

PLA FORCE REDUCTIONS

Impact on the Services

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In October 2013, during the Third Plenum of the 18th Party Congress, President Xi Jinping announced Beijing's intent to reform the Chinese military, with the decision document adopted at the plenum providing a brief overview of the intended reforms.¹ These remarks kicked off what would become a sweeping reform initiative, the details of which were revealed over the next few years and implemented in phases with an expected completion date of 2020. This reform program has received a fair amount of scholarly attention, which it deserves given the scale and scope of change taking place within the People's Liberation Army (PLA).² A subset of the overall reform initiative involves a 300,000-troop reduction, announced by Xi in September 2015 at an event honoring the anniversary of China's war with Japan. This reduction, and its impact on the PLA, has received much less attention from Western academics.³

The current force reduction initiative, which was "basically completed" by the end of 2017, is the eleventh of its kind in the PLA's history. An examination of past efforts in comparison to the current round of troop cuts demonstrates broad commonalities in how the PLA implements the force reductions as well as in its stated objectives. The PLA has repeatedly

conducted large-scale demobilization in tandem with organizational changes, and in almost every case the goals are the same: streamline what is perceived as a bloated and inefficient military force, focus reductions primarily on noncombat troops, and utilize the force reductions and organizational changes to address longstanding cultural problems existing within the PLA.⁴

This chapter briefly examines several past force reduction efforts dating back to the 1980s to highlight Beijing's continued interest in creating a military that emphasizes quality over quantity, addressing a perceived army-centric bias within the PLA, and reducing the number of command and headquarters staff positions to enable more efficient command and control and military operations. The current round of reductions is no exception, with the bulk of demobilized forces coming from the ground forces and noncombat units. The organizational changes taking place in tandem with the force reductions are arguably the most serious example to date of Beijing's intent to overcome the PLA's historical army-centric culture and elevate the relative importance of the other military services.

The troop reduction effort and overall military reform should also be couched within Beijing's strategic goals for its military. These goals have been relatively consistent over the past several decades and were perhaps best encapsulated in remarks by Jiang Zemin in December 1997, as he laid out a "three step strategy" [*sanbuzou zhanlue*, 三步走战略] for modernizing China's military. This strategy, while vague on details, lays out three milestones for the PLA: to lay a solid foundation by 2010, to basically accomplish mechanization and make major progress in informationization by 2020, and to fully realize an informationized military by the middle of the 21st century.⁵

Xi Jinping's recent political work report at the 19th Party Congress reiterated these broad goals but added an interim milestone and modified the third goal. Xi called on the PLA to achieve modernization by 2035 and to become a world-class military by the middle of the 21st century.⁶ While

these goals are clearly ambitious, outside observers may be struck by the relative conservative timelines given the long-period of double-digit growth in China's military budget and the overall pace of military modernization over the past two decades. The current force reduction effort falls within this larger strategic context, as Beijing believes it is a necessary step to achieve these broader military modernization objectives.

Historical Context

The reductions announced in September 2015 were the latest in a series of personnel adjustments that have occurred within the PLA over the past several decades. The current force reduction is, again, the eleventh iteration in the PLA's history and the fourth since 1985, with the PLA having shed 1 million troops in 1985; 500,000 in 1997; and 200,000 in 2003. While the context and specific drivers for these changes differed in each case, the stated objectives that senior PLA leadership hoped to achieve are notably consistent. In general terms, force reductions were aimed at streamlining a military force that was viewed as bloated and inefficient. Furthermore, the PLA implemented organizational changes in tandem with each iteration of force reductions, in an effort to enhance the PLA's overall operational capabilities and tackle lingering cultural issues that were viewed as obstacles to further modernization.

