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Arrests in Poland Contribute to the International Controversies Surrounding Huawei

By John Dotson

Introduction

The December 1, 2018, arrest of Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou (孟晚舟) in Vancouver—an arrest made by Canadian officials pursuant to a warrant issued in the United States—touched off a three-way diplomatic firestorm between China, Canada, and the United States. However, in the controversy surrounding the arrest of Ms. Meng, a number of other issues surrounding Huawei—including ones of potentially longer-term impact—have received far less attention. Ms. Meng’s arrest, and the arrest of another Huawei employee in Poland (*see below*), come on the heels of a series of escalating measures—or measures under consideration—by governments in North America and the Pacific Region to restrict the use of Chinese-manufactured telecommunications equipment. Such measures are now increasingly under consideration in Europe, as well, with major implications not only for the international profile of companies such as Huawei, but also for the construction of advanced communications infrastructure throughout much of the world.

In the United States, Huawei and its fellow Chinese telecom company ZTE have long been treated with suspicion on security grounds. In 2012, the Intelligence Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives issued a report that identified the use of equipment by the two firms as a threat to U.S. communications security. [1] Such suspicions became codified in the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019*, which placed formal restrictions on the use of Chinese-manufactured electronics by agencies within the Department of Defense. [2] However, the United States has not been alone in taking a skeptical eye towards Chinese telecommunications companies, and measures to restrict the use of equipment and services from these firms gathered tempo in 2018 and 2019. Citing security concerns, the Australian, New Zealand, and Japanese governments have banned 5G (i.e., fifth generation cellular mobile network) telecom providers from using Huawei equipment; Australia and Japan have further banned the use of equipment from ZTE ([SDX Central](#), December 10 2018).

Controversies in Europe, and Alleged Huawei Spying in Poland

Huawei has established a major market presence in Europe—due in part to the company's active cultivation of European elites and political parties, as well as its highly competitive bids for major contracts. Huawei has had a particularly large profile in the construction of 5G infrastructure in multiple European countries—signing, for example, a large deal in December 2018 to upgrade Portugal's largest phone network to the 5G standard ([Carnegie Endowment](#), December 27 2018; [South China Morning Post](#), December 10, 2018).

The controversies regarding Huawei and other Chinese telecom manufacturers, however, have recently spread to the formerly hospitable EU market. In France—which has long been prominent among European Union (EU) countries for restrictive policies intended to protect its national infrastructure ([China Brief](#), January 18)—the national legislature began discussion in early 2019 of a bill that would allow retroactive security inspections in the country's communications networks, a move widely viewed as linked to concerns about Huawei-manufactured equipment ([Telecom Lead](#), January 22; [Reuters](#), January 21). This latter move sparked a harsh response in the PRC state press, with one commentator calling the French bill “absurd” and a violation of “basic international commercial fairness” ([Global Times](#), January 22).

Controversies surrounding Huawei were further stoked on January 8th, when security officials in Poland arrested two men on grounds of alleged espionage activities. One of the men is a Chinese national officially identified only as “Weijing W.” in accordance with Polish law. However, “Weijing W.” has been widely identified in media as “Wang Weijing,” a man who worked first for the PRC Foreign Ministry at the consulate in Gdansk from 2006-2011, and then assumed public relations and sales positions with Huawei in Poland. The second man, officially identified as “Piotr D.,” is a Polish citizen and former employee of both Orange Polska, Poland's leading communications provider; and of the Polish Internal Security Agency (*Agencja Bezpieczeństwa Wewnętrznego*), where he worked in the field of information security until 2011 ([Gazeta Prawna.pl](#), January 11 2019).

Huawei's Presence in Poland

The arrests in Poland come at a very awkward time for Huawei. Poland has been a primary hub for Huawei's efforts to expand into Nordic and Eastern European markets: in 2008, Huawei designated its division in Poland ("Huawei Polska") as the headquarters for these two regions, with a reported 665 employees as of spring 2017. Huawei has also sought to raise its profile in the Polish high-tech sector in other ways, as well: for example, following from an agreement signed in 2015, Huawei was a founding partner of one of Poland's leading technology research facilities, the Poznan Supercomputing and Networking Centre ([Huawei press release](#), September 25 2017).

Huawei's active marketing in Poland reached a milestone in spring 2018, when the company emerged as the top seller of cell phones in Poland ([Xinhua](#), May 27 2018). Furthermore, in December 2018 Deutsche Telekom announced the kick-off of a 5G network for Poland, with Huawei designated as the sole vendor providing equipment for the network ([Gazeta Wyborcza](#), December 18 2018). In light of the early January arrests, however, the latter deal may be in limbo: Joachim Brudzinski, Poland's Minister for Internal Affairs, has since issued calls for Poland and the European Union to work out a common position as to whether or not Huawei equipment should be barred from European markets ([Money.pl](#), January 12 2019).

Huawei and the Chinese government have taken markedly different approaches in regards to Meng Wanzhou and Wang Weijing. The official PRC response to the arrest of Meng Wanzhou has been harsh, and has contributed to a major diplomatic chill between the PRC and Canada. [3] The response to Wang's arrest, however, has been quite different. In Poland, Wang has stated through his attorney that the charges against him are "completely groundless," and that he "did not cooperate with any kind of intelligence, especially Chinese intelligence" ([South China Morning Post](#), January 23). Despite Wang's protestations of innocence, PRC officialdom has signaled possible intent to cut Wang loose, with state media reporting on Huawei's decision to terminate Wang's employment on grounds that "the incident in question has brought Huawei into disrepute" ([China Daily](#), January 12).

