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**In a Fortnight**

By Joseph E. Lin

CENTRAL PARTY SCHOOL SCHOLAR DISCUSSES LIMITED PARTY-GOVERNMENT SEPARATION

With the 17th Party Congress less than one month away, an increasing number of Chinese scholars have come out in support of political liberalization in China. Most recently, in an interview with the PRC-owned Hong Kong newspaper *Ta Kung Pao*, Wang Guixiu, a professor at the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) Central Party School, called for the Party Congress to develop a comprehensive framework that would help usher in political reform. (*Ta Kung Pao*, September 18). Wang stated that China's rapid pace of economic reform and development needed to be accompanied by corresponding changes in the country's political structure or else the country's "in-depth economic structural reform" would be "seriously hindered." Wang added that "the sole emphasis on economic structural reform while believing that political structural reform can be laid aside for the moment is wrong."

Wang also called upon CCP leaders to embrace political liberalization, stating that there is nothing to fear. "Political structural reform will not necessarily bring instability; on the contrary, it is the fundamental way to safeguard and reinforce social stability...Only by establishing a truly effective social control system through political reform can we bring about lasting political stability in the country," he contended. What was most notable about Wang's statements was his call for the party to slowly disengage itself from the affairs of the Chinese government. Given China's current Leninist political structure in which the CCP is intimately intertwined

with government organs at all levels, such a statement from the influential academic at China's bureaucratic finishing school is tantamount to a call for a complete restructuring of China's political system. Wang argued, "From the perspective of specific approach, it is necessary to face up to the problem of the lack of distinction between the party and government work. Aside from managing its own party affairs and party building well, the ruling party [should] practice political leadership over the executive, judicial, and legislative organs, but not interfere in their specific affairs. Not only would a genuine separation of party work from government work not weaken the party's leadership but it could improve and strengthen it." In his statements to *Ta Kung Pao*, Wang also addressed the issue of establishing a democratic political system, stating, "Democracy should begin with the upper echelons in the party, and grassroots democracy should be continuously advanced at the same time so that the top-down mode is integrated with the bottom-up mode."

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## The Stars of China's Space Program: The Rise of a "Space Gang"?

By Kevin Pollpeter

Since 2001, China's space program has received increasing attention in both budgetary allocations and technological accomplishments. More recently, the rise of China's space program has been highlighted by the appointments of career space professionals to positions of importance in China's weapons development bureaucracy. In fact, career space professionals will now occupy the head position at the Commission on Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense (COSTIND) and four out of the eight top positions at the General Armaments Department (GAD) [1].

On August 30, Zhang Qingwei, General Manager of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), was promoted to the post of minister of the COSTIND. Zhang, 46, is one of the youngest ministers to have ever been appointed in the People's Republic of China. In 2006, another career space insider, Huang Zuoxing, was promoted to the position of deputy political commissar of the GAD. Huang's promotion was preceded in 2002 by the appointment of the former deputy political commissar of the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center, Chi Wanchun, to the position of political commissar of the GAD. Two other

deputy commanders of the GAD also have space careers. Zhang Jianqi, appointed to the GAD in 2004, has served most of his career at China's launch facilities and Zhu Fazhong, appointed to the GAD in 2002, appears to have spent the majority of his career in the missile and radar fields. Zhang Qingwei, Chi Wanchun, Zhang Jianqi, and Zhu Fazhong are also members of the important Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party.

The promotion of career space professionals to positions of prominence in China's military industrial complex may signal the increasing influence of the program in Chinese decision-making on weapons development. Such influence could help explain China's decision to develop counterspace capabilities and the increasing attention that is being paid to the development of space-based C4ISR assets and China's space program overall. For the future, the rise of China's career space professionals to national-level decision-making positions could help China expand its position as a major space power.

ZHANG QINGWEI [2]

Zhang's appointment as the minister of COSTIND follows a string of successes in China's space industry where he was repeatedly called upon to rescue ailing projects. As general manager of CASC, Zhang has managed the most important sectors of China's space industry during its most successful period of performance.

