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National Defense University

About the Authors

Dr. Phillip C. Saunders is Director of the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs (CSCMA), Institute for National Strategic Studies, at the National Defense University. Dr. Joel Wuthnow is a Research Fellow in CSCMA.

Key Points

- The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is undertaking its most significant restructuring since 1949, including changes to all of the PLA's main organizational pillars—the Central Military Commission, services, and theaters.
- The reforms are modeled partly on the U.S. military structure, where combatant commanders lead operations and the services train and equip troops. However, the PLA remains a Leninist military responsible for defending Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule.
- The reforms aim to tighten CCP supervision over a force seen as corrupt and unaccountable and to enhance the PLA's ability to conduct joint operations across multiple domains.
- Theater commanders will be able to develop force packages drawn from all the services, and a new Strategic Support Force will provide C4ISR support.
- The reforms will create a short-term organizational disruption, but may enable more effective joint warfighting over the long term. The PLA will have to overcome significant obstacles such as continued ground force dominance and inter-service rivalry to make the reforms succeed.

China's Goldwater-Nichols? Assessing PLA Organizational Reforms

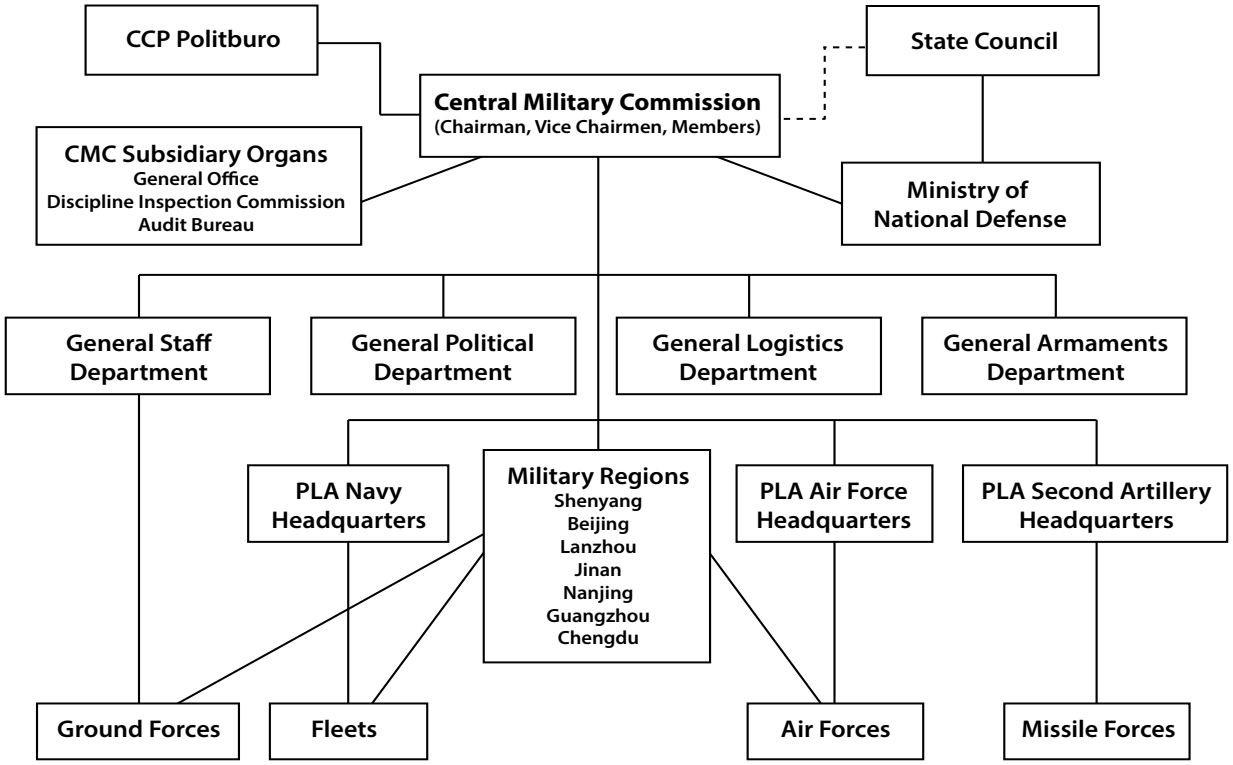
by Phillip C. Saunders and Joel Wuthnow

In the past few months, China has announced a series of major reforms to the organizational structure of the People's Liberation Army (PLA): the Central Military Commission (CMC) has been revamped, the four general departments dissolved, new service headquarters created, and five new theater commands established in place of the seven military regions (MRs). These changes are part of a sweeping transformation of