



China's Military Fault Lines

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Abstract

Over a period of time, external threats to China have receded. Internally; however, China is facing sub-national movements in its non - Han buffer regions i.e., Xinjiang and Tibet. Both the regions are extremely crucial for China to shape its regional periphery, energy security, water security, and promotion of commerce and trade. Tibetan dilemma when connected with unsettled borders with India poses a security challenge to China. In addition to these sub-nationalistic movements, internal stability and continued support for the party rule is another major concern. The party has an unwritten understanding with the Chinese population that it would continue to provide political stability and economic prosperity in return for surrendering some political freedom to the common man. So far both ends had held their side of the bargain. The brief outpouring of public resentment in the 1989 -Tiananmen Square incident, was a direct outcome of spiralling inflation as also unbridled corruption as a result of economic liberalization. According to the Chinese, if China intends to become a major power by 2025 and world power by 2050, it should have a powerful military that can uphold its perceived historical territorial claims as well as security goals. It has started a highly significant military modernization program centered on specialized asymmetric warfare capabilities/disruptive technologies, supported by liberal defence expenditure that is second only to that of the US. More crucially, China has repeatedly shown a propensity to use military choices not just against its neighbours but also against the US and the former Soviet Union.

Key Words: Political Stability, Economic Prosperity, Territorial Claims, China, Soviet Union.

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Over a period of time, external threats to China have receded. Internally; however, China is facing sub-national movements in its non - Han buffer regions i.e., Xinjiang and Tibet. Both the regions are extremely crucial for China to shape its regional periphery, energy security, water security, and promotion of commerce and trade. **Tibetan dilemma when connected with unsettled borders with India poses a security challenge to China.** In addition to these sub-nationalistic movements, internal stability and continued support for the party rule is another major concern. The party has an unwritten understanding with the Chinese population that it would continue to provide political stability and economic prosperity in return for surrendering some political freedom to the common man. So far both ends had held their side of the bargain. The brief outpouring of public resentment in the 1989 -Tiananmen Square incident, was a direct outcome of spiralling inflation as also unbridled corruption as a result of economic liberalization. However, the economic landscape improved considerably after 1992. The Chinese economy has been facing turbulence ever since the economic slowdown of 2008. There have been reports of people losing jobs and livelihoods. This places a direct question mark on political stability and continued support for the party rule. The party and the government have resorted to desperate measures to continue the GDP growth by providing monetary stimulus as also diversifying investment options by launching the one belt one road initiative. The monetary stimulus has however resulted in massive internal debt thereby necessitating payback of large parts of earnings as interest repayments. Managing the economic recovery is therefore a key to continued political and social stability in China. To partially divert attention from these security concerns, China has whipped up an ultra-nationalist sentiment in the public who increasingly perceive rising China as the new Middle Kingdom and the 21st century as the Chinese century. **According to the Chinese, if China intends to become a major power by 2025 and world power by 2050, it should have a powerful military that can uphold its perceived historical territorial claims as well as security goals.** It has started a highly significant military modernization program centered on specialized asymmetric warfare capabilities/disruptive technologies, supported by liberal defence expenditure that is second only to that of the US. **More crucially, China has repeatedly shown a propensity to use military choices not just against its neighbours but also against the US and the former Soviet Union.**

CHINA'S MILITARY RE-ORGANIZATION

The development of China as an economic superpower has significantly influenced both its military modernization plan and pursuit of an active and aggressive international policy. Clichés such as the “China Dream” and the revival of historic commerce via “Belt and Road Initiatives” and the “Maritime Silk Route” are measures to reenergize the Chinese people. The Chinese military forces play a significant role in this situation by defending the country's economic and fundamental interests. This shift was alluded to in China's 2015 Defence White Paper, Military Policy of China, which explained that “the goal of CPC is to build a strong military where China's armed forces will unswervingly adhere to the principle of the CPC's absolute leadership, uphold combat effectiveness, follow the CPC's commands, and can fight and win wars”. Therefore, the strategic task of China's modernization drive under President Xi Jinping's leadership is to build a strong national defence and formidable military forces.