China initiated its eighth round of military force reductions in 1985, which is a useful starting point for analysis due to the size of the reduction and because it was largely in response to changes in China's threat perceptions and domestic situation. The change in threat perception is perhaps captured best in the change made to China's military strategic guidelines at the time. The operating guidance for the military changed from "active defense, lure the enemy in deep," to simply "active defense." While a seemingly cosmetic change, this shift in jargon embodied a significant change in worldview.⁷ The removal of the phrase "lure the enemy in deep" reflected not only China's embrace of economic modernization but also its growing recognition of the doctrinal shortcomings of "People's War." Reform and

opening up placed economic development as the top priority for China. A military strategy of allowing the enemy to seize massive amounts of territory, particularly China's most economically valuable territory, fundamentally undermined this new development strategy.⁸

Directly related to the elevation of economic development as China's primary national objective was the recognition that the makeup of the military at the time was too large, too expensive, and wasted manpower that could be better utilized in China's private sector in order to fuel economic growth. Decreasing the size of the armed forces would also alleviate economic pressure on the government, allowing it to allocate additional resources to foster private industry and the commercial sector.

An unintended consequence of these changes was the creation of what became known as "PLA, Incorporated." As PLA budgets were slashed and as China's economy began to liberalize, the military and defense industry became increasingly involved in the commercial sector in an attempt to compensate for the lost income. This change had widespread and lasting negative influences on the PLA that Beijing is still attempting to address. Corruption within China's military grew to pervasive levels and large sections of the PLA shifted their focus away from honing operational capabilities toward economic initiatives. One purpose of the current anti-corruption campaign in China is specifically to address the challenges brought about by this cultural change.⁹

The 1985 reforms also reduced the number of military regions (MRs) from 11 to 7, disestablished 11 group armies, disbanded over 4,000 division and regimental entities, and reduced army units above the corps level by 31.¹⁰ In addition to the desire to streamline China's military force, reductions and changes made during this time were aimed at emphasizing the importance of combined arms within the group armies. Group armies gained additional subordinate units that provided combined arms capabilities, including antiaircraft artillery, artillery, amphibious tanks, signal regiments, and engineering units. Training and exercises at the time also shifted to reflect this focus, taking on a more combined arms character.¹¹

The reductions were carried out gradually over a couple years, with almost half of the goal of demobilizing 1 million soldiers achieved by December 1986 and the reduction basically completed by April 1987.¹² Overall this represented a 25 percent cut to the overall size of China's military, with the bulk of troops coming from China's ground forces.

A common target for force reductions across each iteration of reform included cuts to headquarters and staff personnel at all echelons of the PLA, decreasing the ratio of army personnel relative to the other services, adjustments to the ratio between officers and enlisted, and eliminating noncombat personnel. The 1985 iteration halved the number of personnel within the PLA's general departments, and the navy, air force, and Second Artillery all experienced growth in terms of both personnel and budget.¹³

The 1997 iteration of force reductions was intended to shed an additional 500,000 troops from the PLA. These reductions deactivated an additional three group armies and over a dozen infantry divisions, with many of these personnel transferred to the People's Armed Police.¹⁴ Additionally, the 500,000 troops demobilized included over 200,000 officers, building on a theme established during the 1985 reductions of addressing a perceived imbalance between the number of officers and enlisted personnel within the PLA.¹⁵

The 1997 iteration also included significant organizational changes to the PLA to address problems inadvertently created by the previous force reduction initiative. Specifically, it was at this time that Beijing began a serious effort to divest the PLA from its involvement in private industry. By 1997, the PLA was believed to be involved in over 15,000 enterprises, totaling over \$10 billion annually.¹⁶ While some of this revenue was used to maintain and improve military installations and equipment, most of it is thought to have been siphoned off to line the pockets of individual officers, creating a culture of graft and corruption that Beijing is attempting to deal with to this day. To address this problem, Beijing provided sustained increases to the PLA's annual budget and made organizational changes meant to manage and rein in the military's reach into private industry.

In 2003, the PLA initiated its tenth troop reduction, demobilizing an additional 200,000 personnel over a 2-year period and disbanding an additional three group armies.¹⁷ Consistent with the previous reduction initiatives, the 2003 iteration focused primarily on noncombat units within the ground force, and emphasized the removal of “lower quality” units in an effort to bolster the overall operational capability of the PLA. Once again, Beijing implemented organizational changes around the same time as the force reduction that appeared to be specifically aimed at addressing the army-centric culture within the PLA. Notably, it was in 2004 that the navy, air force, and Second Artillery commanders were added to the Central Military Commission (CMC), a symbolic step toward greater joint representation on China’s highest military body.

