

# CHOOSING THE “LEAST BAD OPTION”

## Organizational Interests and Change in the PLA Ground Forces

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The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is currently undergoing a series of organizational reforms unprecedented in its 90-year history. Beginning in September 2015, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary and Central Military Commission (CMC) Chairman Xi Jinping announced a force reduction of 300,000 PLA personnel, kicking off a rapid-fire sequence of organizational and structural reforms. The PLA has undergone significant revisions to multiple levels of its command structure, constituent branches and services, and force structure that broadly conform to a dictum that the CMC will handle general management, newly formed theater commands (TCs) will focus on operations, and the services will handle force building [*junwei guanzong, zhanqu zhuzhan, junzhong zhujian, 军委管总, 战区主战, 军种主建*].<sup>1</sup> These are major changes, and their complete impact may not be fully understood and appreciated for some time to come.

Changes in China's external security challenges, altered perceptions of the character of warfare, and new political directives all likely played critical roles in driving these latest adaptations in the PLA ground forces. These drivers, however, appear better suited for explaining the gradual, spasmodic pace of PLA Army reform that has taken place over the past 25

years rather than the sweeping changes enacted over the past 2 ½ years. If these three main drivers offer only partial explanations, what explains the dramatic and unprecedented changes in the ground forces announced in the latest organizational reforms?

This chapter argues that the army's organizational and bureaucratic interests are a valuable lens for interpreting the 2015 reforms and that these same considerations may have contributed to the recent disruptive changes aimed at fielding a PLA ground force that serves as a true ground component of a joint force. To the extent that organizational interests prove to be important steering factors of the future army, they may push the PLA ground forces toward a more offensive-oriented role for a PLA ground force that has previously been tasked to defend and deter.

This chapter proceeds in four parts. The first section summarizes several possible drivers for change within the PLA ground forces since the collapse of the Soviet Union, briefly outlining a variety of motivations and the expected "new type of army" [*xinxing lujun*, 新型陆军] that would result from each. The second section examines past and present changes in the army, arguing that while each driver has some explanatory value, the existing explanations for adaptation are incomplete. The third section identifies organizational incentives and behavior as a valuable lens for explaining the drawn-out nature of army reforms. The final section describes the implications of army organizational behavior as a possible explanation for the latest tranche of PLA reforms.

### **Drivers for Changes**

Many of the existing explanations for the 2015 reforms fall into three broad categories: changes in China's external security environment, changes in Chinese views on the character of warfare, and response to new political imperatives. While these categories of drivers are typically offered in explanation of change in the PLA writ large, they are equally applicable to changes in the ground forces.<sup>2</sup>

### Changes in External Security Outlook

Changes in China's external security outlook could have motivated significant changes to the PLA ground forces. A broader reorientation of security threats along China's land borders, or a change in enemy war plans along those borders, could have led to major changes in the ground forces. Any change in threat perception from China's surrounding waters would also have had an impact on the ground forces. If changes in China's overall external security outlook are the main determinant for changes in the PLA Army, new doctrinal thinking, force structures, and training patterns should emerge following any new assessment of China's land security situation. Conversely, relative continuity in China's security situation should trigger no major changes in the ground forces.

The most consequential change in China's external security outlook in the last three decades was the disappearance of the Soviet Union as a major land threat. Shortly after the December 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, top Chinese leaders assessed that a major land invasion of the Chinese homeland from the north no longer posed an existential threat. This relative confidence in the security of China's land borders is reflected in the 1993 *Military Strategic Guideline for the New Period* [*xinshiqi junshi zhanlüe fangzhen*, 新时期军事战略方针], which called for the PLA to shift its attention away from defending the Chinese mainland from large scale invasion to preparing to fight local wars under high-technology conditions along China's periphery.<sup>3</sup> The 1993 guideline held that the most likely sites of local wars were on China's land borders, along with near seas and associated airspaces.<sup>4</sup>

The dissolution of a major land threat on China's northern border has been accompanied by an intensified emphasis on offshore threats. Military scholars argued that future wars would increasingly threaten targets along China's coastline and involve maritime and air operations,<sup>5</sup> and the 2004 defense white paper called for increased prioritization of naval, air, and missile forces in accordance with this new threat perception.<sup>6</sup> The most recent defense white paper, published in 2015, reiterated the need to shift

emphasis away from land and toward the sea, arguing that China “must break the traditional thinking that land outweighs sea” [*bixu tupo zhonglu qinghai de chuantong siwei*, 必须突破重陆轻海的传统思维].<sup>7</sup> This language was a prominent part of the development of the latest iteration of China’s military strategy.<sup>8</sup> The overall intent was clear: the PLA as a whole would focus less of its resources and attention on land threats.

These altered views on China’s external security outlook had a clear impact on reshaping the PLA ground forces. The dramatic decrease of the land threat to China led to a reduction in the PLA Army’s end strength, while the increasing priority placed on sea threats nudged the army toward becoming the ground component of a joint force. The introduction of the 1993 military strategic guideline was followed by a force reduction of 500,000 personnel in 1997 that reduced the ground forces by some 19 percent, while only trimming the navy by 11.6 percent and the air force by 11 percent;<sup>9</sup> further reductions in 2005 and 2015 also disproportionately impacted the ground forces.<sup>10</sup> The losses in end strength have been accompanied by increasing emphasis on maritime threats and joint training in the years following the 1993 military strategic guideline, with the army increasing the size of its amphibious forces after the 1997 troop reduction by transforming the first army division to an amphibious mechanized infantry division in 2000 and adding other amphibious units to the order of battle in the former Nanjing and Guangzhou military regions (MRs).<sup>11</sup> The army began discussing and implementing its interpretation of “integrated joint operations” [*yitihua lianhe zuozhan*, 一体化联合作战], which inevitably broached an increasing maritime orientation when it was established as the main form of operations beginning in 2004.<sup>12</sup>

### Changing Views on the Character of Warfare

A second explanation for changes in the PLA ground forces could be that broader changes in views on new technology and the character of warfare drove military reforms within the PLA and its ground forces. The rise of new warfighting technologies and their implications for force structure

and employment may be driving adaptations in the ground forces, and new technology may drive new tactics and ways of conducting warfare. Increased emphasis on technological developments, changes in force structure, and rapid integration of new technologies into the force following new assessments of the character and conduct of warfare would indicate that the PLA ground forces are adapting to changes in the way warfare is carried out. Relative continuity within the ground forces during perceived periods of fundamental change in the character of war, especially in doctrinal thinking, would suggest that any army changes are responding to a different determinant.

PLA strategy documents have envisioned at least three notable shifts in the character of warfare over the past 25 years, namely "local war under high-technology conditions" [*gaojishu tiaojian xia de jubu zhanzheng*, 高技术条件下的局部战争], "local war under informationized conditions" [*xinxihua tiaojian xia de jubu zhanzheng*, 信息化条件下的局部战争], and "informationized local war" [*xinxihua jubu zhanzheng*, 信息化局部战争]. Two of these fundamental changes in how the PLA views the character of warfare were strongly influenced by recent conflicts: local war under high-technology conditions was informed by the 1991 Persian Gulf War, and local war under informationized conditions was informed by the 1999 Kosovo War and the 2003 Iraq War.<sup>13</sup> Scholars have argued that the third, informationized local war, was not influenced by any particular past conflict.<sup>14</sup>

The lessons derived by PLA academicians from these conflicts place a premium on mobility, range, command of information, and increased operability in multiple domains, including land, sea, air, space, and the electromagnetic spectrum. High-technology warfare is "focused on superior weapons technology; battlefield integration between air, land, and sea; high-speed, all-weather operations; new modes of long-range warfare, especially missile, electronic, and air warfare; and a premium on [command, control, communications, and intelligence] dominance."<sup>15</sup> War under informationized conditions is characterized as an intermediate step toward informationized war, using "information systems and a defined degree of

informationized weapons to carry out war.”<sup>16</sup> Informationized warfare “relies upon networked information systems and informationized weapons, fighting on air, land, sea, space, and in the electromagnetic spectrum.”<sup>17</sup>

These lessons have not been lost on the PLA ground forces, which have translated them into ground forces more capable of meeting the requirements of high-technology and informationized warfare, especially by emphasizing increased mobility and more multifunctional [*duoneng hua*, 多能化] units. Army transformation theorists argued that future PLA ground forces would need diverse capabilities to enable army units to fight under different conditions of informationization.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, PLA ground forces began to stress mobility and more organic cross-domain capabilities like aviation and electronic countermeasures units. Army training has placed special emphasis on transregional mobility and operations in complex electromagnetic environments since at least 2008.<sup>19</sup> The ground forces have been adding aviation units and building them in size and capability since the first formation of an army aviation brigade in 2009.<sup>20</sup> These changes in force structure and training strongly suggest that the PLA ground forces have been gradually adapting to a shift in the character of warfare that has called for better mobility and multifunctionality.

### Response to New Political Directives

The PLA's role as a Leninist military organization subject to CCP command means that military reforms could alternatively be the direct result of military obedience to new political directives emanating from the Party. Political directives that could have spurred doctrinal and organizational change in the ground forces could include anything from the articulation of new missions for the ground forces to exhortations to embrace joint warfare. Timely changes in PLA ground forces in direct response to CCP orders would suggest that obedience to Party directive is the main driver of reform in the ground forces. On the other hand, delays in implementation or repeated CCP orders would suggest that changes in the ground forces are not necessarily responses to Party commands.

