

PLA INFLUENCE ON CHINA'S  
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## 4 Top Leaders and the PLA: The Different Styles of Jiang, Hu, and Xi

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AS A PARTY-ARMY SUBORDINATE TO THE LEADERSHIP of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the People's Liberation Army (PLA) differs from Chinese civilian ministries under the State Council that report to the premier. Instead, the PLA reports to the Central Military Commission (CMC), chaired by the CCP general secretary and staffed almost entirely by military officers.<sup>1</sup> Key policy decisions that affect the party, state, and military are made collectively by the CCP Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), which currently consists of seven civilian members and is chaired by the CCP general secretary. There has not been a PLA officer on the PBSC since 1997. Instead, the CCP general secretary represents PLA views in PBSC discussions and conveys PBSC decisions back to the CMC for implementation by the PLA. This arrangement limits institutionalized channels for top-level civil-military policy coordination and places a premium on the CCP general secretary's role in ensuring coordination of civilian and military policies and civilian (party) control of the PLA.

Many of the institutional practices that helped coordinate policy and ensure the PLA's loyalty to CCP orders that existed during the first four decades of the PRC have gradually broken down. First- and second-generation leaders such as Mao and Deng relied on extensive personal networks in the PLA to "command the gun" and coordinate policies, based on their revolutionary legitimacy and the narrative that "they founded the PLA." Third- and fourth-generation leaders such as Jiang and Hu lacked such networks

because they had never served in the PLA. (Fifth-generation leader Xi Jinping, who served for three years as secretary to then-Defense Minister Geng Biao from 1979 to 1982, is a partial exception.) During the revolution and the initial decades of the PRC, civilian cadres often served as political commissars and military officers rotated into government positions. However, the CCP's increasing emphasis on formal credentials and technical expertise (and a parallel emphasis on military professionalism) has ended this cross-institutional circulation of civilian and military elites. PLA political commissar positions are now filled by career uniformed officers, who are required to be loyal to the party but are also charged by PLA *Political Work Regulations* to defend and serve the institutional interests of the PLA.<sup>2</sup> Other policy coordination measures such as military representation on leading small groups for national security affairs, foreign affairs, and Taiwan affairs have proven inadequate. It remains to be seen whether the newly established National Security Commission can improve coordination.

As a result of these changes, civil-military policy coordination and party control of the PLA now rest heavily on the CCP general secretary in his role as chairman of the CMC. This chapter examines the relationship between CCP general secretaries and the PLA by comparing the leadership styles of Jiang, Hu, and Xi. Although the importance of this relationship is obvious, it is not well understood. A better understanding may help clarify the relative weight of the PLA in national security decisionmaking.

To operationalize the different styles of top leaders in a manner that can be verified or falsified by empirical evidence, this chapter identifies two major ideal types: currying favor and imposing will. Currying favor means that top leaders seek to build military support by doing what the PLA wants. They hesitate to order the PLA to do things it does not want to do or to intervene in military matters to stop the PLA from doing things it wants to do. Conversely, imposing will means that top leaders are willing to order the PLA to do things it does not want to do, or to prevent it from doing things it does want to do. Imposing will may be unpopular with some or all of the military, but it may be necessary to serve the larger good at the expense of special, vested interests within the PLA.

This chapter argues that although Jiang usually curried favor with the PLA from 1989 to 1997, he imposed his will more during the period from 1997 to 2004. In comparison, Hu largely curried favor with the PLA as CCP general secretary and CMC chairman from 2004 to 2012. After becoming the CMC



chairman in 2012, Xi has also curried favor with the PLA, but major indicators show Xi is capable of imposing his will on the PLA.

There are three caveats. First, greater civil-military institutionalization in post-Deng China has imposed more constraints on the role of personalities in affecting policy outcomes. Nevertheless, areas of discretion remain where different personal styles do make a difference, particularly in top-level interagency coordination and civilian oversight of the PLA. Analyzing the role of personal styles does not deny progress in institutionalization. The literature on bureaucracy indicates that informal, personal politics can make a difference in highly institutionalized bureaucratic settings under certain conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Second, this chapter focuses on these two ideal types because they are the most typical and the most likely to affect outcomes. Most analysis highlights the CCP general secretary's role in representing PLA views and interests in civilian settings such as PBSC meetings, suggesting efforts to "curry favor" with the PLA. However, party general secretaries may also represent the views and interests of civilians in military settings such as CMC meetings, "imposing will" by ordering the PLA to do things it may not want to do or preventing the PLA from doing things it wants to do. These two ideal types are also consistent with the Chinese classical governance philosophy of both "bestowing favor" and "inspiring awe (through imposing will)" (*shi'en* and *shuwei*, or *enweibingju*), two very different but necessary requisites for becoming a competent leader. The chapter will analyze nuances in empirical cases that the two ideal types may not explain fully.

