



## Reflections on the Progress of China's Military Reforms

**OE Watch Commentary:** The People's Liberation Army (PLA) celebrated its 93rd anniversary on 1 August. This prompted the publishing of several articles, such as the first article extract, published by *China Global Television Network*, on the country's progress in its military reform. The PLA has seen its biggest reforms take shape over the past five years. A deeply determined President Xi Jinping, who also serves as Chairman of the Central Military Commission, has been leading the efforts and pushing at the highest levels.

The article contains several charts and graphics that outline progress since 2015. For example, in September 2015, President Xi announced that the PLA would cut 300,000 troops, going from 2.3 million to 2 million. This announcement was viewed by some analysts as the beginning point of the military's reforms. The latest defense white paper, *China's National Defense in the New Era*, released in 2019, explains that 300,000 personnel have now been cut, with non-commissioned officers and civilians taking on officer positions. Leading organs at all levels have been downsized by reducing the leadership.

The article also highlights other major reforms. For example, the four former General Departments were restructured into 15 smaller organizations, all reporting directly to the Central Military

Commission. The former seven military regions were reorganized into five fully joint theater commands. Xi Jinping announced the establishment of the Central Commission for Integrated Military and Civilian Development, a new organization that would oversee and coordinate the country's effort in civil-military integration. Xi now heads the new organization and, according to the article, during the new organization's first meeting, he pushed the status of civil-military integration up to a national strategy. Civil-military integration has become integral to the process of China's military reforms. For example, Chinese analysts view civil-military integration as playing a key role in the country's ability to achieve the next level of warfare – which China refers to as *intelligentization*, a term used to describe military forces that use artificial intelligence, machine learning, and autonomy of systems as opposed to human controlled information systems. The second article extract, published earlier this year in *Jiefangjun Bao*, noted that “the constitution of the intelligent military forces is characterized by civil-military fusion and integration. The profound changes in the war-winning mechanism and in the character of weapons and equipment have given birth to a new era of civil-military technology compatibility, product interoperability and standards sharing, as economic development and national defense construction, being interdependent and mutually beneficial, have been merged into one entity of common destiny.” Some of the key high-tech projects identified in China's civil-military integration plan include an integrated information system, quantum communication and computing, and artificial intelligence, according to the first article.

Other reforms highlighted in the first article include, but are not limited to, the establishment or adjustment of 84 corps-level units and the CMC setting a goal to develop a robust socialist system of military policy with Chinese characteristics by 2022. While Xi Jinping has made a lot of progress in his military reforms over the past five years, he is far from done, with key goals in place. For example, as the third article extract, published in *China Daily*, points out, Xi Jinping has set a goal for the Chinese military to become a modernized power by 2035 and a world-class force by mid-century.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

*“...the Chinese military will become a modernized power by 2035 and a world-class force by mid-century...”*



*The People's Liberation Army troops prepare for a parade in September 2007 to commemorate the PLA's 90th anniversary.*

Source: Defense Intelligence Agency 2019, <https://www.jcs.mil/Media/Photos/igphoto/2002080054/> Public Domain



## Continued: Reflections on the Progress of China's Military Reforms

**Source:** “China’s Military Reform in Past 5 Years,” *China Global Television Network*, 1 August 2020, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-08-01/Graphics-China-s-military-reform-in-past-5-years--SceNvpfC92/index.html>

### *China’s Military Reform in Past 5 Years*

*August 1 marks the anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA), which is today celebrating 93 years. This year, China is also celebrating the fifth anniversary of the launch of the reform plan for the armed forces.*

*Five years ago, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for efforts in fully strengthening the armed forces through reform and unswervingly follow the path of strengthening the armed forces with Chinese characteristics at the Central Military Commission Reform Work Meeting in November.*

*...the military reform, ... has been described as the “most wide-ranging and ambitious restructuring since 1949.”*

*The overall goal is to achieve progress and concrete results before 2020 in military administration and joint operational command, optimizing military structure, enhancing policy systems and civilian-military integration, and building a modern military with Chinese characteristics that can win information age wars.*

**Source:** Li Shihua, Jia Junming, and Lu Bingchi, “深刻把握战争形态智能化演进特点 (Deeply Grasp the Intelligentized Characteristics of Evolution of War),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 23 January 2020, [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/1/2020-01/23/07/2020012307\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/1/2020-01/23/07/2020012307_pdf.pdf)

### *Deeply Grasp the Intelligentized Characteristics of Evolution of War*

*...Intelligent unmanned combat systems will embody a new trend in the development of future war equipment. Its core lies in meeting the requirements of “zero casualties”, “full coverage”, and “quick response” in future wars. A new type of intelligent unmanned forces will thus be forged on a large scale to conduct combined operations of various unmanned combat systems in the form of a system of systems. Third, the constitution of the intelligent military forces is characterized by civil-military fusion and integration. The profound changes in the war-winning mechanism and in the character of weapons and equipment have given birth to a new era of civil-military technology compatibility, product interoperability, and standards sharing, as economic development and national defense construction, being interdependent and mutually beneficial, have been merged into one entity of common destiny.*

**Source:** Zhang Yangfei, “Military Honing its Capability to Triumph in Battle,” *China Daily*, 1 August 2020, <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202008/01/WS5f24a67ca31083481725d851.html>

### *Military Honing its Capability to Triumph in Battle*

*In October 2017 during the 19th CPC National Congress, he set a goal that the Chinese military will become a modernized power by 2035 and a world-class force by 2050. Under his leadership, the military has beefed up efforts to achieve the goals by increasing its training intensity, pushing forward reforms and speeding up the development of modernized equipment and weapons to be more prepared for today’s informatized warfare.*



**China’s cyber policy appears to have three vectors —peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner— that dominate China’s cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.**

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195610/download>