

## 2. THE CENTRAL MILITARY COMMISSION AND MILITARY POLICY IN CHINA

By Nan Li<sup>127</sup>

As China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) withdrew from the societal politics of the Cultural Revolution, and more recently from its extensive business activities, its leadership should become more capable of concentrating its attention and energy on major issues associated with PLA force modernization. Similarly, no longer as distracted by major domestic, social, political and commercial concerns, this leadership may also become more inclined to involve itself in formulating China's national security policy. Both developments can have significant implications for future Chinese security policy and Asian security. However, the central institution that constitutes the core of this leadership, the Central Military Commission (CMC), has not been well understood due to a lack of serious analysis.<sup>128</sup> This study intends to fill this knowledge gap through an in-depth examination of the CMC. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions. What are the central roles and missions of the CMC? What are the origins of the CMC and how has it evolved since its founding? How is the CMC structured, and what are the major institutional norms and mechanisms for its functioning? What is the nature and structure of the CMC's relationship with major civilian institutions, and with lower level operational departments and units? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the CMC in fulfilling its central roles?

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<sup>128</sup> An exception is Michael Swaine's work. But since Swaine's brief analysis of the CMC is a part of a larger study of China's national security policy, a separate and in-depth examination of the CMC is justified. See Michael Swaine, "The PLA and Chinese National Security Policy: Leaderships, Structures, and Processes," in David Shambaugh and Richard Yang, eds., *China's Military in Transition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

This study intends to make a contribution to the basic knowledge and understanding of the CMC through a narrative account by illustrating what the CMC is rather than develop a theoretical argument or test a theoretical proposition. Consequently, the bulk of this study will concentrate on a description of the CMC's roles and missions, origins and evolution, structure, norms and mechanisms, and relationships. On the other hand, since the CMC is located at the key institutional junctures of both the PLA bureaucratic hierarchy and China's civil-military relations, this study touches on issues regarding the organizational theory and civil-military relations. As a result, the concluding section will address the bureaucratic and civil-military structures and dynamics regarding CMC effectiveness in fulfilling its roles.

The study is divided into four major sections. The first section examines the central roles and evolving missions of the CMC. The second looks into the origins and the historical evolution of the CMC. The third section addresses the CMC structure, norms and mechanisms, and relationships. The concluding section critically evaluates the CMC-based bureaucratic and civil-military structures and dynamics that affect CMC effectiveness.

## **ROLES AND EVOLVING MISSIONS**

### **Roles**

In a modern democracy, the military is nonpartisan and pledges its allegiance to the Constitution. It is also mitigated by a civilianized defense bureaucracy that answers to the popularly elected executive and legislature based on the requisites of the Constitution. China, however, is not a democracy, but rather an authoritarian Leninist regime where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has a monopoly on political power. As a result, the PLA, headed by the CMC, pledges its allegiance to the CCP rather than to popularly elected civilian authorities. The CMC functions as the military work department (*junshi gongzuo bumen*) of the CCP, and answers to the CCP Central Committee and the Politburo. The CMC chair, who is the commander-in-chief of the PLA, also “comes from among the principal leaders of the Party Central (*dang zhongyang*).” The central roles of the CMC include military policy-making, and coordination in both policy implementation and in managing the PLA, i.e., “as the highest military policy-making institution (*zuigao junshi juece jiguan*), the CMC conducts uniform command (*tongyi zhihui*) of the country's armed forces ... according to the line (*luxian*), guiding principles (*fangzhen*), and policy (*zhengce*) of the CCP Central.”<sup>129</sup>

### **Evolving Missions**

While the CMC has been managing military affairs on behalf of the CCP, the specific missions of the CMC have changed over time. This change happened largely

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<sup>129</sup> Yan Shikun, *Dangdui jundui juegui lingdao lilun yu shijian* [The Theory and Practice of the Party's Absolute Leadership over the Army], Beijing: Military Science Press, 1993, pp. 11, 174-175 (hereafter *Theory and Practice*).

because the CCP line and policy have changed over time. After its founding in the 1920s, for instance, the CCP adopted a line of a united front with the Kuomintang (KMT or Nationalist Party), where the CCP assisted the KMT and its army in their attempt to reunify China through expeditionary campaigns against the provincial warlords. Without an army of its own to command, the CMC, in accordance with the CCP policy of the united front, had a minor role to play. Its primary mission was to “direct CCP organizational and liaison work within the KMT Army.” It also coordinated the organization of the workers’ and peasants’ arms to assist the KMT Army’s expeditionary campaigns against the warlords.<sup>130</sup>

With the breakup of the CCP-KMT united front in the late 1920s, the CCP line changed. Rather than a moderate policy that placed emphasis on cooperation with the KMT to promote national reunification, the CCP now adopted a radical line. Such a line stressed class struggle-based land reform and an armed struggle against KMT rule. In the meantime, after several failed urban uprisings against KMT forces, several KMT Army units, influenced by the CCP, retreated to the remote mountains of southern Jiangxi Province. Together with local peasant forces in several southern provinces, these units were reorganized into the Chinese Workers and Peasants Red Army, which pledged its allegiance to the CCP. Now that the CCP had its own army and the emphasis of the Party line had shifted to armed struggle against the KMT, the CMC began to embark on more substantial missions. From the late 1920s to the middle 1930s, such missions included coordinating the expansion of the Red Army, directing the development of the Soviet bases, and formulating military strategy to resist the KMT Army’s annihilation campaigns. To the extent expanding the Red Army and developing Soviet bases relied on the success of land reform, the CMC and the Red Army were also heavily involved in radical land reforms. In doing so, the CMC was not only concerned with the military missions but also heavily involved in social and political functions.<sup>131</sup>

The setback of a decisive military campaign against the KMT forces in Jiangxi led to a the Long March that brought the CCP Central and the Red Army to the barren loess plateau of northern Shaanxi province. This setback coincided with the beginning of Japan’s invasion of China’s heartland. The CCP’s successful mediation of an incident in the city of Xi’an, where KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek was kidnapped by one of his generals for fighting the CCP rather than the Japanese, led to a second CCP-KMT united front: to fight against the Japanese invasion. The CCP line changed again: this time away from the radical land policy of Jiangxi. Rather than confiscating land from the landlords, the alleged social basis of the KMT, the rural policy emphasis had shifted to reducing land rent and interests of loans to avoid social polarization and division in the countryside. Rather than treating the KMT Army as the primary adversary, the new enemy became the Japanese invaders. Consequently, the missions of the CMC also

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<sup>130</sup> *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun* [China’s People’s Liberation Army] Beijing: Contemporary China Press, 1994, p. 340 (hereafter *China’s People’s Liberation Army*).

<sup>131</sup> Yan, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 92-94, 204-206; and *China’s People’s Liberation Army*, p. 341.

shifted. It was now responsible for reorganizing and integrating the Red Army into the KMT National Army, while maintaining its political independence from the KMT and allegiance to the CCP. The CMC was also bestowed the responsibility for designing and implementing a guerrilla warfare strategy based on protraction, dispersion, and combining warfare with social and political tasks, such as developing anti-Japanese bases behind the enemy lines through mobilizing the masses.<sup>132</sup>

The end of the Anti-Japanese War led to the termination of the second CCP-KMT united front, and the resumption of the civil war. The CCP line shifted again, this time toward defeating the KMT forces and establishing a “new democracy” regime where the CCP would dominate, but other social groups would be represented. As a result, the CMC was assigned new missions. These involved formulating and executing an active defense strategy, which stressed annihilating the KMT forces by piecemeal through stratagems and mobility, thus enabling the CCP forces to shift gradually from the defensive to the offensive. The CMC also directly conducted several decisive campaigns, which fatally crippled the KMT forces and contributed to the collapse of the regime.<sup>133</sup>

The founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in late 1949 was soon followed by the crisis on the Korean Peninsula. To “prevent the failure of the Korean revolution which would jeopardize the accomplishments of the Chinese revolution,” the CCP Politburo decided to send PLA forces to Korea to “fight the counterrevolutionary alliance of the US, South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan.”<sup>134</sup> The CMC was instrumental this time in organizing and deploying the People’s Volunteers to Korea, formulating strategies, coordinating operations, and directing major campaigns. The end of the Korean War was followed by a new CCP “general line,” which aimed to achieve “the socialist transformation of means of production in agriculture, handicraft, industry and commerce (referring to nationalization of productive means),” and “industrialization” of the country. For the PLA, rather than directly participating in “socialist transformation” and “industrialization,” its new function was to secure these programs through national defense. As a result, the CMC was bestowed with new missions. These missions involved formulating and coordinating policy programs concerning downsizing the PLA, the PLA work in education and training, arms and equipment development, scientific research, logistics and separating the PLA from civilian functions.<sup>135</sup>

The focus of the CMC on national defense-related military missions, however, proved to be short-lived. The anti-Rightist campaign of 1957 and the criticism of the

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<sup>132</sup> Yan, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 94-96, 206-209; and *China’s People’s Liberation Army*, p. 341.

<sup>133</sup> Yan, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 96-97, 209-212.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 213-214; Academy of Military Science Military History Research Department, *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun qishi nian: 1927-1997* [Seventy Years of China’s People’s Liberation Army: 1927-1997], Beijing: Military Science Press, 1997, pp. 405-410 (hereafter *Seventy Years*).

<sup>135</sup> AMS Military History Research Department, *Seventy Years*, pp. 446-467.

CCP's Great Leap Forward and People's Commune policy in 1959 by Peng Dehuai (the defense minister and the CMC member responsible for daily affairs) convinced Mao Zedong (the CCP chair) that the bourgeois ideology continued to exercise influence even after the means of production had been socialized, and that bourgeois representatives did exist in the CCP, the government, the PLA, and throughout Chinese society. Therefore, the emphasis of the CCP line should shift from economic construction and industrialization to class and "lines" struggle, which aimed to expose and weed out those in responsible positions who "take the capitalist road." With the gradual radicalization of the CCP line, the missions of the CMC also began to change. After Lin Biao succeeded Peng in 1960 as the new defense minister and the CMC vice chair responsible for daily affairs, he proposed that the guiding principle of the PLA work was for "politics to take command." As a result, the attention and energy of the CMC began to shift gradually toward formulating and coordinating politics-related programs, which aimed to promote Mao's revolutionary ideals and advise vigilance about the "bourgeois representatives" hidden in the PLA.<sup>136</sup>

The ultimate expression of the new CCP line to "remove those who take the capitalist road" was the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, which caused the paralysis of the civilian Party-state apparatus. As a result, the PLA was called upon to undertake new missions to support the program of "Three Supports" and "Two Militaries" ("*sanzhi*" "*liangjun*," or "supporting the leftists, workers, and peasants," and "military control and training") to fulfill the civilian functions previously done by the Party-state bureaucracy. These missions involved formulating, coordinating and supervising policy programs associated with the "Three Supports" and "Two Militaries." They ranged from propagating Maoist revolutionary ideology and promoting "continuous revolution" and class struggle throughout Chinese society, to managing daily affairs in central, provincial and local governments, and in factories, communes, schools, and other civilian working units.<sup>137</sup>

With the radical CCP domestic line in the late 1950s came an equally radical foreign policy characterized as changing from attempting to improve relations with foreign governments, to supporting the Maoist radical movements and regimes and promoting "world class struggle and revolution" through armed struggles. These struggles aimed to overthrow the established world order allegedly dominated by traditional US-led Western "capitalism and imperialism" and the new Soviet "bureaucratic capitalism" and "social imperialism." The shift in foreign policy also had an impact on the missions of the CMC, as it was involved in designing and coordinating programs in providing military assistance and training to the radical Maoist or national liberation movements in various continents of the world.<sup>138</sup>

With the death of Mao and the removal of the Maoist radicals (known as the Gang of Four) in 1976 and the ascendance of Deng Xiaoping to power in the late 1970s and

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., pp. 496-503.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., pp. 553-564.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., pp. 585-594.

early 1980s, the CCP line changed again. Eschewing the Maoist emphasis on class and “lines” struggle and “continuous revolution in the realm of ideology,” the new emphasis was placed on “developing productive forces.” As a result, a nation-building program, couched in the notion of “Four Modernizations (modernizing industry, agriculture, science and technology, and national defense),” was officially endorsed. For the PLA, rather than actively participating in the intense domestic “class” and “lines” struggle and supporting “world revolution” abroad, it was now required to withdraw from the societal politics of the Cultural Revolution and concentrate on peacetime army building and national defense.

Accordingly, two distinctive changes took place regarding the CMC and its parent institution and the missions it is to fulfill. While the CMC continues to answer to the CCP Central, it is also required by the 1982 Constitution to answer to the National People’s Congress (NPC), China’s legislature. In terms of major missions, the CMC is now supposed to fulfill the following:

- 1) to conduct uniform command of the nation’s armed forces;
- 2) to decide (*jueding*) the military strategy and the operational principles of the armed forces;
- 3) to lead and manage PLA building, which involves formulating programs (*guihua*), planning (*jihua*), and organizing implementation;
- 4) to propose and forward motions (*yi’an*) to the NPC and its standing committee;
- 5) to make military laws and regulations according to the Constitution and the laws, and to issue military decisions and orders;
- 6) to determine the PLA system of organization (*tizhi*) and organizational scale (*bianzhi*), and to define the missions and responsibilities of the PLA general departments, the services, and the MR (military region) level organizations;
- 7) to appoint and release (*renmian*), cultivate and train (*peixun*), examine and check (*kaohe*), and reward and penalize (*jiangchen*) the members of the armed forces;
- 8) to approve the systems of arms and equipment of the armed forces, and the programs and plans for arms and equipment development; and in coordination with the State Council, to lead and manage the national defense scientific research and production;
- 9) together with the State Council, to manage the national defense expenditure and assets;
- 10) to fulfill other responsibilities according to law.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>Zhang Wannian, *et al*, eds., *Dangdai shijie junshi yu zhongguo guofang* [Contemporary World Military Affairs and China’s National Defense] Beijing: Military Science Press, 1999, p. 218 (hereafter *Contemporary World Military Affairs*).

## ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION

### Origins

The conceptual origin of a communist party which possesses its own military department and forces, such as the CCP, can be traced to Lenin's theory of revolution. The classical Marxist theory of a socialist revolution is based on the premise that industrial capitalism would create conditions for its own demise: the socialization of workers in organized production in modern factories, which would provide organization and discipline; and the alienation of the working class from the capital and the machines for lack of their participation in the ownership and production decision making, which would generate the necessary revolutionary consciousness. Lenin, however, believed that both organization and revolutionary consciousness would not develop spontaneously as a historical inevitability, particularly in places like Russia where industrial capitalism had not been fully developed. They would rather be cultivated and developed through the workings of a highly centralized, disciplined, politically aware, and cadre-based vanguard party. Also, the bourgeoisie controls state power, including its military force, and would defend itself through armed resistance or suppression against a proletarian revolution. As a result, this vanguard party should also acquire its own military force, for the purpose of armed uprisings against the capitalist class-dominated state power, particularly in the urban areas where the bourgeoisie resides and whose influence dominates.<sup>140</sup>

To the extent the CCP is a brainchild of the Moscow-based Communist International (Comintern), the Leninist theory of organization and revolution left its unmistakable mark on the organization of the CCP, with its strong emphasis on organization and propaganda. Organization serves the purpose of generating unity, discipline and strength for the revolution, while propaganda serves to awaken and develop the class-based consciousness and identity for the revolution. Finally, it is no coincidence that the idea of a military department such as the CMC to be established within the CCP Central for coordinating military affairs was first proposed by Wang Yifei, the head of the Chinese military class who returned to Shanghai in 1925, after completing his studies in the Soviet Red Army academies.<sup>141</sup>

Even though the birth of the CCP is related to the theory and practice of the Russian revolution, Moscow was not interested in a working class-based socialist revolution in China where the CCP would play the leading role, largely due to the perceived underdevelopment of Chinese industrial capitalism. Instead, the attention of the Comintern was devoted to the KMT, particularly in reorganizing it into a Leninist style

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<sup>140</sup> Lenin, "What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement," and "The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State and the Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution," both in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Lenin Anthology*, New York: Norton & Company, 1975, pp. 12-114, 311-406.

<sup>141</sup> Zhao Gongde, *et al.*, *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun lishi shang de qishi ge jun* [The Seventy Corps in the History of China's People's Liberation Army], (Tianjin: Tianjin People's Press, 1993), p. 37. Also see Table 1.

party, and in assisting the establishment of the Huangpu Military Academy. The doctrinal excuse of the Comintern for the neglect of the CCP, which the CCP leaders accepted as an article of faith, was the “theory of two revolutions” (“*liangci geminglun*”). Such a theory assumes that the CCP-led working class should assist the bourgeoisie-based KMT to carry out a national democratic revolution first. Such revolution would lay the foundation for national unification and industrialization. In the process, the CCP and the working class would also gain economic benefits and political rights for the lawful struggles. As capitalism developed more fully and lawful struggles lead to the winning over of a substantial number of the masses and the soldiers, the CCP would organize and launch urban armed uprisings “at an appropriate time.” Such uprisings would overthrow the bourgeois rule “at one stroke,” making it possible for the CCP to seize state power and realize a socialist revolution.<sup>142</sup>

The implications of such a theory for CCP development are that it hampered the independence and autonomy of the CCP, which was required to operate as a “block within” the KMT, and denied the CCP the rationale for developing its own army, particularly in the early phase of a “national democratic revolution”. The neglect of military affairs in the early years of the CCP was reflected in several aspects concerning the CMC. First, there was no central military department until after the regional party organizations established their own military departments.<sup>143</sup> Also, the early CCP military departments had only the limited power to suggest and discuss (*jianyi taolun quan*), but not to make decisions and to command forces.<sup>144</sup> Finally, even after the CMC was established, it was not headed by the CCP general secretary, who seemed to be genuinely disinterested in military affairs (See Table 2.1). It was not until after the breakup of the CCP-KMT united front in 1927, where the CCP was successfully suppressed by the KMT Army, that the CCP leadership realized the importance of an army that was loyal to the Party and began to pay attention to military affairs.

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<sup>142</sup> AMS Military History Research Department, *Seventy Years*, p. 15.

<sup>143</sup> The CCP Regional Committee in Guangdong, for instance, established its military department as early as in the winter of 1924. See Xu Yan, *et al.*, *Mao Zedong junshi sixiang fazhan shi* [History of the Development of Mao Zedong’s Military Thought], Beijing: Liberation Army Press, 1991, p. 8.

<sup>144</sup> Zhao, *The Seventy Corps*, p. 38.

**Table 2.1 Central Military Commission, 1925-1928**

<b>Critical Years</b>	<b>Name Changes</b>	<b>Members</b>
February, 1926	Central Military Department (CMD) Established at the Politburo special meeting in Beijing**	<b>Director:</b> Zhang Guotao. <b>Members:</b> director, Wang Yifei, Ren Bishi.
November 1926	CMD renamed Central Military Commission(CMC)	<b>Director:</b> Zhou Enlai. <b>Secretary:</b> Wang Yifei.
August 1927 - 1928	CMC downsized to Central Military Section ( <i>ke</i> ) under CCP Organization Bureau	Zhou Enlai

\* Adapted from Jiang Siyi, *et al*, eds., *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun dashi dian* [A Dictionary of the Major Events of China's People's Liberation Army] Tianjin: Tianjin People's Press, 1992, p. 2124 (hereafter *Dictionary*).

\*\*Some Chinese military historians, however, suggest that the CMC was established in October 1925 at an enlarged conference of the CCP Central of the 4th CCP Congress. See Academy of Military Science Military History Research Department, *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun qishi nian: 1927-1997*, Beijing: Military Science Press, 1997, p. 15.

### **Red Army Period (1928-1936)**

This period witnessed the growing importance of the CMC. This was reflected in several policy changes. First, as specified by the *Military Work Outline (junshi gongzuo dagang)* issued by the CCP Central in April 1928, “the CMC not only has the power to suggest and to discuss, but should also have the responsibility to command the military forces and to manage military affairs under the military movement policy of the Party...” The CCP Central should also establish CMC branches (*fenhui*) in provinces “where substantial military movements, and significant Workers and Peasants Revolutionary Army units exist.”<sup>145</sup> But more importantly, the post-1927 shift of the CCP policy to the radical “land revolution and armed struggle against the KMT regime” meant that a new dimension was added to the traditional mobilization of the workers and peasants through propaganda and organization: the “militarization of the workers and peasants” (*gongnong junshi hua*) also meant the “workerization and peasantization of the military” (*jundui gongnong hua*). By the same token, such a policy shift also drove the CCP leaders who traditionally specialized in propaganda and organization to military work. Similarly, the new tasks of radical land redistribution to mobilize peasant youth to join the Red Army, and developing and expanding the Soviet bases meant that the top Red Army officers were also to be well versed in propaganda, mass mobilization, and local administration, hence, the “militarization of the Party cadres” and the “politicization of the military

<sup>145</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

cadres.” This is reflected in the membership of the CMC by men such as Zhu De, Peng Dehuai, and Lin Biao, in addition to several top Red Army officers who received formal military education from Huangpu or from the earlier provincial “military lecture halls” (*jiangwu tang*) and served as officers in the pre-1927 KMT Army. There were also many who were actually Party cadres who received little military training (see Table 2.2). All these developments laid the basis for the political-military fusion of the Chinese communist leadership, which has been extensively discussed in Western scholarly work on communist civil-military relations.<sup>146</sup>

This political-military symbiosis, or the blurring of the civilian-military boundary, does not mean that such leadership is highly unified. On the contrary, this leadership was highly fragmented during this period. But such fragmentation is not based on a civil-military divide, but rather on cleavages that cut across the civil-military boundary. One major cleavage, for instance, is the divide between the political-military leadership of the local Soviet bases on the one hand, and the Shanghai-based (until 1933) Politburo-CMC leadership on the other. The guiding principle for the armed struggles during this period was to establish the so-called “separate armed regimes of the workers and peasants” (*gongnong wuzhuang geju*). This principle means that the central task of the Red Army was to develop Soviet bases in remote, isolated, and economically backward inter-provincial border areas neglected by provincial warlords and where the KMT control was also the weakest. Two major characteristics resulted from the development of these bases. First, “the principal Party leaders of each Soviet base were also the leaders of the Red Army units in that area.” Second, “while accepting the strategic guidance of the CCP Central and the CMC, local leaders made decisions about campaigns and battles, and strategic development largely based on the local conditions. The Red Army units in each Soviet base generally fought their battles in their own ways (*gezi weizhan*).”<sup>147</sup>

**Table 2.2 Central Military Commission, 1928-1936**

<b>Critical Years</b>	<b>Name Changes</b>	<b>Members</b>
June-July, 1928	CCP Central Military Department restored at CCP 6th Congress held in Moscow	<b>Director:</b> Yang Yin. Zhou Enlai replaced Yang in August 1929 after Yang was arrested by KMT.
February, 1930	CCP CMC (Shanghai)	<b>Secretary:</b> Guan Xiangying <b>Standing Committee:</b> Zhou Enlai, Guan Xiangying, and Zheng Zhongsheng . Zhou Enlai replaced

<sup>146</sup> See particularly Amos Perlmutter, *et al*, “The Party in Uniform: Toward a Theory of Civil-Military Relations in Communist Political Systems,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 76, No. 4, December 1982, pp. 778-789.

<sup>147</sup> AMS Military History Research Department, *Seventy Years*, p. 76.

		Guan as secretary in August.
January, 1931	Central Revolutionary Military Commission(CRMC) of the CCP Central Bureau in Central Soviet Area (Jiangxi) established	<b>Chair:</b> Xiang Ying <b>Vice chairs:</b> Zhu De, Mao Zedong.
November, 1931	CRMC of the Central Soviet Republic Provisional Central Government (Jiangxi) established	<b>Chair:</b> Zhu De. <b>Vice chairs:</b> Wang Jiaxiang, Peng Dehuai. <b>Members:</b> chair and vice chairs, Lin Biao, Tan Zhenlin, Ye Jianying, Kong Hechong, Zhou Enlai, Zhang Guotao, Shao Shiping, He Long, Mao Zedong, Xu Xiangqian, Guan Xiangying, Wang Shengrong.
January, 1933	CCP CMC merged with CRMC in Jiangxi as CCP Central moved from Shanghai to Jiangxi	Bo Gu (Qin Bangxian) and Guan Xiangying were added as members of CRMC. Guan became acting commanding frontline Red Army chair in May.
February, 1934	New CRMC elected by the Second Central Soviet National Congress	<b>Chair :</b> Zhu De. <b>Vice chairs:</b> Zhou Enlai, Wang Jiaxiang. Real power was allegedly controlled by Bo Gu and Comintern China representative Li De.
1935 (Long March)		Zunyi Conference in January designated Zhou Enlai and Wang Jiaxiang responsible for military work. A three-person military leadership group was established in March, including Zhou Enlai, Wang Jiaxiang, and Mao Zedong. Zhang Guotao was added in June. A five-person group ( <i>wu ren tuan</i> ), including Mao, Zhou, Wang, Peng Dehuai, Lin Biao, was established in September.
November (end of Long March) 1935	Northwestern Revolutionary Commission of the Chinese Soviet Military established in Northern Shaanxi	<b>Chair:</b> Mao Zedong <b>Vice chairs:</b> Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai. <b>Members:</b> Chair and vice chairs, Wang Jiaxiang, Nie Hongjun, Lin Biao, Xu Haidong, Cheng Zhihua, Guo Hongtao. Ye Jianying, Nie Rongzhen, and Liu Zhidan were added as members in April 1936.

<p>October-December, 1936</p>	<p>CRMC of the Chinese Soviet restored as three Front Red Armies converged</p>	<p><b>Chair:</b> Mao.  <b>Vice chairs:</b> Zhou Enlai, Zhang Guotao.  <b>Presidium:</b> chair and vice chairs, Zhu De, Peng Dehuai, Ren Bishi, He Long.  <b>Members:</b> chair, vice chairs and presidium members, Xiangying, Lin Biao, Wang Jiaxiang, Xu Xiangqian, Chen Changhao, Liu Bochong, Guan Xiangying, Ye Jianying, Chen Yi, Xiao Ke, Dong Zhentang, Xu Haidong, Nie Rongzhen, Guo Hongtao, Zhang Yunyi, Wang Weizhou.</p>
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\*Adapted from Jiang, *A Dictionary*, pp. 2124-2128; Liao Gailong, *et al*, eds., *Dangdai zhongguo zhengzhi dashi dian* [A Dictionary of the Major Political Events in Contemporary China], Changchun: Jilin Literature and History Press, 1991, pp. 321-322; *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun, shangche* [China's People's Liberation Army, Book One], Beijing: Contemporary China Press, 1994, pp. 340-341; and AMS Military History Research Department, *Junqi piaopiao: xin Zhongguo wushi nian junshi dashi shushi* [Colors Are Fluttering: Recounting the Major Military Events in the 50 Years of New China], Beijing: Liberation Army Press, 1999, pp. 70-71 (hereafter *Colors are Fluttering*).

As these local leaders became members of the CMC,<sup>148</sup> clashes over policy and strategies became inevitable with the dominant members of the CMC who were trained in Soviet revolutionary and military strategies and tactics and retained regular and close contact with the Comintern. In 1930, for instance, CCP leader Li Lisan advocated a strategy of “unified organization and command of the Red Army” to “attack the enemy’s vital communication lines (*jiaotong yaodao*), main forces (*zhuli*), and central cities (*zhongxin chengshi*)” so that “a national general uprising” would be ignited. Beginning in early 1931, Wang Ming, the new CCP leader, stressed a strategy of ‘continuous offensive to take central cities’ to ensure “the success of the revolution in one or several provinces.” After the CCP Central and the CMC moved from Shanghai to Jiangxi in early 1933, and while KMT annihilation campaigns intensified, Wang allegedly adopted a rigid

<sup>148</sup> In the CMC during this period, Zhu De (commander), Mao Zedong (commissar), Peng Dehuai and Lin Biao represented the Red Army forces of the *gan’nan* (southern Jiangxi) *minxi* (western Fujian) Soviet area, which is also known as the central Soviet area, or *zhongyang suqu*. He Long represented the Red Army of the *xiang* (Hunan) *erxi* (western Hubei) Soviet area. Zhang Guotao, Chen Changhao, and Xu Xiangqian, on the other hand, represented the Red Army of the *er* (Hubei) *yu* (Henan) *wan* (Anhui) Soviet area. The *Gan’nan minxi* Red Army was reorganized as the First Front Red Army, the *xiang erxi* Red Army the Second Front Red Army, and the *er yu wan* Red Army the Fourth Front Red Army in the early 1930s and during the Long March.

