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## **In a Fortnight: In Maldives Standoff, China Looks to Safeguard Growing Interests**

*By Matt Schrader*

A deepening electoral crisis in the small island nation of the Maldives, located roughly 300 miles west-southwest of India's southern tip, has highlighted the growth of Chinese interests in a part of the world long considered India's strategic backyard, and points the way toward likely future Sino-Indian friction, both in the Maldives and elsewhere throughout the Indian Ocean. Although the Chinese government's public response has been muted, assertive PRC signaling around the presence of PLA Navy (PLAN) ships in the Indian Ocean may be sign that New Delhi should consider its next moves carefully.

Relations between Maldives President Abdulla Yameen and his political opposition, already fraught following his contentious election in 2013, reached a new low in early February, when the country's Supreme Court ordered

Yameen to free a number of jailed opposition leaders and restore them to their seats in Parliament, a move which would restore the opposition's parliamentary majority. The court also vacated a conviction of exiled former president Mohamed Nasheed. Yameen responded on February 5 with a 15-day "state of emergency," seeking to annul the ruling. On February 20, he extended the state of emergency a further 30 days. As of this writing, the situation remains fluid.

Both China and India have significant equities in the Maldives. Geographical proximity has long given India a strong voice in Maldivian affairs, and former president Nasheed is strongly pro-India; his surprise loss to Yameen in 2013 came after a controversy involving his government's decision to award a lucrative contract to run the Maldives' primary international airport to an Indian company ([Livemint](#), November 27, 2012). Yameen, however, has aligned himself with China since taking office.

His stance has coincided with a surge in Chinese engagement with the Maldives: after the tropical island nation, a

popular travel destination for Europeans, scrapped visa requirements for Chinese tourists, visits by Chinese travelers climbed from 100,000 a year in 2010 to 400,000 in 2016 (Xinhua, May 9, 2017). Yameen's government has bought wholeheartedly into One Belt One Road, declaring it wants its participation in the initiative to drive inbound Chinese tourism to 1 million visits within five years. China's government has reciprocated, helping to fund a significant expansion of Velana International Airport in Malé, the country's capital, through the construction of a new runway. A Chinese company, CCCC Second Harbor Engineering, is also building a "China-Maldives Friendship Bridge" connecting Hulhulé Island, home to Velana International, with Malé proper (the crossing was previously made via ferry).

CCCC won the \$125 million tender to build the bridge, the country's first major inter-island bridge, through a bidding process run not by the government of the Maldives, but by the PRC government (Maldives Independent, December 31, 2015; Reference News, February 18). The two sides reached agreement on the bridge and the tender process following Xi Jinping's visit to the Maldives in September 2014, the first by a PRC president (Office of the Maldives President, September 14, 2014). The bridge is also instrumental to President Yameen's 2013 campaign promise to build a "Youth City" on Hulhulé Island, where he plans to rehouse 70 percent of the country's population of 400,000, currently scattered across 188 islands, in an effort to build economies of scale. Military ties have also grown: The PLA Navy (PLAN) Type 52C guided missile destroyer *Changchun* paid Malé a five-day port visit in April 2017 (Xinhua, April 17, 2017).

Chinese reaction to the unfolding crisis has been a mixture of official caution, with unofficial willingness to assert what it views as its prerogative as a rising Indian Ocean power. The Maldives lie square along the "Maritime Silk Road" half of the Belt and Road project, as well as the shipping lanes along which Gulf oil is exported to China. Since 2008 Chinese naval forces have transited the waters nearby on their way toward anti-piracy patrols off the coast of Somalia (China Brief, April 20, 2017), a key component of the PLA Navy's (PLAN) efforts to train a "blue water navy" capable of providing "open seas protection" in waters far from China's coast (PLA White Paper, 2015). The Chinese foreign ministry has refused to comment beyond expressing its view that "what happens now in the Maldives falls within that country's internal affairs and should be properly resolved by various parties in the Maldives through dialogue

and negotiation," effectively giving the Yameen government free rein (PRC Foreign Ministry, February 9). At the same time, the semi-official newspaper *Global Times*, while declaring that "China needs to work hard to dispel, to some extent, Indian doubts about encirclement in Sino-Maldivian ties", notes that increasing Maldivian ties with China should naturally lead to a broadening of the former's diplomatic horizons—simply put, "in the age of globalization, it's impossible for India to exercise complete control over the Maldives" (Global Times, February 14).

India's reaction to unfolding events has been one of barely disguised alarm. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs said it is "deeply dismayed" by the 30-day extension of the state of emergency, and expressed its hopes that "that Maldives quickly returns to the path of democracy and the rule of law" (Times of India, February 21). Former president Nasheed has called for Indian military intervention to "release judges [and political] detainees" (Twitter, February 6). As if to forestall this possibility, on February 21 Chinese state broadcaster CCTV released footage of ten PLAN ships, including two Type 052D guided missile destroyers and four Type 54A frigates, on patrol in the Indian Ocean (CCTV, February 21). The clip—partially titled "Where Is Our Sword Pointed?"—states that China "does not support other countries' interference in Maldivian internal affairs", cut together with an image of ex-president Nasheed.

Despite the PRC's assertive signaling, it may well be that the Yameen government cannot afford for its standoff with the opposition to continue. Since the declaration of the state of emergency, many countries including China have advised their nationals to avoid travel to the Maldives, and tourist arrivals, the backbone of the Maldivian economy, have dropped off precipitously. However, while the current crisis may soon pass, it is likely that Sino-Indian jockeying in the Maldives has just begun.