Hu Jintao’s 2004 articulation of a set of New Historic Missions [*xin de lishi shiming*, 新的历史使命] for the PLA is one obvious example of a new political directive shaping PLA ground forces. Hu’s speech called for the PLA to protect CCP rule, guarantee strategic opportunity for national development, provide strategic support for defending national interests, and protect world peace and security,<sup>21</sup> and thereupon laid the groundwork for increasing prioritization of military operations other than war (MOOTW). The MOOTW concept made its first appearance in the 2008 defense white paper, signifying its elevation in status to that of a critical military task.<sup>22</sup>

The PLA ground forces have made adaptations in accordance with these New Historic Missions, with many of the changes falling in line with the new political directive. Doctrinally, the PLA ground forces began to embrace their newly articulated MOOTW role in a series of research works detailing the army’s role in a variety of MOOTW operations, including counterterrorism, protection of social stability, peacekeeping, and disaster relief.<sup>23</sup> Force structure concepts like “modularity” [*mokuai hua*, 模块化] were originally intended to create more independent, deployable army units capable of quickly adapting to a wide variety of missions in combat,<sup>24</sup> but quickly proved applicable for units training for different types of MOOTW operations and yielded obvious utility for units rotating into and out of peacekeeping operations abroad.<sup>25</sup> At home, PLA ground force units routinely practiced rapid-reaction maneuvers to the point where the official distinction between designated “rapid-reaction units” and “regular units” has been mostly dissolved.<sup>26</sup> Abroad, army soldiers make up the majority of China’s peacekeeping forces,<sup>27</sup> and some have gained combat experience during their time overseas.<sup>28</sup>

Taken separately, these three drivers for army reform would have resulted in three distinct types of ground forces, each with different projected opponents, force compositions, geographic orientation, and types of operations. The characteristics of these different types of ground forces are summarized briefly in table 1.

**Table 1. Drivers of PLA Army Changes and Resultant Types of PLA Ground Forces**

	Changes in External Threat Environment	Changes in Nature of Warfare	New Political Directives
Change	Land threat perception greatly reduced; maritime threat perception increases	Shifting from large land conflict to long-range, noncontact warfare	Focus on New Historic Missions and military operations other than war
Role	Ground component of joint force	Defend and deter; survive and thrive in noncontact warfare	Guarantee Party rule; secure China's overseas interests
Required Force Size and Structure	Reduced size, increased amphibious capabilities	Multifunctional, mobile	Modularity, mobile
Training	Joint training with other services; amphibious training	Cross-domain training; joint training with other services	Rapid deployment, experience overseas

In reality, however, all three of these drivers have stimulated adaptations in the PLA ground forces in the past and continue to manifest themselves in the 2015 reforms. The PLA ground forces appear to have responded to changes in China's external threat environment, changes in views on the character of warfare, and new political directives by implementing many of the changes in table 1 to varying degrees over the past 25 years. Many of these changes are still under way as a direct result of the 2015 reforms: the army continues its seaward orientation,<sup>29</sup> revisions to force structure have stressed multifunctionality in army units by creating combined arms brigades [hecheng lü, 合成旅] from divisions,<sup>30</sup> and the army continues to play a large (and increased) role in peacekeeping operations overseas.<sup>31</sup>

Yet an explanation that attributes the 2015 changes in the army solely to some combination of the three drivers identified here would be incomplete. None of the specific factors described were especially pressing or unique to the period immediately preceding the 2015 reforms. The explanatory gaps associated with each of these drivers are covered in more detail in the following section.



## Gaps in Explaining the 2015 Reforms

Despite the fundamental nature of the existing explanations for reform, none of these three main drivers is sufficient explanation for the 2015 reforms. Many of the critical indicators of change in the PLA ground forces were present long before the 2015 reforms came about. Changes in doctrinal thinking, force structure adjustments, and new training regimens all suggest that the three main drivers for changes in the ground forces have been motivating a number of different adjustments in the army for some time.

### Changes in Threat Environment?

Changes in China’s external threat environment are unlikely to have been the primary determinants of the 2015 changes to the PLA ground forces. Current analysis indicates that the 2015 reforms were designed to enhance the PLA’s ability to conduct joint operations,<sup>32</sup> which would strongly suggest that PLA leaders envisioned a change in China’s external security environment or in the character of warfare dramatic enough to warrant a major reorganization of the PLA ground forces—and yet no such tectonic shifts are obvious in the period immediately preceding the 2015 reforms. In fact, many of the factors driving the 2015 reforms have been unvarying components of army transformation for years.

The 2015 force reductions that might be correlated to a shifting threat assessment are not unique to the latest tranche of reforms. While these latest troop reductions undoubtedly help reorient the army away from land and toward the sea, they are better understood as part of a long-running effort dating back to the 1990s to create a much smaller [*xiaoxing hua*, 小型化] army. The 1999 *Science of Military Strategy* noted that combat forces were trending toward smaller and lighter formations, and the 2001 *Science of Military Strategy* called for the PLA to reduce the size of the armed forces as much as possible without compromising victory.<sup>33</sup> By early 2008, army researchers had called for overall force reductions and specifically cited army reductions as a key component of ground force transformation.<sup>34</sup> Force reductions to implement this new type of ground force have taken

place intermittently since the 1993 military strategic guideline, with reductions announced in 1997, 2005, and 2015.<sup>35</sup>

Although the latest reforms purport to push the army toward a maritime orientation, they have not yet added amphibious capabilities to the army commensurate with a substantial reorientation toward a maritime threat. Some army capabilities, like special operations, aviation, and electronic warfare units, are useful for offshore maritime operations, but PLA and army leaders have been calling for more of these units since at least 2011, as noted in the 2013 Academy of Military Science (AMS) edition of the *Science of Military Strategy*, which called for reductions in “traditional” army units in favor of expansions in special operations, electronic countermeasures, network attack and defense, tactical guided-missile, and army aviation units.<sup>36</sup> These types of units have been growing in size and number since at least 2009.<sup>37</sup> If anything, rumors about the conversion of army units in Northern China to navy-controlled marine brigades seem to suggest that other services with more relevant maritime capabilities will benefit at the expense of the army.<sup>38</sup>

Most importantly, the highest-level strategic articulations of army missions have remained consistent since the early 2000s, coalescing around regional threats including Taiwan, Korean Peninsula, and various forms of territorial disputes along China’s borders. These missions are expressed in the 2004 and 2015 defense white papers, which represent close approximations of revised military strategic guidelines, but are also reflected in more granular PLA texts from the years dating back to at least 2004 and preceding years.<sup>39</sup> For instance, army academic research confirms the service’s previously anticipated roles in addressing regional threats: a 2011 AMS volume identified several regional threats that China was likely to face, including potential land conflict hotspots like the Korean Peninsula to the east, Afghanistan and Central Asia to the west, and Kashmir to the south. Tibetan independence and Xinjiang independence were also specifically identified as security challenges within Chinese land borders.<sup>40</sup> For their part, army researchers regularly stressed “anti-Taiwan separatist” operational training<sup>41</sup>

and emphasized preparations for potential border conflict with India.<sup>42</sup> The 2015 white paper repeats almost all of these regional land security threats, with an added emphasis on threats to the security of Chinese overseas energy resources, overseas personnel and assets, and strategic sea lines of communication.<sup>43</sup> In short, past doctrinal thinking on the army's main missions roughly matched the thinking immediately prior to the 2015 reforms, albeit with an additional emphasis on maritime threats in recent years.

Changes in the external security outlook certainly affected army modernization, but the nature and scope of those changes may have been insufficient to force large-scale, organizationally disruptive reforms. The reduction of the Soviet military threat permitted change but did not compel the PLA to adapt quickly to confront a major new threat. The rise of the threat of Taiwan independence in the mid-1990s created the need for army capabilities to deter Taiwan via the threat of punishment, a relatively modest goal. Building the capability to successfully invade Taiwan in the face of U.S. military intervention was a much more ambitious goal, but one that lacked urgency given the acceptability of the status quo, so long as Taiwan did not move toward de jure independence.

### Changes in the Character of Warfare?

A fundamental shift in views regarding the character of warfare is similarly unlikely to have been the primary driver of the 2015 reforms. Many of the indicators of such a shift predate Xi Jinping's rule and have been in play for many years before the 2015 reforms, suggesting that other factors combined to push the 2015 reforms through. Although evidence suggests that PLA theorists believe informationized warfare [*xinxihua zhanzheng*, 信息化战争] to be a departure from warfare under informationized conditions [*xinxihua tiaojian xia zhanzheng*, 信息化条件下战争], the changes in the army instituted by the latest reforms have been undergoing trial and experimentation for a decade or more, suggesting that a new conception of the character of warfare among army leaders may not be a primary reason for the 2015 reforms.

