## 3. THE PINNACLE OF THE PYRAMID: THE CENTRAL MILITARY COMMISSION[199]

By David Shambaugh[200]

The real "nerve center" of the Chinese military system is clearly the Central Military Commission (CMC or *Zhongyang Junwei*). It is the principal deliberative and decision-making body for all major military and strategic decisions that involve the PLA. Command authority and the complete decision making power to deploy China's armed forces resides with the CMC—although one authoritative and *neibu* PLA source states that, "Practically speaking (*shiji shang*) major questions concerning war, armed force, and national defense building are decided by the Central Committee Politburo. Therefore, in reality, the highest-level decision-making authority is the Central Committee Politburo (*Zhongyang Zhengzhi Ju*)."[201] In addition making ultimate decisions concerning the deployment of troops, the CMC also has *direct* control over the Second Artillery (missile forces) and the two principle educational institutions of the PLA, the National Defense University (NDU) and Academy of Military Sciences (AMS). As specified in the 1997 National Defense Law, the CMC also has ostensible command authority over the paramilitary People's Armed Police (PAP), presumably via the General Staff Department, although the CMC's command authority is shared with the Ministry of Public Security of the State Council (the PAP also has some fiscal ties to the Ministry of State Security).[202] The most important command line of authority runs from the CMC to the Four General Headquarters and, in turn, to each of the service branches and military regions. The CMC itself has other subordinate organs, as depicted below:

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199 This chapter is drawn from my book *Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects,* University of California Press, forthcoming.

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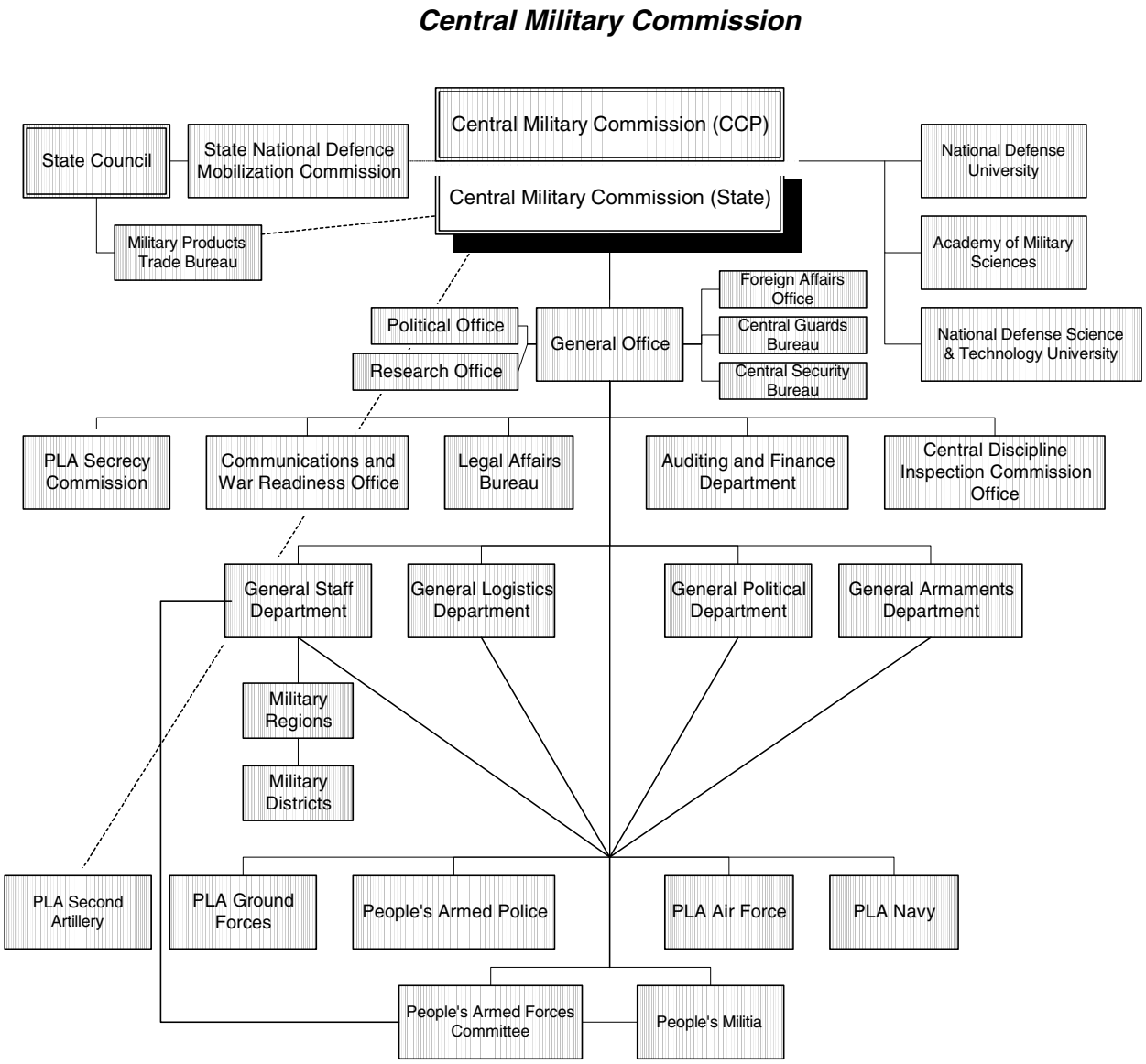
201 Yao Yanjin et al, eds., *Junshi zuzhi tizhi yanjiu,* Beijing: Guofang daxue chubanshe, *junnei faxing*, 1997, p. 371.

202 For the text of the NDL and and expostion of its contents see Xu Jiangrui and Fang Ning, eds., *Guofangfa gailun,* Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 1998.

## Figure 3.1 Central Military Commission




Sources: *Directory of PRC Military Personalities*, various years; Academy of Military Sciences (ed.), *Shijie Junshi Nianjian*, various years; Yao Yunzhi et al (eds.), *Junshi Zuzhi Tizhi Yanjiu*; interviews.

**HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE CMC**

The CMC of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has a lengthy history dating to October 1925. It was reorganized numerous times during the Civil War and Anti-Japanese War, but held the name *Zhongyang Junshi Weiyuanhui* (CMC) and the administrative level of a Central Committee commission (which rank higher than Central Committee departments such as the Organization, Propaganda, United Front Work, and Investigation Departments) since March 1930.[203] In September 1949, the armed forces were reorganized and centralized into the People's Liberation Army and the People's Public Security Forces (*Renmin Gong'an Budui*) and a Central People's Government Revolutionary Military Affairs Commission (*Zhongyang Zhengfu Geming Junshi Weiyuanhui*) was established.[204] After the PRC was proclaimed on October 1st, a CMC was created inside the Party (*dang nei*).[205] In September 1954, at the First Session of the First National People's Congress, a new Constitution was promulgated and a new National Defense Commission (*Guofang Weiyuanhui*) was created under the Central Government, but it is described as having been intended "as a consultative (*zixunxing*) body, not as a leadership organ over the armed forces."[206] At the same time, the Central Committee decided to create a new Central Military Commission under the CCP, which would have complete leadership (*quan lingdao*) over the PLA and other armed forces, and a new Ministry of National Defense under the State Council. This dual arrangement of having state and Party military commissions existed on paper until January 1975 when the Fourth Session of the NPC decided to formally abolish the post of President of the PRC and the National Defense Commission—although, in fact, both had ceased to function after the Cultural Revolution broke out in 1966. President Liu Shaoqi, Chairman of the National Defense Commission, was purged and died in a solitary cell in a Kaifeng prison in 1969.

Like almost all central-level organs during the Cultural Revolution, the CMC's membership and responsibilities were disrupted. However, it did not cease to function. It continued to meet on several occasions, and when it met the CMC generally sought to insulate the military from the Red Guards and the political radicalism rampant at the time. For example, the CMC convened a prolonged

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[203] See Lei Yuanshen, "Zhongyang junwei biandong" [The Evolution of the Central Military Commission], *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, Vol. 34 (1990), p. 219; Pu Xingzu, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhengzhi zhidu,* Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1999, pp. 557-58.