*Matt Schrader is the editor of the Jamestown China Brief.*

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## Party Congress Reshuffle Strengthens Xi's Hold on Central Military Commission

By Nan Li

Xi Jinping has introduced major institutional changes to strengthen his control of the PLA in his roles as Party leader and chair of the Central Military Commission (CMC), driven by rampant military corruption attributable to the neglect of civilian control by Hu Jintao during his term as CMC chair from 2004 to 2012. Xi, for instance, dismantled the four General Departments that presided over the PLA: the General Staff Department (GSD), General Political Department (GPD), General Logistics Department (GLD) and General Armament Department (GAD, reorganizing them into 15 new CMC agencies, because he believes the old departments had “concentrated too much power in themselves” and served as major venues for corruption. [1] Xi's primary responsibilities are running the party and the state. He is therefore likely to delegate functional responsibilities to military professionals in order to make the PLA “capable of fighting and winning wars.” These responsibilities logically fall on the shoulder of the new CMC appointed at the 19th Party Congress, held in October 2017. The CMC's new structure and personnel both reflect Xi's determination to root out corruption, consolidate his personal control, and reinvent the PLA as a more responsive, flexible war-fighting organization.

### The New Central Military Commission

Unlike the previous CMC, where Xi's predecessor Hu Jintao continued to exert influence through the two uniformed CMC vice-chairs he appointed in 2012, Xi himself appointed all the members on the current CMC (see Table 1). These appointments are likely based on five considerations: personal relationships, promoting professionalism, boosting “jointness” through service representation, strengthening political control, and enhancing Xi's control of the CMC by reducing its size.

First, members of the new CMC are likely to be people whom Xi knows well and trusts personally to ensure political loyalty, mainly in terms of running the PLA and implementing Xi's military policy. General Zhang Youxia, the newly appointed CMC vice-chair, for instance, has strong personal ties with Xi because their fathers were partners in

commanding a major PLA column in the late 1940s. Admiral Miao Hua, the newly appointed director of CMC Political Work Department (CMCPWD) and a new CMC member, rose through the ranks of the 31st Group Army (GA) headquartered in Fujian, and became acquainted with Xi during the latter's 17 years there (1985-2002). Air Force General Xu Qiliang, the other CMC vice-chair, came to know Xi when he served as commander of the 8th Air Corps in Fujian from 1988 to 1993.

The potential influence of personal relationships, however, must be qualified. Xi would have left himself politically vulnerable had he appointed Zhang Youxia as CMC vice-chair on the basis of personal ties alone. In addition to his ties with Xi, Zhang is also a decorated veteran of China's 1979-1988 war with Vietnam. The credibility he derives from combat experience in an army where it is sorely lacking translates into political capital for Xi.

Hu Jintao appointed Xu Qiliang as commander of the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and a CMC member in 2007, elevating him to CMC-vice chair in 2012. More than likely, Xi decided to appoint Xu to another term not because of their Fujian acquaintance, but because Xu won Xi's trust by faithfully implementing Xi's reorganization of the PLA. [2]

Another important qualifier is that interactions between military officers and civilian officials at local and provincial levels are horizontal, inter-agency ones that are limited and formalistic, and do not involve vertical authority relationship of superiors and subordinates. Personal acquaintances developed in these interactions may play a role in Xi's appointment of senior officers, particularly if Xi's knowledge of the senior officer corps is limited.

However, these limited interactions do not translate into durable personal ties and entrenched personal networks in the PLA for Xi; the majority of Xi's appointments are not based on such ties.

A second consideration in the appointment of CMC members is the promotion of functional and technical expertise-based military professionalism. Xu Qiliang, for instance, is a trained combat pilot who served in the Nanjing and Shenyang Military Regions (MR), PLAAF headquarters, and the PLA General Staff. Zhang Youxia commanded battles against the Vietnamese forces in both 1979 and 1984, and served in the Chengdu, Beijing and Shenyang MRs. General Li Zuocheng, the newly appointed chief of the CMC

Joint Staff Department (CMCJSD) and a new CMC member, is also a decorated hero of the Sino-Vietnamese War of 1979 with experience in the Guangzhou and Chengdu MRs. General Wei Fenghe, a reappointed CMC member and China's defense minister-designate, worked his way up through the ranks of the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF).

All four have extensive service, staff, and command experience.

A third consideration, related to military professionalism, is enhancing "jointness" through diverse service representation in the CMC. Three of the six uniformed CMC members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Current position</b>	<b>Previous position</b>	<b>DOB</b>	<b>Specialty</b>	<b>First Service Unit</b>	<b>Major Service and Command Experience</b>
Xu Qiliang	CMC vice chair	CMC vice chair	1950	Combat pilot	26th Aviation Division of PLAAF stationed in Shanghai	Commander of 8th Air Corps; PLAAF chief of staff; commander of Shenyang MR Air Force; deputy chief of GSD; and PLAAF commander
Zhang Youxia	CMC vice chair	Director of CMCADD and CMC member	1950	Infantry	14th GA headquartered in Kunming	Fought in 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War as a company commander and in 1984 Sino-Vietnamese border conflict as a regiment commander; commander of 13th GA; deputy commander of Beijing MR; commander of Shenyang MR; and director of GAD
Wei Fenghe	Defense minister-designate and CMC member	Commander of PLARF and CMC member	1954	Strategic missile	54th Base of Second Artillery stationed in Luoyang	Commander of 53rd Base of Second Artillery; deputy chief of GSD; and commander of Second Artillery
Li Zuocheng	CMCJSD Chief and CMC member	Commander of PLAA	1953	Infantry	Guangxi Provincial Military District	Fought in 1979 Sino-Vietnamese War as a company commander; commander of 41st GA; and commander of Chengdu MR
Miao Hua	CMCPWD Director and CMC member	PLAN Political Commissar (PC)	1955	Political work	31st GA headquartered in Xi'an	PC of 12th GA and PC of Lanzhou MR
Zhang Shengmin	CMCDIC Secretary and CMC member	PC of CMCLSD	1958	Political work	47th GA headquartered in Xi'an	PC of a Second Artillery base; PC of Second Artillery Command College; and PC of CMC Training and Management Dept.

