reform PLA, see Mark Stokes, “Employment of National-Level PLA Assets in a Contingency: A Cross-Strait Conflict as Case Study,” in *The People’s Liberation Army and Contingency Planning in China*, ed. Andrew Scobell et al. (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2015), 135–158.

¹²⁹ Dennis J. Blasko, “The PLA Army/Ground Forces,” in *The PLA as Organization v2.0*, 267.

¹³⁰ See *Science of Military Strategy* [战略学] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science, 2013), 201.

¹³¹ “Li Zuocheng’s First Media Appearance as the PLA’s First Ground Force Commander” [出任首任陆军司令员后，李作成首次接受媒体专访], *People’s Daily* [人民日报], January 31, 2016, available at <http://news.ifeng.com/a/20160130/47302756_0.shtml>.

¹³² Interview, 2013. A PLA spokesman stated that the cut would target “troops equipped with outdated equipment, office staff, and personnel of non-combat organizations,” though he did not specifically state how the services would be affected. See “Defense Ministry Holds Press Conference on V-Day Parade, Cut of Troops’ Number,” *China Military Online*, September 3, 2015, available at <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/DefenseNews/2015-09/03/content_4617101.htm>.

¹³³ The PLA could also disaggregate SSF and JLSF personnel from the Army, which would help bring the official Army figures into balance with the other services. The authors thank Dennis Blasko for this insight.

¹³⁴ Interviews, 2016.

¹³⁵ See Cozad, “PLA Joint Training and Implications for Future Expeditionary Capabilities.”

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Discussion with a senior PLA officer, April 2016.

¹³⁸ “CCP Central Committee Decision on Deepening of Reforms for Major Issues.”

¹³⁹ “Fang Fenghui: Firmly Implement Chairman Xi’s Important Instructions and the CMC’s Decisions” [房峰辉：坚决贯彻习主席重要指示和军委决策部署], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], December 31, 2013, available at <<http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2013/1231/c64102-23990954.html>>.

¹⁴⁰ *CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms*.

¹⁴¹ “PLA Restructuring Changes Focus at Military Schools,” *China Daily*, April 28, 2016, available at <www.china.org.cn/china/2016-04/28/content_38341095.htm>.

¹⁴² Mark A. Stokes and Ian Easton, “The Chinese People’s Liberation Army General Staff Department: Evolving Organizations and Missions,” in *The PLA as Organization v2.0*, 154–157.

¹⁴³ It may also produce a revised Outline of Military Training and Evaluation (OMTE). The last OMTE was published in July 2008 and took effect in 2009. See “New Outline of Military Training and Evaluation Promulgated,” *Chinamil*, July 25, 2008.

¹⁴⁴ “CMC Sends Training Supervision Teams to All Theater Commands and Some Service Units” [中央军委训练监察组进驻各战区和军种部分单位], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], May 11, 2016, available at <http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/n2014/tp/content_7011148.htm>.

¹⁴⁵ However, the PLA NDU and Academy of Military Science will remain directly under the CMC. Discussion with midlevel PLA officer, October 2016.

¹⁴⁶ Zhang Shibo and Liu Yazhou, “Strive to Build the Highest Military Academy with the World’s Advanced Standards and Unique Chinese Characteristics” [努力建设具有世界先进水平和中国特色的最高军事学府], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], April 17, 2016, available at <<http://mil.sohu.com/20160418/n444670851.shtml>>.

¹⁴⁷ For instance, there is reportedly a joint staff course for mid-career officers that involves rotations at the PLAAF, PLAN, PLARF, and PLAA command academies. Discussion with a senior PLA officer, April 2016.

¹⁴⁸ For a discussion, see Susan Puska, “The People’s Liberation Army General Logistics Department: Toward Joint Logistics Support,” in *The PLA as Organization, Reference Volume v1.0*, 247–272.

¹⁴⁹ Susan Puska, “Taming the Hydra: Trends in China’s Military Logistics Since 2000,” in *The PLA at Home and Abroad: Assessing the Operational Capabilities of China’s Military*, ed. Roy Kamphausen et al. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2010), 553–624.

¹⁵⁰ Roger Cliff, *China’s Military Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 150.

¹⁵¹ “Reform of Logistics Policy, System, and Support Forces Comprehensively Initiated” [后勤政策制度和保重力量改革全面启动], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], March 20, 2014, available at <<http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2014-03-21/033929757044.shtml>>.

