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*Xi Jinping in Guangdong Province on His "Southern Tour"*

## In a Fortnight

By Peter Mattis

### YEAR-END QUESTIONS ON POLITICAL-LEGAL REFORM

At the conclusion of the 18th Party Congress on November 15, the announcement of China's new leadership offered few glimpses of the possibility of reform in the next five years. The one area, however, where reform is evident appears to be the one part of the Chinese system most resistant to change. The reduction of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Politburo Standing Committee from nine members to seven members pushed the internal security portfolio back down to the Politburo, ostensibly reducing the power and influence of the secretary of the Central Political-Legal Committee (Xinhua, November 15). Elsewhere, Beijing issued a judicial reform white paper that suggested a reduced role for the party in determining how Chinese citizens are processed (Xinhua, October 9). While all signs point to a conservative CCP leadership, there is at least one area where some reform may be in the offing.

The controversy surrounding the former Political-Legal Committee Secretary Zhou Yongkang and his relationship with the ousted Bo Xilai is difficult to parse to evaluate whether Zhou's supposedly out-of-control power is the cause of these reforms. For example, journalists reported Zhou had disappeared in March indicating he may follow Bo into CCP purgatory. Yet, during that month, Zhou appeared more than he had in the previous three months combined ("Zhou

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Yongkang and the Tarnished Reputation of China's Police," *China Brief*, March 30; *China Leadership Monitor*, No. 38, August 6). Moreover, it is difficult to read much in Zhou's bland, perhaps obligatory, paeans of Bo's "Strike the Black" (*dahai*) campaigns. The brevity of national media assessments versus those of Chongqing's outlets suggests Bo's efforts to play up Zhou's support for his own purposes (*Chongqing Daily*, March 14, 2010; Xinhua, October 30, 2009). If Zhou's outsized authority were all that were at stake, then the limits of political-legal reform should be easy to spot and easier for the CCP to finish: the replacement of Zhou Yongkang, which did proceed on schedule.

Although the demotion of the Central Political-Legal Committee secretary to the Politburo is a definite sign of change, there are still a number of lingering questions about the extent to which the party may restructure the political-legal apparatus. Under now-CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping's leadership, the Central Party School published a series of articles over the summer examining contradictions in the social management and internal security apparatus, signaling future changes to the political-legal system ("Portents of Change in China's Social Management," *China Brief*, August 3). One of the central contentions was that the dominance of the Central Political-Legal Committee meant that the police approach overrode the softer elements of social management (*Study Times*, June 18). If the Central Party School's assessments hold true and the CCP sees the problem as more fundamental than just one personality, then observers should keep their eyes peeled for other signs of change.

First, during the 2000s, the CCP created the Office of Preserving Stability to execute the directives of the Preserving Stability Leading Small Group. At each level—national, provincial and local—the office brings together public security, state security and procuratorate elements outside the state structure and under the party. This is not unlike the 610 Office system created to pursue the Falun Gong ("The 610 Office: Policing the Chinese Spirit," *China Brief*, September 16, 2011). The question is who will take over this apparatus and whether it will continue to exist under the leadership of the Political-Legal Committee secretary—the massive internal security budget (roughly \$110 billion) may be too much for a mere Politburo member.

Second, the latest rumors of reform in China's ministerial structure surprisingly included a change to the management of the Ministry of State Security (MSS)—the civilian internal and external intelligence service—placing it entirely under the State Council (Asia Sentinel, December 5). Moving the MSS away from the Political-Legal Committee structure will further weaken Meng and his successors, but it could offer opportunities for the MSS to focus on foreign intelligence and counterintelligence concerns rather than competing directly within the same administrative system with the politically more-powerful MPS. Although a seemingly innocuous change, it could have a significant effect on the evolution of China's intelligence apparatus.

Third, looking ahead to the National People's Congress meeting in March when ministerial posts are assigned and Meng Jianzhu is replaced as the minister of public security, who will replace him and what will the MPS front office look like? Meng, like his recent predecessors, was, first, a political heavyweight before going to the MPS (Xinhua, November 19). Real reform of internal security would entail the de-politicization of senior MPS positions—many MPS vice ministers also have prior non-police careers—reducing the ministry's relevance as a factional prize and tool. This may sound idealistic, but this approach appears to have isolated the MSS successfully from politics apart from exceptional circumstances as it was intended (*Ming Pao* [Hong Kong], April 28, 1995; Xinhua, June 30, 1979). Moreover, it is worth noting Bo Xilai relied on Wang Lijun, a public security official, for his dirty work rather than state security and it was an MSS vice minister who escorted Wang back to Beijing.

Some of these questions will resolve themselves in the weeks and months ahead; however, others, like the evolution of the internal security ministries and their associated party offices, will continue to be important long after the personnel changes at the National People's Congress in March.

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## **Xi Jinping's "Southern Tour" Reignites Promises of Reform**

By Willy Lam

General Secretary Xi Jinping has lost no time in reassuring the world that his Chinese Communist Party (CCP) administration will not only persevere with reforms championed by late patriarch Deng Xiaoping but also "initiate new paths." Shenzhen, the special economic zone (SEZ) that is synonymous with the country's 34-year-old era of reform and the open door, was the first city that Xi inspected after becoming party chief and Chairman of the Central Military Commission on November 15. While China's intellectuals generally have responded positively to Xi's early commitment to economic reform, many doubt whether anything substantial will be accomplished in the more controversial field of political liberalization.

The symbolism of Xi's five-day visit to Shenzhen, Guangzhou and other Guangdong cities is particularly significant in light of widespread criticism in the foreign press that the seven-man CCP Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) is stacked with conservatives, such as former vice-premier Zhang Dejiang and former Director of the CCP Propaganda Department Liu Yunshan. The Shenzhen SEZ is not only the brainchild of Deng but also that of Xi's father Xi Zhongxun (1913–2002), the late vice premier who was Guangdong governor and party secretary from 1978 to 1981. A close ally of reformist General Secretary Hu Yaobang's (1915–1989), Xi Zhongxun not only turned Guangdong into an "experimental zone" for economic reform but also was praised for his tolerant policies toward outspoken intellectuals who criticized Chairman Mao's excesses during the Cultural Revolution. Guangdong Party Secretary Wang Yang accompanied General Secretary Xi when he arrived in Shenzhen on December 7. Xi underscored his personal affiliation with the "ahead-of-the-times" province by paying a brief visit to his 86-year-old mother Qi Xin, who is a long-time Shenzhen resident (*Ming Pao*, [Hong Kong] December 8, *South China Morning Post*, December 8). At one stroke, Xi has laid claim to being the successor of the CCP's reformist wing that was once headed by luminaries such as Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang and Xi Zhongxun.