Conclusion

Although the case has yet to be adjudicated in the Polish legal system, the arrests of "Weijing W." and "Piotr D." could have a potential chilling effect on Huawei's expansion—not only into the Polish market itself, but also in the Eastern European and Nordic regions for which Huawei Polska serves as the company's regional hub. Even more importantly, the allegations of espionage on the part of Huawei personnel will almost certainly provide further impetus to voices within the EU that wish to block Huawei's growing presence in expanding European networks for 5G communications.

Huawei's status as the world's largest telecommunications firm, and its prominent role in developing 5G infrastructures throughout the world, would likely make the company an object of scrutiny under the best of

circumstances. However, Huawei's parallel role as a national champion of PRC international commercial expansion—as well as its deep and longstanding ties to the ruling Chinese Communist Party, and the obligations of all major Chinese companies to support PRC state goals—naturally lead to concerns that the company may operate with more than simple profit motives in mind. The ultimate outcomes of the Polish case may prove very illuminating as to where the line is drawn between Huawei's commercial activities and the interests of the Chinese state.

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Notes

[1] U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, “Investigative Report on the U.S. National Security Issues Posed by Chinese Telecommunications Companies *Huawei* and ZTE,” October 8, 2012.

[https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/huawei-zte%20investigative%20report%20\(final\).pdf](https://intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/huawei-zte%20investigative%20report%20(final).pdf).

[2] U.S. Congress, *H.R.5515 - John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019* (signed into law August 13, 2018), Section 871: “Prohibition on Acquisition of Sensitive Materials from Non-Allied Foreign Nations.”

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5515/text#toc-H8723BEF6929A4A7B9B0EBDE0C72BB11D>.

[3] The Chinese government has responded angrily to the arrest of Meng Wanzhou, with a PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson asserting that the United States and Canada had “arbitrarily abused” their bilateral extradition agreement, and had seriously infringed on Ms. Meng’s legal rights ([People’s Daily Online](#), January 23). The PRC Foreign Ministry further summoned the U.S. and Canadian ambassadors for a formal protest, and warned of “serious consequences” if Ms. Meng were not released ([PRC Foreign Ministry](#), December 6 2018; [BBC News](#), December 9 2018).

The Learning Curve: How Communist Party Officials are Applying Lessons from Prior “Transformation” Campaigns to Repression in Xinjiang

By Sarah Cook

Editor's Note: This article continues coverage by China Brief of the ongoing efforts by the Chinese government to suppress dissent in Xinjiang (see [China Brief](#), May 15 2018; and [China Brief](#), November 5 2018). This article examines commonalities between the situation in Xinjiang and the government's prior (and ongoing) efforts to suppress and “transform” practitioners of Falun Gong. Due to the detailed nature of the information this article contains, for this issue of China Brief a rare exception is being made to our standard

publishing practices: this article, significantly longer than the standard contribution for China Brief, is being offered as a dual-length piece in lieu of a fourth contributors' article.

Introduction

A 45-year-old seamstress is arbitrarily taken away by police for detention at a “transformation through education” session held at an old munitions factory guesthouse, where she is pressured to renounce her religious beliefs. Nine days later, her husband is informed that she has died in custody and see signs of abuse on her body, but is pressured by local officials to permit rapid cremation.

For those following the current campaign of detentions, indoctrination, and torture in Xinjiang, such a scenario may sound familiar. But this incident did not occur in Xinjiang in 2019, and the victim was not Uighur—this happened in Hebei province in 2010 to Yuan Pingjun, a Han Chinese and an adherent of the Falun Gong spiritual practice ([Human Rights in China](#), September 2011). However, there is a link to current events in Xinjiang: Hebei’s deputy party secretary at the time was a rising star in the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) named Chen Quanguo (陈全国), now party secretary in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

Much analysis to date has noted Chen’s previous experience in Tibet, and the similarities between securitization policies implemented there and those expanding under his tenure in Xinjiang ([China Brief](#), September 21 2017; [International Campaign for Tibet](#), December 10 2018). Less serious attention has been given to the Xinjiang campaign’s commonalities with the party’s long-standing struggle to eliminate Falun Gong—another massive CCP effort at “transformation” targeting millions of spiritual believers. But as is outlined below, Chen’s own career path is not an isolated example: rather, it would appear that the CCP’s nearly 20-year experience implementing the anti-Falun Gong campaign has shaped policies and tactics in Xinjiang, a dynamic that yields insights into how events may unfold in that region and beyond.

“Transformation Through Education” in the Repression of Falun Gong

The concept of “re-education” has a long history in Communist China, most starkly epitomized by the “re-education through labor” (劳教, *laojiao*), or RTL, system in existence from the 1950s through 2013. In the early 2000s, a new term for a particular type of re-education targeting religious believers gained prominence: “transformation through education” (*jiaoyu zhuanhua*, 教育转化). This set of practices emerged in the context of the party’s campaign to eliminate Falun Gong, a spiritual and meditation discipline practiced in the late 1990s by tens of millions of Chinese citizens, but which was abruptly banned in 1999 after then-CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin decided it posed a threat to the party’s power. [1]

The primary bureaucratic entity charged with the suppression of Falun Gong is the “610 Office,” an extra-legal CCP-based security agency named for the June 10 date of its establishment in 1999. Amongst its other tools, the 610 Office developed a particular specialty in thought reform targeting Falun Gong and other religious movements that were categorized as *xiejiao* (邪教)—meaning “heterodox religion,” but often translated in official sources as the more demonizing term “cult” ([China Brief](#), September 16 2011; [Freedom House](#), February 2017).

“Transformation through education” soon emerged as a central component of the party’s effort to wipe out Falun Gong, with the slogan intended to invoke a positive image of personal growth and compassionate treatment by the state. In reality, in the Falun Gong case, “transformation” has not only involved forcing

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adherents to renounce the practice—often through the use of violence; it has also required victims to actively demonstrate, by participating in the psychological manipulation and abuse of fellow believers, that they have decisively turned against their former beliefs centered on the tenets of truthfulness, kindness, and forbearance.