“pure defense” (*danchun fangyu*) stance, which emphasized “warding off the enemy outside the gate of the state” (*yudi yu guomen zhiwai*) and “fighting the tough with toughness” (“*yingda yingpin*”).<sup>149</sup>

These strategies, however, ran counter to the view held by most of the leaders at the local Soviet bases. This view stressed the need to develop rural bases and build up the Red Army and not attempt to trigger urban uprisings by attacking and capturing big cities. It also stressed dealing with the KMT annihilation campaigns by using a more flexible strategy of “luring the enemy in deep” and constituting local superiority through mobility to strike the weakest link of the enemy offensive, but not “fending off the enemy outside the gate” and “matching strong force with strong force.” Such differences led to severe friction between the CCP-CMC Central and the leadership in local bases. For instance, to “impose their political line and military strategy, the CCP leaders dispatched central delegations or delegates to the Soviet bases, or established CCP central bureaus, bureau branches, and provincial committees in base areas, displacing local leaders or denying their speaking and voting rights in discussing and deciding strategic questions, and even their commanding power over campaigns and battles. All these local commanders could do was to avoid errors in campaigns and battles in their limited scope of responsibilities.”<sup>150</sup> The most noted example was the removal of Mao from his commissar position of the First Front Red Army in October of 1932 for his insistence on dispersing his troops to mobilize the masses and in order to prepare for another KMT annihilation campaign, rather than follow the order of the CCP Central to attack westward to capture Ji’an or northward to capture Wuzhou, in order to threaten Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi.<sup>151</sup>

Besides the central-local tension, another major cleavage that cut across the civil-military boundary was the tension among political-military leaders of different Soviet bases. When Red Army units in each Soviet base operated on their own in highly isolated border areas and had little communication or coordination with one another, such cleavages didn’t exist. But when these separate units converged, such as during the Long March, inter-front army tension arose due to disparity in objectives and strength. For instance, when the First Front Red Army (also known as the Central Red Army, headed by Mao, Zhu, and Zhou), and the Fourth Front Red Army (led by Zhang Guotao and Chen Changhao) met in June 1935 in northwestern Sichuan, severe disagreement occurred between the leaderships of the two armies about the objective of the Long March. While the First Front Army leaders proposed to march northward to establish the Soviet base in the interprovincial border region of Shaanxi, Gansu and Sichuan, the Fourth Front Red Army leaders argued for movement either westward to Qinghai and Xinjiang, or

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<sup>149</sup> See AMS Military History Research Department, *Seventy Years*, pp. 62, 105-117.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p.78.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110. Mao’s position was taken over by Zhou Enlai. For this, Zhou had to make self-criticism for following the “wrong line” in Jiangxi in almost every CCP rectification campaign thereafter.

southward to the Chuan (Sichuan) - Kang (Xikang, currently eastern Tibet) border region. The disagreement escalated to the point that Zhang Guotao allegedly refused to march northward, mobilized his subordinates to demand that he become the CMC chair (since the Fourth Front Red Army was the largest among the three), and even attempted to establish a separate CCP Central after marching some of the newly integrated Red Army units southward.<sup>152</sup>

Reflected in the composition of the CMC of the two major cleavages (central-local and inter-front army) is the frequent reshuffling of the CMC membership (see Table 2.2), which also suggests the highly unstable and volatile nature of the CCP-CMC leadership. These cleavages were apparently exacerbated by the failed military policy, strategies and campaigns, and the ensuing factional scapegoating and bickering among this leadership.

### **1937-1949 Period**

The CMC membership during this period remained relatively unchanged, which reflected a higher level of leadership unity when compared to the Red Army period (see Table 2.3). Several major factors may have contributed to this leadership stability. The failed “urban strategy” and “fortress defense” in Jiangxi and the fate of the West Route Army in late 1936, discredited the “Moscow returnees” and Zhang’s elements among the top leadership.<sup>153</sup> This failure also validated Mao’s rural strategy and “luring enemy in deep” approach in Jiangxi, and the northern strategy for the Long March. Both apparently contributed to the elevation and consolidation of the power of Mao and his followers. The uprooting of the Red Army units from their southern bases and the tremendous casualties suffered during the Long March, and their convergence in the unfamiliar territory of northern Shaanxi, may have generated a strong sense of vulnerability and thus a heightened desire for a stronger central leadership. The relationships among the 20,000 survivors, hardened by the difficult experience in Jiangxi and during the Long March, enhanced group solidarity and helped Mao and his followers to consolidate power. The newly formed united front with the KMT against the Japanese invaders reduced KMT military pressure on the CCP forces. Similarly, the KMT forces fought the Japanese forces on major fronts, while the CCP forces engaged mainly in guerrilla warfare behind

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., pp. 126-130.

<sup>153</sup> The West Route Army, constituted mainly of the Fourth Front Red Army units, was stranded west of the Yellow River and gradually annihilated by the KMT forces. Since this incident happened after Zhang Guotao made self-criticism about his earlier mistake of “splits,” and the West Route Army was participating in a centrally coordinated campaign, Mao should be held partially responsible for its demise for not providing timely relief or reinforcement. Some Fourth Front Red Army leaders complained that Mao was “borrowing a knife (KMT forces) to kill his political enemy (the Fourth Front Red Army)” (*jiedao sharen*). Many Fourth Front Red Army survivors also became the targets of criticism and purges during the Yan’an Rectification Campaign of 1943. For official interpretation of the West Route Army incident, see *ibid.*, pp. 141-143.

the enemy lines. The reduced military pressure on both fronts helped to lower the probability of CCP-CMC leadership bickering over strategies, which contributed to leadership stability. The united front also provided the crucial breathing space for the CCP to build up its bases and forces. Thus when KMT military pressure increased after the Japanese surrender and the breakup of the united front in late 1946, the CCP bases and forces had developed to the point where they became strong enough to contest the KMT offensives. Winning numerous smaller battles contributed further to a changing balance of forces that was increasingly favorable to the CCP, which in turn contributed to a higher level of consensus among the leadership about policy and strategies. This consensus also made it possible to plan and fight decisive campaigns. Winning these campaigns further enhanced the leadership unity.

**Table 2.3 Central Military Commission, 1937-1949**

Critical Years	Name	Members
August (Outbreak of Anti-Japanese War), 1937	CCP CRMC established at the Politburo Enlarged Conference in Luochuan, Shaanxi	<p><b>Secretary:</b> Mao Zedong.  <b>Deputy secretaries:</b> Zhu De, Zhou Enlai.  <b>Members:</b> secretary, deputy secretaries, Peng Dehuai, Ren Bishi, Ye Jianying, Lin Biao, He Long, Liu Bocheng, Zhang Hao, Xu Xiangqian.</p> <p>Wang Jiaxiang was added as deputy secretary in November. Liu Shaoqi was added as deputy secretary, and two commission branches (<i>fenhui</i>) established in March 1943, one in North China to coordinate the 8th Route Army, and the other in Southern China to coordinate the New Fourth Army.</p>
1945, August	New CCP CMC was elected at the 7th Congress, CCP that remain unchanged virtually to the end of civil war in 1949.	<p><b>Chair:</b> Mao Zedong.  <b>Vice chairs:</b> Zhu De, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehuai.  <b>Members:</b> chair and vice chairs, Chen Yi, Nie Rongzhen, He Long, Xu Xiangqian, Liu Bocheng, Lin Biao, Ye Jianying.  <b>Secretary general:</b> Yang Shangkun.</p>

\*Adapted from Jiang, *A Dictionary*, pp. 2232, 2279; Liao, *Contemporary China*, p. 322; *China's People's Liberation Army*, p. 341; AMS Military History Department, *Colors Are Fluttering*, pp. 71-72.

The above account does not imply that there were no issues that could have divided the CMC during this period. There was debate in the late 1930s, for instance, on whether protracted guerrilla warfare, if not supplemented by major campaigns, would be sufficient to defeat the Japanese invaders. The annihilation of the New Fourth Army headquarters by the KMT forces in southern Anhui in early 1941 (known as “Southern Anhui Incident,” or *wan’nan shibian*) raised questions on whether the united front with the KMT was a good policy. As a result, the three Eighth Route Army divisions were dispersed in separate regions to develop separate bases behind enemy lines. There was a concern of the growth of “mountaintopism” among their commanders, who represented local perspectives and attended CMC meetings as members, which could trigger the tension between the local bases and the central leadership over strategies as had happened in Jiangxi. During the civil war of 1946-49, there were alleged disagreements between Mao and his field commanders on how to conduct local campaigns. There were also instances where units from different field armies clashed with one another. Finally, some suggested that the tension between the commanders and the commissars of the PLA field armies grew to the point that some commanders requested the CCP Central to remove their commissars to reduce political interference in military decisions.<sup>154</sup>

These sources of tension and division, however, were marginal if compared to the Red Army period, and they were largely diffused before they became significant to divide the CMC. The “One Hundred Regiments” Campaign of 1940 caused great casualties and loss of bases due to Japanese retaliation, exposed the real strength of the CCP forces, and only temporarily delayed the Japanese march toward southern China. These actions contributed to the consensus on the protracted guerrilla warfare, but not major campaigns, as the correct way to go. The 1941 Southern Anhui Incident may have alerted the top leadership of the need to maintain CCP independence, but not yet to the point for the CCP to end the united front with the KMT, since the cost of the incident was much smaller than the benefit of developing CCP bases and forces under the united front umbrella. The KMT and the Japanese, meanwhile, would devote most of their resources dueling one another. Two CMC regional branches were established in 1943 (see Table 2.3) to improve the coordination between the Yan’an-based center and the local bases. The lack of purges of local commanders may indicate that the center-local relationship was relatively good. One major contributing factor may be that unlike the Jiangxi period where the CCP Central represented the view of Moscow, which may have been largely divorced from the Chinese reality, both the central and local leaders now were “natives” who went through similar experiences and supposedly understood the local conditions well. This understanding helped to mediate the relationship, and reduced the odds of

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<sup>154</sup> This point was made by a Mainland China participant at the CAPS/Rand Conference on the PLA as Organization, Airlie House Conference Center, Warrenton, Virginia, August 4-6, 2000.

friction between the center and the local bases.<sup>155</sup> Some PLA historians on the civil war also suggested that unlike the Jiangxi period where the center tried to micro-manage local campaigns through “absolute centralism,” the Mao-led central leadership was careful enough to confine themselves to making sense of the relative significance of various regional campaigns to the general objective and progress of the war, but allow local commanders to use their initiatives in conducting campaigns.<sup>156</sup> This freedom also helped to contribute to the improved coordination between the center and the local bases and forces. While it is true that there were “friendly fire” incidents between units from different field armies at the final stage of the civil war, when warfare became highly mobile and chaotic, such incidents took place at lower levels, and their political significance was not comparable to the “Zhang Guotao Affair” of the Long March. Finally, it may not matter much whether field army commanders liked their commissars or not, since little evidence exists to show that commissars’ interference contributed to bad decisions, and lead to the loss of any particular major campaign. The low technological nature of the PLA and warfare, the Party committee system that served to mediate and integrate decision making, and the generally positive progress of the war may render the impact of the alleged commander-commissar tension on conducting war marginal. Generally speaking, unlike the Red Army period, leadership consensus and stability appeared to be the norm during this period, while division and fragmentation were the exceptions.

### **1949-1959 Period**

The success-based consensus extended to this period. To accommodate Mao’s notion of “new democracy” where the CCP would share power with other political parties in the newly established PRC government, CCP-CMC was replaced by a government-based CMC, which also included non-CCP members (see Table 2.4). The CCP, however, exercised its leadership through several mechanisms. First, “the CCP Central (referring to Politburo) discussed and decided major issues regarding military affairs.” Second, “CCP membership constituted the absolute majority (21 out of 28) in the new government CMC.” Finally, “the system of Party committees at lower levels ensured the Party leadership over the military.”<sup>157</sup> By 1954, however, the CCP CMC was restored to centralize decision making, while a government-based National Defense Commission

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<sup>155</sup> The alleged disagreement between Mao and Lin Biao over conducting the Liao-Shen Campaign during the civil war may be exaggerated, since it was revealed only after 1971, and the purpose was to discredit Lin by showing that he was not always Mao’s good pupil, as he had claimed.

<sup>156</sup> See AMS Military History Research Department, *Seventy Years*, pp. 75, 277-278, 290-293, 320-322.

<sup>157</sup> See Li Cheng, *et al*, *Jianguo yilai junshi baizhuan dashi* [One Hundred Major Events in Military History since the Founding of the State], Beijing: Knowledge Press, 1992, pp. 8-9 (hereafter *One Hundred Major Events*).

was established to absorb non-CCP members (see Table 2.4). Also, unlike the relatively decentralized CMC before 1949, where heads of the major field armies and bases were regular members of the CMC, a centralized model was introduced, where membership was confined to the senior PLA leaders and heads of the PLA general departments, services and selected technical arms in Beijing. As a result, heads of the MRs would be informed of central decisions mainly through the CMC enlarged conferences. Moreover, the precedent of chair delegating daily decisions to a senior member responsible for daily affairs was established. Unlike during the war years when a symbiotic relationship existed between Party and PLA leaders, this new relationship symbolized an attempt to create at least a sense of boundary between the Party and the PLA. This would enable the CMC, which was dominated by military members, to focus on military work, while it would allow the chair, who is also the Party leader, to be involved only in major CMC decisions (See Table 2.4).

**Table 2.4 Central Military Commission, 1949-1959**

<b>Critical Years</b>	<b>Name Changes</b>	<b>Members</b>
October, 1949	People's Revolutionary Military Commission of the Central People's Government (including both CCP and non-CCP members) established	<b>Chair:</b> Mao Zedong. <b>Vice Chairs:</b> Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, Peng Dehui, Chen Qian. <b>Members:</b> Chair and vice chairs, He Long, Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Lin Biao, Xu Xiangqian, Ye Jianying, Nie Rongzhen, Gao Gang, Su Yu, Zhang Yunyi, Deng Xiaoping, Li Xianian, Rao Shushi, Deng Zihui, Xi Zhongxun, Luo Reiqing, Sa Zhenbing, Zhang Zhizhong, Fu Zuoyi, Chai Tingjie, Long Yun, Liu Fei, Lin Biao and Gao Gang were added as vice chairs in November 1951. Liu Bocheng, He Long, Chen Yi, Luo Ronghuan, Xu Xiangqian, Nie Rongzhen, and Ye Jianying were added as vice chairs and Xu Haidong added as a member in June 1954.
September, 1954	CCP CMC restored based on decision of a Politburo conference, and a separate National Defense Commission (NDC) established in the government**	<b>Chair:</b> Mao Zedong. <b>Members:</b> chair, Peng Dehua (responsible for daily affairs) Zhu De, Lin Biao, Liu Bocheng, He Long, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, Luo Ronghuan, Nie Rongzhen, Xu Xiangqian, Ye Jianying <b>Secretary general:</b> Huang Kecheng

		<b>Deputy secretary general:</b> Xiao Xiangrong, Huang Kecheng, Su Yu, Chen Geng, Tan Zheng, Xiao Jingguang, Wang Shusheng, Xu Guangda, Xiao Hua, Liu Yalou, and Hong Xuezhi were added as new members in November 1956.
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\*Adapted from Liao, *Contemporary China*, pp. 322-323; *China's People's Liberation Army*, pp. 341-342.

\*\*The NDC was allegedly a consultative but not a decisionmaking and commanding institution. It was composed of both the CCP and non-CCP members, many of whom were former KMT officers who led their units to defect to the CCP side during the civil war. The First National People's Congress (NPC) of 1954 elected a 81-member NDC chaired by Mao. Liu Shaoqi chaired the NDC of the Second (1959) and the Third (1965) NPC. NDC ceased to exist as Cultural Revolution began in 1966. See Liao, *Contemporary China*, pp. 324-326; AMS Military History Department, *Colors Are Fluttering*, pp. 75-77.