Unlike the 1997 iteration, none of the demobilized ground troops was transferred to the People’s Armed Police, thus representing a more genuine reduction to China’s security forces. This round of reductions again centered on streamlining higher echelon units, which was partly accomplished by the disbandment of the headquarters and associated staff of three group armies. Furthermore, several divisions and brigades under these group armies were dissolved, while others were transferred to the reserve force.¹⁸ A similar method of implementation is taking place currently within the PLA.

Current Iteration

Although Beijing’s public commentary on the purpose of force reductions cites the effort as evidence of China’s peaceful intentions and benefit to regional security, the actual objectives are likely strikingly similar to the historical examples detailed above. China’s Ministry of National Defense acknowledged that the troop cuts were primarily designed to optimize the PLA’s scale and structure in order to make it a more capable and efficient fighting force, and the primary target for demobilization once again involved troops with outdated equipment, headquarters staff, and non-combat personnel.¹⁹

Changes to the Top

Official figures on the number of personnel working within the highest echelons of China's military are difficult to come by. However, the reforms made a number of changes to the Central Military Commission and its subordinate entities. Although Beijing was probably able to trim some excess personnel from the CMC as a result of reform, outside observations of the organizational changes to these entities suggest that personnel were mainly shifted from one organization to another, rather than removed from the military entirely.

The Joint Staff Department, formerly known as the General Staff Department (GSD), probably experienced a large amount of change as a result of reform, shedding a number of second-level departments with responsibilities that fall outside the purview of operations or that fit better in some of the newly created organizations. Specifically, the GSD previously had responsibility for ground force operations that did not fall under the MR structure, to include army aviation and special forces. These departments were almost certainly transferred to the newly created army headquarters.

Similarly, the GSD's well-known third and fourth departments (the Technical Reconnaissance Bureau and Electronic Countermeasures Bureau) were absorbed by the newly created Strategic Support Force (SSF), which is responsible for all information operations in the post-reform PLA structure. These include space, cyberspace, and electromagnetic operations, in addition to the "three warfares" (psychological, media, and legal).²⁰ The actual reduction of personnel resulting from this change is probably negligible. Instead, the SSF is likely to see organizational growth in the coming years rather than a reduction. Placing all entities within the PLA that have a responsibility for information operations—which had previously been dispersed across several entities—under a unified command is likely to improve China's capabilities in this new warfare domain.

Other changes to the CMC involved the creation of new organizations, which may suggest a force increase rather than a decrease, but these entities

all existed previously in some form within the PLA. In most cases, these organizations were subordinate entities to the previous CMC departments and were merely given new names and subordination. For instance, the Science and Technology Commission appears to be primarily comprised of former General Armaments Department organizations, and the Discipline Inspection Commission is made up of entities previously under the General Political Department.

The changes to the CMC are important and worthy of discussion, but the direct impact of the 300,000-force reduction on China's top military organization appears to be minimal. The changes instead appear to align with Xi Jinping's model for building a "strong army," with his emphasis on having a military that listens to the Communist Party's command, is capable of fighting and winning wars, and strictly maintains discipline. The fact that the leaders of the CMC Political Work Department, CMC Joint Staff Department, and CMC Discipline Inspection Commission are the only CMC department heads to have positions as CMC members reflects these priorities.

Military Regions to Combat Theaters

Below the level of the CMC, at the theater echelon, is where the PLA was probably most able to achieve some significant personnel reductions. Similar to earlier force reduction and reform efforts, the latest round of reform included the removal of some military regions. The Jinan MR was broken up and distributed to the newly created Northern Theater and Central Theater, while the Lanzhou MR was disestablished and its subordinate units absorbed within the Western Theater. Similar to the 2003 force reduction, the elimination of MR headquarters staff and their associated MR air force headquarters staff provided an opportunity for actual personnel reductions. However, it remains unclear how much of the overall staff was removed from the military vice transferred to other entities.