Official biographies describe Zhang as the wunderkind of China's space industry. Born on November 7, 1961 in Hebei Province, Zhang graduated from the Northwest Polytechnical University (NPU) in 1982. After graduation, he was employed at the 603 Institute, where he designed aircraft tails. In a short time, he was promoted to director of the engineering department, but after three years at the institute, he returned to NPU to get his masters degree. After graduation in 1988, he joined the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology (CALT), China's largest and most important launch vehicle manufacturer, in its overall system design department.

Zhang's first claim to fame occurred in January 1989 while at CALT. At that time, the U.S. satellite manufacturer Hughes had contracted CASC to launch the Asiasat-1 satellite on a Long March rocket. This was the first time that the Long March had been used to launch a foreign satellite and Hughes required the satellite to be separated from the launcher only after it has stopped spinning, a technique not yet mastered by China's space industry. During discussions about Hughes' requirements, Zhang, then a junior engineer, proposed a method using computer modeling. CALT management quickly endorsed the method

and, as one article puts it, Zhang “in one fell swoop went from being in the reserves to being part of the shock troops.” Just 10 months later, Zhang’s plan was accepted by Hughes and on April 7, 1990, the Asiasat-1 satellite was successfully launched from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center. Even though Zhang did not officially qualify for promotion, CALT bent the rules and promoted Zhang to senior engineer based on this performance.

Having proven himself, Zhang was placed in charge of the founding Long March-2 (LM-2) rocket program, which was in danger of running over budget and behind schedule. With just 40 days left before the contract expired, Zhang and two others were able to conclude the project and on July 16, 1990 the first Long March 2 rocket successfully lifted off.

After the success of the Long March 2, Zhang was put in charge of more than 30 other engineers to determine the suitability of the LM-2 for the human spaceflight program and given three main tasks: to improve reliability indicators, guarantee astronaut safety and the adaptability of the space capsule, and write a technology improvement and feasibility report. When the human space flight project was approved on September 21, 1991, Zhang was appointed the deputy general engineer for the LM-2F and became the youngest deputy engineer in the Chinese aviation and space industries. In this capacity, Zhang personally wrote the “Long March 2F Design Criteria” which governed the entire stage of the research and development process.

The year 1996 was devastating for China’s space industry. In that year, CALT suffered two launch failures: a LM-3B in February and a LM-3 in August. The failures were the death knell for China’s commercial launch industry and the subsequent controversy over the U.S. industry handling of the failures would lead to convictions involving export control violations and recriminations of Chinese spying. In August 1996, Zhang was again asked to fill the breach and was named deputy director of CALT and placed in charge of the next launch of the LM-3 and, above all, putting China’s launch industry back on track. Zhang committed his team to quality and on May 12, 1997, a Dongfanghong-3 (DFH-3) communications satellite was successfully launched.

In July 1999, Zhang was promoted to deputy general manager of CASC and a member of the leading Communist Party organization within CASC. During the next two years, China would successfully launch two experimental Shenzhou capsules. Upon becoming deputy general manager, Zhang set about making the corporation more profitable. He did this in part by emphasizing technological and organizational innovations and introducing information

technology into the production process. Through these efforts, it is said that many people who had left the space industry returned.

In December 2001, Zhang was promoted to general manager and party general secretary of CASC. At the same time, he was also promoted to be the deputy commander of the human spaceflight program. In November 2002, Zhang’s political fortunes increased when he became a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, one of the most important Communist Party organizations in China.

