

[breakthrough-long-awaited-military-reform](https://www.scmp.com/sites/default/files/2015/12/08/pla-xi.jpg)

The restructure is part of Xi's massive military overhaul, which aims to shift the PLA from an army-centric system towards a Western-style joint command, in which the army, navy and air force are equally represented.



Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also the general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, shakes hands with shipboard helicopter pilots on vessel Jinggangshan, in Sanya. Photo: Xinhua

<https://www.scmp.com/sites/default/files/2015/12/08/pla-xi.jpg> The PLA's mouthpiece last week published a commentary saying the existing system of seven military commands and four headquarters was outdated, too centralised and challenged the Communist Party's absolute leadership over the army. The overhaul, it said, aimed to consolidate the CMC's power and the party's control over the gun.

The Post reported in September that the military overhaul also included plans to reorganise the existing "four headquarters" – the General Staff, General Political, General Logistics and General Armaments departments.

To that end, the CMC had already created three new commissions and six departments, three sources close to the army confirmed.

INFOGRAPHIC: How China will rebuild its People's Liberation Army (<http://www.scmp.com/infographics/article/1854629/infographic-how-china-will-rebuild-its-peoples-liberation-army?comment-sort=recommended>)

General Cai Yingting, head of the Nanjing military command, is tipped to lead the Joint General Staff Department, while General Liu Yuan, political commissar of the General Logistics Department who helped bring down former CMC vice-chairmen Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou, is likely to be the secretary of the new military discipline inspection commission. General Li Zuocheng, the chief of the Chengdu military command, is expected to be the new head of land forces.



General Cai Yingting (left), head of the Nanjing military command, is tipped to lead the Joint General Staff Department; General Liu Yuan (centre), political commissar of the General Logistics Department, is likely to be the secretary of the new military discipline inspection commission; and General Li Zuocheng (right), the chief of the Chengdu military command, is expected to be the new head of land forces. Photos: SCMP Pictures

<https://www.scmp.com/sites/default/files/2015/12/08/pla-comm-chiefs.jpg> "The three new commissions and six departments are directly under the CMC, and the restructure aims to reduce the political influence of leaders of the existing four headquarters and seven military commands," one of the three sources said.

"For example, the General Political Department was seen as a hotbed of corruption because it controlled personnel, discipline and audits.

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But under the new structure, those jobs will be separated to create a better system of checks and balances.”

Earlier reports said four military regions – North, South, East and West – would emerge from the dismantled seven-command system. But the latest blueprint followed a decision to add a strategic zone in central China, according to two sources.

“The head office of the central combat zone is likely to be in Beijing, because the capital is also China’s administrative and military nerve centre,” one of the sources said.

Another source said the administrations of the Jinan and Chengdu military commands would be completely scrapped, while the five other military areas were likely to be reorganised.

Hong Kong-based military commentator Liang Guoliang said it made sense to scrap the Jinan command in the general restructure.

“The dissolution of the Jinan military command is inevitable because under the outdated army-centric system, it was seen [only] as support for other major military zones,” Liang said.

Liang said part of the Chengdu military area would be merged into the new West, South or Central strategic zones.

“The new five-strategic-zone system is sufficient to help the PLA deal with challenges today and in the near future,” Liang said.

Two PLA officials at the mainland’s top military academy earlier warned Beijing that it could destabilise the armed services and society if it went ahead with plans to restructure and slash the size of the country’s military without addressing salaries and pensions.

NEW NAMES FOR THE TOP?

Cai Yingting, 61

Nanjing command chief; tipped to be head of joint general staff department

Liu Yuan, 64

General Logistics Department political commissar; tipped to lead military discipline inspection commission

Zhang Yang, 64

head of General Political Department; tipped to be political work department head

Li Zuocheng, 62

head of Chengdu command; tipped to be head of the land forces

Wei Fenghe, 61

head of Second Artillery Corps; tipped to be strategic supporting forces head

Zhou Songhe, 60

deputy head of General Logistics; tipped to be head of joint logistics department

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Sifu128628
Dec 8th 2015
9:44am

This is a political exercise that has very little impact on PLA’s combat readiness or capabilities. However, this restructuring will enable President Xi to control more of the PLA command center and to prevent future political adversaries from infiltrating the PLA. Nevertheless, many senior commanders are unhappy with the curtailing of their powerbase and the removal of their lucrative businesses. Along with changes that Xi has made to the command center of Chinese State Security (CSS), former Chinese power-brokers have grown disgruntled and will likely mount a counter-attack against Xi and his captains. Look for a coup-like maneuver initiated by senior directors inside the CSS collaborating with senior commanders of the PLA and executives at Chinese state media, banking and market regulatory agencies to remove President Xi from power within 2 years. They may or may not be successful, as Xi must prove his mettle to survive the coup. Chinese political feudalism is alive and active; it’ll be exciting to see it unfold!

Sam Clemens

Sam Clemens
Dec 8th 2015
10:38am

This has nothing to do with Bo Xilai coming within a hair’s breadth of igniting a military-backed coup in 2012.

Nothing.

561ebbd8-c268-4a7a-817b-04c80a320968

Sifu128628
Dec 8th 2015
1:18pm

In reply to: [Sam Clemens \(/scmp_comments/269898\)](#) (Dec 8th 2015, 10:38am)

Perhaps so, Sam. There’ll be more coups to come, as there’s no shortage of Bo Xilai want-to-be in China.

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