During this period, consensus-based decision making was the norm, particularly with regard to major decisions on new military doctrine, downsizing and reorganizing the PLA, developing research and learning institutions, formulating rules and regulations, and modernizing arms and equipment.<sup>158</sup> Some disagreements, however, did exist among the top CCP-CMC leaders. There were different opinions, for instance, on whether China should intervene in the Korean War, and on strategies to conduct specific campaigns in that war. The 1958 "anti-dogma" campaign led to criticism of Marshal Liu Bocheng (the CMC member responsible for rules and regulations, and education and training) for uncritically accepting the Soviet model. Also, those who wanted to substitute the Soviet style "one-man command" for PLA's "dual-leadership system" (*shuang shuozhang zhi*, referring to the system of shared responsibilities between the commander and the commissar) were criticized.<sup>159</sup> While these contentions laid the basis for the more severe intra-CMC division later, during this period they were still treated as "contradictions among the people," which requires "criticism and self-criticism" to resolve them, but not yet as "antagonistic, class contradictions," where those criticized would be removed from key posts as anti-Party criminals.

### 1959-1982 Period

This period was characterized by a high level of contention and fragmentation within the CMC. Mao's belief that a "bourgeois line" existed within the CCP, the government, the PLA, and throughout Chinese society following the Peng Dehuai Affair in 1959 led to the accusation of Peng and Huang Kecheng (the PLA chief of staff) for

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<sup>158</sup> See AMS Military History Research Department, *Seventy Years*, pp. 449-467.

<sup>159</sup> For "anti-dogmatism" campaign, see *ibid.*, pp. 467-474.

organizing an “anti-Party military club” and their removal from the CMC. As a result, Lin Biao took over as the new CMC vice chair responsible for daily affairs (see Table 2.5). From 1960 to 1965, Lin’s policy emphasis on “politics taking command” and fighting “Rightist tendencies” in the PLA met varying levels of resistance from other PLA leaders. These resistance led to Lin’s accusation of Tan Zheng (the director of the General Political Department, or GPD) for organizing an “anti-Party clique” by confining political work to literacy education but not ideological work, and Tan’s removal from the GPD and the CMC in late 1960. By late 1964, Luo Ruiqing (PLA chief of staff) was accused of representing a “bourgeois military line” for promoting the “great martial competition” (*da biwu*, referring to a PLA-wide program of intensified military training) at the expense of political studies during 1963-64, and subsequently relieved from his positions in the General Staff Department (GSD) and the CMC.<sup>160</sup>

The outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 meant more intensified power struggles within the CMC between those who followed Lin’s policy of exposing the “bourgeois military line” by “giving prominence to politics,” and those who intended to limit the scope of the Cultural Revolution in the PLA. The outcomes were the persecution of He Long, and the “sweeping aside” of other CMC senior members such as Zhu De, Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, and Xu Xiangqian by early 1967. Xiao Hua (GPD director) was removed from his positions in the GPD and the CMC in July 1967, and Yang Chengwu (acting PLA chief of staff) from his positions in the GSD and the CMC in March 1968 (see Table 2.5). As a result, the CMC, particularly its newly formed and powerful administrative group, was dominated by Lin loyalists such as Huang Yongsheng (the new PLA chief of staff), Wu Faxian (PLA Air Force commander), Ye Qun (Lin’s wife), Li Zuopeng (PLA Navy commissar), and Qiu Huizuo (director of the General Logistics Department, or GLD) (see Tables 2.5 and 2.6). By late 1970, however, Mao became suspicious of Lin’s political ambitions. To balance against Lin’s expanding power in the CMC, Mao began to implement a strategy of what he called “mixing sand,” by adding non-Lin loyalists to the CMC administrative group (see Table 2.6).<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 500, 519-520.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 555-560.

**Table 2.5 Central Military Commission, 1959-1969**

Critical Years	Changes	Members
September, 1959	Post-Peng Dehuai Affair Changes	<p><b>Chair:</b> Mao Zedong <b>Vice chairs:</b> Lin Biao (responsible for daily work), He Long, Nie Rongzhen.</p> <p><b>Standing Committee:</b> chair, vice chairs, Zhu De, Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Deng Xiaoping, Luo Ronghuan (secretary general), Xu Xiangqian, Ye Jianying, Luo Reiqing (secretary general after Luo Ronghuan's death in 1963), Tan Zheng.</p> <p><b>Members:</b> chair, vice chairs, Standing Committee members, Su Yu, Chen Geng, Xiao Jinguang, Wang Shusheng, Xu Guangda, Liu Yalou.</p> <p><b>Deputy secretary generals:</b> Su Zhenhua, Xiao Xiangrong. Working Conference (<i>bangong huiyi</i>, established in October under Standing Committee)</p> <p><b>Members:</b> Luo Reiqing, Tan Zheng, Yang Chengwu, Xiao Hua, Qiu Huizuo, Xiao Xiangrong. Xiao Hua was added as deputy secretary general and Zhang Aiping a member of Working Conference in May 1960. Yang Chengwu was added as deputy secretary general in June 1965. Chen Yi, Xu Xiangqian, Liu Bocheng, Ye Jianying (secretary general) were added as vice chairs in January 1966 and Wang Xinting added as deputy secretary general in March.</p>
1966-1969	Early Cultural Revolution Changes	<p>Many members were allegedly criticized and "swept aside." In March 1967, Xie Fuzhi, Xiao Hua, Yang Chengwu, Su Yu were added as Standing Committee members. In August, a four-man small group was established within CMC, including Wu Faxian (responsible person), Ye Qun, Qiu Huizuo, Zhang Xiuchuan. By September, it became the CMC administrative group (<i>banshi zhu</i>) headed by Yang Chengwu, with Wu Faxian, Ye Qun, Li Zuopeng, Qu Huizuo as members. Li Tianhuan,</p>

Critical Years	Changes	Members
		Liu Jingping were added as group members in October. In March 1968, Huang Yongsheng replaced Yang Chengwu as group leader, with Wu Faxian as his deputy, and Ye Qun, Li Zuopeng, and Qu Huizuo as members. Li Tianyou was added as group member in January 1969.

\* Adapted from Liao, *Comtemporary China*, p. 323; *China's People's Liberation Army*, pp. 343-344.

The Lin Biao Affair in late 1971 led to the removal of Lin loyalists from the CMC. This was followed by three developments. First, those who were persecuted during the early Cultural Revolution such as Ye Jianying and Deng Xiaoping were reinstated and became key members of the CMC, Deng, for example, was appointed the new PLA chief of staff. Second, members of the Gang of Four such as Wang Hongwen and Zhang Chunqiao also became key CMC members with Zhang becoming the director of the newly restored GPD. Neither of these two members, however, had previous military experience. Finally, partly due to the expanding role of the PLA in societal politics due to its involvement in the “Three Supports and Two Militaries,” and partly due to the need for competing CMC senior leadership factions to mobilize support from below, the CMC became decentralized. Unlike the 1950s when the CMC membership was confined only to senior PLA leaders and heads of the PLA general departments, it was now extended to heads of the MRs. These three developments produced two major effects on the nature and structure of the CMC. First, it rendered the CMC much more heterogeneous and fragmented than before, with its military members (those PLA leaders who were persecuted earlier for representing the “bourgeois military line”), political-military members (those PLA leaders who benefited from the Cultural Revolution), and nonmilitary members (those who had no PLA experience before becoming the CMC members). Second, they contributed to the bloating of the CMC, as membership was now extended to lower levels. Both further exacerbated the factional struggles within the CMC. Even after Hua Guofeng came to power following the death of Mao and the removal of the Gang of Four in late 1976, the CMC continued to remain decentralized, heterogeneous and bloated (see Table 2.6). This may also imply that Hua, who had little influence in the PLA, at least tried to consolidate his position in the CMC by mobilizing support from both below and outside of the PLA in his fateful power struggle against Deng and his followers.

**Table 2.6 Central Military Commission, 1969-1981**

<b>Critical Years</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Members</b>
1969, April	CMC produced at the CCP Ninth Congress	<p><b>Chair:</b> Mao Zedong  <b>Vice chairs:</b> Lin Biao, Liu Bocheng, Chen Yi, Xu Xiangqian, Nie Rongzhen, Ye Jianying.  <b>Administrative group:</b> Huang Yongsheng (head), Wu Faxian (deputy head), Ye Qun, Liu Xianquan, Li Tianyou, Li Zuopeng, Li Desheng, Qiu Huizuo, Wen Yucheng, Xie Fuzhi.  <b>Members:</b> chair, vice chairs, admin group members, Ding Sheng, Wang Binzhang, Wang Shusheng, Wang Xiaoyu, Wang Huiqiu, Wei Guoqing, Pi Dingjun, Liu Feng, Liu Xinyuan, Xu Shiyou, Chen Shiqu, Chen Xianrei, Chen Xilian, Li Xuefeng, Zhang Dazhi, Zhang Cimin, Zhang Guohua, Zhang Cunqiao, Yang Dezhi, Du Ping, Xiao Jinguang, Zheng Weishan, Xian Henghan, Yuan Shengping, Liang Xinchu, Zheng Shaoshan, Zheng Siyu, Peng Shaohui, Han Xianchu, Su Yu, Wen Yucheng, Tan Puren, Pan Fusheng.</p> <p>In 1970, Wang Dongxing, Ji Dengkui, Zhang Chaiqian, Chen Shiqu were added as administrative group members, the result of Mao's "mixing sand" strategy.</p>
1971, October	Post-Lin Biao Affair	<p>Large numbers of members were criticized as followers of Lin and were removed. The adjustments administrative group was abolished and Working Conference restored, with Ye Jianying, Xie Fuzhi, Zhang Cunqiao, Li Xiannian, Li Desheng, Ji Dengkui, Wang Dongxing, Chen Shiqu, Zhang Chaiqian, Liu Xianquan as Conference members. Ye was responsible for daily affairs. Wang Hongwen was added as Conference member in October 1973. Deng Xiaoping become CMC and Working Conference member in December</p>

		<p>1973, and became CMC vice chair and PLA chief of staff in January 1975. In February 1975, CMC Standing Committee was restored to replace Working Conference, with Ye Jianying, Wang Hongwen, Deng Xiaoping, Zhang Chunqiao, Liu Bocheng, Chen Xilian, Wang Dongxing, Su Zhenhua, Xu Xiangqian, Nie Rongzhen, and Su Yu as members. Ye was responsible for daily work. Li Xiannian and Wang Zhen were added as members later. Ye was dismissed from daily responsibility in February 1976 and Deng was criticized and removed in April 1976. Wang Hongwen and Zhang Chunqiao were removed following Mao's death on October 6, 1976. Hua Guofeng became CMC chair the same month. In March 1977, Ye was restored the responsibility for CMC daily affairs.</p>
<p>July – August, 1977</p>	<p>CMC produced by the CCP</p>	<p><b>Chair:</b> Hua Guofeng</p> <p><b>Vice chairs:</b> Ye Jianying, Deng Xiaoping, Liu Bocheng, Xu Xiangqian, Nie Rongzhen.</p> <p><b>Standing Committee:</b> Li Xiannian, Wang Dongxing, Chen Xilian, Wei Guoqing, Su Zhenhua, Zhang Tingfa, Su Yu, Luo Reiqing (secretary general), Yang Yong (nonvoting, or <i>liexi</i>), Liang Biye (nonvoting), Zhang Zhen (nonvoting).</p> <p><b>Members:</b> chair, vice chairs, Standing Committee members, Wang Ping, Wang Zheng, Wang Zhen, Wang Bicheng, Wang Shangrong, Wang Jian'an, Deng Hua, Kong Shiquan, Gan Weihuan, Lu Zhengchao, Liu Zhen, Liu Zhijian, Xu Shiyong, Du Yide, Yang Chengwu, Yang Dezhi, Li Suiqing, Li Zhimin, Li Desheng, Li Jukui, Li Yaowen, Xiao Hua, Xiao Ke, Xiao Jingguan, Xiao Wangdong, Wu Kehua, Song Shilun, Song Chengzhi, Zhang Chaiqian, Zhang Aiping, Chen Xianri, Chen Zhaidao, Chen Heqiao, Jin Rubo, Hong Xuezhi, Qin Jiwei, Nie Fengzhi, Xu Liqing, Guo Linxiang, Gao Houliang, Tang Liang,</p>

		<p>Huang Xinting, Han Xianchu, Zheng Siyu, Liao Hansheng, Tan Shanhe.</p> <p>In March 1978, Wang Zhen was added as Standing Committee member. In January 1979, Geng Biao was added as Standing Committee member, and became secretary general following Luo Reiqing's death. In February 1979, Wei Guoqing and Yang Yong were appointed as deputy secretary generals. In November 1979, the CMC Working Conference under Standing Committee was restored, nonvoting Standing Committee positions were eliminated, and Wang Ping was added as deputy secretary general. Conference members included Wei Guoqing, Yang Yong, Wang Ping, Wang Shangrong, Liang Biye, Hong Xuezhi, Xiao Hongda. In January 1980, Xu Shiyong, Yang Dezhi, Han Xianchu, Yang Yong, and Wang Ping were added as Standing Committee members. In February 1980, Chen Xilian and Wang Dongxin resigned from CMC. In March 1980, Yang Dezhi succeeded Deng Xiaoping as PLA chief of staff and became CMC deputy secretary general and Standing Committee member. In June 1981, Hua Guofeng resigned as CMC chair, Deng Xiaoping became the new chair, and Yang Shangkun became the Standing Committee member and replaced Geng Biao as secretary general.</p>
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\*Adapted from Liao, *Contemporary China*, pp. 323-324; *China's People's Liberation Army*, pp. 344-347.

What then is the nature of the fragmentation within the CMC during this period? Ideological rhetoric of the time and some studies suggest that the division was primarily between political commissars who wanted the PLA to stay politically and ideologically “red,” and military commanders who desired expertise-based professionalism, or “whiteness” for the PLA. The reality, however, is more complex than such a simple civil-military dichotomy. People with either commander or commissar experience, for instance, can be found within each of the competing factions of the CMC. A better indicator seems to be the revived historical ties such as the field army system of the civil war period, which really cut across the civil-military boundary. Except for those who existed on the margin of each of the competing factions, Lin Biao's rise to power largely meant that those with Fourth Field Army backgrounds had a much better chance of being

appointed and promoted to important positions,<sup>162</sup> while those with non-Fourth Field Army background were very likely to be accused of representing the “bourgeois military line” and removed from key positions. Paradoxically, the downfall of Lin Biao meant the reverse of political fortunes for the core members of the competing factions.

