

## “Inspired with Enthusiasm”: Themes from the October 1 National Day Editorial

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Each year on October 1, *Liberation Army Daily* publishes an editorial celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Along with similar messages published on Army Day on August 1 and the anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party on July 1, the National Day editorial always offers a snapshot of the dominant political and military policy “lines.” This article compares the text of this year’s commentary with the three previous National Day messages, and assesses the implications for party-military relations and military modernization.

### Introduction

For analytical purposes, the content of National Day editorials can be divided into three rough categories. The first are explicitly political themes with no military content, reflecting current party lines. The third are explicitly military themes with no political content, reflecting current military policy lines. In between are party-military themes—these represent the ties binding the Chinese Communist Party to the People’s Liberation Army.

### Political Themes

Following some variation on a autumnal metaphor and an exuberant greeting to the various military constituencies, the second paragraph of a standard National Day editorial describes the current state of the party and country. At first blush, it is tempting to read too much into the buoyant tone of the 2005 editorial,<sup>1</sup> which describes the country in a state of “full confidence” and the people as “high-spirited and vigorous and inspired with enthusiasm.” This agrees with the impressions of many foreigners visiting China today, where achievements in manned space launch and the impending Olympics have created an attitude approaching swagger and bravado. Yet close textual examination of editorials back to 1998 reveals little meaningful variation. Indeed, the 2000 National Day message declared that China “has never been so thriving and prosperous as today,” and the Chinese people have “never felt so proud and elated and in such high spirits as today.”<sup>2</sup> Editorials between 2000 and 2005 freely used words like “prosperity,” “contentment,” “vitality,” and “dynamism,” and all of the editorials echoed the same core theme: that the Chinese nation was experiencing a rapid and powerful “rejuvenation.” On the

international front, editorials since 2000 have unanimously proclaimed that China's international status is "rising" or "enhanced." At the same time, however, China's view of the international security environment has changed dramatically, from the gloomy pessimism of 2001 ("In recent years, the international environment has been complicated and changeable, and the tasks of reform, development, and stability have been very arduous"<sup>3</sup>) to the heady optimism of 2005 ("China is facing a period of important strategic opportunity"<sup>4</sup>).

More meaningful clues often appear in the subsequent paragraphs, particularly with respect to the current leadership dynamic and the primary policy "lines" espoused by the Party at that time. The 2005 message<sup>5</sup> repeated the current leadership reference of "the CCP Central Committee with Hu Jintao as general secretary" rather than "with Hu Jintao as the core" (*hexin*), though the latter epithet has episodically appeared in the public comments of individual military leaders such as Xu Caihou and Cao Gangchuan. The "Hu Jintao as general secretary" line has been used since 2003.<sup>6</sup> Before then, the leadership system was described as "the party Central Committee with Comrade Jiang Zemin as the core." It has been almost five years, however, since the editorial was used as a platform for the cult of personality demonstrated by this gushing section of the 2000 message:

...the party's third-generation leading collective with Comrade Jiang Zemin as the core has the superb leading ability of controlling the overall situation, dealing with all kinds of complicated situations, and leading all of the people of the whole country in forging ahead in a pioneering spirit, and is a powerful and reliable leading collective. The guidance of such a great banner and the leadership of such a strong collective are the good fortune of the country, the armed forces, the people, and the nation, and are the fundamental guarantee of our victory.<sup>7</sup>

The greatest amount of variation and change, not surprisingly, arises in the formulaic recitation of current party policy lines. The 2005 editorial made its case early, lauding Hu Jintao's policy of "comprehensively building a well-off society" (*xiaokang shehui*) in the second sentence of the commentary.<sup>8</sup> Yet the main policy section of the 2005 editorial did not contain any new concepts:

The CPC Central Committee, with Comrade Hu Jintao as general secretary, has led the people of all ethnic groups throughout the country to hold aloft the great banner of Deng Xiaoping Theory and the important thinking on "Three Represents," implement the scientific development concept, persist in regarding economic construction as the central task, regard development as the primary task, and give impetus to the all-around development of building socialist material, political, and spiritual civilization and a harmonious society, thus developing a new situation in reform, opening, and socialist modernization.<sup>9</sup>

Previous editorials were characterized by greater, and sometimes even fawning, support for Jiang's theory of the Three Represents.

