

MILITARY UPDATE AFTER 19TH PARTY CONGRESS MEET

(Brig HS Cheema)

1. President Xi Jinping has emerged as more powerful leader next to Mao Zedong after the 19th Party Congress meet. Xi has clearly laid out a structured agenda for his country in these proceedings. The new leadership announced has been chosen who have pledged implicit loyalty to party and its chief. Xi also assured its neighbours that China is ready to resolve its disputes through dialogue but not at the expense of Beijing's strategic interests. China would "deepen relations with its neighbours in accordance with the principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness and the policy of forging friendship and partnership". At the same time he has also devilled at length about his plans to make the 2.3 mn strong PLA, the world s largest military, into a world class force.

2. The CPC has included Xi Jinping's military thinking and the Party's "absolute" leadership over the armed forces into its Constitution, according to a resolution approved by the 19th CPC National Congress. The CPC shall uphold its absolute leadership over the PLA and other Peoples' armed forces and implement Xi Jinping's thinking on strengthening the military, as part of the amendments to the CPC's fundamental documents for its over 89 million members. The development of the PLA shall be strengthened by enhancing its political loyalty, strengthening it through reform and tech, and running it in accordance with the law, the resolution read.

3. "A military force is built to fight. Our military must regard combat readiness as the goal for all its work and focus on how to win when it is called upon," Xi said in its address. The Chinese military will continue to embark on a massive hardware upgrade, modernize its doctrine, Strategy, train and revamp top personnel leadership and better integration between the civilian and military sectors so that the PLA become a world-class fighting force in the next three decades. The time line laid out is that PLA must modernise by 2035 and become a top-ranked military by 2050. In pursuit to bring in radical changes ,it can be seen that nearly 90 per cent of the military delegates to the party congress this time are new faces while two CMC heavyweights have been ousted.

4. CPC has appointed a new [slimmed down Central Military Commission](#) (CMC) to oversee the nation's armed forces. These appointments further strengthened Xi's control over the commission, which he heads. The body will be led by a seven member group, down from the 11 who oversaw its operations previously. Under the earlier system, the CMC comprises a chairman, two vice-chairmen, and eight regular members: the defence minister, the heads of the four former headquarters, and the commanders of the air force, navy and rocket force. The new line-up of CMC now will comprise Xi, two vice-chairmen: The CMC's former second vice-chairman, PLA Air Force General [Xu Qiliang](#), moves up one spot to replace General Fan Changlong, who is retiring. Xi ally Gen [Zhang Youxia](#) takes over from Xu. The four other CMC members are Gen Wei Fenghe, Gen Li Zuocheng, Admiral Miao Hua and Lt Gen Zhang Shengmin. Lt Gen Zhang Shengmin is presently the chief of the CMC's Discipline Inspection Commission, and his elevation suggested that the anti-graft campaign, which has already brought down at least 100 generals, would continue in full swing. There is still a big question mark over the roles and functions of the two vice-chairmen and the four members in the new structure. It can be seen that service chiefs have been kept out of major decision making body probably to allow them to concentrate on their service specific works. How joint operations will be overseen by this body needs to be assessed.

5. The CMC administers China's military and paramilitary forces, including the People's Liberation Army and the People's Armed Police. The CMC chairman is the de facto commander-in-chief of the nation's armed forces. The head of the Communist Party is not automatically made CMC chairman, but Xi has taken on both roles over the past five years. The Communist Party has absolute control over the military; hence the CMC functions as a state institution and a party organ. CMC members have a rank in the military and a party position.

6. The CMC previously had four departments overseeing the general staff, politics and ideology, plus logistics and armaments, known as the "General Four". Xi has centralised the commission's leadership while delegating responsibility for military operations to theatre commands. A key aim was freeing each force to develop its own capabilities. The General Four were scrapped last year and restructured into 15 smaller "administrative departments". While the new entities were more specific in their functions than their predecessors, they had no final decision-making authority. They included departments for the general office, joint staff, political work, logistical support, equipment development, training and administration, plus national defence mobilisation. Three commissions dealt with discipline inspection, politics and law and science and technology. Five directly affiliated offices handled strategic planning, reform and organisational structure, international military cooperation, audits and the agency for offices administration. Meanwhile, the previous seven military districts were replaced by five regional theatre commands.

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