In addition to the now-abolished RTL camps and judicial prisons, extralegal detention regimes at various venues (often operating under euphemisms such as “legal education center”) became a common form of punishment, and a means for “transforming” Falun Gong practitioners. The use of such facilities gained new momentum with the abolition of the RTL camp system in 2013 ([Amnesty International](#), December 2013). One study in 2014 uncovered 449 “legal education centers” in existence under various names, spread throughout 329 districts and 173 municipalities ([China Change](#), April 3 2014). The proliferation of these centers also coincided with two nationwide anti-Falun Gong campaigns initiated by the central 610 Office—one from 2010 to 2012, and another from 2013 to 2015 ([Congressional-Executive Commission on China](#), March 2011; [China Quarterly](#), September 2015).

At the centers, detainees are forced to watch propaganda videos, sing patriotic or pro-Communist Party (CCP) songs, and “repent,” while those refusing to concede are made subject to various forms of physical coercion and torture. Medical analogies are used—such as describing dedicated believers as “addicts,” while staff or volunteers with backgrounds in psychology are employed at the centers ([Jiangxi Provincial Government](#), November 2017).



Image: A “transformation through education” compound in the city of Hotan, Xinjiang Province. The Chinese characters on the building read: “Study Bilingually, Study the Law, Study Technical Skills.”

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One theme that emerges consistently from official websites and party journals is an effort by the CCP to refine its tactics for “transformation through reeducation work” relating to Falun Gong or other banned *xiejiao* groups, such as the quasi-Christian “Almighty God” sect ([Congressional-Executive Commission on China](#), October 31 2008; [Wugong County \(Shaanxi\) Government](#), March 7 2018). Many examples of this are available, stretching across China and over a period of several years:

- A May 2010 document from Anhui province emphasizes the importance of innovation, and states that “we must conscientiously sum up the new experiences of transformations through education and reinforce the results” ([Hefei Municipal Government](#), January 2011).
- A similarly timed document from Henan instructs officials to “use transformation through education bases or transformation classes as a place to train cadres” ([Henan Provincial Government](#), May 5 2010).
- A February 2017 document on a website set up by the China Anti-Cult Association discusses key strategies to serve as the “model” for “transformation through education” of Falun Gong adherents ([Kaiwind.com](#), February 17 2017).
- An October 2017 report from Yunnan province refers to an effort to set up a “transformation through education expert group” and to “organize transformation through education expert training courses” ([Yunnan Province Discipline and Inspection Commission](#), October 25 2017).

Policies and CCP Personnel Linked to Anti-Falun Gong Campaigns Are Employed in “Transformation” Programs in Xinjiang

The terminology used in official documents and relayed by former detainees from the party’s anti-Falun Gong repression is strikingly similar to what has appeared more recently in Xinjiang, including official references to re-education efforts as “psychological counselling” ([Zenz](#), September 2018; [Xinjiang Government](#), May 15 2017). Official documents in both cases also divide targeted populations by perceived severity: such as being “die hard” Falun Gong adherents or “strike hard detainees” in Xinjiang. Local officials are assigned target quotas as a percentage of the known relevant population ([hnhx.gov.cn](#), May 2010); and reports from lower authorities offer accounts of the percentage of those successfully “transformed.”

The link between the two campaigns goes beyond the general evolution of the CCP’s thought reform strategies. Several key officials now influencing events in Xinjiang gained first-hand experience with programs directed against Falun Gong earlier in their careers, and appear to have applied their experience to policymaking in Xinjiang. Four officials linked to the escalating repression in Xinjiang—two at the provincial level and two at the national level—stand out for their previous connections to the anti-Falun Gong campaign, including “transformation” efforts and “education classes” at extralegal detention facilities. One of these men, Fu Zhenghua, is currently serving as PRC Minister of Justice. The remaining three individuals—Chen Quanguo, Sun Jinlong and Chen Xunqiu—are believed to be members of the Leading Small Group for Xinjiang Work, with Chen Quanguo acting as the leader ([China File](#), May 11 2018).

As noted above, Chen Quanguo served as deputy party secretary in Hebei from 2009 to 2011, which covered the initial implementation phase of the 2010-2012 campaign that swept up Yuan Pingjun (as described in the beginning of this article). Prior to that appointment, Chen had been a member of the CCP standing committee in Henan from 2000-2009, including a stint as deputy party secretary from 2003 to 2009. Although Chen’s personal role in promoting the Falun Gong “transformation” effort in the province during that period is difficult to pin down, eyewitness accounts from people detained in Henan during this period describe a variety of tactics intended to break prisoners’ wills: sleep deprivation, forced feeding, being tied in contorted positions,

and being forced to watch anti-Falun Gong videos. Camp wardens reportedly told prisoners that monetary rewards would be received for every Falun Gong believer successfully “transformed.” [2]

Chen Quanguo’s currently appointed deputy in Xinjiang, Sun Jinlong (孙金龙), also has long-term experience in the anti-Falun Gong campaign dating back to 2001—when, as the head of the All China Youth Federation, he made public comments vilifying the group and urging members of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference to fight against it ([People’s Daily](#), February 5 2001). Sun was later a top party official in Anhui and Hunan throughout the above-mentioned nationwide “transformation” campaigns carried out against Falun Gong from 2010 to 2015. One 2010 document from the city of Hefei, at a time when Sun was the city’s party secretary, provides a detailed “overall battle work plan” for the 2010-2012 campaign. It designates tasks such as establishing real-name databases of local residents known to practice Falun Gong, and conducting “legal education classes” for dedicated adherents and door-to-door visits for others, with the aim of reaching a 70 percent total transformation rate over three years ([Hefei.gov.cn](#), May 2010). Another document from Hefei indicates that street-level officials were apparently so effective at their anti-Falun Gong “transformation” efforts in 2010-2012 that they were granted an award established by the city ([Hefei Government](#), January 2014).