*Sources: Baidu Encyclopedia and other China-based internet sources.*

—the two vice-chairs and the defense minister—work full-time in the CMC running the PLA as a whole. The other three are part-timers who represent the staff agencies they

head. As a result, at least on a nominal basis, none of the six members represent the specific services in which they

previously served. However, four of the CMC's six uniformed members have clear ties to a specific service: Zhang Youxia and Li Zuocheng the PLA Army (PLAA), Xu Qiliang the PLA AF, and Wei Fenghe the PLARF. Political officers such as Admiral Miao Hua and General Zhang Shengmin, the newly appointed secretary of the CMC Discipline Inspection Commission (CMCDIC) and a new CMC member, whose skill sets are not service-specific and whose services in the PLA Navy (PLAN) and PLARF were relatively brief, may be less representative of a specific service.

In another important change in service representation, PLA service chiefs, who gained seats on the CMC in 2002, are no longer members. The fact that services are now restricted to force construction rather than operations may have made their presence on the CMC unnecessary, as it could have served to exacerbate inter-service rivalry over resources. On the other hand, the PLA may now find more challenging the task of providing "joint" advice at the strategic level in its top decision-making council.

Enhancing political control of the PLA by the CMC chair is clearly another major consideration for Xi's reinvention of the CMC. First, the new CMC members who head the CMCJSD and CMCPWD are much less powerful than their predecessors, who headed GSD and GPD prior to the dismantling of the four general departments. Unlike their predecessors, they can no longer issue orders to the PLA. The primary role of these senior officers and the agencies they head, which have been substantially downsized and downgraded, is now to provide senior staff support to the CMC chair and vice chairs in making decisions. This change has clearly enhanced the power of Xi, the CMC chair, to control the PLA.

Moreover, unlike the previous CMC, the directors of the CMC Logistics Support Department (CMCLSD) and the CMC Armament Development Department (CMCADD) no longer serve on the CMC. The two departments have been downsized and downgraded, with major components of their predecessor agencies, the GLD and GAD, transferred to the newly established CMC Joint Logistics Support Force and PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF), respectively. Although the two department heads continue to provide senior staff support to CMC leadership in areas such as budgeting, armament development, and procurement, exclusion from the CMC has clearly curtailed their power. Finally, the exclusion of the chiefs of CMCLSD and CMCADD and PLA services from the CMC has reduced

the number of uniformed CMC members from ten to six, which is likely to centralize the chair's power by reducing the voices from within the PLA that attempt to influence CMC decisions. The change has made CMC deliberation on policy less contentious and reduced the power of service chiefs, since they can only serve for one term of five years if they do not become CMC members. This lowers the chance that locality or personality-based cliques will form, or that the chiefs to become "lords of their own estates" ("一方诸侯").

The number of political officers in the new CMC has also increased. Only one of the 10 uniformed members of the previous CMC was a political officer: the director of the GPD. In the new CMC, two out of six, or one-third of the uniformed members, are political officers: the director of the CMCPWD and the secretary of CMCDIC. It is likely that Xi made this change to strengthen his hold on the PLA: the CMCPWD and CMCDIC control the vital functions of personnel appointment and discipline inspection, respectively. It will be a challenge for these political officers to successfully balance Xi's effort to weed out corruption and consolidate control of the PLA with their desire to safeguard the interests of the PLA, subject as they still are to its incentive structure.

## Conclusion

A revamped CMC has major implications for party leader's control of the PLA. A much smaller CMC, for instance, implies that top military decision processes will be much more centralized within the top leadership than before. The smaller size may also enable a more agile and responsive CMC leadership for operational command and control of PLA forces. Exclusion of service chiefs from the new CMC, however, may make provision of "joint" advice at the strategic level in the CMC a major challenge.

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## Notes

1. See Nan Li, "Xi Jinping and PLA Restructuring," *East Asian Policy*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (December 2016).
2. Xu, for instance, has served as the standing deputy head (常务付组长) of the CMC Leading Small Group

to Deepen National Defence and Military Reforms since 2014.

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## "Full Employment" in Tibet: The Beginning and End of Chen Quanguo's Neo-Socialist Experiment

By Adrian Zenz

### Introduction

On November 8th, 2017, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) published its second and final public job intake for the year, completing its annual process of announcing open public and civil service positions for eligible university graduates from this sensitive minority region. Notably, the timing was unusually late. Public job announcements are usually issued shortly after tertiary graduation dates in August or early September.

There is ample reason to speculate that the delay was caused by a drastic, unannounced change in Tibet's public employment policy, one that may not prove popular with young, well-educated Tibetans in the region. The total numbers of advertised public jobs in the region fell sharply to 5,844, just over half of the previous year's 10,030 positions, leaving thousands of graduates to compete for employment in the private job market.

To informed observers, this sudden adjustment marks a silent abrogation of the "full employment commitment" instituted by the region's previous Party Secretary, Chen Quanguo. [1] After Chen was transferred to China's northwestern Xinjiang region in August 2016, the TAR's government apparently decided to abandon his popular yet unsustainably expensive employment policy. However, the abrupt nature of this policy shift and the resulting gap in public employment opportunities holds considerable risks for the future stability of this sensitive region. Importantly, the TAR's termination of its "neo-socialist" stability experiment raises wider questions about the sustainability of China's subsidy-driven approach for maintaining stability in restive minority regions.

### The Genesis of Chen Quanguo's "Full Employment Commitment"

In 2007, the TAR was China's last region to end the "graduate job assignment system" (毕业生分配制度), a key feature of socialist society in China and other Communist nations such as the former Soviet Union. Job assignment meant that university as well as vocational secondary graduates were guaranteed a job in a government work unit, be it a state-owned enterprise or a government or related public service agency within the civil service system (公务员制度) and public service units (事业单位). In much of Western China, the private sector remains severely underdeveloped; especially in lesser-developed minority regions, secure, well-remunerated employment is difficult to obtain outside the public sector. This dependence is especially severe in remote regions such as Tibet. Additionally, minorities such as Tibetans often find it difficult to compete with the Han majority for private sector jobs, which require fluent Mandarin.