## Party-Military Themes

Each National Day editorial contains language reflecting the current state of party-military relations. The 2005 editorial repeated the current line, which asserts that “the army should provide important force guarantee for the party in consolidating its ruling status, provide a strong security guarantee for safeguarding the important strategic opportunity period in national development, provide effective strategic backing for safeguarding national interests, and play an important role in preserving world peace and promoting common development.”<sup>10</sup> Known as “providing three things and playing one role,” this new mantra expresses “the new demands of the party's historic tasks on our army.”<sup>11</sup>

All National Day editorials repeat the theme of the party's “absolute leadership over the army,” though the idea receives more emphasis in some years than others. In 2004, for example, the editorial covered the subject at some length:

Upholding the party's absolute leadership over the Army is the foundation upon which our Army is built, the immutable soul of our Army, and the first and foremost issue in the building and development of our Army. We should always adhere to the basic principle and institution of the party exercising absolute leadership over the Army, make sure that the Army is politically qualified, and ensure that the Army is forever loyal to the party, to socialism, to the motherland, and to the people. We should consistently give top priority to ideological and political building in all areas of Army building; strengthen ideological and political work; maintain rigorous political discipline and organizational discipline; steadfastly obey the party and follow the party; firmly safeguard the authority of the party central committee, the CMC, and Chairman Hu; and firmly obey the orders of the party central committee, the CMC, and Chairman Hu.<sup>12</sup>

Like the July 1, 2005 Army Day editorial analyzed at length in *China Leadership Monitor* 15, the 2004 editorial seems to “protest too much,” raising questions about possible stress or tension in the party-military relationship.<sup>13</sup>

## Military Themes

Every National Day editorial since 1998 has declared that the PLA is in the midst of a “new” period of development. Nevertheless, eight years of commentaries provide a clear roadmap of the evolution of Chinese military policy lines. As usual, the 2005 editorial articulates the current themes, without introducing any new concepts. First, the editorial outlines the proper sequencing and hierarchy for leadership guidance, beginning with

“Deng Xiaoping Theory and [Jiang Zemin’s] important thinking on “Three Represents” as the guide.” This is immediately followed by “Jiang Zemin’s thinking on national defense and army building,” while Chairman Hu’s series of important “instructions” (*zhishi*) brings up the rear with a more modest contribution to the canon. As late as the 2004 editorial, there was no specific mention of Hu’s contributions to PLA policy guidance.<sup>14</sup> Other important themes include:

1. “the revolution in military affairs with Chinese characteristics.”

This phrase has been a pillar of military guidance since at least 2003, when it was introduced at a military delegates meeting of the National People’s Congress.<sup>15</sup> It is generally believed to be a synthesis of previous Chinese fascination with the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs and the limitations of Chinese military technology, personnel, and organization. The result is supposed to be a selective adaptation of advanced information technologies within the constraints of PLA command culture and access to resources. It sometimes called “RMA on the cheap.”

2. The campaign to maintain “the advanced nature of communist party members”

This ideological campaign was the focus on my submission to *China Leadership Monitor* 14.<sup>16</sup> The term “advanced nature” is not a new concept within the ideological and political lexicon of the CCP; it has been supported by senior leaders for over a decade.<sup>17</sup> The concept was enshrined as a central goal in the documents of the 16th Party Congress in 2002, and figured prominently in Hu Jintao’s July 1, 2003, speech to the Central Party School on the 82nd anniversary of the founding of the CCP. In October 2004, the central authorities decided to launch an educational campaign for party cadres on maintaining the advanced nature of the CCP. The program centered on the draft of “Regulation of the Chinese Communist Party for Inner-Party Supervision.”<sup>18</sup> Following a meeting of the Political Bureau Standing Committee and a meeting of the Central Leading Group for Party-Building Work, Beijing established a central leading group for the campaign on October 1, 2004, headed by Political Bureau member and Organization Department head He Guoqiang.

This educational campaign also has been assiduously implemented within the armed forces. With the approval of the Central Military Commission (CMC), the General Political Department launched the internal military educational campaign on January 14, 2005, issuing three circulars.<sup>19</sup> At a People’s Liberation Army (PLA) delegates meeting at the National People’s Congress on March 13, Hu Jintao gave a speech exhorting the military to play a central role in the campaign.<sup>20</sup> As it is for civilians, whose advanced nature is always “related to the party’s historic tasks for different periods,” the advanced nature of military party members is closely related to the army’s historic tasks at any given moment. In

late April, the military campaign moved into higher gear when the Central Military Commission held a “democratic life” meeting chaired by Hu Jintao to discuss educational activities to “maintain the advanced nature” of party members in the army. As recently as October 14 the *Liberation Army Daily* published a full commentary devoted to the campaign, testifying to the continuing relevance of the concept.<sup>21</sup>

3. “The party’s absolute leadership over the army, and obey the orders of the CPC Central Committee, the CMC, and Chairman Hu in all actions”

Hu’s military speeches and the core party and military editorials since spring have grown increasingly shrill on the subject of the military’s “absolute loyalty to the party.” On the July 1 anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, *Liberation Army Daily*’s main editorial repeated these themes, calling upon the army to adhere to the “party’s absolute leadership,” and “resolutely resist the influence of erroneous trends of thought, such as the call for ‘the de-partification and depoliticization of the army’ and the army’s ‘nationalization.’”<sup>22</sup> A July 15 article in *Liberation Army Daily*, quoted Hu at length on the topic: “The party’s absolute leadership over the army is our army’s military spirit and it should never be changed. This concept must be further strengthened under the new historical conditions and this is the party’s fundamental political demand on the army under the new situation.”<sup>23</sup> Propaganda about military loyalty to the party reached an apex of shrillness in the traditional *Liberation Army Daily* editorial on Army Day—the editorial used variations of the phrase “absolute loyalty to the party” 17 times in the course of a single article!<sup>24</sup>

4. “Do a sound job in all work led by preparations for military struggle”

The notion of preparing for military struggle (*douzheng*) appeared a few years ago, and correlates the PLA’s increased seriousness about the possibility of military combat with both Taiwan and the U.S. military.