What then contributed to such severe fragmentation? Mao’s belief in a hidden but ever-present “bourgeois line” and the following “witch hunt,” certainly triggered the formation and consolidation of competing factions, and the escalation of the balancing behavior between and among them. The escalation in turn damaged the old norms and mechanisms of mediating differences. Small disagreements, for instance, were no longer treated as “contradictions among the people,” but rather as “antagonistic contradictions” which warranted severe struggles and purges. As competing factions mobilized support from below and outside and integrated them into the CMC, the old boundaries of the CMC collapsed and its internal quality declined. As the CMC became more heterogeneous and bloated, it became increasingly difficult to build consensus on policy, but much easier to wage ideology-based struggles and purges. For those who had political aspirations, the collapse of the old bureaucratic norms and mechanisms meant that they could no longer count on them for career security and survival, but rather needed to look for alternative, informal mechanisms. It seems that the old, battle-hardened ties such as the field army affiliations offered such alternative, since they helped to enhance the chances of survival in the new environment of political anarchy.

### **1982-1999 Period**

CMC reforms during this period aimed essentially to restore the old norms, mechanisms and boundaries so that the chances of factional bickering could be reduced. First, the old “lines” struggle-based mobilization methods, geared toward weeding out hidden class enemies, were abandoned. In the meantime, bureaucratic norms and mechanisms (to be discussed later) aimed to build consensus on policy were restored. Second, the decentralization model where membership was extended to the MR level commanding officers, was replaced by the centralization model, where CMC membership was accessible only to the PLA senior leaders and the heads of the general departments. These reforms not only reduced the participation of the lower levels in CMC policy deliberations, but also allowed them to focus their attention and energy on implementing policy and on managing their own units. Third, an attempt was made to gradually reduce the political-military and nonmilitary members so that the CMC would be dominated by military members, or those who spent their life and career in the PLA. This change reduced the heterogeneity of the CMC, which in turn made it easier to build consensus, since a commonly shared career experience may contribute to a more uniform institutional outlook on policy (Compare Table 2.7 with Table 2.6 for changes).

These changes have produced some positive results. The old ideology-based factional purges and counter purges become relatively rare. In the meantime, the CMC has been demonstrating a higher level of unity by churning out new policy programs on

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<sup>162</sup> Lin was the commander of the Fourth Field Army during the civil war.

PLA doctrine, organization, technology, and education and training. Some may suggest that the ousting of Zhao Ziyang in 1989 and the removal of Yang Shangkun and Yang Baibing in 1992 indicated that the old style purges persisted. These instances, however, are the exceptions. In addition, their removal was not caused by competing agendas on military policy, but rather by disagreements on ways to handle unexpected events such as the student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, Yang Baibing retained his Politburo position even after his exit from the CMC, which was not comparable to the severe purges of the Cultural Revolution. Finally, the exit of the three represented the removal of the vestige of the political-military and nonmilitary members, which further enhanced the homogeneity of the CMC.

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<sup>163</sup> Zhao was removed from the CMC as a result of the loss of his position as CCP general secretary, and the main reason was his “ineffectiveness” in handling student demonstrations. Though there are various interpretations of the retirement of Yang Shangkun and the removal of Yang Baibing from the CMC, the more plausible reason may be that the two were overly active in suppressing the student demonstrations and took the opportunity to intensify the political activities of the PLA, which was reflected in Yang Baibing’s militant “class struggle” rhetoric as the GPD director. Both therefore may be suspected of forming a factional clique, considering that the two are relatives and militant rhetoric usually serves as the strategy for factional mobilization and struggles in CCP history. For Yang Baibing’s political activism, see David Shambaugh, “The Soldier and the State in China: the Political Work System in the PLA,” *China Quarterly*, No. 127, September 1991, pp. 553-567.

**Table 2.7 Central Military Commission, 1982-1999**

Critical Years	Name	Members
September, 1982	CMC produced at the CCP 12th Congress	<b>Chair:</b> Deng Xiaoping <b>Vice chairs:</b> Ye Jianying, Xu Xiangqian, Nie Rongzhen, Yang Shangkun (secretary general) <b>Deputy secretary generals:</b> Yu Qiuli, Yang Dezhi, Zhang Aiping, Hong Xuezh.
November, 1987	CMC produced by the CCP 13th Congress	<b>Chair:</b> Deng. <b>Vice Chairs:</b> Zhao Zhiyang (executive), Yang Shangkun (secretary general) <b>Deputy secretary generals:</b> Hong Xuezh, Liu Huaqing. <b>Members:</b> chair, vice chairs, secretary generals, Qin Jiwei, Chi Haotian, Yang Baibin, Zhao Nanqi.
November, 1989	Post-Tiananmen Incident CMC	<b>Chair:</b> Jiang Zeming. <b>Vice Chairs:</b> Yang Shangkun (executive), Liu Huaqing. <b>Secretary general:</b> Yang Baibing. <b>Members:</b> chair, vice chairs, secretary general, Qin Jiwei, Chi Haotian, Zhao Nanqi.
October, 1992	CMC produced at the CCP 14th Congress	<b>Chair:</b> Jiang Zemin <b>Vice chairs:</b> Liu Huaqing, Zhang Zhen. <b>Members:</b> chair, vice chairs, Chi Haotian, Zhang Wannian, Yu Yongbo, Fu Quanyou
September, 1997	CMC of the CCP 15th Congress	<b>Chair:</b> Jiang Zemin <b>Vice chairs:</b> Chi Haotian, Zhang Wannian. <b>Members:</b> chair, vice chairs, Fu Quanyou, Yu Yongbo, Wang Ke, Wang Reilin
September, 1999	Pre-16th Congress Adjustments(to be held in 2002)	<b>Chair:</b> Jiang Zemin <b>Vice chairs:</b> Hu Jintao, Chi Haotian, Zhang Wannian. <b>Members:</b> chair, vice chairs, Fu Quanyou, Yu Yongbo, Wang Ke, Cao Gangchuan, Wang Ruilin, Guo Boxiong, Xu Caihou.

\*Adapted from Liao, *Contemporary China*, p. 324; *China's People's Liberation Army*, pp. 347-348.

## STRUCTURE, NORMS, MECHANISMS, AND RELATIONSHIPS

### Structure

The CMC in essence resembles a committee where the CCP and the PLA top leaders meet to make major decisions and to coordinate policy. It is usually chaired by the CCP chair or general secretary. The position of vice chairs is usually limited and confined to the uniformed PLA senior leaders, while other members are the heads of the four PLA general departments. Even though the CMC does not claim to have a hierarchy, certain factors affect the relative power among its members. Since the CMC is a Party institution and all CMC members are Party members, those who hold position in the CCP Politburo may be regarded as more powerful than others, and those who hold position in the Politburo Standing Committee should be seen as even more powerful. Within the CMC itself, chair and vice chairs, who constitute an informal executive committee,<sup>164</sup> are certainly seen as more senior and more powerful than the other members. Among the other members, those who hold position of the full heads of the general departments are regarded as more powerful than those who hold position of the deputy heads of these departments. Furthermore, those who hold position of the full heads of the GSD and GPD are considered more powerful than those who hold the position of the head of the GLD, since the former are recognized as more important departments.<sup>165</sup> Some sources suggest that the newly established General Armament Department (GAD) may reflect a new emphasis on technology, which may render its head equal status with the heads of the GSD and the GPD. But since GAD is relatively new and a supportive department, it probably has the status of the GLD. Military ranks used to be an important factor in determining the relative importance of members (marshals vs. generals). But since all current uniformed members are generals, ranks may not be as an important indicator as before, even though levels of salary (which is determined by the length of military service, an indicator of relative seniority, as well as by ranks) may be an influential factor.

There have been historical exceptions to the current, more regularized CMC structure as described above, particularly during the political turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, and even thereafter. From 1982 to 1989, for instance, Deng was neither the CCP chair nor its general secretary, but he held the position of the CMC chair, while the CCP general secretary Zhao Ziyang, who should have been the CMC chair, only held the position of the CMC vice chair (see Table 2.7). Moreover, those who had little PLA service experience or who left the PLA for civilian positions since the late 50s, such as Deng (from 1975 to 1976 and from 1977 to 1982), Wang Hongwen (from 1975 to 1976), Zhao Ziyang (from 1987 to 1989), and Hu Jintao (from 1999 to present), held or holds the position of the vice or first vice chair of the CMC (see Tables 2.6 and 2.7). While it is understandable that the “core in waiting” needs to have prior CMC tenure to gain military experience and to cultivate relationship and authority within the CMC and the PLA, some

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<sup>164</sup> Swaine, “The PLA and Chinese National Security Policy,” p. 119.

<sup>165</sup> A deputy PLA chief of staff or a deputy GPD director is equivalent to a full GLD director in level distinction.

regularized norm may be necessary to enhance the legitimacy of such succession-related practice. If Hu Jintao succeeds Jiang as the CMC chair at the same time as he would become the new CCP general secretary, his prior tenure at the CMC may establish a precedent that may serve as a normative mechanism of political-military succession. But if Hu takes over the position of the CCP general secretary at the 16th CCP Congress to be held in 2002, while Jiang continues to hold the position of the CMC chair, as Deng did earlier relative to Zhao, the attempt to normalize the political-military succession would be seriously hampered. This line of succession is unusual because holding the CMC chair position without being the CCP general secretary would be perceived as being abnormal and irregular, even according to the CCP's own past practice and norm.

Another exception to the current structure is appointing a uniformed senior member or a uniformed vice chair to be responsible for daily affairs (Peng Dehuai from 1954 to 1959, Lin Biao from 1959 to 1971, and Ye Jianying from 1971 to 1976 and from 1977 to 1982), or a standing (*changwu*) vice chair (Yang Shangkun from 1982 to 1989) (see Tables 2.4, 2.5, and 2.7). Related to this exception is appointing a secretary general to assist the vice chair responsible for daily affairs in managing his daily tasks (Huang Kecheng from 1954 to 1959, Luo Ronghuan from 1959 to 1963, Luo Ruiqing from 1963 to 1965 and from 1977 to 1979, Geng Biao from 1979 to 1981, Yang Shangkun from 1981 to 1989, and Yang Baibing from 1989 to 1992. See Tables 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7). These arrangements, however, are usually seen as concentrating power either in the hands of these two members, or in the hands of one member (if both positions are occupied by one person, as Yang Shangkun did from 1982 to 1989. See Table 2.7). This in turn may lead to a perception of the declining influence over policy by the civilian chair and other members. Since these two members usually work closely together, they may also be suspected of forming a clique (Peng Dehuai and Huang Kecheng from 1954 to 1959, and Yang Shangkun and Yang Baibing from 1989 to 1992). Both may generate a sense of insecurity and anxiety about one's relative power among other CMC members. Sometimes, however, the two may not get along well, either due to fear of being suspected of forming a clique or for ideological differences (as had happened between Lin Biao and Luo Ronghuan from 1959 to 1963, and between Lin Biao and Luo Ruiqing from 1963 to 1965), leading to severe rivalry between the two at the expense of policy. Since these two positions may contribute to the "relative gain" problem in the CMC and trigger preemptive power struggles, both were eliminated in 1992 to reduce factionalism.

There are other exceptions to the current structure. When the CMC grew rather large, for instance, a standing committee would be established (from 1959 to 1966, and from 1975 to 1982. See Tables 2.5 and 2.6) to differentiate the more senior and influential members from others with the standing committee itself differentiated between voting and nonvoting members (from 1977 to 1979. See Table 2.6). Related to the standing committee is the working conference, which was established either as the mechanism to interpret and operationalize the standing committee decisions (from 1959 to 1966, and from 1979 to 1982. See Tables 2.5 and 2.6), or as a substitute for the standing committee (from 1971 to 1975. See Table 2.6). Moreover, from 1966 to 1971, the heyday of the Cultural Revolution, both the standing committee and the working conference were replaced by a powerful CMC administrative group. Finally, specialized committees were sometimes established within the CMC to manage functional and technical tasks (in military training and education, science and technology, etc.). These arrangements

produced several negative effects. First, they turned the CMC into an overly stratified or compartmentalized bureaucracy, making it difficult to build consensus on major decisions and to coordinate policy. Moreover, they contributed to an excessively uneven distribution of power, which may have caused the relative gain-driven spiral, leading to intense factional rivalry. Furthermore, some extra-institutional arrangements, such as the administrative group, can easily be turned into the tool of intra-CCP power struggles.<sup>166</sup> Finally, specialized committees tended to micromanage tasks that were the responsibilities of the PLA general departments, making it difficult for either to fulfill its tasks due to blurring of bureaucratic ranks. Largely for these reasons, these arrangements have gradually been phased out.

### **Major Norms and Mechanisms**

For the CMC to make decisions and coordinate policy, there are two major norms that provide context and guideline. First, the line changes of the CCP Central, which are usually related to leadership changes and a reevaluation of China's internal and external environment, provide the context within which military policy would be formulated or changed. "Early, total, nuclear war," for instance, was largely identified with the radical Maoist line of "war and revolution." As CCP line shifted toward "peace and development" under Deng, the notion of "local war under modern conditions" was articulated and adopted. Moreover, bureaucratic incrementalism provides an important norm for decision making. With the restoration and consolidation of the bureaucracy in the post-Mao era,<sup>167</sup> military policy has become less erratic and more incrementalized. Personnel appointments, for instance, are less determined by competing definition of ideological correctness and more by bureaucratic requisites such as service length, performance, and education.<sup>168</sup> Similarly, decisions on budget and weapons acquisition are less based on revolutionary zeal-driven and unrealizable targets and more on feasibility factors such as how much was spent the previous year; spending relative to government budget, annual economic growth, and the annual gross domestic product (GDP); availability of suppliers; and cost-benefit ratio.<sup>169</sup>

While major norms set the parameters for which debate and consensus on major decisions take place, at the operational level the CMC General Office (GO) is an

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<sup>166</sup> Most Lin loyalists in the CMC administrative group also served in the CCP Politburo, and were both active participants and victims in the intra-CCP "lines" struggle of the time.

<sup>167</sup> See Nan Li, "Organizational Changes of the PLA," *China Quarterly*, No. 158, June 1999.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 330-331.