PLA institutions, force structure, and policy that will be ongoing through 2020. In pursuing these reforms, China's leaders hope both to tighten central political control over a force that was seen as increasingly corrupt and to build the PLA into a credible joint warfighting entity. Yet important obstacles remain, and it may be years before the implications of these reforms come into full view.

Major Organizational Reforms

Prior to the reforms, the PLA's organization was based on a model imported from the Soviet Union in the early 1950s.[1] Its three main pillars included the following: (1) three services (army, navy, and air force) and the Second Artillery Force (SAF), an independent branch responsible for China's conventional and nuclear missiles; (2) four general departments—General Staff Department (GSD), General Political Department (GPD), General Logistics Department (GLD), and General Armaments Department (GAD); and (3) seven geographic MRs, listed in protocol order: Shenyang, Beijing, Jinan, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Chengdu, and Lanzhou, with subsidiary units drawn from the services. The CMC stood atop these pillars and exercised the highest command authority in the PLA.[2] This structure is depicted in figure 1.

Figure 1. PLA Structure Prior to Reforms



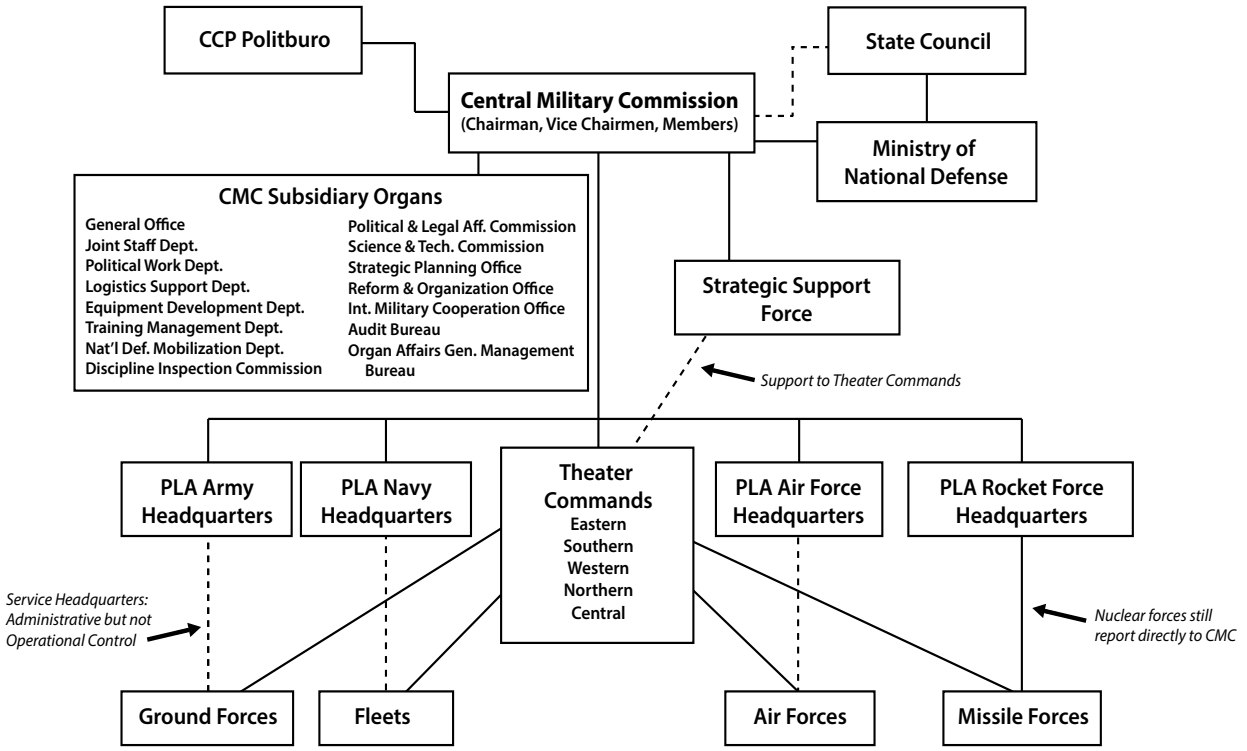
Over the years, the PLA made only incremental changes to this system. Past reforms revised the MR system (most recently in 1985), created new general departments (the GAD in 1998), and added an independent branch (the SAF in 1966).[3] Yet due in part to bureaucratic resistance to more comprehensive changes, the PLA remained a fundamentally ground force–centric organization that lent itself to single-service operations. A key weakness was an outdated command and control (C2) structure in which the services, rather than theater commanders, possessed operational authority during peacetime. This hindered the development of a force capable of conducting modern joint operations.

