

# **XI JINPING OVERHAULS THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY**

Lance L. P. GORE

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## **Executive Summary**

1. China's military reform that was launched on 26 November has been hailed as the most important reform since the 1950s. It was dominated by Xi Jinping, chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) and head of the CMC Leading Small Group for Deepening Defence and Military Reforms.
2. The overhaul will move the People's Liberation Army (PLA) away from its Soviet-style command structures towards an American-style joint operation command. A key change is the separation of command and control. The seven garrison-style military regions will be abolished and replaced by four regional commands and a central command to be created under the CMC.
3. The services are in charge of daily management, training, logistic support and force development etc. while the central and regional commands are responsible for military operations.
4. The two are integrated at the CMC level. The four general departments will be abolished and their functions regrouped into the more fully developed CMC bureaucracies, which are expected to be more streamlined and effective.
5. The new structure is believed to adapt more to the new security environment where terrorism has changed the nature of threat and warfare has become more like emergency responses. It facilitates long distance power projection to protect China's far-flung national interests around the globe.
6. The Party's organisational presence and political/ideological work are reaffirmed as a way to curb corruption and enhance loyalty of the military to the Party. The judiciary in the military will be revamped for better supervision of power.
7. One structural weakness will remain: every future generation of civilian top leaders has to cultivate military support and hence cater to its needs as the Party

considers the military to be the ultimate source of its power and final defence of its rule. Indulgence breeds corruption and arrogance.

8. The reform is bound to meet with fierce resistance from vested interest. Xi has adopted a sophisticated approach, waging a massive anti-corruption campaign on the one hand and offering assurances on the other. With Xi's trademark meticulous planning and execution of the reforms, he may pull it off.