What is herein referred to as the defense policy subarena is usually termed the military strategy (junshi zhanlue) or military policy (junshi zhengce) realm by most Chinese leaders and strategists. This subarena comprises the range of external defense or security-related activities undertaken by the major agencies of the PLA in support of national security policy and China’s broader national strategic objectives. These primarily center upon China’s national military strategy and military planning efforts. Key components include China’s military (i.e., defense) doctrine, military budget, force structure, force deployments and order of battle, military operational doctrines, force readiness and training, military strategy and tactics, and military threat analysis, as well as policies and activities concerning arms control and nuclear disarmament, proliferation issues, military-related acquisitions, contacts and dialogues with foreign militaries, and major arms sales.

At present, on the broadest level, China is implementing a “two-tier” defense strategy reflecting Beijing’s short- to medium-term desire to increase the efficacy of military power as a more potent and versatile instrument of foreign and defense policy, and its longer-term aspirations for power projection and extended territorial defense capabilities commensurate with the attainment of great-power status.

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1Hence, this subarena does not explicitly include policy regarding internal military affairs, such as the control of minority areas or the handling of civilian unrest, even though the policy process is similar in many respects.

The first tier focuses on the modernization of the PLA's nuclear capability through the creation of a small yet more accurate and versatile triad-based strategic and tactical missile force. This nuclear modernization program is apparently intended to serve two broad goals: (1) the maintenance of a deterrence capability against both nuclear and conventional threats from the major powers, and (2) the development of a tactical nuclear weapons capability for possible use in limited conflict scenarios. At the same time, China's official nuclear defense strategy still continues to stress a "no first use" doctrine and prohibits the use by China of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear powers.

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3 In general, China's nuclear weapons modernization program emphasizes (1) the development of land- and sea-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) with improved range, accuracy, survivability, and penetration against limited missile defense; (2) the development of a new generation of solid-fuel, short- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles; (3) the development of smaller warheads, which would theoretically allow a multiple, independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV) capability (Beijing might perceive a need for rapid increases in the number of deployed warheads to overwhelm an Asia-based TMD or U.S.-based antiballistic missile (ABM) system); and (4) an improvement in China's nuclear weapons C3I through the acceleration of space capabilities and the continued importation of advanced communication technologies. The author is indebted to James Mulvenon for providing this summary. For a more detailed overview of China's nuclear modernization program, see John Caldwell and Alexander Lennon, "China's Nuclear Modernization Program," Strategic Review, Fall 1995, pp. 27–37.

4 Deterring potential major conventional threats through nuclear means is viewed as especially important over the short to medium term, as China strives to modernize its largely obsolete conventional forces.

5 The above two goals suggest that China's nuclear deterrence doctrine may be shifting from an emphasis upon the maintenance of a minimal strategic force sufficient to inflict what is perceived to be unacceptable damage on a handful of enemy cities with a simple, undifferentiated countervalue second strike ("city busting") to the attainment of a limited yet more sophisticated range of strategic and substrategic capabilities to deter any level of nuclear conflict, and in a nuclear war to contain escalatory pressures. The latter doctrine (often termed "limited deterrence") requires a nuclear force capable of hitting a range of countervalue and counterforce targets including enemy strategic nuclear missiles, conventional military bases and troop concentrations, transport hubs and command-and-control centers, etc. For further details, see Alastair I. Johnston, "China's New 'Old Thinking': The Concept of Limited Deterrence," International Security, Vol. 20, No. 3, Winter 1995/96. For additional interesting discussions of China's nuclear warfare doctrine and strategy, see Colonel Yao Yunzhu, "Differences Between Western and Chinese Deterrence Theories," Academy of Military Science, unpublished manuscript; Holly Porteous, "China's View of Strategic Weapons," Jane's Intelligence Review, Vol. 8, No. 3, March 1996, pp. 134–137; and Ralph A. Hellenbeck et al., "China's Nuclear Weapon's Modernization Program, Nuclear Warfare Doctrine and Strategy, and Prospects for Strategic Arms
The second tier of China’s defense strategy stresses the improvement of specific conventional military capabilities to cope with a wide variety of possible land- or sea-based threats originating primarily from within the Asia-Pacific region. Such threats provide the rationale for China’s emerging post-Cold War conventional defense doctrine, which is keyed to concepts such as “local war” and “active peripheral defense.” First enunciated by the Chinese leadership in the early and mid 1980s, these concepts assume that regional conventional conflicts of relatively low intensity and short duration could break out virtually anywhere on China’s periphery, demanding a rapid and decisive application of force. This defense doctrine employs new or redefined Chinese versions of basic military principles and combat methods, e.g., “strategic frontier,” and “strategic initiative through preemptive action.”