STRUCTURE OF RECENT MILITARY REFORMS IN CHINA

Chinese President Xi Jinping presented a long-term restructuring strategy for the People's Liberation Army on November 26, 2015. The PAPF ("People's Armed Police Force"), Reserve Forces as well as China's Militia are also affected by these changes as he is also the President of the CMC ("Central Military Commission"). These adjustments will likely cause President Xi Jinping to further strengthen his control over all state institutions in addition to restructuring the armed forces. The following are the numerous reforms: -

Reorganize the 'Military Regions' - The 5 Theatre Commands – the Central, Northern, Western, Southern, and Eastern Commands/Zones – replace the seven military areas that were formerly located in Lanzhou, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Jinan, Beijing, and Shenyang. The CMC controls overall army operations, Theatre Commands/Zones concentrate on warfare, and other military services strive to grow within the newly established structure's guiding concept.^[1] The purported goal of this transition is to increase operational cohesion. According to the President, the establishment of a war-winning plan and improved training for combined operations are the key goals of these Theatre Commands/Zones. The goal of the military reform is to create a three-tiered command structure, consisting of "the CMC- Theatre commands- Troops/units", as well as an administrative structure that passes from the CMC to the units/troops via several services.^[2] For the majority of the novel Theatre, Command/Zones was formerly in charge of one of the 7 military areas. Nevertheless, several were transferred far from their original position of leadership in order to prevent any commander from being able to sustain a network of personal devotion superior to Party authority.^[3] For instance, Liu Yuejun the "former commander" of the Lanzhou MR ("Military Region"), was appointed to lead the Eastern Theatre Command/Zone. In addition, Yuan Yubai, the former commander of the Northern Shenyang MR was appointed to lead the Southern Theatre Command/Zone. The Western Theatre Command/Zone was taken over by "Zhao Zongqi" of the Eastern Jinan MR, while the Northern Theatre Command/Zone was led by Commander Song Puxuan of the old Beijing MR. It's significant to note that Han Weiguo, his deputy commander, was given the position of Central Theatre Command/Zone commander. So that the changes could be carried out without interference, the President used this to guarantee that his supporters were elevated to positions of authority.

Formation of 2 New Forces specifically, the PLA Strategic Support and the PLA Rocket Force. The PLA Rocket Force has replaced the Second Artillery Force in China. While the 'PLA Rocket Force' maintains its previous traits, it is notable because it is now designated China's 4th branch of the armed forces, on an equal basis with the Air Force, PLA Army, along with Navy⁴, and not merely an expansion of the military caring after land missile capabilities. Second, the traditional missiles would also fall in the Rocket Force, confirming China's continuance of its "Dual Deterrence" policy, in which China has attempted to integrate its traditional missile force with its strategic weapons, therefore bolstering its "Active Defence" approach. This "Active Defence" is a significant indication of China's military philosophy, in which the proclaimed Chinese defensive stance (of assaulting the opponent only when hit by it first) conceals a violent operational strategic posture. This force can include a sizable number of traditional cruise & tactical missiles. In this way, China's nuclear deterrent and counter strike abilities would continue to be

strengthened by the new Rocket Force. China will eventually become a big power due to advancements in its capacity to conduct medium and long-range precise attacks. Likewise, the Strategic Support Force of the PLA will become the 5th branch of the armed forces. This is an innovative framework that was developed and will help the other four services perform more effectively.^[4] It will simplify space operations, electronic warfare, etc., as well as provide the proper cyber and intelligence support during a war. Therefore, it seems that these alterations involved a lot of thinking.

China has Reorganized the CMC: The previous 4 military departments-General Logistics, General Armaments, General Political, and General Staff Department were abolished, and the CMC currently oversees 15 new organizations that share their roles and responsibilities.^[5] The new offices maintain the General Staff Dept while establishing 6 new departments- National Defence mobilization, Training, Equipment Development, Logistical Support, Political Works, and Joint Staff. Science and Technology, Politics & Law, and Discipline Inspection are its three commissions. Additionally, five new departments have been established, including strategic planning, organizational structure, international collaboration, auditing, and administration. Extended staff assistance has basically been provided for the CMC. Many experts have attempted to show that this was done in an effort by President Xi Jinping to increase political power. This may only be partly accurate, and it appears that the CMC's new structure is intended to improve functioning. The Chinese military forces are enormous and very effective. The traditional structures would have become too unwieldy for operational management during wartime as well as for day-to-day effectiveness. To appreciate this, one simply has to compare the number of departments inside the headquarters of the Indian Armed Forces. In any event, it did not seem essential to enhance the party's already total political control of CMC.

