

## MILITARY REGIONS

China's vast territory, diverse populations, and complex geography, with attendant transportation and logistics challenges, initially necessitated a regional approach to national defense, with centralized control imposed on decentralized operations. The area control of the People's Liberation Army was originally divided into six levels (see Table 1), though terms have varied over time, restructuring has occurred, and mission overlap persists.

Since February 1949 the People's Liberation Army has employed a geographically delineated system of military regions (*junqu*), which comprise military units permanently allocated to them. During wartime, a theater of war (*zhanqu*) encompasses both these geographically based units and any additional units deployed or otherwise operationally assigned there.

In the late 1940s Red Army forces were organized into five field armies (*yezhan jun*) (see Table 2). As part of a larger consolidation of forces at multiple levels, in 1948 the Central Military Commission combined the field armies into five military regions, and four military-region levels were established. The Central Plain (Zhongyuan) Military Region, later renamed the Central South (Zhongnan) Military Region, comprised Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, and Guangxi; the East China (Huadong) Military Region comprised Shandong, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Anhui, Zhejiang, and Fujian; the Northeast (Dongbei) Military Region comprised Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning; the North China (Huabei) Military Region comprised Shanxi and Hebei; and the Northwest (Xibei) Military Region comprised Xinjiang, Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, and Shaanxi. In February 1950 it established a sixth military region, the Southwest (Xinan) Military Region, comprising Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, and Xizang.

In 1955, under Soviet influence, China's six military regions were reconfigured into twelve ground-operations military regions: Shenyang, Beijing, Jinan, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu, Kunming, Lanzhou, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Xizang. Each was under a single commander, with some of the thirty-five infantry corps of the People's Liberation Army directly subordinate. The People's Liberation Army Navy was divided into the current North, East, and South Sea Fleets. The operations of the People's Liberation Army Air Force were divided

into six air-defense regions. The following year, a thirteenth military region, Fuzhou, was added.

By 1969 the military regions of the People's Liberation Army were reduced to eleven: Shenyang, Beijing, Jinan, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu, Kunming, Lanzhou, Fuzhou, and Xinjiang (renamed Wulumuqi Military Region in May 1979). (In May 1967 the Inner Mongolia Military Region was reduced to a provincial military district (*sheng junqu*) subordinate to the Beijing Military Region, and in December 1969 the Xizang Military Region was reduced to a provincial military district subordinate to the Chengdu Military Region.)

In 1985 the eleven military regions were reduced to the current seven (with over twenty provincial military districts) as part of a major demobilization. The Shenyang Military Region contains Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang; the Beijing Military Region contains Hebei, Shanxi, and Inner Mongolia; the Lanzhou Military Region contains Gansu, Shaanxi, Xinjiang, Ningxia, and Qinghai; the Jinan Military Region contains Shandong and Henan; the Nanjing Military Region contains Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Fujian, and Jiangxi; the Guangzhou Military Region contains Guangdong, Guangxi, Hunan, Hubei, and Hainan; and the Chengdu Military Region contains Yunnan, Xizang, Guizhou, and Sichuan—as well as the Hong Kong and Macau garrisons.

Below the military-region level, military units answer to the local government/party. The headquarters of provincial military districts command local border, coastal defense, and logistics units of the People's Liberation Army, for example.

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