Third, the empirical evidence used to illustrate the different styles of Jiang, Hu, and Xi mostly involves military policy decisions with important implications for national security. These examples are not national security or crisis management decisions, nor are they routine bureaucratic decisions. As a result, the number of decisions available as evidence is limited. A major reason for selecting these examples is that relatively more information is available about them. To the extent that different types of issues and decisions may make a difference in the PLA's role in influencing national security decisions,<sup>4</sup> the findings may also serve as a starting point for examining how the PLA's influence on different types of issues and decisions varies.

The next three sections of the chapter discuss the different styles of Jiang, Hu, and Xi, presenting empirical evidence on how they interacted with the PLA. The conclusion then addresses what accounts for the different styles of Jiang, Hu, and Xi.

### Jiang and the PLA: From Currying Favor to Imposing His Will

Jiang became party general secretary and CMC chairman in 1989. With no military experience and few close connections in the PLA, Jiang was quite successful in exploiting his position as CMC chairman to consolidate his power. The CMC chairman has the final say in all major military decisions, from allocating budget and appointing senior officers to deploying troops and controlling employment of nuclear weapons. Jiang's relationship with the PLA can be roughly divided into two periods: a "consolidation" period from 1989 to 1997 where he curried favor with the PLA, followed by an "initiative" period from 1998 to 2004 where Jiang was more likely to impose his will on the PLA.

#### *Currying Favor*

Jiang's efforts to curry favor with the PLA can be clearly identified in the areas of defense budget, senior officer appointments, and cultivating relationships.

China's defense budget has enjoyed double-digit growth most years since Jiang became CMC chairman. This is a sharp contrast to the earlier period, when the defense budget steadily declined in real terms as Deng shifted resources toward economic development and required the "army to be patient." As a result, the PLA was asked to go into business on a massive scale to make up for spending shortfalls under a policy of "self-development, self-perfection."<sup>5</sup>

Some analysts argue that Jiang initiated the post-1989 defense budget increases to reward the PLA for its action during the 1989 Tiananmen crisis. While Jiang had incentives to curry favor with the PLA by increasing defense expenditures, lobbying by senior PLA officers may have played a more important role. After becoming a CMC vice-chairman in 1992, General Liu Huaqing asked "experts" to calculate the cost to upgrade armaments for the navy, air force, and army mechanized forces, concluding that the defense budget should be doubled or tripled. Liu also suggested that the salaries and benefits for military personnel were too low compared with the civilian sector, and that the "practical difficulties" (referring to poor living and working conditions and inability to have dependents live with officers) of those in basic-level units were "unresolvable." These factors made it difficult to attract and retain high-quality personnel. Liu went to Jiang, Premier Li Peng, and Vice-Premier



Yao Yilin several times to “reflect the difficulties of the army” and to “provide a credible and accurate basis for the Party Center to make policy.”<sup>6</sup>

Liu and Zhang Zhen, another uniformed CMC vice-chairman, also met with Zhu Rongji (who succeeded Yao as vice-premier in charge of finance) to discuss the budget. This lobbying quickly produced positive results. The 1993 defense budget increase allowed for hefty salary improvements for PLA personnel, particularly those in basic-level units. This set a precedent and “played a positive role in preserving the stability of the army.”<sup>7</sup>

Jiang also curried favor with the PLA by approving the appointments of a large number of senior officers as well as selecting who would fill key positions. *PLA Officers' Service Regulations* requires the CMC chairman's authorization for appointments of all officers at and above the division leader grade (*shiji*). From 1989 to 2004, Jiang's fifteen-year tenure as CMC chairman, 81 officers gained the rank of full general (three-star, or *shangjiang*), an average of slightly less than 11 every two years. Jiang interviewed some candidates for senior positions before approving their appointments, but promotion recommendations came from military professionals in the CMC.<sup>8</sup> Jiang's knowledge of senior appointees was scanty due to his limited exposure to them; as a result, his personal ties with the officers he appointed may not have been that strong. Whatever networks Jiang attempted to develop within the PLA are not comparable to those of Mao and Deng, because the latter were tested by numerous military and political life-and-death battles.

On the other hand, approving the appointments of senior officers may create a superior-subordinate relationship. Jiang's 1997 revamping of the CMC, for instance, probably made it easier for him to impose his will on the PLA. The retirement of PLA elders such as Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen and filling the two CMC vice-chairman positions with younger officers Zhang Wannian and Chi Haotian may have removed a constraint stemming from deference to the elders.

Jiang also curried favor with the PLA by demonstrating respect for the PLA as an institution and by cultivating and maintaining good relations with PLA leaders. This involved showing respect for PLA veterans, listening to officers' concerns on major issues, honoring PLA heroes and traditions, and conducting regular inspection tours of basic-level PLA units.<sup>9</sup> In a culture that highly values attention and sensitivity to and investment in relationships, this likely contributed to more positive and rewarding interactions between Jiang and the PLA. Jiang may also have curried favor with the PLA by allowing it to

drive the decision to conduct military exercises during the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1995–1996.<sup>10</sup> By doing what the PLA wanted in the areas of defense budget, personnel appointments, and building relationships in his early years as CMC chairman, Jiang accumulated substantial political capital with PLA leaders.

