



CASI Commander's Toolkit: People of the PLA



Chinese Attitudes Towards Military Service

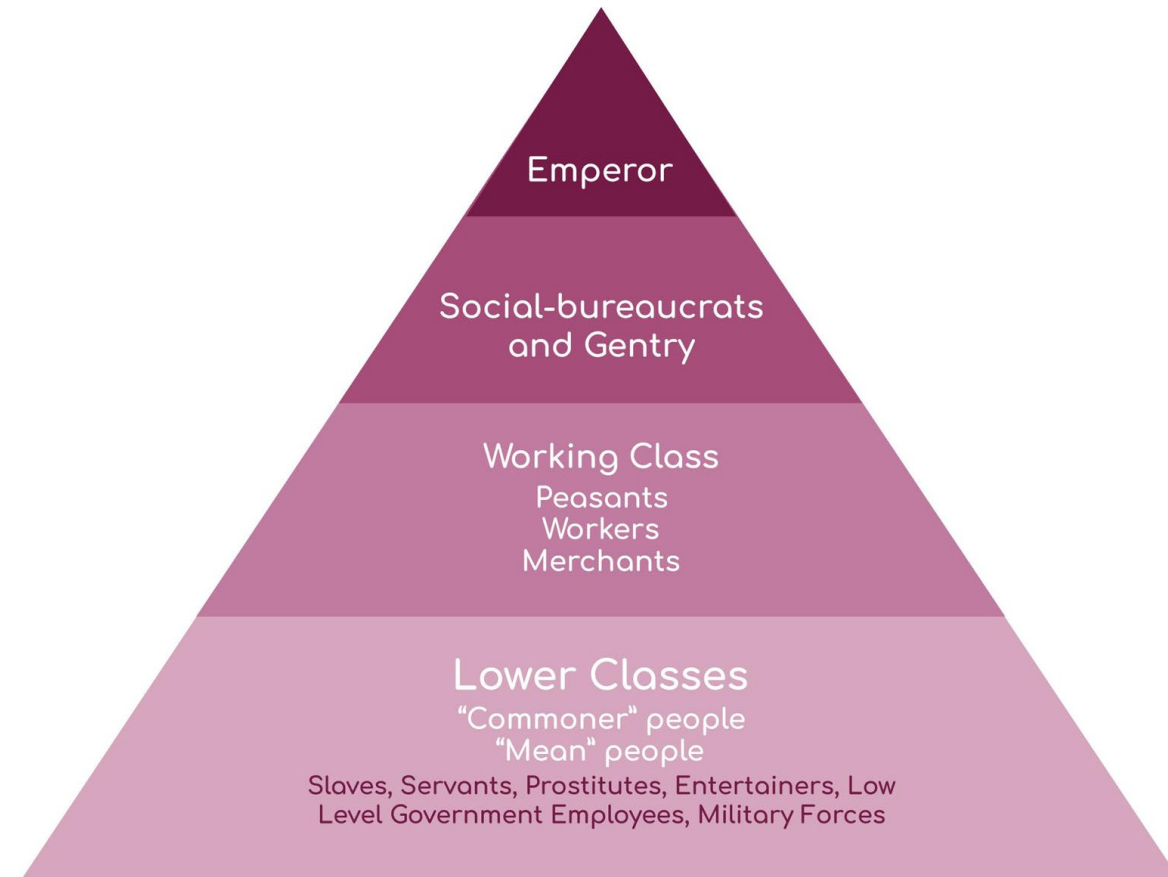
好鐵不打釘，好男不當兵

“Good iron is not used for nails; good men do not become soldiers”



Chinese Attitudes Towards Military Service

- Ancient Chinese cultural attitudes towards military service were largely negative.
 - Confucian social hierarchy ideals placed soldiers at the bottom of society.
- Chinese attitudes towards military service changed as modern mass politics influenced public perceptions.





Chinese Attitudes Towards Military Service

- Recurring national crises during the 19th and early 20th Centuries (“Century of Humiliation”) awakened Chinese people to the value of military service.
- Military service became a means of upward social mobility between the 1920s and the 1950s.