According to Paul Godwin, local or limited wars include (1) small-scale conflicts restricted to contested border areas, (2) conflict over territorial seas and islands, (3) surprise air attacks, (4) defense against deliberately limited attacks into Chinese territory, and (5) punitive counterattacks launched by China into enemy territory to “oppose invasion, protect sovereignty, or to uphold justice and dispel threats.” For further details, see Paul H.B. Godwin, “Force Projection and China’s Military Strategy,” paper prepared for the Sixth Annual Conference on the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, Coolfont, Virginia, June 1995, p. 4. Active peripheral defense is defined by one PLA analyst as “the defense of territorial and strategic frontiers exercised for anti-attack purposes, [not excluding the possibility of] offensive strikes for self-defense or for offense after a period of defense.” See John Downing, “China’s Evolving Maritime Strategy: Part One, Restructuring Begins,” Jane’s Intelligence Review, Vol. 8, No. 3, London, March 1996, p. 130.

The Chinese principle of “strategic frontier” is intended to encompass the full range of competitive areas or boundaries implied by the notion of comprehensive national strength, including land, maritime, and outer space frontiers, as well as more abstract strategic realms related to China’s economic and technological development. An increased emphasis on gaining the initiative by striking first (rather than waiting for the enemy to strike) is associated with the notion of active peripheral defense. It reflects the need to act quickly and decisively to preempt an attack, restore lost territories, protect economic resources, or resolve a conflict before it escalates. For further details on these and other less critical principles basic to China’s post-Cold War defense doctrine, see Li Nan, “The PLA’s Evolving Warfighting Doctrine, Strategy and Tactics, 1985-95: A Chinese Perspective,” China Quarterly, No. 146, June 1996, pp. 443-463.
China’s resulting conventional force planning and deployment strategy thus posits the creation of a smaller, highly trained and motivated, technologically advanced, versatile and well-coordinated military force operating under a modern combined arms tactical operations doctrine. This requires the creation of smaller, more flexible ground forces, especially so-called rapid reaction combat units (RRUs) with airborne drop and amphibious landing capabilities, as well as sophisticated air and naval arms, to perform both support and power projection functions. To improve capabilities in the latter area, the Chinese now place a high priority on the development of air and naval electronic warfare systems, improved missile and aircraft guidance systems, improved surface ships (especially in air defense and fire control), precision-guided munitions, more advanced communications and early warning/battle management systems, long-range transport and lift capability, and midair refueling technology. Such a diverse set of military capabilities also requires a host of secondary features, including a more robust research and development capability, a more technologically advanced and quality-driven defense industry, and a highly professionalized, merit-based system of officer recruitment, education, promotion, and training.

The PLA is primarily responsible for formulating and implementing policy and strategy in all of the above defense policy areas, under the supervision of the senior party elite responsible for formulating national strategic objectives. Indeed, defense policy is virtually the exclusive domain of the PLA and comprises the core of its involvement in the entire national security arena. As with the foreign policy subarena, the leadership, structure, and processes of the defense policy subarena are fairly regularized and bureaucratic, although the informal influence exercised by leaders of key organs remains critical. Major actors include a top tier composed of the highest-ranking
civilians and senior military officers with high party rank, a second, overlapping tier including the heads of the major military departments and organizations responsible for key aspects of defense policy (itself a subset of a much larger military affairs bureaucracy), and a single important coordinating mechanism: the party CMC and its general office (CMC GO). These actors are depicted in Figure 4.

The uppermost tier of this subarena encompasses the most senior members of the CMC. Since the 14th Party Congress of October 1992, and until very recently, this group has consisted of three figures: Jiang Zemin (as CMC chairman) and Generals Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen (as CMC deputy chairmen). These three leaders constituted an informal executive committee of the CMC, exercising sole decisionmaking authority over the most critical military (including defense) policy issues, usually with the concurrence of the remaining members of the PBSC. More recently, the selection of Generals Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian as additional deputy CMC heads has expanded the size of the informal CMC executive committee to five members. However, the above-outlined leadership changes of the 15th Party Congress of September 1997 suggest that Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen will step down from their formal CMC posts at the end of 1997, thus returning the size of the informal CMC executive committee to three persons.