It is easy to attribute Zhang’s exploits to the hagiography that often accompanies biographies of official personages in the Chinese press, but there is no doubt that Zhang’s quick rise through government and party ranks has been due to his stellar performance. Through his leadership of CASC and its subsidiary organizations, Zhang has been responsible for driving the Chinese space industry’s most impressive performance ever. Under its subsidiary CALT, CASC successfully conducted 61 straight launches of the Long March rocket since 1996, raising its reliability to 94 percent, a success rate equivalent to other international carriers. Moreover, China has launched more satellites and more different types of satellites than at any other time in its history. CASC’s subsidiary, the China Academy of Spaceflight Technology (CAST), builds the majority of China’s satellites, including the DFH, Sinosat, and Zhongxing communication satellites, the Beidou navigation and positioning satellite, recoverable satellites, the Ziyuan earth resources satellite, the Haiyang ocean surveillance satellites, and the Shenzhou manned space capsule. China has also been able to sign the first-ever contracts for the export of satellites to Nigeria and Venezuela and for the first time in six years, conducted a commercial launch of a satellite in 2005. Moreover, China completed testing of its human spaceflight program and launched two manned spaceflights. Only one failure has marred an otherwise flawless performance: the solar panels of a Sinosat-2 launched in October 2006 failed to open properly causing the loss of the satellite.

These accomplishments have earned Zhang a number of awards. In 1991, he was selected as one of the top ten young science workers in the space industry; in 1999, he was recognized as one of the top 10 outstanding young people in China; and in 2003, he was the CCTV businessperson of the year [3].

CHI WANCHUN [4]

General Chi Wanchun was born in 1946 in Shandong Province, joined the PLA in 1965, and was enrolled in the Harbin Military Engineering Academy until 1970. Chi’s

first assignment after graduation was at the Weinan Satellite Training Station in Shaanxi Province where he studied the application of computer technology to observing and controlling satellites. He then went on to serve in a series of leadership positions in China's Telemetry, Tracking, and Control (TT&C) network. He has served as the political commissar of the Kashgar Satellite Observation and Control Center, the political commissar of the Minxi Satellite Observation and Control Center, and deputy political commissar of the Xichang Satellite Launch Center. He also served a tour as the political commissar of the COSTIND logistics department. In 1990, he was appointed deputy political commissar of the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center. This was followed in 1997 by a promotion to be deputy director of the political department of COSTIND. For a short time in 1999, Chi was the director of the political department of the GAD until he was promoted to the political commissar position of the National Defense University of Science and Technology, a school heavily involved in weapons development and research. In October 2002, he was elected to the Central Committee and was promoted to political commissar of the GAD.

#### HUANG ZUOXING [5]

General Huang Zuoxing is the current deputy political commissar of GAD. He was born in 1948 in Shaanxi Province and joined the Army in 1968. He received an undergraduate correspondence degree from the Economic Management Department of the Central Party School. He was political commissar of the Taiyuan Satellite Launching Center and assumed the office of deputy political commissar of the GAD in August 2006.

#### ZHANG JIANQI [6]

Lieutenant General Zhang Jianqi is a deputy commander of GAD. He was born in March 1946 in Shandong Province. In 1970, he graduated from the Harbin Military Engineering College with a degree in nuclear physics. After graduation, he served tours at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center and the Xichang Satellite Center. After these appointments, he served as the department head of COSTIND's testing department. In 1997, he became the deputy director of the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center and became its head in 2001. In 2004, he became a deputy director of the GAD and a member of the Central Committee.

#### ZHU FAZHONG [7]

Lieutenant General Zhu Fazhong was born in May 1948 in Anhui Province and is a graduate of Beijing University with a degree in computational mathematics. Zhu, who joined the PLA in 1969, is not strictly a space professional

and it appears that much of his career has been in the missile field. From 1969 to 1993, he served at multiple testing bases. In 1993, he was the commander of a test facility involved in launch telemetry and in 1994, he was involved in a test facility working on mobile radar. In 1999, he was the commander of a testing base and in 2002, he was promoted to be deputy director of the GAD. In 2002, he was appointed an alternate member of the Central Committee.

#### ANALYSIS

The promotion of five space professionals to prominent positions within China's military industrial complex may shed light on the direction of China's military modernization, the nature of advancement in the government and military, and China's future leadership. These people are now in key positions to influence the direction of Chinese military hardware development. Indeed, the appointments suggest the rise of a "hangtian bang" or "space gang" within China's military-industrial complex that could shape policy for years to come.