[204] Ibid.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid, p. 559.

expanded session at the Jingxi Hotel in February 1967.[207] This meeting produced an "Eight Point Circular" (known as the *Ba Tiao*) aimed at strengthening command and control over geographic military units, protecting weapons stocks from raiding by Red Guards, protecting secret documents and archives, and regularizing the PLA's training regimen.[208]

Throughout this period, major military decisions were made in *ad hoc* meetings of Chairman Mao, Defense Minister Lin Biao (prior to his death in September 1971), and several senior PLA Marshals who had the lucky fortune of not having been purged (notably Ye Jianying, Xu Xiangqian, and Chen Yi).[209] Mao relied heavily on these elder marshals during this time, particularly as tensions with the Soviet Union mounted. In fact, it was the triumvirate of Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, and and Xu Xiangqian that the Chairman that the Chairman tasked to undertake an assessment of China's national security environment in the aftermath of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The marshals allegedly convinced Mao that the situation was extremely threatening, that war with Moscow was imminent (and would likely include nuclear conflict), and that China needed a dramatic opening to the United States to offset the Soviet threat.[210] This was in the summer of 1968. It took *three years* of discrete signaling by Mao and the Chinese side before Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon took their own initiative in September 1971 to reach out to the Chinese leadership.

While the CMC was moribund during these years, the six subordinate units of the CMC all continued to function to varying degrees, and in effect substituted for the CMC by running the PLA. This was certainly the case with the General Staff Department, which continued to operate thirteen departments and direct forces in the field.[211] Its General Office was merged with the General Office of the CMC.[212] However, the General Political Department was in a state of political chaos and underwent a sweeping purge (see below)—while the General Logistics Department, National Defense Science and Technology Commission, and National Defense Industries Office maintained a modicum of production and research (see chapter

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[207] Academy of Military Sciences History Department, ed., *Zhongguo Renmin jiefangjun de qishinian*, op cit, p. 556.

[208] Ibid, p. 557.

[209] See Li Ke and Hao Shengzhang, *'Wenhua Da Geming' Zhong de Renmin Jiefangjun,* Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi ziliao chubanshe.

[210] Interview with Chen Yi's son, Chen Xiaolu, March 1990. This account has been subsequently confirmed by Chinese historians.

[211] Li Ke and Hao Shengzhang, *'Wenhua da Geming' zhong de renmin jiefangjun*, op cit, pp. 351-52.

[212] Ibid, p. 353.

6).[213] The Academy of Military Sciences, however, was severely disrupted and essentially ceased to function (*tingzhi*).[214]

After the worst of the Cultural Revolution chaos, and the opening to the United States (which partially offset the immediacy of the Soviet threat), Deng Xiaoping and the marshals set about rebuilding the PLA in 1974-75. One of the first steps was to reconstitute the CMC. This was particularly needed after the death of Lin Biao, following an alleged *coup d'etat* attempt, and the purge of his followers in the upper echelons of the PLA. The CMC was gutted and radically reduced in size (see below). It took several years to weed out the "Lin Biao Counter-Revolutionary Clique" in the CMC, General Headquarters, and services (especially the Air Force and Navy),[215] but once it was done the new CMC met in February 1975.[216] Ye Jianying and Deng Xiaoping were put in charge of overseeing the daily work of the CMC. The revamped CMC convened a major expanded work conference from June 24-July 15, 1975 that took a series of decisions on the restructuring of the PLA and concerning China's international security environment. Even when Deng was purged again in 1976, the revamped CMC continued to function on the leadership of Marshal Ye Jianying.[217]

When Deng returned to the stage in 1977, he gradually worked to regain control over the military. By 1982 he had usurped Hua Guofeng's role as Chairman of the CMC and re-installed himself as Chief of Staff. A *state* CMC was reestablished at the Fifth Session of the Fifth NPC in December 1982, and it was enshrined in a new national Constitution (a revised parallel CCP Constitution reaffirmed the Party CMC). The restoration of a separate CMC under the Government was seen as an important manifestation of the new policy of "separating party from government" (*dang-zheng fenkai*), as advocated by reformist Premier Zhao Ziyang and CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang.[218] Certainly Deng Xiaoping supported the initiative. After Zhao was purged in 1989 he was criticized for having tried to usurp Party authority over the military by (re)creating a state CMC, but in fact the move proved purely cosmetic—as the state CMC existed only on paper. The membership was identical, the state CMC never met separately, and it had no separate powers other than ostensibly being responsible to the President of the republic and the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. The two

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213 Ibid, pp. 351-352.

214 Academy of Military Sciences History Department, eds., *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun de qishinian*, op cit, p. 560.

215 For a description of this process, see ibid, pp. 564-568.

216 Ibid, p. 569.

217 For an excellent study of this period see Cheng Zhongyuan, et al, *1976-1981 nian de Zhongguo,* Beijing: Zhongyang wenzhai chubanshe, 1998.

218 Academy of Military Sciences History Research Department, *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun de qishinian*, op cit, p. 622.

bodies were the same—described by Chinese as "one overlapping body and one organization" (*yitao banzi, yige jigou*) or "two signs, one organization" (*liangge paizi, tong yige jigou*)—and the Party CMC is the one with real power and authority. Other Chinese sources claim that the existence of two CMCs is no contradiction (*liang zhe bing bu maodun*), and is meant to illustrate that the "Party and state have united leadership and organizational assurance towards national military power," and that "the Party and Government are not separated, but that the Party leads the Government,"[219] but it is clear that the state CMC is a hollow body with no autonomous power. In terms of command authority the PLA remains a party-army, although in other realms there is evidence of movement towards more autonomous and corporate roles for the PLA. The PLA remains far from becoming a "national military" or "state military" (*guojia jundui*), but there nonetheless has been distinct movement in the direction of limited military autonomy from the Communist Party.[220]

While membership in the two CMCs today is identical, the process of selecting members has changed in recent years as part of the process of regularizing and standardizing PLA procedures. In earlier years, the CMC was a large organ that included a wide variety of senior military commanders and leaders. As such it has fluctuated greatly in size and composition. From 1949-54 it had no fewer than 28 members, shrinking slightly to 22 members between 1954 and 1966, before ballooning to 52 members during the 1969-1977 period, and 64 during the 1977-1982 period![221] To be sure, during much of this time an "inner cabinet" of the CMC existed which included Mao and perhaps a half dozen senior military leaders and who met and made key decisions—although it was by no means unknown for Mao to convene a full or expanded (*kuoda*) CMC meeting when warranted.[222] After 1982 and Deng Xiaoping's regaining of authority over the PLA, the CMC shrunk considerably in size and instituted an *ex officio* system of membership. Under the new system, the heads of the (then) three General Departments and the Minister of

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219 Li Shouchu, ed., *Zhongguo zhengfu zhidu,* Beijing: Zhongyang Minzu Daxue chubanshe, 1997, p. 297.

220 This phenomenon is discussed at much greater length in my *Modernizing China's Military*, op cit, chapter 2.

221 As compiled by Yan Kong in "Evolution of the Central Military Commission," unpublished paper (1993). Yan draws mainly on Academy of Military Sciences, ed., *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zuzhi yange he geji lingdao chengyuan minglu,* Beijing: Junshi Kexueyuan chubanshe, 1987 and Liao Gailong, ed., *Dangdai Zhongguo zhengzhi dashidian, 1949-1990*, Changchun: Jilin wenhua lishi chubanshe, 1991. Nan Li calculates similar numbers from other Chinese sources in "Organizational Changes in the PLA, 1985-1997," in *The China Quarterly,* June 1996, p. 320.

222 For a detailed listing of these expanded CMC meetings see Hou Shudong, et al, eds., *Guofang jiaoyu da cidian,* Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 1992, pp. 96-97.

Defense would automatically serve on the CMC. In addition, there would be a Chairman (Deng), several vice-Chairmen (usually three but unspecified), and a Secretary-General. After 1992 and the purge of Yang Baibing, the position of Secretary-General was eliminated. Since 1989 the President of the PRC, Jiang Zemin, has served simultaneously as Chairman of the CMC, although this is not stipulated by the Constitution or other regulation. Jiang's simultaneously dual positions as Party leader and state president blurs the distinction as well as providing some validity to concept of having two separate military commissions. In 1999, after several attempts by Jiang to install him, the Vice-President of the PRC (Hu Jintao) was added as First Vice-Chairman (a position resurrected from the 1980s when Zhao Ziyang held it), becoming only the second civilian member of the CMC. Hu has no background in military matters whatsoever (neither does Jiang[223]), and reportedly commands little respect from the military brass. The Premier of the State Council, Zhu Rongji, is not a member. In terms of actual power and decision authority the two senior vice-chairmen and serving officers—Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian today—enjoy overall authority within the CMC. No doubt Jiang Zemin and certainly Hu Jintao, defer to the judgment of these men on most matters. It is not clear if Generals Zhang and Chi share a division of labor in terms of overseeing different elements of defense policy and the military establishment,[224] as was the case with their predecessors Generals Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen (Liu oversaw weapons production, defense industries, and military diplomacy, while Zhang was in charge of doctrine, training, deployments, and military education).[225] The other members of the CMC constitute, in effect, an informal "executive committee" with functional responsibilities for their respective functional bailiwicks (not unlike the "leading small group" system in civilian policymaking).[226] It remains permissible to include members of the CMC who command Military Regions or have other portfolios (such as Wang Ruilin, Guo Boxiong, and Xu Caihou today), but the day of enlarged and "packed" CMCs ended with the Maoist era.