Among senior defense policy leaders, Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian will almost certainly become the most critical decisionmakers in many defense policy areas, replacing Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen, although the latter two generals will likely retain important informal influence. Jiang Zemin has labored mightily since becoming chairman of the CMC to increase his level of control over the PLA and to gain the trust and loyalty of its senior leadership, and has apparently

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9Prior to his removal from office at the 14th Party Congress, the CMC executive committee undoubtedly also included Yang Shangkun. Yang served as a critical intermediary between the defense policy subarena and the national security objectives subarena, as suggested above.

10The expected revival of the post of CMC Secretary General, inactive since the removal of Yang Baibing in 1992, would add a sixth figure (possibly Fu Quanyou) to this executive committee.
The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking

Figure 4—Defense Policy Subarena
met with some success. However, in the defense policy subarena, Jiang almost certainly follows the lead of the top PLA elite. His policy role concerning many military issues is probably limited to that of a communicator and occasional advocate of the PLA’s defense policy views to his civilian colleagues on the PBSC and within the foreign policy subarena. Generals Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian clearly stand as “first among equals” among the successor generation of military leaders, especially on defense policy matters.

Within the PLA, each member of the CMC executive committee heads one or more committees or leading groups responsible for developing specific military policies. This process involves regular consultations with the remaining members of the CMC. These figures include the heads of the three PLA central departments (General Staff Department (GSD), General Political Department (GPD), and General Logistics Department (GLD)). These posts are currently held by Generals Fu Quanyou, Yu Yongbo, and Wang Ke, respectively (all three officers are full members of the CCP CC). A fourth regular CMC member is General Wang Ruilin, mentioned above.

In the past, decisions on defense policy issues were also strongly influenced by individual retired or semi-retired PLA elders. Many of these military leaders reportedly attended CMC meetings as ex-officio members. However, as noted above, PLA elders no longer wield power in the policy apparatus on a regular basis, although a few individuals might express their views on specific issues in an informal manner, usually by phone, memo, or letter. In general, PLA elders currently exert influence over critical defense policy issues in a

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12Jiang Zemin reportedly does not attend many CMC meetings, especially when they deal with routine or technical issues of military development. However, a close aide always attends in his absence, serving as Jiang’s “eyes and ears” during CMC deliberations.

13Zhang’s and Chi’s status among senior officers stems from their professional competence and relative emphasis on military matters over factional intrigue, the senior status of the bureaucracies each officer has headed, and, in the case of Chi Haotian, a likely personal tie with Jiang Zemin. Despite Chi’s close relations with Jiang Zemin, however, Zhang Wannian, as the most senior serving PLA officer, reportedly exercises predominant authority over many purely military decisions.
largely negative sense, i.e., they can probably veto a policy decision if they are sufficiently aggressive in their protest and relatively unified in their stance.\textsuperscript{14} Such cases are reportedly very rare, however.

The above-mentioned heads of the three general departments are key organizational leaders of the PLA. Other senior PLA bureaucratic leaders include the directors of the Commission on Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (COSTIND), the National Defense University (NDU), and the Academy of Military Science (AMS), currently Generals Cao Gangchuan, Xing Shizhong, and Xu Huizi, respectively.

These six military agencies constitute the core policy organs of the PLA.\textsuperscript{15} Among them, the GSD, GPD, GLD, and COSTIND are considered by some Chinese and foreign observers to be the “four large general headquarters” (s\textit{ida zongbu}), because they control the most personnel, subordinate units, and military bases.\textsuperscript{16} Secondary PLA organs include the Second Artillery (also known as the Strategic Missile Force), the PLA Air Force (PLAAF), the PLA Navy (PLAN), and the headquarters of China's seven military regions (MRs). The Strategic Missile Force, PLAAF, and PLAN are currently led by Lieutenant General Yang Guoliang, General Liu Shunyao, and Admiral Shi Yunsheng. In late 1997, the commanders of China’s military regions included Generals Li Laizhu (Beijing MR), Lieutenant General Liao Xilong (Chengdu MR), General Tao Bojun (Guangzhou MR), General Qian Guoliang (Jinan MR), General Liu Jingsong (Lanzhou MR), General Qian Guoliang (Jinan MR), General Liu Jingsong (Lanzhou MR), and Admiral Shi Yunsheng (Beijing MR).

\textsuperscript{14}This statement probably also holds true for civilian elders as well, and in relation to other policy areas.