CCP Officials with Anti-Falun Gong Experience in the Security Organs of the Central Government

CCP officials who gained earlier experience in provincial-level repression of Falun Gong now also occupy senior positions in the national-level government security apparatus. Two officials in particular stand out for their strong links both to the anti-Falun Gong campaign, and the current repression in Xinjiang. Chen Xunqiu (陈训秋) is the deputy secretary general of the CCP’s Central Politics and Law Commission, which exercises control over the PRC’s security and intelligence agencies. Chen has worked in the central public security apparatus since 2011, when he was promoted to Beijing by then security-czar Zhou Yongkang. (Zhou had been a key ally of Jiang Zemin, and a leading force in anti-Falun Gong efforts after Jiang’s retirement—until Zhou’s own purge in 2014). In his position, Chen would have played a role overseeing the 2013-2015 anti-Falun Gong nationwide “transformation” campaign. Chen himself had already established a record of being harsh on Falun Gong in his time in Hubei in the early years after the group’s ban—first as the provincial head of public security, and then as party secretary in Wuhan. In 2001, he accompanied Liu Jing, then head of the 610 Office, to inspect a “legal education study class” for Falun Gong practitioners in Wuhan’s Jiang’an District ([Chinanews.com](#), May 23 2001).

Although not a member of the Xinjiang Leading Small Group (which coordinates central government policy for Xinjiang), another central official may be playing a crucial role influencing, and guaranteeing funding for, political indoctrination tactics in the region: Fu Zhenghua (傅政华), who became PRC Minister of Justice in 2016. Under his cognizance, the Xinjiang Department of Justice issued a key February 2017 policy document mandating the establishment of “education and transformation training centers” ([ChinaFile](#), May 11 2018; [Yuli County Government](#), March 2017). Moreover, recent research into PRC security budgets has concluded that “Xinjiang’s re-education campaign seems to be managed by the Ministry of Justice...and funded largely out of the budgets of these same authorities” ([China Brief](#), November 5 2018).

Of the four officials examined in this article, Fu’s link to the anti-Falun Gong campaign is arguably also the most direct. Prior to his current position, Fu served as head of the central 610 Office for almost a year. Under his brief leadership, no new national campaign was launched, but various “transformation” efforts continued throughout the country. [3] In September 2015, when Fu was just beginning his tenure at the 6-10 Office, he

joined a delegation to Xinjiang led by then Politburo Standing Committee member Yu Zhengsheng—and in a rare occurrence, state media listed his 610 Office title ([Xinjiang Daily](#), September 26 2015). A few months later, in May 2016, his then deputy at the agency, Tao Dingcheng, visited Xinjiang and gave a lecture on “anti-cult” efforts at the regional party school ([Xinjiang Production Corps](#), June 1 2016). In addition to Fu’s experience at the 610 office, during the period of 2010-2015, he was a top official at the Public Security Bureau in Beijing; research by Amnesty International has described how Falun Gong practitioners who refused to “transform” during this period were “directly sent to various ‘brainwashing centres’ around Beijing” ([Amnesty International](#), December 2013).

Conclusion

The above analysis has several implications for understanding current and future events in Xinjiang, as well as human rights in China more generally. First, the officials driving the “transformation” campaign in Xinjiang are coming to it with almost 20 years of experience, which helps explain how they have managed to launch and implement such a massive campaign within such a short time frame. Second, the fact that these officials appear to be following the anti-Falun Gong playbook in Xinjiang should raise alarm bells. It indicates that they are playing the long game, have little intention of reversing the policy, and have few qualms about using harsh tactics like severe torture or long prison terms to achieve their aims. In addition, certain conditions appear to be in place to enable rapid escalation to even more horrific abuses, like involuntary organ removals. [4]

Third, the career trajectories of these four officials highlight the depth and breadth of China’s human rights problems under the Communist Party. It appears that these officials were promoted within the CCP hierarchy precisely because of their proven track record of harshly suppressing innocent religious believers. Fourth, as these and other officials complete their tenure in Xinjiang and move on, we may see the above pattern repeating itself, reinforcing the prospects that similar policies could be deployed against other populations of believers—such as Hui Muslims or underground Christians—at a time when persecution of these groups is already increasing. Meanwhile, “transformation through education” efforts continue today throughout China, mostly targeting Falun Gong believers but in some cases, the members of other banned religious groups as well.

But there are also more optimistic lessons to be drawn from the party’s crackdown on Falun Gong—including that resistance to state oppression is still possible. After nearly 20 years of persecution, Falun Gong survives in China: millions of Chinese still practice the discipline, including hundreds of thousands who have published online statements rescinding denunciations made under torture during “transformation” efforts. In some locales, repression has eased over the past five years, even though a national ban against Falun Gong remains in place. A comprehensive 2017 Freedom House study of religious revival, repression, and resistance in China concluded that “billions of dollars and an untold number of ruined lives later, the party’s concerted efforts to change people’s actual beliefs have largely proven futile” ([Freedom House](#), February 2017).

For these reasons, international actors should continue to expose “transformation” efforts in Xinjiang and elsewhere. Furthermore, targeted sanctions should be considered against key officials. These steps might not reverse current policies entirely, but they might prevent further deterioration of human rights in the PRC, limit the populations affected—and ultimately, save lives.

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Notes

[1] Various factors contributed to the decision by Jiang Zemin and the CCP to ban Falun Gong and launch an aggressive elimination campaign against the previously popular and state-tolerated group. See the author's previous discussion of these factors in: Sarah Cook, *The Battle for China's Spirit: Religious Revival, Repression, and Resistance under Xi Jinping*, Freedom House, February 2017, pp 110-113; and Sarah Cook, "The Origins and Long-Term Consequences of the Communist Party's Campaign against Falun Gong," written statement to the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, "Falun Gong: Review and Update" hearing dated December 18, 2012, <https://freedomhouse.org/article/China-communist-party-campaign-against-falun-gong>.