Consequently, in the years after 2007, thousands of TAR university graduates struggled to obtain employment that would be considered adequate for this more highly educated population segment. When Chen Quanguo assumed the position of TAR Party Secretary in autumn 2011, the region was still grappling with the aftermath of the 2008 Lhasa uprising, as well as a growing wave of self-immolations in the neighboring Tibetan regions in Sichuan Province. Self-immolations have been especially popular among the younger population ([International Campaign for Tibet](#)). Meanwhile, rapid economic growth resulting from economic liberalization processes initiated by previous administrations had led to soaring urban-rural income discrepancies. In minority regions such as Tibet, urban-rural income gaps are essentially indicators of inter-ethnic inequality, as over 90 percent of the TAR's Tibetan population is rural.

Shortly after assuming his new post, Chen tackled the issue head-on by proclaiming an all-out "full employment commitment" (全就业的承诺) at the Eighth TAR Party Congress in November 2011 ([Zhongguowang](#), March 21, 2013). This step came in the context of Chen urging officials to "do everything possible to create more job opportunities and positions" (千方百计创造更多的就业机会和岗位) ([CCTV.com](#), January 3, 2012). Chen's "full employment" policy effectively reinstated the erstwhile graduate job assignment system, albeit with variations. Its measures specifically applied to TAR residents who sat their university entrance examination (高考) in the TAR

and who were TAR residents at that time. In 2014, regional news outlets proudly announced that the TAR had achieved “four consecutive years of full employment” for its graduates (Renminwang, March 7, 2015).

Indeed, annual numbers of formal public job adverts soared from 4,680 in 2010 to 10,313 in 2011. Advert numbers peaked at 14,500 in 2012, exceeding that year's tertiary graduates by an estimated 4,000. The 2012 public job bonanza was presumably designed to provide employment opportunities for unsuccessful applicants from previous years, who were also eligible to apply. State media stated that between 2011 and 2016, a total of 61,862 TAR tertiary graduates, or 84 percent of all such graduates, obtained government jobs (Xinhua, December 30, 2016). Thousands of the positions were allocated through various TAR police forces (China Brief, September 21, 2017).

Likewise, the 2015 graduate employment report of Tibet University, the TAR's top tertiary institution, noted that 81 percent of its graduates that year secured employment in government-related positions, 14 percent in state-owned enterprises, and only 5 percent in other, potentially non-state work units (Xizang Daxue, December 29, 2015).

Even though graduate employment in western China is traditionally dominated by state employment, this non-state employment share is nevertheless surprisingly low. After all, 43 percent of that year's graduates were Han, and both Han and minority graduates fluent in Mandarin are typically able to secure well paid private sector positions. By 2016, Tibet University's graduate employment situation remained largely unchanged, with 74 percent of graduates entering government work units, 14 percent taking up positions in state-owned enterprises, and only 12 percent securing positions in non-state work units (Xizang Daxue, February 15, 2017).

During the six years of the full employment commitment (2011-2016), the TAR advertised over three times more civil service positions per capita than Xinjiang. Doing so resulted in bloated cadre ranks and major long-term financial commitments, since those in formal government employment cannot be laid off unless they commit significant misdemeanors. Even so, Chen's ambitious promise anticipated Xi Jinping's drive for stability maintenance (维稳) at nearly any cost, primarily applied through state-led, top-down investment.

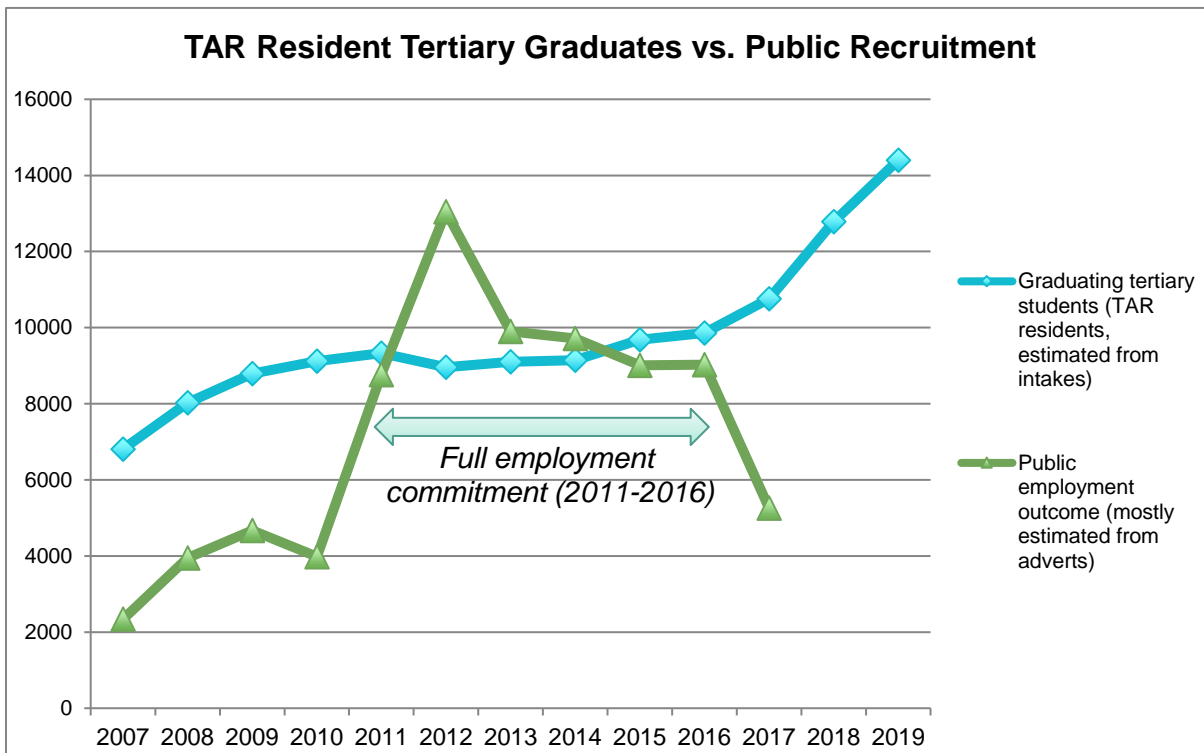


Figure 1: Sources: TAR public employment adverts (高校毕业生公开招录计划), tertiary student intake allocation tables (招生计划).