At a macro-level, the appointments appear to reinforce the PLA's commitment to making it a high-technology force capable of fighting and winning informationized wars. More specifically, the appointments also suggest that the PLA's commitment to space is increasing. While more attention has been focused on China's space program after the January 11 anti-satellite test, China also appears committed to building a robust space-based C4ISR system. As one author writes, "Recent high technology local wars have shown: space weapon systems, whether at the strategic or tactical levels, cannot be removed from modern operations and have an increasingly important role in no-contact warfare" [8].

The promotion of career space professionals may also indicate that China's commitment to expanding its role as a major space power will continue, not only for military space programs but also for its more controversial lunar and human spaceflight programs. The presence of a group of space professionals in top decision-making positions also gives credence to a bureaucratic politics model for China's decision to develop counterspace capabilities. According to one report, these five individuals are all proponents of establishing an experimental space warfare unit [9]. Such leadership in the past has proven critical with major scientific and engineering programs. The human spaceflight program faced major opposition until leading scientists appealed directly to Deng Xiaoping for his approval [10]. Likewise, the Three Gorges Dam project received significant opposition from the National People's Congress and was only approved because of Li Peng's

personal efforts.

These appointments also suggest something about paths to promotion in the Communist Party. Much research has focused on the role of factions within the promotion process. For example, there has been conjecture that the promotion of Chi Wanchun was due in part to his close relationship to the former minister of national defense, Chi Haotian (no relation). After his promotion, Chi Wanchun could have filled subsequent GAD openings with other space colleagues. However, it is also evident that individual qualifications do play a role. While data on the other cadres profiled here is too sparse for effective analysis, the case of Zhang Qingwei illustrates that achievement can also guarantee success in the Communist Party.

Finally, the careers of these individuals may continue. It is rumored that Zhang Qingwei is being groomed for higher positions [11]. Indeed, it can be argued that Zhang could have more of an effect on China's space industry by remaining at CASC instead of at COSTIND where he will have less tactical influence over the development of weapon systems. Clearly, the advancement of Zhang Qingwei has more to do with his outstanding success as a manager rather than simply serving as a space professional.

While it is ordinary for top ranking officials to have municipal or provincial experience, the current premier, Wen Jiabao, had no such experience and rose up through the ranks of the Ministry of Land and Resources and the General Office of the Central Committee. Zhang's next appointment should be telling since it will most likely involve a position outside of the military industrial complex. In regards to the military members of the space gang, the current head of the GAD, Chen Bingde, has spent most of his career in operations and it would not be unreasonable to consider a career armaments officer, like the ones profiled here, to replace him.

#### CONCLUSION

The origins of the space gang are unknown, with their formation possibly the result of direction from the top leadership of the PLA or simply due to serendipitous conditions. It is also possible that the PLA's commitment to building an informationized force led to the selection of individuals highly competent in advanced technologies. In this case, careers in the space program have made them uniquely qualified to serve in these roles. Finally, institutional factionalism may have also played a role. Whatever the reason, the influence of the space gang may be felt for many years to come as China's space program grows in numbers and complexity.

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#### NOTES

1. COSTIND and GAD form two parts of China's three part military industrial complex, with the third being the defense industries. COSTIND is a governmental organization under the State Council responsible for coordinating weapon and equipment development between the defense industry and the military. GAD is a military organization under the CMC responsible for weapons and equipment development and procurement. Officially, GAD presents its requirements to COSTIND, who then coordinates with the defense industries to meet the requirements. In practice, there is an overlap between the two organizations and no clear-cut delineation of powers.

2. Unless otherwise noted, this section is taken from Yu Xing, "Zhang Qingwei Becomes the Youngest Minister Who Previously Strengthened the International Prestige of China's Space Program (Zhang qingwei chengwei zui nianqing buzhang ceng liwan zhongguo hangtian guoji shengyu)," Qianlong.com, September 1, 2007.