The theater command (TC) structure that resulted from reform has interesting operational implications. Chinese state media have noted that

the newly created theater commands align to China's "strategic directions" [*zhanlüe fangxiang*, 战略方向]. While rarely enumerated in public forums, we can infer the general focus areas from the five TCs that were created, which include Taiwan and Japan, the South China Sea and South East Asia, India, the Korean Peninsula, and the defense of Beijing.²¹

The consolidation of the former Chengdu MR and Lanzhou MR into a single theater command aligned operational planning for a contingency with India under a unified staff. However, the retention of both the Xinjiang Military District and the Xizang (Tibet) Military District indicates that some degree of bifurcation remains below the theater level.²² These two military districts each border an area of territorial dispute with India in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, which perhaps necessitates their continued existence as military districts. The tensions between China and India in the Doklam region in the summer of 2017 provided Beijing an opportunity to test and assess the new command organization and its ability to deal with a crisis.²³ While it is difficult to determine the operational impact of the consolidation of command and control from media reporting, the change appears to be a step in the right direction for the PLA, at least conceptually.

Similarly, the Jinan MR and its subordinate entities were broken up and distributed between the Northern and Central theaters. Historically, Jinan MR has served as the PLA's strategic reserve, and would deploy its subordinate forces to other military regions to support any emerging military contingency. The newly created Central Theater absorbed the former Jinan MR 54th Group Army and probably carries forth the mission of strategic support to the surrounding military regions in the event of a conflict.

Elimination of Group Armies

As part of the force reduction, the PLA reorganized 84 corps-level entities. In April 2017, Beijing officially confirmed what had been rumored for several months—that five group armies within China's ground forces had been disbanded.²⁴ The 13 remaining group armies all received new unit designators (from 71st to 83rd) that aligned with the new theater structure

and served as a symbolic break from the tradition and history of the PLA ground forces. The full extent of these changes is not yet clear. Similar to past instances of eliminating group armies, it appears that the headquarters offices have been disbanded but that many of the subordinate units have either been transferred to other remaining group armies or remain in a state of transition.

Of the five group armies that were eliminated, one came from each of the former seven military regions except for Guangzhou and Nanjing MRs, possibly representing the continuing operational importance of preparing for military conflict with Taiwan (a contingency for which the Guangzhou and Nanjing MRs had primary responsibility). While the elimination of five group armies represents a reduction in the number of combat troops, the total impact remains unclear. The group armies selected for elimination were arguably among the less capable and in possession of more outdated equipment.

Force Structure Adjustments

The PLA appears to have utilized this round of force reductions to implement force structure adjustments that have been under way for several years. For the ground force, this includes the wider trend of converting existing divisions and regiments into brigades. The brigade structure is meant to facilitate greater mobility and modular capabilities, a theme highlighted within the PLA for several years now (see the chapter by Blasko in this volume). Since at least 2009, the PLA has stressed the need for the ground force to be capable of rapid deployments, which it has practiced in a series of exercises including Stride [*kuayue*, 跨越] and Mission Action [*shiming xingdong*, 使命行动].²⁵ The purpose of these exercises is to develop the ability of ground units to rapidly deploy anywhere on China's periphery to respond to emerging contingencies; the shift to a brigade structure that is accompanying the force reduction is also meant to facilitate this change.

In addition to the continued transition to a brigade structure, the ground force is increasing its aviation and special forces units across the

army. Of the remaining 13 group armies, there is increasing evidence that the ultimate goal is to have at least one army aviation brigade and one special forces brigade under every group army. This is another example of a trend that has been under way for several years, but Beijing appears to be utilizing reform and force reductions to force through changes that may have otherwise taken longer to implement. Both army aviation and special forces are viewed as key elements to the army's future concept of operations, which the PLA generally refers to as "three-dimensional" or "multidimensional" assault [*liti tuji*, 立体突击].