\textsuperscript{15}The Ministry of National Defense (MND) is not included in this listing because it is not a true organization. It does not have a large internal structure of bureaus and offices. Its major function is the management of China’s system of military attachés and PLA contacts with foreign militaries. The level of influence exerted by the MND within the PLA as a whole is therefore largely a function of the personal clout of the officer leading it. In other words, although the Minister of Defense is usually an important military figure, he does not lead a major military bureaucracy.

\textsuperscript{16}Lewis, Hua Di, and Xue Litai (1991), p. 88. AMS and NDU are much smaller organizations in size and scope of duties. They are essentially engaged in strategic analysis and/or officer education, as discussed below, but they are nonetheless led by very senior officers.
These sixteen senior organizational leaders of the PLA are roughly equivalent to the civilian “specialized leaders” who exercise control over important party and state bureaucracies at the ministerial and commission levels, such as the MoFA and MoFTEC in foreign policy, although the leaders of some PLA organs (e.g., GLD and COSTIND) are reportedly equivalent to vice-heads of ministries and commissions. Taken together, the organizations they lead form the functional components of the entire military affairs system (junshi xitong).18

These leaders of the PLA bureaucracy are responsible for executing all major operational dimensions of military policy.19 In this capacity, they undoubtedly champion, in the military policy process, the interests of their organizations on issues of critical institutional concern, and also oversee the implementation of all major policies within their departments and/or regional areas.20 In addition to their role as bureaucratic representatives, the above senior officers also no doubt express their personal views on military security policy to more senior PLA members and party leaders, both formally (for those individuals belonging to the CMC), and probably informally.

In the defense policy subarena, the most influential (and vocal) bureaucratic players in formulating and supervising critical components of policy include, in order of importance, the directors of GSD, PLAN, PLAAF, and COSTIND.

The GSD functions as the headquarters of the PLA and the chief executive arm of the PLA leadership. It conveys policy directives

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18See Lieberthal (1995), pp. 204–207, for a discussion of this system.
19Other senior PLA officers who do not head major military bureaucracies probably also exert significant influence over aspects of military policy, by virtue of their special status with senior party leaders. This would include officers such as Wang Ruilin and Xiong Guangkai.
20With the exception of AMS, NDU, and the MND, each of the above major PLA organs heads an extensive, vertically structured system of subordinate units.
downward, translates national security and defense policy into specific responsibilities for the various subordinate functional departments of the PLA, oversees policy implementation on behalf of the CMC, and commands China’s military force operations in wartime. The GSD also performs important organizational functions such as procurement, operational planning, and intelligence.21

As the above suggests, the GSD is primarily an administrative entity with “little direct policy formulation responsibility.”22 However, of the three general departments and other executive agencies of the military affairs system, the GSD has by far the greatest input into the national security and defense policy process. In general, GSD defense policy interests center on promoting and implementing the strategic and tactical/operational goals of the PLA leadership. In this effort, however, the GSD reportedly often gives preference to the interests of the PLA ground forces, which have historically dominated the military command system. Moreover, the GSD performs the headquarters function of China’s infantry forces and hence most GSD officers have extensive backgrounds in the ground forces. This service preference leads many GSD strategic analysts and senior officers to emphasize defense against potential threats from the Asian mainland. Hence, the GSD reportedly is the major bureaucratic proponent of a continental strategic orientation requiring improved, and relatively large, ground forces along the Russian border and Inner Asia. It also strongly supports the development of the above-mentioned rapid reaction units, which are viewed by many within the PLA as primarily designed for use against threats along China’s continental borders, and to quell internal disturbances. They are not viewed primarily as forces for use along China’s eastern and southern maritime strategic frontiers.23


23The GSD reportedly receives important support from a few retired PLA elders who served for long periods of time with infantry units and who in general equate military power with massive ground forces. We should note, however, that the GSD’s ground forces/continental orientation is shifting, according to some interviewees, to a more balanced strategic approach, as primarily maritime security concerns over Taiwan, Japan, and the Spratly Islands gain greater salience within the leadership.
The PLAN and the PLAAF are formally subordinate to the GSD in the chain of command. However, both services exercise considerable independence in the overall military system. They often report directly to the CMC on many matters, and reportedly possess their own logistics and intelligence networks. In the formulation of critical elements of China's defense policy, the PLAN in particular is increasingly behaving as a quasi-independent bureaucratic actor. In recent years, it has pushed for a greater recognition of its institutional viewpoint in the senior levels of the PLA leadership, with significant success. Not surprisingly, the PLAN takes the lead in arguing for a defense strategy keyed to China's growing maritime strategic interests and therefore places a high priority on naval development. Specifically, the PLAN leadership has been the major (but by no means the sole) proponent of the creation of a technologically sophisticated, operationally versatile blue water force, centered on significantly increased numbers of principal surface combatants with greater operational range, fire power, and air defense capabilities, a greatly improved diesel- and nuclear-powered submarine force, a stronger naval air arm, and possibly one or more carrier battle groups. China's military modernization efforts have indeed focused in large part on the acquisition of many of these naval capabilities, reflecting the increased importance of maritime defense to Chinese national security. However, the overall pace and direction of naval modernization remains a major subject of debate within the PLA leadership. In this debate, the PLAN viewpoint is often challenged by the ground forces orientation of the GSD, which receives significant support from some strategists in the civilian foreign policy sector.