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[223] See my "China's Commander-in-Chief: Jiang Zemin and the PLA," in C. Dennison Lane, et al, *Chinese Military Modernization,* London and Washington, D.C.: Kegan Paul International and AEI Press, 1996, pp. 209-245.

[224] One Hong Kong source asserts that Chi is merely responsible for military diplomacy in his capacity as Minister of Defense, while Zhang has authority over all military matters. "Beijing Holds Enlarged Meeting of Central Military Commission: Zhang Wannian Pursues New Ideas for Developing Weapons," *Guang Jiao Jing* [Wide Angle], 16 December 1997, translated in BBC, *Summary of World Broadcasts/Far East*, 30 December 1997.

[225] Interview with aide to General Liu Huaqing, June 1993.

[226] See Michael Swaine, *The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking* (revised edition), Santa Monica: RAND, 1998, pp. 43-44.

The CMC usually convenes in full session about half a dozen times per year, always following a Party plenum or Congress, always in December to approve the proposed military budget for forwarding to the State Council, and whenever else it is warranted. These CMC meetings usually stretch out over several days, sometimes taking place in the Jingxi Guest House (a military hotel owned by the General Political Department in central Beijing), sometimes in the Zhongnanhai, or sometimes in the Great Hall of the People. Now that the Ministry of National Defense has built a palatial new office compound on West Chang'an Boulevard, in which the CMC occupies the top floor, it is likely that CMC meetings will henceforth take place in this new building. It is unclear how the meetings are actually run, whether the members actually "vote" on agenda items or deliberate policy on the basis of consensus. Participants include CMC members, but others can be invited on a case-by-case basis (sometimes CMC meetings receive special briefings on specific situations, such as Taiwan). Usually, one or two "Decision" documents are promulgated after a full CMC meeting, but the content of these are likely prepared and agreed in advance. The agenda itself is likely shaped by subordinates in the CMC General Office. Contrary to numerous reports in the Hong Kong media, it is highly unlikely that CMC meetings consider "petitions" put forward by dissatisfied generals or become forums for table-pounding military bluster against Taiwan, the United States, Japan, or other would-be foes. PLA analyst Tai Ming Cheung also distinguishes several other types of CMC meetings (although these are not conformed by other sources):[227]

- A weekly work conference (*gongzuo hui*) that meets every Thursday to discuss routine administrative and staffing matters. Presumably, this is attended by members of the General Office staff.
- Irregular "knocking-heads" meetings (*peng-tou hui*), for informal discussion of pressing issues, usually attended by CMC military members and other senior PLA officers.
- Discussion meetings (*zuotan hui*) last for several days, often after a Party plenum, for detailed discussion of major defense and national security issues.
- Plenary meetings (*quanti hui*), usually at the end of every calendar year to assess the past year's work, finalize the next year's budget and Annual Plan.
- Enlarged meetings (*kuoda hui*) convened on special occasions and included several hundred military leaders.

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[227] Tai Ming Cheung, "The Influence of the Gun: China's Central Military Commission and Its Relationship with the Military, Party, and State Decision-Making Systems," in David M. Lampton, ed., *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform* Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 61-90.

What are the duties and functions of the CMC? According to published Chinese sources,[228] the CMC:

- Establishes unified command over the nation's armed forces;
- Decides military strategy and the warfighting principles for the armed forces;
- Leads and manages PLA building, formulates regulations, plans and organizes deployments;
- Implements resolutions of the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee;
- Formulates military regulations according to the Constitution and law, and disseminates decisions and orders;
- Determines PLA structure and personnel, oversees the General Departments and Military Regions, and other organs under the Military Regions;
- Appoints and removes, cultivates, investigates, rewards and punishes armed forces personnel according to military law and regulations;
- Oversees and approves the armed forces' weapons equipment system and weapons equipment development orders and development plan, and coordinates with the State Council leads and manages national defense science and technology research and production; and
- Jointly organize and manage with the State Council the military budget and national defense investment.

The CMC exercises administrative control and oversight over the Four General Headquarters (General Staff, Logistics, Political, and Equipment Departments). This is ostensibly done via the membership on the CMC of each department director, but apparently there are representatives of each serving in the General Office of the CMC who serve as liaison. The CMC also exercises direct command authority over the seven Military Regions and services, although in practice this is done via the General Staff Department (particularly to the ground forces). The CMC also has administrative responsibility for the armed forces' two principal institutions of professional military education (PME), the National Defense University and Academy of Military Sciences (the organization of these is described below and in Figures 4:15 and 4:16). Importantly, according to an internal Chinese military source, the Second Artillery (strategic and tactical rocket forces) is "under the CMC's direct leadership, exercising vertical command" (*Di Er Pao Bing zai Zhongyang Jun Wei zhijie lingdao xia, shixing chuizhi zhihui*).[229]

The CMC also has command authority over the unit that offers personal security protection to all Central Committee members and leading military officials—the Central Security Bureau (*Zhongyang Bao'an Ju*), which is more commonly known as

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[228] Pu Xingzu, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhengzhi zhidu, op cit, p. 560.

[229] Yao Yanjin, et al eds., *Junshi zuzhi tizhi yanjiu*, op cit, p. 372.

the Central Guards Bureau (*Zhongyang Jingwei Ju*).[230] For many years this elite guard regiment was known simply by a four-digit designator: 8341. The number had no meaningful military nomenclature, but rather came from the serial number on a rifle that Mao Zedong had purchased during the 1927 Autumn Harvest Uprising. Mao kept the rifle throughout the Long March and in the Yan'an base area. He was very proud of it, enjoyed cleaning it, and accordingly decided to name his personal guard detachment in Yan'an by the number—and henceforth the 8341 Regiment assumed a lore of its own.[231] While the CMC has direct command over this unit and the CMC General Office oversees it on a daily basis,[232] the Beijing Military District garrison of the Beijing Military Region and the Security Bureau of the PLA General Staff Department apparently share some command authority and provide funds, equipment, training, and barracks for the elite guards.[233] It is apparent, though, that the General Staff maintains a separate guard unit solely for top military leaders, while the Central Guards Bureau protects civilian leaders. The Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of State Security, and People's Armed Police also maintain their own elite guard units, but it is unclear how their jurisdiction is distinguished from the Central Guards (probably for local and visiting overseas officials). Each senior leader receives two types of security protection—a set of one to six bodyguards who are responsible for personal security as well as various daily logistical matters (arranging meals, medical care, clothing, transport, and other personal needs[234]) and a larger military/security detachment, ranging in size from a squad (*ban*) to a company (*tuan*) to secure an area during a leader's visit.[235]

The internal organization of the CMC is not entirely clear—and is, in fact, a state secret. It is known however, that the CMC contains at least five key organs. If the CMC is the "nerve center" of the PLA, then the CMC's General Office is the

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[230] See Wei Li, "The Security Service for Chinese Central Leaders," *The China Quarterly,* September 1995, pp. 814-827.

[231] No author, "*Shuo bu wan dao bu pu de shenmi fuhao: '8341' cong qiyong dao xiaoshi zhimi*" [The Endless Story of the Mysterious Symbol: '8341' and the Mystery From its Inception to its Disappearance], *Huaxia*, No. 70 (June 1997), pp. 31-35; and "*Zhongnanhai de di yizhi jingwei budui*," ibid, pp. 12-17.

[232] Interview with former Chinese military intelligence official, 5 August 2000.

[233] Ibid and Wei Li, *The Security Service for Chinese Central Leaders*, op cit. The aforementioned interview source described the General Staff's command as *yewu zhidao* (professional guidance) instead of *lingdao guanxi* (leadership relations).