In contrast to the army, the other services within the PLA are likely experiencing a force increase rather than a decrease. This trend also pre-dates the current round of reform and is a component of a longstanding effort to reduce the army-centric focus of the PLA to the relative benefit of the other services. Official personnel figures for the PLA in the 2012 white paper break out to 850,000 in the army; 235,000 in the navy; and 398,000 in the air force. The figure for the Rocket Force is left unstated, but most unofficial figures put it at around 130,000 personnel. If accurate, that leaves approximately 687,000 troops within the 2.3-million-member PLA unaccounted for. That figure probably consists of civilian cadre [*wenzhi ganbu*, 文职干部] and noncombat troops, in addition to other unidentified personnel.²⁶

Absent updated official figures, the post-downsizing personnel ratios within the PLA breakout are a matter of speculation. That said, the PLA Navy and to a lesser extent the PLA Air Force and Rocket Force are poised to experience potential growth in personnel end strength. This is evident from the PLA's announced prioritization of the maritime domain, as outlined in Beijing's 2015 white paper on military strategy. Furthermore, the establishment of a new marine corps headquarters and a rumored increase from two marine brigades to six hold true may produce a significant increase to the size of the navy.²⁷

If the increase in the number of marine brigades proceeds as predicted, one possibility that would both accommodate the force reduction plan and

allow for more rapid establishment of mission capable units would involve the transfer of existing ground force units over to the navy. The units currently within the PLA Army with amphibious capabilities would make logical sense for such a transfer. However, this would represent a significant change to the historical missions of the army and marine corps, particularly with respect to combat against Taiwan, which the army sees as one of its most important missions. Recent PLA marine exercises featuring a diverse set of climates suggest a potentially evolving role of the marine corps to one that features more expeditionary missions.²⁸

Other than rumors about additional marine brigades, the PLA reforms and force reductions have had a relatively minor impact on the navy compared to the other services. The three fleets that existed prior to the creation of the geographically focused theaters still exist and retain their previous names, unlike the rebranding and flag ceremonies that have occurred elsewhere with the PLA. It is unclear at this stage whether this is an interim step with wider changes to be expected in the coming years, or if the PLA is generally satisfied with the navy's modernization pathway and will continue with established plans (see the chapter by Burns McCaslin and Erickson in this volume).

The PLA Air Force is experiencing a number of substantial changes to its force structure, primarily as a result of the reforms rather than through force reductions. As with the army, the air force has utilized the force reductions and reform initiative to implement longstanding aspirational force structure adjustments. In particular, the air force has continued its own conversion of division and regimental units into brigades, which began several years previously but appeared to have stalled. The air force brigades are designed to provide more modular capabilities at the operational level through the creation of brigades with subordinate units with dissimilar aircraft, compared to the past structure that featured entire divisions containing essentially the same operational capability.

The PLA Rocket Force is the most difficult of the services to get direct information on through open sources. However, it appears that

all six operational missile bases that formerly existed within the Rocket Force's predecessor, the Second Artillery, have been retained, albeit with new numerical designations. This is noteworthy due to the mismatch between the missile bases and number of theaters, suggesting that the Rocket Force has not fully been aligned under the theater structure. This is further evident in the apparent absence of any Rocket Force leaders among the theater deputy commanders.²⁹ (See the discussion of the relationship between the Rocket Force and theater commands in the chapter by Logan in this volume.)

Similar to the situation with the navy, the reason for this apparent disconnect is unclear, and it may represent an interim phase with plans for a broader overhaul of the Rocket Force in the future. However, in the meantime, the changes to the Rocket Force have been largely symbolic, with the formal elevation of the organization to a service, while it had been effectively treated as such for several years previously. Unlike the ground force, there is little indication within the Rocket Force of structure changes or unit transfers. However, like the army, the Rocket Force has been issued a new set of military unit cover designators, possibly reflecting a new set of true unit designators as well.

Conclusion

The broad objectives of China's military force reduction and overall reform effort are consistent with the strategies and goals outlined in numerous official pronouncements dating back several decades. Although these objectives may not be surprising, this does not diminish their significance. Indeed, the consistency by which Beijing approaches its overall military modernization effort speaks to the level of importance and determination associated with this effort. We can conclude that China is sincere when it announces goals such as becoming a world-class military by the middle of the 21st century and that Chinese leaders are taking the necessary steps and making the required investments to achieve these objectives within their self-imposed timeline.

