



China's Military Reforms in the Xi Era, 2016-2026: A Decade in Review

Dr James CHAR (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore)

Dr Joel WUTHNOW (National Defense University, Washington, D.C.)

Dear Madam, Sir,

We are pleased to invite you to an **evening conference** hosted by the **Centre for Security and Defence Studies** of the **Royal Higher Institute for Defence** on **Tuesday 17 November 2026** from **17:00 until 18:30**.

Over the past decade, under Xi Jinping, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has undergone profound reforms intended to support China's objective of building a world-class military by the middle of the century. The reorganisation of command structures, the strengthening of joint operations, armed forces modernisation, technological innovation and tighter control by the Communist Party have reshaped Chinese armed forces. These developments have unfolded amid intensifying Sino-American rivalry, growing tensions across the Pacific Rim and China's broader effort to strengthen its strategic position and military effectiveness.

This conference will examine China's military reforms in the Xi era through two complementary expert perspectives. **Dr James CHAR**, Assistant Professor in the China Programme at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore) is a specialist in the PLA, Chinese civil-military relations, military modernisation and security policy. He will present the Chinese perspective, explaining the reforms, their objectives, evolution and current results. **Dr Joel WUTHNOW**, Senior Research Fellow at the Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs (Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, D.C.) is a specialist in Chinese military affairs, PLA modernisation, Chinese strategy, joint operations and Indo-Pacific security. He will present the American perspective, examining how these reforms are assessed in the United States and what their impact is on US defence planning, the regional balance of power and American strategic conclusions.

Through these complementary perspectives, the conference will help deepen understanding of a decade of Chinese military transformation within the broader security dynamics of the Indo-Pacific, while fostering reflection on its implications for American strategic priorities and its consequences for European countries.

This conference will be held **in English at the conference room at campus Renaissance** (entrance: **rue Hobbema 8/Hobbemastraat 8, 1000 Brussels**) on **Tuesday 17 November 2026 at 17:00**. Simultaneous interpretation in Dutch and French will depend on the progress of the renovation work in the Frank De Winne conference room and cannot be guaranteed at this time. Please note that online participation will not be possible.

Kindly register in advance at www.defence-institute.be. **Registration is required by Monday 9 November 2026 at the latest.**

(Signed)

Baudouin COPPIETERS DE GIBSON, MSc Eng

Rear Admiral

Aide-de-Camp to the King

Director-general

Royal Higher Institute for Defence

Programme:

16:30:	Welcome
17:00:	Conference and Q&A
18:30 – 19:30:	Reception