[234] This includes massages and sexual favors. Chairman Mao, Ye Jianying, and other senior leaders were known to have used the guard units to procure modern-day concubines, "nurses," etc. See, in particular, Li Zhisui (with the assistance of Anne Thurston), *The Private Life of Chairman Mao,* New York: Random House, 1994.

[235] Wei Li, The Security Service for Chinese Central Leaders, op cit, p. 817.

nerve center of the nerve center. The General Office (*Zhong Ban*) processes all CMC communications and documents, coordinates meetings, and conveys orders and directives to other subordinate organs. It was formerly housed in the Sanzuomen complex just north of Beihai Park in central Beijing, and within a short distance of the Zhongnanhai leadership compound (and is reportedly connected via underground tunnel), although it moved along with the CMC to the top floor of the new palatial Ministry of Defense compound in western Beijing when it opened in 2000. The General Office is known to have a Director (Lieutenant General Tan Yuexin since January 2000[236]) and a number of Deputy Directors, most of who serve as the personal secretaries (*mishu*) to CMC members (Jiang Zemin has a separate military *mishu*, for many years this was Major General Jia Ting'an[237]). According to one source, the General Office has a total staff of between 200 and 300 members.[238] The General Office also has a subordinate Political Office (*Zheng Ban*), Research Office (*Ke Yan Ban*), and Foreign Affairs Office (*Wai Ban*)—which is, in fact, identical to that of the Ministry of Defense.[239] In past years, particularly in the late-1980s when General Li Jijun was Director, the General Office was a source of innovative ideas and reform initiatives—although it seemed to revert to a more bureaucratic role in the 1990s.

The CMC also has at least five separate first-level departments (*yi ji bu*), although they do not all bear the administrative title of "department." These are all depicted in Figure 3.1 above. The Communications War and Readiness Office is the central command and control organ for disseminating orders and commanding forces in both peacetime and wartime. This Office thus liaises directly with the General Staff Department, Military Region commands, and but not the Second Artillery (which is under direct CMC control). It is probably into this Office where early warning, air defense, and other critical signals intelligence is channeled from the

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[236] Institute of Asian Affairs (Hamburg, Germany), *China Monthly Data,* April 2001, p. 12.

[237] Jia Ting'an has served as Jiang's *mishu* for more than twenty years since Jiang was Minister of Electronics. He became his chief military secretary in the early 1990s and subsequently became director of the Jiang Zemin Office (*Jiang Ban*). He is thought to often represent Jiang at CMC meetings. In the summer 2000, however, Jia was reported to have been removed from his position and come under investigation for an alleged connection to the nation's largest smuggling and official corruption case, in which a Xiamen-based company (Yuanhua) with close ties to senior central-level leaders smuggled autos and a variety of other products worth nearly $10 billion in Fujian. See BBC Monitoring, "Hong Kong Source Reports Removal of Jiang Zemin Aide Suspected of Corruption," 14 August 2000.

[238] Tai Ming Cheung, "The Influence of the Gun," op cit.

[239] Personnel in the *Wai Ban* have name cards that list both organs.

PLA's growing number of transmitters and sensors.[240] It is also known that the PLA is embarked on a comprehensive upgrading of its communications systems for command and control. According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the PLA now possesses a completely automated command and control system, and is developing a new type of Integrated Battlefield Area Communications System (IBACS) that includes speech signal processing and broadband integrated services digital networks (B-ISDN).[241]

The CMC also has a Legal Affairs Bureau (responsible for drafting military laws and regulations, and possessing sharing oversight of the military judicial system with the General Political Department), an Auditing and Finance Department (responsible for formulating the defense budget and liaising with the Ministry of Finance and State Council, as well as the General Logistics Department financial system), a Military Products Trade Bureau (set up in 1989 to oversee both the import and export of weapons and other military equipment), and a Central Discipline Inspection Commission (CDIC) office. The CDIC is a subsystem of the Communist Party within the military, which has the principal function of monitoring the performance of Party members and policing them for malfeasance, corruption, and other breaches of Party discipline and regulations. Since the CDIC was established within Party Committees (*dangwei*) in the PLA in September1978 on the order of the CMC,[242] it has been jointly administered by the CDIC of the Central Committee and the CMC. During the time that General Yang Baibing served as Secretary-General of the CMC (1987-92), the CDIC committees reported directly to him, but subsequently a separate CDIC office was established in the CMC.

The CMC also has responsibility for the People's Armed Committees (*Zhongyang Junwei Renmin Wuzhuang Weiyuanhui*), and jointly administers (with the State Council) the State National Defense Mobilization Commission (*Gujia Guofang Dongyuan Weiyuanhui*). The People's Armed Committees (PAC) exists *within Party Committees* at the levels of province, autonomous regions, centrally-administered cities, prefecture, county, and township levels is described as the "a specialized organ

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[240] For a list of these command and control facilities see: www.fas.org/nuke/guide/china/facility/c3i.html.

[241] *Selected Military Capabilities of the People's Republic of China*, Report from the Secretary of Defense to Congress Pursuant to Section 1305 of the FY97 National Defense Authorization Act, p. 5.

[242] The order was *Guanyu tuan yishang geji dangwei chengli jilu jiancha weiyuanhui zhidao* [Order Concerning the Establishment of the Discipline Inspection Commission in party Committees at the Regimental Level and Above], in Academy of Military Sciences Military History Research Department, ed., *Zhongguo dabaike quanshu: Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun zhengzhi gongzuo fence,* Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 1987, p. 37.

for the masses' armed construction."[243] Its duty is to disseminate national defense information and CMC directives to the civilian population, and to "resolve any problems concerning the militia" (see section on People's Armed Police for discussion of militia).[244] They apparently also have some responsibility for PLA recruiting. The PACs are supposed to liaise closely with Military Region and District commands, and were formally "aligned with" (*xulie*) the PLA by CMC order on April 1, 1996.[245] Thereafter PAC officers began wearing PLA uniforms, whereas previously their uniforms were similar but distinct.[246] The PACs have existed since at least the Great Leap Forward and became important for providing local security during the Cultural Revolution.[247] The State National Defense Mobilization Commission (SNDMC) has other responsibilities for civil defense. It is under the "joint leadership" (*shuangzhong lingdao*) of the CMC and State Council, although it is not clear precisely at what levels of government it exists (presumably it parallels the PACs). The SNDMC itself is described as having at least four constituent offices: State People's Armed Mobilization Office (*Guojia Renmin Wuzhuang Dongyuan Bangongshi*), State Economic Mobilization Office (*Guojia Jingji Dongyuan Bangongshi*), State People's Anti-Air [Defense] Office (*Guojia Renmin Fankong Bangongshi*), State Transportation War Preparedness Office (*Guojia Jiaotong Zhanbei Bangongshi*).[248] Both of these organs are no doubt remnants of the period in the 1960s-70s when China anticipated war with the former Soviet Union, and would only become active in time of war and invasion.

Clearly, however, the most important set of command relationships for the CMC are those to the Four General Headquarters (Departments) of the PLA. These organs are not only the principal conduits through which the CMC commands the services and military regions, but they are large and powerful organizations in their own right. They are dealt with in other contributions to this volume, and hence I will not detail them here.[249]

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[243] Academy of Military Sciences World Military Affairs Editing Bureau, ed., *Shijie junshi nianjian 1999,* Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 1999, p. 102.

[244] Ibid.

[245] Pu Xingzu, Zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhengzhi zhidu, op cit, p. 566.

[246] I am indebted to Dennis Blasko for this observation.

[247] See Harlan Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles*, op cit, especially pp. 167-68.

[248] Liu Zhaoxiang, ed., *Zhongguo junshi zhidushi: junshi zuzhi tizhi bianzhi juan* Zhengzhou: Dajia chubanshe, 1997, p. 545.

[249] Also see vmy *Modernizing China's Military*, op cit, chapter 4.

## THE CENTRAL MILITARY COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP[250]

As of 2001, the Central Military Commission today is chaired by CCP General Secretary and President Jiang Zemin and is composed of three Vice Chairmen (Hu Jintao, Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian), and seven regular members (Fu Quanyou, Yu Yongbo, Wang Ke, Wang Ruilin, Cao Gangchuan, Guo Boxiong, Xu Caihou).