In late 2015 and early 2016, CMC chairman and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping announced the most wide-ranging restructuring of the PLA since 1949. The reforms included the following changes to the PLA's three main organizational pillars (see figure 2):[4]

Service Reforms. On December 31, 2015, Xi announced three changes to the services: (1) establishment of national- and theater-level headquarters for the ground forces, which previously had been collectively led and administered by the general departments; (2) elevation of the SAF to the status of a full-fledged service renamed the PLA Rocket Force; and (3) establishment of a new Strategic Support Force (SSF), whose missions likely include operations in the "information domain," including space, cyber, and electronic warfare activities.[5] The SSF is not a service per se, but rather an independent force along the same lines as the former SAF.[6]

CMC Reforms. On January 11, 2016, Xi revealed that the general departments had been replaced by a new CMC structure composed of 15 departments, offices, and commissions. The GSD's extensive portfolio was dispersed among several new CMC departments. Its core C2 function was transferred to a new Joint Staff Department (JSD), while its sub-departments responsible for training, mobilization, and strategic planning each became first-level departments directly under the CMC. The GPD, GLD, and GAD became the CMC Political Work, Logistics Support, and Equipment

Figure 2. PLA Structure after Reforms



Development departments, respectively. The GPD's law enforcement functions were transferred to a new CMC Political and Legal Affairs Commission, while its oversight of Party discipline in the PLA moved to a strengthened CMC Discipline Inspection Commission. The GAD's Science and Technology Commission, responsible for defense innovation, was placed under direct CMC oversight.[7]

Theater Reforms. On February 1, 2016, Xi announced that the MRs had been replaced by five new theater commands (战区)[8], listed in protocol order: the Eastern, Southern, Western, Northern, and Central theaters.[9] These commands are headquartered in Nanjing, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Shenyang, and Beijing, respectively.[10] The theaters are aligned against land and, where applicable, maritime security challenges in their respective geographic areas; for instance, the Eastern Theater Command covers the Taiwan Strait and East China Sea, while the Southern Theater Command covers the South China Sea.[11] As with the MRs, theaters have subordinate units drawn from the individual services.

China's Goldwater-Nichols?

The reforms affected not only individual organizations but also the lines of authority connecting the PLA's major components. Chinese sources describe the revised division of labor with the following formula: the CMC and its subsidiary departments will provide overall management, the theaters will focus on operations, and the services will manage force building (军委管总、战区主战、军种主建).[12] In effect, the PLA will have two distinct chains of command: an operational chain passing from the CMC to the theaters to the troops, and an administrative chain flowing from the CMC to the service headquarters to the troops.[13]

The nature of the reforms suggests that the PLA is moving toward a more modular, U.S.-style C2 arrangement in which operational commanders develop force packages from units that are trained and equipped by the services. In particular, the PLA restructuring has drawn comparisons to the U.S. military following the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.[14] This act resulted in a 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, who lead joint forces within their respective theaters.[15] Service chiefs were given an advisory role, with responsibilities to "organize, train, and equip" troops. This bifurcation of authority appears similar to the evolving PLA distinction between operational and administrative chains of command.[16]