<sup>169</sup> For detailed discussion of budgetary processes, see Ku Guisheng, *et al.*, *Junfei lun* [Theory of Military Budget], Beijing: National Defense University, 1999. For discussion of weapons acquisition, see Sun Haiyang, *et al.*, *Junpin lun* [Theory of Military Product] Beijing: Arms Industry Press, 1997.

important mechanism for the CMC to fulfill its roles.<sup>170</sup> As the PLA has shifted to more quality-based and technology-driven modernization, policy issues also require more sophisticated technical analyses than before. As a result, the GO's Comprehensive Investigation and Research Bureau (CIRB) is playing an increasingly important role in providing such analyses. This analysis is usually done in three major ways. The CIRB's own research staff conducts its own investigation, research and analyses on major policy issues. Moreover, the CIRB can assign specialized research projects to other PLA research institutes such as the Academy of Military Science (AMS), the National Defense University (NDU), and the general departments, services and MR-affiliated research institutions, or collect and aggregate inputs from these institutions on policy issues. Finally, the CIRB's research staff can be integrated into a drafting group that attempts to tackle larger, more comprehensive policy subjects.<sup>171</sup>

The CMC currently consists of the heads of the four PLA general departments so that the relationship among operations, personnel, arms and technology, and finance and logistics can be coordinated, since the four departments are also considered the operational departments (*gongzuo bumen*) of the CMC. There are, however, newly emerging issues that transcend the functional responsibilities of the four general departments, which require central coordination at the CMC level. As a result, specialized bureaus were established and placed under the GO for the purpose of policy coordination. The Rule of Law Bureau, for instance, came into being largely as an attempt to coordinate the numerous newly formulated rules and regulations that transcend the functions of the four general departments and encompass all aspects of the PLA. The Auditing Bureau, on the other hand, was established as a device to impose some central financial discipline through auditing the budgetary expenditures as well as non-budgetary income, largely the

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<sup>170</sup> Since the early 1950s, the CMC and its GO had been located in the relatively small Sanzuomen compound, which is close to the back entrance of Zhongnanhai (CCP Central) and the front gate of Beihai Park, and contains a small auditorium (well known for showing internally circulated foreign movies in the 1970s) and a few conference rooms and offices. Both have recently moved to a newly built, rather large building next to the Military Museum on western Chang'an Avenue, known as the "August 1st Building." Swaine estimates that the CMCGO has about 100 full time staff. See Swaine, "The PLA and Chinese National Security Policy," p. 120.

<sup>171</sup> Senior Colonel Hu Hanlin, the CIRB director, served as deputy head of a drafting group for the book entitled *Contemporary World Military Affairs and China's National Defense*. The group consisted of 17 analysts and scholars from the CIRB, AMS, and NDU. Other group heads included Major General Li Yu (full head, former director of AMS' Scientific Research Guidance Department) and Major General Su Xisheng (deputy head, deputy dean of NDU). The chief editor is General Zhang Wannian, and the deputy chief editors are Generals Liu Jingsong (former AMS commandant) and Xing Shizhong (NDU commandant). The CCP Central leadership allegedly instructed the CMC to draft the book as the military component of a textbook series for CCP's Central Party School. See Zhang, *Contemporary World Military Affairs*, p. 363.

outcome of extensive involvement in business by lower level departments and units. Similarly, the Military Trade Bureau was established as an attempt to centralize and coordinate policy over foreign arms sales, which may have foreign policy implications (see Table 2.8 for various GO bureaus). The PLA Disciplinary Inspection Committee and the PLA Confidentiality Committee were also established within the CMC for policy coordination in their respective functional areas (see Table 2.8).

**Table 2.8 CMC General Office (*junwei bangongting*)**

<p><b>Major Subordinate bureaus:</b> Secretariat (<i>mishu chu</i>), Comprehensive Investigation and Research Bureau (<i>zonghe diaoyan ju</i>), Rule of Law Bureau (<i>fazhi ju</i>), Auditing Bureau (<i>shenji ju</i>), Military Trade Bureau (<i>junmao ju</i>).*</p>
<p>* The GO Services Department (<i>fuwu chu</i>) and the Guard Department (<i>jingwei chu</i>), responsible for logistical services and security of the CMC, are not listed here since they are not considered major functional departments. The GO is usually directed by a Lieutenant General (Tan Reixin is the current director), who is assisted by several deputy directors who hold the rank of major general. Bureau heads are either major generals or senior colonels. Also associated with the CMC are the PLA Disciplinary Inspection (<i>jilu jiancha</i>) Committee and the PLA Secrecy (<i>baomi</i>) Committee, which are parallel but not subordinate to the GO. The CMC Transportation and War Preparation Leading Small Group and the CMC People's Arms Committee were abolished and their functions were transferred in late 1994 to the newly established State National Defense Mobilization Commission (to be discussed below).</p>

The major function of the GO's Secretariat in decision making and policy coordination is the indispensable dissemination of information among CMC members to facilitate agendas. The Secretariat maintains routine communications with the CCP Central General Office for major policy initiatives from the CCP leadership. It also gathers and collates materials from other GO bureaus and PLA lower level departments and units, and circulates them through personal secretaries to CMC members in summaries.<sup>172</sup> Both help in shaping the agendas for the CMC meetings. Some scholars of

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<sup>172</sup> The materials coming down from the CCP Central are usually instructions (*zhishi*, referring mainly to those handed down from superiors to subordinates). Materials from lower levels are mostly requests for instructions (*qingshi*) or reports (*baogao*). The CMC members can make comments on reports to be returned to lower levels (*pishi*) or issue direct *zhishi* to lower levels. The speech given by the CMC members in smaller meetings (such as a symposium) is *fayan*. The speech given in front of a larger audience at an enlarged CMC conference is *jianghua*, which can also be called a *baogao*. Policy

Chinese politics suggest that rather than serving merely as conduits, personal secretaries of major leaders can substantially influence policy agendas. Such a view may be historically relevant. Some personal secretaries, being well versed in ideological doctrines, for instance, acted on behalf of major CCP leaders and directly participated in drafting key policy documents. These actions contributed to many “lines” struggles in CCP history and lead to severe factional purges and counter purges. In such struggles, close relations are also easier to forge between the leaders and their personal secretaries. This means that the rehabilitation and purge of major leaders also implies the rise and decline of political fortunes of their personal secretaries, which in turn lead to either their appointment to more important positions than their credentials warranted (where they would push the policy view of their leaders at the expense of others’), or their removal from important positions.<sup>173</sup>

The influence of personal secretaries over policy, however, may be declining in the post-Mao era for several reasons. The new emphasis on technical and functional expertise, for instance, means the decline of ideology in policy formulation. Since few personal secretaries are technical and functional experts who can provide sophisticated policy analyses, the CMC and the PLA technical and functional bureaus and departments should have more input into the policy processes than personal secretaries. Furthermore, post-Mao bureaucratic routinization means the decline of the personality-based purges, counter purges, and rehabilitation. Finally, the perception of personal secretaries benefiting from their personal bond with leaders for career advancement may mean that both leaders and personal secretaries would maintain appropriate distance from one another to avoid the perception of favoritism and that personal secretaries would be more regularly transferred to lower levels to gain “grassroots unit work experience” and competence before promotion. All these actions should reduce the conditions for forming highly personalized cliques, and therefore curtail the policy role of personal secretaries.<sup>174</sup>

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options discussed at CMC meetings are plans (*fang'an*). A final decision (*jueding*) is usually a resolution (*jueyi*). *Zhishi* and *jueyi* are usually distributed as documents (*wenjian*) with four levels of classification: top-secret (*juemi*), essential-secret (*jimi*), secret (*mimi*), and internal (*neibu*).

<sup>173</sup> Such ups and downs can also happen to family members and relatives, and even to bodyguards, chauffeurs, and chefs. Such practice can trace its origin to the palace intrigues of the imperial times. Understanding such historical continuity, however, is beyond the scope of this study and requires a separate analysis.

<sup>174</sup> Chen Boda, Mao’s former personal secretary, was a CCP Politburo Standing Committee member and the head of Cultural Revolution Leadership Small Group. Wang Reilin, Deng’s former personal secretary, has become a CMC member and a GPD deputy director. Jia Ting’an, Jiang’s former personal secretary, only holds the position of the deputy director of CMCGO. Chen was also purged from the CCP leadership in 1970. These show that the political role of personal secretaries is declining and that personal secretary experience is no guarantee for political protection from the boss that the

As far as major meetings are concerned, CMC “meets ... at least once per month” in so-called routine sessions (*lihui*), and “at least twice per year” in sessions that are usually enlarged to include the MR level commanding officers (*kuoda hui*).<sup>175</sup> To the extent the CMC resembles the Party committee of the PLA,<sup>176</sup> the official norm that guides decision processes at these committee meetings (which applies to Party committees at all levels of the PLA) is a “system of division of responsibilities among commanding officers under the unified and collective leadership of the Party committee” (*dangwei tongyi jiti lingdao xia de shouzhang fengong fuze zhi*). Such a norm involves three key principles. The first is the unity principle, which means that all commanding officers, whether military, political, logistics or equipment, are subordinate to the leadership of the Party committee of their unit, and all *important* issues would be resolved and decided by the Party committee. The second is the collectivism principle. This principle first of all means that major issues would be fully discussed and “all committee members air their views and make suggestions.” Secondly, “except for emergencies where a key commanding officer acts promptly at his own discretion (*jiduan chuzhi*),” major policy issues should be put to a vote (*biaojue*) at committee meetings where “one man has one vote” and “the minority would subordinate their view to the majority,” but not left to the “arbitrary will” of a single leader. “If the result of voting is too close or arguments break out, the decision can be postponed for another vote, while further investigation and research and exchange of views would take place and the minority view reviewed carefully. Under special circumstances, the issue can be forwarded to a higher level for arbitration.” The third is the division of responsibilities principle, which has two major elements. The first element is that once a policy decision has been made, a division of labor among members should be clarified (*mingque fengong*), so that each would fulfill his/her responsibility (*gesi qize*) in implementing policy.<sup>177</sup> Secondly, to prevent excessive separation of responsibilities, members are

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secretary used to serve, even though the boss is very much in power. Moreover, some of those with personal secretary experience can be quite competent and deserve important jobs in spite of such experience. This also means that such experience can be a political liability, since one with such experience may be suspected of favoritism and denied important appointments, even though the person can be quite competent and qualified.

<sup>175</sup> Swaine, “The PLA and Chinese National Security Policy,” p. 119. For a sample of major CMC enlarged conference decisions over the years, see Tables 9 and 10.

<sup>176</sup> The CMC is more similar to the Party committee of a provincial military district (MD), where the civilian provincial first Party secretary serves as the first secretary while the MD commander and commissar serve as secretaries, than the Party committee of a group army, where the first secretary is a uniformed commanding officer (either the commander or the commissar of the unit).

<sup>177</sup> In the case of the CMC, a major policy decision (such as the 1985 PLA downsizing and reorganization) usually involves an operational component, a personnel component, and arms and technology component, and a financial and logistical component, which match well with the functional responsibilities of the four general

supposed to cooperate through mutual respect, support and consultation, so that policy would be successfully executed.<sup>178</sup>

To what extent is such an official norm regularly practiced, particularly in terms of voting at the CMC meetings? There are certainly benefits and incentives from voting on major issues. Votes can be recorded, thus contributing to clarification of positions and responsibilities.<sup>179</sup> It also enhances the legitimacy of a policy if a majority has voted for it. Moreover, it reinforces the official norm by setting an example for lower level Party committees. Finally, establishing a nonvoting category of CMC membership briefly (see Table 2.6) and extensive literature on Party committee meeting procedures imply that CMC, like Party committees at lower levels, should vote. On the other hand, there are downsides of formal voting. Existence of a significant minority against a policy may raise questions about its soundness, leading to reevaluation and delay of a final decision. This may contribute to prolonged discussions without a resolution (*jiuyi bujue*), thus lowering the credibility of the CMC. Heated arguments and split votes may also evoke the memory of the Cultural Revolution, where small agreements were elevated to the level of “lines” struggle, contributing to severe factional rivalry. Finally, if the more senior members voted on the losing side, their authority and legitimacy may be negatively affected. In a culture that values “face” highly, such a prospect may trigger hasty face-saving measures at the expense of sound policy.

Several mitigating strategies and mechanisms exist to minimize the chances and negative effects of formal voting, which may amount to an embarrassing showdown. First, Party committees are required to focus on “significant and major policy issues” (*zhongda zhengce wenti*) and not on administrative issues, in order to avoid “the administratization of the Party committee” (*dangwei xingzhenghua*). This means that Party committee meetings must not mix with “commanding officer meetings” (*shouzhang bangong huiyi*). While the former concentrates on fewer but more important issues based on the collectivism principle of “minority yielding to majority” (*shaoshu fucong duoshu*) through voting, the latter deals with more numerous and trivial administrative matters based on the principle of “lower levels obeying higher levels” (*xiaji fucong shangji*) through issuing and following orders. It also means that “Party committees should not take on (*baolan*) administrative matters, substitute for (*daiti*) administrative officers, and interfere in (*ganyu*) their routine exercise of responsibilities; but should support them in

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departments. This apparently allows the two CMC vice chairs, General Zhang Wannian and General Chi Haotian, to preside over the heads of four general departments to coordinate and supervise the implementation of policy. It is also safe to assume a division of general responsibilities between the two. General Zhang, for instance, has reportedly been responsible mainly for operational matters, while General Chi is largely responsible for other major matters.

<sup>178</sup> For the three principles, see Yan, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 18-21, 40-41; Liao, *et al*, *Contemporary China*, p. 55.

<sup>179</sup> I am indebted to Admiral Michael McDevitt for this observation.

carrying out their responsibilities independently.”<sup>180</sup> Both should help to reduce the number of issues to be decided at the Party committee meetings.

Second, for those issues that find their way to the agendas of the Party committee meetings, many, such as arbitration of disagreements and coordinating implementation of policy at lower levels, may not require a formal vote. The restoration of a bureaucratic hierarchy may mean that higher level officials tend to take a unified stance in dealing with issues arising from lower level units. This is a significant departure from the bureaucratic breakdown of the Cultural Revolution, where officials of lower levels can exploit the cleavages at higher levels or *vice versa* to develop vertical, highly personalized factions that cut across bureaucratic ranks. The Party committee can also transmit (*zhuanfa*) the reports from the functional departments of its level to lower levels. These reports may not require a formal vote at Party committee meetings, but they do imply a tacit approval of the policy initiatives in such reports by commanding officers.<sup>181</sup> Moreover, some issues, particularly those concerning long-range planning are regularly discussed at these meetings (a mediating process by its own right) and do not require a final decision based on a formal voting. Arranging for next year’s work also may not require a formal vote. All these mechanisms should further reduce the number of issues to be decided through a formal vote.

Finally, major informal mechanisms exist to mediate between Party committee members about major policy issues. It is advised, for instance, that committee members “should be informed of the agendas in advance” (*anmin gaoshi*), so that they are “well prepared to discuss these issues” (*youbei eryi*) at the meetings. Also, “based on thorough investigation and research, two or more plans should be forwarded at the meetings so that there will be choices to make.” Moreover, it is necessary to have “more communication, coordination, and solicitations of views to unify thought (*tongyi sixiang*) before meetings.” This serves “to avoid either delay or hasty decisions” at the meetings. Informal mechanisms of exchanging views include “early notice” (*da zhaohu*), passing on circulating documents (*fa chuanyue jian*), symposiums (*zuotan hui*) and briefings (*pengtou hui*) among commanding officers, and transition meetings (*jiaojieban hui*), even

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<sup>180</sup> Yan, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 18, 41; Yu Jingchang (commissar of Heilongjiang Provincial MD), “*Dangqian renwubu dangwei jianchi minzhu jizhongzhi ying zhaoli jieju de jige wenti*” [Several Current Issues That Should be Emphatically Resolved Regarding Adherence to the System of Democratic Centralism by the Party Committees of the People’s Arms Departments] in *National Defense* Editorial Department, ed., *Weile daying mingtian de zhanzheng* [In Order to Fight and Win Tomorrow’s War], Beijing: National Defense University Press, 1999, military circulation only, p. 88 (hereafter “Several Current Issues”).