3. Zhang Qingwei, Together Innovating a Brilliant China Space Program (Gongchuang zhongguo hangtian xin huihuang)," *China Scholars Abroad (Shenzhen xueren)*, May 2005, p. 17.

4. Unless otherwise noted, this is section taken from Chin Chien-li, "The CPC's Key Figure for Combating Taiwan: A Commentary and Profile of Chi Wanchun, Political Commissar of the General Armament Department (Zhonggong dui tai zuozhan zhongjian renwu zongzhuangbeibu zhengwei chi wanchun jiangjun pingfu)," *Chien Shao*, September 1, 2006, pp. 58-61.

5. "Huang Zuoxing Promoted to Deputy Political Commissar of PLA General Armament Department (Huang Zuoxing Sheng Zong Zhuangbeibu fu zhengwei)," *Ta Kung Pao*, August 31, 2006.

6. "Leadership Organization (Lingdao xulie), www.plaaf.net.

7. "Leadership Organization (Lingdao xulie), www.plaaf.net.

8. Pan Changpeng, Gu Wenjin, and Chen Jie, "Analysis of the Capabilities of Military Satellite Support of Anti-ship Missiles in Offensive and Defensive Operations (Junshi weixing dui fanchuan daodangongfang zuozhan de zhiyuan nengli fenxi)," *Winged Missile Journal (Feihang daodan)*, May 2006, p. 12.

9. Chin Chien-li, "The CPC's Key Figure for Combating Taiwan: A Commentary and Profile of Chi Wanchun, Political Commissar of the General Armament Department (Zhonggong dui tai zuozhan zhongjian renwu zongzhuangbeibu zhengwei chi wanchun jiangjun pingfu),"

*Chien Shao*, September 1, 2006, p. 59.

10. “The Highest Leader Has The Final Say (Zuigaoceng lingdao paiban),” *China Space News* (Zhongguo hangtian bao), October 16, 2003, p. P34.

11. “5th Generation Elite Who Will Be Responsible for China in the Future,” *Sentak*, March 1, 2005, p. 34.

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## Limited Reforms: Status Quo at the 17th Party Congress

By Willy Lam

The liberal faction of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is doing eleventh-hour lobbying to have genuine political reform included in the agenda of the upcoming 17th Party Congress. Yet all signs point to the fact that General Secretary and President Hu Jintao will only promote the kind of “intra-party democracy” that will not spoil harmony in the party and country. A key reason behind Hu’s caution is that while his heir-apparent Li Keqiang is likely to be appointed to the Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC), the “Hu Faction’s” bid to dominate the Politburo and the PBSC is coming up against significant challenges from within the CCP.

Much of the CCP’s future will be laid out in Hu’s “Political Report to the 17th Party Congress,” to be delivered as the conclave opens on October 15. A draft of the keynote address began circulation among senior cadres in late August, and sources in Beijing who had read the draft stated that Hu would stick to the “safe” goal of constructing a harmonious society through ensuring that disparate political blocs and social-economic groupings would be able to share the fruits of economic progress. Owing to a lack of consensus on defining the next stage of political reform, the party chief is not expected to go beyond expressing vague platitudes, such as “pushing forward the construction of democratic politics,” and “boosting the people’s participation in politics in an orderly and incremental fashion.”

Repeating almost verbatim sections of a speech that he had delivered to the Central Party School in late June, Hu is expected to underscore the primacy of the so-called “four insistences.” This is a reference to the CCP’s “unswerving insistence” on four goals: “thought liberation,” the reform and open-door policy, the theory of scientific development and constructing social harmony, as well as “the materialization of comprehensive prosperity” for the entire nation. The “four insistences,” which could eventually be written into the CCP Charter, is deemed a liberal substitution of the orthodox “Four Cardinal Principles”—Marxism-Leninism and Mao

Zedong Thought, party leadership, the socialist road, and “democratic proletarian dictatorship”—first put forward by late patriarch Deng Xiaoping in the early 1980s. Hu Shuli, editor of the influential *Caijing* magazine, said there was a “special significance” to Hu’s citation of “thought liberation” as the first of his “four insistences.” She noted that this was “clearly aimed at breaking the constraints of the political ‘left,’” meaning remnant Maoism and other forms of conservatism (*Caijing*, July 13). After all, “thought liberation” was associated with the teachings of the late general secretary Hu Yaobang, one of the CCP’s most liberal leaders and President Hu’s mentor.