The PLA ground forces have been pushing toward the multifunctionality [*duonenghua*, 多能化] associated with changes in the character of warfare since long before 2015, suggesting that it was not a substantial change in the way Chinese leaders perceived warfare that directly precipitated the 2015 reforms. The effort to build a “multifunctional” army has been justified by a perception that the PLA’s ground forces must adapt to a variety of different missions since the early 1990s. For instance, the 1999 *Science of Military Strategy* argued that “local wars” were by nature “diverse situations,” and called for the PLA to better prepare for missions on land, at sea, and in air.<sup>44</sup> A 2011 AMS work called for the development of multifunctional forces to fulfill the needs of a “mission-oriented” combat structure.<sup>45</sup> This attitude had filtered down to operational army units by mid-2013, when a deputy commander of the former Shenyang MR emphasized the importance of being able to complete a wide variety of missions.<sup>46</sup> These same views were expressed in various authoritative PLA writings leading up to the 2015 reforms<sup>47</sup> and have been implemented in the restructuring of group armies to accommodate combined arms brigades.<sup>48</sup> This implementation, however, is the culmination of years of efforts that predate the 2015 reforms, suggesting that it was not a fundamental change in PLA views of the character of warfare that drove the increased multifunctionality in the latest reforms.

An emphasis on increased mobility emblematic of a shift in the character of warfare has likewise been a consistent feature of army training for more than a decade before the 2015 reforms. Doctrinally, the army has stressed increased mobility and flexibility since before 2000: the 2000 defense white paper noted that the army was moving toward smaller, modularized, and multifunctional forces as the army “reoriented from theater defense to trans-theater mobility.”<sup>49</sup> The army began to implement some of these concepts by adding aviation units in 2009, while exercises beginning in 2006 emphasized transregional mobility and operations in complex electromagnetic environments.<sup>50</sup> The 2015 reforms may have accelerated implementation of these concepts, but the reforms are implementing

changes suggested in response to a shift in PLA views of warfare that was elucidated many years before.

Army views on the character of warfare have evolved in the past 25 years, but there is no evidence that a major change in the Army's view of warfare occurred immediately prior to the 2015 reforms to prompt major organizational changes. Many of the changes implemented in the reforms were experimented with and agreed on long before they were actually executed, suggesting that other factors were at play in determining the timing of the reforms.

### **New Political Directives?**

Some analysts argue that a new political directive from Xi Jinping may have driven the 2015 reforms, but the issuance of a new political directive alone is unlikely to have prompted such swift and sweeping change in the ground forces. Past political directives have not always been fully heeded or executed in a timely fashion. While a new political dictum was issued in March 2013 calling for the military to obey CCP command, fight and win wars, and develop an excellent work style (that is, not be corrupt) [*ting dang zhihui, neng da sheng zhang, zuofeng youliang*, 听党指挥, 能大胜仗, 作风优良],<sup>51</sup> this broad formulation did not imply a specific organizational structure or translate directly into distinctive guidance for PLA reforms. The outlines of the military reforms were unveiled in the third plenum decision document approved by the CCP Central Committee in November 2013,<sup>52</sup> but it took an additional 2 years of work within the PLA to flesh out the details, some of which are still being refined as the reforms are implemented. The new military strategic guideline that eventually resulted (which was announced in the 2015 white paper on China's military strategy) was a minor adjustment rather than a major change. (See the chapter by Wuthnow and Saunders in this volume for discussion of Xi's role in the reforms).

While the 2015 reforms were undoubtedly accompanied by a new political urgency, the actual military content of the latest political directive appears to be based on longstanding past appeals by PLA reformers,

including the emphasis on improving the PLA's ability to plan and execute joint operations.<sup>53</sup> (See the chapter by Finkelstein in this volume.) Immediately after the reforms were announced at the end of 2015, newly anointed commander of the army Li Zuocheng called for the service to dispense with the "Big Army Mentality" [*da lujun siwei*, 大陆军思维], avoid the belief that "land warfare is outdated and the army is useless" [*luzhan guoshi, lujun wuyong*, 陆战过时, 陆军无用], and construct a "new type of army,"<sup>54</sup> ostensibly marking a new political directive to the army endorsed by Xi Jinping himself.<sup>55</sup> These expressions, however, are not new. A 2009 AMS volume on army command in joint operations listed "countering the influence of the Big Army" [*kefu da lujun de yingxiang*, 克服大陆军的影响] as the first among many steps to establish better coordination among the services,<sup>56</sup> and a 2011 volume noted that the PLA should abandon Big Army tradition in order to better embrace integrated joint operations.<sup>57</sup>

Even if the most recent political directive had significant new content, the PLA's track record of executing political orders in a timely manner is mixed. Hu Jintao's New Historic Missions were announced in 2004, but the PLA ground forces did not appear to fully embrace the study of MOOTW operations until an extensive series of instructional materials were published in 2008.<sup>58</sup> The details of Xi Jinping's new type of army are likely being interpreted in a similarly delayed approach: the flurry of recently published articles by army officers "studying" Xi's new type of army suggests that the ground forces are still translating this latest political directive in ways that may yield additional changes further in the future.<sup>59</sup> Hu Jintao reportedly contemplated organizational reforms to establish joint command structures in 2008–2009, but was unable to push the reforms through against opposition by the ground forces.

These examples indicate a distinctive new political directive was not the primary driver of recent army reforms. Hu's inability to carry out reforms may have been thanks to a lack of political capital or the resistance of corrupt senior army officers, such as CMC vice chairmen Guo Boxiong or Xu Caihou. The familiar content of the latest political instructions to

the PLA suggests that that Xi Jinping’s personal involvement in the reforms and use of a multifaceted political strategy to see them through likely affected the timing and implementation of the reforms, but the content of the reforms was largely derived from ideas about joint operations that had been advocated by PLA reformers for years.

The main body of available PLA literature suggests that army theorists arrived at a clear answer for their service’s modernization by the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century at the latest: the future army was to be a smaller, modular, multifunctional force shaped to conduct informationized joint operations with a primary focus on threats emanating from the sea. Many of these concepts were well-worn and not unique to the immediate period leading up to the 2015 reforms. Even the new political directive to abandon the Big Army Mentality was based on previously articulated exhortations.

The existing explanations for the 2015 reforms fail to account for the timing and implementation of the most recent changes to the army. What explains the time lag between development of army reform concepts and the actual implementation after the 2015 reforms, and what could explain the timing of the actual implementation of these concepts within the army at scale once the 2015 reforms began?

### **Army Changes from an Organizational Perspective**

The inadequacies of several existing explanations for the timing and implementation of the 2015 reforms leave at least one major question unanswered. If many of the changes that comprise the 2015 reforms are not substantively new ideas, what explains the long lag time between the genesis of these ideas and their actual implementation in 2015, and what may have caused the changes to actually happen? Though direct evidence of organizational motivation to reform is hard to find, examining the changes from the organizational perspective of the army yields several compelling insights and possible explanations for the long delay and the timing of the 2015 reforms.

The rough typology of PLA ground force organizational interests that follows is based on past studies of organizational behavior that chart the

typical organizational interests of a bureaucracy, as well as evidence of army concern about these broad categories of organizational interests. It is neither exhaustive nor necessarily fully borne out by direct evidence that may be difficult to obtain; instead, the sections below provide a useful framework for evaluating army changes from an organizational perspective.

### **Uniqueness and Identity**

Like any other military organization, the PLA ground forces appear to place a premium on a unique service identity driven by unique service capabilities and a monopoly of expertise. Early scholars of bureaucracies identified monopoly of expertise as a formidable and indispensable source of bureaucratic power.<sup>60</sup> Monopoly of expertise and a bureaucracy's "technical superiority over any other form of organization" ensure that a bureaucracy is the only unit capable of executing a task and virtually forces society to rely on that organization to execute policy.<sup>61</sup>

PLA Army scholars view the service's unique capability to seize and hold territory as the defining hallmark of its identity, even as the advent of integrated joint operations carves out even greater roles for the other services. Army theoreticians have argued that even though naval, air, and missile capabilities have replaced many of the army's traditional strengths, the army continues to have a special role even in the context of joint warfare, namely to seize, hold, and control strategically important territories.<sup>62</sup>

### **Autonomy**

The army's unique capabilities and identity are inextricably linked to autonomy, which is a critical organizational interest for the service. This emphasis on autonomy is particularly pronounced when related to control of the budget, as the expenditure of funds determines the essence and priority of an organization's activities. Organizations frequently seek total operational control over the personnel and resources required to carry out a mission.<sup>63</sup> Autonomy is valued by bureaucracies "at least as much as resources" and signals that the agency "has a supportive constituency base



and a coherent set of tasks that can provide the basis for a strong and widely shared sense of mission."<sup>64</sup>

One proxy for the army's relative autonomy is its relationship with the other PLA services, which is theoretically moving away from single-service thinking and toward more interservice cooperation as a result of increased emphasis on joint warfare. Army researchers openly acknowledge that the service's relative freedom to act on its own singular objectives is fast waning as the rest of the PLA adopts joint warfare as the primary mode of operations and the other services gain in prominence.<sup>65</sup> On top of that, PLA theorists have noted that army commanders must increasingly understand and consider the requirements, strengths, weaknesses, and specialties of other services, especially in the era of joint operations.<sup>66</sup> This rhetoric suggests a steadily decreasing amount of autonomy for army commanders and units, especially when engaged in joint operations or exercises.