On the second day of his visit, Xi laid a wreath at the Deng Xiaoping Statue in Lotus Hill Park. "The reform

and open-door policy that the party central authorities decided upon [in 1978] was correct," the 59-year-old supremo told local cadres, "Henceforward, we will continue down this correct path." Xi added "Not only will we unwaveringly take the road that brings wealth to the country and the people but we will also break new ground." Xi also expressed his wish that Shenzhen and Guangdong would "make an even bigger contribution" to the reform enterprise. As though to underscore his status as Deng's heir, Xi made it a point to see four long-retired officials who had accompanied the Chief Architect of Reform on his famous "South Tour" (*nanxun*) in the summer of 1992. They included two former party bosses of Shenzhen, respectively Wu Nansheng, age 90, and Li Hao, age 86, as well as the former party boss of the nearly Zhuhai SEZ Liang Guangda, age 77 and deputy secretary general of the Guangdong Provincial Committee, Chen Kaizhi, age 72 (*Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*, December 9; Phoenix TV [Hong Kong], December 9; *Wen Wei Po* [Hong Kong] December 9).

On December 9, Xi took part in an economics-focused seminar with Guangdong cadres as well as leading entrepreneurs in the provincial capital of Guangzhou. The discussion centered on how Chinese industry could maintain its momentum in the face of the global financial uncertainties and increasing competition from emerging markets. "We must resolutely and unhesitatingly push forward systematic innovation and technological innovation," he said, "We must implement the strategy of using innovation to drive development, and push forward structural changes in economic development." The party chief also repeated pledges made by other leaders such as President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao about "deepening reform, perfecting the systems of the market economy, changing the functions of the government and strengthening rule by law," which Xi summed up in this way: "The reforms will not stop and the pace of opening up will not slacken" (Xinhua, December 11; China News Service, December 10; *People's Daily*, December 10).

While Xi has given Chinese citizens and the global audience no details regarding what innovative measures his administration is due to undertake, he and his PBSC colleagues have at least tried to boost the transparency of the official functions of senior cadres. The Politburo decided during their first meeting on December 4 that top officials including PBSC members should minimize

disruptions to the public while performing public duties. “Traffic controls should be decreased,” the Politburo announcement said, “There should be no sealing off of roads under general conditions. Nor should [ordinary people] be barred from places and buildings that [the cadres] are visiting” (*People’s Daily*, December 4; China News Service, December 4). Shenzhen and Hong Kong papers have reported that many Shenzhen residents were able to wave at, and occasionally even talk to, Xi from surprisingly close distances. Moreover, although it has been standard practice for the official media not to release information about inspection trips made by PBSC members until after their departure, photographs and brief reports of Xi’s Guangdong outing appeared in selected official newspapers and websites not long after his arrival in the southern province (*Global Times* [Beijing], December 9; *Yangtze.com* [Nanjing], December 9).

Chinese scholars have given relatively affirmative appraisals to Xi’s *nanxun*. According to well-regarded historian Zhang Lifan, Xi has departed from the tradition of newly-appointed general secretaries making their first inspection trips to “red revolutionary meccas,” such as the Jinggangshan guerrilla base in inland Jiangxi Province. Zhang noted “Xi’s trip is a gesture of support for the line of reform and the open door.” Hu Xingdou, a scholar at the Beijing Institute of Technology and a noted social critic, said he viewed Xi’s future moves with “guarded optimism.” Professor Hu said “It seems that both Xi Jinping and [premier-in-waiting] Li Keqiang are firm supporters of reform... Yet reform is not that easy because of the constraints imposed by vested interest groups. Just look at the fate of the ambitious reforms introduced by Hu [Jintao] and Wen [Jiabao] in 2003” (*Apple Daily*, December 9; Hu Xingdou’s Microblog, December 7).

It is also significant that Xi’s *nanxun* took place in the wake of at least three major post-18th Congress forums on reform that were organized by the Caijing news group, the Hong Kong-registered Bo Yuan Foundation and Beijing-based *Reform Journal*. Participants included such nationally renowned reformers as Hu Deping, the son of Hu Yaobang; legal scholar Jiang Ping; and veteran economist and government advisor Wu Jinglian. Speaking at one of the conferences, Hu Deping suggested the CCP could not afford to further postpone political liberalization. “The 18th Party Congress has started a good trend

[for reform]” he pointed out, “Whether this trend will continue depends on all of us.” Renmin University jurist Jiang Ping, who is often dubbed “the father of China’s legal reform,” urged the new leadership “to immediately build [political] institutions so as to ensure the rule of law in society.” Wu Jinglian, a long-time advocate of free market forces, noted the Xi leadership had taken the first right step by “reinstating the agenda of reform and getting ready the resumption of reform.” Wu pointed out that the administration must speedily “complete the construction of a competitive market economy.” Wu added that in light of the resistance of powerful interest groupings, there also must be far-reaching political and institutional reforms. He quoted Deng’s famous adage: “Economic reform cannot succeed without political reform” (Ifeng.com [Beijing], December 4; Caijing.com.cn [Beijing], November 29; Sohu.com [Beijing], November 29).

There is no evidence that Xi’s *nanxun* was connected to these forums of the nation’s leading liberal intellectuals. Shortly before the Congress, however, he did seek the advice of progressive officials and scholars such as Hu Deping on the next step of reform. The marathon “airing of views” (*biaoti*) by the nation’s most prominent public intellectuals also could be interpreted as an effort to lobby the new administration (*Ming Pao*, October 24; Central News Agency [Taipei], October 23). There are, however, very little signs that significant steps are about to be taken in the area of political reform.

Take, for instances, the treatment of party critics and public intellectuals, which has remained a litmus test of Beijing’s commitment to liberalization. On December 10, more than 100 petitioners and Internet activists gathered outside the UN Office in Beijing to mark International Human Rights Day. They were hustled away quickly by the near-ubiquitous security personnel in the capital. The spouses and relatives of dissidents continue to be subject to frequent harassment and 24-hour surveillance. After Liu Xia, the wife of jailed Nobel Prizewinner Liu Xiaobo, complained last week that she was living under virtual house arrest, 15 Nobel laureates issued a statement calling for the unconditional release of the Liu couple. Late last month, Chen Guangfu—the nephew of world-famous human rights lawyer Cheng Guangcheng—was sentenced to three years in jail for having injured a local official in his Shandong Province hometown. Chen, who arrived in the United States in May after seeking political asylum at

the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, said in New York that his relative's imprisonment was in effect a punishment for himself (Cable TV [Hong Kong], December 10; *Apple Daily*, December 5; *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, December 2). Nor is it likely that Beijing's tough tactics toward Tibet and Xinjiang will be relaxed soon. Xinhua reported in early December that a Sichuan-based monk and his nephew were arrested for allegedly instigating the self-immolations of eight Tibetans in the western province. The detained monk, Lorang Konchok, who lives in the predominantly Tibetan county of Aba, was accused of "colluding" with the Dalai Lama's exiled government (China News Service, December 9, Xinhua, December 9).