Overall, Chinese military force reductions have focused on streamlining the PLA, enhancing cross-service interoperability, eliminating a culture that favors the ground forces, and emphasizing qualitative improvement of the force over quantitative measures. The 2-million-person military that will exist after the completion of this round of reforms will still be among the largest in the world, indicating that reform and force reductions will likely continue beyond the current eleventh iteration. Indeed, while many of the changes taking place within the PLA today are preparing China to become a more capable and effective regional military power, a number of additional changes will likely be required as Beijing shifts from seeking to accomplish its regional ambitions to a more global orientation.

Notes

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² Christina Garafola, “People’s Liberation Army Reforms and Their Ramifications,” RAND blog, September 23, 2016, available at <www.rand.org/blog/2016/09/pla-reforms-and-their-ramifications.html>; David M. Finkelstein, *Initial Thoughts on the Reorganization and Reform of the PLA*, CNA China Studies (Arlington, VA: CNA, January 15, 2016), available at <www.cna.org/cna_files/pdf/DOP-2016-U-012560-Final.pdf>; 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, March 2017), available at <<http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/china/ChinaPerspectives-10.pdf>>; and David M. Finkelstein, *Get Ready for the Second Phase of Chinese Military Reform*, CNA China Studies (Arlington, VA: CNA, January 2017), available at <www.cna.org/cna_files/PDF/DOP-2017-U-014677-Final.pdf>.

³ For a discussion on the resettlement process for demobilized People’s Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers and its impact on society, see John Chen, “Downsizing the PLA, Part 1: Military Discharge and Resettlement Policy, Past and Present,” *China Brief* 16, no. 16 (October 26, 2016); and John Chen, “Downsizing the PLA, Part 2: Military Discharge and Resettlement Policy, Past and Present,” *China Brief*

16, no. 17 (November 11, 2016). Also see the chapter by Ma Chengkun and John Chen in this volume.

⁴ Dong Zhaohui, “China Releases Guideline on Military Reform,” Xinhua, January 1, 2016, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-01/01/content_6840068.htm>; and “CPC Central Committee Decision on Deepening of Reform.”

⁵ *China's National Defense in 2008* (Beijing: State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, January 20, 2009), available at <www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node_7060059.htm>; also see Huang Weimin [黄伟民], “A Scientific Guide to Advancing Military Reform with Chinese Characteristics: Experience in Studying Jiang Zemin's Collected Works” [推进中国特色军事变革的科学指南: 学习《江泽民文选》的体会], August 31, 2006, available at <<http://politics.people.com.cn/GB/30178/4762395.html>>.

⁶ “China to Build World-Class Armed Forces by Mid-21st Century,” Xinhua, October 18, 2017, available at <www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-10/18/content_33403375.htm>.

⁷ For an analysis of changes and adjustments in China's military strategic guidelines, 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), 37–83.

⁸ Wang Junwei, “A View of Our Nation's Military Strategic Guidelines Choices and Inspiration Based on the Development of Our National Security Interests,” Party Literature, May 20, 2013.

⁹ Andrew Scobell, *Going Out of Business: Divesting the Commercial Interests of Asia's Socialist Soldiers*, East-West Center Occasional Papers No. 3 (Honolulu, HI: East-West Center, January 2000); Dean Cheng, “The Business of War: The Impact of ‘PLA, Inc.’ on Chinese Officers,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 56 (1st Quarter 2010), 94–96.

¹⁰ “Army to Serve China's Modernization,” *China Daily* (Beijing), December 26, 1986.

¹¹ “Accelerate Our Military's Pace Toward Fewer but Better Troops,” *PLA Daily* (Beijing), October 17, 2008.

¹² “PLA Progress in Streamlining, Restructuring Continues,” Xinhua, December 25, 1986; “PLA Streamlining, Reintroduction of Ranks,” Xinhua, April 5, 1987.