The End of Full Employment: A Silent Abrogation

The government appeared to quietly abandon the full employment policy in mid-2016; the term has been conspicuously absent in official statements and media coverage since then. However, even in 2015, when TAR media channels were touting the success of the initiative, the year's total public employment intake marked the lowest since 2011. By advertising 10,010 public jobs, the region would likely have hired roughly 9,000 graduates (based on an estimated 90 percent hiring rate). Other sources permit us to estimate the number of eligible TAR-resident tertiary graduates in 2015 at about 9,700. [2] This slight discrepancy by itself would not have been a cause for concern, considering that there are at least some private sector employment opportunities in the region. However, in 2015 TAR residents were allocated nearly 15,000 new tertiary study spaces, a figure that increased to a record-breaking 20,249 in 2017. [3] As a result, the estimated number for TAR graduates, all eligible for Chen's full employment commitment, can be forecasted to nearly double between 2015 and 2020, from about 9,700 to about 18,000.

The definitive and abrupt end of Chen Quanguo's policy took place in 2017. In the face of an estimated cohort of nearly 11,000 tertiary graduates, the region only advertised 5,844 civil service positions, leaving almost half of all eligible graduates to secure adequate employment from other sources. Media reports noted a record number of 47,500 applicants for these positions, marking an applicant-to-job ratio of 8.1 (Phoenix Information, November 28, 2017). In 2010, before the full employment commitment, this ratio stood at 5.8, whereas by 2013 it had dropped to only 1.7. [4] As is evident in Figure 1, the ratio of public jobs to applicants is set to rise sharply in the coming few years. No official reason has been given for the abandonment of Chen's measure. However, informed sources have told the author that rising graduate numbers had made the full employment policy too costly for the TAR government. The central government was reportedly unwilling to further subsidize the resulting growth in human resource expenses, and it was widely felt that guaranteed positions reduced the motivation of local university students to study diligently. Chen Quanguo's transfer to Xinjiang allowed the TAR to quietly abandon his policy without causing its former leader any political embarrassment.

### Tibet After Full Employment: What Comes Next?

Since publishing lower figures for new public jobs in November, the TAR government and state media outlets have shifted to emphasizing other longstanding employment support measures. In particular, the state wants graduates to take up job opportunities in the more developed parts of China. Through the "pairing assistance" (对口援藏) program, other regions in China have offered 40,000 job opportunities to TAR-resident graduates since 2012 (Tibet News, December 9, 2017). In 2017 alone, there were 11,065 such positions, 1,872 of which were based in Guangdong.

However, according to the Tibet News, the Guangdong job offers only resulted in 105 expressions of "employment intentions" (就业意向) between graduates and employers, filling only 5.6 percent of the positions. Informed sources told the author that Tibetan graduates dislike long-term resettlement to locations outside the TAR, as this uproots them from their cultural, linguistic and natural environments, despite the existence of generous government subsidies (Xinhua, December 9, 2017; State Council Information Office, August 21, 2014).

The government's emphasis on moving highly educated TAR graduates to other regions raises the question of why it does not do more to secure them better private sector job opportunities at home. A forthcoming research report on private enterprise career paths in the TAR reviewed by the author shows that nearly all managers above the low-middle level are Han migrants from Eastern China. Moreover, those Tibetans that were able to advance in the ranks were both fluent in Mandarin and well-adapted to Han cultural and behavioral patterns.

Even though local Tibetans might lack experience or expertise compared to their Han counterparts, the government should double down on its efforts to systematically train and integrate them into Han-dominated contexts in order to boost Tibetan private sector employment opportunities more effectively. In addition, preferential employment policies, which have been part and parcel of public job recruitments for decades, could play an important role in the private sector as well.

### Conclusions

Chen Quanguo's full employment commitment was a bold, expensive, and ultimately unsustainable measure for pro-



moting social stability in this restive region. The quiet abrogation of his policy during the past 12-18 months has implications beyond the future stability of Tibet. With China's local government and corporate debt levels at record heights, the end of the full employment policy in Tibet raises wider questions about the sustainability of the state's strategy of buying social stability and popular support in Tibet, Xinjiang and elsewhere through massive state-funded and infrastructure-driven investments.

For Tibetans, the future holds rising levels of competitive and assimilatory pressures. To secure well-remunerated private or public jobs at home, strong Mandarin skills and a willingness to firmly integrate into the mainstream culture are becoming ever more important. Subsidized employment opportunities only exist for those willing to detach themselves from their socio-linguistic habitat.

Consequently, those who are poised to benefit from all these job opportunities are Tibetans who are firmly embedded in Mandarin-language education, often those from the region's top schools in Lhasa or other major urban centers. Their employment outcomes contrast sharply with the much larger numbers of Tibetans who remain in the educationally inferior Tibetan schools. However, it is precisely these lesser-educated and harder to assimilate segments of the population who pose the greater threat to the region's long-term stability, especially if their upward mobility prospects after the end of the public employment drive turn out to be dim. Rather than attempting to move this population group away from Tibet, the government could focus on providing them meaningful employment opportunities closer to home, while ensuring that Tibetan language skills are an asset rather than a hindrance in private job markets.