Little progress is seen even regarding the relatively limited goal of building viable institutions to curb corruption, which former General Secretary Hu referred to last month as "a matter of life and death for the party and state." Perhaps to underscore its commitment to nabbing so-called "tigers among corrupt cadres," the Central Disciplinary Inspection Commission (CDIC)—China's highest-level graft-busting office that is headed by new PBSC member Wang Qishan—swung into action immediately after the Party Congress by detaining the Deputy Party Secretary of Sichuan Li Chuncheng for alleged "economic crimes." Moreover, the disgraced former Politburo member Bo Xilai, who will be put on trial early 2013 for alleged crimes including corruption, is expected to get a hefty jail term. There are, however, few indications that the CDIC is about to put into place regulations and institutions to combat graft. A long-standing proposal that all senior cadres must publicly disclose their assets—as well as those of their spouses and children—has remained on the drawing board (Caijing.com.cn, December 5; *Hong Kong Economic Times*, December 5; *Global Times*, November 26). Other measures such as empowering the media to expose the business activities of princelings—the children of senior cadres and party elders—also are unlikely to be adopted.

As legal scholar Jiang Ping noted, the window of opportunity for political reform is getting narrower by the day. Jiang pointed out that the last five years amounted to a "golden juncture" for rolling out real reforms. "Yet it is most disappointing that nothing much was done" by the Hu-Wen administration, Jiang said. He added that the next five years would be critical for the future of

reform and the fate of the nation. Jiang warned "If this opportunity is lost again, the future of China will be in very dire straits" (Chinacourt.org [Beijing], December 6; Sina.com [Beijing], November 29). The onus is on Xi and his PBSC colleagues to demonstrate whether they have what it takes to be the worthy successors of the Great Architect of Reform.

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## Debating a Rising China's Role in International Affairs

By Michael S. Chase

The newly promoted Chinese leaders who ascended to power at the 18th Party Congress in November must address a number of important foreign policy issues, one of the most important of which is what role China should play on the global stage as its power and influence continue to grow. Part of the debate centers on the extent to which a stronger China should be prepared to accept a greater level of responsibility globally. Indeed, considerable discussion of this issue has taken place since then-Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick's September 2005 "responsible stakeholder" speech, but Chinese analysts continue to debate how much responsibility China should accept. Even as Chinese officials continue to grapple with international calls to assume greater responsibilities, and domestic pressure to more assertively defend China's interests abroad, they are attempting to cultivate a positive image of China as a "responsible great power" (*fu zeren daguo*) [1].

**China's "Developing Country Reality"**

Beijing's September 2011 white paper *China's Peaceful Development* argues that China is "actively living up to international responsibility." The document suggests that the level of responsibility China should be expected to shoulder globally remains limited by its focus on domestic challenges and its current stage of development:

"For China, the most populous developing country, to run itself well is the most important fulfillment of its international responsibility. As a responsible member of the international community, China abides by international law and the generally recognized principles governing international relations, and eagerly fulfills its international responsibility. China has actively participated in reforming international systems, formulating international rules and addressing global issues. It supports the development of other developing countries, and works to safeguard world peace and stability. As countries vary in national conditions and are in different stages of development, they should match responsibility with rights in accordance with their national strength. They should play a constructive role by fulfilling their due international responsibility in accordance with their own capability and on the basis of aligning their own interests with the common interests of mankind."

Nonetheless, the document also suggests China's willingness to bear international responsibility will increase along with its growing power. Specifically, it states "For its part, China will assume more international responsibility as its comprehensive strength increases" [2].

In line with the section on China's international responsibilities in the development white paper, some Chinese observers contend the appropriate level of responsibility should be closely linked to China's status as a country that still faces many daunting challenges. Because China is still a developing country in some important respects, they contend, domestic and international observers should not have unrealistic expectations. For example, according to a June 2010 *China Daily* article, "There is ample evidence to show that China is playing an active role in global matters...On the other hand, national strength and international status should determine the

international responsibilities China should accept. Given China's developing country reality and the current West-dominated world order, it is far-fetched, if not ill-timed, to demand that the country undertake duties that are beyond its prowess" (*China Daily*, June 17, 2010).

Similarly, Ministry of Foreign Affairs official Le Yuecheng argued in May that, although China is now the world's second largest economy, it is not yet the second strongest nation. Le acknowledges that some observers criticize China as a "selective stakeholder," one that "speaks of itself as an 'elephant' or as an 'ant' as needed." They want to see China become a "comprehensive stakeholder" instead. Furthermore, notwithstanding all that China has achieved as a result of more than 30 years of reform and opening, the country still has numerous shortcomings. Consequently, Le argues—even though China has increasingly behaved as a "responsible member and international stakeholder" as reflected by its response to the international financial crisis, diplomatic role in regional security issues, and participation in anti-piracy operations in recent years—"China is both unwilling and unable to assume more international obligations and play the role of a major power" [3].

**A Larger Role on the World Stage**

Some Chinese scholars encourage a greater global role, and a few argue in favor of heavier responsibilities. For example, some recommend that Beijing provide more global "public goods." Within this context, some Chinese scholars have focused on the global commons—to include the high seas, international air space, outer space and cyberspace—as an area of growing interests and greater responsibility for China. For example, according to Zhang Ming, a researcher with the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, "along with China's increasing national strength, its international standing has been in constant ascendance" Furthermore, as China's international standing and influence have continuously expanded, its interests increasingly have become intertwined with the security of the "global commons." Consequently, Zhang writes "As a responsible rising power, China needs to determine how best to position itself in the governance of the global commons." To this end, Zhang recommends that China should not only participate in discussions about these issues, but also actively engage in maintaining the security of the global commons. Zhang

highlights China's counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden as an example of China taking action to address shared security problems. Such participation is required to "protect [China's] expanding national interests, particularly overseas interests" [4].

China's increasing interconnectedness with the world means promoting the security of the global commons is essential if China is to "promote development, maintain national security, and prosper culturally." It is also necessary to cultivate China's desired image as "a responsible great power on the international stage." In addition to protecting its own security, economic and cultural interests and burnishing its international image, Zhang argues, "as a responsible great power, China should actively provide regional and global public goods and make its due contribution toward maintaining the peace and openness of the 'global commons'" [5].

Some other Chinese scholars have made similar recommendations. For example, Wang Yizhou, a professor and administrator in the School of International Studies at Beijing University, suggests China should provide more "public goods" and international aid (*International Herald Leader*, December 20, 2011). Another Beijing-based scholar, Li Yonghui, argues China should move beyond a narrow-minded view of the world and "shoulder historic responsibilities" [6]. In Li's view, "China is rising to become a major power in the world, and therefore it should have a great power mentality and great power diplomacy." In particular, Li writes, China should supply more "public goods" to peripheral countries in order to strengthen its regional diplomacy. Similarly, Wu Xinbo, Deputy Director of Fudan University's Center for American Studies, argues it is in China's interest to play a responsible role as a major power and provide more "public goods" to regional countries. Offering such countries economic and security benefits will reduce their reliance on the United States, Wu contends, thus contributing to the development of a "more equal" order in the Asia-Pacific region (*Global Times*, July 29, 2011).