[2] One account on file with the author, based on U.S. asylum application documents, is that of Ms. Ding from Jiaozuo, who recently received asylum in the United States. Ms. Ding was sent twice to a "re-education through labor" camp for three years, once in 1999 and again in 2004, coinciding with Chen's tenure in Henan. The second stint was in apparent retribution for refusing to go with police to an extralegal indoctrination center. During her time in custody, she experienced abuses aimed at "transforming" believers that ranged from being forced to watch anti-Falun Gong videos to force-feeding, deprivation of sleep, and being tied up in contorted positions for long periods of time, while witnessing evidence of other Falun Gong detainees being tortured with electric batons. She reports that the warden of Shibalihe Forced Female Labor Camp in Zhengzhou, where she was held the second time, told her that the camp would receive 10,000 yuan for every Falun Gong believer successfully "transformed."

[3] See, for example, this document from Shanxi Province: "Datong City Communist Party Committee General Office 2016 Departmental Budget" (中共大同市委办公厅2016年部门预算), document dated June 29, 2016. Accessed at: <https://archive.is/cUkl9#selection-885.0-885.18>.

[4] Sarah Cook, "Submission to Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting from Prisoners of Conscience in China," Freedom House, November 15, 2018 (on file with author, available upon request).

The Chinese Navy's Marine Corps, Part 1: Expansion and Reorganization

By Dennis Blasko and Roderick Lee

Editor's Note: This is the first part of a two-part article discussing organizational reforms and evolving missions for the PLA Navy (PLAN) Marine Corps. The first part focuses on the growing order of battle for the PLAN Marines. The second part, which will appear in our next issue, will focus on the creation of a service headquarters for the PLAN Marines, and their expanding training for expeditionary warfare and other missions. Taken as a whole, this two-part article provides significant new information and analysis to update the December 3, 2010 China Brief article titled "[China's Marines: Less is More.](#)"

Introduction

On August 16, 2018, the Department of Defense *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018*, reported that "One of the most significant PLAN structural changes in 2017 was the expansion of the PLAN Marine Corps (PLANMC)." The PLA Marine Corps ([中国人民解放军海军陆战队](#)) has historically been limited in terms of personnel, geography, and mission—with a primary service focus on amphibious assault, and the defense of outposts in the South China Sea. However, under currently estimated plans for service expansion, "by 2020, the PLANMC will consist of 7 brigades, may have more than 30,000 personnel, and will expand its mission to include expeditionary operations on foreign soil." [1]

The expansion of the PLANMC, which commenced in April 2017, is an important element of reforms to the PLA's operational forces. For the past two decades, the Marine Corps consisted of only two brigades, the 1st and 164th Marine Brigades (each estimated to number from 5,000 - 6,000 personnel) assigned to the South Sea Fleet stationed in Zhanjiang, Guangdong. After recent reforms, the number of brigades now amounts to a total of eight, with four new Marine combined arms brigades, a Special Operations Forces (SOF) brigade, and the core of a shipborne aviation (helicopter) brigade added to the previously existing two brigades. The four new combined arms brigades were formed out of units transferred from the Army, while the SOF and helicopter brigades were created from standing Navy units. A corps-level headquarters for the Marine Corps also has been identified. Though the Chinese government has not officially explained these developments, this new structure probably amounts to a total of up to approximately 40,000 personnel distributed among eight brigades at full strength.

The expanded Marine Corps, supported by Navy long-range sealift, likely will become the core of the PLA's future expeditionary force. Training that began in 2014 further indicates that the eventual objective for the Marine Corps is to be capable of conducting operations in many types of terrain and climates – ranging beyond the PLANMC's former, and continuing, focus on islands and reefs in the South China Sea. The manner by which the force has expanded, however, suggests that the PLA leadership was not motivated by an immediate need for a larger amphibious capability; rather, it appears to be consistent with several new missions undertaken by the Chinese military over past decade that have provided impetus for the addition of new Marine units. It will likely take several years for all of the Marine Corps' new units to reach full operational readiness as measured by personnel, equipment, and training.

Expanded Order of Battle

After "below the neck" reforms and restructuring implemented throughout PLA in 2017, Marine units are now found along China's eastern seaboard from Shandong in the north, to Fujian and Guangdong in the east opposite Taiwan, to Hainan in the South China Sea. In northern Shandong, a former Army motorized infantry brigade of the old 26th Group Army has been transformed into a new Marine brigade ([Jiefangjun Bao Online](#), September 30 2017). On Shandong's southern coast, a second new brigade has been formed from what likely was a former Army coastal defense regiment located near Qingdao ([Qingdao Television](#), February 12 2018). Further south, an Army coastal defense division stationed

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around Jinjiang, Fujian was the basis for a third new brigade that remains in that same locale; and may also have provided manpower and resources for a fourth new brigade that recently moved to Jieyang in eastern Guangdong province ([Anxi, Fujian Government website](#), August 1 2017; [Jieyang News](#), August 17 2018). Although the PLA has not widely publicized either the creation of these new brigades or their true unit designators, the emergence of photos and new military unit cover designators associated with the Marine brigades both suggest a 1st through 6th brigade numbering scheme. [2]

As the new Marine brigades are being organized and equipped for their new missions, the two previously existing brigades also appear to have been reorganized. Most significantly, to streamline their chain of command, the former amphibious armored regiment headquarters appear to have been eliminated: command is now passed directly from brigade level to the newly established combined arms battalions (similar to the Army's brigade command structure). Marine combined arms battalions are distinguished between amphibious mechanized and light mechanized combined arms battalions. Some, if not all, marine brigades also have, or will likely have, units trained for air assault operations ([Jiefangjun Bao Online](#), December 10 2017), and will be reinforced by operational support battalions [3].