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## Notes

1. Here and below, "informed sources" refers to Chinese (Han or minority) academics with a research focus on the TAR and/or Tibetan regions in general.
2. Based on TAR tertiary intake documents (招生计划) for each year.

3. See [Fischer and Zenz \(2016\)](#).
4. Calculated based on various media reports.

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## Beijing's Vision for a Reshaped International Order

*By Nadège Rolland*

The "community of common destiny" (命运共同体) has emerged as one of Xi Jinping's most favorite "diplospeak" phrases, appearing in his public speeches more than a hundred times since he first came to power in 2012. Far from a bland and well-meaning platitude, the "community" belongs to the realm of official political "formulations" (提法) that are meant to indicate the Party line. It reflects Beijing's aspirations for a future world order, different from the existing one and more in line with its own interests and status.

### Early Appearances and Concentric Circles of Expansion

"Community of common destiny" (or its now preferred official English translation, "community of shared future") featured prominently in Xi Jinping's 19th Party Congress speech last October ([Xinhua](#), October 27, 2017). The term "community of common destiny" was seldom used prior to the start of the Xi era. Hu Jintao aired it in 2007 to describe the special relationship between the mainland and Taiwan, with the implication that two politically different entities could have reasonably good relations despite their dissimilarities. In an international context, it was mentioned in a 2011 State Council white paper published on China's peaceful rise, as a way to underline the interdependence between "countries with different systems, different types and different stages of development" born out of economic globalization ([gov.cn](#), September 2011). Xi first used the term at the April 2013 Bo'ao Forum, then reiterated it in numerous public addresses to domestic and foreign audiences over the following years.

There are several categories of communities of shared destiny, going out in concentric circles: bilateral communities with China's immediate neighbors (i.e. Pakistan, [Xinhua](#), April 22, 2015), with regions and entire continents (China's periphery, [Xinhua](#), October 25, 2013; ASEAN, [CPC News](#), October 4, 2013; Africa, [CPC News](#), March 26,

2013), and, more recently, with the entirety of “humankind” (人类命运共同体) ([Xinhua](#), April 22, 2015). This latest iteration illustrates both Beijing’s growing global outlook, commensurate with what it sees as its great power status, and its increasing confidence that it can compete at the global level with other great powers not only in material terms, but also in the realm of ideas.

### The Emerging Shape of the Common Community

Although the phrase has appeared often in Xi’s public speeches, there is no official definition of what the community of common destiny (CCD) is all about. Its content is still being discussed internally among scholars and members of the Party nomenclature, as illustrated, for example, by a March 2016 seminar organized jointly by the CCP’s International Liaison Department Research Office and Contemporary World (当代世界) magazine ([Huanqiu](#), April 12, 2016). CCD is still an evolving and amorphous concept, but there is nevertheless an emerging common understanding among the people who take part in the domestic debate over its meaning: CCD reflects a dissatisfaction with the current US-led international order, and it purports to offer a better way than the Western one for organizing the world.

The community is, at its essence, a view on how to “re-shape the international order” (重塑国际秩序) ([Dangdai Shijie](#), May 30, 2016), and to offer a new model of global governance ([cssn.cn](#), January 19) that is “more just and reasonable” (CASS) than the present “domination by the West” which has become “unsustainable” ([jinming](#), December 1, 2017). In human affairs, say CASS scholars Xu Jin and Guo Chu, “one cannot talk about destiny without touching upon life and death; in international relations, one cannot talk about destiny without touching upon the rise and fall of powers.” Managing China’s rising peacefully, as Beijing says it intends to do, means in effect finding ways to avoid military conflict with the incumbent hegemon, namely the United States. The CCD is intended within this context, as “to overcome the resistance encountered during China’s rise process.” In other words: China will continue to expand its power and influence while trying to reduce outside resistance, using the narrative of an inclusive community which everyone is welcome to join because it supposedly transcends individual countries’ narrow interests. ([CASS](#)).

The new community defies political, ideological and physical boundaries, because its members manage to find the greatest common denominator ([BISU](#), October 20, 2017) while putting aside their ideological differences ([Dangdai Shijie](#), May 30, 2016). The common ground around which the community will coalesce is believed to be economic development, which Beijing No.2 Foreign Language Institute professor Zhang Yaojun (张耀军) defines as “the key to solving all problems” ([BISU](#), October 20, 2017) and State Councillor and Politburo member Yang Jiechi (杨洁篪) deems as “the most important task.” The community is non-ideological and apolitical ([Dangdai Shijie](#), May 30, 2016), contrary to the West’s “ideologically-based aid programs” ([BISU](#), October 20, 2017) because “no single road or model can be universally adopted” ([cssn.cn](#), January 19). This resonates quite well with Xi Jinping’s 19th CCP Congress speech ([Xinhua](#), November 3, 2017) in which he offered socialism with Chinese characteristics as a “new option for other countries and nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence.”

The main threat to China’s ambitions is seen as the United States, which wants to exercise full control over the international order and “suppress and contain” (压制围堵) emerging powers and challengers militarily, economically and politically, through its network of alliances system, its “dollar hegemony,” and the promotion of “so-called” universal values ([Dangdai Shijie](#), May 30, 2016). In contrast, within the CCD, China promotes peace and harmony (和合), equality of all beings (众生平), and harmony within difference (和而不同) ([CPC News](#), August 18, 2017). Such an implicit moral superiority is prominent in the writings of Yang Jiechi, who claims that CCD reflects how China is now “confident and capable of making greater contributions to the world” by offering a “new model” of regional cooperation and global governance, informed by “Chinese wisdom” (中国智慧) ([jinming](#), December 1, 2017). Fu Ying (傅莹), chairwoman of the National People’s Congress Foreign Affairs Committee, also extols the morally superior qualities of China’s “traditional strategic culture” which she describes as essentially non-expansionist and conflict-averse. The CCD’s model of “cooperative security” is in her eyes more desirable than the Western model of “collective security” which does nothing but “expand the security of its members while squeezing the security of non-members.” ([cssn.cn](#), January 19).