### **Budget**

A third army organizational interest is budget. An organization's budget may be the most important of the metrics of bureaucratic power, as money enables a bureaucracy to hire personnel, buy equipment, gain prestige, and otherwise increase an organization's capabilities and strengthen its ability to get what it wants.<sup>67</sup> Scholars have compared bureaucracies to firms, articulating a vision of bureaucracies as budget maximizers (instead of profit maximizers). The problems of making changes and managing a bureaucracy are at least partially alleviated by an increase in the total budget, and organizations will frequently maximize their budget relative to the production output expected of them by the sponsor of the organization's budget.<sup>68</sup> In brief, money is important to the extent that it enables production and eases management, and organizations (and their leaders) will pursue higher budgets as rational actors.

Available army writings almost never explicitly reveal budget-maximizing behavior, but the importance of the army's budgetary disposition is not lost on PLA researchers. Past researchers have called for increased

overall defense expenditures to enable more investment on army weapons,<sup>69</sup> while more recent articles have argued that overall army expenditure is excessive in comparison to the spending of other services.<sup>70</sup> These contrasting viewpoints illustrate that service budgets have long been a point of debate within the PLA, in spite of an overall lack of budgetary transparency.

### **Presence in Command Billets**

A final organizational interest is the number of influential positions held by army personnel. Scholars have argued that in order for a bureaucracy to provide governance, its officials must “occupy the most important positions in policy making, and further, they must be in sufficient numbers to be able to make their decisions effective.”<sup>71</sup> Quantity of positions held has a quality all its own, in that sheer preponderance of positions held may itself increase bureaucratic power.<sup>72</sup> Staffers, ad hoc players, and lower level officials are also critical, wielding substantial influence over action channels and agenda-setting.<sup>73</sup>

PLA Army theorists understand the importance of having qualified personnel occupying key billets in a given command structure. Army researchers have recognized the importance of developing relevant army talent to occupy billets that might require army expertise,<sup>74</sup> and past analysis has identified the lack of qualified army technical personnel in key billets as a major bottleneck for the advancement of transformation.<sup>75</sup> One prominent researcher proposed the establishment of an army command organ, among other specifically army-controlled organizations like military academies, research units, and logistics support units, to remedy this problem as far back as 2009.<sup>76</sup>

### **Becoming a Joint Force Component: Choosing the “Least Bad Option”**

While organizational and bureaucratic interests (some would say pathologies) may have held up the reforms until 2015, these same interests could also have enabled the reforms by helping the army to evaluate its future

force choices. Interpreting the army’s menu of options for its future force through the lens of the service’s organizational interests yields an interesting perspective: of the three variants of a new type of army, becoming the ground component of a joint force may have been the least objectionable option for the army as an organization. The contours of these three different models for a future ground forces are summarized briefly in table 2 and described in more detail in the sections that follow.

<b>Table 2. Future PLA Ground Force Roles</b>			
	<b>“Defend and Deter”</b>	<b>Constabulary Force</b>	<b>Ground Component of Joint Force</b>
<b>Missions</b>	Deterrence	Military operations other than war	Taiwan
<b>Unique Capabilities</b>	Defend homeland	Defend Chinese Communist Party at home	Seize and hold territory
<b>Relationship with PLA Partners</b>	Reliant on naval, rocket, and air forces for protection and strike	Reliant on naval and air forces for overseas transportation	Reliant on naval and air forces for transportation and support; naval, rocket, and air forces for strike
<b>Budgetary Implications</b>	Limited budget; investment in equipment for defensive and deterrence operations	Smallest budget; limited investment for personnel and minimum necessary equipment	Comparatively reduced budget; investment in heavy power-projection
<b>Command Implications</b>	Stay at home; limited role in command of high-end combat operations	Stay loyal; little to no role in command of high-end combat operations	Reduced but continued role in command of complex combat operations

### **Defend and Deter**

The PLA ground force is currently shaped as a force designed to defend and deter, largely thanks to China’s longstanding strategic posture and periodic modifications in the way PLA leaders perceived the character of warfare. The PLA and its ground forces place a heavy emphasis on deterrence and defense of China; offense is typically referenced in the context of “active

defense,” in which China would task its armed forces to attack only when threatened.<sup>77</sup> Force modernization resulting from changes in perceptions about warfare under high-technology conditions to informationized conditions laid the groundwork for a force that is increasingly mechanized and informationized, with growing but limited-range power projection capabilities in its special operations and aviation components.<sup>78</sup> Taken together, these components represent the army’s status quo, forming the basis for an army shaped primarily to defend the Chinese homeland and deter any violations of Chinese territory.

A ground force shaped for defense and deterrence confers specific bureaucratic advantages, capitalizing on the army’s unique capability among the PLA’s services to hold territory in defense of China’s landmass. While the navy and air force each have ground force components, and the Rocket Force is based on land, the army alone has sufficient numbers and heavy weapons to assure China’s territorial integrity on land.

At the same time, however, an army shaped for defense and deterrence is saddled with distinct bureaucratic disadvantages. While the army could benefit from interior lines for transportation and logistical support, it would be heavily reliant upon the PLA’s naval and air forces and Rocket Force for protection and strike, even while operating inside friendly territory. PLA academics acknowledge this reliance, commenting that army operations are “near impossible without reliable air cover”<sup>79</sup> and that the army should make maximum use of long-range firepower strikes from the other services to achieve its goals.<sup>80</sup>

This reliance generates some significant potential budgetary and command limitations for the PLA Army. Comparatively greater portions of the defense budget would go to the navy, Rocket Force, and air force to buy high-end equipment needed for their operations. Meanwhile, with limited power projection capabilities and missions, army commanders would gradually be given commands limited to homeland defense and would only participate in high-end joint combat operations to the extent that they are needed to coordinate with other services tasked with protecting the ground forces.

The PLA ground forces have already run up against many of these limitations. The army does not command strategic air defense assets, which belong to the air force, and the long-range strike weapons used to keep China's enemies far afield are under the command of the Rocket Force and air and naval forces, which are perceived to be naturally better suited to use long-range firepower.<sup>81</sup> These trends have contributed to an army with limited power projection capabilities designed primarily to secure Chinese territorial integrity.

### A Constabulary Force

Hu Jintao's New Historic Missions offered the army a glimpse at a future bureaucratic disposition far worse than the one army leaders were accustomed to during the runup to the 2015 reforms. A PLA ground force that fully embraced Hu's New Historic Missions would have focused more of its time and resources on MOOTW missions like antiterrorism, peacekeeping, and internal security, at the expense of training and equipping for complex combat operations against peer adversaries. The result would have been an army that more closely resembled an enhanced constabulary force with limited expeditionary capabilities instead of one designed to defeat the militaries of peer competitors.

While the call to participate in MOOTW missions under the aegis of Hu's New Historic Missions offered bureaucratic opportunities for the army, the unique and most politically important of these was not one that the PLA ground forces especially savored. Party leaders have continued to champion the army as the final line of defense for ensuring continued CCP rule,<sup>82</sup> but internal security was a mission that army leaders did not especially want. Some officers have candidly expressed their distaste for this particular duty.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the existence of the People's Armed Police helps distance the PLA from this internal security mission.<sup>84</sup>

A constabulary army could have expected a greatly reduced share of the budget and significantly lessened command responsibility for the types of complex combat operations that armies typically embrace. Its unique role as the defender of the CCP would not have required extensive

modernization that could justify budgetary largesse, and modernization funds would likely be funneled to selected units tasked with overseas peacekeeping, antiterrorism, and other MOOTW operations, eschewing the advanced capabilities needed to fight peer adversaries in favor of lighter rapid reaction forces. The increased emphasis on MOOTW would divert training time and resources away from more intensive combat operations, which would ultimately diminish the number of army officers holding prestigious command billets charged with executing complex combat operations against peer adversaries offshore from China.

It is no surprise that the PLA ground forces have not fully embraced the constabulary model that MOOTW missions would have foisted upon the service. Some evidence suggests that army theorists increasingly conceive of MOOTW operations within the context of larger, more complex operations rather than a set of separate, dedicated missions.<sup>85</sup> This is preliminary evidence that army theorists appear inclined to include MOOTW missions as lesser included tasks, even though MOOTW operations remain enshrined as one of the “three basic ways to use military power” cited in the 2013 *Science of Military Strategy*<sup>86</sup> and offer unique opportunities for the army to gain experience in combat support skills.<sup>87</sup> Given the significant bureaucratic disadvantages, army leaders are unlikely to endorse or adopt anything resembling the constabulary model if they can help it.

### Ground Component of a Joint Force

Given the options described here, becoming the ground component of a joint force appears to be the best option from the perspective of the army’s bureaucratic interests. While a full embrace of joint warfare would reduce the service’s budget allocation, control over command billets, and leave the army reliant on other services for transportation and support, it nonetheless presents the strongest case for continued force modernization, making it the best option for the ground forces from the standpoint of organizational and bureaucratic interests.

Fully transforming into the ground component of a joint force would result in a bureaucratic retreat on multiple fronts, damaging the army's organizational interests and priming the way for significantly reduced influence. The army would lose some of its monopoly of expertise as other services begin to absorb or compete for army roles, such as amphibious operations. Accordingly, the army's share of budgetary appropriation relative to other PLA services would fall as the navy, air force, and Rocket Force funnel money toward costlier systems and training needed for complex joint operations. Army dominance of command billets would end as officers from other services increased their proficiency in joint operations and begin to rise through the ranks, demanding greater control commensurate with the rising importance of the other services.