It is likely that in coming years older equipment will be retired and all Marine units will be issued new amphibious vehicles—such as the tracked ZBD05 Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV), tracked ZTD05 Assault Vehicle, PLZ07 122mm Self-Propelled Howitzer, the eight-wheeled ZBL09 IFV, the eight-wheeled ZTL11 assault vehicle, and the *Mengshi* Assault Vehicle. (The latter three vehicles have been observed deployed to the Djibouti Support Base). Some reconnaissance units are also receiving light 8x8 all-terrain-vehicles for terrain that is inaccessible to larger vehicles ([Chinaso.com](#), April 9 2018).

In total, the Army probably transferred over 20,000 personnel to the Navy's new Marine units, while retaining its own amphibious capability. The Army's two former amphibious infantry divisions—one previously stationed in the Nanjing Military Region near Hangzhou and the other in the Guangdong Military Region near Huizhou—were both transformed into two combined arms brigades each, while keeping their amphibious weapons and capabilities. A fifth former amphibious armored brigade also was converted into a new Army combined arms brigade located in Fujian. The decision to maintain these amphibious units in the Army reflects that service's continued role in building capabilities to deter further steps toward Taiwan independence—one of the missions of foremost importance to the PLA.

Had the senior PLA leadership perceived the need to increase rapidly the Navy's amphibious capacity, it could have decided to transfer to the Marine Corps those existing Army amphibious units, all of which were equipped and trained for assault from the sea. But by transforming a motorized infantry brigade and multiple coastal defense units—none of which were outfitted with amphibious equipment, nor trained extensively in amphibious operations—the PLA leadership understood that it would take multiple years for these units to be equipped, and even more annual training cycles before they would be fully trained to undertake amphibious operations. So, while the Marine Corps has been expanded in size, its actual amphibious capabilities will increase gradually over the next several years.

The new Marine special operations force (SOF) brigade has been formed out of the Navy's existing SOF Regiment stationed in Hainan, which includes the *Jiaolong* ("Dragon") commando unit ([China Central Television](#), December 12 2017). The former Navy SOF Regiment's missions and capabilities overlapped with that of the Marine Corps, and therefore their transfer is a logical evolution as the Marine Corps expands. Eventually, the new brigade will likely number approximately one thousand personnel more than the old regiment (estimated to have been about 2,000 strong). Some of those personnel may have been transferred from the 1st and 164th Marine Brigades' structure, each of which probably included SOF elements in their former reconnaissance battalions. Of all the new Marine units within the expanded force structure, the SOF Brigade currently is the most combat ready.

The 2018 DOD report on the Chinese military also noted the creation of an independent aviation capability for the PLA

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Marines, stating that the expanding PLANMC “may also incorporate an aviation brigade, which could provide an organic helicopter transport and attack capability, increasing its amphibious and expeditionary warfare capabilities.” [4] The new Marine Shipborne Aviation (helicopter) Brigade apparently has been built out of elements from all three PLAN independent air regiments ([Weibo](#), January 27 2018). These regiments have been busy since 2009, provided the aircraft for 15 of 30 of the Navy’s deployments to the Gulf of Aden escort mission ([PLA Daily](#), July 16 2018).

Currently, the new Marine helicopter unit likely has considerably less than a full contingent of aircraft compared to an Army Aviation Brigade, which when fully equipped probably consists of over 70 helicopters. *The Military Balance 2018* estimates the Navy’s entire helicopter fleet at slightly over 100 aircraft, with about half being transport helicopters—while the others are anti-submarine warfare, early warning, and search and rescue aircraft needed to support the rest of the Navy’s operations [5].

Heretofore the Navy apparently has experimented with only a few armed Z-9 helicopters ([People’s Navy](#), July 31 2012). Until additional attack helicopters are added to the force, as a stop gap measure it would be possible for the Army to temporarily assign a few of its attack helicopters to the Marines to assist in training and doctrine development for amphibious operations. Thus, it is likely that it will take several more years to add additional transport and attack helicopters and train the pilots and crews before the new Marine helicopter brigade is at full strength and combat ready.

This article will continue in the next issue of China Brief, with “The Chinese Navy’s Marine Corps, Part 2: Chain-of-Command Reforms and Evolving Training.”

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The views and opinions expressed herein by the authors do not represent the policies or position of the U.S. Department of Defense or the U.S. Navy, and are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Notes

[1] U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2018*, p. 28.
<https://media.defense.gov/2018/Aug/16/2001955282/-1/-1/1/2018-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT.PDF#page=11&zoom=auto,-85,733>.

[2] Military unit cover designators (MUCDs) are serial numbers (consisting of five digits) employed by the People’s Liberation Army to identify specific military units, and are frequently employed in official communications in the place of the true unit designators.

[3] *People’s Navy*, January 23, 2018 and February 9, 2018.

[4] U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2018*, p. 28.
<https://media.defense.gov/2018/Aug/16/2001955282/-1/-1/1/2018-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT.PDF#page=11&zoom=auto,-85,733>.

[5] International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2018*, p. 254.

**PLA Stratagems for Establishing Wartime Electromagnetic Dominance:
An Analysis of *The Winning Mechanisms of Electronic Countermeasures***

By Zi Yang

Introduction

As Chinese companies assume an ever-more prominent international profile, recent controversies surrounding Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei have rekindled discussions over information security. However, while public debates have mostly focused on peacetime communications security and alleged incidents of espionage, it is also necessary to explore the designs and stratagems of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) for dominating the information sphere in a time of war. It is the objective of this paper to analyze the PLA's latest treatise for dominating the electromagnetic spectrum (电磁频谱), or EMS, a critical realm that serves as the main carrier of information for modern military forces.