Chinese Attitudes Towards Military Service

- In the 20th century, the armed forces of the Chinese People's Republic reached their zenith of prestige in the 1950s.
 - “Victory” over the U.S. in Korea
 - Soviet Union-provided assistance
- The Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution destroyed China's economy, hindered military modernization, and reversed military professionalization.





Chinese Attitudes Towards Military Service

- In the 1980s and 1990s Beijing cut the PLA's budget and encouraged the PLA to secure funding by engaging in economic activity.
- PLA economic activity resulted in widespread corruption.
- Military service was no longer a means of achieving upward social mobility.





Chinese Attitudes Towards Military Service

- **The armed forces' reputation has improved since 1990.**
 - CCP's Patriotic Education Campaign
 - PLA participation in domestic and international disaster relief efforts
 - Force modernization





Chinese Attitudes Towards Military Service

- **PLA Making a Reputational Comeback**
 - Since 1998 the Chinese armed forces divested themselves of most of their businesses and ceased most remunerative activity
 - Since 2000 Beijing has annually raised China's defense budget
 - Since 2010 approximately 30 percent of China's defense budget was allocated to personnel
 - Since 2012 an anti-corruption campaign has made the Chinese armed forces relatively meritocratic.





Chinese Attitudes Towards Military Service

- Two remaining problems make military service unattractive as a long-term career:
 - The Chinese armed forces determine whom service members can marry
 - Most service members cannot live with their families
- Local governments sometimes do not provide legally-stipulated benefits to service members and their families.





PLA Active Duty Force


- **Size of the PLA active-duty force:**

Officers	450,000 (23%)
Noncommissioned officers	850,000 (42%)
Junior enlisted men	700,000 (35%)
Total	2,000,000



PLA Junior Enlisted Force (“Conscripts”)

• Enlisted Rank Structure

U.S. Pay Grade	PLA Rank Title (Chinese)	PLAAF Rank Title (English)	PLA Rank Category
E-9	一级军士长 (25-30th year)	Master Sergeant First Class 	Senior NCO
E-8	二级军士长 (21-24th year)	Master Sergeant Second Class 	
E-7	三级军士长 (17- 20th year)	Master Sergeant Third Class 	
E-6	四级军士长 (13-16th year)	Master Sergeant Fourth Class 	Intermediate NCO
E-5	上士 (9th-12th year)	Technical Sergeant 	
E-4	中士 (6th-8th year)	Staff Sergeant 	Junior NCO
E-3	下士 (3rd-5th year)	Sergeant 	
E-2	上等兵 (2nd year)	Airman First Class 	Junior Enlisted Men (“Conscripts”)
E-1	列兵 (1st year)	Airman 	



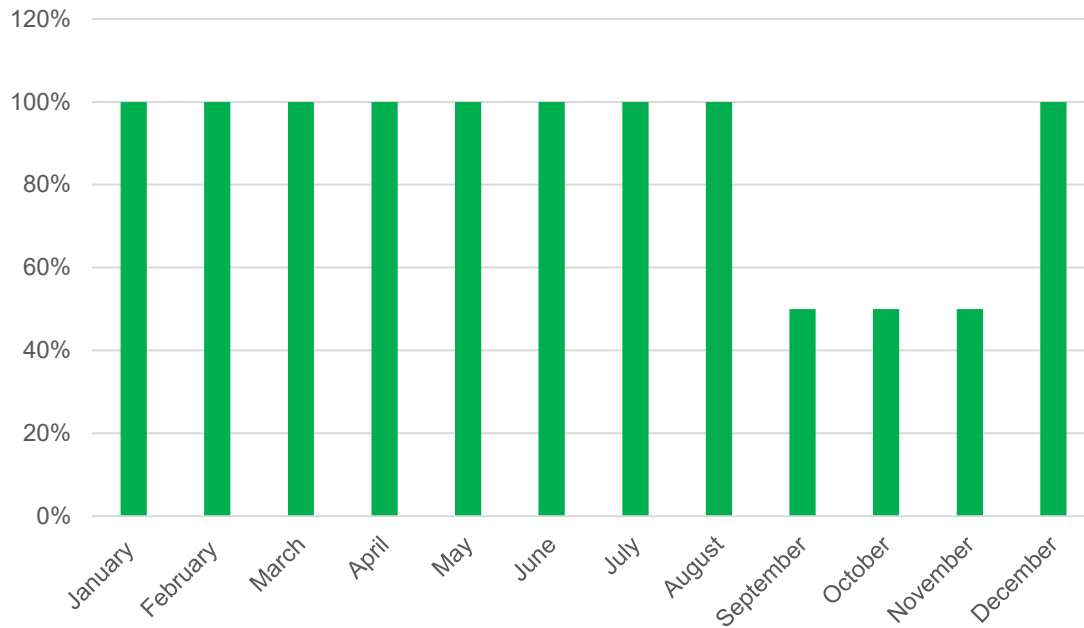
PLA Junior Enlisted Force (“Conscripts”)