Nevertheless, the new PLA C2 system has some key differences with the U.S. system. First, unlike the U.S. combatant commands, which span the globe, the theaters cover territory only within China. Operations far beyond China's borders (such as those in the Middle East or the Indian Ocean) will apparently be centrally directed by the JSD in Beijing.[17] Second, the PLA retains the CMC as its highest decisionmaking body and does not have a U.S.-style commander in chief equivalent. Nevertheless, as discussed below, the reforms have strengthened Xi Jinping's role within the CMC (under what is being labeled a "CMC chairman responsibility

Table. PLA Reform Agenda, 2015–2020

Reform Area (English)	Reform Area (Chinese)	Topics	Target Date
Leadership Management System	领导管理体制	Reform Central Military Committee departments, military services, logistics system, equipment development system	2015*
Joint Command and Control 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, reducing 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 professional military education	2016
People's Armed Police command and control system and force composition	武装警察部队指挥管理体制和力量结构	Adjust People's Armed Police command and control and force structure	2016
Policy System	政策制度	Reform personnel system, budget management and 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 military justice system	No Date Provided

*Although the "Opinions" states that changes to the leadership management system were completed in 2015, the Central Military Commission (CMC) reforms were not announced until the second week in January 2016. See "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>.

†Reforms to the two-tiered joint command system, composed of the CMC and theater commands, were not announced until January and February 2016, respectively.

‡Although the CMC reform outline lists 2016 as the completion date for the downsizing, a People's Liberation Army spokesman has stated that it would be complete by the end of 2017. See "China to Cut 300,000 Troops by 2017," Xinhua, September 4, 2015, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/video/2015-09/04/c_134588862.htm>.

system"). Third, the PLA remains a Leninist military whose primary responsibility is defending CCP rule. Unlike the U.S. military, where unit commanders exercise sole authority, the PLA retains political commissars and Party committees that are supposed to play a role in all key decisions. Given these differences, the new PLA C2 structure might best be described as Goldwater-Nichols with Chinese characteristics.

The Broader Military Reform Agenda

The PLA's organizational restructuring is only one piece of a broader transformation of the PLA being pursued under Xi Jinping. The current round of PLA reforms was launched at the Third Plenum of the 18th Party Congress in November 2013, in which the party elite adopted a sweeping program of national reform.[18] Military reforms were discussed as an integral part of the overall reform program, with advocates arguing that China could not achieve prosperity without a strong military. However, building a strong military would require several fundamental changes, including to the PLA's size, structure, human resource policies, professional military education (PME) system, budgeting processes, and defense industrial base. In short, the party decided that the PLA's "software" needed to be updated.

After the Third Plenum, the PLA set about crafting a specific reform plan. This process was led by a CMC military reform leading small group chaired by Xi Jinping. Intellectually, PLA analysts from organizations such as the Academy of Military Sciences and National Defense University studied lessons from Chinese history and assessed how foreign militaries, especially the U.S. and Russian armed forces, are organized for modern warfare.[19] Politically, the PLA carried out a major propaganda offensive to cultivate a reform mindset among rank-and-file PLA personnel.[20] An anti-corruption campaign was also under way within the PLA, targeting both senior and more junior officers (known colloquially as "tigers" and "flies"). This latter effort served to put the PLA on notice that resistance to reform would not be tolerated.

A reform plan was ultimately agreed on at a CMC reform work meeting in November 2015 and codified in a CMC document published on January 1, 2016, titled "CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms."[21] The document makes clear that the PLA's organizational changes are only the first steps in a 5-year reform agenda. The next step is a downsizing (announced in September 2015) that will reduce the force from 2.3 million to 2 million members. This will likely disproportionately affect the ground forces and noncombat personnel.[22] Changes will also be made to the active duty, reserve, militia, and People's Armed Police force structure. Other changes will involve PME reforms, new personnel policies, and new military laws, rules, and regulations.[23]

the new PLA command and control structure might best be described as Goldwater-Nichols with Chinese characteristics

The reforms are slated for completion in 2020. The table on page 4 reproduces the PLA's reform agenda.