The reform includes other measures like decreasing the size of the militia and reducing the number of troops from 2.3 to 2million. The Chinese military forces were reducing their personnel size as they advanced in technology. In this light, the projected reduction of 300,000troops could be viewed.

Time will demonstrate the success of these changes since there was strong resistance to them from inside the military services. The stability of the armed forces or perhaps the whole society might be impacted if [reform] is not carried out correctly, according to Han Xiao and Sun Kejia of the "PLA National Defence University". The most powerful leader since Mao and Deng has arisen as President Xi in the contemporary context, and it appears that he was effective in establishing a centralized system in which the power of the Party is unquestioned.

AN ANALYSIS OF CHINA'S MILITARY REFORMS

Doctrinal Changes in the PLA Since 1949 - An Ongoing Process: China was profoundly affected by an era of humiliation, and ever since, it has worked to improve its army might. A culture that valued a strong military was created as a consequence of both the Japanese occupation and the civil war that followed the end of the Qing dynasty. Chinese involvement in the Korean Conflict, Tibet's military annexation, and the 1962 war with India are all examples of Mao's willingness to use this military might. Due to a lack of technology, Chinese military strategy at first depended

only on numerical advantage, giving rise to the idea of "People's War". With improved military equipment, the resolution of border disputes, and generally increased capability, it was considered throughout the time that battles might be confined to a narrow area or a border with a particular country. This applied to both the Indo-China War of 1962 and the Vietnam War of 1979. Consequently, the military plan evolved into local/limited conflict under contemporary circumstances, local war under Hi-tech situations, People's war under contemporary circumstances, under conditions of informationization, and local/limited conflicts. Informatisation was incorporated after seeing the net-centric character of war, as exhibited by Western countries during the Gulf Conflicts. Another point worth highlighting is that China always maintained a defensive mindset even as it got more aggressive. As was previously stated, "Active Defence" was essentially an offensive concept while claiming to be the contrary. Global force projection is the current approach, which is consistent with the country's updated international status.

The Cause of the Present Change in Doctrine: As evidenced by historical shifts in the geostrategic landscape of the Asia-Pacific, the global governance system, the balance of power, and international competition in the fields of economics, science and technology, and military affairs, China believes that significant changes are occurring in the world order. Intensifying threats include neo-interventionism, power politics, hegemonies, and global rivalry for the redistribution of interests, rights, and power.^[6] The major countries are updating their national security policies and defence plans as well as accelerating their military transformation and force restructure in response to the military revolution, which is presenting new and significant threats to the military security of China.^[7] A comprehensive perspective of the national security system must be envisioned via balanced internal and external security systems as well as an evaluation of conventional and non-conventional threats since the national security concerns China is now dealing with are considerably more varied and complicated. To fulfil its military objectives of fighting and winning wars, China has been compelled by these new needs to reinvent its military policy and produce armed forces that continuously modernize its strategic leadership and operational principles. Additionally, due to the nation's expanding strategic interests, the armed forces will need to actively participate in future regional and global security cooperation. **A foreign invasion was the main reason for the military changes between 1949 and the 1980s. The current reforms are intended to represent China as a significant global force in addition to safeguarding China's basic interests.** It was argued that the likelihood of a significant conventional or nuclear conflict had diminished under Deng Xiaoping's leadership. Thus, it was necessary for the military to have the capacity to conduct "local wars under hi-tech conditions". This resulted in the decrease of MRs from 11 to 7, the reduction of the number of field armies at the time from 37 to 24, and their transformation into corps-level units known as Group Army.^[8] Similar military reductions have also been occurring occasionally, and the PLA's current soldier strength is at 2.3 million, dropping from 3.23 million in the past. Thus, the new changes are a synthesis of both new and old measures that have been expertly legislated by the current administration.

Senior PLA Officers may have been seen as supporting certain Party factions: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun" and "The Party must control the gun" have described the party-PLA relationships in China. The Red Army, often known as the PLA, was in charge of overthrowing the Kuomintang and establishing Communist Party power in China. The PLA has been essential in fostering both internal cohesiveness and nation-building. However, this also required the politicization of the rank and file for them to continue defending China's one-party system. In the past, PLA served as a party tool for internal controls in addition to deterring external threats. Almost all PLA commanders belonged to a party, and political commissars were and are still essential parts of any PLA unit with parallel power. There were several prominent PLA officers who served on the politburo standing committee or the party's central committee. *The reorganization may aim to prevent senior PLA commanders from remaining a member of different political cliques, which explains the appointments change.*