A number of titles exploring "winning mechanisms for informationized warfare" (信息化战争制胜机理) have been published since PLA Commander-in-Chief Xi Jinping first proclaimed a personal interest in the subject ([People's Daily](#), April 21 2016). *The Winning Mechanisms of Electronic Countermeasures* (电子对抗制胜机理) is one of the more prominent texts that have emerged during this rush to satisfy Xi's concerns. [1]

Most significantly, *Winning Mechanisms* is the only monograph since the initiation of the 2016 PLA reforms that systematically breaks down thinking among PLA strategists in regards to achieving a superior position in the EMS. Authored by a group of electronic warfare (EW) experts from the National University of Defense Technology's Electronic Countermeasure Institute, *Winning Mechanisms* is a volume that expresses in detail the PLA EW brain trust's ideas and stratagems on achieving electromagnetic dominance (制电磁权), which is defined as "guaranteeing the information activity needs of friendly forces in the EMS, while rendering the enemy's information activities in the EMS ineffective." The authors specifically champion the use of offensive electronic measures to achieve such goals. [2]

The significance of the EMS cannot be disregarded because it is the main carrier for information in all domains of war. Whoever controls the EMS, and has the ability to deny enemies from effectively utilizing this channel, will retain enormous advantages in securing victory. According to the text, "the winning mechanism" of EMS contests is described as "the inherent basis and path to realizing electromagnetic dominance through electronic offense and defense by way of electromagnetic energy, directed energy, sound energy, and other technical means." [3]

The PLA's game plan is divided into four principles and stages: 1) "gather one's strengths and advantages to achieve a superior starting position" (聚优谋势); 2) pursue "multi-level integration" (多元集成); 3) employ "precise release of energy (精确释能); and 4) demonstrate "effects in multiple areas" (多域显效). The fourth and final stage is the most important one in securing victory, and it is the focus for the majority of EMS

stratagems.

Gather One's Strengths and Advantages to Achieve a Superior Starting Position

Per *Winning Mechanisms*, careful preparation is needed before launching any attacks, and pre-war preparations allow one to achieve an advantageous starting position. Bringing forward qualitatively and quantitatively superior forces is a must in any war preparations. While quantity can make-up for inferior quality in some cases, the text underlines the importance of quality—not only in terms of hardware, but also in terms of military personnel and their experience, training, and ability to quickly react to ever-changing battlefield conditions. [4] After identifying the forces needed, meticulous operational planning and force arrangement is needed to maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses. Careful arrangements of quality forces could bolster one's capability to speedily seize and keep the initiative. Moreover, having accurate intelligence and a comprehensive understanding of enemy capabilities ahead of battle will enable prompt assessment and decision-making. [5] Such diligent planning will ensure that the PLA will always be ahead of the enemy in conducting sustained offensive operations, and in keeping the enemy off-balance. [6]

The Importance of Multi-Level Integration

The multi-level integration stage focuses on supplying friendly forces with timely intelligence data. Platforms (平台), systems (系统), and “systems of systems” (体系) must be integrated to make sure that friendly forces can effectively move and fight as one. Information and intelligence tie these levels together, guiding the decisions of commanders and operators through the reconnaissance–target guidance–strike–assessment loop. In this stage, battlefield intelligence is collected from platforms in land, sea, air, and space through satellites, radars, electro-optical sensors, and electronic intelligence equipment. [7]

Besides integrating friendly forces with intelligence, information support systems encompassing reconnaissance, surveillance, communications, navigation, positioning, guidance, and control need to be strengthened in order to protect them from enemy electronic attacks. In addition, operations security must be further reinforced to prevent the leaking of critical information to enemy forces. [8]

Precise Release of Energy

The third principle involves the precise release of energy, which is important for both tactical and political reasons. The battlefield environment is fast changing; therefore, friendly forces cannot waste time and resources with imprecise attacks. The authors of *Winning Mechanisms* note that precise attacks avoid collateral damage against civilian electronic infrastructure, which could have negative legal and public opinion ramifications. [9]

Instead of imprecise attacks, friendly forces must identify and strike at “critical nodes” (中枢节点) in the enemy's network, to be conducted at opportune moments prior to the launching of an all-out offensive. According to the authors' calculations, destruction of ten percent of critical nodes will collapse the enemy's information network. In contrast, the network would still remain intact even after 40 percent of “ordinary nodes” (普通节点) are destroyed. Strikes must be therefore be performed in a systematic fashion, and assessments are necessary in improving upcoming attacks. [10]

The attack methods employed—whether they be anti-radiation, directed energy, or electromagnetic pulse

weapons—must correspond to the target’s characteristics in order to achieve the most desired effects. *Winning Mechanisms* divides the types of targets into five general categories: reconnaissance and early warning, wireless communication, guidance and fire control, navigation and positioning, and friend-or-foe identification. [11]

Demonstration of Effects in Multiple Areas

Precise strikes alone cannot secure victory. *Winning Mechanisms* lays out three broad areas—electromagnetic deterrence, deception, and destruction—as the main areas in which the PLA must confront the enemy. Notably, PLA strategists view winning with minimum use of force as the ideal scenario, and the first two categories (EM deterrence and deception) both incorporate a strong psychological component. The text indicates that, given modern armies’ heavy reliance on electronic equipment, EM deterrence will play a crucial role in forcing the enemy to submit or withdraw. By demonstrating the PLA’s sophisticated electromagnetic strike capability and willingness to employ such means without hesitation, EM deterrence will exploit the enemy’s fear of losing expensive, critical electronic assets. [12]