Yet, even scholars and analysts who advocate shouldering greater international responsibility suggest China will face daunting challenges as it assumes a larger role in world affairs. For example, according to Zhang, China faces challenges stemming from the attitude of the United States and other Western countries. Even as they expect

China to make a greater contribution toward safeguarding the global commons, they also are "concerned that their own preeminence will be challenged" and thus use their discourse about China, diplomatic pressure and their military power to guard against and constrain China. For example, Zhang asserts, they frame the discourse about the global commons in ways that portray China alternately as a "stakeholder and collaborator" and as a "potential challenger, competitor, trouble maker or even opponent," while coordinating diplomatically and developing new concepts to counter perceived threats from China. . China should "be calm and composed, and respond appropriately," Zhang writes [7].

Still another challenge for China is that its capabilities, though growing, remain limited in some areas, such as military capability. Chinese analysts assert that China's military requires greater situational awareness and improvements in its capabilities for force projection as well as humanitarian aid and disaster relief missions. For example, according to Zhang, China needs to improve its space and communications infrastructure, build a more powerful air force and strengthen its naval capabilities [8].

### The Responsibility Trap?

Still other Chinese observers are deeply wary of accepting greater international responsibility. Some even suggest Western calls for China to shoulder heavier responsibilities are a trap that Beijing must avoid. According to a March 2009 *People's Daily* article by Li Hongmei, "Since it was initiated by the former U.S. Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, the theory of 'China's responsibility' has been exaggerated and embroidered in recent years. Especially in times of economic slowdown, it has become a term much sought after by the Western world. It seems that they intentionally coined the term in a bid to make it well-tailored to their special needs later." Moreover, according to Li:

"...the concept of 'great powers' responsibility' is defined by the Western world completely on the conditions of satisfying its own needs and interests. Simply put, whether to be responsible for the world, from the Western perspectives, is literally evaluated by how much responsibility you have assumed for the West. Some Western countries are desperately pressing China to actively shoulder more responsibility as a great

power, but it is manifested that they are eager to capitalize on China's strength in order to shake off their own troubles" (*People's Daily*, March 23, 2009).

Some Chinese commentators have been especially suspicious of Western demands for China to accept greater responsibility for global economic and environmental problems. According to another article: "Some Western countries have been throwing out various 'China responsibility' theories after the global financial crisis. These responsibilities form a system that seems to grant China a responsibility to save the world." Furthermore, the article warns "These theories are fabricated on purpose by some western countries. They have been exaggerating China's strengths and influences in a bid to let China shoulder more 'world-level obligations and responsibilities' and also make China increase its 'contributions' to tackle the global economic downturn. The objective is to slow down and check China's development" (Xinhua, August 19, 2010). Similarly, Huo Jianguo, President of the International Economic and Trade Research Institute of the Ministry of Commerce, has charged that Western countries intend to distract attention from their own problems, force China to adjust its policies in accordance with their demands and "burden China with 'responsibilities.'" The ultimate goal, Huo asserts, is to "serve the Western strategy of curbing China's development" (*Beijing Review*, September 2, 2010). Other observers have echoed this theme. For example, an August 2010 op-ed asserted the underlying motivation of demands for China to shoulder greater responsibility "lies in some Western countries' attempt to distract world attention from facts and burden Beijing with more responsibilities that it should not and could not shoulder. In other words, some Western countries are too eager to shirk their responsibilities and pass on their burden to China" (*China Daily*, August 18, 2010).

## Conclusion

Chinese scholars and analysts, like their counterparts in the United States and many other countries, are still wrestling with some of the key issues surrounding China's emergence as a great power, including what role China should play on the global stage. One complicating

factor is that Beijing must balance calls for China to do more with the risk that actually doing more would intensify concerns about China's growing power. Beijing could face accusations of "free riding" if it fails to take greater responsibility for international problems, but a more activist role could stoke fears that China intends to project power regionally—and perhaps even globally—in ways that could undermine the security or challenge the interests of the United States and its allies. Consequently, it should not be surprising that Chinese scholars continue to discuss and debate the contradictions and challenges inherent in China's emergence as a great power, including the question of how much international responsibility China has an interest in accepting and the capacity to handle.

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## Notes:

1. For a discussion of the challenges involved in meeting the expectations of China's citizens, see Lu Sumin, "Jing zhiku: zhan fu zeren daguo xingxiang, di lianghao huanjing [Beijing Think Tank: Display the Image of a Responsible Power and Foster a Good Environment]," *Ching chi jih pao* [Hong Kong Economic Times], July 16, 2012. The article quotes Qu Xing, an analyst at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-affiliated China Institute of International Studies, who explains that "a 'great power mentality' that has arisen among ordinary people along with China's rise poses new challenges on the diplomatic front." According to Xu, "many netizens criticize China's diplomacy for being too 'soft' and think that China is confident in itself and should act tougher on the diplomatic front," but their expectations fail to take into account the large gap that still separates China from the world's most highly developed countries. Notwithstanding these comments, it should be noted that domestic pressure is likely only one of a number of reasons for Beijing to adopt a more assertive approach to the defense

- of Chinese interests.
2. *China's Peaceful Development*, Information Office of the State Council, People's Republic of China, September 2011, <[http://www.gov.cn/English/official/2011-09/06/content\\_1941354.htm](http://www.gov.cn/English/official/2011-09/06/content_1941354.htm)>.
  3. Le Yuecheng, "Guanyu Zhongguo yu shijie guanxi de shidian sikao [Ten Ideas About China's Relations with the World]," *Guoji wenti yanjiu*, May 13, 2012, pp. 1-8. According to Le, China's role in the world is mirrored in its performance at the Olympics. Chinese divers and ping-pong players are increasingly dominant, winning numerous gold medals, but China's soccer team is far from being ready to produce results at a similar level: "It is not that the Chinese do not want such a gold medal. Chinese fans are dreaming of it. But the reality is that Chinese soccer is not at that level. It is thus not a question of choice, but one of ability."
  4. Zhang Ming, "'Quanqiu gongdi' anquan zhili yu zhongguo de xuanze [Security Governance of the 'Global Commons' and China's Choice]," *Xiandai guoji guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], 2012, No. 5, pp. 22-28.
  5. Ibid.
  6. Li Yonghui, "Zhongguo da waijiao: dangdai wenti yu chuantong zhihui [China's Great Power Diplomacy: Contemporary Problems and Traditional Wisdom]," *Xiandai guoji guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], November 20, 2010, pp. 4-6.
  7. Zhang Ming, "'Quanqiu gongdi' anquan zhili yu Xhongguo de xuanze"
  8. Ibid.