Everything Depend on Modernization: The justifications for the current downsizing and reorganization of the PLA have been hotly contested. The prevailing opinion is that this is being done to strengthen the party's control over PLA. Most likely, it requires a different perspective. The Communist Party as well as the Chinese President already have a firm grip on the PLA, and this grip has never been loosened. Therefore, there was no requirement to tighten their control over the PLA. The goals would likely have been dual in nature. First, to lower the nepotism and corruption levels within the PLA, and second, to improve the PLA as a combat force, in line with changing national goals and PRC's status in the area and throughout the world. Of course, the President has been able to increase his authority and place his supporters in important positions via the process.

Expeditionary role: The Current Central Doctrinal Idea: The 2015 Defense White Paper anticipates a growing expeditionary role for the PLA, which provides some insight into this modernization. This is also attributable to the removal of all genuine threats from China's near borders. Today, China has established boundaries with the majority of countries, and it has no cause to worry that its frontiers would be attacked. A military battle is still unlikely, even with rivals like the USA. Thus, the Eastern Seaboard is likely to be the single source of the main danger to China.

A focus on PLAN and PLAAF: The present reorganization aims to address the improved force projection, control, joint command, and improved technologies for intelligence & surveillance demands of an expeditionary capacity. China is transitioning from an ideology of mass employment to a policy of technological exploitation. The effort to reduce headquarters size, autonomous brigades in lieu of divisions, theatre commands/zones, and a greater focus on the PLAAF, PLAN, and the Rocket Force are all signs in the direction described above. The PLAAF and PLAN being distinct services further solidify the PLA Army's prim and proper standing.

Additional Funds Release for Asymmetric Capabilities: Asymmetric warfare, like cyber warfare and the militarization of space capabilities, has also been a priority for China. These efforts were made to both increase the effectiveness of its troops and to build up its capacity to destroy its

adversaries without engaging in direct combat. Part of the downsizing's purpose is to free up money to improve these areas' capabilities.

PLA Autonomy: For a long time, the PLA has demanded professional independence from the party. The idea of the PLA exercising autonomy in areas like force structure, war-fighting doctrines, etc. could be indicated by this modernization.

The Contradiction: How does the connection between the party and the PLA alter as a result of this modernization drive? A fully professional army with worldwide influence cannot also continue to operate on a daily basis as a political tool run by political commissars. The conflict is found right there. As China aspires to be a major power, the need for the PLA to modernize and develop into a combat force of the highest level is now essentially irrevocable. It will, however, inevitably result in a more independent military mindset. The political system will thus need to handle the transition. Although they may not be aware of it now, the political leadership would eventually have to deal with this conflict.

Corruption - The On-going Theme: Xi Jinping has also taken strong action against the widespread corruption inside the PLA. Therefore, the reorganization affords him the chance to eliminate the existing standards, forces, and institutions that allowed this corruption to grow. It creates a brand-new order that is impervious to corruption.

However, Xi Jinping's plan is more about modernization and efficiency than it is about control. Additionally, it reflects the shifting perspective of the wars in which the PLA is most probable to take part in the future.

Military Regions Reorganisation





Figure 1: The Possible Boundaries of Military Regions (Source South China Morning Post)

In the past, China's military zones have changed in number as well. There were formerly 13 military zones, but they were later reduced to 11, then 7, and currently there are just 5. This is the result of shifting attitudes about the danger and scaling down the use of force. The three coastal military zones are still mostly intact if the maps from the Economist are accurate (see maps above), even if Beijing and Chengdu military regions have been combined in other locations. The precise limits are not yet known. The limits shown above are only illustrative.

Therefore, it is more probable that group armies will be concentrated in the 3 coastal military commands or zones, which will also likely be in charge of the three fleets.

The organization of the recently developed military commands/zones would be interesting to investigate. For example, it is unclear if they would have direct authority over the militias and the PAPF ("Peoples Armed Police Force"). Should the latter occur, it would indicate the Party's aim to handle the domestic situation via PAPF while the PLA focuses on foreign threats (like the Indian Model). If it does, it would be a huge move and will lessen the PLA's role in upholding the party dictatorship. It's important to keep an eye on this issue since it's not entirely apparent.