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24 Many civilian strategists and some AMS researchers also advocate a much more potent Chinese navy, according to interviewees.

25 The funding, training, and technological obstacles to China's acquisition and effective deployment of a carrier battle group are enormous. As a result, some PLAN officers and analysts question the wisdom of moving in this direction, even over the long term. Instead, many favor a greater concentration of resources and energies on developing submarine and land-based naval air capabilities.

26 Liu Huaqing, a former PLAN commander and major figure in Chinese naval development, has served as a key advocate within the leadership for a sophisticated, high-seas power projection capability. See Garver (1992), p. 1016. Liu probably continues to play this role at present, although apparently to a lesser extent than in the past.

27 For a general discussion of these differences, see Chu Shulong, "China and Strategy: The PRC Girds for Limited, High-Tech War," Orbis, Spring 1994, pp. 177-191.
The PLAAF is reportedly a significant yet less vigorous bureaucratic actor in defense policy debates among the senior PLA leadership. In part, this is because the PLAAF experienced a long period of upheaval and decline in the 1960s and 1970s that severely retarded its development. It has apparently maintained a narrow and generally passive approach to strategic issues. Of course, the PLAAF has not needed to be as assertive on policy matters as the GSD and PLAN because few bureaucratic opponents exist to its core interests. Specifically, the other two services, and presumably the PLA senior leadership, recognize that (a) the PLAAF fighter and bomber force is extremely backward and faces major technological, financial, organizational, and human resource obstacles to its modernization, and (b) a more capable air force is critical to the successful attainment of the increasingly ambitious roles and missions of the other two services.

COSTIND is formally under the joint control of the State Council and the Central Military Commission. However, in reality, it is largely under military leadership. On the broadest level, as China’s principal manager of defense industrial policy for technology, COSTIND is formally charged with formulating and overseeing both civilian and military (including dual-use) Science and Technology (S&T) goals and related programs. It thus organizes and oversees most basic science relevant to advanced conventional and nuclear-weapons-related research, testing, development, and technical applications, defense production/conversion, space technology research and development, and satellite launchings and trackings, and is China’s main contact for all foreign military technology transfers and other

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28Kenneth W. Allen, Glenn Krumel, and Jonathan D. Pollack, China’s Air Force Enters the 21st Century, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, MR-580-AF, 1995, pp. 181–188. The authors state that “the PLAAF remains reluctant or unwilling to put forward more assertively a set of strategic concepts that would be appropriate to a fuller range of defense responsibilities—even under existing doctrinal constraints. Existing PLAAF doctrine remains keyed to homeland air defense.”

29Because of these factors, the PLAAF has reportedly received the most funding of the services. Such funds are being used to develop an array of improved and some entirely new capabilities, including more modern indigenously produced fighters and fighter bombers, small numbers of advanced foreign-supplied fighters, attack and transport helicopters, aerial refueling capabilities, air-launched cruise missiles, improved ground-based defenses, and an airborne early warning capability. For further details, see Swaine (1996).

30Virtually all leading COSTIND personnel have military rank.
defense industry exchanges. It also has a role in the import and export of military arms and technology and is the primary bureaucracy charged with technical intelligence gathering overseas.\textsuperscript{31} To varying degrees, it is thus involved in virtually all long-range planning regarding the technology and production dimensions of both conventional and nuclear forces, across both military and civilian sectors. Most recently, COSTIND has also taken on primary responsibility for developing Chinese approaches to information warfare and provides significant input on arms control issues.\textsuperscript{32} In conducting all these activities, COSTIND “presides over a vast, interlocking network of [civilian and military] institutions.”\textsuperscript{33}