**Table 3.1 Central Military Commission Members (2001)**

| Member | Position | Date of Membership |
|---|---|---|
| **Jiang Zemin** | **Chairman** | **November 1989** |
| **Hu Jintao** | **Vice-Chairman** | **September 1999** |
| **Chi Haotian** | **Vice-Chairman** | **September 1995** |
| **Zhang Wannian** | **Vice-Chairman** | **September 1995** |
| **Cao Gangchuan** | **Member** | **November 1998** |
| **Fu Quanyou** | **Member** | **October 1992** |
| **Guo Boxiong** | **Member** | **September 1999** |
| **Wang Ke** | **Member** | **September 1995** |
| **Wang Ruilin** | **Member** | **September 1995** |
| **Xu Caihou** | **Member** | **September 1999** |
| **Yu Yongbo** | **Member** | **October 1992** |

Jiang Zemin is by far the most important civilian playing an active role in the civil-military arena.[251] Indeed, notwithstanding vice-president and Politburo Standing Committee member Hu Jintao, one is hard-pressed to identify *any* other party or government elites who have any influence or contact with the PLA High Command. Nor should Hu Jintao's influence be exaggerated. He has no personal military experience, but did serve as the first party secretary of the Tibet and Guizhou military districts during his service there (1985-88). Hu's elevation to the CMC at the Fourth Plenum of the Fifteenth Central Committee in September 1999 was a

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[250] This section also draws upon my "China's Post-Deng Military Leadership," in James Lilley and David Shambaugh, eds., *China's Military Faces the Future,* Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999, pp. 11-38.

[251] For further explication of Jiang's relationship with the PLA see Tai Ming Cheung, "Jiang Zemin at the Helm: His Quest for Power and Paramount Status," in *China Strategic Review,* Spring 1998, pp. 167-91; and David Shambaugh, "China's Commander-in-Chief: Jiang Zemin and the PLA," in C. Dennison Lane, et al, eds., *Chinese Military Modernization,* London and Washington, DC: Kegan Paul International and AEI Press, 1996, pp. 209-45. This section draw, in part, on this earlier work.

transparent move by Jiang Zemin's to continue the grooming of his chosen successor by giving him some military responsibility and exposure.

Jiang was not unlike Hu Jintao when he was suddenly appointed to become chairman of the CMC in November 1989. Upon his appointment Jiang reportedly confessed:

> At the Fourth Plenum I said I am not worthy of being elevated to [the position] of General Secretary, I do not have the ideological preparation. This decision to promote me to Central Military Commission Chairman, has also left me without proper ideological preparation. I have not undertaken work in military affairs, I have no experience in this regard, I deeply feel the responsibility, but my ability is insufficient (*li de congxin*). The Party has placed a big responsibility on me. I will certainly assiduously study military affairs, will quickly strive to become familiar with the situation in the military, and will diligently and quickly carry out the duties [of the position].[252]

Despite his understandable uncertainty, over the course of the last decade Jiang Zemin has done a remarkably good job of cultivating a base of support in the PLA. He has certainly done a better job of winning military support than either of his predecessors Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang (both of whom drew lukewarm support or opposition from the PLA High Command). Of course, one will not know the ultimate success of Jiang's efforts until he is tested in a crisis—although he weathered the 1995-96 Taiwan crisis, oversaw the removal of the Yangs and a wholesale turnover of the High Command, and felt confident enough to order the armed forces to divest themselves of their commercial holdings in 1998. As such, it appears that Jiang's position as commander-in-chief of China's armed forces is quite secure.

In cultivating a base of support in the PLA, Jiang has been careful, persistent, and methodical in his strategy and tactics. He has certainly been attentive since the beginning of his tenure in office—frequently visiting bases and units, cultivating relationships with various high-ranking officers, and staking out palatable positions on issues of key concern to the PLA. His has been a building-block strategy—establishing bases of support among different institutional sub-constituencies in the military, but always being mindful of cultivating relations with key allies in the Central Military Commission, central departments, and regional commands. He has hitched his horse to certain individuals, but he has not been afraid to switch positions and abandon some when it was expedient. He has astutely sensed sentiments in the armed forces and adapted his speeches and activities accordingly—a characteristic

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[252] Li Guoqiang, et al, *Zhonggong junfang jiangling* [High-Ranking Officers of the Chinese Communist Military], Hong Kong: Wide Angle Press, 1992, p. 6. Author's translation.

that previously earned Jiang the nickname "the weathervane" of the "wind faction" (*feng pai*). Jiang's strategy has included several key elements:

- personnel changes;
- supporting military modernization and professionalism;
- being receptive to military sentiments in foreign and domestic policy matters.

After disposing of the Yangs, Jiang Zemin paid close attention to personnel policy in the armed forces. He has personally promoted more than fifty officers to the rank of full general. It is reported that, in the early 1990s, Jiang himself insisted on reviewing the files of any officer recommended for promotion down to the level of division commander.[253] In personnel matters, Jiang has also had to rely heavily on the advice and influence of Generals Wang Ruilin, Yu Yongbo, and Zhang Wannian. Jiang's military secretary (*mishu*) on the CMC, Jia Ting'an, has also played an influential role as Deputy Director of the CMC General Office.

During his tenure as Chairman of the Central Military Commission a wholesale turnover of personnel has taken place in the CMC itself, in the three General Headquarters (General Staff, Logistics, and Political Departments), in Military Region and District commands, at the Group Army level, in elite military academies, and in the paramilitary People's Armed Police. Not since the aftermath of the Lin Biao Affair in the early 1970s or the housecleaning after the purge of the "small Gang of Four" in 1981-82, has the PLA experienced such widespread turnover of personnel. There is considerable evidence that Jiang Zemin has overseen and approved this process, and has been personally engaged in many of the specific removals and appointments. He has certainly benefited from the turnover, even if he cannot claim true personal "loyalty" from many of those promoted. Jiang has overseen the promotion of numerous officers he has met during his tours of the military regions, but otherwise there are really only two examples of promotions directly tied to Jiang: General Ba Zhongtan and his successor General You Xigui as head of the Central Guards Bureau. Thus, in one respect, Jiang has appreciated one of the cardinal tenets of being a Leninist leader—control of the *nomenklatura*—as control of personnel is central to political survival and power in a communist political system. It is also key to policy implementation, as one must be able to trust their subordinates to carry out dictates and implement policy.

Another key facet of Jiang's strategy vis-à-vis the PLA has been to reach out to various constituencies within the armed forces, trying to mobilize as broad a coalition of support as possible (which might be described as "pork barrel politics with Chinese characteristics"). In various ways and at various times, Jiang has played to and placated the political commissars (General Political Department), the military-industrial complex (General Logistics Department and five defense ministries), the

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253 Lu Yushan, "Jiang Zemin Hits Out in All Directions to Consolidate His Strength," *Dangdai* (Hong Kong), 15 July 1994, in FBIS-CHI, 17 August 1994, p. 14.

defense science and technology establishment (COSTIND and GAD), the nuclear forces (Second Artillery), military academies (NDU and AMS), People's Armed Police, the General Staff Department, and all three services. Jiang has at various times supported all the key themes of importance: politicization of the military and loyalty to the Party; professionalization of the armed forces; modernization of equipment, doctrine, and research and development; and protection of state sovereignty and core national security interests. He has been a proponent of "army building," a harsh critic of corruption and laxity, a supporter and then opponent of commercial activities in the PLA, and a proponent of increased military budgets and improved living standards. And throughout he has wrapped himself in the garb of Deng Xiaoping's teachings on "army-building in new historical circumstances."