Reasons for Reform

The PLA restructuring can be understood as the product of two basic considerations: the need to tighten political control over the PLA, and the imperative to enhance the military's ability to carry out modern joint operations.

Tightening Political Control. The main political drivers of the reforms are the desire to tighten civilian political control over the PLA and the need to deal with rampant corruption inside the military, including in the promotion system. These reflect Xi's general tendency toward centralizing authority and his use of the anti-corruption campaign as both a means of rebuilding the party's image and a weapon against opponents. Since

Xi assumed office, there has been a drumbeat of stories stressing the need for the party to exercise "absolute leadership" over the military; this was a major theme at the October 2014 PLA Political Work Conference at Gutian.[24] Reiteration of this principle suggests continued leadership concerns about control over the military. The anti-corruption campaign within the PLA has implicated a number of senior officers, including former CMC vice chairmen Xu Caihou and Guo Boxiong, both of whom were expelled from the party. Stories have circulated from Chinese military sources indicating that Hu Jintao was a "figurehead" who never succeeded in establishing full authority over the military, and that Xu and Guo had used their positions to isolate Hu from decisions and to accept massive bribes in exchange for promotions.[25]

Xi has a more assertive leadership style than Hu and appears to be much more successful in exercising authority over the PLA

The need to strengthen party control and tackle corruption in the PLA is clear, but the means of rectifying these problems depend on the diagnosis of their root causes. One problem was inadequate supervision of the PLA by top party leaders, with Jiang Zemin to blame for elevating corrupt officers such as Xu and Guo to their positions as CMC vice chairmen and Hu at fault for his inability to exercise control over them as CMC chairman.[26] A second concern is that PLA political work has been inadequate and party organs within the PLA were ineffective in exercising party control. A third problem is that senior PLA officers at the CMC, the general departments, and the military regions had too much power and were not always responsive to orders from the center. Fourth, the institutional mechanisms of supervising the PLA were either corrupted (in the case of the promotion system and auditors) or ineffective (party committees and military courts).

This diagnosis of root causes explains a number of political aspects of the reforms. Xi has a more assertive leadership style than Hu and appears to be much more successful in exercising authority over the PLA.[27] But as in other aspects of governance, he has emphasized the need for centralizing authority. 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 Central Military Commission chairmanship responsibility system, 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 Central Military Commission.*[28]

The "CMC chairmanship responsibility system" is distinguished from the so-called CMC vice chairman responsibility system allegedly practiced under Jiang and Hu, where many routine duties were handled by the CMC vice chairmen.[29] In contrast, "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."[30]

A second element in the reforms is to eliminate the general departments and move most of their functions to the CMC. This change is intended to reduce the autonomy of the heads of the departments and make them directly accountable to the CMC chairman.

A third element in the reforms is to move 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).[31] The CMC Discipline Inspection Commission will enforce party discipline by sending investigation teams to party units throughout the PLA. The commission should have greater independence and authority since it will now be a CMC commission rather than part of the GPD. 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."[32] 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."[33]

Another element of the reforms is to increase the 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 will be supported by the establishment of a Political and Legal Affairs Commission at the CMC level, which will promulgate regulations and oversee the military court system.[34]

Enhancing Joint Operations. A second consideration driving the reforms is the desire to increase the PLA's ability to carry out joint operations on a modern, high-tech battlefield. This has long been a goal for Chinese military planners, who were inspired initially by the U.S. military's successful joint operations during the first Gulf War.[35] The PLA subsequently developed joint campaign doctrine, created a joint logistics system, and conducted an increasing number of cross-service exercises.[36] However, PLA analysts contend that the absence of a permanent joint C2 mechanism, combined with the continuing dominance of the ground forces, has stunted progress toward achieving a true joint warfighting capability.[37] Xi Jinping himself noted, in 2013, that establishing a joint C2 system should be given "primary importance," explaining that "we have given much consideration to joint C2, but fundamental problems remain . . . establishing a CMC and theater command joint C2 system requires urgency and should not be delayed."[38]