¹⁵² *CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms*.

¹⁵³ For details, see Joint Publication 4-0, *Joint Logistics* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, October 16, 2013), available at <www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp4_0.pdf>.

¹⁵⁴ “Xi Jinping Shifts Control of PLA Audit Office to Military’s Top Decision-Making Body,” *South China Morning Post*, November 7, 2014, available at <www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1633802/xi-jinping-shifts-control-pla-audit-office-militarys-top-decision-making>.

¹⁵⁵ One way it will do this is by dispatching 10 anti-corruption teams across the PLA, though it is unclear how much this will focus on the logistics system. See “Inspectors to Cover all of Military,” *China Daily*, May 5, 2016, available at <http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-05/06/content_25096733.htm>.

¹⁵⁶ In addition to the stories cited above, Chinese press reports claimed that Hu Jintao rarely visited his CMC office, in contrast to Xi Jinping, who reportedly spends a half-day working on military issues every week. Ji Beiqun, “To Reshuffle Military Generals as Fast as Mao: Xi Jinping’s

‘Foresight’” [军队换将直追毛泽东习近平 “深谋远虑”], Duowei Newsnet [多维新闻], January 10, 2015, available at <<http://china.dwnnews.com/news/2015-01-10/59629032.html>>.

¹⁵⁷ Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is Chinese Nationalism Rising? Evidence from Beijing,” *International Security* 41, no. 3 (Winter 2016–2017), 38. Johnston cites a speech that Xi purportedly gave in December 2012 containing an analysis of the causes of the Soviet collapse.

¹⁵⁸ Susan Finder, “Ruling the PLA According to Law: An Oxymoron?” *China Brief* 15, no. 21 (November 2, 2015), available at <<https://jamestown.org/program/ruling-the-pla-according-to-law-an-oxymoron/>>.

¹⁵⁹ *CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms*.

¹⁶⁰ Sun Chiaye, “Who Is Responsible on the Central Military Commission? [中央軍委誰負責], *Ming Pao* [明報], January 29, 2015, cited in James Mulvenon, “The Yuan Stops Here: Xi Jinping and the ‘CMC Chairman Responsibility System,’” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 47 (Summer 2015), available at <www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm47jm.pdf>. Of note, the CMC chairmanship responsibility system is not new but rather contained in the PRC constitution, issued in December 1982, which states that the CMC chairman “assumes overall responsibility for the work of the Central Military Commission.”

¹⁶¹ Mulvenon, “The Yuan Stops Here.”

¹⁶² “The Communiqué of the Sixth Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China,” Xinhua, October 27, 2016.

¹⁶³ Wang Yushan, “The Central Military Commission Holds Its Executive Meeting to Study and Implement the Spirit of the Sixth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee,” Xinhua, November 3, 2016.

¹⁶⁴ “Reconfiguring Leadership and Command System of Our Military Is the Inevitable Choice for Strengthening and Reinvigorating the Military” [重塑我军领导指挥体制是强军兴军的必然选择], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], November 30, 2015.

¹⁶⁵ Minnie Chan, “Xi Jinping Shifts Control of PLA Audit Office to Military’s Top Decision-making Body,” *South China Morning Post*, November 7, 2014, available at <www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1633802/xi-jinping-shifts-control-pla-audit-office-militarys-top-decision-making>.

¹⁶⁶ “Xi Urges Breakthrough in Military Structural Reform,” Xinhua, November 26, 2015, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-11/26/c_134859089.htm>.

¹⁶⁷ “Military Experts Interpret National Defense and Military Reforms” [军事专家解读国防和军队改革], Xinhua, November 27, 2015, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2015-11/27/c_1117287443.htm>.

¹⁶⁸ *CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms*.

¹⁶⁹ “中央军委印发‘关于深化国防和军队改革 期间加强军事法规制度建设的意见’ [Central Military Commission Opinion on Strengthening the Construction of a Military Law and Regulation System During the Period of Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms], *People’s Daily* [人民日报], June 2, 2016.

¹⁷⁰ Finder.

¹⁷¹ “Matter of Key Importance at Present, Most Important Political Task” [当前头等大事 首要政治任务], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], November 20, 2012, available at <<http://theory.people.com>>.