The CCD, by contrast, is described as an “extended family coexisting harmoniously” that “does not duplicate the old game of geopolitics” (Fu Ying), a global partnership network, a “non-aligned alliance” (Yang Jiechi), in which members need to “stand on the side of China, or at least, be neutral” while at the same time “providing mutual security support” (Xu-Guo). In sum, CCD is a network of strong strategic partnerships that resemble an alliance system while denying being one. As Xu and Guo explain, the community also needs an “other,” a “contrast and reference point” to catalyse goodwill and cooperation. Short of a “major threat originating from outside the Earth,” the presence of an adversary “is the only way humanity will bind together.” The authors leave the identity of this enemy to the imagination of the reader, but there is no question who they have in mind.

### Concrete Steps

The community of common destiny is intimately associated with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as they form two facets of the same coin: while the community is an intellectual construct, a “theory”—almost a utopian vision that gives the overall direction needed to attain a distant goal—BRI is the “practice,” the path, providing concrete means to knit the community together (BISU, October 20, 2017). Just as China is still in the “primary stage of socialism” on the road to pure communism, the community is in its infancy but embodies the “ultimate goal of human society’s development.” (Huangjiu, April 12, 2016) Until this ideal vision is achieved, China needs to continue to offer pragmatic cooperation via BRI.

Xu Jin and Guo Chu describe the CCD as a set of new “strategic partnerships,” “based on political and security arrangements” that will emerge as a result of China’s increased economic interactions with the world. Members of the community will join initially because they will recognize the economic benefits they can reap from their membership. In time, they will come to understand that in order to protect the fruits of their economic interactions, they will also need to broaden and deepen their political and security cooperation with China. Increased interactions will help shape members’ views and nurture a “we” feeling among them. After a while, they will come to feel that being part of the community, is not only necessary for pragmatic reasons, it will also appear “inevitable and the right thing to do.” The process of building the community is significant in and of itself, as it will help pave the way for China to

emerge as a regional and global leader. CCD will allow trust-building, and enhance friendship, until its members “become accustomed to China’s playing such a role.” (CASS)

### Conclusion

Whereas BRI provides physical connectivity, the CCD represents the intangible bonds that would tie the region together around China to form a “bloc with those countries that more or less depend on its economy” (Diplomat, November 28, 2013). The principles and norms that would regulate and frame the interactions among its members reflect Beijing’s rejection of the current U.S.-led world order. The community’s fate is intimately associated with BRI and the eventual realization of such an ambitious ideal is anything but certain. But its recurrence in the official diplomatic lexicon reflects how serious the vision has become for the regime.

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## Amphibious Operations: Lessons of Past Campaigns for Today’s PLA

*By Kevin McCauley*

Amphibious operations are important components of current PLA doctrinal writings and exercises. With no recent experience in amphibious warfare, PLA military science examines foreign and historical operations for guiding principles. PLA histories highlight amphibious operations against Xiamen, Kinmen and Hainan in 1949 and 1950, the last of which the PLA views as its first large-scale sea crossing experience. These nascent amphibious operations provided amphibious warfare experience and lessons learned for the intended invasion of Taiwan, as well as the PLA’s first joint operation to seize the Yijiangshan Islands in 1954-55.

## Xiamen and Kinmen

The PLA initiated operations to capture Fujian Province in July 1949, in part as a base for future operations against Taiwan. The PLA had hoped to keep Nationalist (Kuomintang or KMT) forces from escaping the mainland, but some Nationalist forces retreated to islands off the coast, specifically the island of Xiamen—which makes up the bulk of the present-day PRC city of the same name—and the island of Kinmen a mile to the east, as well as several smaller islands. [1]

Initial sorties to seize several small islands on October 10-13 by the PLA's 10th Corps (兵团) secured the crossing corridors for the subsequent landing on Kinmen. [2] The Xiamen amphibious operation followed soon thereafter. The PLA began the assault on the island itself the evening of October 15, shelling the smaller, nearby island of Gulangyu to deceive the enemy while the main attack launched against the north of Xiamen. At 2100 the 29th Army landed at two beachheads on the northern coast, broke through the enemy defenses, and defeated several counterattacks. After consolidating the beachheads, forces began to move south through the island. By noon on October 16, northern Xiamen had been secured, and KMT troops in the south sought to escape by ship. Shortly before noon the next day Xiamen was liberated.

The KMT was therefore determined to defend Kinmen, as it protects the Penghu archipelago and Taiwan, and controls the approach to Xiamen. The defenders improved fortifications and reinforcements arrived to raise the military personnel from 20,000 to 30,000. PLA intelligence failed to detect these KMT preparations and reinforcements.

On the evening of October 24, the PLA landed two regiments on Kinmen's northwest coast. Another began the crossing at midnight, but a northwest wind left the fleet in disorder with poor communications. The 82nd Division command post did not cross with the first echelon to take command of on-island operations. Close to the shore the assault force met fierce enemy fire and suffered heavy casualties. By the wee hours on October 25 assault forces had begun to break through the enemy defenses, but loss of unified command adversely impacted the operation. Adding to the problems, the wooden junks had become grounded by the ebb tide and underwater obstacles, unable to return to embark the second echelon.

KMT aircraft and naval forces destroyed the stranded fleet.

On the morning of October 25, two KMT divisions launched a counterattack supported by aircraft, warships and tanks inflicting heavy losses on the PLA, and initiating two days of back-and-forth combat. Contact with the invasion force was lost on October 27, although some fire could be seen on the beach. All was silent by 1500 on October 28. The PLA had inflicted heavy casualties on the island defenders, but the invasion force was lost. There would not be another; Kinmen remains part of Taiwan today.