Changes in the PLA's assessment of the operational and strategic environment strengthened the case for greater jointness. China's 2015 defense white paper, titled *China's Military Strategy*, noted that the PLA needs to be able to fight and win "informationized local wars" (信息化局部战争), referring to the evolving nature of modern warfare featuring, among other things, a greater emphasis on cyber and space operations, and on long-range precision-strike systems. The white paper also described growing external security challenges from the United States and regional antagonists, such as Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, especially along China's maritime periphery. These developments meant that China would need to improve its ability to conduct high-end joint operations in multiple domains, including by establishing a permanent joint C2 mechanism.[39]

the reforms are intended to increase the PLA's ability to carry out joint operations on a modern, high-tech battlefield

The organizational reforms promote joint warfighting in several ways. First is by establishing a "two-level joint operational command system" with decisionmaking nodes at the CMC and theater levels.[40] This C2 system will operate in both peacetime and wartime, giving China an ability to quickly transition to a "war footing" when needed.[41] One innovation is the creation of joint operations command centers both in Beijing (managed by the JSD) and within each of the five theaters. These centers have several roles, including developing operational plans, carrying out 24/7 watch functions, maintaining situational awareness,

managing joint exercises, and providing a communications hub linking theater commanders with service component commanders and combat units.[42]

Second, the reforms enhance joint operations by creating separate national- and theater-level ground force headquarters. This means that CMC departments and theaters—divested of responsibility for army affairs—are fully "joint" organizations, staffed by what in the U.S. system would be considered as "purple-hatted" officers. Chinese media sources note, for instance, that the PLA's new joint operations command centers are staffed by personnel drawn from all the services.[43] Nevertheless, in the near term, the dominance of the ground forces is likely to remain as senior CMC and theater command positions remain filled by army officers.[44] A test of China's ability to move toward a more effective joint system will be its ability to rotate navy, air force, and rocket force officers into joint command positions.

over the longer term, the PLA reforms could result in a leaner, more effective warfighting organization

Third, the reforms facilitate joint warfighting by placing forces from all the services at the disposal of theater commanders. Previously, service headquarters exercised peacetime operational control over naval fleets and MR air forces (which, in theory, would have been transferred to joint commanders during wartime). This authority now rests with the theaters. In addition, conventional missile forces under the Rocket Force—which were previously centrally controlled by the CMC—are now under the authority of the theaters.[45] This allows theater commanders to integrate conventional precision-strike missiles into joint operations, such as island-landing campaigns or counter-intervention operations. Commanders will also likely be able to draw on SSF units responsible for space, cyber, and electronic warfare operations.

Implications and Obstacles

In the near term, the reforms are bound to create some degree of organizational disruption, as new operational and administrative relationships are established, new commanders assume responsibility, and PLA personnel seek to understand where they fit in the new structure and what their duties will be. A further complication will be implementation of the force reduction, which will require the Chinese government to find new employment for more than 10 percent of current service members.[46] Although the PLA will have to continue to respond to perceived security threats, it may spend the next few years focused inward, putting the reforms into practice. If this is the case, we might expect to see less appetite within the PLA for outward-focused, risk-acceptant behavior.

Over the longer term, however, the PLA reforms could result in a leaner, more effective warfighting organization. The creation of a permanent joint C2 structure, in addition to other changes—such as more realistic, combat-oriented training, tighter control of PLA finances, stronger PME, a dedicated SSF responsible for electronic warfare and operations in the space and cyber domains, a force structure that places more emphasis on naval and aerospace forces, and anticipated advances in long-range precision strike and other capabilities—could all give the PLA more confidence and capacity to execute joint operations in multiple domains. This could create new and more complex challenges for U.S. and allied forces operating in the Asia-Pacific region.

However, there are also several reasons to question the positive impact of the reforms on PLA operational effectiveness, especially in terms of promoting joint warfighting. Potential obstacles could include the following:

- Ground force dominance. As noted above, nominally joint billets (and the CMC) will be initially filled predominantly by ground force officers. This introduces

the problem that army perspectives, interests, and biases may continue to frustrate efforts to build a genuinely joint force. Much will depend on the PLA's ability to foster jointness in the force through means such as joint PME, joint billets, and rotational assignments between the services.