Jiang has been all things to all quarters, and has demonstrated in his moves toward the PLA the same political strategy he has demonstrated towards other constituencies in the Chinese political system. Jiang is a consummate politician — playing to, balancing, and placating different constituencies. Chinese politics should be thought of as an endless web of bureaucratic and political constituencies that compete and bargain for position and resources within a vertically organized Leninist system.[254] In this respect, Jiang is a new breed of Chinese politician, not cut from the cloth of his Leninist or Maoist predecessors (or even his colleagues Li Peng and Zhu Rongji--both of whom show more autocratic tendencies). Rather than commanding, Jiang conciliates and arbitrates between competing interests, trying to build support amongst individual components that can be forged into a broad-based coalition. Jiang is not prone to backroom factional maneuvering or strong-arm tactics, but is capable of both. He is not beholden to one or another bureaucratic or geographic base of support (although he has clearly promoted his colleagues from Shanghai). His inclinations are politically conservative, but this serves him well during times of succession indeterminacy. Prior to 1997 Jiang seemed contemplative, plodding, careful, deliberate, and cautious, but subsequently he has become much more assertive in policy advocacy (including towards the military). Importantly, Jiang Zemin's political style may reveal a move away from a hierarchical Leninist system to a more constituency and coalition-based political system (albeit within a single party system)—more characteristic of other newly industrializing countries and proto-democracies.[255]

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[254] See Kenneth Lieberthal and Michel Oksenberg, *Policy Making in China: Leaders, Structures, and Processes,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988; Kenneth Lieberthal and David M. Lampton, eds., *Bureaucracy, Politics, and Decision-Making in Post-Mao China,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992; and Susan Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

[255] For more on Jiang Zemin's political style see Bruce Gilley, *Tiger on the Brink: Jiang Zemin and China's New Elite,* Berkeley: University of California Press,

The third facet of Jiang's strategy for earning support from the PLA has been to be more sensitive to PLA concerns in foreign and national security affairs. To some extent, he has had no choice, as the military has asserted itself on several issues of their concern. Also, it is not unnatural for the PLA to express its views on matters of national security — and they have done so with respect to Taiwan, relations with the United States, the U.S.-Japan Revised Defense Guidelines, the denotation of nuclear devices by India, and potential U.S. development and deployment of Theater Missile Defenses (TMD). In all these instances Jiang has been receptive and responsive to military concerns. The closest he has come to being challenged by the PLA came in the wake of the 1995 visit by Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui to the United States. Jiang was held personally responsible by the PLA brass for the policy "failure" that permitted the visit, as he and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen were forced to make self-criticisms before the Central Military Commission during the second week of July 1995.[256] Qian was held accountable as he had assured the Politburo Standing Committee that "under no circumstances" would Lee Teng-hui be granted a visa to the U.S.[257] Jiang apparently acquiesced at the CMC meeting to PLA demands that a "military option" be activated vis-à-vis Taiwan.[258] Immediately following Jiang's self-criticism, the PLA announced two rounds of ballistic missile tests just off the northern coast of Taiwan, undertook conventional military exercises in the Taiwan Strait, and continued nuclear testing in defiance of the international moratorium. On these and others foreign policy issues, Jiang has been sensitive to PLA concerns, but more importantly the military has been forced to defer to civilian management since the mid-1990s. This is another indication that the PLA's policy jurisdiction has been limited strictly to the military realm.

**Zhang Wannian**

Of PLA members of the CMC, clearly Zhang Wannian is the most important. Although Zhang had unspecified health difficulties in 1997-1998 (reportedly a heart

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1998; and Willy Wo-Lap Lam, *The Era of Jiang Zemin,* Singapore: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

256 Interviews with knowledgeable sources in Hong Kong and Beijing, July 1995. Interestingly, one source argued that in Chinese political culture Jiang's self-criticism was an astute move. This source claimed that Jiang's self-criticism was self-initiated, and thus Jiang was able to earn kudos by voluntarily taking blame. He could thereafter position himself to "get tough" with both Taipei and Washington.

257 This was because U.S. Secretary of State Christopher has personally assured Qian of this. Of course, President Clinton overruled Christopher and the State Department.

258 See Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "Get Tough with Taiwan and U.S., Generals Tell Jiang," *South China Morning Post*, 17 July 1995, p. 4; *idem*, "Jiang Flexes Muscles," ibid, 26 July 1995, p. 4.

condition), he continues to hold the *de facto* top spot. Zhang emerged as the most senior member of the PLA High Command in 1996-97, a fact underlined by his inclusion as the military representative in the four-member official delegation for the Hong Kong reversion ceremonies (along with President Jiang Zemin, Premier Li Peng, and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen).

Zhang Wannian's background is typical of the new military leadership; he is a soldier's soldier. His age and career bridge the pre and post-1949 periods and make him typical of the "third generation" of military leadership. A career field officer from the Fourth Field Army system (under Lin Biao), Zhang took part in the final campaign of the civil war. His star really began to rise in the wake of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese border war. Zhang distinguished himself during the war, particularly when he led the 127th Division in the battle of Liang Shan, an offensive that turned out to be one of the PLA's few tactical accomplishments in the war. Zhang consequently was decorated and received personal praise from Deng Xiaoping. This put Zhang on the fast track for promotion. In 1982 he became Deputy Commander of the Wuhan MR and in 1987 was appointed Commander of the Guangzhou MR. While in the latter position Zhang created the PLA's first rapid reaction unit (*kuaisu fanying budui*) and convened the first joint-service exercises—thus establishing two core components of contemporary PLA doctrine. Perhaps for recognition of these achievements, in 1988 Zhang Wannian was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General, and in 1990 he was shifted to command the important Jinan MR. It appears that Zhang's transfer out of his southern stronghold had to do with Yang Baibing's machinations to rotate commanders and build up a power base loyal to him and Yang Shangkun following the crackdown in Beijing. Yang Baibing personally visited Zhang in Guangzhou in May 1990, apparently seeking Zhang's retirement. Yang was sharply rebuffed, and it took an intervention by Deng Xiaoping and Yang Dezhi to transfer him to Jinan, while replacing him with Deng loyalist Zhu Dunfa.[259] This was a significant appointment for Zhang for several reasons. First, as a native of Shandong (Longkou City in Yuanhuang County), this gave him an opportunity to establish his credentials with the important "Shandong faction" in the PLA—many of whom now occupy high positions in the armed forces. Secondly, having worked his entire career in southern and central China, it was important for Zhang to command a military region with a different set of missions. The Jinan MR is home to the North Fleet and is central to contingencies regarding Korea, Japan, the United States, and Taiwan. As the Jinan MR contributed several units to the Tiananmen crackdown (at least one regiment of the 20th Group Army, two infantry divisions from the 54th Group Army, and one division of the 67th Group Army), Zhang thus took command at a sensitive time. Prior to June 4th it was rumored that Zhang sided with Zhao Ziyang and refused to commit Guangzhou MR forces to Beijing, but this does not seem to be the case (airborne rapid-reaction units were dispatched but did not take part in the

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259 As recounted in "The Resurgence of Fourth Field Army Veterans," *Kaifang* (Hong Kong), November 1992, p. 25.

assault on the city). Third, having taken his new command, in 1992 the Jinan MR was visited by new CMC Chairman Jiang Zemin. Jiang's tour of Jinan and other MR commands during the previous two years was instrumental in the promotion of new officers to key central-level positions following the purge of the Yang clique, and Zhang Wannian was to be one of the main beneficiaries.[260] He soon found himself transferred to Beijing to head the General Staff Department, a position he held until 1995. Being an outsider to central-level positions, possessing a solid set of previous command credentials, having not been involved in politics or closely aligned with any particular faction, all accrued to Zhang's promotion. To be sure, Zhang's unequivocal support for the June 4th Beijing massacre and ties to Zhang Zhen also aided his meteoric rise to the top spot in the PLA. Since joining the Central Military Commission in December 1995 Zhang Wannian has increasingly taken over Zhang Zhen's portfolio of operations, training, tactics, and doctrine. He has closely identified himself with high technology weapons and innovative tactics related to limited war, but his public speeches conform closely to standard rhetoric. In his speeches and published articles, Zhang has also been notably sycophantic in support of Jiang Zemin.

While currently the most senior PLA officer, General Zhang is over seventy years old and he is known to suffer a heart ailment and other health problems. In all liklihood general Zhang will retire at the 16th Party Congress in October 2002. When this occurs, Zhang's influence will still be felt through a number of officers tied to him that have filled important central and regional military posts in recent years. These currently include Beijing MR Commander Li Xinliang, Shenyang MR Commander Liang Guanglie, Guangzhou MR Commander Tao Bojun, Guangzhou MR Political Commissar Shi Yuxiao, Jinan MR Commander Qian Guoliang, Beijing MR Political Commissar Du Tiehuan, Air Force Commander Liu Shunyao, Naval Commander Shi Yunsheng, People's Armed Police Commander Yang Guoping, NDU Commandant Xing Shizhong, and former Nanjing MR Commander Gu Hui. There also remain a number of officers in the Jinan and Guangzhou MRs who were Zhang's subordinates during his time there.