The PAPF, which has probably been renamed the National Guard, may take on a bigger role. This might result in the PAPF's function being expanded to include all aspects of internal security. It could be related to the CPC's belief that an event such as the one in Tiananmen Square is less likely as affluence grows. This line of reasoning, however, may be incorrect given that the CPC

continues to worry about regime transition despite the fact that President Xi Jinping has nearly complete control over all governmental institutions.

The modern chain of command for the PLAAF and PLAN will be another important area to research. The regional HQs for the PLAAF and PLAN were formerly located inside their respective army areas. Will the innovative army areas continue to have combined structures, whereby the service's controls all are placed in a single commander? Or with the designation of PLAN and PLAAF as autonomous services, would the service head quarters have a stronger operational say-especially in the instance of PLAN? The 3 coastal military commands/zones will presumably continue to control the three PLAN fleets. This component is still not entirely apparent. However, the reorganization is not intended to make the military commands and zones more "joint", since military regions have long controlled parts of all the services that are situated inside their borders.

The reorganization of military regions does not make it clear whether a particular military command is to be given this duty or whether all armed zones would now designate a force component for expeditionary duties, despite the recent military papers' desire for expeditionary capability.

India would be particularly interested in the reallocation of group armies since it will probably determine how many reserves are made available to the military zone across from us. Additionally, the 300,000-troop reduction endeavour may need some decrease in the size of combat units. Such a significant decrease may not be achieved by just reducing HQ. These specifics are yet unknown.

India, Russia, and Vietnam, respectively, are the three mainland boundaries that are of military importance. All three are categorized under various military areas.

The military command/zone in Western will be in charge of the largest land boundaries as well as a vast area of territory. Additionally, they may control problematic areas like Tibet and Xinjiang. A reinforced military organization may be seen in the Western command/Zone, which controls over one-third of China's land-based forces. Gen Zhao Zongqui, the current commander of the Western command/zone, has a long history with Tibet; from 1984 to 2004, he held the positions of Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff in Tibet. His position on Tibet is not likely to be soft.

Only the Western military command/zone has boundaries with Indian Territory at this time. From the Chinese standpoint, this will likely be more effective since they can coordinate the use of troops in our Western and Eastern regions more effectively and with more synergy. This is especially important since the Chinese are strategically positioned on inner lines. Conversely, India is on the outside, hence there is little strategic synchronicity between its Western and Eastern Sectors.

The USA has strategic commands that have the whole world under its control. Nevertheless, even with an expansive mind, China has confined the geographical borders of the newly constituted

Theatre Commands “Within China” despite the fact that the Southern, Eastern, and Central Theatre Commands are most probably assigned for eventualities “outside China”. Most probably, the Southern Theatre Commands will be assigned responsibility for the IOR, while the Eastern and Central Theatre Commands would focus on the Pacific Ocean. Further research must be done to determine the precise jurisdictions.

PLA STRATEGIC SUPPORT FORCE AND PLA ROCKET FORCE

As mentioned above, there is a lot of focus on the expansion of asymmetrical abilities, including those in space, missile technology, cyber war, nuclear deterrent, and so on. The establishment of the PLA Rocket Force provides a further boost to this attempt and confirms resource synergy. China has previously performed tests of tools like anti-satellite weapons. The rocket force has greater freedom to create conceptions and ideologies due to its position as a service. It also shows China's dependence on this service as a winning element in the struggle. There may have been a conflict of interest while still being a member of the PLA (i.e., Army) or any other military, in which the senior officials of that service could have attempted to maintain their relevance, sometimes at the expense of the expansion of the nuclear and deterrent. As a result of the ability to switch warheads, conventional missile deterrence would probably become more efficient. Thus, delivery methods are standardized in a single agency.

Likewise, the PLA strategic force unifies different assets including cyber warfare capabilities and information collected under a single command structure. This will further contribute to the improvement of force structures, doctrinal principles, and financial independence and autonomy. This will also assist in strengthening their expeditionary capabilities. Although these effects may look modest, they will have a major impact.

Determining their anticipated deployment or distribution as well as operational command factors, which are unknown at the present, is of course still an open question.

Miscellaneous Restructuring

Unconfirmed reports also circulated concerning more restructurings, including the elimination of the divisional HQ and the placement of just brigades under group armies. It's uncertain whether this represents phase 2 of the restructure or if it has already been implemented. Nonetheless, all armies have dealt with this idea at one point or another, as various benefits and drawbacks accumulate. The benefits may include quicker decision making, improved reserve management, flatter, and leaner organization, etc. In contrast, the group army's HQ must be expanded and grows unwieldy. Additionally, the decision-making process becomes more centralized, with no buffer in the event of a poor choice. As Xi Jinping has lately stated several times, restructuring is expected to continue alongside modernization.