Despite its impressive responsibilities, however, COSTIND is primarily responsible for basic defense research and technology issues, however, not specific weapons programs or security and defense strategy writ large.\textsuperscript{34} Thus, it is not as influential in determining the fundamentals of weapons systems or broader defense policy as the GSD, PLAN, and PLAAF. In addition, COSTIND’s overall influence on defense-related S&T and research and development (R&D) has declined in recent years, for several major reasons. First, many areas of formerly defense-related S&T and R&D have become entirely civilianized under the market-led reform process, often as part of a widespread effort to commercialize the defense industry sector. Second, other technology-oriented central organizations (such as the civilian State Science and Technology Commission) have become much more involved in the defense area as a result of the reforms. These organizations now compete with COSTIND to control critical aspects of defense or dual-use research and technology develop-

\textsuperscript{31}COSTIND reportedly oversees all centrally allocated hard currency accounts used to procure foreign high technology.

\textsuperscript{32}Pollack (1992), p. 172, and personal correspondence with Bates Gill and Alastair Johnston. Within COSTIND, an informal “wise-men’s group” on arms control composed of about ten or so leading officials and scientists from several of its internal departments plays an important role in developing the commission’s position on arms control issues. The author is indebted to Alastair Johnston for this information.

\textsuperscript{33}Pollack (1992), p. 172.

\textsuperscript{34}COSTIND does not directly manage most applied military R&D programs or weapons procurement programs. The Equipment Department (zhuangbeibu) of the GSD takes the lead in funding and managing most weapons development programs, in cooperation with relevant defense industrial factories and supervisory offices within the government.
The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking

ment. Third, past supporters of COSTIND among the senior leadership have either died, taken on other responsibilities, or lost their political clout. COSTIND’s level of influence in the broader defense policy realm was historically dependent on the personal stature of its director and on the existence of several key patrons within the PLA senior officer corps. These included Marshal Nie Rongzhen, members of the Nie family, and General Zhang Aiping. Nie died in the early 1990s; General Ding Henggao, Nie’s son-in-law and the long-standing head of COSTIND, recently stepped down from his post amidst rumors of scandal; and Ding’s wife, Nie Li, also recently retired from her post as a COSTIND deputy director. General Zhang, a leading proponent in the late 1980s of greater funding for defense R&D activities and closer military security ties with the United States,\(^35\) has lost considerable influence because of his advanced age and formal retirement from the senior PLA leadership. Finally, COSTIND had reportedly lost out in some critical defense policy debates with the GSD over whether to give priority to indigenous weapons development over “off-the-shelf” foreign purchases. COSTIND has been a major supporter of the development of indigenous weapons systems capabilities through the application of both domestic and foreign technologies.\(^36\) The GSD has generally opposed this position, at least over the near to medium term, because its leadership is very dissatisfied with the products of China’s defense industry.\(^37\)

The GPD, GLD, and Second Artillery reportedly do not play a major formative role in the defense policy process. Their policy input is


\(^{36}\)Shen Rongjun, a vice-minister of COSTIND, was reportedly involved in negotiations concerning the purchase and co-production of Su-27 fighter aircraft from Russia. The author is indebted to Bates Gill for this information.

\(^{37}\)It should be noted, however, that some knowledgeable observers believe that Defense Minister Chi Haotian is a strong supporter of COSTIND within the CMC, at least partly because of his past factional contacts with Nie Rongzhen and Zhang Aiping (see Swaine, 1992, pp. 69-70). This fact, plus COSTIND’s ongoing importance to the military industrial complex and the influence exerted by individual COSTIND offices (such as the science and technology committee) could provide it with continued influence in the formulation of defense policy in specific areas related to force modernization.
largely limited to providing information and assessments on an operational level, with two important exceptions. The GPD exerts an indirect but potentially major influence over defense policy (as well as over virtually all other military policies) through its role as political and ideological watchdog and proponent of the party line. Even very senior military officers must pay heed, when making major policy decisions, to the basic line and political priorities established by the party center and enforced by the GPD. In some instances, such political imperatives can influence fundamental defense policy decisions.\(^38\) Moreover, a far less subtle yet still indirect form of GPD influence over defense policy is exercised through its control over personnel selection at all levels of the PLA. With support from the party leadership, the GPD can replace or reshuffle key leading PLA officers and thereby presumably alter internal PLA defense policy discussions and behavior. The Second Artillery reportedly plays a significant (and apparently increasing) role in the development of China’s nuclear defense doctrine, with some (primarily technical) input provided by COSTIND.\(^39\) Unfortunately, very little is known about the specific views or level of influence over nuclear defense policy exerted by the Second Artillery, so little else can be said about this organ’s role. The contribution of the AMS and NDU to defense policy is largely limited to providing strategic assessments and recommendations and conducting wargaming (see Chapter Five for further details). However, the top leaders of all these central institutes express views on defense policy to their senior colleagues on an informal basis. Similarly, the heads of the seven military regions likely express their views on aspects of defense policy on an informal basis, albeit less frequently and most likely during enlarged meetings of the CMC. In general, the latter’s views are reportedly limited to operational dimensions of defense strategy and present a distinctly regional, and