- All males 18-22 are subject to conscription, but deferments are granted to those who are enrolled in a university program and those who are the sole able-bodied laborer in a family
 - Males in undergraduate programs can enlist up to age 24
 - Males in graduate programs can enlist up to age 26
- Females are not subject to conscription, but age limits are the same
- Mandatory service length is two years
- Recruits are inducted in March and September of each year following the promotion or demobilization of their predecessors

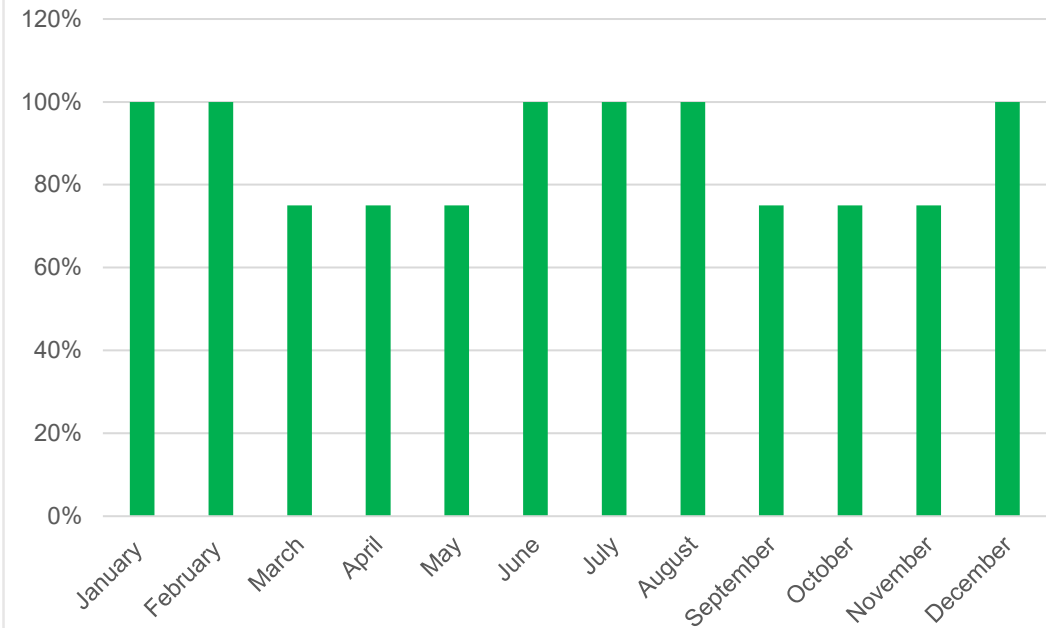


Improvements to the Conscription Cycle

Fall-Only Cycle Conscript Readiness



Twice a year Cycle Conscript Readiness





PLA Junior Enlisted Force (“Conscripts”)

- **Enlisted Training**
 - The training of recruits is relatively decentralized
 - Recruits generally undergo three months of basic military training in an unknown number of training brigades throughout the force
 - Most advanced training is conducted in training elements in the recruits’ assigned units.





Two Years as a Conscript (Fall Enlistment)

Month 0

Once enlisted, conscripts conduct limited military training near their place of enlistment. They ship out to designated units within a few weeks.

Months 1—3

Conscripts arrive at training units* and undergo three months of basic training. They will be minimally proficient and can take on limited garrison or field duties at this point.

Months 4—9

Conscripts slated to perform more technical duties (e.g. weapons handling or becoming a driver) receive 3-6 months of additional training. Non-technical conscripts begin at units.