## The Hainan Amphibious Campaign

Lessons learned from the Xiamen and failed Kinmen landings were incorporated into planning for the Hainan operations. After the PLA captured Guangdong Province, KMT forces retreated to Hainan. The KMT considered Hainan important for conducting operations against the mainland, and planned to use bases on Hainan for naval construction, maintenance and repair. The KMT force on Hainan appeared considerable on paper, with four route armies (路军) under the command of Xue Yue, regarded as an effective Nationalist general. However, the long island coastline and internal front tended to negate the KMT's numerical advantage, as well as make coordination between the defenders difficult.

A meeting was held on February 1, 1950 in Guangzhou to assess the situation and plan the campaign. While there was concern over the KMT naval and air forces, Nationalist morale and capabilities were considered low. The PLA had a small number of aircraft—fighters, bombers, and transports—supported by Soviet personnel, but they apparently played no role in the amphibious landing. The PLA assessed their troops' capability as high, but were concerned about the limited experience in amphibious operations. The PLA assembled more than 2,000 ships, and conducted intensive amphibious training. The sea crossing distances from planned embarkation points on the Leizhou Peninsula to beaches in northern Hainan ranged from 19 to 115 miles. Sea crossings were planned at night to mitigate the KMT's air and maritime superiority.

General Xue had reorganized and improved the Hainan defenses in face of the invasion threat. The KMT Navy attempted to establish a blockade of the strait separating

Hainan from the mainland, while its Air Force attacked fishing ports and concentrations of shipping, disrupt training and lines of communication, and conducted harassment bombing of key cities. These proved ineffective in halting the PLA's invasion operation, which began on the night of April 16, with PLA landings at two locations on the north coast. The westernmost landing included the 40th Army command post, and a division and a half-worth of troops. The other landing to the east comprised a 43rd Army command element, and the equivalent of two regiments. These units began attacking inland in coordination with CCP-affiliated guerilla forces already present on the island. A second phase began on the night of April 23 on the northeast coast, with a command element of the 43rd Army, and the equivalent of over four regiments. The PLA conducted another landing down the western coast as the KMT forces retreated towards the southern end of Hainan. The Nationalist forces finally evacuated by sea.

### Lessons Learned

The Xiamen landings displayed careful planning, preparation and intelligence collection. Xiamen's terrain and defenses were closely analyzed, and a suitable transit time, crossing routes, and landing areas chosen. Further, the PLA mobilized the requisite number of transports, and conducted repeated exercises to prepare the amphibious assault force. Some deception was employed to confuse the KMT as to the main landing area. According to later PLA amphibious doctrine, the main landings on the northern beaches first defeated counterattacks and quickly consolidated the beachheads before transitioning to on-shore combat. The PLA recognized it had to seize enemy-held satellite islands, to eliminate interference with the crossing operations.

In contrast, the Kinmen operation appeared to be haphazardly planned. Sailors were not familiar with the area, training was inadequate, and information on the tides and weather conditions at the landing beaches not known. PLA analysis identified another problem with the operation: in clearing the coast and seizing Zhangzhou and Xiamen, the PLA had the dual missions of combat as well as support in establishing control in the newly captured areas. The PLA had difficulty balancing the complex requirements of the two missions. The implication was that the military's role in establishing political control negatively impacted attention to the details of the amphibious operation against Kinmen. The conclusion appeared to be

that completion of combat missions took priority over establishment of local control by the military. This has important implications for a Taiwan invasion scenario, where exerting control over captured territory, maintaining public order, and restoring and repairing needed infrastructure would be important requirements that could impact combat operations. Provisions for civilian control and reconstruction, supported by the employment of People's Armed Police national-level units, would need careful advanced planning.

Lessons learned from the Hainan landing campaign reinforced those from Xiamen and Kinmen. Careful preparation, intelligence collection, and intensive pre-battle training were keys to a successful operation. While not surprising, these factors were particularly critical in a situation where air, sea and information dominance were not possible. Additionally, a strong escort group was required to protect the troop transports, especially with the threat of enemy naval and air forces in the Hainan campaign. Training of ship crews and pilots was particularly important. Once landed, the troops needed to move inland from the beachhead quickly. In the Hainan campaign, the PLA had the advantage of a second front operating on the island to support the landings. The KMT was never able to mount a strong counterattack against the Hainan or Xiamen landings as they did during the successful defense of Kinmen.

The PLA learned from the careful preparation, pre-battle training, operation timing, selection of landing sites, and intelligence preparation evidenced in the Xiamen and Hainan campaigns, but absent in the failed Kinmen operation. While deception did not appear to have a major role in these historical campaigns, it could in a future landing campaign against Taiwan. While tactical surprise might be achieved, strategic or even campaign-level surprise would be difficult due to the indicators that would be evident in an operation on this scale. However, indicators that an operation was imminent would cause Taiwan to mobilize. The extensive mobilization of reservists and civilian equipment—required to man units and equip engineer and logistics forces—could adversely impact Taiwan's economy without firing a shot. The counterattack at Kinmen is an important lesson for Taiwan; short of defeating the invasion force during the embarkation or transit phases, the ability to conduct strong counterattacks prior to the establishment of a lodgment is critical to defeating the island landing campaign. A major counterintelligence

concern for Taiwan is the level of Communist penetration of the military leading to debilitating internal sabotage during a crisis, a concern reinforced by a spate of recent espionage cases, some of which have included military personnel. Such sabotage could debilitate command as well as situational awareness at a critical time, causing paralysis. Taiwan would do well to heed the lessons of history, as they will surely inform the PLA's invasion plans.

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## Notes

1. Kinmen is also known by the names "Jinmen" and "Quemoy".
2. The source for this and subsequent accounts of PLA operations is *The Chinese Army Actual Combat Record, Vol. 4*, (Beijing: NDU Press, 1993).

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