A “National Security” Commission to fight separatism, extremism, and terrorism has also been established in China.^[9] This did not get much attention due to the declarations of military reform. Additionally, it's possible that the PAPF/National Guard will operate under new legislation that even authorizes its deployment abroad.^[10] Once again, this has not received much public attention, but it has extensive ramifications for the dynamics of internal security, including the

possible deployment of Chinese paramilitary forces in addition to their regular army to defend Chinese interests overseas.

Modernization Trends: In the application of the military strategic directive in the new circumstances, the armed forces of China should carefully focus on the CPC's objective of developing a powerful military, addressing the state's primary security requirements, aim to build an informationized military, deepen national defence reform, win informationized wars, and the armed forces in a comprehensive manner, develop a new military system with Chinese characteristics, and continuously improve their abilities to handle different security risks and achieving varied military tasks.^[11]

1) Nuclear Weapons: China has further refined the NFU doctrine, but there hasn't really been a significant shift. The command, control, and communications systems for the nuclear forces were extensively networked, allowing for better and quicker mobilization and deployment. A rising number of "DF-21 D" with a 1500 kilometers range are being deployed on land-based platforms. These may be employed for both traditional and nuclear warheads. There are also anticipated to be added DF 31s with a 11200 Km range. New generation mobile missiles are also being developed, as well as DF 41 with MIRV capability. As the nuclear force of China is for the 2nd strike and traditional missiles for the offensive 1st strike hence currently its traditional missiles make up the majority of China's ballistic missiles, and their rise was considerably quicker than the nuclear forces. Additionally, they are creating the "Global Strike Precession" missiles in imitation of the Americans.

They have made an effort to establish their sea-based systems for power forecasts in terms of the triad's development. Maximum development has occurred in this region. The JL2 SLBM (7,400 km Rg), which has been installed on the Jin Class SSBN Type 094-3+5, increases the Chinese triad's power as well as its ability to target any location on the American mainland. China is projected to build "SSBN(Type 096)/Type 095 (SSGN)"-along with "Guided Missile Attack Submarine Land Attack Capability(ASCM-ASCM/LACMs)" during the course of the next decade.

The Liaoning aircraft carrier was relocated to the Northern Sea Fleet's Yuchi Naval station. It will soon have a functioning air wing. China is preparing more aircraft carriers for high-profile naval diplomacy, SLOC patrols, and military projection. This is consistent with the Chinese mindset of exploration. To avoid the American aircraft carriers moving in, the PLAN ("Air Wing") is enhancing its offshore strike capacity. A number of further modern destroyers and frigates with improved capabilities are also being designed. Wave-piercing missile boats have been installed on the HOUBEL Class ASCM.

2) Air and Air Defence: These are the special services/arms receiving increased modernization emphasis. By 2018, the modernization effort involves the purchase of Russian SU-35 Flanker-ac aircraft and the production of 5th generation fighters (J31&J20 such as US F-35). LACM carrying capabilities are being built into the H6-K. Additionally, the Y 20 big transport aircraft is undergoing testing. UAVs have been introduced to long-range reconnaissance and strike operations. Other advances include the purchase of the "SA-X-21b (S-400) SAM System (400km)"

and an increase in the domestic CSA-9 8AM's range beyond 200 km. The next phase is to create an informationalized military with credible A2AD capabilities. This will involve the capacity to protect one's information systems and disrupt those of the opponent. More advanced radars, as well as Electronic Counter Measures, will enable simultaneous operations on kinetic operations, counter space, information domain, cyberspace, underwater, water, air, and land, under accurate battlefield circumstances.

3) Space Capabilities: The advancements here contain EW Satellites, intelligence Reconnaissance, & counter communication. Instances include the launch of the Space Launch Vehicle ("Long March" 11) for quick entrance into space and the Kuaizhou ("Quick Vessel") for the introduction of tiny satellites into low Earth orbit. By 2020, China is also projected to restart launching Beidou NAVSAT, which will have the potential for a worldwide constellation. The human space program and space launch vehicles continue to be the key priorities.