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## "Spillover" in the Sino-Indian Relationship: An Indian Perspective

By Chietigj Bajpaee

The recent unveiling of a new Chinese passport that contains a map marking territory disputed with India has emerged as a renewed source of tension between the two countries (Sina.com, November 25; *Indian Express*,

November 24). While the passport issue is unlikely to be a lasting source of tension, the underlying source of friction—the Sino-Indian territorial dispute—remains alive and well. In the context of their overall bilateral relationship the strategic significance of the territorial dispute, however, is declining amid the rise of both countries as major regional and potentially global powers. This is revealing new theaters of interaction and potential competition.

The changing nature of the Sino-Indian relationship is made evident by the contrast of the current state of bilateral relations with their state during the month-long border conflict that took place 50 years ago. Future hostilities between both countries, however, are unlikely to be confined to their disputed border. Rather, with both countries acquiring more tools and platforms of interaction, renewed hostilities will likely spill over beyond the confines of their bilateral relationship with greater repercussions for the regional and global security architecture. Amid the growing strategic importance of trade and imported resources to fuel their economies, the most likely theaters of this "spillover" are both countries' third-party relations and their growing interests in the maritime domain.

### Beijing Leverages "All-Weather" Friends

The potential "spillover" is most evident in third-party relationships. Notably, China's "all-weather" relationship with Pakistan has been complemented by deepening relations with other states around India's periphery (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 2, 2009). These deepening relations have been evidenced in China emerging as a leading trade partner, source of diplomatic support and provider of military hardware to several countries in the region. More specifically, Chinese investment in several strategically important projects—ranging from port projects at Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, and Sonadia Island in Bangladesh, a railway link between China and Nepal as well as an oil and gas pipeline from the Burmese port of Kyaukkyu to Yunnan—has raised Indian fears that these projects could facilitate Chinese encirclement (*Asia Times*, September 29; April 23; Xinhua, September 10, 2010).

Pakistan is a case in point. Despite growing levels of political, economic and security instability facing the

country, more than 60 Chinese companies and 10,000 Chinese nationals in the country working on 122 major development projects demonstrate Beijing's commitment (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, October 2, 2009). Notably, China recently renewed its commitment to the Gwadar port project after the Singaporean Port Authority decided to pull out of the port management and development contract (*Asia Times*, August 29). Despite problems facing the project over land acquisition and security concerns, China has reassumed responsibility for the infrastructure project after financing the port's construction.

Moreover, China is now Pakistan's leading trading partner and economic integration has continued to gain momentum facilitated by their free trade agreement, the establishment of the Pakistan and China Joint Investment Company (JIC) and an agreement to settle trade across the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region border using the Chinese renminbi as the base currency instead of the U.S. dollar. China's on-going support for Pakistan's civilian and military nuclear power program also has served as veiled criticism of the civilian nuclear power agreement between India and the United States ("The China-Pakistan Reactor Deal and Asia's Nuclear Energy Race," *China Brief*, June 11, 2010; *Times of India*, June 2, 2010; May 13, 2010; *Asia Times*, April 21, 2010).

In Afghanistan, a nascent competition for transshipment corridors is underway with India having constructed the Delaram-Zeranj highway connecting Afghanistan with the Iranian port of Chahbahar. This provides an alternative route to the Chinese-funded Gwadar as a means for accessing the resources and markets of Central, West and South Asia (*Asia Times*, December 4, 2009). The value that both countries place in their relations with Afghanistan is evidenced by China's conclusion of a "strategic and cooperative partnership" with Afghanistan in June less than a year after India concluded a similar agreement in October 2011.

Burma's on-going democratic transition also makes the country a key "battleground" state in the Sino-Indian competition for resources and strategic influence. While India has so far played "second-fiddle" to China in Myanmar, New Delhi's middle-path approach of engaging both members of the former military junta regime and pro-democratic forces is likely to yield dividends as Burma comes in from the cold and re-

engages the international community. The liberalization process itself appears to have been driven in part by the desire of the military-backed government to reduce the country's overwhelming reliance on China. This was made evident by the suspension of the Myitsone dam and hydroelectric power project in Kachin state in September 2011 over social and environmental concerns (*The Irrawaddy*, October 2).

Meanwhile, Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi's recent visit to India is evidence of a burgeoning Indo-Burmese relationship, which could come at the cost of the Sino-Burmese relationship if the country's democratic transition continues (*Global Times*, November 29). New Delhi has the potential to forge a special relationship by facilitating capacity building on the economic front while strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law. This will ensure Burma's ongoing reform process remains substantive and sustainable.

Another potential "battleground" state is Sri Lanka, where internal transformation is also emerging as a catalyst for China and India to reorient their relations. Unlike Myanmar where the democratic transition offers opportunities to India to expand its influence, Sri Lanka's authoritarian consolidation has offered China the opportunity to strengthen its presence. Amid criticism of Sri Lanka's human rights record in the conduct of its military campaign against the Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that culminated in victory over the separatist insurgency in 2009, Colombo has turned increasingly to "non-traditional" sources of diplomatic and financial assistance. Notably, China has emerged as Sri Lanka's leading aid donor, providing preferential loans at subsidized rates and investing in strategically and symbolically important infrastructure projects, such as the Hambantota port project and the Colombo South Harbor Development Project. Beijing also was more forthcoming in providing offensive armaments to the Sri Lankan military in its campaign against the Tamil Tigers and providing crucial diplomatic support to Sri Lanka that New Delhi was unable or unwilling to provide (*Sri Lanka Guardian*, October 29, 2009). This has strengthened goodwill between Colombo and Beijing while souring relations with New Delhi.

Bangladesh and Nepal are not far behind in this competition. China has concluded the second-biggest

investment in Bangladesh earlier this year by contributing two-thirds of the cost of a fertilizer factory in Sylhet followed by a private sector power project in Habiganj. This has been accompanied by projects aimed at helping Bangladesh emerge as a regional trade and transshipment hub, including constructing bridges and upgrading road and rail infrastructure in the country, upgrading the airport at Cox's Bazar as well as strengthening the country's commercial shipping fleet. The fact that opposition leader Khaleda Zia followed up a recent visit to China with a parallel visit to India demonstrates how the Sino-Indian relationship has seeped into Bangladeshi domestic politics (*Asia Times*, November 9; April 23).

Meanwhile, the transition of the Nepali Maoists from an insurgent group into a mainstream political party, Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), with growing influence has fuelled closer relations between Nepal and China. Nepal has exploited this to reduce India's traditionally dominant influence over the country, including putting pressure on India to renegotiate their unequal friendship treaty. Meanwhile, the Nepali government has reciprocated China's advances by becoming increasingly aggressive in its crackdown on Tibetan activists (*Times of India*, March 7, 2010). .