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¹⁷⁶ For a Chinese discussion of CMI, see Liu Maojie, *The Strong Army Dream* [强军梦], (Beijing: Academy of Military Sciences Press [军事科学出版社], 2014), 330–342.

¹⁷⁷ For a discussion, see Daniel Alderman et al., “The Rise of Chinese Civil-Military Integration,” in *Forging China’s Military Might*, ed. Tai Ming Cheung (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 109–135.

¹⁷⁸ David Yang, “Civil-Military Integration Efforts in China,” SITC Research Brief 24, September 2011; Brian Lafferty, Aaron Shraberg, and Morgan Clemens, “China’s Civil-Military Integration,” SITC Research Brief 2013-10, January 2013.

¹⁷⁹ Chase et al., 132–133.

¹⁸⁰ “CCP Central Committee Decision on Deepening of Reforms for Major Issues.”

¹⁸¹ “At CMC Reform Work Meeting, Xi Jinping Stresses.

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¹⁸⁴ Pollpeter and Chang, 228–231.

¹⁸⁵ Hao Xin, “China to Create Its Own DARPA,” *Science*, March 11, 2016, available at <www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/03/china-create-its-own-darpa>.

¹⁸⁶ See, for example, Li Qiang, *The DARPA Innovation Plan* [DARPA创新计划], (Beijing: National Defense Industry Press [国防科技出版社]), 2015. Li, who is affiliated with state-owned defense company China Electronics Technology Group Corp., served as commissioner of the GAD STC.

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2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/pla-daily-commentary/2016-01/06/content_6846500.htm>.

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¹⁹⁰ Chase et al., 132.

¹⁹¹ For a discussion, see Dean Cheng, “Converting the Potential to the Actual: Chinese Mobilization Policies and Planning,” in *The People’s Liberation Army and Contingency Planning in China*, 107–134.

¹⁹² Chase, et al., 80.

¹⁹³ “CCP Central Committee Decision on Deepening of Reforms for Major Issues.”

¹⁹⁴ Bai Zonglin, “Perspective on China’s Military Reform,” *International Strategic Studies*, no. 2 (2016), 22.

¹⁹⁵ Nan Li, “The Top Leaders and the PLA: The Different Styles of Jiang, Hu, and Xi,” in *PLA Influence on China’s National Security Policymaking*, 120–140.

¹⁹⁶ These figures are based on a search for each leader’s name in the military issues section of the *China Vitae* database for the relevant periods.

¹⁹⁷ Ji.

¹⁹⁸ Nan Li, “The Top Leaders and the PLA: The Different Styles of Jiang, Hu, and Xi.”

¹⁹⁹ “China’s Reform Leading Group Holds First Meeting,” Xinhua, January 22, 2014, available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-01/22/c_133066240.htm.

²⁰⁰ Bai.

²⁰¹ “At CMC Reform Work Meeting, Xi Jinping Stresses.

²⁰² “Faithfully Perform the Sacred Missions Assigned by the Party and the People,” *Jiefangjun Bao*, January 2, 2016; also see Li Jing, “President Xi Jinping Lays Down the Law to the Chinese Army in First ‘Precept’ Speech Since Mao Zedong,” *South China Morning Post*, January 4, 2016, who stresses the imperative nature of Xi’s precept speech, known as a *Xun Ci* [“admonishing words”].

²⁰³ Li Xuanliang, Zhang Xuanjie, and Li Qinghua, “Meeting on Establishment of Army Leading Organ, Rocket Force, Strategic Support Force Held in Beijing; Xi Jinping Confers Military Banners to Army, Rocket Force, Strategic Support Force Units of the People’s Liberation Army and Delivers Speech,” Xinhua, January 1, 2016.

²⁰⁴ Li Xuanliang, “Xi Jinping Meets with Responsible Comrades at Various Departments of the CMC Organ, Emphasizing the Requirements of Stressing Politics, Striving for Winning, Rendering Services, Playing an Exemplary Role, Endeavoring to Build the CMC Organ With ‘Four Iron Qualities,’” Xinhua, January 11, 2016.

²⁰⁵ “Xi Calls for Smaller but More Capable Army,” Xinhua, December 3, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-12/03/c_135878424.htm>.

²⁰⁶ “CMC General Office Director Qin Shengxiang Will Concurrently Serve as Director of the CMC Reform and Organization Office” [军委办公厅主任秦生祥兼任军委改革和编制办公室主任], *The Paper* [澎湃新闻], August 28, 2016, available at <<http://news.qq.com/a/20160828/009988.htm>>.