Many of these bureaucratic retreats have already come to fruition during the recent reforms, though the army lost at least some of these bureaucratic battles more than a decade ago. Recent changes have captured the most attention. For instance, key chief of staff and theater commander billets in the newly formed theater commands are increasingly being filled by officers from other PLA services.<sup>88</sup> If true, rumors that an army brigade would be converted to a marine corps unit would have dealt a further blow to the army's weakening monopoly of expertise on amphibious operations.<sup>89</sup> Still, it is clear that the army likely lost some important bureaucratic clashes years before—the prioritization of informationization over mechanization and the announcement that the navy, air force, and Second Artillery would have modernization priority in the 2004 defense white paper hinted at major bureaucratic defeats for the army.<sup>90</sup>

In context, however, becoming the ground component of a joint force entails comparably fewer bureaucratic concessions than the other two options. Should the army ultimately be tasked with a future invasion of Taiwan, for instance, it would reap the budgetary benefits of continued modernization directed at defeating a technologically advanced Taiwan military and the U.S. military might that the PLA expects to confront in such a scenario. The aggregate number of officers occupying command

billets responsible for joint operations would fall, but the army would still retain a legitimate claim to a substantial number of critical command positions given its continued role in a joint PLA. An army that is an equal participant in joint operations could ameliorate its reliance on other PLA services for protection and transportation by contributing niche capabilities to joint operations with other PLA services.

Given the comparatively lesser bureaucratic losses to the army, it is not entirely surprising that the undeniably painful transition toward a joint force is fully under way. This transition, evinced by numerous blows to the army's bureaucratic standing, will likely continue to be shaped by not only the army's organizational interests but also broader strategic and political directives described in previous sections of this chapter. In the end, however, organizational interests may have helped push army leaders and experts toward making the best of a worsening bureaucratic environment.

### **Explaining Incremental Change: Organizational Backsliding with Chinese Characteristics, or Risk Aversion?**

If the transition to a ground component of a joint force was ultimately in the army's best organizational interest, what explains the lag time between the introduction of reform concepts in the 2000s and actual implementation in 2015?

The first and most simple explanation for the delay is that the army simply saw no strategic imperative for dramatic changes to its fighting force after the 1993 military strategic guideline, which marked a new era in how the PLA and the ground forces should have perceived land security challenges—a shift toward fighting local wars under high-technology and later under informationized conditions called for a smaller, more versatile, and mobile ground force. According to this explanation, the army's changes, or lack thereof, were a response to the new strategic directives laid down by the 1993 guideline, and subsequent modifications were appropriate responses to comparatively minor adjustments in China's national military strategy. The army continues to implement the directives handed down to them by



higher authorities and does so with sufficient speed and effectiveness.<sup>91</sup> The consistency in the army's perceptions of land security challenges is a function of the enduring nature of China's remaining land security challenges, which is an especially plausible explanation given that China has mostly settled its territorial disputes, save for a select few outstanding trouble spots.<sup>92</sup>

But the evidence suggests that this "strategic" explanation is incomplete. If the PLA and its ground forces were as responsive to higher level strategic directives as the CCP and the military would have observers believe, one might expect quicker and more pronounced changes in doctrine or force structure than those described in the previous sections of this chapter. One prominent example of this explanatory gap is the apparent multiple attempts to adopt the smaller ground force structure that is consistently upheld and reiterated seemingly *ad infinitum* as a key pillar of army modernization. Since the introduction of the 1993 guidelines, the PLA has undergone several troop reductions: 500,000 personnel in 1997, 200,000 more in 2005, and an additional 300,000 announced in 2015.<sup>93</sup> The latest reductions were reportedly completed in March 2018,<sup>94</sup> nearly a full 25 years after the strategic need for a smaller ground force was first articulated in 1993 and 20 years since the first personnel reduction under the "military strategic guideline in the new period" was undertaken. Are these reductions deliberate and precise responses to changes in China's land security threats and views on the character of warfare, or have they been conducted in a delayed and piecemeal fashion because the PLA (and especially its ground forces) was unwilling or unable to reduce the size of the force? How much of the delay can be attributed to the consensus-driven nature of the PLA's organizational culture, and how much is due to opposition or resistance? Given the relative consistency in China's views on land security threats since 1993, the timing of the iterative, piecemeal force reductions cannot be readily explained by adjustments in perceptions of land security threats.

A second explanation involves PLA (and especially ground force) resistance to implementing its conclusion that smaller, modular, and

multifunctional forces were necessary because these changes went against parochial organizational interests within the ground forces. Seasoned PLA experts point out that the PLA does not always respond rapidly to decisions it does not like. There is ample scholarship supporting the idea that the PLA and its ground forces may be less than fully willing to follow through on CCP directives,<sup>95</sup> and history is replete with concrete instances of serious friction between the Party and army. One recent example is the November 2015 announcement of a 3-year phase out of PLA commercial businesses, which came nearly two decades after the famous 1997 divestiture of PLA businesses ordered by Jiang Zemin, which was apparently not as effective or complete as civilian leaders had hoped.<sup>96</sup> Through this lens, one might attribute the slow and small-scale changes in army priorities to organizational backsliding and unwillingness to break “iron rice bowls” within the service. The army’s professional role as land warfare experts gives the service excellent bona fides upon which to execute this particular form of doctrinal disobedience, as with any other service. The long series of experimental exercises in the former Jinan MR may have been an expression of this resistance, serving as an excuse to put off implementation of needed reforms rather than a genuine effort to change the army.<sup>97</sup> Was the army’s laggard pace of change actually a result of a deliberate campaign of military slow walking?

A third possible explanation for the army’s relative failure to adapt to a new type of force centers on a potential organizational inability to do so, or at least do so in a radical way. Military organizations, like their nonmilitary counterparts, are typically deeply resistant to change, except under conditions of competition or doctrinal innovation from a foreign opponent.<sup>98</sup> A review of scholarly literature on organizational behavior suggests that organizations rarely adopt radical change, preferring instead to engage in incremental innovation characterized by the adoption of policy options that bear a strong resemblance to choices adopted in the past.<sup>99</sup> On its face, the main body of PLA and army literature regarding land security threats appears to conform to these patterns of behavior—views on regional

challenges and the future shape of the force have remained nearly identical, while changes to emphasize amphibious operations use many of the same intellectual language and constructs employed before the latest revision to China's military strategic guideline.<sup>100</sup> This suggests that the ground forces may have previously been organizationally unable to innovate, hindered by a particular brand of organizational pathology that emphasizes hierarchy and consensus-driven processes.<sup>101</sup>

Evidence to assess the relative weight of these explanations is difficult to come by, but some details from the PLA reforms give hints that all three of these explanations may be valid to varying degrees. Some of the latest reforms appear to be directed at remedying selected residual outcomes that could have resulted from the above three explanations, especially any deliberate slow-rolling or inability to foster doctrinal innovation. For instance, the reduction of army influence at the highest levels of administrative and operational command, exemplified by the reassignment of several former General Staff Department functions to competing organizations<sup>102</sup> and the formation of joint operations command centers [*lianhe zuozhan zhihui zhongxin*, 联合作战指挥中心] at the new theater commands,<sup>103</sup> would likely reduce any army-led efforts to obstruct or hinder the development of a "joint" PLA. The heavier presence of air force and navy officers at the theater commands is likely to force their army counterparts to interact more with other doctrinal schools of thought.<sup>104</sup> The bevy of first-time military delegates to the latest Party congress may also hint at a broader displacement of army personnel who were professionally disinclined toward change.<sup>105</sup>

While it remains difficult to determine precisely which of the above explanations best describes the army's pace and scope of change, the relative validities of these explanations nonetheless have much larger implications for the army, the PLA writ large, and the state of Party-military relations in China.

If the army failed to adjust in the past based on limited adjustments in strategy or views on the character of warfare, the latest changes in the

ground forces suggest that a dramatic reorientation in the army's future force is coming to fruition. Many of the changes that army theorists have discussed at length over the past 20-odd years are finally being realized, shortly after the issuance of a new military strategic guideline strongly emphasizing maritime threats. Reforms from the "neck down" [*bozi yixia gaige*, 脖子以下改革] have resulted in significant reductions and changes to army units, including the elimination of five group army headquarters and the redistribution and reassignment of many of their subordinate units, personnel, and equipment. The remaining group armies command combined arms brigades instead of divisions, and have been redesignated, reduced in size, and completely reorganized.<sup>106</sup> If the army is responsive to the latest military strategic guideline, it will continue to work toward developing smaller, modularized, and multifunctional forces, primarily for use in joint maritime operations.

If the ground forces were backsliding, some elements of the reforms may be better interpreted as deliberately disruptive measures. The process of "discarding Big Army Mentality" may have motivated the removal of individual leaders and precipitated the abolition of certain institutions and departments, and any further perceived Big Army Mentality may result in further disruption within the PLA ground forces. A concerted move against the army would bode ill for the Party-army relationship, and analysts should expect to see much more stringent efforts at political control of the army in particular. Ground force personnel associated with corruption may be drummed out of the force en masse, and the remaining forces and their commanders will likely experience a sharp uptick in political work emphasizing political and personal loyalty to Xi Jinping. For career army personnel, it will likely pay to be "Red."