\(^{38}\)For example, the GPD reportedly long resisted GSD plans to make further significant cuts in the size of the PLA ground forces beyond those taken in the early 1990s. The GPD was apparently concerned that such reductions would weaken the ability of the PLA to deal with domestic unrest and would excessively lower the number of political commissars within the PLA.

\(^{39}\)Other leading PLA defense policy organs also influence the development of China’s nuclear doctrine. These include the GSD (through its Operations and Chemical Defense Departments), the AMS (through its Department of Strategic Studies), and the PLAN (through its Naval Military Studies Research Institute, which formulates sea-based nuclear strategies). The author is indebted to Alastair Johnston for this information.
The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking

ground force, perspective. Hence, such views most likely feed into or reinforce those of the GSD.40

The key mechanism for developing policy inputs for senior military leaders and for facilitating coordination, communication, supervision, and consultation among the above military organs and between these organs and the senior PLA leadership is the party CMC. Several scholars of the Chinese military have described the CMC as the supreme party body for military policy.41 This may have been the case in earlier years (the CMC has existed in one form or another since the 1930s); however, as suggested above, the CMC as a body reportedly does not meet to vote and “make decisions” in the conventional sense. Its primary purpose is to develop policy options, to coordinate relationships among the major organs of the PLA (i.e., as John Lewis has stated, it balances competition among them for manpower, budget and technology, and resources)42 and to ratify decisions made by the national security policy leadership and the informal CMC executive committee described above.

The CMC is roughly similar to the FALSG in its coordination policy function, although, unlike the FALSG, it ranks higher than any other commission or any leading small group, enjoying the same general rank as the State Council.43 The full CMC meets at least once per month and several other times during the year on an ad hoc basis in response to a specific need. It also meets in enlarged session at least twice per year to discuss and ratify five- and ten-year defense plans, the defense budget, and other key aspects of defense policy. Those meetings include senior members of the PLA regional commands as well as leaders of the non-core PLA organs at the center. The CMC might also convene on an irregular basis as a “court of last resort” to

40 There is one possible caveat to this last statement. The commanders of coastal military regions (e.g., the Guangzhou, Nanjing, and Jinan MRs) probably hold a broader perspective toward defense policy, reflecting their concern with defense against maritime-based threats.

41 For example, Godwin (1988), p. 37, describes it as the dominant structure below the PB or PBSC in determining military and defense policy. Shambaugh says it is the “highest-level military policymaking body,” with “considerable input” into the foreign policy process (1987, p. 296).


resolve disputes occurring within the organs of the military affairs system, although the most serious of such disputes are probably resolved by its executive committee. Finally, the CMC occasionally forms temporary, ad hoc subcommittees or various functional committees to prepare the five-year defense plan, study specific policy issues or problems, and commission appropriate reports.

The key internal unit responsible for carrying out most of the above CMC activities on a daily basis is the CMC General Office (CMC GO). This small unit (containing about 100 full-time staff) facilitates and supervises personal interactions among the senior members of the PLA leadership, manages the external activities of the MND, coordinates bureaucratic interactions among the core PLA agencies and their subordinate systems, and supervises the daily operations of CMC departments. It is also the key coordination and evaluation point for strategic research and assessments developed within the PLA bureaucracy (see Chapter Five). The CMC GO is headed by a di-

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44 Pollack (1992), p. 167. Some scholars have occasionally referred to the existence of a second coordinating mechanism within the PLA, the Military Affairs Leading Small Group. However, many knowledgeable Chinese and foreign observers of the PLA have never heard of this leading group. Indeed, if it existed, it would largely duplicate the functions of the CMC and hence makes little sense. However, supra-CMC supervisory groups of senior leaders have apparently been formed by the paramount leader under emergency conditions. For example, Byrnes refers to the formation of a temporary leading group on military affairs at the time of the Tiananmen incident. It was organized to advise the CMC and MND on strategy and planning and included Deng Xiaoping, Yang Shangkun, Hong Xuezhi, Wang Zhen, Qin Jiwei, and Li Desheng. See Michael T. Byrnes, “The Death of a People’s Army,” in George Hicks (ed.), The Broken Mirror: China After Tiananmen, Chicago, Ill.: St. James Press, 1990, p. 148.