#### *“Imposing Will” on the PLA*

After 1997, when Deng died and PLA elders Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen retired, Jiang began to impose his will on the PLA.

In 1998, Jiang required the PLA to divest most of its business activities. The PLA was highly divided on the issue of divestiture, which gave Jiang allies in the PLA. But although some senior officers were concerned about corruption and the corrosive effects of business activities on PLA combat readiness, the mainstream view was to reform PLA business activities by separating them from combat units and retaining the revenue they generated. Zhang Zhen wrote that many comrades “see more the benefits of production and business but see less the harm they produce.”<sup>11</sup>

Jiang wrote that when he first became CMC chairman, he wanted to get the PLA out of business activities.<sup>12</sup> This shows Jiang had a “will” on this issue even before the negative effects of business activities on PLA combat readiness began to divide the PLA. He was unable to impose his will because it was Deng who had allowed the PLA to go into business,<sup>13</sup> because many children of PLA elders were involved, and because PLA units were poorly funded. After 1997, he felt secure enough to push divestiture without fear of displeasing Deng and the PLA elders. Rapid economic growth also made it possible to allocate more funding to the PLA. Moreover, divestiture increased political control over the PLA by cutting off its sources of extra-budgetary income. Although some PLA officers supported divestiture, the PLA was united in wanting compensation in the form of a higher defense budget, and was reportedly disappointed by the budget increase that it received.<sup>14</sup>

Jiang also endorsed policies to downsize the PLA by 500,000 billets from 1997 on and another 200,000 from 2003 on. As early as in 1993, Jiang advanced the new PLA strategic principle of preparing for fighting and winning “local war under high-tech conditions,” but was not able to follow up with concrete policy initiatives. After 1997, he felt more secure to introduce bold and concrete policies. To justify downsizings, Jiang introduced the concept of “leapfrogging development” in 1997 by shifting the emphasis of military modernization from mechanization (adding new hardware platforms) to



informatization (developing information-technologies-based networks and software) to narrow the technological gap with more advanced militaries. This led to the CMC's endorsement of a policy of dual-transformation (mechanization and informatization) of the PLA in late 2002.<sup>15</sup>

While some in the PLA leadership supported downsizing to free up funds for technology-based modernization, these policies were mostly unpopular in the PLA, mainly because the PLA remained a military heavily vested in manpower rather than technology. These two rounds of downsizing represent critical cases that show Jiang made the PLA take actions it would not otherwise have taken.

Jiang also may have prevented the PLA from taking actions it wanted. He made the decision not to reserve a PBSC seat for a senior PLA officer after Liu Huaqing's retirement in 1997. This removed the PLA's ability to have a direct voice and vote on national policy decisions.

After the 1999 accidental U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade where the PLA defense attaché was seriously wounded, and the 2001 EP-3 incident where a PLA Navy (PLAN) pilot was lost, the PLA demanded harsh reprisals. In the case of EP-3 incident, the PLA wanted the U.S. crew detained in Hainan to be court-martialed. Jiang eventually persuaded senior PLA officers to agree to his position that China would demand an apology from the United States and then release the U.S. crew.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, after the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, Jiang refused to endorse the aircraft carrier program that Liu Huaqing had lobbied for,<sup>17</sup> arguing that carriers were not that useful for a military conflict over Taiwan.<sup>18</sup> These cases show that after 1997, Jiang felt more secure and was relatively successful in imposing his will on the PLA.

#### Hu and the PLA: From Currying Favor to Currying Favor

Hu Jintao took over the position of party general secretary in 2002 and of CMC chairman in 2004. Like Jiang, Hu had weak military credentials, with no service experience and few close connections in the PLA. Hu also curried favor with the PLA through increases in the defense budget and regularly appointing senior officers. PLA personnel also received a 100 percent salary increase in 2006 and were issued better-quality uniforms. Salaries of PLA personnel were raised substantially again in 2008 and 2011.<sup>19</sup> In 2004, Hu approved a change to the CMC that added the PLAN, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF), and the Second Artillery (China's strategic rocket force) commanders as ex officio members. Hu had also paid many

visits to basic-level units, attended and delivered speeches at party congresses of major PLA institutions, and maintained good relations with senior officers.

A central challenge in analyzing the relationship between Hu and the PLA is that it is difficult to identify a clear example where Hu was able to impose his will on the PLA by making the PLA do things it did not want to do or by preventing the PLA from doing things it wanted to do. Hu highlighted the need for the PLA to “enhance the capabilities to cope with multiple types of security threat and fulfill diversified military missions,” calling on the PLA to devote more energy and resources to nontraditional security missions. This guidance was codified in the “new historic missions” that Hu approved in 2004. The PLA's participation in 2008 Sichuan earthquake relief operations and the PLAN's counter-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden since late 2008 are both examples that deserve scrutiny.