If the ground forces are simply risk averse and organizationally incapable of articulating a radically different view of land security challenges, the process of discarding Big Army Mentality is likely to be gentler and more gradual, although just as jarring in the end. Party and military leaders may increase the army officers' exposure to other components

of the PLA, namely the air force, navy, and Rocket Force, in an attempt to diversify army doctrinal and operational thinking. Older officers will be ushered out of their posts in order to be replaced by a new generation that is more inclined to value joint operations with other services. One obvious price of becoming more accepting of change in the army, however, is that the service's bureaucratic status and influence are likely to continue to decrease as a result of any "radical" changes in views on land security challenges.

These three paths are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and some of the recently announced changes from the reforms could be indicators of all three explanations of army theoretical and actual change. One major issue going forward is that absent better data, much of the evidence gleaned from the reforms can be interpreted as supporting evidence for multiple theories explaining the army's views on land security challenges. For instance, army leadership reductions and reassignments resulting from the group army reorganization could be part of the service's response to a new strategy, serve as a punishment to some backsliding officers, or remove organizational and bureaucratic obstacles to needed change. On balance, such a leadership change probably achieves all three of those objectives, which makes it difficult to determine which explanation is most valid.

As it stands, the key findings of this chapter suggest that while changes in China's external security challenges, altered perceptions of the character of warfare, and new political directives all likely played critical roles in driving these latest adaptations in the PLA ground forces, these explanations for reform neglect the army's organizational interests as a potential driver and enabler of reform. While an organizational explanation may still be unable to account for exactly what happened to push the 2015 reforms to fruition, the existing body of literature on bureaucratic behavior in general and on the ground forces suggests that army organizational interests almost certainly influenced the scale and timing of reforms.

To the extent that army organizational interests prove to be important determinants of the future service, they may push the PLA ground forces

toward a more offensive-oriented role for a PLA ground force that has previously been tasked to defend and deter. This is not to say that the PLA or the highest CCP leadership will opt to use the ground forces in an offensive manner, but rather to imply that a more joint PLA ground force would have a greater organizational preference for offensive actions within the context of the PLA's broader posture of active defense. This may be especially true in a Taiwan scenario in which the ground forces may be called upon to invade the island.

Ultimately, the ongoing transformation of the army into the ground component of a joint force is still not good for the service's bureaucratic standing. An altered strategic paradigm will likely precipitate a continued decline in army bureaucratic power and influence. Organizational opposition or simple organizational pathology is likely to trigger similar outcomes, albeit with varying degrees of disruption. Given these possible explanations and outcomes, the other PLA services and branches will likely continue to gain at the expense of the ground forces as the PLA continues to implement the next slate of reforms. Nonetheless, the army's embrace of joint warfare will likely continue to be its "least bad" organizational choice, especially in light of its other options.

The author is indebted to Dennis J. Blasko, Morgan Clemens, and Phillip C. Saunders for their generous help in reviewing previous versions of this chapter. Any errors are the author's alone.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Zhang Jiaoying [张骄瀛], ed., "CMC Opinions on Deepening National Defense and Military Reforms" [中央军委关于深化国防和军队改革的意见], Xinhua [新华社], January 1, 2016, available at <[www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2016-01/01/c\\_128588503.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2016-01/01/c_128588503.htm)>.

<sup>2</sup> For a similar but distinct categorization of the factors that spur changes in military strategy, see M. Taylor Fravel, "Shifts in Warfare and Party Unity: Explaining China's Changes in Military Strategy," *International Security* 42, no. 3 (Winter 2017/2018), 40–44.

<sup>3</sup> For an extensive description of the formulation, content, and significance of the 1993 military strategic guideline, see David M. Finkelstein, “China’s National Military Strategy: An Overview of the ‘Military Strategic Guidelines,’” in *Right Sizing the People’s Liberation Army: Exploring the Contours of China’s Military*, ed. Andrew Scobell and Roy Kamphausen (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 69–140.

<sup>4</sup> Wang Xiangfu [王祥富] et al., eds., *Study Guide on Jiang Zemin National Defense and Military Construction Thought* [江泽民国防和军队建设思想学习读本] (Beijing: Chinese Communist Party History Press [中共党史出版社], 2002), 75.

<sup>5</sup> Shan Xiufa [单秀法], ed., *Research on Jiang Zemin National Defense and Military Construction Thought* [江泽民国防和军队建设思想研究] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press [军事科学出版社], 2004), cited in Finkelstein, “China’s National Military Strategy,” 106.

<sup>6</sup> *China’s National Defense in 2004* [2004年中国的国防] (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, December 2004), available at <[www.mod.gov.cn/affair/2011-01/06/content\\_4249947.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/affair/2011-01/06/content_4249947.htm)>.

<sup>7</sup> *China’s Military Strategy* [中国的军事战略] (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, May 2015), available at <[www.mod.gov.cn/auth/2015-05/26/content\\_4586723.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/auth/2015-05/26/content_4586723.htm)>.

<sup>8</sup> Language calling for the military to rid itself of the “big army” [大陆军] mentality appeared in several papers published by *China Military Science* in a two-part 2014 study of Xi Jinping’s thoughts on the military. For examples of this language, see Gao Guanghui [高光辉], “Considerations on Adhering to the Standard of Warfighting Capability in the New Situation” [新形势下坚持战斗力标准], *China Military Science* [中国军事科学], vol. 3 (2014), 34; and Wang Pei and Zhang Zhihui [王培, 张志辉], “Adhere to the Sole and Fundamental Standard of Warfighting Capability—A Thorough Study of Xi Jinping’s Important Expositions on the Standard of Warfighting Capability” [坚持战斗力这个唯一的根本的标准—深入学习领会习近平关于战斗力标准的重要论述], *China Military Science* [中国军事科学], vol. 3 (2014), 29.

<sup>9</sup> *China’s National Defense in 1998* [1998年中国的国防] (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, September 1998), available at <<http://60.people.com.cn/GB/166974/9988169.html>>.

<sup>10</sup> Li Tao [李涛], “Ten Historical Troop Reductions of the People’s Liberation Army” [人民解放军历史上的10次大裁军], *PLA Daily* [解放军报], November 18, 2015, available at <[www.81.cn/20151126jg/2015-11/18/content\\_6885147.htm](http://www.81.cn/20151126jg/2015-11/18/content_6885147.htm)>.

<sup>11</sup> See Dennis J. Blasko, *The Chinese Army Today*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 96; and Dennis J. Blasko, “PLA Amphibious Capabilities: Structured for Deterrence,” *China Brief* 10, no. 17 (August 19, 2010), available at <<https://jamestown.org/program/pla-amphibious-capabilities-structured-for-deterrence/>>.

<sup>12</sup> Fravel, “Shifts in Warfare and Party Unity,” 79.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>15</sup> Chang Qiaozhang and Cui Shuxia [常巧章, 崔叔霞], “High-Technology Warfare” [高技术战争], in *China Military Encyclopedia* [中国军事百科全书], *Military Science I* [军事学术1], ed. Song Shilun and Xiao Ke [宋时轮, 萧克] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press [军事科学出版社], 1997), 126–127.

<sup>16</sup> All-Military Military Terminology Management Committee [全军军事术语管理委员会], *People’s Liberation Army Military Terminology* [中国人民解放军军语] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, 2011), 48.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Zhan Yu [战玉], ed., *Research on Army Transformation under Informatized Conditions* [信息化条件下陆军转型研究] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, 2009), 270–271.

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed analysis of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) ground forces’ transregional exercises involving other services, see Dennis J. Blasko, “Clarity of Intentions: People’s Liberation Army Transregional Exercises to Defend China’s Borders,” in *Learning by Doing: The PLA Trains at Home and Abroad*, ed. Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Travis Tanner (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 171–212; and his chapter in this volume. See also Kevin McCauley, *PLA System of System Operations: Enabling Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2017), 67.

<sup>20</sup> Dennis J. Blasko, “Recent Developments in the Chinese Army’s Helicopter Force,” *China Brief* 17, no. 8 (June 9, 2017), available at <<https://jamestown.org/program/recent-developments-chinese-armys-helicopter-force/>>.

<sup>21</sup> Hu Jintao, “Recognize Historical Missions of Our Military in the New Period of the New Century” [认清新世纪新阶段我军历史使命], speech to session of the Central Military Commission, Beijing, December 24, 2004, available at <<http://gfjy.jxnews.com.cn/system/2010/04/16/011353408.shtml>>.

<sup>22</sup> Morgan Clemens, “PLA Thinking on Military Operations other Than War,” in *China’s Evolving Military Strategy*, ed. Joe McReynolds (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, 2016), 338.



<sup>23</sup> In 2008, the Academy of Military Science published a series of books for military distribution only through the Nanjing Army Command College [南京陆军指挥学院] on military operations other than war. The series included volumes on the army’s role in counterterrorism, protection of social stability, peacekeeping operations, and disaster relief, among others. See Zhang Jian [张健], ed., *Military Operations other Than War Research Series* [非战争军事行动系列研究] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> See Zhan Yu [战玉], “Strategic Considerations on Army Transformation” [对陆军转型的战略思考], *China Military Science* [中国军事科学], vol. 2 (2008), 97; and Zhan, *Research on Army Transformation*, 271–272.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of how PLA academicians conceived of peacekeeping rotations, see Li Chunyuan [李春元], ed., *Army Peacekeeping Operations Research* [陆军维和行动研究] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, 2008), 100–106.