<sup>181</sup> The CMC, for instance, transmitted to lower levels *The Report on Several Issues concerning the Authorized Strength of Military Schools*, forwarded by the three general departments in 1975. It also transmitted *The Plan on Reforming and Streamlining the System of Military Schools*, forwarded by the three general departments in 1986. Li, *One Hundred Major Events*, pp. 53-54.

though these informal mechanisms “must not substitute for the Party committee procedures and resolutions.”<sup>182</sup> All these strategies and mechanisms should either lower the need for a formal vote at Party committee meetings, or reduce such voting to a mere formality.<sup>183</sup>

### **Relationships**

The CMC maintains important relationships with the CCP Central, government institutions, and lower level PLA departments and units. Among these, the most important relationship is with the CCP Central. During the Cultural Revolution, the CMC’s relationship with the CCP Politburo was highly intertwined and symbiotic, with about 50% of the Politburo members being uniformed PLA officers, and a substantial proportion of the CMC membership being nonmilitary and political-military members. Such a symbiosis reflected both the earlier political-military revolutionary experience and Mao’s emphasis on “politics to take command” during the Cultural Revolution. Because of this, intra-Politburo “lines” struggle-based factional rivalry would easily extend into and divide the CMC, which cut across the civil-military divide between the Politburo and the CMC (the Gang of Four and Lin Biao and his generals in CMC on the one side, and Liu and Deng and the marshals in the CMC on the other). The post-Mao years witnessed the gradual decline of uniformed PLA members in the Politburo to two out of 21 members, and neither of the two serves in the powerful Politburo Standing Committee. In the meantime, nonmilitary and political-military members in the CMC have been substantially reduced: with the exception of the chair and the “core in waiting,” all members are uniformed PLA commanding officers.<sup>184</sup> The institutionalization of a nominal civil-military boundary between the Politburo and the CMC means that the PLA role in intra-Party leadership politics is reduced as military votes in the Politburo declined substantially. It also means that the CMC, no longer distracted by intra-Party leadership “lines” struggle, can now focus more on the functional and technical issues of defense modernization, as it is now dominated by the uniformed PLA commanding officers.

However, such nominal civil-military differentiation may also mean that the CMC increasingly resembles a lobbying group that actively articulates the PLA’s institutional interests in the policy arena of the Party. The similarity is particularly evident if the Party moves away from the old revolutionary, one-person dominant, charismatic leadership toward a more technocratic and collective leadership, sustained more by consensus-driven collective bargaining and accommodations than the arbitrary will of one person. For the CCP leadership, while it may continue to accommodate the PLA interests if they are

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<sup>182</sup> Yu, “Several Current Issues,” pp. 88-89; and Yan, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>183</sup> These probably lead one analyst to state that “the CMC as a body reportedly does not meet to vote and ‘make decisions’ in the conventional sense.” Swaine, “The PLA and Chinese National Security Policy,” p. 119.

<sup>184</sup> See Li, “Organizational Changes of the PLA,” pp. 317-318, 320-321.

perceived as reasonable and justified, it may also attempt to restrain excesses by stressing the Leninist principle of “Party commanding the gun” to remind the uniformed CMC members that CCP Politburo is still its parent organization, and that the CMC functions and formulates policies only within the basic principles and policy framework of the CCP leadership; and by limiting the number of uniformed members in Politburo and its standing committee. Also, since CMC members are more like Party members who wear uniforms than professional officers who hold a party card,<sup>185</sup> the uniformed CMC members would most likely hold on to the same Leninist principle by articulating a view where pursuing functional and technical expertise and institutional interests would not be inconsistent with Party principles and objectives.<sup>186</sup>

Such a mutually accommodating and cordial relationship, coupled with a measure of restraint, can also be detected at an operational level. The CCP Secretariat, which is responsible for managing CCP central bureaucracies, operationalizing Politburo decisions, and supervising their implementation, for instance, retains at least one uniformed CMC vice chair on its board, as does the CCP Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group (FALSG), which is responsible for discussing and coordinating foreign policy and supervising its implementation.<sup>187</sup> The single uniformed membership allows for military input into policy as well as civil-military coordination in policy implementation. It also serves to accommodate the institutional perspective and interests of the PLA. On the other hand, limiting military membership to no more than one is apparently intended to restrain the PLA leadership from exerting too much influence over policy.

As for government institutions, the CMC interacts mainly with the NPC and the State Council. The 1982 Constitutional change requires the formation of a state CMC that answers to the NPC, implying that legislative oversight would be exercised over military affairs. In reality, however, the state CMC is identical with the CCP CMC in organization and membership, and its loyalty apparently goes to where real power lies: the CCP

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<sup>185</sup> This means that the PLA officers are Party members first and professional officers second, and that the PLA is still a Party army with professional characteristics, but not otherwise. Hopefully, however, increased professionalism would gradually build up professional identity and weaken Party identity to the point the latter becomes irrelevant.

<sup>186</sup> The current PLA-CCP leadership interaction is confined mainly to mundane bureaucratic politics such as defense budget increases to compensate for losses due to business divestiture, or to augment PLA technology. The probability for the PLA leadership to play the direct and blatant role of kingmaker in CCP leadership politics is relatively low, unless an acute CCP leadership crisis occurs on the scale of the Cultural Revolution or the 1989 Tiananmen Incident. This does not mean, however, the PLA leadership has no role to play in CCP leadership transition politics. Some behind-the-scene political-military negotiations about CCP leadership transition in the upcoming 16th CCP Congress, for instance, can be expected to have already been going on.

<sup>187</sup> General Zhang is a member of the CCP Secretariat, and General Chi is a member of FALSG.

Central. This change, however, doesn't mean that legislative hearings would not take place. As a matter of fact, the policy area where the NPC holds the most regular hearings is military rules and regulations. In such hearings, the CMC entrusts the head of the GPD to report and explain to the NPC in detail the newly formulated rules and regulations, which the NPC regularly approves. Hearings are also held on the more substantial policy area such as the defense budget, where the CMC delegates the head of the GLD the responsibility to report and explain. Such hearings, however, tend to dwell more on general principles and large figures than on spending details. As claimed in one account on the budgetary process:

In countries such as the US, France, England, and Russia, the defense department (or ministry) is both the highest leadership institution of the armed forces and the functional department of the government (or cabinet). It participates in drafting the defense budget on behalf of both the armed forces and the government. In order to get approval from the legislature, the drafted budget needs to be as detailed as possible. Once approved, the budget is strictly executed ... The decision making power (*juece quan*) of the defense department itself in distributing and managing budget is highly constrained (by the legislature and chief executive)... The highest leadership institution of our army is the CMC. The CMC is not a subordinate functional department of the government. Like the State Council, it is produced by the institution of the highest state power (implying the CMC parallels the State Council in level distinction, but is not a subordinate department within the State Council). Such a relationship between the CMC and the government determines that the CMC has much more decision making power in distributing and managing the defense budget than the defense departments in other countries. The NPC is only responsible for examining and approving (*shenpi*) the general figures of this budget. The CMC has the highest decision making power in detailed distribution and management.<sup>188</sup>

The most secretive and the least area of oversight is the PLA's personnel policy. The CMC makes major decisions about high level personnel appointments and promotions in the PLA. The list of candidates is prepared out of the nomenclature maintained by the GPD's Cadre Department and the CCP's Organization Department. The final decisions would be reported to the CCP Politburo for the record (*shangbao bei'an*), which would then be kept by the CCP's Organization Department. There is virtually no news report on

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<sup>188</sup> Ku, *Theory of Military Budget*, pp. 190-191.

such decisions except for ceremonies where the CMC chair promotes high-ranking PLA officers.<sup>189</sup> This decision process is off limits to the NPC.

Even though one uniformed CMC vice chair holds the position of the defense minister (in this case General Chi), his power comes with the position of CMC vice chair, but not the head of a Ministry of National Defense (MND), since the MND is a public relations facade which does not exist within the State Council. The regular functions of the MND are fulfilled by the four PLA general departments, which answer to the CMC, but not the premier of the State Council.<sup>190</sup> As a result, the executive control of the military through the supervision of a defense department or ministry in his or her cabinet does not exist in China. This does not mean that the relationship between the CMC and the State Council has to be conflictual. On the contrary, the relationship among the uniformed CMC vice chairs and the premier and vice premiers of the State Council can be highly civil and cordial, since they are mostly CCP Politburo members or members of the CCP Secretariat, and do meet often in the regular meetings of these councils. The uniformed CMC vice chair who holds the position of defense minister is also a State Councilor. Below the top level, however, the relationship between the State Council ministries and the PLA general departments can sometimes be problematic, particularly in policy coordination. In recent years, for instance, the PLA general departments and other PLA major institutions have had serious disputes with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State Council over major foreign policy issues.<sup>191</sup> Since the State Council premier has no jurisdiction over lower PLA institutions, such conflicts need to be forwarded to the Party leadership for mediation and arbitration. The outcome can be quite unpleasant for either the CMC or the State Council, thus potentially undermining future cooperation and coordination between the two.

To limit such disputes, an attempt has been made to institutionalize two major mediating mechanisms. The first is a “system of coordination conferences” (*xieshang huiyi zhidu*), where “coordination conferences between the State Council and the CMC would be held depending on circumstances, to resolve issues concerning national defense matters.” Moreover, “the State Council and the CMC would organize implementation of the decisions made at such conferences within each’s realm of responsibilities and power.” The second mechanism is the State National Defense Mobilization Commission established in November 1994. This is “a discussion and coordination (*yishi xietiao*) institution responsible for national defense mobilization work under the leadership of the State Council and the CMC.” The positions of chair and vice chairs of the commission are “held by the principle leaders of the State Council and the CMC.” Its members “include leaders of the related State Council ministries and commissions, and of the PLA general departments.” The four major offices (people’s arms mobilization, economic

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<sup>189</sup> Gaining higher rank implies promotion to higher positions, but it does not tell what positions. Such ceremonies also seem to be a purely internal CMC process (e.g., Jiang handing out new ranks to his top lieutenants).

<sup>190</sup> See Li, “Organizational Changes of the PLA,” pp. 322.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

mobilization, people's air defense, and transportation and war preparation) under the commission are also staffed by both State Council and PLA personnel.<sup>192</sup>

The CMC's relationship with lower level PLA operational departments and units is related to the important question on whether the CMC has sufficient autonomy to make its own policy decisions. There are two views on this. One is that the CMC largely ratifies decisions of the CCP Politburo. The other view is that most CMC policy ideas come from lower levels, and the CMC largely stamps its approval on these ideas.<sup>193</sup> Both views assume the CMC is mainly a coordinating and mediating institution, which does not normally make major policy decisions of its own. Such an assumption was relevant mainly to the period between the late 1950s and middle 1970s, when the PLA was highly revolutionized, the military hierarchy severely weakened, and the CMC highly divided. Mao's concern about bureaucratic differentiation and hierarchy breeding "bourgeois consciousness and class," for instance, led to the CMC's anti-bureaucratic measures such as requiring generals to spend two months as a soldier in a company every year, narrowing salary scales, eliminating military ranks, closing down military schools, and conducting incessant criticism sessions at all levels to intensify "internal contradictions" in order to expose "hidden class enemies."<sup>194</sup> Similarly, the dominance of mass mobilization methods during this period also extended into the PLA, where grassroots initiatives easily found their way to the high policy council of the CMC. The "Three Supports and Two Militaries," for instance, was based on a report from a local unit in Anhui Province, where local "rebels" requested the protection of the PLA in their mass rallies to criticize and attack the "capitalist roaders." The CMC also stamped its approval on a GLD's report on expanding PLA's participation in agriculture and sideline production in 1966, which apparently appealed to Mao's obsession with reducing the "bourgeois privileges" of the PLA through manual labor and self-sufficiency.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> The principal leader of the commission from the CMC is General Chi. At the operational level, General Qian Shugen, a deputy PLA chief of staff, serves as secretary general. The commission has also been replicated at the provincial, prefecture, and county levels. For both mechanisms, see Zhang, *Contemporary World Military Affairs*, pp. 219, 263. For replication at lower levels, see Li Jun (head of the Military Affairs and Mobilization Department of the Beijing Garrison District), *et al*, "Tigao guofang dongyuan weiyuanhui de hongguan tiaokong nengli" [Enhancing the Adjustment and Control Ability of the National Defense Mobilization Commission at the Macro-level], in *National Defense Editorial Department, In Order to Fight and Win Tomorrow's War*.

<sup>193</sup> This is the view proposed by a mainland participant at the CAPS/RAND Conference on PLA as Organization, Airlie House Conference Center, Warrenton, Virginia, August 4-6, 2000.

<sup>194</sup> See Li, *One Hundred Major Events*, pp. 118-119, 147-149, 155-159, 164-166, 300, 359.

<sup>195</sup> For the origins of the two policy ideas, see *ibid.*, pp. 233, 404-405.

With gradual restoration of bureaucratic hierarchy since the middle 1970s, however, the “bottom-up” approach has gradually been replaced by a “top-down” approach, reflected in major CMC decisions such as terminating the “Three Supports and Two Militaries”; reducing the PLA’s participation in agricultural and sideline production; restoring military ranks; restoring military research and learning institutions; downsizing and reorganizing the PLA in 1985, 1992, and 1997, involving the elimination of a large number of lower level headquarters, departments, and units; and ordering the divestiture of lower levels from commercial activities in 1998.<sup>196</sup> To the extent no evidence exists that these policies have failed, even though they clearly reduced the influence and vested interests of lower levels, it obviously weakens the argument that the CMC is mere the captive of lower level special interests.

There are several major reasons why the CMC is gaining more policy autonomy from both the CCP leadership and the lower levels. On the CCP leadership side, the generalized nature of the new CCP policy framework and the collective nature of the new CCP leadership allow substantial leeway for the CMC to exploit and to make policy choices. The CCP policy transition from “war and revolution” to “peace and development,” for instance, has not specified the military policy implications of such transition. It is therefore up to the CMC to articulate these implications in terms of the scope and nature of the PLA’s new missions, and the new requirements for PLA’s operational doctrine, organization and personnel, arms and technology, and finance and logistics. Also, the relative lack of knowledge of military affairs by the new generation of CCP leadership the establishment of a nominal civil-military boundary as discussed earlier, and the technology-driven sophistication of the military profession may all contribute to the increased policy autonomy of the CMC.