## Delhi Leverages “Strategic Pivot”

Meanwhile, India has pursued a deepening relationship with China's traditional competitors, including Japan, Vietnam and the United States. Notably, the United States has made a concerted effort to draw India into the East Asia region as a means of balancing China's expanding influence in the region. Calls by U.S. officials for India to go beyond its “Look East” policy and “Be East” alludes to U.S. attempts to embed India into the region (*Business Standard*, February 11, 2011). Although the Obama administration has not yet revived the more confrontational rhetoric of an “arc of democracies” that emerged under the Bush administration, it is nonetheless pursuing a similar agenda amid the ongoing multilateralization of the U.S. security posture in Asia. Evidence of this includes the launch of the U.S.-Japan-India trilateral dialogue in 2011 and Japan's participation in the U.S.-India Malabar joint naval exercises since 2007 (BBC, December 13, 2011).

Meanwhile, India's relations with China's key Southeast Asian rival, Vietnam continue to deepen. India has been conducting joint naval exercises with Vietnam since 2000 and Vietnam has granted Indian Navy vessels permanent berthing rights at Na Thrang port, which has extended New Delhi's “sustainable maritime presence” in the South China Sea (*Times of India*, Octobbbber 8, 2011). Reportedly, India also has offered Vietnam its indigenously-developed *Brahmos* supersonic cruise missile and training in underwater warfare to support Vietnam's expanding fleet of submarines (*Asia Times*, March 29; August 17, 2011). India also is emerging as an increasingly prominent player in Vietnam's energy sector with Indian state-owned company ONGC Videsh jointly exploring in disputed waters (*Outlook India*, August 3). The fact that India's deepening maritime and energy cooperation with Vietnam coincides with renewed tensions between China and Vietnam over their maritime territorial disputes in the South China Sea signals Sino-Indian competitiveness could “spill over” into Southeast Asia.

Finally, the rapprochement in India-Japan relations has coincided with a deterioration in the Sino-Japanese relationship. To be sure, Indo-Japanese economic interactions remain weak with \$14 billion in bilateral trade in 2011 and a target of \$25 billion by 2014. This pales in comparison to Japan's trade with China that was close to \$345 billion in 2011 (*Economic Times*, May 20; JETRO, February 23). Nonetheless, despite starting from a low base Indo-Japan relations have continued to grow from strength to strength in the economic and strategic domains. India has been the leading recipient of Japanese overseas development assistance (ODA) since 2003 while in 2006 both countries forged a “strategic and global partnership,” which has been complemented by a bilateral strategic dialogue since 2007, a free trade agreement in 2011 and bilateral naval exercises in June (*Press Trust of India*, June 4; *Business Standard*, February 22, 2011; Mofa.go.jp, December 2006).

## Moving into the Maritime Domain

Beyond both countries' engagement with third parties, the most likely platform of “spillover” in the Sino-Indian relationship is the maritime domain, which has gained strategic importance amid their rise as major trading and resource-consuming powers. This in turn has transformed the nature of their bilateral relationship from a land-

based rivalry toward a competition increasingly taking place in the maritime domain. This is rooted in the fact that more than 95 percent of India's exports are seaborne compared to 60 percent of China's exports while 70 percent of Indian hydrocarbons emanate from offshore blocks and 80 percent of China's oil imports transit the sea lanes of the South China Sea and Indian Ocean [1].

Both countries traditionally have pursued relatively modest maritime security interests confined to playing a supporting role to land-based operations and protecting their respective coastlines. China's focus has been on sea-denial capabilities aimed at deterring U.S. intervention in a conflict in the Taiwan Strait while India has focused on coastal defense and surveillance given the country's porous, poorly-demarcated and disputed maritime border. Both countries' are now pursuing increasingly ambitious naval doctrines, reflecting the need to protect their expanding overseas interests. For instance, Chinese maritime strategists have espoused moving beyond "near-coast defense" toward "near-seas active defense" and increasingly into the realm of "far-sea operations" [2].

China's pursuit of "new historic missions" that entail increasing overseas deployments coincide with the Indian Navy's ambitions to transform itself into "a brand new multi-dimensional navy" with "reach and sustainability" (*Times of India*, December 21, 2011). This will bring both countries' navies into closer contact and ensure that they cross paths more frequently. This was demonstrated in July 2011 when an Indian Navy vessel, the *INS Airavat* allegedly received radio contact from the Chinese Navy demanding the vessel depart disputed waters in the South China Sea after completing a port call in Vietnam (*Times of India*, September 2, 2011). Similarly, the 2009 deployment of a People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) naval taskforce to the Indian Ocean has brought China's navy into closer contact with India's strategic backyard (BBC, December 13, 2011). The fact that China and India are two of only six countries with a nuclear submarine capability and two of only ten countries with aircraft carriers points toward a growing interest by both countries to project power beyond their littoral regions.

### **Constructive Competition**

To be sure, competition between China and India is by no means a certainty nor necessarily a cause for concern.

For instance, third-party countries benefit from Sino-Indian competition through improved infrastructure and greater access to aid and investment. If this competition grows fiercer, however, it may drive Beijing and New Delhi to provide more aid to local elites with fewer strings attached at the expense of good governance.

In the maritime domain, given both countries' mutual dependence on trade and imported resources to fuel their economies, they share an interest in protecting sea lines of communication and maintaining freedom of navigation. This potential for cooperation has been demonstrated by China and India coordinating their anti-piracy patrols in the Indian Ocean within the framework of the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction mechanism (*Times of India*, February 2). India has so far outpaced the PLAN in the sphere of protecting the 'maritime commons'. This was demonstrated by the Indian Navy's assistance following the Asian tsunami in 2004, the cyclone that struck Myanmar in 2008 and the evacuation of Indian, Sri Lankan and Nepalese civilians from the conflict in Lebanon in 2006 (*Financial Times*, February 17, 2010; *Times of India*, January 7, 2005).

China is fast catching up in its humanitarian response capabilities as demonstrated by the PLA Navy escorting non-Chinese vessels, including UN World Food Program convoys, through the Gulf of Aden as well as the deployment of a Chinese missile frigate to the Mediterranean Sea in early 2011 to support the evacuation of Chinese nationals from Libya. China's rhetoric of maintaining "Harmonious Seas" and engaging in military operations other than war (MOOTW) suggest that Beijing's potential for cooperation in the maritime domain could grow as its maritime security interests move farther from its coastline (*South China Morning Post*, March 30, 2011; February 26, 2011; *China Daily*, November 27, 2010; "PLAN Shapes International Perception of Evolving Capabilities," *China Brief*, February 4, 2010).

### **Conclusion**

Fifty years on, another war between China and India remains an unlikely prospect. Conflict has been constrained by the fact that their bilateral frictions have been largely strategic rather than ideological. The bilateral relationship lacks the historical animosity seen in the Sino-Japanese or Sino-Vietnamese relationship (*Pragati*,

January 6).