◆ Interservice rivalry. As with any modern joint force, competition for resources and influence might constrain effective cooperation between the different services.[47] This is especially likely as China's economic growth continues to slow, placing a premium on access to scarce budgetary resources.

◆ Lack of combat experience. China has taken several necessary steps toward a credible joint warfighting capability, including developing joint doctrine, conducting joint exercises, and establishing a joint C2 structure. However, lack of experience in undertaking real-world joint combat operations could hamper the PLA's ability to field a strong joint force.[48]

◆ Leninist features. The PLA retains features designed to maintain Party control over the military such as the CMC (which is technically an organ of the CCP Central Committee), political commissars, and Party committees. Indeed, the reforms have emphasized the need to strengthen the "absolute leadership" of the Party. The need for Party consultation and unity could reduce the flexibility and autonomy of commanders, especially at the operational level.

Given the potential obstacles, as well as significant lingering uncertainties about the reforms, it is far too soon to make any conclusive judgment about the likely impact of the reorganization on PLA operational effectiveness. Moreover, as David Finkelstein argues, the ultimate effects of the reforms may not be known until far beyond the formal completion date of 2020.[49] This should not be surprising, as the U.S. military has been continually improving its ability to conduct joint operations in the three decades following Goldwater-Nichols. Current PLA reforms are likewise part of a long-term generational process that has no real end point.

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Notes

[1] For a discussion, see: David Shambaugh, *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), chapter 4.

[2] 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.

[3] For a discussion, see Kenneth W. Allen, "Introduction to the PLA's Administrative and Operational Structure," in *The PLA as Organization, Reference Volume v1.0*, ed. James C. Mulvenon and Andrew N.D. Yang (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), 1–44.

[4] For excellent initial analysis of the reforms, see David M. Finkelstein, *Initial Thoughts on the Reorganization and Reform of the PLA* (Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 2015), available at <www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DOP-2016-U-012560-Final.pdf>; and Kenneth W. Allen, Dennis J. Blasko, and John F. Corbett, Jr., "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/programs/chinabrief/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=45069&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=25&cHash=99759e945776c89e45d3416a25ad4e39#.VrnlPPnR_RY>.

[5] "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>.

[6] Allen, Blasko, and Corbett, Jr.

[7] "China Reshuffles Military Headquarters," Xinhua, January 11, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-01/11/c_134998692.htm>.

[8] The Chinese term *zhanqu* (战区) has several possible English-language translations, including *battle zones*, *war zones*, and *strategic regions*. This paper adopts the term *theater commands* to follow the terminology used in authoritative People's Republic of China English-language media.

[9] "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>.

[10] "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>.

[11] "Experts: The Five PLA Theater Commands Have Clear Goals, With the Southeast Coastal Front Being the Key Link of Future Military Operations" [专家：五大战区目标清晰 东南沿海是作战重点], *Global Times* [环球时报], February 2, 2016, available at <http://mil.huanqiu.com/observation/2016-02/8489177.html>.

[12] "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>.

[13] "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>.

[14] Finkelstein, 18. 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; and James R. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 2002).

[15] For the formal delineation of responsibilities, see 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>. See especially II-9, which defines the operational and administrative command relationships in the U.S. military.

[16] Indeed, PLA researchers explicitly cite both the U.S. and Russian joint command systems in discussing needed changes to China's C2 structure. See, for example, Xu Sanfei, "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], *PLA Daily* [解放军报], May 28, 2014, available at <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n/2014/0528/c83083-25075239.html>. This article consists of an interview with PLA Academy of Military Sciences president General Liu Chengjun. See also 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>. Senior Colonel Wang is deputy director of the PLA National Defense University's Strategic Research Department.

[17] "PLA Sets Up Overseas Operations Office To Strengthen Overseas Rapid Reaction," *PLA Daily*, March 25, 2015, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/pla-daily-commentary/2016-03/25/content_6977517.htm>.

[18] For an overview of the Third Plenum decision, see "Xi Explains China's Reform Plan," Xinhua, November 15, 2013, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-11/15/c_132891949.htm>.