Because disaster relief has been a traditional PLA mission, the quick mobilization of about 120,000 PLA men to participate in the Sichuan earthquake relief in May 2008 might not seem like a new departure. However, the deployment revealed serious force structure, training, equipment, and interagency issues that may have made the PLA more reluctant to conduct these missions. The forces mobilized were largely quick-reaction units (*kuaifan budui*) and strategic reserve forces (*zhanlüe yubei dui*), or elite army divisions, paratroopers, and PLAN marines trained to fight conventional wars. They were issued light tools such as spades and picks that were ineffective in removing large concrete pieces of collapsed buildings. More importantly, Premier Wen Jiabao asked senior PLA officers to undertake tasks that they perceived as recklessly risking the lives of their soldiers, leading some PLA officers to conclude that Wen “does not understand the army.”<sup>20</sup>

Hu could have exploited this moment of PLA vulnerability due to poor performance to impose his will, which he probably tried to do initially. The December 2008 CMC meeting, for instance, allegedly reached agreement that the PLA should be downsized substantially, eliminating some group armies and Military Region (MR) bureaucracies by consolidating the seven MRs into four, and by establishing an army headquarters to command all the remaining army units. To enhance party-army coordination, each MR was to be led by a regional military commission modeled after the CMC, chaired by a regional party leader.<sup>21</sup> This reorganization plan, however, was not executed.

The PLAN's counter-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden was first requested by the Ministry of Transportation agency that oversees the safety of commercial



shipping. The PLA's desire to remedy its deficiencies revealed by the Sichuan earthquake relief may be an important reason for the more forthcoming PLA cooperation and coordination with the state authorities. The PLAN has also been acquiring more warships capable of far-seas operations and was interested in opportunities to expose itself to conditions in the far seas to gain operational experience. Therefore, Hu's order for the PLAN to conduct this mission should not be counted as an example where Hu imposed his will on the PLA.<sup>22</sup>

A final case is the first test flight of the J-20 stealth fighter during Defense Secretary Robert Gates' visit to China in January 2011. The puzzle is whether Hu knew about the test flight in advance, because he looked surprised and had to consult an aide when Gates raised the issue in their meeting. One answer is that Hu did not know about the test flight because top leaders are mainly concerned with decisions of larger, strategic importance, not routine issues such as the timing of test flights. While this is plausible, there are a few reasons and some anecdotal evidence to support an alternative answer, that Hu might have known about the test in advance.

As CMC chairman, Hu would be kept informed of major progress in research and development of strategically important weapons. Hu, for instance, attended the ceremony to commission two new nuclear submarines in 2006.<sup>23</sup> There are also reports that Xi Jinping, the newly appointed vice-chairman of the CMC, was at the Chengdu airport on January 7, 2011, to inspect the new J-20.<sup>24</sup> Finally, from the perspective of Chinese culture, Hu may have tried to be polite to Gates by looking surprised. If Hu had answered "yes" to Gates' inquiry, it would have amounted to an affront that may have made the distinguished guest "lose face."

It is possible that senior PLA officers, but not Hu, initiated the idea to conduct the J-20's first test flight at the same time as Gates' visit. Hu probably went along with the idea, because he did not want to say "no" to the PLA, or impose his will on the PLA. These examples show that Hu curried favor with the PLA much more than he imposed his will on it.

#### Xi and the PLA: From Currying Favor to Imposing His Will?

Even though Xi served in the PLA for three years from 1979 to 1982, his tenure was too short to cultivate a personal network in the PLA. Like his predecessors, Xi also curried favor with the PLA after he became CMC chairman

in 2012. Double-digit defense budget increases have continued, and senior officers were promoted to the rank of full general in November 2012, July 2013, and July 2014.<sup>25</sup> Xi has also regularly inspected troops, including a tour of Sanya Naval Base in Hainan on April 9, 2013, a visit to the PLAAF headquarters on April 14, 2014, a meeting with delegates to the Second Artillery Party Congress on December 5, 2012, and inspection of a division of the Thirty-first Group Army in Fujian on July 30, 2014.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Xi has aligned his preferences with those of the PLA, endorsing the "dream of a strong military" (*qiangjun meng*),<sup>27</sup> and supporting a harder-line policy over maritime disputes in China's near seas, including establishing an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea.<sup>28</sup>