<sup>26</sup> Blasko, *The Chinese Army Today*, 84.

<sup>27</sup> Yin Shijie [尹世杰], ed., “Army Begins Organizing Peacekeeping Unit Awaiting Orders” [陆军启动组建6类19支维和待命部队], Xinhua Online [新华网], November 18, 2017, available at <[www.xinhuanet.com/2017-11/18/c\\_1121976423.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2017-11/18/c_1121976423.htm)>.

<sup>28</sup> Zhuang Pinghui, “Two Chinese UN Peacekeepers Killed, Two Seriously Injured in Attack in South Sudan,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), July 12, 2016, available at <[www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1988348/two-chinese-un-peacekeepers-killed-two-seriously](http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1988348/two-chinese-un-peacekeepers-killed-two-seriously)>.

<sup>29</sup> *China’s Military Strategy*.

<sup>30</sup> Dennis J. Blasko, “PLA Army Group Army Reorganization: An Initial Analysis,” October 2017, available at <[www.ashtreeanalytics.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PLA-Army-Group-Army-Reorganization-An-Initial-Analysis.pdf](http://www.ashtreeanalytics.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PLA-Army-Group-Army-Reorganization-An-Initial-Analysis.pdf)>.

<sup>31</sup> Sarah Zhang, “China Completes Registration of 8,000-Strong UN Peacekeeping Force, Defense Ministry Says,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), September 29, 2017, available at <[www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2113436/china-completes-registration-8000-strong-un](http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2113436/china-completes-registration-8000-strong-un)>.

<sup>32</sup> Phillip C. Saunders and Joel Wuthnow, *China’s Goldwater-Nichols? Assessing PLA Organizational Reform*, INSS Strategic Forum 294 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, April 2016), 1–9.

<sup>33</sup> Researchers at PLA’s National Defense University began work on the 1999 version of the *Science of Military Strategy* in 1992, and Academy of Military Science researchers from the Strategy Research Department began work on the 2001 edition of the *Science of Military Strategy* in 1996. For information on the drafting

processes for both of these volumes, see Wang Wenrong [王文荣], ed., *Science of Military Strategy* [战略学] (Beijing: National Defense University Press [国防大学出版社], 1999), 1; and Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi [彭光谦, 姚有志], eds., *Science of Military Strategy* [战略学] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, 2001), 509–510. For relevant text on force reduction, see Wang, *Science of Military Strategy*, 273–274, 383; and Peng and Yao, *Science of Military Strategy*, 203.

<sup>34</sup> Zhan, “Strategic Considerations on Army Transformation,” 97–98. Similar calls for army force reductions were echoed in a 2009 book edited by the same author. For one example of many, see Zhan, *Research on Army Transformation under Informationized Conditions*, 31–33.

<sup>35</sup> Li, “Ten Historical Troop Reductions of the People’s Liberation Army.”

<sup>36</sup> Shou Xiaosong [寿晓松], ed., *Science of Military Strategy* [战略学] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, 2013), 201.

<sup>37</sup> Blasko, “Recent Developments in the Chinese Army’s Helicopter Force.”

<sup>38</sup> For rumors of a transfer of a 26<sup>th</sup> Group Army brigade to the PLA Navy Marine Corps, see “Two Generals Strike a Pose: Chinese Marine Corps About to Expand?” [这两位少将亮相, 中国海军陆战队要扩编成军?], May 29, 2017, available at <[www.guancha.cn/military-affairs/2017\\_05\\_29\\_410685.shtml](http://www.guancha.cn/military-affairs/2017_05_29_410685.shtml)>.

<sup>39</sup> For a seminal treatment of the importance of the military strategic guideline in understanding China’s national military strategy, see Finkelstein, “China’s National Military Strategy,” 69–140. For a discussion of the uncertainty surrounding the existence of the military strategic guideline as a single document, see Timothy R. Heath, “An Overview of China’s National Military Strategy,” in *China’s Evolving Military Strategy*, 4–6. See also China’s *National Defense in 2004* and *China’s Military Strategy*.

<sup>40</sup> Wang Fa’an [王法安], ed., *Strong Military Strategy Amidst China’s Peaceful Development* [中国和平发展中的强军战略] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, 2011), 58, 78.

<sup>41</sup> For an example, see Zhan, *Research on Army Transformation under Informationized Conditions*, 291.

<sup>42</sup> PLA academics have written extensively about India’s military strategy and the threat India poses to China. For a candid 2005 assessment of the Indian border threat, see Geng Weidong and Zhou Zhenfeng [耿卫东, 周振锋], eds., *Joint Border Operations at the Group Army Level* [集团军级边境联合作战] (Beijing, Academy of Military Science Press, 2005), 1–18.

<sup>43</sup> *China’s Military Strategy*.

<sup>44</sup> Wang, *Science of Military Strategy*, 282–283.

<sup>45</sup> Wang, *Strong Military Strategy Amidst China’s Peaceful Development*, 177.

<sup>46</sup> Wang Xixin [王西欣], “Understanding of and Consideration on Improving Warfighting Capabilities of the PLA Infantry Forces” [对提高陆军部队实战能力的认识与思考], *China Military Science* [中国军事科学], vol. 4 (2013), 103–107.

<sup>47</sup> See Xiao Tianliang [肖天亮], ed., *Science of Military Strategy* [战略学] (Beijing: National Defense University Press [国防大学出版社], 2015), 330, 332; Shi Zhongwu [石忠武], “Considerations on Promoting the Transformation of the PLA Army” [推进陆军转型建设的几点思考], *China Military Science* [中国军事科学], vol. 6 (2016), 106–107; Wang Jishan [王吉山], “A Study of Real Combat Training of the PLA Army” [陆军实战化训练研究], *China Military Science* [中国军事科学], vol. 5 (2015), 127–128; Zhang Dongjiang, Xu Zhen, and Lü Tao [张东江, 许震, 吕涛], “Guidance of Xi Jinping’s Important Thought on ‘Building a Human Community of Shared Destiny’ for China’s Military Strategy” [习近平“构建人类命运共同体”重要思想对中国军事战略的指导意义], *China Military Science* [中国军事科学], vol. 2 (2017), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Blasko, “PLA Army Group Army Reorganization.”

<sup>49</sup> *China’s National Defense in 2000* [2000年中国的国防] (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, October 16, 2000), available at <[www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2000/Document/307949/307949.htm](http://www.scio.gov.cn/zfbps/ndhf/2000/Document/307949/307949.htm)>.

<sup>50</sup> Blasko, “Clarity of Intentions,” 171–212. See also McCauley, 67.

<sup>51</sup> Xi Jinping, “Build a People’s Military That Obeys Party Command, Can Fight and Win Wars, and Has an Excellent Work Style” [建设一支听党指挥, 能大胜仗, 作风优良的人民军队], *News of the Chinese Communist Party* [中国共产党新闻网], March 11, 2013, available at <<http://cpc.people.com.cn/xuexi/n/2015/0720/c397563-27332090.html>>.

<sup>52</sup> “CPC Central Committee Decision on Deepening of Reforms for Major Issues” [中共中央关于全面深化改革若干重大问题的决定], *Xinhua*, November 15, 2013, available at <[http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-11/15/c\\_118164235.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2013-11/15/c_118164235.htm)>.

<sup>53</sup> See Xi Jinping, “Speech at a Ceremony Marking the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the People’s Liberation Army,” *Qiushi Journal* 9, no. 4 (October–December 2017), available at <[http://english.qstheory.cn/2017-11/28/c\\_1122006806.htm](http://english.qstheory.cn/2017-11/28/c_1122006806.htm)>.

<sup>54</sup> Shao Beizhen and Ren Lihong [邵贝真, 任丽虹], eds., “Army Commander Li Zuocheng: Build a Strong Modernized New Type of Army” [陆军司令员李作成: 建设强大的现代化新型陆军], *People’s Daily* [人民日报], January 31, 2016, available at <<http://sn.people.com.cn/n2/2016/0131/c358036-27662181.html>>.

<sup>55</sup> Jiang Pingping and Cheng Hongyi [姜萍萍, 程宏毅], eds., “Work Hard to Build a Strong, Modernized New Type of Army—Deep Study Implementation of Chairman Xi’s Important Thoughts Regarding Army Building” [努力建设一支强大的现代化新型陆军—深入学习贯彻习近平主席关于陆军建设重要论述], *Qiushi* [求是], February 26, 2016, available at <<http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0216/c40531-28128055.html>>.

<sup>56</sup> Li Chunyuan and Li Zhangrui [李春元, 李章瑞], eds., *Army Command in Joint Operations* [联合作战中的陆军指挥] (Beijing: Academy of Military Science Press, 2009), 20.

<sup>57</sup> Wang, ed., 75.

<sup>58</sup> See Zhang, ed.

<sup>59</sup> For instance, see Guo Tong [郭统], “Adhere to Guiding Army Transformation by Xi Jinping’s Thought on Military Strategy” [坚持以习近平军事战略思想指导陆军转型建设], *China Military Science* [中国军事科学], vol. 3 (2017), 32–39; and Chen Genhua and Fu Minghua [沈根华, 付明华], “Consolidate the Political Guarantee for Army Transformation—A Strategic Consideration of Strengthening Army’s Ideological and Political Construction” [强化陆军转型建设的政治保证—加强陆军思想政治建设的战略思考], *China Military Science* [中国军事科学], vol. 3 (2017), 40–48.