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²⁰⁸ State Council Information Officer, “China’s National Defense in 2004,” December 27, 2003.

²⁰⁹ Saunders and Wuthnow, “China’s Goldwater-Nichols?”; Allen, Blasko, and Corbett, “(Part 1)”; *China Security Report 2016: The Expanding Scope of PLA Activities and PLA Strategy* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2016), 62.

²¹⁰ Saunders and Chen, “Is the Chinese Army the Real Winner in PLA Reforms?”

²¹¹ Sun Kejia and Han Xiao, “Stepping Up Preparations to Integrate Military Reform into Country’s Strategic Planning” [加强统筹, 把军队改革纳入国家战略规划], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], November 19, 2015, available at <<http://news.10jqka.com.cn/20151119/c585953928.shtml>>; also see Jun Mai, “PLA Pay Deal Could ‘Destabilise’ Chinese Society,” *South China Morning Post*, November 19, 2015, available at <www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1880498/pla-overhaul-could-destabilise-chinese-society-military>.

²¹² For details, see Chen, “Downsizing the PLA, Part 1: Military Discharge and Resettlement Policy, Past and Present.”

²¹³ Liu Zhiming, “Build a Service Oriented Security Structure According to the ‘Four Iron’ Requirements” [按照 “四铁”要求打造一流服务保障机构], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], April 20, 2016, available at <www.mod.gov.cn/topnews/2016-04/20/content_4650021_4.htm>.

²¹⁴ “Two Ministries: No State-Owned Enterprise May Refuse to Accept Retired Soldiers” [两部委: 任何国有企业不得拒绝接收退役士兵], *People’s Daily* [人民网], December 28, 2015, available at <<http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2015/1228/c1001-27986615.html>>.

²¹⁵ See Kevin J. O’Brien and Neil J. Diamant, “Contentious Veterans: China’s Retired Officers Speak out,” *Armed Forces & Society* 41, no. 3 (2015), 563–581.

²¹⁶ For an assessment of the likely effectiveness of these efforts, see Chen, “Downsizing the PLA, Part 2: Military Discharge Policy, Past and Present.” See also “Chinese Military Veterans Gather in Beijing to Protest ‘Broken Promises,’” Radio Free Asia, January 2, 2017, available at <www.rfa.org/english/news/china/veterans-protest-01022017200052.html>.

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²¹⁸ “China’s Defense Ministry Confirms Probe of Leading General Wang Jianping,” *South China Morning Post*, December 29, 2016, available at <www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2057961/chinas-defence-ministry-confirms-probe-leading-general>.

²¹⁹ 2014 interview with civilian with close ties to PLA leaders.

²²⁰ See Cheng Li, *Chinese Politics in the Xi Jinping Era: Reassessing Collective Leadership* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2016).

²²¹ For a useful preview of changes, see Dennis J. Blasko, “Walk, Don’t Run; Chinese Military Reforms in 2017,” *War on the Rocks*, January 9, 2017, available at <<https://warontherocks.com/2017/01/walk-dont-run-chinese-military-reforms-in-2017/>>.

²²² For a discussion of Chinese strategic and operational thinking on the concept of “counter-intervention,” see Timothy Heath and Andrew S. Erickson, “Is China Pursuing Counter-Intervention?” *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (Fall 2015), 143–156.

²²³ For an Indian perspective on the reforms, see Manoj Joshi, “Xi Jinping and PLA Reform,”

ORF Occasional Paper, February 2016, available at <www.orfonline.org/research/xi-jinping-and-pla-reform/>.

²²⁴ See Phillip C. Saunders and Joel Wuthnow, “What Do China’s Military Reforms Mean for Taiwan?” *NBR Commentary*, May 19, 2016, available at <www.nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=692>.

²²⁵ The remaining 58 were wearing the green uniforms donned by army and rocket force officers. See Allen, Blasko, and Corbett, “(Part 1).”

²²⁶ See Phillip C. Saunders and John Chen, “Is the Chinese Army the Real Winner in PLA Reforms?” *Joint Force Quarterly* 83 (4th Quarter 2016), 44–48.

²²⁷ For a seminal treatment, see Samuel P. Huntington, “Interservice Competition and the Political Roles of the Armed Services,” *American Political Science Review* 55, no. 1 (March 1961), 40–52.