While currying favor with the PLA and serving as CMC chairman for only two years, however, Xi has also taken measures to reduce special privileges and combat corruption in the PLA, which may have upset many in the PLA. For instance, Xi has ordered retired officers to return illicit houses and apartments that they occupy or have a much higher market rental rate automatically deducted from their pension.<sup>29</sup> Because these low-cost properties can be rented out or even sold for a high profit, such a policy is highly unpopular among those who occupy these properties, but highly popular among those (likely active-duty officers) who are entitled to a house or an apartment but do not have one yet.<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, Xi has issued regulations intended not only to eliminate petty graft such as business-related extravagant dining, excessive alcohol consumption, and luxurious hotels, but also to ban senior officers from corruption-related practices. These include interference in officer appointment and promotion decisions made by lower-level party committees, and intervening in project contracts, equipment procurement, and military land disposal in exchange for valuable gifts, money, and stock shares. These regulations also admonish senior officers to "strictly discipline" family members and personal aides to ensure proper behavior.<sup>31</sup>

More importantly, Xi has put these regulations into practice. On June 30, 2014, the CCP Politburo decided to expel from the party General Xu Caihou, who served as a CMC member (1999–2004) and vice-chairman (2004–2012), and hand him over to prosecutors on charges of "using his office to provide help for others in promotions, and accepting bribes directly or through his family."<sup>32</sup> Xu allegedly took several million dollars of bribes from Gu Junshan, a senior officer accused of corruption, and played a key role in Gu's promotion



to the position of deputy chief of the PLA's General Logistics Department (GLD), despite objections by the GLD leadership.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Xu allegedly attempted to block a GLD request to investigate Gu for corruption.<sup>34</sup> In both cases, Xu had apparently "interfered" in decisions of a lower-level party committee in exchange for money. Similarly, Gu reportedly embezzled tens of millions of dollars that he could use to pay for bribes by pocketing kickbacks from the sale of military land while serving as head of GLD's Infrastructure Construction and Barracks Department.<sup>35</sup>

Because many senior officers may be affected by these anti-special privileges and anticorruption campaigns, these cases represent major indicators that Xi can "impose his will," or order the PLA to do things many in the PLA may not want to do. These cases can also be regarded as a process where Xi attempts to fight special interests in the PLA in order to consolidate his authority. During the period when Xu was undergoing an internal investigation, for instance, fifty-three senior officers pledged their support for Xi's military policy in *PLA Daily*.<sup>36</sup> By consolidating his authority in the PLA, Xi apparently intends to impose his ultimate will on the PLA, which is to restructure the PLA through downsizing and reorganization.

Currently, the army dominates the PLA structure and consumes substantial PLA resources. The army's dominance is so overwhelming that unlike other services, it does not even have a headquarters in Beijing. As a result, the PLA general departments must devote their organizational resources to army functions. Both the General Staff Department (GSD) and General Armament Department (GAD), for instance, have specialized departments and agencies dedicated to army issues,<sup>37</sup> but not for other services. Such an army bias may distort the functions of the PLA general departments, which constitute the CMC's command and coordination institutions, inhibiting greater jointness. At the regional level, the command and control structure of seven MRs, roughly comparable to the U.S. regional combatant commands, are also army-centric. Senior navy, air force, and Second Artillery officers may serve symbolically as deputy commanders of MRs, but they are not fully integrated because they cannot become full MR commanders. Similarly, officers from other services may find it difficult to penetrate MR staff departments, which are largely dominated by army officers.

As most of China's land border disputes have been settled by diplomacy, and the responsibility of domestic security has largely been shifted to the reinforced People's Armed Police, an army-dominated PLA structure looks

increasingly irrational. In the meantime, most of China's maritime territorial disputes remain unresolved, and the major threat to China's security is perceived by many Chinese analysts to come from the maritime direction. Moreover, China's development interests are growing in the far seas and overseas. Therefore, restructuring the PLA in order to provide security for China's growing maritime interests is likely to become a major challenge for Xi.

In the Decision to Deepen Reforms passed by the CCP's Third Plenum in 2013, Xi outlined his plan to restructure the PLA. The Decision, for instance, proposes to "perfect leadership and management systems of respective services, and improve the CMC's joint operations command institutions and theater (regional) joint operations command systems." Moreover, the Decision highlights the need to "optimize the scale and structure of the military, and adjust and improve the ratio among services."<sup>38</sup> In an article to flesh out the Decision, CMC Vice-Chairman Xu Qiliang also highlights the need to "emphatically strengthen the construction of navy, air force, and Second Artillery units."<sup>39</sup>

All these imply that the next phase of China's military reform may involve substantial downsizing of the army, establishing an army headquarters to contain and manage the remaining army units, and expanding the other services. This change should enhance the equal status among services, making it easier for the CMC's command institutions and regional-level command and control structure to become genuinely joint.

But because restructuring the PLA in favor of the non-army services may be controversial and unpopular in an army-dominated PLA, whether Xi can follow through with his plan can be a critical test of whether he can impose his will on the PLA. The anti-special privileges and anticorruption campaigns, however, show that Xi can impose his will on the PLA if needed. Moreover, Xi has outlined his plan in the Third Plenum Decision, which suggests that he is serious about restructuring the PLA. The credibility cost of not implementing his plan as China's top leader should also incentivize Xi to impose his will on the PLA.