According to Du Daozheng, publisher of the liberal journal *Yanhuang Chronicles*, a number of liberal cadres, including those who had served under Hu Yaobang and the late Zhao Ziyang, another reformist party chief, are lobbying the party leadership to make significant commitments to political change. A retired, ministerial-ranked cadre, Du noted that Hu’s “Political Report” should at least include forward-looking statements made by Hu ally Premier Wen Jiabao earlier this year (*Hong Kong Daily News*, September 9). In an article carried by the official Xinhua News Agency in February, for example, Wen indicated that “science, democracy, the legal system, freedom and human rights are not something peculiar to capitalism.” He added: “Rather, they are common values pursued by [all] mankind.” Wen also spoke highly of “the philosophical precept of ‘harmony without uniformity,’ and the belief that ‘people are the foundation of the nation.’” (Xinhua, February 26). Similar statements were made by Wen when he talked to the international media after the plenary session of the National People’s Congress (NPC) in March.

It should be noted, however, that Wen’s views, while seconded by Hu, represent but one voice within the current Politburo and PBSC. Even though the premier’s NPC press conference was broadcast live on national TV, for instance, several of his remarks about democracy could no longer be found in the official transcript subsequently carried by Xinhua and *People’s Daily*. More importantly, there are indications that the PBSC had arrived at a consensus earlier this summer stating that if only during the run-up to the 17th Party Congress, the state propaganda and police machinery should adopt tough tactics to muzzle dissident intellectuals and NGO organizers. The Wen cabinet reportedly earmarked 10 billion yuan (\$1.3 billion) to boost the nation’s already formidable internet police squads (*Open* [Hong Kong], September 2007). And beginning last month, scores of China’s relatively outspoken websites and blogs have been closed down.

In light of the tense atmosphere in the capital, analysts have cast doubt on the extent of “intra-party democracy” that

will be showcased at the Congress. Since late spring, liberal members of official think tanks have cited improvements, such as more leeway being given to the 2,217 congress delegates when they choose the 200 or so Central Committee members next month. At the 16th Party Congress in 2002, the “margin of elimination” was 10 percent, meaning that Central Committee candidates nominated by the PBSC outnumbered the slots up for grabs by 10 percent. There is strong speculation in Beijing’s political circles that this time around, the delegates can eliminate up to 15 percent of the Central Committee nominees when they cast the ballots (*Wen Wei Po*, August 3). No other reforms along the lines of empowering congress delegates or boosting the transparency of top-level decision-making, however, are in the works. For example, it is unlikely that Central Committee members will be given any “margin of elimination” when they pick the new Politburo members. Instead, as in the past, they will simply endorse the entire list of cadres nominated by Hu and his PBSC colleagues.

Beijing cadres familiar with preparations for the Congress have pointed out that Hu will not upset “intra-party harmony” by venturing beyond the common denominators—what officials call the “core values”—of the CCP. This is due to Hu’s interest in consolidating his hold on power by building bridges to other factions. This atmosphere of conservatism was illustrated by a recently concluded meeting of the heads of the propaganda departments of major provinces and directly administered cities. The conclave reiterated that all cadres must conscientiously learn from Hu’s Central Party School speech. Politburo member and Director of the CCP Propaganda Department Liu Yunshan called on party members to “even more tightly rally around party central [authorities] with comrade Hu Jintao as General Secretary.” Xinhua quoted the propaganda specialists as saying that the party must raise its guard against “non-Marxist ideological trends” as well as other “cacophonous and impure noises.” The meeting concluded with the following call to arms: “We must loudly glorify the leitmotif [of socialist orthodoxy], seize the initiative in fighting the major warfare [against impure thoughts] and build up a strong base” (Xinhua September 8).

