



## Contemporary China CCP, Army and the 18th Central Committee

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China's veteran communist leadership has traditionally had close ties with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and ensured that they retain a tight grip over it. The role and importance of the PLA in communist China has grown steadily in importance over the years and its importance for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was brought into sharp focus during the Tiananmen 'incident' in 1989. As veteran cadres, most of whom had gained their initial experience and grown while in the communist Armies, began disappearing from the scene the need was felt for tightening the CCP's control and grip over the PLA. This became more pronounced as Party apparatchiks with little or no experience of service in the PLA began entering the Party's top echelons. The present day statements of senior Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders, that the "Party must firmly control the gun", reinforce their view of the need for enhanced political control over the PLA.

Deng Xiaoping's farsighted move of establishing a Central Military Commission (CMC) under the Chairmanship of the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was with the objective of strengthening Party control over the PLA. The arrangement by which the prospective Party Chief was positioned as Vice Chairman of the CMC, so that he gains influence and establishes his authority before taking over as

General Secretary of the CCP Central Committee (CC) usually five years later, effectively placed the PLA subordinate to the Party.

CCP CC General Secretaries Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao both focused on the PLA, but Hu Jintao especially extended political control and expanded the CCP and Communist Youth League (CYL)'s presence in the PLA. There are presently at least 90,000 cells of the CCP, comprising five members each, in the PLA. Political Commissars in the PLA have simultaneously been given an enhanced role and authority and their inputs now impact significantly on the career prospects of the PLA's operational officers. Political Commissars are now given training specific to the new kind of wars anticipated and their exposure to the different services and military regions/commands have been made more expansive.

The CCP and PLA leadership has identified, with concern, new vulnerabilities in the PLA. As greater numbers of better educated personnel and college graduates join the PLA, their potential susceptibility to "hostile" foreign propaganda is considered to be greater. This "hostile" foreign propaganda, which was troublingly noticed to have been articulated in the run up to the recently-concluded 18th Party Congress by some of the more 'liberal' Chinese economists calling for political reform,

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argues that the PLA should be an army of the State and not subservient to the CCP.

The issue of factional 'sub-loyalties' in the PLA was also, significantly, raised for the first time in a Liberation Army Daily (LAD) article published on June 17, 2012. Prompted by these considerations the Party and CMC jointly launched three successive year-long "political education" campaigns in the PLA to counter this propaganda. The latest such campaign was launched this year. The growing popular discontent, combined with the political fallout following the ouster of former Politburo member Bo Xilai including his efforts to make inroads into the PLA, has added to the Party leadership's concern. A 'Xinhua' dispatch, which reported that the PLA had finalized selection of its 251 Delegates to the 18th party Congress (Nov 8-14, 2012), specifically mentioned that their political records were free of blemish. The high number of Political Commissars in the list of Delegates reflected the importance of the Party's representatives in the PLA.

Within days of taking over as CMC Chairman, Xi Jinping signaled his intention of continuing this trend. At an enlarged meeting of the CMC on November 16, 2012, he stressed that "we must unwaveringly adhere to the Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces" and ensure that the "Party has a firm grip over the troops ideologically, politically, and organizationally". He called for "...serious political discipline and organizational discipline".

PLA representatives have representation in the CCP's CC and Politburo (PB), thereby reinforcing the Party's control over the PLA since the PLA officers also have a ranking in

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the Party hierarchy. Over the past few years, the PLA has had two representatives in the PB and PLA representatives account for between 18-20 per cent of the total CC membership. This has remained unchanged at the 18th Party Congress, indicating that there has been no visible gain in the PLA's political influence. Analysis of the PLA officers 'elected' to the 18th CC reveals interesting data.

The number of PLA representatives in the PB remains at two and these are the two Vice Chairmen of the CMC, Xu Qiliang and Fan Changlong. Excluding these two Vice Chairmen, there are a total of 65 officers representing the PLA and People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) who are Full and Alternate Members of the CC. Of the total PLA/PAPF strength in the 18th CC, 41 are Full Members and 26 are Alternate Members.

All members of the Central Military Commission are CC members while the two Vice Chairmen, Xu Qiliang and Fan Changlong are members of the PB. Of them, Xu Qiliang is the former Commander of the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and represents, for the first time ever, the PLAAF at the level of CMC Vice Chairman. The former Director of the GAD, Chang Wanquan, who has been retained as a Member of the CMC, is also a member of the CC reinforcing reports that he is likely to take over in March 2013, as China's next Defence Minister.

Commanders of all Military Regions, except Chengdu, are Full Members of the 18th CC. Similarly, the Political Commissars of all seven Military Regions, except the Lanzhou Military Region, are Full CC members. Non-inclusion of these two individuals could be indicative of their imminent retirement. Interestingly, the Commanders of the Tibet and Xinjiang Military Districts are both Full Members of the 18th CC. The parity maintained between the Commanders of Military Regions and their Political Commissars, with the inclusion of both as Full members of the 18th CC, is reflective of the Party's political control over the PLA/PAPF.

The inclusion of 24 Political Commissars as

members of the CC---18 as Full Members and 6 as Alternate Members--underscores their important role.

The 18th Party Congress appears to have made a determined effort to elect new representatives from the PLA to the CC. 26 of the 41 Full Members of the CC, have been elected for the first time. The advent of first timers is, however, most noticeable among the Alternate Members of the CC. Of the 26 Alternate Members, 23 have been identified as new comers. 11 of the Full CC members are below 50 years of age while the rest are mainly in the early 60s. A larger number of the Alternate CC Members are in their mid-50s, except for the present Chiefs of Staff of 2nd Artillery and the Nanjing MR and President of the NDU who are younger. In view of their numerical superiority, the PLA ground forces have the majority representation. There are 9 representatives of the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and 5 of the PLA Navy (PLAN). 7 'princelings' have been identified among the 67 CC Members.

