

**XI JINPING AND THE PEOPLE'S
LIBERATION ARMY
RESTRUCTURING**

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Executive Summary

1. Restructuring of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) leadership and command system began in late 2015 based on Xi Jinping's principle that "CMC (Central Military Commission) is in charge of general affairs, while theatres are primarily responsible for operations and services are primarily responsible for construction".
2. At the CMC level, four very large, highly autonomous and very powerful general departments have been dismantled, with a large number of their second-level departments and subordinate units transferred to new PLA organisations or to become new CMC organisations.
3. Replacing them are 15 much smaller, highly specialised CMC departments, commissions and offices. The new CMC agencies are now part of the CMC to serve as the "CMC's staff organs, execution organs and service organs".
4. At the regional level, five strategic direction-based theatres have replaced the seven military regions. These theatres are multi-service-based and only have the power for operational command and control of forces.
5. For services, a PLA Army headquarters has been established to take over responsibilities of running army units from PLA's central departments and regional headquarters.
6. A PLA Strategic Support Force was also established to take over PLA organisations and forces responsible for cyber, electromagnetic and space operations; the Second Artillery was renamed as PLA's Rocket Force.
7. Finally, service headquarters are stripped of the power for operational command and control of forces, but maintains the power for peacetime force construction.
8. Enhancing civilian control of the PLA is one reason for the PLA restructuring. The dismantling of four general departments and the requiring of the new CMC agencies

to report to Xi Jinping will give him direct control of the PLA without interference from higher-level PLA bureaucracies.

9. The separation of monitoring agencies from PLA performing agencies is also to enhance the “checks and oversight” of the PLA. Xi’s control of the PLA is further enhanced by dividing the power for “construction” and power for “operations” between services and theatres.
10. Enhancing “jointness” is another driver for restructuring. By divesting PLA regional headquarters of the responsibility of running the army units, and by integrating more non-army service officers into the theatre staff and command structure, theatres are becoming genuinely multi-service in nature, laying the basis for joint services operations.