Months 10-12

With the summer exercise season approaching, most if not all conscripts will participate in their first large scale training exercise.

Months 13-24

At this point, the conscript has likely determined their military future. Some may determine at this point to become an NCO or officer, with some receiving an early NCO promotion.

Month 24+

Conscripts that are leaving the military demobilize two years after their enlistment. However, mission requirements can extend a conscript's service by days, weeks, or even months.



PLA Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Force

- Most NCOs are recruited from junior enlisted ranks
- The PLA also directly recruits NCOs from technical programs in universities
- The PLA has “target training” programs to cultivate NCOs from high school graduates
- The PLA has positional billets like first sergeant and command sergeant major, but the personnel occupying these billets all have the same title of “Chief NCO” and they do not bear identifying insignia





PLA Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Force

- The PLA's NCO corps lacks the history, tradition, and degree of prestige of the U.S. military's NCO corps
- NCOs in the PLA are entrusted with less authority and responsibility than NCOs in the U.S. military
- The PLA has improved the balance between officers and enlisted men, so the authority and prestige of the PLA NCO corps will likely improve.
- NCO promotion: tests, peer selection, HQ party committee, and PME





PLA Officer Force

- The PLA has neither service academies nor even basic officer training schools
- Most officers undergo officer training in the school where they also undergo specialized training
- The PLA also directly recruits small numbers of officers from universities





PLA Officer Category

- **Command and Administrative Officer (指挥管理军官)**
 - Commanding officer (指挥军官)
 - Military Officer
 - Political Officer
 - Staff Officer (参谋/干事)
- **Special technical officer (专业技术军官)**
 - Education and teaching officer
 - Scientific research officer
 - Engineering and technical officer
 - Medical and health care officer
 - Specialized business officer





PLA Officer Force

• Officer Rank Structure

U.S. Pay Grade	PLA Rank Title (Chinese)	PLAAF Rank Title (English)	PLA Rank Category
O-10	上将	General 	General Grade (将官)
O-9	中将	Lieutenant General 	
O-8	少将	Major General 	
O-7	大校	Senior Colonel 	Field Grade (校官)
O-6	上校 (19-22th year)	Colonel 	
O-5	中校 (15-18th year)	Lieutenant Colonel 	
O-4	少校 (11-14th year)	Major 	
O-3	上尉 (7-10th year)	Captain 	Company Grade (尉官)
O-2	中尉 (3-6th year)	First Lieutenant 	
O-1	少尉 (1-2nd year)	Second Lieutenant 	



PLA Officer Positional Grade (15 Grades)

Retirement Age		Positional Grade	Primary Rank	Secondary Rank
Combat	Non-Combat			
		CMC Vice Chairman (军委委员)	General	N/A
		CMC Member (军委委员)	General	N/A
65	65	TC Leader (正战区职)	General	Lieutenant General
63		TC Deputy Leader (副战区职)	Lieutenant General	Major General
55	60	Corps Leader (正军职)	Major General	Lieutenant General
	58	Corps Deputy Leader (副军职)	Major General	Senior Colonel
50	55	Division Leader (正师职)	Senior Colonel	Major General
		Division Deputy Leader (副师职) (Brigade Leader (正旅职))	Colonel	Senior Colonel
45	50	Regiment Leader (正团职) or (Brigade Deputy Leader (副旅职))	Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel
	45	Regiment Deputy Leader (副团职)	Lieutenant Colonel	Major
40	40	Battalion Leader (正营职)	Major	Lieutenant Colonel
		Battalion Deputy Leader (副营职)	Captain	Major
35	35	Company Leader (正连职)	Captain	First Lieutenant
		Company Deputy Leader (副连职)	First Lieutenant	Captain
30	30	Platoon Leader (排职)	Second Lieutenant	First Lieutenant



PLA Civilians

- **Civilians play roughly the same role in the PLA as they do in the U.S. military**
- **Civilians in the PLA undergo limited basic training and are subject to more stringent physical standards than U.S. military civilians**
- **Civilians in the PLA wear uniforms.**





PLA Females

- **Female service members comprise a very small proportion of all service members in the PLA**
- **Female service members are represented in all roles, but they generally serve in female-only units**





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