²²⁸ Greg Chaffin, “An Interview with Andrew S. Erickson,” National Bureau of Asian Research, September 27, 2012, available at <<http://nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=276>>.

²²⁹ Saunders and Chen.

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²³¹ An exception is the new army commander, Li Zuocheng, who was a unit commander during the conflict.

²³² “Defense Ministry’s Regular Press Conference on May 26,” *China Military Online*, May 26, 2016, available at <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2016-05/26/content_4665371.htm>.

²³³ James C. Mulvenon, “China: Conditional Compliance,” in *Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2002), 317–335; and James C. Mulvenon, “Straining Against the Yoke? Civil-Military Relations in China after the Seventeenth Party Congress,” in *China’s Changing Political Landscape: Prospects for Democracy*, ed. Cheng Li (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 267–282.

²³⁴ *Annual Report to Congress*, 63.

²³⁵ “PLA Army Commander Meets with U.S. Army Chief of Staff,” *China Military Online*, August 17, 2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-08/17/content_7212176.htm>.

²³⁶ For details, see <www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/US-CHINA_CRISIS_COMMUNICATIONS_ANNEX_SEP_2015.pdf>.

²³⁷ For analysis of the likely content of the next phase of PLA reforms, see David M. Finkelstein, “Get Ready for the Second Phase of Chinese Military Reform,” CNA Occasional Paper, January 2017 (Arlington, VA: CNA, 2017); and Kenneth Allen, “China to Build Rank-Centered Military Officer System: What Does This Mean?” *China Brief*, forthcoming.

²³⁸ For a discussion, see Dennis J. Blasko, “PLA Ground Forces: Moving Toward a Smaller, More Rapidly Deployable, Modern Combined Arms Force,” in *The People’s Liberation Army as Organization, Reference Volume 1.0*, ed. James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N.D. Yang (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), 309–345.

²³⁹ “China Says to Finish Military Cuts by 2017,” *PLA Daily*, September 3, 2015, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2015-09/03/content_6663779.htm>.

²⁴⁰ Blasko, “Walk, Don’t Run; Chinese Military Reforms in 2017.”

²⁴¹ “President Xi Stresses Training Capable Commanders for Joint Warfare,” Xinhua, March 23, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-03/23/c_135216931.htm>.

²⁴² Authors’ interviews and interactions with various PLA senior officers, 2016.

²⁴³ “China to Build Rank-Centered Military Officer System,” *China Daily*, December 19, 2016, available at <www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-12/19/content_27713063.htm>.

²⁴⁴ “China’s Military Plans New System for Officers’ Ranks,” *South China Morning Post*, January 9, 2017, available at <www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2060385/chinas-military-plans-new-system-officers-ranks>.

²⁴⁵ Under the Goldwater-Nichols Act, joint experience became a prerequisite for officer advancement. This reshaped career incentives and helped build an officer corps with stronger joint qualifications. However, there has not yet been any indication that the PLA has sought to replicate those requirements.

²⁴⁶ Thomas A. Bickford, “Regularization and the Chinese People’s Liberation Army: An Assessment of Change,” *Asian Survey* 40, no. 3 (June 2000), 456–474.

²⁴⁷ Finder.

²⁴⁸ “Military Auditing Regulation Revised,” *China Daily*, December 21, 2016, available at <www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-12/21/content_27736363.htm>.

²⁴⁹ TC Air Force headquarters (formerly MR Air Forces) are collocated with TC headquarters.

²⁵⁰ “Joint Operations Have a ‘Data Time Lag,’ How Will the Eastern Theater Command Break Through It?” [联合作战有“数据时差”，东部战区咋破?], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], available at <www.chinanews.com/mil/2016/02-24/7770581.shtml>.

²⁵¹ It is unclear whether the PLAAF plays a role in nuclear deterrence, given that several of China’s defense white papers discuss nuclear capabilities of the SAF and PLAN but not the PLAAF. See Christopher T. Yeaw, Andrew S. Erickson, and Michael S. Chase, “The Future of Chinese Nuclear Policy and Strategy,” in *Strategy in the Second Nuclear Age*, ed. Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 68.

²⁵² During wartime, research indicates a “skip echelon” arrangement in which authority would pass from the CMC to theater commands. See Gill, Mulvenon, and Stokes, 521.