5. “governing the army according to law and in strict fashion”

This phrase has replaced the Jiang Zemin dictum about not permitting the military to “degenerate,” and it is associated with the fight against corruption and other illegal behaviors.

6. “building an informatized army and winning an informatized war”

“Informationization” or “informatization” is a code word for the PLA’s approach to modernization. It is a third way between mechanization, which is embodied in the industrial combat of WWII, and the dream of the Revolution in Military Affairs, which is deemed unattainable due to resource constraints. Informatization seeks to use advanced information technologies to augment the capabilities of the PLA’s existing equipment inventory. In other words, information technologies

serve as force multipliers, capable of networking sensors and shooters together in new ways that increase their lethality on the battlefield.

6. “strengthen our ability to deal with crises, preserve peace, curb war, and win in war”

This new phrase encapsulates the PLA’s view of its rung on the ladder of national importance, culminating with the intent “to win.” This exhortation began appearing regularly in PLA commentary in the late 1990s. At first blush, the invocation to “win” was curious, as it seemed self-evident that a military would seek to prevail in its primary bureaucratic expertise. The appearance of the phrase may signify a push by the leadership to bolster the confidence of a post-Belgrade military, and convince the rank and file that the PLA’s military modernization program will eventually achieve success against modern militaries such as that of the United States.

## Conclusion

The 2005 National Day Editorial in *Liberation Army Daily* suggests both a confident China and Hu Jintao. Seemingly freed from rear-guard political battles against Jiang Zemin, these days Hu appears less worried about cleavages in the party-military relationship. At the same time, the editorial suggests even greater mandates and challenges for the PLA. It makes greater demands upon the military to provide both internal and external stability, and pushes the army to build upon its modernization successes with the goal of not just deterrence but victory.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> “Shoulder the Historic Mission of the New Century and New Stage—Enthusiastically Celebrating the 56<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the PRC,” *Jiefangjun bao*, October 1, 2005, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> “Strong Leadership, Splendid Achievements—Warmly Celebrating the 51<sup>st</sup> Founding Anniversary of the People’s Republic of China,” *Jiefangjun bao*, October 1, 2000, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> “March Triumphantly under Guidance of Important Thinking of ‘Three Represents’—Warmly Celebrate 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of PRC Founding,” *Jiefangjun bao*, October 1, 2001, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 1 above.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> “Contribute to Building Well-Off Society in All-Around Way—Celebrating the 54<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the People’s Republic of China,” *Jiefangjun bao*, October 1, 2003, p.1.

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 2 above.

<sup>8</sup> See footnote 1 above.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> “People’s Army Marches On in Step With Great Motherland,” *Jiefangjun bao*, October 1, 2004, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.chinaleadershipmonitor.org/20053/jm.html>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Huang Guozhu, Cao Zhi, and Xu Zhuangzhi: “To Provide an Assurance of Security for the Building of a Well-off Society: Military Delegates to NPC Talk Freely About National Defense Construction and Military Modernization,” *Xinhua*, March 12, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.chinaleadershipmonitor.org/20052/jm.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> Jo Fei, "Authority of Post-Deng Leadership Is Being Threatened," *Ming pao*, May 8, 1995, sec. B, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> "CPC Plans Educational Activities on Keeping Advanced Nature," Xinhua News Agency, October 21, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> "A Basic Project of Party-Building in the Military under the New Situation," *Jiefangjun bao*, January 14, 2005, 1; "Raising Awareness to Promote Deepening [Educational Activities]—Second Commentary on the Basic Project of Party-Building in the Military under the New Situation," *Jiefangjun bao*, January 24, 2005, p.1; and "Leading Cadres Take the Lead in Promoting the Deepening of [Educational Activities]—Third Commentary on the Basic Project of Party-Building in the Military under the New Situation," *Jiefangjun bao*, February 16, 2005, p.1.

<sup>20</sup> "Hu Jintao Urges Chinese Military to Perform 'Historical Mission,'" Xinhua News Agency, March 13, 2005.

<sup>21</sup> "Earnestly Consolidating, Expanding Results of Advanced-Nature Education Activities," *Jiefangjun bao*, October 14, 2005, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> Editorial, "Vigorously Strengthen the Building of the Party's Advanced Nature in the Armed Forces," *Jiefangjun bao*, July 1, 2005, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> Dai Yunpeng, "Military Spirit Will Never Change," *Jiefangjun bao*, July 15, 2005, p.3.

<sup>24</sup> "Stride Forward Under the CCP's Absolute Leadership—Marking the 78<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Chinese PLA," *Jiefangjun bao*, August 1, 2005, p.1.