Per the text, increasing news reports and propaganda on PLA war games is one way of giving adversaries the impression that the PLA is adroit in EW. Intentionally leaking snippets of information regarding the PLA’s advanced “assassin’s mace” (杀手锏) electromagnetic weaponry will also intimidate adversaries. Furthermore, publishing works on EW theories and doctrine could show PLA know-how in striking vulnerable nodes in the enemy information network—thus compelling the enemy to think twice about an EMS face-off with China. [13]

Deterrence is especially effective when the enemy commander is weak-minded. When it is revealed that the PLA has state-of-the-art electromagnetic weapons (such as high-powered microwave weapons) ready and that it is prepared to use them if required, a weak enemy commander will be fearful and retreat—thus accomplishing the goal of winning without fighting. Even if the enemy commander does not fall back, it could create doubt in his or her heart that will make them opt for indecisive, timid actions that will place them in a reactive position. [14]

In conjunction with other methods, electromagnetic destruction will inflict substantive physical damage on enemy forces. *Winning Mechanism* recommends employing suppressive jamming and firepower simultaneously in order to increase damage to critical nodes in the early warning, communications, and “latent-potential warfare system” (战争潜力系统). [15] Yet the argument here appears to run counter to the aforementioned notion of not striking civilian infrastructure—instead, it suggests that civilian infrastructure must also be a target. The text recommends striking telecommunications systems in order to disrupt communications between enemy government and citizenry, foster popular discontent through disrupting the electric power system, and degrade transportation systems that support enemy troop mobilization and deployment. [16]

The authors specifically point out the differences between “deterrence” (威慑), “deception” (欺骗), “threats” (威胁), and “shock and awe” (震慑) tactics. Deterrence shows genuine military capability, and the resolve to use it. Deception presents fake information to the enemy with an intention to mislead; deception may be employed both against enemy personnel and against “smart” weapons. Threats force the enemy into courses of action that they never desired (as opposed to deterrence, which deters the enemy from implementing their original plans).

Shock and awe employs one, or a small number, of precise strikes on high valued targets in order to demonstrate PLA capabilities and stun the enemy into submission. [17]

The Critical Importance of Deception

As explicated in *Winning Mechanisms*, deception has been used by armies throughout history, and remains an integral component of today's wars. Military deception tactics seek to trick the enemy into taking actions against their own interest through a range of actions that feed the enemy false information. Military deception can be further divided into two types: "confusion deception" (迷惑型欺骗) and "misleading deception" (误导型欺骗). In the first instance, the target could become confused when confronted with a mixture of real and false information—such as the use of decoys to create the illusion of a large incoming force on enemy radars—that will lead to "vacillating decisions or a dispersion of forces" (举棋不定或是处处分兵). In the latter instance, the target is actively fed false information—such as rumors about the surrender of the enemy's command elements—that could lead opposing commanders into misjudgments. [18]

Deception may be considered a success when the enemy partially or fully accepts the fake information, and acts accordingly. The authors suggest careful design of deception content to fit the enemy commander's psyche: it must appear to be logical, fitting the enemy's perception of PLA capability. Deception information must also be delivered in a continuous manner until the target is totally misled or confused. At times, those charged with deception must help the enemy cement his set mode of thinking—such as that substantive strikes will follow in the direction of incoming electronic attacks—in order to surprise the enemy by launching substantive strikes from a totally different direction. Such deception efforts will be most successful if enemy call signs and passcodes are obtained, which will facilitate the use of deceptive communications. [19]

Conclusion

All in all, *The Winning Mechanisms of Electronic Countermeasures* provides a number of insights regarding the thinking among the PLA's EW top brass on how to establish electromagnetic dominance in a future conflict. While the book is detailed in outlining the stages and principles of EMS warfare, it nonetheless suffers in a few areas. First of all, the contents are quite abstract at times and lack specific details—especially in regards to examples from the PLA's own experience. Most examples cited in the title come from wars conducted by the U.S. military. Secondly, as a collectively written volume, the writing is sometimes repetitive, and at times even contradictory (such as the inconsistency regarding whether or not to strike civilian electronic infrastructure). Lastly, the volume is too qualitative, and lacks quantitative data to support some of its claims.

Nevertheless, the treatise is illuminating. Leading PLA EW theorists advocate seizing the offensive initiative with careful planning, intelligence-led force integration, and the use of precision weapons, as well as deterrence and deception tactics to intimidate or confuse the enemy. In the foreseeable future, the electromagnetic spectrum will continue to serve as the main carrier of information, and the side that dominates the EMS will have the greatest chances to prevail in a conflict. This text, from an authoritative source, serves as a window into the thinking of PLA EW experts on how a post-reform PLA could achieve victory in the EMS. While having its share of flaws, *Winning Mechanisms* nevertheless offers the PLA and China-watching community a reference on how one of the world's leading militaries plans to conduct itself during a future EMS conflict.

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Notes

- [1] Shan Linfeng, Jin Jiakai, Zhang Ke. *Dianzi Duikang Zhisheng Jili* [电子对抗制胜机理] (“The Winning Mechanism of Electronic Countermeasures”), (Beijing: National Defense Industry Press, 2018).
- [2] *Ibid.*, p. 26, and p. 15.
- [3] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- [4] *Ibid.*, p. 48., and pp. 39-40.
- [5] *Ibid.*, p. 41, p. 46, p. 55, p. 63.
- [6] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- [7] *Ibid.*, p. 67, p. 74, p. 87, p. 94.
- [8] *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84, p. 92.
- [9] *Ibid.*, p. 103, p. 117.
- [10] *Ibid.*, p. 106, p. 118.
- [11] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- [12] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
- [13] *Ibid.*, pp. 180-181.
- [14] *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167.
- [15] *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- [16] *Ibid.*, pp. 158–159.
- [17] *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.
- [18] *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- [19] *Ibid.*, p. 146, p. 163-164.