²⁵³ “A Concerted Effort Begins with Open-Mindedness” [合心，从敞开心胸开始], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], February 16, 2015, available at <www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2016-02/16/content_1589.htm>.

²⁵⁴ For a useful first cut, see Leigh Ann Luce and Erin Richter, “Handling Logistics in a Reformed PLA: The Long March to Joint Logistics,” paper presented at the 2016 CAPS-RAND-NDU PLA conference, Arlington, VA, November 18–19, 2016.

²⁵⁵ Tai Ming Cheung, “The Riddle in the Middle,” 96.

²⁵⁶ For a discussion, see Finder.

²⁵⁷ “Carter Proposes Updates to Goldwater-Nichols Act,” *DoD News*, April 5, 2016, available at <www.defense.gov/News-Article-View/Article/713930/carter-proposes-updates-to-goldwater-nichols-act>.

²⁵⁸ Finkelstein, “Initial Thoughts on the Reorganization and Reform of the PLA,” 18.

²⁵⁹ Alice Miller, “The Central Military Commission,” in *The PLA as Organization v2.0*, 93–94.

Due for retirement in 2017 are General Fan Changlong, CMC vice chairman, General Zhao Keshi, director of the CMC Logistics Support Department, and Admiral Wu Shengli, former PLA Navy commander. All of these individuals will have reached the informal retirement age for CMC members of 70.

²⁶⁰ For a discussion of different possible permutations of the next CMC, see Allen, Blasko, and Corbett, “(Part 2).”

²⁶¹ Of the 69 uniformed officers present at the announcement of the new CMC organization on January 11, 2016, 58 were PLA Army or Rocket Force, while only six were navy and five were air force. This is “not an auspicious start for greater jointness at the most senior levels of the PLA command structure.” See Allen, Blasko, and Corbett, “(Part 1).”

²⁶² *Directory of PRC Military Personalities March 2016*.

²⁶³ “China Reshuffles Military Headquarters,” Xinhua, January 11, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/11/c_134998692.htm>; “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

²⁶⁴ Tai Ming Cheung, “The Riddle in the Middle, 90–92.

²⁶⁵ “Which Generals Will Be on the CMC after the Reform?” [哪些将军这次会后调进中央军委?], *China Youth Online* [中国青年网], January 12, 2016, available at <<http://military.china.com/important/11132797/20160112/21122496.html>>. For biographical details on Lieutenant General Qin, see “CMC General Office Director Qin Shengxiang Promoted to Lieutenant General” [中央军委办公厅主任秦生祥晋升中将], *Caixin Wang* [财新网], July 21, 2015, available at <<http://china.caixin.com/2015-07-21/100830965.html>>.

²⁶⁶ “New CMC Leaders Revealed, Greatest Changes to CMC General Office” [军委新领导首亮相 军委办公厅排位变化最大], *New Tang Dynasty Television*, April 30, 2016, available at <<http://ca.ntdtv.com/xtr/gb/2016/04/30/a1264832.html>>.

²⁶⁷ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

²⁶⁸ The Operations Department was also sometimes known as the 1st Department (总参一部), a second-level (Corps Leader grade) department within GSD. Stokes and Easton, 142–145.

²⁶⁹ Miller, 97.

²⁷⁰ Discussions with midlevel PLA officers, October 2016.

²⁷¹ “Latest News on Military Reform: New Positions of Former Four General Department Leaders Settled” [军改最新消息：解放军原四总部负责人新职务落定], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], January 14, 2016, available at <<http://military.china.com/important/11132797/20160114/21138743.html>>.

²⁷² Allen, Blasko, and Corbett, “(Part 1).”

²⁷³ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

²⁷⁴ “Latest News on Military Reform.” Moreover, its deputy has been reported as General Du Hengyan (杜恒岩), who was most recently political commissar of the Jinan MR. See “Former Guangzhou MR Commander Xu Fenlin Comes to Beijing as Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff Department” [广州军区原司令员徐粉林进京出任联合参谋部副参谋长], *Nanfang Dushi Bao* [南方都市报], January 12, 2016, available at <http://epaper.oeeee.com/ipaper/A/html/2016-01/12/content_2883.htm>.

²⁷⁵ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

²⁷⁶ For instance, at its Third Plenum in November 2013, the CCP decided to push forward reform of logistics for joint combat operations. See “CCP Central Committee Decision on Deepening of

Reforms for Major Issues.” See also Puska, “Taming the Hydra.”