## Conclusion

This chapter shows that although Jiang curried favor with the PLA from 1989 to 1997, he imposed his will during the period from 1997 to 2004. In comparison, Hu mostly curried favor with the PLA during his tenure as China's top



leader from 2004 to 2012. After succeeding Hu in 2012, Xi has also curried favor with the PLA, but major indicators show Xi is capable of imposing his will on the PLA if needed.

What accounts for the different styles of Jiang, Hu, and Xi in dealing with the PLA? One explanation has to do with the relative influence of retired CCP leaders and PLA elders. From 1989 to 1997, for instance, Jiang had to be cautious because Deng was still alive and attempted to influence military policy by appointing PLA elders Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen as CMC vice-chairmen to "assist" Jiang in military work, and by having Wang Ruilin, his former personal aide, join the CMC as a member. As a result, Jiang had to defer to the elders in all major policy decisions. By 1997, Deng had died and both Liu and Zhang were retired. Jiang's own appointees began to dominate the CMC. As a result, Jiang felt more secure and moved to introduce bold military policies, imposing his will on the PLA.

When Hu became the CCP general secretary in 2002, he had to defer to Jiang to deal with the PLA because Jiang stayed on as the CMC chairman for two years. Even after Hu became the CMC chairman in 2004, he still had to work with a CMC dominated by Jiang's appointees. This explanation suggests that Hu therefore had to be cautious and defer major decisions to Jiang and "his men" in the CMC until Hu left office in 2012.

Xi assumed the CMC chairman position at the same time that he became CCP general secretary in November 2012, and therefore did not have to contend with a predecessor who retained the top CMC position. Moreover, the majority (eight members) of the twelve-member CMC retired in 2012, allowing Xi to fill the CMC with his own appointees.<sup>40</sup> Both factors gave him the confidence to impose his will on the PLA.

While having some merit, this explanation is inadequate. First, Jiang and his CMC appointees are not comparable to Deng and PLA elders in status and prestige. Their influence on Jiang's successors should therefore be much smaller than the influence of Deng and PLA elders on Jiang. Also, major members of the previous CMC can shift their support to the new top leader. Xi, for instance, can impose his will on the PLA seemingly without deference to senior CMC members known as "Hu's appointees," such as Xu Qiliang, Chang Wanquan, and Wu Shengli. Xi even took on Xu Caihou, an alleged protégé of Jiang.

A more persuasive explanation has to do with different personalities between Jiang, Hu, and Xi, mostly shaped by different life and career

experiences. Jiang's personality of being willing to impose his will may be shaped by a life and career experience that highlights executive responsibilities. First, Jiang can claim revolutionary credentials because he joined the CCP before 1949. For most of his career after 1949, Jiang held major executive positions that involved independent and sometime unpopular decisions. Jiang, for instance, served as manager of three different factories in 1950s. He was director of two major research institutes of China's First Ministry of Machine-Building Industry in 1960s, and served as a bureau chief of the same ministry in 1970s. He was put in charge of two national commissions that supervised imports and exports and foreign direct investment, and served as China's minister of electronics industry in the early 1980s. From 1985 to 1989, he served as mayor and party secretary of Shanghai, one of China's largest and most economically dynamic cities.

In contrast, Hu's personality of currying favor and leadership style of avoiding conflict may be shaped by a life and career experience that requires caution rather than independent decisions. A humble but also "exploitative class" family background such as a small-scale tea merchant in the age of "class struggle," for instance, demanded caution and may not have instilled a lot of self-confidence. Hu worked as a political instructor in Tsinghua University in the mid-1960s, a technical assistant and a personal secretary in a hydraulic project in Gansu province in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a section head of the Construction Commission of Gansu province in the late 1970s, secretary of the Gansu Communist Youth League (CYL) in the early 1980s, and general secretary of China's CYL from 1982 to 1985. Most of these are staff positions that do not require independent decisions, but instead demand careful conformity with bureaucratic supervisors. The positions of provincial and national CYL secretaries may sound more important, but their responsibilities mainly involve propaganda and ideological work among youth rather than executive leadership.

From 1985 to 1992, however, Hu held the positions of party secretaries of Guizhou province and Tibet Autonomous Region. While these are major leadership positions that require executive responsibilities, these provinces were relatively poor and backward. Hu's six years managing two different provinces also seems to be rather short by Chinese bureaucratic standards. This time was further shortened by reports that Hu had to stay mostly in Chengdu during his term as Tibet's party secretary because he suffered from high altitude sickness. By 1992, Hu moved to Beijing to become a full-time CCP Politburo member.



