

XI JINPING AND HIS MILITARY TIES

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Executive Summary

1. Xi Jinping (习近平), son of Xi Zhongxun (习仲勋) and heir apparent to President Hu Jintao (胡锦涛), has strong ties with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) generals.
2. Unlike other frontrunners of the fifth generation leadership, Xi has had some military service before. Upon his graduation from Qinghua University in 1979, he worked for Geng Biao (耿飚), the then secretary general of the Central Military Commission (CMC), for about three years.
3. His connections in the PLA are from two different sources. Due to his close ties with Jiang Zemin (江泽民), former chairman of the CMC and president of China, Xi has the support of Jiang's loyalists in the PLA. These include Guo Boxiong (郭伯雄), Xu Caihou (徐才厚), and Jia Ting'an (贾廷安).
4. Both Guo Boxiong and Xu Caihou were promoted by Jiang Zemin to the CMC as well as the rank of full general in 1999. And Jia Ting'an has been the personal secretary of Jiang Zemin since 1982. All three have shown their support for Xi Jinping.
5. Xi is also close to a number of princeling generals in the PLA, including Liu Yuan (刘源), Liu Yazhou (刘亚洲), and Zhang Haiyang (张海阳).
6. These princeling generals, in fact, are quite diverse in characteristics. Liu Yuan, son of Liu Shaoqi (刘少奇) (former president of China), is one of the very few civilian politicians who have crossed over to become military generals. After having worked as a local cadre in Henan for 10 years, he was transferred to the People's Armed Police as a major general in 1992.

7. Liu Yazhou, son-in-law of Li Xiannian (李先念) (former president of China), is an intellectual general. He has pursued a writing career within the PLA and has been promoted to higher positions mostly because of his writings.
8. Zhang Haiyang, son of General Zhang Zhen (张震) (former vice chairman of the CMC), is a military professional. He has served as political commissars at various levels in the PLA.
9. Since becoming vice chairman of the CMC in October 2010, Xi has been working closely with the military. He has reactivated his old ties and built new connections in the PLA.
10. It is conceivable that Xi would be able to consolidate his power in the military soon after he takes over as chairman of the CMC. But he will have to maintain a balance between princeling generals of diverse interests and reach out to other PLA generals.