



CHINA: PLA, THE PARTY AND ANALYSIS OF THE MILITARY IN THE 18th CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Jayadeva Ranade

Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi

The role of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in communist China has always been important and is reinforced by present day statements of senior Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders that the "Party must firmly control the gun". In recent years and, more so with the departure from the scene of 'Long March' veterans who commanded great prestige and influence in China's armed forces, command of the PLA has become more important.

Growing popular discontent, combined with the political fallout following the ouster of former Politburo member Bo Xilai including his efforts to make inroads into the PLA, compelled top echelons of the Party leadership to focus greater attention on the PLA. Strengthening of Party control over the PLA was facilitated by Deng Xiaoping's farsighted move of creating the Central Military Commission (CMC) under the Chairmanship of the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This effectively made the PLA subordinate to the Party. It was reinforced by the arrangement to position the prospective Party Chief as Vice Chairman of the CMC, so that he gains influence and establishes his authority before taking over as General Secretary of the CCP Central Committee (CC), usually five years later. Room was left, however, for making the State Military Commission independent if required in the future. CCP CC General Secretaries Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao both focused on the PLA. Hu Jintao especially expanded the CCP and Communist Youth League (CYL)'s presence in the PLA. Today there are at least 90,000 cells of the CCP, comprising five members each, throughout the PLA. The training, role and authority of Political Commissars in the PLA has simultaneously been increased and their remarks in the dossiers of the PLA's operational officers now impact the latter's promotions.

Today there are at least 90,000 cells of the CCP, comprising five members each, throughout the PLA. The training, role and authority of Political Commissars in the PLA has simultaneously been increased and their remarks in the dossiers of the PLA's operational officers now impact the latter's promotions.

With the PLA increasingly recruiting better educated personnel and college graduates, the CCP leadership perceived the need for enhanced ideological and 'political education' of PLA personnel. A key vulnerability identified was the potential susceptibility of these newly recruited better educated personnel to "hostile" foreign propaganda, which argues that the PLA should be an army of the State and not subservient to the CCP. Three successive year-long "political education" campaigns, including one this year, have been launched in the PLA to counter this propaganda, which was troublingly noticed to have been also articulated in the run up to the recently-concluded 18th Party Congress by some of the more liberal Chinese economists calling for political reform.

Xi Jinping will continue this trend of strengthening the Party's grip over the PLA. In fact, within days of taking over as CMC

Chairman, Xi Jinping stressed at an enlarged meeting of the CMC on November 16, 2012, that "we must unwaveringly adhere to the Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces" and emphasized the need to ensure that the "Party has a firm grip over the troops ideologically, politically, and organizationally". "We must have serious political discipline and organizational discipline".

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) branches across the People's Liberation Army (PLA) over the last year selected 251 Delegates to the Party's 18th Congress held in Beijing from November 8-14, 2012. In the wake of the Bo Xilai incident, selection of the Delegates was done with care and after at least five central teams conducted investigations in the PLA, and especially its 14th Group Army and the Chengdu Military Region, to assess

the political reliability of personnel in these formations. A 'Xinhua' dispatch, which reported that the PLA had finalized selection of its Delegates, specifically mentioned that their political records were free of blemish. The high number of Political Commissars in the list of Delegates reflected their importance.

PLA representatives have additionally been given representation in the CCP's CC and Politburo (PB), thereby reinforcing the Party's control over the PLA since the PLA officers also have a ranking in the Party hierarchy. Over the past few years, the PLA has had two representatives in the PB and PLA representatives account for between 18-20 per cent of the total CC membership. This has remained unchanged at the 18th Party Congress.

The percentage of PLA representatives in the 18th CCP's PB and CC has remained generally constant, indicating that there has been no visible gain in the PLA's political influence. The number of PLA representatives in the PB remains at two and they are the two Vice Chairmen of the CMC, Xu Qiliang and Fan Changlong. Excluding these two Vice Chairmen, there are a total of 65 officers representing the PLA and People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) who are Full and Alternate Members of the CC. Of the total PLA/PAPF strength in the 18th CC, 41 are Full Members and 26 are Alternate Members.

All members of the Military Commission are CC members while the two Vice Chairmen, Xu Qiliang and Fan Changlong are members of the PB. The former Director of the GAD, Chang Wanquan, who has been retained as a Member of the CMC, is also a member of the CC reinforcing reports that he is likely to take over in March 2013, as China's next Defence Minister. Commanders of all Military Regions, except Chengdu, are Full Members of the 18th CC. Similarly, the Political Commissars of all seven Military Regions, except the Lanzhou Military Region, are Full CC members. Non-inclusion of these two individuals could be indicative of their imminent retirement. The parity maintained between the Commanders of Military Regions and their Political Commissars, with the inclusion of both as Full members of the 18th CC, is reflective of the Party's continuing to retain a tight grip on the PLA/PAPF. This is borne out by the inclusion of 24 political officers as members of the CC—18 as Full Members and 6 as Alternate Members.

The 18th Party Congress appears to have made a determined effort to elect new representatives from the PLA to the CC. 26 of the 41 Full Members of the CC, have

been elected for the first time. There has, though, been a noticeable influx of first timers as Alternate Members of the CC. Of the 26 Alternate Members, 23 have been identified as new comers. In view of their numerical superiority, the PLA ground forces have the majority representation. There are 9 representatives of the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and 5 of the PLA Navy (PLAN). 7 'princelings' have been identified among the 67 CC Members. None of the PLA's CC members has been identified as belonging to an ethnic minority nationality and there is only one female among them. At least 8 of those inducted as Alternate Members of the CC clearly appear destined for higher office.