¹³ Tu Chenxi [屠晨昕], “An Exclusive Interview with Major General Xu Guangyu: Performing Arts Troupes Bear the Brunt of Force Reduction” [本端专访徐光裕少将: 裁军文工团首当其冲], *Zhejiang Xinwen* [浙江新闻], September 3,

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¹⁴ The 1985 reduction resulted in the deactivation of Shenyang Military Region’s (MR’s) 68th Group Army (GA), Beijing MR’s 66th and 69th GAs, Lanzhou MR’s 19th GA, Jinan MR’s 46th GA, Wuhan MR’s 43rd GA, Nanjing MR’s 60th GA, Fuzhou MR’s 29th GA, Guangzhou MR’s 55th GA, Kunming MR’s 11th GA, and Chengdu MR’s 50th GA. In 1997, the PLA deactivated Shenyang MR’s 64th GA, Beijing MR’s 29th GA, and Jinan MR’s 67th GA, providing the PLA with a total of 21 GAs.

¹⁵ “Three Rounds of Disarmament after Reform and Opening Up,” *Xinhua*, July 18, 2007.

¹⁶ Andrew Tanzer, “The People’s Liberation Army, Inc.,” *Forbes*, March 24, 1997, available at <www.forbes.com/forbes/1997/0324/5906044a.html#66f22e0c303f>; see also Tai Ming Cheung, *China’s Entrepreneurial Army* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁷ The GAs disbanded in the 2003 force reduction included the 24th GA and 63rd GA from the Beijing MR and 23rd GA from the Shenyang MR.

¹⁸ Dennis J. Blasko, *The Chinese Army Today: Tradition and Transformation for the 21st Century*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 75.

¹⁹ “Defense Ministry Holds Press Conference on V-Day Parade, Cut of Troops’ Number,” *China Military Online*, September 3, 2015.

²⁰ For a discussion of the Strategic Support Force, see the chapter in this volume by John Costello and Joe McReynolds; see also Benjamin Frohman and Daniel Gearin, “China’s Strategic Support Force: Seeking Dominance in the ‘High’ and ‘New Frontiers’ of National Security,” paper presented at the National Bureau of Asian Research, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Pacific Command, and Department of the Army conference on the PLA, Carlisle Barracks, PA, October 21–23, 2016, 7.

²¹ Wang Hongguang, “Former Nanjing Military Region Deputy Commander: The Korean Peninsula Has Historically ‘Dragged China Down,’” *People’s Daily* (Beijing), October 8, 2013.

²² “Tibet Military Region Gamba Barracks: Please Rest Assured about the Motherland!” *Xinhua*, September 17, 2015.

²³ Sanjeev Miglani and Ben Blanchard, “India and China Agree to End Border Standoff,” *Reuters*, August 28, 2017, available at <www.reuters.com/article/us-india-china/india-and-china-agree-to-end-border-standoff-idUSKCN1B80II>.

²⁴ Wang Shibin [王士彬], “Xi Jinping Receives the Newly Adjusted and Established 84 Corps-Level Officials and Issues Orders” [习近平接见全军新调整组建84个军级单位主官并发布训令], *PLA Daily* [解放军报], April 18, 2017, available at <http://jz.chinamil.com.cn/n2014/tp/content_7567108.htm>.

²⁵ Wu Kelei, “A Certain Brigade of the 80th Group Held ‘STRIDE-2017 Zhurihe’ Mobilization Meeting” [第80集团军某旅举行‘跨越—2017•朱日和’出征誓师动员大会], *PLA Daily*, August 24, 2017; Cai Pengcheng, “More Than 40,000 People from the PLA Took Part in ‘Mission Action-2013’ Exercise on the 10th” [解放军4万余人10日起参加‘使命行动-2013’演习], *PLA Daily*, September 10, 2013.

²⁶ *The Diversified Employment of China’s Armed Forces* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, April 16, 2013), available at <<http://en.people.cn/90786/8209362.html>>.

²⁷ Minnie Chan, “As Overseas Ambitions Expand, China Plans 400 Percent Increase to Marine Corps Numbers, Sources Say,” *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), March 13, 2017.

²⁸ Zhang Tao, ed., “Chinese Marines Kicks Off Exercise Jungle-2015,” *China Military Online*, September 16, 2015, available at <http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2015-09/17/content_6686394.htm>.

²⁹ “China’s Military Regrouped into Five PLA Theater Commands,” *Xinhua*, February 1, 2016, available at <www.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-02/01/c_135065429.htm>.