Unlike Hu and Jiang, Xi had served in the PLA for three years. Xi's father was founder of a major red army base in northern China, which offered a safe haven for the main Red Army units that had been decimated by the tumultuous Long March by late 1935. While PLA-related personal experience and family connections may give Xi political capital in dealing with the PLA, other aspects of Xi's life and career experience gain more respect from China's ruling elites, including senior PLA officers. A prominent and privileged family background may foster self-confidence in Xi, but this background is also mitigated by sixteen years of family misfortune. Xi's father, for instance, was out of political favor as early as 1962, when Xi was only nine. In 1969, Xi moved to a village in loess-covered northern Shaanxi as a sent-down youth, and lived and worked in one of the poorest regions of China for seven years. The son of a major "capitalist roader" in China, Xi had to make all the tough decisions on his own. Xi applied for CCP membership ten times but was rejected repeatedly before his hard work eventually allowed him to become party secretary of his village.<sup>41</sup>

In twenty-five years from 1982 to 2007, Xi held major executive positions that require independent decisions. Xi, for instance, served as party secretary of a county in Hebei province from 1982 to 1985. He then moved to Fujian province and worked there for seventeen years from 1985 to 2002, serving as mayor or party secretary of two cities and one prefecture, and then governor and party secretary of the province. From 2002 to 2007, Xi was governor and party secretary of Zhejiang province. Both Fujian and Zhejiang are large, economically dynamic coastal provinces. In 2007, Xi took over as party secretary of Shanghai, but moved to Beijing to become a new member of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee after a few months. It is likely that twenty-five years of executive experience has played a crucial role in shaping Xi's personality as a leader able to impose his will if he needs to do so.

#### Notes

1. A state CMC chaired by the president technically exists, but in practice the positions of president and CCP general secretary are usually held by the same person and the state CMC membership parallels that of the party CMC.
2. See Nan Li, *Chinese Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Deng Era: Implications for Crisis Management and Naval Modernization*, China Maritime Studies 4 (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College Press, 2010); and Michael Kiselycznyk and Phillip C. Saunders, *Civil-Military Relations in China: Assessing the PLA's Role in Elite Politics*,

INSS China Strategic Perspectives 2 (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2012).

3. See Michel Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 109–111; and Anthony Downs, *Inside Bureaucracy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 61–64.
4. See the chapter by Kardon and Saunders in this volume.
5. See Zhang Zhen [张震], *Memoirs of Zhang Zhen*, Vol. 2 [张震回忆录, 下册] (Beijing: Liberation Army Press [解放军出版社], 2003), 399.
6. See Liu Huaqing [刘华清], *Memoirs of Liu Huaqing* [刘华清回忆录] (Beijing: Liberation Army Press [解放军出版社], 2004), 585.
7. Zhang, *Memoirs*, 373–374.
8. Personnel policies concerning senior officers had largely been worked out by Zhang Zhen, Liu Huaqing, and Yu Yongbo (CMC member and head of the General Political Department) and approved by Jiang during the 1992–1997 period. See Zhang, *Memoirs*, 377–378.
9. You Ji, "Jiang Zemin's Command of the Military," *The China Journal*, no. 45 (January 2001); and James Mulvenon, "China: Conditional Compliance," in *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 318.
10. See Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chap. 8.
11. Zhang, *Memoirs*, 406.
12. Jiang Zemin [江泽民], "The Army Must Stop All Its Business Activities" [军队必须停止一切经商活动], collected in Jiang Zemin, *On National Defense and Army Construction* [论国防和军队建设] (Beijing: Liberation Army Press [解放军出版社], 2002). The speech was delivered on July 21, 1998, at a CMC meeting.
13. Even though first CMC vice-chair Zhao Ziyang was believed to be responsible for the policy, Zhao was likely to have consulted Deng, who was then the CMC chair.
14. For detailed discussions of the rise and decline of PLA's business activities, see James Mulvenon, *Soldiers of Fortune: The Rise and Fall of the Chinese Military-Business Complex, 1978–1998* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2001); and Tai Ming Cheung, *China's Entrepreneurial Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
15. See Army Construction Research Institute of National Defense University [国防大学军队建设研究所], *A Reader for Studying Jiang Zemin's Thought on National Defense and Army Construction* [江泽民国防和军队建设思想学习读本] (Beijing: CCP History Press [中共党史出版社], 2002), 56, 232–244.
16. Conversations with informed sources in Guangzhou and Beijing in 2003.
17. See Liu, *Memoirs of Liu Huaqing*, 477–481. Liu was PLAN commander from 1982 to 1987 and a CMC member and vice-chair from 1987 to 1997.
18. Jiang even removed a commanding officer of the PLAN South Sea Fleet for advocating aircraft carriers to resolve the Spratlys issue to him during an inspection tour of the fleet. Conversation with informed sources in Guangzhou in 2003. See also "Phoenix Net's Special Interview with Ma Xinchun: Aircraft Carrier Should Have



Been Developed 10 Years Ago” [凤凰网专访马辛春：十年前就该造航母], *Phoenix Net*, October 14, 2009. Ma Xinchun is the former commander of the PLAN North Sea Fleet. In the interview, Ma notes that someone was criticized for advocating aircraft carriers ten years earlier. He actually refers to an incident where a North Sea Fleet senior officer was reprimanded by Jiang at a National People's Congress annual meeting for advocating aircraft carriers.