**Chi Haotian**

The second most important CMC officer is General Chi Haotian. As Minister of National Defense since 1993, Chi has had extensive foreign travel and interaction with foreign military and civilian leaders—including a visit to the United States in December 1996. He has also played a key role in brokering the PLA's growing ties with the Russian military and defense industrial sector. General Chi is thought to be the closest of any PLA leader to CMC Chairman Jiang Zemin, and he has extensive ties with military elders Liu Huaqing, Zhang Aiping, Yang Dezhi, You Taizhong, and formerly to Deng Xiaoping and Xu Shiyou. Chi proved his political loyalties during

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[260] See David Shambaugh, "China's Commander-in-Chief: Jiang Zemin and the PLA," *op cit*, p. 218.

crucial junctures—as Chief of Staff during the June 4th crackdown (having ultimate command over the troops) and playing a role in coordinating the arrest of the Gang of Four in 1976. Following the 1989 massacre, Chi was a staunch public defender of the actions taken, but also subsequently developed a fierce rivalry with Yang Baibing. His standing has been enhanced since the dismissal of Yang in 1992, and he is a key member of the "Shandong faction" now dominant in the upper echelons of the PLA.

Chi Haotian has had a distinguished career in the armed forces. He joined the PLA in 1944 and fought in several key battles of the Sino-Japanese and civil wars, including the final phase of the famous Huaihai campaign. He was wounded five times in battle and was decorated as a People's Hero in 1949. He subsequently fought in the Korean War and was again decorated for valor in combat. From 1958-60 Chi studied at the Military Academy in Nanjing under Commandant Zhang Zhen, in the class just before Zhang Wannian (they overlapped by a year). Chi rose to prominence in the Beijing MR in the early-1970s, having been transferred there to serve in a succession of sensitive political commissar posts following the Lin Biao Incident in 1971. Throughout the 1970s he oversaw propaganda in the region, and following the arrest of the Gang of Four was appointed to be deputy editor-in-chief of the *People's Daily*. When Deng Xiaoping returned to power and became Chief of Staff in 1977, Chi was transferred to be his deputy. Inexplicably, Chi dropped from view in 1982, only to reemerge as political commissar of the Jinan MR in 1985. In 1987 he returned to Beijing to become Chief of General Staff.

Chi Haotian is known to be a key advocate of the politicization of the PLA, particularly the subordination of the army to the Communist Party, but he has also been a public advocate of military professionalization and modernization. Given his background as a political commissar and his exposure to foreign militaries as Defense Minister, Chi is a good complement to the more technical, apolitical, and distinctly less cosmopolitan Zhang Wannian and Fu Quanyou. Chi appears to have few enemies in the PLA (save Yang Baibing) but—aside from Jiang Zemin—neither does he have PLA superiors to whom he is closely tied. His two previous patrons, Marshals Ye Jianying and Nie Rongzhen (both of whom promoted Chi for his role in the arrest of the Gang of Four), have died. His longevity as Defense Minister seems the result of his antipathy for the Yangs, his support for Jiang Zemin, and possibly the support of Zhang Zhen stemming from their days together in Nanjing. Thus, at 69, Chi's chances of remaining one of the top two or three military leaders during the next five-ten years are good. He is younger than Zhang Wannian and Fu Quanyou and may indeed succeed Zhang Wannian as the most senior PLA member of the CMC following the 16th Party Congress in 2002—but, on the other hand, Chi is also over the retirement age and may well join these other senior officers in stepping down. If he does so, Generals Wang Ke or Cao Gangchuan will probably become the senior vice-chairmen of the CMC.

**Fu Quanyou**

At present, the third most important member of the new PLA leadership is Fu Quanyou, currently Chief of General Staff and previous head of the General Logistics Department from 1992-95. Fu is another example of the strong professional

background and ethic characteristic of many of the new PLA leadership. Another highly decorated veteran of the Korean and 1979 Vietnam conflicts, General Fu has served in a series of ground force commands along China's minority-occupied restive borderlands throughout his career. A native of Shanxi and veteran of the famous First Corps of the First Field Army, Fu has spent most of his career in the Lanzhou MR—which he wound up commanding in 1990. Fu has the distinction of being a "model soldier," based on his command of the legendary "Hard Bone Sixth Company." Fu also fought in the Korean War, and engaged in intensive combat with South Korean troops during 1952. He was noted at this time for his combined use of tanks and artillery. Fu was also selected as the premier student of his class of 1960 at the Nanjing Military Academy. Fu also served as Chengdu MR Commander from 1985-1990, during which time he enforced martial law in Tibet (perhaps working closely with rising Party star Hu Jintao). His lifelong ties to Marshal He Long clearly benefited Fu, although he was purged along with He Long during the Cultural Revolution.

Fu's background has also been that of a soldier's soldier—having experience in strategy and tactics, commanding large numbers of troops, combat experience in large-scale battles, and functional expertise working in artillery, armor, infantry, and engineering corps. His background is ideal to head the GSD and to oversee the modernization of the PLA under the new doctrinal requirements. As Chief of Staff, Fu began to travel more widely overseas, but he is described by those who have met him as being uncomfortable in meeting with foreigners and discussing global strategic affairs (frequently reading from a script), as well as possessing "earthy" personal habits. Fu's age would suggest his retirement in 2002.

**Yu Yongbo**

The fourth most important member of the CMC is Yu Yongbo, currently Director of the General Political Department. Yu has served as head of the GPD since November 1992, the longest-held position of any member of the High Command. Throughout this period Yu has shown his loyalty to Jiang Zemin. In fact, the Jiang-Yu relationship dates to the 1980s when Jiang was Mayor of Shanghai and Yu director of the political department of Nanjing MR, responsible for liaison with local civilian leaderships. As head of the GPD today, Yu is not only responsible for propaganda and political work in the armed forces, but he also plays a key role in vetting personnel promotions. In this capacity, Yu has worked closely with General Wang Ruilin. The two men had direct responsibility for ferreting out followers of Yang Baibing, following his dismissal in 1992. It was once thought that Yu was a member of Yang's faction, but it seems that Yu was all along reporting to Jiang Zemin and Deng Xiaoping about the Yang's machinations. For his loyalty, he has been maintained in this sensitive position during a period when there has been tremendous turnover elsewhere in the High Command. Yu's age (b. 1939) also suggests retirement at the 16$^{th}$ Party Congress—indeed General Xu Caihou is being groomed to succeed him (see below).

**Wang Ke**

Wang Ke owes much of his career rise to PLA elder Zhang Zhen, who personally trained him in the Fourth Division of the New Fourth Field Army during the civil war. Zhang Zhen subsequently followed and oversaw Wang Ke's career development. A veteran artillery commander, Wang has been described as a "jack of all guns."[261] Geographically, Wang Ke has served most of his career in the northwest — primarily in the Xinjiang Military District of the Lanzhou MR. Wang has thus also enjoyed career-long ties to Fu Quanyou, and undoubtedly to the late PLA elder Wang "Big Cannon" Zhen, who oversaw Lanzhou and Xinjiang as his personal military fiefdoms during his lifetime. Wang Ke was also praised by Jiang Zemin during his 1991 tour of Xinjiang, and soon found himself propelled to be Commander of the important Shenyang MR (another example of regional commanders with whom Jiang met during his 1991-92 tours now occupying top positions). Wang Ke is also known to be a leading advocate of reforming tactics in line with the new "limited war under high technology conditions" doctrine. After the Gulf War, Wang submitted a report on Desert Storm to the CMC, which was reportedly well received.[262]

Thus, Wang Ke also perfectly fits the profile of the new Chinese military leadership: mid-60s, ground force background, combat experience, extensive regional command experience (in more than one region), functional expertise (artillery in his case), connections to Jiang Zemin and important PLA elders, and an interest in reforming doctrine and tactics commensurate with making the PLA a modern military. Wang will likely remain on the CMC following the 16th Party Congress in 2002. Born in 1932, Wang will turn seventy before the Congress. Even though beyond retirement age, Wang Ke remains several years younger than Fu Quanyou and Zhang Wannian and, for the interests of continuity, will likely remain on the CMC. He may well succeed General Fu as Chief of General Staff, giving his position at the GLD to General Guo Buoxiong (see below), with whom he has some career ties.

**Cao Gangchuan**

Although relatively new to the CMC (promoted in November 1998), General Cao Gangchuan has rapidly earned the respect and support of Jiang Zemin and other senior members of the CMC. He is a also leading candidate to become a leading officer and vice-chairman of the CMC after October 2002—although, if the retirement age of 65 is strictly enforced, this would not be possible.[263]

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[261] "Wang Ke, Commander of the Shenyang Military Region," *Inside China Mainland,* March 1994, p. 83.