[19] For details, see David Liebenberg and Joel Wuthnow, "Navigating the Dangerous Shoals: An Overview of the new Period of China's Military Reform," paper presented at the 2014 CAPS-RAND-NDU PLA conference, Arlington, VA, November 22, 2014.

[20] For instance, in August 2014, the PLA released a circular to all personnel encouraging support for reforms. See "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], *PLA Daily* [解放军报], August 11, 2014, available at <www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2015-11/29/content_130601.htm>.

[21] "CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms."

[22] For a discussion of previous force reductions in the PLA, see Allen, "Introduction to the PLA's Organizational Reforms," 34.

[23] In PLA jargon, this is known as a process of "regularization" (正规化). For an overview, see Thomas A. Bickford, "Regularization and the Chinese People's Liberation Army," *Asian Survey* 40, no 3 (May–June 2000), 456–474.

[24] "Xi Stresses CPC's Absolute Leadership Over Army," Xinhua, November 1, 2014, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/01/c_133759418.htm>. Also see James Mulvenon, "Hotel Gutian: We Haven't Had That Spirit Here Since 1929," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 46 (Winter 2015), available at <www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm46jm.pdf>.

[25] Cheng Li, "Promoting 'Young Guards': The Recent High Turnover in the PLA Leadership," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 48 (Fall 2015), available at <www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm48cl.pdf>; Minnie Chan, "Hu Jintao's Weak Grip on China's Army Inspired President Xi Jinping's Military Shake-Up," *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>; "Major General Broke the News: Xu Caihou Went Over the Head of Hu Jintao to Sell a Military Region Command for Twenty Million" [少將爆料：架空胡錦濤 徐才厚標價賣官 大軍區司令兩千萬], *Singtao Ribao* [星島日報], March 10, 2015, available at <http://news.singtao.ca/toronto/2015-03-10/world1425970399d5474726.html>.

[26] 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.

[27] 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*, ed. Phillip C. Saunders and Andrew Scobell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 120–140.

[28] "CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms."

[29] Sun Chiaye [孫嘉業], "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>.

[30] Mulvenon, "The Yuan Stops Here."

[31] 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>.

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

[33] "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>.

[34] "CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms."

[35] Dean Cheng, "Chinese Lessons from the Gulf Wars," in *Chinese Lessons from Other Peoples' Wars*, ed. Andrew Scobell, David Lai, and Roy Kamphausen (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011), 153–200.

[36] See, for example, Kenneth W. Allen et al., *Institutional Changes of the Chinese People's Liberation Army: Overview and Challenges* (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 2002); Dean Cheng, "*Zhanyixue* and Joint Campaigns," in *China's Revolution in Doctrinal Affairs*, ed. James Mulvenon and David M. Finkelstein (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 2005); 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

[37] The 2013 edition of the Academy of Military Science's doctrinal teaching volume *Science of Military Strategy* states that collective

administration of the ground forces by the four general departments was increasingly "unconducive" to establishing a joint C2 structure. See *Science of Military Strategy* [战略学] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science, 2013), 201.

[38] "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.

[39] *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>.

[40] Ibid.

[41] "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.

[42] "Starting with a New Style Under Fluttering Red Combat Banners—Observing 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新华网], Xinhua, February 2, 2016, available at <http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-02/02/c_1117973365.htm>.

[43] Ibid.

[44] "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 >.

[45] Nuclear forces appear to remain under direct CMC supervision.

[46] To be sure, the Chinese government has sought to minimize the turmoil associated with the downsizing by requiring state-owned enterprises to provide employment for ex-PLA personnel. "State-Owned Enterprises Not Allowed to Refuse Veterans," *PLA Daily*, December 29, 2015, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2015-12/29/content_6835935.htm>. However, this requirement will conflict with efforts to run most state-owned enterprises on a commercial basis, and is likely to be resisted.

[47] 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.

[48] See Phillip C. Saunders, "The PLA and Contingency Planning in China," in *The People's Liberation Army and Contingency Planning in China*, ed. Andrew Scobell et al. (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2015), 1–4.

[49] Finkelstein, 18.

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