19. “Details of Raising Salaries for the PLA” [解放军加薪详情], *Global Times* [环球时报], March 2, 2011.

20. For details, see Li, *Chinese Civil-Military Relations*, 26–32.

21. Conversations with informed sources in Beijing in 2009.

22. For details, see Li, *Chinese Civil-Military Relations*, 32–33.

23. “Two New-Type Nuclear Submarines Entered Service in 2006: Chairman Hu Personally Conferred the Flag” [海军2006年服役两艘新型核潜艇, 胡主席亲自授旗], *People's Daily* [人民日报], May 18, 2009.

24. “Xi Jinping Inspects J-20 Aircraft of Chengdu Aircraft Corporation on January 7” [习近平1月7日视察成飞J-20飞机], *Ming Pao* [明报], January 8, 2011.

25. See *PLA Daily* [解放军报], November 23, 2012, July 31, 2013, and July 11, 2014.

26. For inspection tours, see “Xi Jinping Lays out Overall Arrangement for Military Reform: Break down Barriers against System of Systems, and Strategize Transformation of Three Services” [习近平布局军队改革: 破体系壁垒, 谋三军转型], *People's Daily Online* [人民网], August 8, 2014; and “Xi Jinping Inspects Naval Units in Sanya” [习近平视察海军驻三亚部队], *PLA Daily* [解放军报], April 11, 2014.

27. “Xi Jinping: Constructing a Modern Military Force System of Systems with Chinese Characteristics” [习近平: 构建中国特色现代军事力量体系], *People's Daily* [人民日报], August 15, 2014.

28. An ADIZ is likely an agenda that is preferred by PLAAF. For a discussion of “air operations to safeguard maritime interests and rights” [维护海洋权益空中行动] and “far-seas air offensive and defensive system of systems operations capabilities” [远海空中攻防体系作战能力], see Ma Xiaotian [马晓天], “Assiduously Enhance the Capabilities of Air Force Units to Fight and Win War” [努力提高空军部队能打仗打胜仗能力], *PLA Daily* [解放军报], April 2, 2014. Ma is commander of the PLAAF.

29. See “Four General Departments and CMC Disciplinary Inspection Commission Issue Notice, Requiring Strengthening of Forceful Measures to Clear-up Housing of Departed and Retired Cadres That Violates Regulations” [四总部军委纪委发出通知, 要求强化刚性措施清理离退休干部违规住房], *PLA Daily* [解放军报], July 26, 2014.

30. See “Great Housing Clearance of the Chinese Military” [中国军队大清房], *Southern Weekend* [南方周末], August 14, 2014.

31. See “CMC Has Issued Ten Regulations to Strengthen Construction of Its Own Work Style” [中央军委印发关于加强自身作风建设十项规定], *Xinhuanet* [新华网], December 21, 2012.

32. “CCP Center Decides to Expel Xu Caihou from the Party” [中共中央决定给与徐才厚开除党籍处分], *Xinhuanet* [新华网], June 20, 2014.

33. See “Senior General on Corruption Charges,” *South China Morning Post*, March 31, 2014.

34. “Xi Strikes Hard at Military Graft and Corruption by Heavily Punishing Gu Junshan” [习严打军队贪腐, 重惩谷俊山], *Ming Pao* [明报], March 11, 2013; and “Leader in China Aims at Military with Graft Case,” *New York Times*, April 1, 2014.

35. See “Senior General on Corruption Charges.”

36. See *PLA Daily* [解放军报], March 7, 2014, April 2, 2014, and April 17, 2014.

37. These include GSD's Army Aviation Department and agencies dedicated to army functional arms such as armor, artillery, and engineering, and GAD's Army Armament Scientific Research and Order and Procurement Department.

38. “The Decision of the CCP Center on Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening Reforms” [中共中央关于全面深化改革若干重大问题的决定], *Xinhuanet* [新华网], November 15, 2013.

39. “Xu Qiliang: Unswervingly Advance National Defense and Military Reform” [许其亮: 坚定不移推进国防和军队改革], *People's Daily* [人民日报], November 21, 2013.

40. Xi served as a civilian vice-chairman of the CMC from 2010 to 2012, and thus likely had a significant role in shaping which military officers were appointed to the CMC to replace the eight members who retired in 2012.

41. “Xi Jinping: How I Went into Politics” [习近平: 我是如何跨入政界的], *Chinese Sons and Daughters* [中华儿女], no. 7 (2000).