²⁷⁷ “Latest News on Military Reform: New Positions of Former Four General Department Leaders Settled.”

²⁷⁸ Li Jing and Minnie Chan, “PLA General Who Helped Xi Battle Graft in Military Retires,” *South China Morning Post*, December 30, 2015, available at <www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1896634/pla-general-who-helped-xi-battle-graft-military-retires>.

²⁷⁹ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

²⁸⁰ “Latest News on Military Reform: New Positions of Former Four General Department Leaders Settled.”

²⁸¹ Stokes and Easton, 154-157.

²⁸² See “Reform Efforts Should Be Focused on the ‘Strategic Hubs’” [改革要向战略枢纽聚焦用力], *Jiefangjun Bao* [解放军报], April 22, 2014, available at <<http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2014/0422/c40531-24927666.html>>.

²⁸³ Discussion with midlevel PLA officer, October 2016.

²⁸⁴ Allen, Blasko, and Corbett, “(Part 1).”

²⁸⁵ This theme was highlighted in a Chinese report about the initial activities of the department. See “Demystifying the Newly Established CMC National Defense Mobilization Department” [揭秘新成立的中央军委国防动员部], *China Youth Online* [中国青年报], January 29, 2016, available at <http://zqb.cyol.com/html/2016-01/29/nw.D110000zgqnb_20160129_1-06.htm>.

²⁸⁶ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

²⁸⁷ Roy Kamphausen, “The General Political Department,” in *The PLA as Organization v2.0*, 173.

²⁸⁸ For a discussion, see Bickford.

²⁸⁹ Strengthening the “socialist rule of law” (社会主义法制) is a theme of the broader national reforms, highlighted in particular at the 4th Plenum of the 18th Central Committee, held in October 2014. See “Highlights of Communique of 4th Plenary Session of CPC Central Committee,” Xinhua, October 23, 2014, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-10/23/c_133737957.htm>.

²⁹⁰ Pollpeter and Chang, 223-224.

²⁹¹ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

²⁹² “Which Generals Will Be on the CMC After the Reform?”

²⁹³ Tai Ming Cheung, “Keeping Up with the Jundui: Reforming the Chinese Defense Acquisition, Technology, and Industrial System to Engage in Advanced Innovation,” paper presented at the 2016 CAPS-RAND-NDU Conference on the People’s Liberation Army, November 19, 2016, 8.

²⁹⁴ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

²⁹⁵ Stokes and Easton, 153-154.

²⁹⁶ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

²⁹⁷ See “Xi Leads China’s Military Reform, Stresses Strong Army,” Xinhua, March 15, 2014, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-03/15/c_133188618.htm>.

²⁹⁸ The GSD Military Affairs Department was also responsible for welfare and benefits and served as the personnel center for enlisted servicemen. It is unclear if the new CMC office will assume these duties. Stokes and Easton, 159-160.

²⁹⁹ “CMC General Office Director Qin Shengxiang Will Concurrently Serve as Director of the CMC Reform and Organization Office.”

³⁰⁰ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

³⁰¹ “Xi Jinping: Further Innovate a New Situation in Military Diplomacy” [习近平：进一步开创军事外交新局面], Xinhua, January 29, 2015, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2015-01/29/c_1114183775.htm>.

³⁰² “Which Generals Will Be on the CMC After the Reform?”

³⁰³ This organization has also been translated as “Audit Office.” However, “Audit Bureau” may be a better translation of *shu* [署] and distinguish it from *bangongshi* [办公室] (“office”).

³⁰⁴ “China Military Reaches Key Decision to Strengthen Auditing,” Xinhua, November 4, 2014, available at <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/TopNews/2014-11/06/content_4550175.htm>.

³⁰⁵ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

³⁰⁶ “Guo Chunfu Becomes Director of PLA Audit Office, in a New Role Twice in a Year” [郭春富任解放军审计署审计长 年内两度履新], *Caixin Online* [财新网], December 30, 2015, available at <<http://china.caixin.com/2015-12-30/100894397.html>>.

³⁰⁷ *Jiguan* [机关] may also be translated as “office” or “organization.”

³⁰⁸ Allen, Blasko, and Corbett, “(Part 1).”

³⁰⁹ “MND Holds Press Conference on CMC Organ Reshuffle.”

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