<sup>60</sup> See Max Weber, “Essay on Bureaucracy,” in *Bureaucratic Power in National Policy Making*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., ed. Francis E. Rourke (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1986), 69; and David Beetham, *Bureaucracy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 60, 75.

<sup>61</sup> Weber, 67–73.

<sup>62</sup> See Zhan, ed., 144; and Li and Li, eds., 27.

<sup>63</sup> Morton H. Halperin and Priscilla A. Clapp, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 51.

<sup>64</sup> James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 195.

<sup>65</sup> Li and Li, eds., 21.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–29.

<sup>67</sup> William A. Niskanen, *Bureaucracy and Public Economics* (Brookfield, VT: Edward Elgar, 1994), 38.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 36–42.

<sup>69</sup> Yan Jia and Shi Jianfeng [严佳, 施剑峰], “An Analysis of the Weaponry Funds Distributed to the Army in the Future” [我军陆军武器装备经费投入预期], *Military Economics Research* [军事经济研究], vol. 9 (2002), 35–36.

<sup>70</sup> An Wenchao, Hao Lu, and Jiang Nan [安文超, 郝路, 姜楠], “Problems and Solutions in National Defense Budget Allocation Efficiency” [国防预算配置效率的困境与出路], *Military Economics Research* [军事经济研究], vol. 11 (2011), 18–20.

<sup>71</sup> B. Guy Peters, *The Politics of Bureaucracy: An Introduction to Comparative Public Administration* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 204.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>73</sup> Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1999), 296.

<sup>74</sup> Zhan, ed., 276.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 247–248.

<sup>77</sup> Dennis J. Blasko, “China’s Evolving Approach to Strategic Deterrence,” in *China’s Evolving Military Strategy*, 315–334.

<sup>78</sup> Blasko, “PLA Army Group Army Reorganization.”

<sup>79</sup> Li and Li, eds., 27.

<sup>80</sup> Zhan, ed., 144.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>82</sup> Murray Scot Tanner, “How China Manages Internal Security Challenges and Its Impact on PLA Missions,” in *Beyond the Strait: PLA Missions Other Than Taiwan*, ed. Roy Kamphausen, David Lai, and Andrew Scobell (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), 40.

<sup>83</sup> General Xu Qinxian, commander of the 38<sup>th</sup> Group Army, refused to lead his forces into Tiananmen Square to clear out student protestors in 1989. Other officials have registered their disapproval: former Defense Minister General Chi Haotian asserted that the actions at Tiananmen Square “would not happen again.” See Verna Yu, “No Regrets for Defiant Tiananmen General,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), February 25, 2011, available at <[www.scmp.com/article/738185/no-regrets-defiant-tiananmen-general](http://www.scmp.com/article/738185/no-regrets-defiant-tiananmen-general)>; and Dennis J. Blasko and John F. Corbett, Jr., “No More Tiananmens: The People’s Armed Police and Stability in China, 1997,” *China Strategic Review* 3, no. 1 (1998), 88–89.

<sup>84</sup> Roy Kamphausen, “China’s Land Forces: New Priorities and Capabilities,” in *Strategic Asia 2012–2013: China’s Military Challenge*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis and Travis Tanner (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012), 32.

<sup>85</sup> In the past, PLA Army writings have allocated dedicated and extensive coverage to a range of stand-alone military operations other than war (MOOTW)

missions; one recent volume, however, makes reference to counterterrorism and social stability operations in the context of joint border campaign operations, not as part of a broader MOOTW construct. See Zhang, ed., for an example of the former; and Cao Zhengrong, Sun Longhai, and Yang Ying [曹正荣, 孙龙海, 杨颖], eds., *Informationized Army Operations* [信息化陆军作战] (Beijing: National Defense University Press [国防大学出版社], 2014), 246–247, for an example of the latter.

<sup>86</sup> Shou, ed., 6. See also Blasko, “China’s Evolving Approach,” 317–318.

<sup>87</sup> Zhang Tao, ed., “Monthly Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense on September 28,” Ministry of National Defense, September 28, 2017, available at <[http://eng.mod.gov.cn/focus/2017-09/28/content\\_4793398.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/focus/2017-09/28/content_4793398.htm)>.

<sup>88</sup> Joel Wuthnow and Phillip C. Saunders, *Chinese Military Reform in the Age of Xi Jinping: Drivers, Challenges, and Implications*, China Strategic Perspectives 10 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2017), 18–19; and Chi-yuk Choi, “Admiral Named to Head PLA’s New Southern Theater Command,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), January 19, 2017, available at <[www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2063649/admiral-named-head-plas-southern-theatre-command](http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2063649/admiral-named-head-plas-southern-theatre-command)>.

<sup>89</sup> “Two Generals Strike a Pose.”

<sup>90</sup> The 2002 defense white paper claimed that the PLA would pursue both mechanization and informationization, but the 2004 white paper announced that the PLA would transition from mechanization to informationization, cementing a shift in priorities that would ultimately benefit other services over the army. See *China’s National Defense in 2002* [中国的军事战略] (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, December 2002), available at <[eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2002.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2002.htm)>; and *China’s National Defense in 2004*.

<sup>91</sup> This is almost certainly the narrative that the Chinese Communist Party wants both the PLA and the outside world to believe. Defense white papers produced for public consumption constantly reiterate that the army will “continue to” carry out modernization according to strategic directives from on high. Any alternative narratives would seriously undermine the governing principle of Party-army relations, namely that the “Party Controls the Gun” (党指挥枪). See note 34 for an example of the careful and differential use of English and Chinese to convey separate messages to Chinese and foreign audiences.

<sup>92</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 300–319.

<sup>93</sup> Li.

<sup>94</sup> "Defense Ministry's Regular Press Conference on March 29," *China Military Online*, March 30, 2018, available at <[http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-03/30/content\\_7987841.htm](http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-03/30/content_7987841.htm)>.

<sup>95</sup> Volumes have been written on the topic of tensions in China's civil-military relationship. Among other works, see Harlan W. Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles: Politics and Professionalism in the Chinese Army* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982); Michael Kiselycynyk and Phillip C. Saunders, *Civil-Military Relations in China: Assessing the PLA's Role in Elite Politics*, China Strategic Perspectives 2 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2010); James C. Mulvenon, "China: Conditional Compliance" in *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>96</sup> For an analysis of the November 2015 announcement, see James C. Mulvenon, "PLA Divestiture 2.0: We Mean It This Time," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 50 (2016). For a study of the 1998 divestiture, see James C. Mulvenon, *Soldiers of Fortune: The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Military-Business Complex 1978–1998* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), which follows up on the problem that apparently never ends.

<sup>97</sup> Blasko, "Clarity of Intentions," 171–212.

<sup>98</sup> Much of the literature on organizational behavior can be found in the eponymously named classic on organizations by March and Simon. See James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, *Organizations* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1958). For discussions of change within militaries based upon these academic studies of organizational behavior, see Kimberly Marten-Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation, 1955–1991* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984).

<sup>99</sup> The main threads of this argument are laid out in a study of American government organizations in Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of 'Muddling Through,'" *Public Administration Review* 19, no. 2 (Spring 1959), 79–88. The framework was extended to an analysis of 1970s Soviet policymaking in Valerie Bunce and John M. Echols III, "Power and Policy in Communist Systems: The Problem of 'Incrementalism,'" *The Journal of Politics* 40, no. 4 (August 1978), 911–932.

<sup>100</sup> Multiple army theoreticians, for example, have repeatedly urged caution about the scale and the shape of ground force drawdowns throughout the entire period of study covered in this chapter.

<sup>101</sup> One fitting and obvious example of the PLA's emphasis on consensus comes from examining the authorship of PLA books. The most authoritative works within

the ecosystem of PLA academic literature are typically recognized as ones authored by large committee(s) or attributed to entire organizations. Nearly all major PLA academic works are edited or vetted by a research or supervisory committee.

<sup>102</sup> For a detailed examination of which sub-departments and functions were redistributed to which organizations, see Wuthnow and Saunders, 10–13.

<sup>103</sup> Chen Jian [陈剑], ed., “Beginning a New Trend Amidst Fluttering Red Flags—Post-Establishment Observations of the Theater Commands” [开局新风起 猎猎战旗红—东南西北中五战区成立伊始见闻], *Xinhua* [新华社], February 3, 2016, available at <[www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-02/02/c\\_1117973365.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-02/02/c_1117973365.htm)>.

<sup>104</sup> Wuthnow and Saunders, 18–19.

<sup>105</sup> Cheng Li, “Forecasting China’s Largest-Ever Turnover of Military Elite at the 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress,” *Brookings*, September 18, 2017, available at <[www.brookings.edu/opinions/forecasting-chinas-largest-ever-turnover-of-military-elite-at-the-19th-party-congress/](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/forecasting-chinas-largest-ever-turnover-of-military-elite-at-the-19th-party-congress/)>.

<sup>106</sup> For a detailed analysis of these “neck-down” reforms to the PLA ground forces, see Dennis J. Blasko, “PLA Army Group Army Reorganization.”