4) Establishing the Defense Industry: This indicates increased collaboration between state-owned businesses (Industry and Shipbuilding Corporation). This also includes the program for aircraft carriers. The goal is to raise the standard for ground weapons and advance turbo engine technology. to increase the manufacturing of big body commercial and military aircraft by improving the currently underdeveloped infrastructure and expertise. Additionally, the acquisition of foreign technologies is undertaken. The main areas of interest include manufacturing and engineering, computer-assisted design, forensic equipment and advanced diagnostic, precision machine tools, guidance and control systems, processors, solid-state electronics, and engines. Priorities comprise 3D marine environmental monitoring systems, for quick, deep-sea operations, and several parameter ocean floor survey technologies; as a result, the advancement of chemical along with solid laser state technology is also a high priority to deploy weapon-grade systems from both ground- and airborne-based platforms.

In conclusion, the recently released defence white paper provided a hint as to the probable course of PLA reorganization and reform. China now views itself as the United States' strategic "Equal". As a result, it aspires to have a worldwide military presence comparable to that of the USA as well as a far greater economic global footprint. This calls for improved force projection capabilities, an expeditionary approach, as well as force modernization. China now sees significantly fewer dangers coming from its land borders. The only nation that poses a real land-based danger is Russia, with whom it is developing relationships. Conversely, the danger from the sea, the unresolved Taiwan question, and the conflicts in the East and the South China Sea make it seem seawards. An improved global standing also necessitates putting more emphasis on services such as PLAN that offer expeditionary abilities. South China Sea adventurism of Chinese, the construction of artificial islands and their claim to them as sovereign territory, the announcement of A2AD procedures, etc., are all activities that are anticipated to increase in the near future. It is consistent with China's desire to expand its sphere of influence all the way to the second island chain and beyond. The whole world is already inside China's sphere of interest. We will still have to gather more inputs before a much more detailed assessment can be drawn with respect to implications for India

The PLA has eased the quick induction along with the implementation of high-altitude acclimatized and trained soldiers not only into "Tibet" but also perhaps into "Ladakh" for any exigencies by placing the Qinghai area under the Western command/zone. This issue has to be taken into account as well in our operational and mobilization strategies. Should the Western Command get engaged in guarding Chinese property in the China and Pakistan Economic Corridor, its forces would be dispersed throughout our Eastern, Northern, & Western Commands. This requires more research.

Disquiet in PLA

There is a lot of speculation about possible disquiet in the PLA on account of the recent reforms which have been carried out by Xi Jinping. There are reports that the reshuffle of various functionaries in senior positions has been viewed with suspicion and as an effort on part of the President to place his coterie in positions of power. This may however be only partially true.

There is no doubt that Xi Jinping would want to rid the PLA of all previous political appointees and place his protégés instead. However, there is also a concurrent narrative of modernization, reforms, and anti-corruption drive. It would be seen that many senior commanders have been reassigned rather than purged. A mere posting to a new appointment of similar stature should be seen as a commonplace occurrence in any military setup anywhere in the world.

Like any change the present set of reorganization is also being resisted – the military mind tends to resist change. However, too much should not be read into it, as military minds are also attuned to following orders. PLA has had a history of absolute obedience to the party and it is unlikely to change anytime soon.

During the regime of Hu Jintao, senior leaders of the PLA may have gotten used to a greater degree of autonomy and non-interference – which has changed now with a more involved and powerful President at the helm. This may partially be the reason for resentment in certain quarters.

While it has not come out in the media, there may have been some curtailment of the perks and privileges of the senior military hierarchy-for example perks arising from the commercial establishments being run by PLA. The anti-corruption drive may have also reduced the incomes of certain officers. This would naturally be resented.

The Prima Donna status of PLAN and PLAAF can only come at the cost of funding to PLA(Army). In China, inter-service turf battles were notably absent, so far. With each service now getting an independent status, this may well change. This may also cause reduced promotion prospects for certain Army officers. These can be big factors for internal grumblings.

As mentioned above there may be unease and uncertainty in PLA but this disquiet leading to any form of revolt or usurpation of power by the military elite remains a remote possibility. The present reorganization in PLA has many positives and unhappiness in certain quarters of PLA is unlikely to be of great concern to the present leadership. On the contrary, a much strengthened and professional military setup is likely to emerge in the long run. In the process, if Xi Jinping manages to consolidate his hold- view it as a bonus.