Nonetheless, both countries face an increasingly complex and multi-layered relationship amid their growing international diplomat, economic and military clout. The Sino-Indian relationship is more nuanced than the U.S.-Soviet rivalry of the Cold War, interspersed with cooperation, competition and a latent rivalry. On the one hand, a climate of mistrust permeates the bilateral relationship rooted in their unresolved territorial dispute, economic imbalance and resource competition, because of deficient institutional mechanisms for interaction. Both countries, however, see eye-to-eye on a number of global issues ranging from climate change to poverty reduction and relations with pariah regimes, such as Iran, Sudan and, until recently, Burma.

Fuelled by a demographic dividend and both countries' growing overseas interests and capabilities, the Sino-Indian relationship is likely to be among the most potent sources of rivalry between major powers in the 21st century. As both states acquire the capabilities and ambitions to reshape the international system, the relationship is likely to play out on the world stage.

Deterring renewed Sino-Indian hostilities will require both countries to acknowledge the changing nature of their bilateral relationship amid their rise as major powers. This will entail devoting more resources to manage the potential "spillover" of their bilateral relationship into other arenas, including third-party relations and the maritime domain, through more institutionalized forms of interaction. Ultimately, maintaining a cordial bilateral relationship will ensure the continuation of both countries' growth and a stable global ecology than unrestrained competition.

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Notes:

1. Shashank Joshi, "China and India: Awkward Ascents," *Orbis*, Vol. 55, No. 4, Fall 2011, p. 566;

U.S. Energy Information Administration; *Country Analysis Briefs: China*, November 2010/2011.

2. Nan Li, "The Evolution of China's Naval Strategy and Capabilities: From 'Near Coast' and 'Near Seas' to 'Far Seas,'" *Asian Security*, Vol. 5 No. 2, 2009, pp. 144–169.

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## PLA Succession: Trends and Surprises

By Cristina Garafola

On November 26, Air Force General Xu Qiliang gave his first major speech as vice chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC). In front of a military audience, Xu urged the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to pursue new. Xu called for the PLA to hasten the process of military modernization (Xinhua, November 27). Army General Zhang Yang, Director of the General Political Department and one of the eight regular CMC members, emphasized the importance of "further uniting behind a common purpose" and "strengthening" the PLA's "sense of responsibility and duty to the mission." The 18th Party Congress marked an important round of transitions for the PLA that also highlighted the difficulties of studying the military's leadership transition process. In the Mao era, the PLA leadership had been tightly linked to the unpredictable factional politics surrounding the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), but the increasing routinization of the succession process since the 1980s has led to a better understanding of leadership transitions within the PLA's top echelons. Unexpected promotions during the recent Party Congress, however, challenge the reliability of some observed trends in PLA leadership succession. In particular, the continuing domination of the ground force component among the military services (e.g., Army, Navy and Air Force) works against succession routinization and hampers modernization efforts for the PLA going forward.

### CMC Membership and Succession

Known as the "supreme command" of the military, the CMC currently has 11 members that include the General

Secretary of the CCP, two uniformed military vice chairman, the Minister of Defense, and representatives from the four service and branch commands. The directors of the four general departments form the joint and de facto army command and sit on the CMC and, since 2004, the commanders from the PLA Navy (PLAN), PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and the Second Artillery also have been CMC members. The CMC “provides guidance for China’s national military strategy and overall war effort,” including force building, weapons purchases and development, senior personnel promotions, and the PLA’s overall organizational structure [1].

PLA succession is difficult to understand in the same way that broader CCP succession processes are opaque. First, the base of power is ostensibly broad but in reality flows downward from a narrow top. The CMC is theoretically elected by the approximately 200 members of the CCP’s Central Committee, but in practice the outgoing CMC as well as the GPD’s Cadre Department and possibly certain top party leaders likely control appointments to the CMC, making predictions a challenge. That said, however, the pool of top military leaders to fill the vice chairmen and CMC member billets is fairly predictable based on their current positions and grades (“Assessing the PLA’s Promotion Ladder to CMC Member Based on Grades vs. Ranks,” *China Brief*, July 22, 2010; August 5, 2010).

Second, for those officers who are eligible based on their grade and position, promotions depend as much on merit as they do on *guanxi*, factional pedigrees and officers’ skill at maintaining good relations within their units [2]. Most enlisted members and officers will serve in the same unit throughout their career, so harmony within the unit can have long-term implications for advancement.

Third, much of how Western PLA analysts frame their understanding of the military is based on patterns and norms that have developed in the reform era. For example, officers in high-level positions must retire once they reach a certain age (e.g., military region leader grade-officers must retire by the age of 65), officers can only be promoted one grade at a time and so on. When established norms run up against intractable personality and institutional conflicts, however, the structural elements of institutions have changed to accommodate

nonconforming promotions. For example, Army General Fan Changlong’s recent promotion as the senior of the two CMC vice chairmen required him to skip a grade, which was unprecedented based on past high-level promotions. The Army, however, wanted a ground forces general in that position to balance Xu Qiliang as the first PLAAF member to hold the vice chairmanship. Though Fan’s promotion resolved the balance of power dilemma by keeping other non-ground forces from being promoted and breaking the grade promotion precedent, poking a hole in one of the guidelines generally used to understand the rules of the game.

Despite the difficulties in analyzing military succession, there have been noticeable changes in how PLA leaders become members of the CMC. Based on the CMC’s membership since 1949 (including organizations with different names and structures that have served the same purpose), five trends are apparent. First, the number of people on the CMC has varied greatly over time, both in terms of overall membership and the number of vice chairmen. For example, by 1954, the “Central People’s Committee” (CPC) had 14 vice chairmen, but the committee established to replace this CPC was slimmed down to only 12 members total. In general, membership has hovered between about eight to 15 people and is currently on the lower end of that spectrum with 10 uniformed members; the number of vice chairmen also has fallen to either two or three in the past few decades. Two vice chairmen are generally PLA officers, including one political commissar, while the third, senior vice chairmanship is held by the CCP successor. For example, Xi Jinping was the senior CMC vice chairman from late 2010 until the recent 18th Party Congress.

Second, the composition of the CMC has moved away from party elders with military experience to career PLA officers and the top CCP leader (and, at intervals, his successor as a vice chairman). The top leader’s accession to the CMC chairmanship also appears to be occurring at more regular intervals. Though Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin remained the CMC chair after stepping down as the CCP general secretary, Hu Jintao did not follow this trend, so Xi Jinping became the party general secretary and CMC chairman at roughly the same time.

Third, the CMC has changed names and added or

**Table 1. Personnel Appointments in PLA Institutions (by Service and Branch)**

<i>Organization</i>	<i>PLAA</i>	<i>PLAN</i>	<i>PLAAF</i>	<i>Second Artillery</i>
CMC (10 + Xi Jinping)	6	1	2	1
General Staff Department Deputies (varies between 4-6)	4	1	--*	--*
General Political Department Deputies (usually 4; currently 3)	3	--**	--	--
General Logistics Department Deputies (3)	3	--	--	--
General Armament Department Deputies (5)	5	--	--	--
Minister of Defense	1	--	--	--
Academy of Military Sciences Commandant and Political Commissar (2)	1	--	1	--
National Defense University Commandant and Political Commissar (2)	1	--	1	--
Military Region Commanders (7)	7	--	--	--

\* The General Staff Department had a PLAAF deputy director from 2004 until the 18th Party Congress who was not replaced by a PLAAF officer; it also had a Second Artillery deputy director until he became the Second Artillery commander at the 18th Party Congress and was not replaced by another Second Artillery officer.