45 Interviews; Cheung (1987a), p. 252. China’s five-year defense planning process largely parallels the process employed within the government to prepare the five-year economic plan. An ad hoc working-level committee of the CMC made up of representatives of all relevant PLA departments and armed services oversees and guides the formulation and revision of the defense plan. This CMC committee (similar in structure and function to a committee established within the State Planning Commission (SPC) to draw up the five-year economic plan) conducts consultations and negotiations among all relevant PLA agencies, following the general guidelines established by China’s overall defense strategy. It then negotiates with relevant government offices within the SPC and the Ministry of Finance to determine the official defense budget. The resulting defense plan is then submitted for approval by the CMC leadership and the State Council. This committee-led planning process is extremely important to the setting of defense priorities and funding levels for the military modernization effort, especially regarding specific weapons programs, although in recent years the importance of the plan has declined because of the growth of extra-budgetary sources of military revenue. The author is indebted to Tai Ming Cheung for this information.
rector and deputy director and staffed by a small working group. Thus, the functions of the CMC GO are similar to those of the CC GO, outlined above. It therefore likely exerts significant, albeit usually indirect, influence on the CMC leadership and over many aspects of military policy, including defense policy.46

The level of actual control exerted by the CMC over the major bureaucratic players of the defense policy subarena is probably less than what is suggested above, however. Each core PLA organ supervises a virtually autonomous system, with its own special powers and responsibilities. In many instances, individual PLA organs probably take the lead in devising and implementing specific aspects of defense policy, with little involvement by other organs. For example, the GSD almost certainly has exclusive control over threat assessments, and the formulation of critical components of defense doctrine and strategy central to the ground forces, such as the development of capabilities concerning the rapid reaction forces. As in the foreign policy subarena, many critical policy components of the defense policy subarena are probably implemented on “automatic pilot” without extensive oversight or intervention from senior CMC leaders. Moreover, other policy issues probably receive support from varying alliances of bureaucratic officials and senior leaders that cut across organizational boundaries.

As a result, defense policy is probably worked out, as some scholars have described it, “in bits and pieces,” through interactions among the CMC executive committee, various CMC work committees, and the other members of the CMC most active in defense policy.47 This was especially true in the early 1990s. Because Yang Shangkun and Jiang Zemin reportedly did not speak to one another at that time, the CMC GO and the heads of the six major PLA organs apparently worked out a de facto system of controls among themselves, relying on their own networks. Lower-level defense specialists also dealt

46The influence of the CMC GO, and perhaps of the CMC as an institution, will likely increase considerably after a new CMC secretary general is named. Past secretary generals such as Yang Shangkun have played pivotal roles in directing the daily operation of the CMC, including the General Office. Other internal CMC offices exert decisive influence over specific areas of defense policy. For example, a CMC arms trade office oversees many major foreign weapons deals and technology transfers.

with components of military and defense policy because no one, in normal practice, oversaw the whole.48

As indicated above, the MoFA’s role in this subarena is extremely limited. Its functions have been described as essentially “housekeeping” in nature, e.g., arranging negotiations and coordinating public statements relating to defense policy. However, the MoFA has attempted at times to limit the independence of the PLA over critical defense policy issues, including military spending levels and force structure planning and deployments.49 MoFA officials have argued that limits must be placed on such activities to avoid unnecessarily provoking regional governments. Yet, absent direct intervention from the top, such efforts have met with very little success, according to interviewees.50

48Lewis, Hua Di, and Xue Litai (1991), p. 91. The removal of Yang Shangkun from power and the emergence of Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen probably increased the level of overall coordination within the defense policy subarena. However, major PLA organizations still enjoy considerable autonomy, and the potential for a significant loosening of controls over this entire subarena clearly exists, as discussed in Chapter Six.

49Lewis, Hua Di, and Xue Litai (1991), p. 90. This includes the military's attempt to use disputes with foreign states to strengthen its arguments for improving force projection capabilities, as in the case of the Spratly Islands dispute in the South China Sea and the dispute over Taiwan.

50Also see Lewis, Hua Di, and Xue Litai (1991), pp. 88–90. These authors state that specific defense allocations, for example, are influenced only modestly, and in many cases not at all, by decisions of the State Council. However, aggregate official defense budget levels are worked out through interactions between the military and responsible government agencies such as the Ministry of Finance, as mentioned above.