With regard to lower level PLA organizations the restoration of bureaucratic hierarchy and the end of mass mobilization methods in the PLA have largely strengthened the authority of the CMC. It has also ensured that lower level organizations function primarily to implement the policy decisions of the CMC. Even though they may have input into the policy processes, they are not primary sources of policy ideas and provide feedback on implementation for higher-level organizations to make policy adjustments. The need to show competence or face-based legitimacy of the CMC also favors a “top-down” approach.<sup>197</sup> On the other hand, with the increasing technological sophistication

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<sup>196</sup> During the 1985 downsizing and reorganization, for instance, the heads of the general departments functioned mainly to flesh out the responsibilities of their respective departments in the new policy, and proceeded to carry out these responsibilities accordingly. For most of the new policy initiatives, see *ibid.*, pp. 237, 300-302, 337-340, 359-364, 405. For the functions of the heads of the general departments, see *ibid.*, pp. 328-332, 341-343.

<sup>197</sup> The new emphasis on the “high-tech” nature of future wars and on *doctrine-driven* (rather than *practice-driven* or mass line-based) defense modernization, for instance, can be interpreted as a political strategy to reinforce the policy autonomy of the PLA leadership, because the increasing technological sophistication of the PLA would

of the PLA, research and learning institutions may play an increasingly important role in generating policy ideas, particularly if they can bridge the gap between knowledge and practice by developing closer relations with the CMC on the one hand, and with the PLA lower level operational departments and units on the other.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Compared to the period of the Cultural Revolution, the CMC has fewer members, is more streamlined, more homogeneous (as it is dominated by uniformed members), and less contentious (as bureaucratic norms and mechanisms replace ideology-based personal attacks in policy negotiations). It is also better insulated from civilian institutions and lower level PLA departments and units. This new period should translate into a higher level of effectiveness in both policy-making and coordination. On the other hand, there are still major internal and external issues that need to be addressed if the CMC intends to become a more effective policy-making and coordination institution.

Internally, restoring bureaucratic hierarchy, norms and mechanisms have certainly enhanced the institutional stability of the CMC, which should translate into a higher level of policy effectiveness. The new official emphasis on stability and consensus may also provide the incentive for bandwagoning behavior on the part of the members and lower level organizations. An unintended effect of such an emphasis, however, may be discouraging and even stifling innovative and creative policy ideas, which can be seen as being too disruptive. This in the long run may cause institutional stagnation and contribute to mediocrity. The lack of critical voices may also contribute to power abuses. Both may negatively affect the credibility and legitimacy of the CMC, and therefore its policy effectiveness. Also, the sharp contrast between the hyper-stability of the CMC on the one hand, and the constant reshuffling of lower level leaders, departments and units due to years of streamlining and reorganization on the other, and the dominance of the “top-down” approach, may contribute to a sense of insecurity and alienation at lower levels. This sense of insecurity and alienation, if not mitigated well, could translate into passive and tacit obstruction against policy programs handed down from above, thus diminishing policy effectiveness, particularly in policy implementation and coordination.

The relationship between the CMC and lower level organizations is somewhat related to the issue of service representation in the CMC. The current configuration where a CMC presides over the four PLA general departments that serve as the CMC’s working arms, is replicated in all levels of the PLA headquarters. Such a configuration is a product of Leninist centralism, since it is a pyramid structure where the top (CMC) exercises control of lower levels through managing strategic factors such as operations, personnel policy, arms and technology, and finance and logistics (the four functional areas matching the four general departments, which penetrate into all services and extend to the lowest level of the PLA). The conventional wisdom that China’s CMC resembles the US Joint Chiefs of Staff may be flawed. This is because while the former is a centrally

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enhance the leverage of the PLA leadership in bargaining with the CCP leadership for resources, and doctrine dominance would reinforce the hands of the CMC in dealing with lower levels.

managed Leninist institution rather than a representation of services, the latter is seemingly a services representation institution designed to mediate and coordinate the sometimes competing and even conflicting interests of various services, the outcome of a more pluralistic context where each service has enjoyed a high level of autonomy and developed strong service identity. Such a difference probably explains why PLA thinkers seem to encounter tremendous difficulties in figuring out how to transform the CMC into a services representation institution, particularly if such transformation implies a new configuration where the heads of the four general departments (who constitute the majority of the current CMC membership) would be replaced by the chiefs of the four major services (ground, naval, air, and strategic rocket forces) in the CMC, and this new configuration would be replicated by all levels of the PLA headquarters: a revolutionary and therefore almost impossible task. On the other hand, as the PLA's technology-intensive services become more developed and the concept of joint service operations is increasingly seen as necessary to enhance combat effectiveness, allowing for service representation at the PLA's central policy council also becomes more indispensable in order to achieve better policy and coordination. It is still not clear how the PLA would resolve the contradiction between an old Leninist style institution where service representation is nonexistent, and the need for more versatile forms to accommodate more diversified, technology-driven changes.

Finally, while the collective, committee decision making style of the CMC has certain merits such as lowering chances of arbitrary and hasty decisions, the drawbacks are also apparent. One is that the possible time-consuming process to build consensus (or unify thought) within the CMC may impede fast reaction to crises, leading to loss of "windows of opportunities" for maximizing benefits and reducing cost. Such a drawback becomes particularly glaring at a time when the PLA is supposed to react to local contingencies fast enough to achieve "quick resolution" in the PLA's favor, as required by the new doctrine of "local war under high-tech conditions." PLA thinkers may argue that during a crisis, commanding officers can make discretionary decisions; and that a separate crises or wartime command structure can be simulated and practiced to prepare for possible contingencies. But these ad hoc mechanisms still raise contentious issues such as what constitute crises that warrant discretion; and how to make the transition from peacetime collective decision making to a wartime type of command. The possible coexistence of three types of decision mechanisms (a Party committee headed by a first secretary and secretaries; an administrative chain of command headed by a commander and a commissar; and a separate wartime command) may also inflate bureaucracy and complicate policy processes further, making it more difficult to make timely decisions, thus reducing policy effectiveness. Moreover, a Party committee coexisting with an administrative chain of command may lead to debate over what constitutes "major" policy issues to be decided by the Party committee, and what are the "administrative" issues to be resolved by commanding officers. Also, the requirement of an individual commanding officer to fulfill decisions made by the Party committee raises thorny questions on who should be held accountable for these decisions (the committee or the individual), particularly if the policy fails. Until the PLA finds answers to these issues and questions, the policy effectiveness of the CMC will remain much less than optimal.

Regarding external relationships, the central issue is how to separate the CMC from the CCP Central and integrate it into the government institutions of the State

Council and the NPC, so that executive control of the military and legislative oversight over military affairs can be established. The close ties of the CMC with the CCP Central and the lack of such ties with the State Council and the NPC have several shortcomings. One is that since the CMC is accountable to the CCP Politburo and its Central Committee who do not meet regularly to deal with daily affairs, the lack of routine executive supervision of the PLA (due to lack of the jurisdiction of the State Council premier over the PLA institutions) may contribute to frequent policy disputes between the State Council ministries and the PLA general departments. It is still not clear how well the newly established State Council-CMC coordination conferences and the State National Defense Mobilization Commission mitigate such disputes. It seems however that these institutions are designed mainly for the PLA to commandeer civilian manpower, technology and equipment, infrastructure, and properties for military operations, rather than to negotiate the costs of using civilian resources or for the State Council to restrain the PLA from unrestricted access to these resources. It is therefore necessary to establish a genuine MND within the State Council, largely because this would achieve true executive control of the military and more effective civil-military policy coordination. A real MND would also absorb a large number of political-military and administrative functions currently fulfilled by the PLA general departments. The absorption by the MND of some general departments would contribute to true downsizing of the PLA bureaucracy from top to bottom. This would make it easier to develop a more streamlined PLA command structure, and make it more likely to transform the CMC into a service representation institution.

Secondly, with economic decentralization, privatization and development, a substantial middle class is emerging in China. They pay taxes and want to know how the government, for instance, is spending tax money on national defense. The current secrecy of the defense budget stems mainly from weak legislative oversight and the virtual monopoly of this process by the CMC and the CCP Central. It is therefore necessary to establish a genuine MND, which is accountable to the NPC and the State Council in defense budget, personnel policy and other defense-related issues, but not to the CCP Central. Regular and careful legislative oversight over defense spending details (but not just general principles and figures) would increase the transparency of the budgetary processes and reduce the chances of abuse and corruption, thus enhancing both the credibility and legitimacy of the government and the military, as well as policy effectiveness.

Finally, if China eventually moves toward true political reforms, such as introducing multiparty competition for political offices, the current close ties between the CMC and the CCP Central may make it more difficult to transform the PLA into a politically neutral, nonpartisan institution devoted mainly to functional and technical expertise of the military profession. In the initial stage of democratization, for instance, the hard-line faction of the PLA leadership may feel so insecure about the future that it may mobilize its loyalists at lower levels and outside of the PLA to launch a coup to defend one-party monopoly (as had happened in the Soviet Union during a similar transition) or to impose direct military rule, or it can fight the liberal military faction and their civilian allies, thus throwing China into civil war. By gradually separating the CMC from the CCP Central and integrating it into the NPC and the State Council framework, however, the odds of such conflicts would be greatly reduced once China begins to

democratize.<sup>198</sup> Such a separation also allows for the withdrawal of the CCP from the government and military policy arena, and enables it to become a normal political party that competes for political offices with one or more others through genuine elections.

**Table 2.9 Major CMC Enlarged Conferences, 1954-75**

<b>Critical Years</b>	<b>Agendas</b>	<b>Resolutions Approved</b>
December, 1954	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Three systems (conscription, military ranks, salary for officers)</li> <li>b) Geographical division of military regions (MR)</li> <li>c) Military training and officers' education.</li> </ul>	<p>“Working Report on Implementing Three Systems”</p> <p>Plan on MR Division</p>
January, 1957	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Streamlining and reorganization (reports delivered by Peng Dehuai and Huang Kecheng)</li> <li>b) Relationship between civilian economic development and national defense construction.</li> </ul>	<p>“Resolution on Reducing Quantity and Improving Quality in the PLA”</p>
May – July, 1958	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Criticizing “dogmatism” (implying Soviet style methods) in military training. Mao Zedong, Zhu De, and Peng Dehuai delivered speeches.</li> </ul>	<p>“Resolution on PLA Reorganization.</p>
August – September, 1959	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Criticizing Peng Dehuai and Huang Kecheng’s “anti-Party crimes” and “bourgeois military line” following criticism of the “Peng-Huang Right opportunism” at the 8th Plenum of CCP 8th Congress. **</li> </ul>	
January – February, 1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Military strategy</li> <li>b) National defense construction</li> <li>c) The “Three Eight Work Style” (“<i>sanba zhuofeng</i>”) proposed by Lin Biao.***</li> </ul>	<p>1960 Outline on National Defense Construction</p>
1960, September -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Strengthening political and ideological work</li> </ul>	<p>“Resolution on Strengthening Political and</p>

<sup>198</sup> Such a separation should be accompanied by removing the CCP role from the legislature and the executive branch of the government as well, and terminating partisan activities in the military, thus leveling the ground for the new multiparty competition.

October	b) Criticizing mistakes of Tan Zheng.**	Ideological work of the PLA”  “Resolution on Mistakes of Comrade Tan Zheng”
June - July, 1961	a) Organization and equipment of war duty units b) The PLA’s operational plan c) Problems in unit management and education, and in military training d) Streamlining through reducing the bureaucracy e) Reducing military expenditure and the scope of defense industry to focus on key projects and to assist civilian economic construction.	
June – July, 1975	a) Streamlining and reorganization, and placement of surplus officers b) Deng Xiaoping’s speech alleging that PLA leadership is “soft, lazy, and disorganized” and units ‘bloated, undisciplined, spoiled, extravagant and lazy,” and that it is necessary to focus on “organization, arms, and training” to rectify these problems c) Ye Jianying’s speech warning against “interference in military affairs through conspiracy by ambitious persons (implying “Gang of Four”)	“Report on Reducing the Military Personnel Quota, Adjusting System of Organizations and Outplacing Surplus Cadres”

\*Adapted from Liao, *A History*, pp. 317-318.

\*\*Both criticisms led to the removal of Peng from CMC, and Huang Kecheng and Tan Zheng from CMC and their jobs as PLA chief of staff and GPD director; and removal of many alleged to be members of their “anti-Party cliques.”

\*\*\* “Three” refers to three adages such as “resolute and correct political direction, hard work and plain living working style, and flexible strategy and tactics.” “Eight” refers to eight characters, the translation of which mean “unity, intensity, solemnity, and liveliness.” One “crime” that led to Tan Zheng’s removal from his GDP director position in the following months is Tan’s alleged comment that PLA style is too rich to be defined by just several adages and characters, and his joke that “three eight” may be misunderstood as the International Women’s Day (March 8 can also be pronounced *sanba* in Chinese).

**Table 2.10 Major CMC Plenary or Enlarged Conferences, 1977-1989**

Critical Years	Agendas	Resolutions Approved
December, 1977	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Rectifying policy of 1975 CMC conference and summarizing experience on criticizing “gang of four”</li> <li>b) Principles and missions for strengthening army construction and war preparation</li> </ul>	<p>“Resolution on Strengthening Military Education and Training PLA Regulations on Keeping State Secrets”</p> <p>“Resolution on Managing Military Schools Well,”</p> <p>“Plan on Adjusting Military System of Organizations”</p> <p>“Resolution on Accelerating Arms and Equipment Modernization”</p>
		<p>“Resolution on Question of Military Service</p> <p>Resolution on Strengthening Management of Military Factories, Horse Farms and Sideline Production”</p>
March, 1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Deng’s speech on “reducing bloating,” reorganization, approved training, and political work</li> <li>b) Xu Xiangqian’s speech on personnel quotas and placement of discharged officers due to downsizing</li> </ul>	<p>“CMC Plan on Army Streamlining and Reorganization” (approved by a CMC Standing Committee meeting in July)</p>
1985, May - June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Strategic transition from preparing for “early, total, nuclear war” to peacetime army building, with emphasis on reducing quantity, enhancing quality, on developing better arms and improving quality of personnel, and on more rational organization that optimally combines arms and men to</li> </ul>	

	<p>enhance effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>b) Plan to demobilize a maillion men</li><li>c) Appointing commanding officers for new general departments, services and military regions.</li></ul>	
<p>December (enlarged to group army level commanding officers, 1986</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Political work in the new period</li><li>b) Arranging military, logistics, and national defense scientific research work</li><li>c) Drafting documents on cadre work, military training, and management and education.</li></ul>	
<p>November (enlarged to responsible persons of general departments, services, MRs, and PAP), 1989</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Continuation of Deng Xiaoping's theory, guidelines and principles after his resignation from CMC chair position</li><li>b) Arranging military work for 1990</li></ul>	

\* Adapted from Liao, *A History*, pp. 319-321.