The 18th Party Congress appears to have made a determined effort to elect new representatives from the PLA to the CC. 26 of the 41 Full Members of the CC, have been elected for the first time.

LIST OF PLA/PAPF MEMBERS OF THE 18th CENTRAL COMMITTEE

(41 Full Members; 26 Alternate Members)

(* - First Time as Full or Alt Member; (xx) Age as in 2012.)

Full Members of 18th CC

1. Xu Qiliang (62), PLAAF, Vice Chairman, CMC
2. Fan Changlong (65), Vice Chairman, CMC
3. Chang Wanquan (63), former Dir GAD and likely Defence Minister
4. Fang Fenghui (61), Dir GSD
5. *Wang Guangzhong (59), Dy Dir GSD
6. *Sun Jianguo (60), Dy Dir GSD
7. *Qi Jianguo (60), Dy Dir GSD
8. Zhang Yang (61), Dir GPD
9. *Jia Tingan (60), Dy Dir GPD
10. *Du Jncai (60), Dy Dir GPD & PLA Secretary for Discipline Inspection
11. * Wu Changde (60), Dy Dir GPD
12. Zhao Keshi (65) Dir GLD
13. Liu Yuan (61), Pol Com, GLD
14. Zhang Youxia (62), Dir GLD
15. *Wang Hongyao (61) Pol Com, GLD
16. Ma Xiaotian (63) Cdr PLAAF
17. Tian Xiushi (62), Pol Com, PLAAF
18. Wu Shengli (67), Cdr PLAN
19. Liu Xiaojiang (63), Pol Com, PLAN
20. *Wei Fenghe (58), Cdr 2nd Arty
21. Zhang Haiyang (63), Pol Com, 2nd Arty

22. *Liu Yazhou (60), Pol Com, NDU
 23. Liu Chengjun (62), President AMS
 24. *Sun Sijing (61), Pol Com, AMS
 25. *Wang Jiaocheng (60), Cdr Shenyang MR
 26. *Chu Yimin (59), Pol Com, Shenyang MR
 27. *Zhang Shibo (60), Cdr Beijing MR
 28. *Liu Fulian (59), Pol Com, Beijing MR
 29. *Cai Yingting (58), Cdr Nanjing MR
 30. *Zhang Weiping (57), Pol Com, Nanjing MR
 31. *Xu Fenlin (59), Cdr Guangzhou MR
 32. *Wei Liang (59), Pol Com, Guangzhou MR
 33. *Zhu Fuxi (57), Pol Com, Chengdu MR
 34. *Liu Yuejun (58), Cdr Lanzhou MR
 35. *Zhao Zongqi (57), Cdr Jinan MR
 36. *Du Hengyan (61), Pol Com, Jinan MR
 37. *Tian Zhong (56) Cdr, North Sea Fleet
 38. *Yang Jinshan (58), Cdr, Tibet Military District
 39. *Peng Yong (58), Cdr, Xinjiang Military District
 40. Wang Jianping (59), Cdr PAPP
 41. *Xu Yaoyuan (60), Pol Com PAPP
- Alternate Members of 18th CC**
1. *Yin Fanlong (59), Dy Dir GPD
 2. *Qin Yinhe (61), Dy Dir GLD
 3. *Liu Sheng (56), Dy Dir GAD
 4. *Niu Hongguang(61), Dy Dir GAD
 5. *Gao Jin (53), Chief of Staff 2nd Arty
 6. *Dr Yang Xuejun (49), President NDU
 7. *Gao Jianguo (58), Dir Pol Dept, Shenyang MR
 8. *Wang Ning (57), Chief of Staff, Beijing MR
 9. *Yang Hui (49), Chief of Staff, Nanjing MR
 10. *Wu Changhai (58), Dir Pol Dept Nanjing MR
 11. *Yi Xiaoguang (54), Dy Cdr Nanjing MR & Cdr Nanjing MR AF
 12. *Zhang Jianping (56), Dy Cdr Guangzhou MR & Cdr Guangzhou MR AF
 13. Ai Husheng (61), Dy Cdr Chengdu MR
 14. *Fan Chengui (57), Dir Pol Dept Lanzhou MR
 15. *Zheng Qunliang (58) Dy Cdr Jinan MR & Cdr Jinan MR AF
 16. *Wang Jun (59), Dy Cdr Jinan MR
 17. Wang Jian (58), Dy Pol Com Jinan MR
 18. *Niu Zhizhong (57), Head of Logistics PAPP
 19. *Zhang Ruiqing (57), Pol Com Beijing Municipal PAPP
 20. *Pan Liangshi (55), Cdr 39 Gp Army under Shenyang MR
 21. *Jiang Weilie (57), Cdr South Sea Fleet
 22. Dr Ms Chen Zuoning (55), Master Engineer, PLA General Logistics
No 56 Research Institute
 23. *Prof Ma Weiming (52), Naval Engineering University
 24. *Xu Linping (55), Cdr 38 Gp Army under Beijing MR based in Baoding
 25. *Dr He Fuchu (50), President Military Medical Science Academy
 26. *Cao Qing (60), Head Central Security Bureau under CCP CC General Office



The Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) is an independent, non-profit think tank that undertakes and promotes policy related research, study and discussion on defence and military issues, trends, and development in air power and space for civil and military purposes, as also related issues of national security. The Centre is headed by Air Cmde Jasjit Singh, AVSM, VrC, VM (Retd)

Centre for Air Power Studies
P-284, Arjan Path, Subroto Park, New Delhi 110010
Tel: +91 11 25699130/32, Fax: +91 11 25682533

Editor: Dr Shalini Chawla e-mail: shaluchawla@yahoo.com

The views expressed in this brief are those of the author and not necessarily of the Centre or any other organisation.