Meanwhile, Hu seems to have succeeded in ensuring the promotion of a key protégé, Liaoning Province Party Secretary Li Keqiang, to the PBSC. Li, 52, is a former first secretary of the Communist Youth League (CYL), which Hu headed in the mid-1980s. And since Li will be the sole Fifth-Generation cadre in the PBSC, his status as heir-apparent is assured. In preparation for Li’s elevation, since early this year, the media has highlighted Liaoning’s achievements in spearheading the reinvigoration of the economy of the entire northeastern region. Recent reports

have also focused on the World Economic Forum’s “Summer Davos” conference in Dalian. Premier Wen was on hand to woo potential investors in the fast-growing region. The WEF meeting also provided opportunities for Li to meet with foreign leaders and the heads of multinational corporations ([www.channelnewsasia.com](http://www.channelnewsasia.com), September 6).

Despite the concerted efforts by the leadership and the official media to improve Li’s reputation, negative elements of his track record since leaving the CYL in 1998 have continued to be made public. A case in point is Li’s handling of the AIDS crisis during the six years he spent first as acting governor and then governor and party secretary of Henan, China’s most populous province. Recent reports by NGOs and AIDS activists, such as the world-renowned Dr. Gao Yaojie, have revealed that the number of Henan farmers who had come down with HIV in the course of selling blood exceeded 1 million, and not the 23,000-odd cited by Henan authorities. It is true of course, that this horrendous scandal took place during the tenure of Li Changchun, an incumbent PBSC member who was governor and party secretary of the province from 1990 to 1998 (*Yazhou Zhoukan*, September 16). Li Keqiang, however, is at least partly responsible for the harassment of NGO volunteers and journalists after he became governor in 1999. The Hu protégé also failed to penalize senior Henan province officials who had made huge profits through operating the tainted blood-collection centers.

Partly in return for the other factions’ support for Li’s ascendancy, Hu has agreed to the PBSC induction of less favorable cadres. The latter includes Guangdong Party Secretary Zhang Dejiang, who, at 60, is the second youngest member of the current Politburo. While Zhang is usually given credit for the continued prosperity of the Pearl River Delta “world factory,” he is deemed an old-style, conservative cadre who rose through the hierarchy due in large to the patronage of ex-president Jiang Zemin. A graduate of Kim Il-Sung University in Pyongyang, Zhang had vehemently opposed allowing private entrepreneurs to join the party. Since taking up his post in Guangdong in 2002, he has played a big role in suppressing the relatively liberal media in the “progressive” province just north of Hong Kong. Zhang’s rumored replacement of the late Huang Ju as PBSC member and executive vice-premier, along with Hu’s lack of enthusiasm for democratization, does not bode well for the future of either economic or political reform.

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## China's Assessment of the War in Iraq: America's "Deepest Quagmire" and the Implications for Chinese National Security

By Michael S. Chase

Chinese analysts assess that the United States has been unable to achieve its strategic objectives in Iraq despite its stunningly rapid victory over the Iraqi armed forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Moreover, Chinese observers argue that the prolonged and brutal conflict that developed in the wake of this early victory has left the United States mired in a deepening morass from which there are few if any options for an easy exit. In the words of one Chinese commentator, since the end of major combat operations in Iraq, the United States has "become bogged down in the deepest military quagmire since the end of the Cold War" [1]. Consequently, Chinese observers have concluded that the Iraq war is weakening the United States militarily, economically, and diplomatically, which at least some believe may make Washington less likely to intervene with military force in other potential hotspots.

### VIEWS ON POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC ISSUES

Chinese assessments of the war in Iraq indicate that the United States is in an extremely unenviable position at the strategic level. Chinese scholars assess that Washington is facing three critical problems: an Iraqi government incapable of producing the required results, the fragmentation of its diplomatic coalition and withdrawal of some countries' troops from Iraq, and flagging domestic support for an increasingly unpopular war.