CT Force, OBOR: Implications

China has of late started propagating the deployment of its troops abroad for the protection of Chinese overseas interests. The law has been recently amended to permit this type of deployment. The defence white paper of 2015 also brings out the same. This shift in Chinese stance has come with a concurrent shift in their doctrinal thought which is now increasingly expeditionary.

The OBOR was announced by China as a geo-economic concept with a view to enhance connectivity and improve infrastructure in the region and beyond. A separate OBOR fund was also earmarked for the same. Thus, Chinese companies and their personnel are going to be increasingly located in many neighbouring countries. Because of the terrorist and other threats, they will require protection when located in regions like the Af-Pak. But even in relatively peaceful areas, a threat cannot be ruled out.

Thus, we are likely to see an increased presence of Chinese troops on foreign soil. While some governments may be accommodative of this presence – some others may resist. For example, the presence of Chinese troops for CPEC may not be in India's best interests. This deployment will also provide valuable experience to Chinese troops in counter-terrorism and even otherwise provide them first-hand knowledge of aspects such as terrain and local conditions.

This first presence has the potential to serve as a precursor to a longer-term deployment. Thus, the host nations will be wise to thoroughly consider all possibilities before entering into any such agreements.

Will a Maritime Silk Route initiative become the reason for more active deployment of naval forces in ports is yet to be seen. For example, will Chinese investments in the Gwadar force justify the positioning of naval assets there to protect these investments?

The requirement of protecting national interests abroad is of course justified. However, China will have to take steps to assure host nations that the intentions are benign and not with any different motive. Legal aspects such as the *status of forces agreement* may also have to be kept in mind. For example, a law-and-order incident involving any Chinese troops overseas may create avoidable controversies and may weaken relationships.

The CT force to guard Chinese assets in OBOR is indicative of growing Chinese confidence as also its diverse economic stakes. If implemented correctly, this can well become an instrument to provide regional security. On the other hand, it can also misrepresent intentions.

PLA MARINES AT GWADAR: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

Newspapers carried reports that the PLA has increased the size of its Marine Corps.^[12] According to reports, the number of troops would rise from 20,000 to over 100,000, with some of those staying permanently in Gwadar. This is perfectly consistent with the PLA's 2015 defence white paper's description of their expeditionary attitude.^[13] However, the expansion may be spread over a period of time as the figure of 100000 marine troops seems a bit inflated. This growth might also have prompted the reduction of troops elsewhere by 300,000, as suggested in the PLA's restructuring plan from the previous year.

As articulated in its OBOR plan, the PRC must seek bigger investment possibilities beyond its borders due to its slowing economy. Nevertheless, this approach demands stronger military projection capabilities to secure the PRC's global commercial interests and, more crucially, to provide it with political and economic power in other nations.

The PRC's interests in the Western Pacific have now been largely secured due to the establishment of bases in the South China Sea. The foundations of its force projection policy in the Indian Ocean include the acquisition of bases in Malacca, Gwadar, and Djibouti, as well as equity shares in Hambantota, rights to acquire property in the Maldives, and so on. The logical outcome was to increase the size of its Marine Corps. It should be observed that the Marine Corps tasking by the PLA now encompasses a far wider geostrategic presence rather than only Taiwan.

What does this augur mean for India? It is well known that a landslide-induced lake submerged the Karakoram Highway in 2010. After that, starting in 2012, the PRC went to considerable lengths to build several tunnels and bridges to ensure that the route is now all-weather. As part of CPEC, further road widening will be performed.^[14] So, even without CPEC, there is now an all-weather road connection between the Mainland PRC and the Gwadar port.

The existence of the PLAN at Gwadar, and a Marines detachment as well as the potential for the PLA to induct ground soldiers into Pakistan via the Karakoram highway under the pretext of defending its CPEC assets, could not be ordered in the event that India and Pakistan engage in a future conflict. These possibilities must be considered in India's operational planning and information collection regarding suspected PRC intents and capabilities at this time. India would also do well to eliminate the pressure point on its "Northern" borders by at least sharing respective perspectives of LAC with PRC even if the resolution of the boundary issue may be postponed to a later date. India should also be prepared for totally unforeseen contingencies, which may even appear ludicrous today. These may include China permanently positioning a fleet in the Indian Ocean, China buying an island from the Maldives and making it a naval base, China positioning troops permanently in Pakistan, and other such scenarios.

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