[262] Ibid, p. 84.

[263] Born in December 1935, Cao will be nearly 67 years old at the time of the Congress.

Two characteristics distinguish Cao Gangchuan's career path: expertise in conventional land armaments and ties to Russia. These two attributes were fused together when Cao was promoted to the position of Director of the Military Products Trade Office of the CMC in 1990 and consequently became the PLA point man for negotiating weapons purchases and military cooperation with Russia. For the previous five years Cao had served as Deputy Director of the Armaments Department of the Headquarters of the General Staff Department, and in November 1992 he was promoted to the position of Deputy Chief of Staff with overall responsibility for PLA equipment and weaponry. In 1996 Cao succeeded Ding Henggao as Director of COSTIND, and presided over its dismantling. He had been known to previously express great frustration with COSTIND and its many failings to produce high-quality weaponry. General Cao was therefore the logical choice to be appointed to be the inaugural Director of the General Armaments Department when it was created in 1998 (he may well, in fact, have been responsible for conceptualizing the new body and the revision of COSTIND).

From the time he joined the army at the age of 19, Cao was associated with artillery.[264] A native of Henan, he was sent to the Third Artillery Technical School in Zhengzhou. From there he was selected to attend the Russian training School in Dalian. After two years of Russian language study, Cao was sent to Moscow's Artillery Engineering Academy, where he studied for six years. He returned to China in 1963 after the full rupture of the Sino-Soviet Split, but fluent in Russian and with extensive knowledge of the Soviet Red Army's artillery development. For much of the next fifteen years Cao worked in the Ordnance Department of the General Logistics Department, but in 1979 was sent to the frontlines of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict to help coordinate artillery attacks. This earned Cao a place in the advanced class of the National Defense University. After a two-year year stint he embarked on the fast track through the GSD to his appointment as Director of the new GAD. He was promoted to the rank of full general in March 1998, and shortly thereafter became a full member of the CMC.

**Wang Ruilin**

The fourth ranking member (not including the three vice-chairmen) of the current CMC is General Wang Ruilin. Wang rose not through any of these aforementioned qualities, but rather as an administrator. His current position and career path has been closely tied to the late Deng Xiaoping. Deng chose Wang to be his personal military secretary (*mishu*) in the early 1960s and he became one of Deng's most important confidants and assistants thereafter. When Deng was purged during the Cultural Revolution and sent to work in a tractor factory, he was allowed to select and take one assistant with him; Deng chose Wang Ruilin. During the time

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[264] Much of this biographical information derives from Jerry Hung, "Cao Gangchuan—Deputy Chief of Staff, People's Liberation Army," *Inside China Mainland,* January 1995, pp. 84-86.

Deng chaired the CMC in the 1980s, Wang acted as director of the CMC General Office — thus handling all confidential material. In this capacity Wang is reported to have routinely represented Deng in CMC meetings and other communications. But Wang's power and influence was not limited to military affairs, as he was also appointed Deputy Director of the General Office of the Central Committee—the key staff position for the Politburo and high-level Party affairs. From the late-1980s Wang also assumed responsibilities as senior secretary of Deng's personal office (*Deng Ban*). In Deng's final years this made Wang quite possibly the most important official in China (similar to the role played by Mao Yuanxin and Wang Hairong during the Chairman's final days). General Wang was the key conduit between the ailing leader and his family (including his powerful daughters), with the Politburo and other senior leaders. This made General Wang a very powerful man—controlling access to Deng and interpreting his wishes and dictates. This office was disbanded following the patriarch's death, but Wang Ruilin continued his duties as a CMC member and GPD Deputy Director.[265] In 1992 he also became Director of the CMC's Discipline Inspection Commission.

Not only did Wang Ruilin handle key staff work and confidential material for Deng for thirty-five years, he had the sensitive and difficult job of executing the former patriarch's orders in the armed forces. Probably one of the toughest tasks Deng gave Wang was to weed out and dismantle the Yang Shangkun-Yang Baibing network in 1992-93. As the network was anchored in the General Political Department and the GPD serves as the principal PLA organ for vetting personnel assignments, Wang was installed as Deputy Director in December 1992 (a position he still holds). In engineering the purge of the Yang network, Wang made himself indispensable to Jiang Zemin and his attempts to cultivate support in the PLA. In fact, as a "talent spotter" and individual experienced in high-level military personnel affairs, it is quite likely that Wang Ruilin has been the guiding hand behind assembling the new PLA leadership and carrying out Deng's wishes to help Jiang Zemin solidify loyalties in the military through promotions and appointments. While Wang possesses no independent power base (despite an Eighth Route Army background and being a member, by birth, of the Shandong faction), this role and his work for Deng and Jiang has made Wang an important player in civil-military relations.

**Guo Buoxiong and Xu Caihou**

In September 1999, at the Fourth Plenum of the Fifteenth Central Committee, two new members were added to the CMC: Lieutenant Generals Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou. It is assumed that each will move into functional positions in one of the four general headquarters in the next few years. At the time of appointment, General Bo was commander of the Lanzhou Military Region, while General Xu was the political

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265 "Deng Office Disbanded — Office Site Handed Over," *Ming bao* (Hong Kong), 25 July 1997, in *SWB/FE*, 28 July 1997, p. G7.

commissar of the Jinan MR. As such, Xu is tipped to replace Yu Yongbo as GPD Director, while Bo may succeed Fu Quanyou as Chief of the General Staff. Both represent the "fourth generation" of military leaders, as they are 57 and 56 years of age respectively.

General Guo rose through the ranks of the Lanzhou MR, serving successively as a squad leader, platoon leader, regimental propaganda cadre, headquarters staff officer, and eventually MR Deputy Chief of Staff. From 1994-97 he was transferred to the Beijing MR, where he had the opportunity to travel abroad with Defense Minister Chi Haotian and domestically with President Jiang Zemin. In 1997 he was sent back to Lanzhou as MR commander. Guo has longstanding career ties to Chief of Staff Fu Quanyou, who was his commander in the 47th Group Army, as well as former Lanzhou MR commander Wang Ke. Eventually, he is likely to succeed one or both in the PLA leadership.

General Xu Caihou has had a career in PLA political work. Geographically, he has spent most of his career in Jilin Military District of the Shenyang MR — although at the time of his promotion to the CMC he worked in the Jinan MR. In Jilin, Xu held a succession of propaganda and GPD jobs. In November 1992, he was transferred to Beijing where he became the assistant to GPD chief Yu Yongbo, but also worked closely with Wang Ruilin. With this backing, Xu is undoubtedly on track to head the GPD following their retirements. In mid-1993, Xu also assumed co-editorship of the *Liberation Army Daily*. This was a sensitive time following the purge of Yang Baibing, and the need to garner control over the GPD apparatus. Xu performed well and was promoted to deputy director of the GPD in July 1994. From 1997 to 1999 he served as political commissar of the Jinan MR.

These are the current proximate players in civil-military relations in China today. The current CMC appears to be relatively faction-free, very professional (rather than political) in its orientation, technically competent, and focussed on implementing the various programs associated with "building an elite army with Chinese characteristics." It is in this body where the nexus of civil-military relations lies, although it is ostensibly a Party organ. This is important, as channels of interaction outside the CMC have been radically reduced in recent years. The PLA no longer has a representative on the Politburo Standing Committee, and its representation on the Politburo is presently limited to Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian. It will be interesting to see if this changes at the 16th Party Congress, although traditionally there has not necessarily been a military member of the Politburo Standing Committee.

**SUMMARY**

Although the CMC is *the* most important institution in the Chinese military, and is a central locus of decision making on national security affairs as well as certain important domestic matters, it is also one of the least transparent and accessible institutions in the PLA. It is thus very difficult to research. No CMC records are declassified form Chinese archives and culling basic information about the body is an exercise in frustration. The discussion above has drawn upon some published documentation from China and a few other sources, and has hopefully illuminated the

essential organizational features of the CMC and its current leadership. Yet, clearly, there is far more that remains unknown about the functioning to the CMC. A more detailed exploration of historical records and the *Liberation Army Daily* could illuminate and build a fuller account of this, the most important of all, PLA institutions. This preliminary effort, and that of a few other analysts,[266] will hopefully lay the basis for further explorations in the years ahead.

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[266] See the works of Tai Ming Cheung, Yan Kong, and Michael Swaine cited above.