None of the PLA's CC members, Full or Alternate, has been identified as belonging to an ethnic minority nationality and there is only one female among them. At least 8 of those inducted as Alternate Members of the CC clearly appear destined for long tenures or higher office.

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## Annexure

### PLA/PAPF Members of the 18th Central Committee

(41 Full Members; 26 Alternate Members)

(\* - First Time as Full or Alt Member; (xx) Age as in 2012.)

#### Full Members of 18th CC

1. Xu Qiliang (62), PLAAF, Vice Chairman, CMC
2. Fan Changlong (65), Vice Chairman, CMC
3. Chang Wanquan (63), former Dir GAD and likely Defence Minister
4. Fang Fenghui (61), Dir GSD
5. \*Wang Guangzhong (59), Dy Dir GSD
6. \*Sun Jianguo (60), Dy Dir GSD
7. \*Qi Jianguo (60), Dy Dir GSD
8. Zhang Yang (61), Dir GPD
9. \*Jia Tingan (60), Dy Dir GPD
10. \*Du Jncai (60), Dy Dir GPD & PLA Secretary for Discipline Inspection
- 11.\* Wu Changde (60), Dy Dir GPD
12. Zhao Keshi (65) Dir GLD
13. Liu Yuan (61), Pol Com, GLD
14. Zhang Youxia (62), Dir GLD
15. \*Wang Hongyao (61) Pol Com, GLD
16. Ma Xiaotian (63) Cdr PLAAF
17. Tian Xiusi (62), Pol Com, PLAAF
18. Wu Shengli (67), Cdr PLAN

19. Liu Xiaojiang (63), Pol Com, PLAN
20. \*Wei Fenghe (58), Cdr 2nd Arty
21. Zhang Haiyang (63), Pol Com, 2nd Arty
22. \*Liu Yazhou (60), Pol Com, NDU
23. Liu Chengjun (62), President AMS
24. \*Sun Sijing (61), Pol Com, AMS
25. \*Wang Jiaocheng (60), Cdr Shenyang MR
26. \*Chu Yimin (59), Pol Com, Shenyang MR
27. \*Zhang Shibo (60), Cdr Beijing MR
28. \*Liu Fulian (59), Pol Com, Beijing MR
29. \*Cai Yingting (58), Cdr Nanjing MR
30. \*Zhang Weiping (57), Pol Com, Nanjing MR
31. \*Xu Fenlin (59), Cdr Guangzhou MR
32. \*Wei Liang (59), Pol Com, Guangzhou MR
33. \*Zhu Fuxi (57), Pol Com, Chengdu MR
34. \*Liu Yuejun (58), Cdr Lanzhou MR
35. \*Zhao Zongqi (57), Cdr Jinan MR
36. \*Du Hengyan (61), Pol Com, Jinan MR
37. \*Tian Zhong (56) Cdr, North Sea Fleet
38. \*Yang Jinshan (58), Cdr, Tibet Military District
39. \*Peng Yong (58), Cdr, Xinjiang Military District
40. Wang Jianping (59), Cdr PAPF
41. \*Xu Yaoyuan (60), Pol Com PAPF
8. \*Wang Ning (57), Chief of Staff, Beijing MR
9. \*Yang Hui (49), Chief of Staff, Nanjing MR
10. \*Wu Changhai (58), Dir Pol Dept Nanjing MR
11. \*Yi Xiaoguang (54), Dy Cdr Nanjing MR & Cdr Nanjing MR AF
12. \*Zhang Jianping (56), Dy Cdr Guangzhou MR & Cdr Guangzhou MR AF
13. Ai Husheng (61), Dy Cdr Chengdu MR
14. \*Fan Chengui (57), Dir Pol Dept Lanzhou MR
15. \*Zheng Qunliang (58) Dy Cdr Jinan MR & Cdr Jinan MR AF
16. \*Wang Jun (59), Dy Cdr Jinan MR
17. Wang Jian (58), Dy Pol Com Jinan MR
18. \*Niu Zhizhong (57), Head of Logistics PAPF
19. \*Zhang Ruiqing (57), Pol Com Beijing Municipal PAPF
20. \*Pan Liangshi (55), Cdr 39 Gp Army under Shenyang MR
21. \*Jiang Weilie (57), Cdr South Sea Fleet
22. Dr Ms Chen Zuoning (55), Master Engineer, P L A G e n e r a l L o g i s t i c s No 56 Research Institute
23. \*Prof Ma Weiming (52), Naval Engineering University
24. \*Xu Linping (55), Cdr 38 Gp Army under Beijing MR based in Baoding
25. \*Dr He Fuchu (50), President Military Medical Science Academy
26. \*Cao Qing (60), Head Central Security Bureau under CCP CC General Office (former Security Chief of Marshal Ye Jianying)

**Alternate Members of 18th CC**

1. \*Yin Fanlong (59), Dy Dir GPD
2. \*Qin Yinhe (61), Dy Dir GLD
3. \*Liu Sheng (56), Dy Dir GAD
4. \*Niu Hongguang(61), Dy Dir GAD
5. \*Gao Jin (53), Chief of Staff 2nd Arty
6. \*Dr Yang Xuejun (49), President NDU
7. \*Gao Jianguo (58), Dir Pol Dept, Shenyang MR

**Views expressed are author's own.**