\*\* The General Political Department had a PLAN deputy director from 2009 until the 18th Party Congress, but he retired and was not replaced.

removed the smaller Affairs and Working committees, which at certain points have held more power than the CMC as a whole. For example, in the Mao era, restructuring was particularly frequent, especially during the Cultural Revolution. Structural changes were sometimes used as a vehicle to enable Mao's current favorite to gain power by undercutting others' authority, such as when Lin Biao was made the head of a new Affairs Group in 1968. Since 1982, however, the CMC has basically remained in its current form, indicating that the focus has shifted away from altering the CMC's power vis-à-vis other organizations and toward how to ensure certain candidates gain positions on the CMC.

Fourth, until Liang Guanglie became the Minister of Defense in 2008, the minister position was held concurrently by a CMC vice chairman, who in turn have been concurrent Politburo members. Since 2008, however, the minister of defense has been only a senior CMC member but not a vice chairman. Of note, while General Liang Guanglie will remain the Defense Minister until the National People's Congress in early 2013, he is

no longer a member of the CMC. General Chang Wanquan now holds that spot on the CMC and presumably will replace Liang as Minister of Defense in 2013.

Lastly, the CMC has seen increasing "diversity" of representation by the PLAN, PLAAF and Second Artillery since the reform era. Admiral Liu Huaqing was the first PLAN commander to gain the vice chairmanship in 1989 and stayed there until he retired in 1996, even if he was required to wear an Army uniform while he held that position. In 2012, the 18th CMC features two PLAAF, one PLAN and one Second Artillery representative besides the six Army generals, suggesting, at the very highest level, non-ground force members are becoming more prominent.

Keeping the early caveats of trend-watching in mind, some scholars believe that these trends hint that the CMC is falling into a more normalized path with a fixed size, standard ratio of vice chairmen to regular members and more representation of the non-Army leaders. Last month, Oriana Skylar Mastro, Michael S. Chase, and

Benjamin S. Purser III argued “the fact that two Air Force officers have secured a place on China’s highest military body along with the rising fortunes of the PLAN and Second Artillery probably foreshadows the loosening of the ground force’s sixty-year-long grip on the levers of military power” (“New CMC Vice Chairmen Strong Advocates for Joint, Modern Chinese Military,” *China Brief*, November 16). This greater diversity among the services, however, has not trickled down below these top positions. Table 1 compares the new CMC membership (the members of which are director grade or above) with deputy director and similarly graded officials. Overall, the top leadership is still dominated by the ground forces (PLAA).

Although the CMC appears to be moving toward more diversity at the top by selecting a PLAAF vice chairman, only one of the current 18 deputy directors is not from the ground forces, and the General Armament Department has never had any non-ground force deputy directors. Even more firmly in the Army’s control, China’s seven Military Regions (MRs) have only ever had Army commanders, even, as Mastro, Chase and Purser noted, “in the Nanjing and Guangzhou MRs that focus on conflict scenarios involving possible sea and air fights over Taiwan and in the East and South China Seas” (“New CMC Vice Chairmen Strong Advocates for Joint, Modern Chinese Military,” *China Brief*, November 16). Based on the current picture of personnel appointments, diversity will be slow to filter down to the lower grade levels or result in a significant change to the balance of institutional power.

### **Conclusion: The 18th Party Congress in Context and Future Prospects**

The recent 18th Party Congress saw signs of increased routinization of succession processes within the CMC but also departures from previously established norms. Overall, with the exception of no civilian vice chairman, the announcement of the new CMC in terms of membership remained consistent with CMC membership since 2004. Also, the membership of the new PBSC continues the trend of no uniformed military representation.

Hu Jintao’s exit from the CMC along with his stepping down as CCP general secretary all but guarantees that

he will have left all three top positions (head of party, military and state) within six months. Although Hu’s “naked retreat” (*luo tui*) breaks tradition from the Jiang-Hu transition, the simultaneous transition of Party and military authority actually speaks to increasing routinization of power transfer at the highest levels of the CCP (*Apple Daily* [Hong Kong], November 16). The Jiang-Hu transition—in which Hu Jintao became the head of the CCP in late 2002 but Jiang Zemin retained the CMC chairmanship until mid-2004—reportedly had PLA officers concerned about potentially facing multiple chains of command during a crisis (Xinhua, September 20, 2004; *Asia Times*, March 12, 2003; *PLA Daily*, March 11, 2003). The “naked retreat” ensures that one leader has clear operational authority during China’s extensive leadership transition period.

Selecting Xu Qiliang and particularly Fan Changlong as CMC vice chairmen marked significant departures from established norms. Xu is the first non-Army vice chairman to wear his branch’s uniform on the CMC, and his selection to the CMC does indicate some victories for pro-“diversity” and pro-modernization leaders among the PLA. Fan’s promotion reveals that the Army, however, is resisting the shift of power to other branches and is willing to go to great lengths to retain dominance. Another change is that the new CMC vice chairmen and members assumed their positions during the last session of the 17th Party Congress in October rather than during the first session of the 18th Party Congress in November.

Looking to future successions and the broader path of the PLA, there are a few key trends worth watching to assess whether the competition for resources and power among the three services and the Second Artillery will result in more joint cooperation or lead to stagnation. One key marker is the “diversity” of billets for officers promoted to corps and above grades, where each grade has two assigned flag officer ranks (one to three stars). The most obvious sign of change would be a significant restructuring of the PLA’s four general departments to become truly joint organizations and the creation of the Army as a separate service with its own headquarters. If the four general departments (currently the army’s de facto headquarters) were restructured to serve—and be directed and staffed by—PLAA, PLAN, PLAAF and Second Artillery officers, proponents of force

modernization and integration will have achieved a major victory. Xu Qiliang's past and recent speeches have indicated his support for reform ("Parsing the Selection of China's New High Command," *China Brief*, November 16). The obstacles he and his supporters encounter as they advocate for change, including restructuring the 15-grade structure, reflect the complexity of internal military as well as party-military relations and will remain key areas for outsiders to parse and uncover.

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Notes:

1. Kenneth W. Allen, "Introduction to the PLA's Administrative and Operational Structure," *The People's Liberation Army as Organization* (RAND: 2002), p. 5.
2. Kenneth W. Allen and John F. Corbett, Jr., "Predicting PLA Leader Promotions," in *Civil-Military Change in China: Elites, Institutes, and Ideas After the 16th Party Congress*, Dr. Andrew Scobell and Dr. Larry Wortzel, eds., Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004.

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