First, Chinese analysts highlight the serious weaknesses of the Iraqi government. They argue that these problems must be resolved if the United States is to have any chance of achieving its strategic objectives. This requires nothing less than a broad reconciliation that would serve as a basis for progress on key issues related to national security and reconstruction. According to one Chinese researcher, "A truly effective means of resolving the Iraq issue is to enable the factions in Iraq to achieve reconciliation quickly. There will then be a foundation for resolving issues such as the stationing of foreign troops, sectarian conflicts, the infiltration of al-Qaeda and the rebuilding of infrastructure" [2].

For many Chinese analysts, however, the prospects of achieving any such reconciliation appear slim at best given the failings of the Iraqi government. According to another

Chinese scholar, "the al-Maliki government has not only failed to calm down the domestic situation since coming to power, but has caused a widespread sectarian conflict, and made the country face the risk of all-out civil war and division" [3]. This scholar suggests that these problems derive in large measure from the Bush administration's attempt to quickly establish a democratic government in a country that was woefully unprepared for such a transition: "When Iraq was in crisis, it urgently needed a strong central government to redeem the situation, but the United States blindly grafted Western-style democracy, which gave rise to a volatile situation and an extremely unsuitable 'weak government'...the grave turmoil in Iraq shows a simple truth: blindly transplanting Western-style democracy will not bring prosperity and stability, and will only trigger new chaos and turmoil and even create a truly 'failed state'" [4].

Second, Chinese observers argue that the United States faces serious diplomatic challenges abroad. In particular, Chinese analysts assess that international support for the occupation of Iraq is waning. According to one recent commentary, "faced with the chaotic situation on the main 'counter-terrorism' battlefield of Iraq, many countries that sent troops to Iraq have withdrawn or are preparing to withdraw their forces" [5]. Most analysts, however, portray the departure of some coalition troops as more of a diplomatic problem than a military one. For example, according to a recent *People's Daily* article, "for the United States, the multinational force in Iraq has far greater strategic significance than tactical significance...for this reason, the withdrawal of any country's troops will not affect America's overall strategic plans and combat capability in Iraq...but looking at it from another perspective, the successive withdrawal of troops from various countries is a huge blow to the Bush administration's political influence and indicates that U.S. policy on Iraq is being increasingly called into question" [6]. Similarly, according to another recent *People's Daily* article, "although the impact of this wave of troop withdrawals from Iraq on the existing power structure is not great from a military perspective, its psychological impact is still quite large, and the 'coalition forces' are gradually turning into a 'lone force'" [7].

Third, Chinese observers assess that the Bush administration confronts declining domestic support as a result of mounting casualties and lack of clear progress on the ground. Chinese newspaper reports frequently highlight U.S. public opinion polls that show the war in Iraq is becoming increasingly unpopular in the United States. In all, many Chinese observers have concluded, the United States is in serious trouble at the strategic level. They assess that Washington is becoming increasingly frustrated with the failures of the Iraqi government and is facing growing international



and domestic opposition to the war. Moreover, Chinese observers have concluded that Washington is having great difficulty deciding how to extricate itself from this deteriorating situation. According to another recent article in *People's Daily*, the Bush administration is “facing strong internal and external pressure to withdraw, but the United States is involved too deeply, its ‘responsibility’ is too heavy, and it is having difficulty deciding on whether to stay or go...the facts are increasingly clear that the United States made a major strategic error in Iraq” [8]. In short, Chinese analysts paint a consistently grim picture of U.S. prospects at the strategic level.

#### ANALYSIS OF U.S. MILITARY OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

At the operational level, the conflict in Iraq is more of a mixed picture from the Chinese perspective. The speed with which relatively small numbers of U.S. forces shattered the Iraqi military and overthrew Saddam Hussein's regime clearly impressed Chinese military analysts, even though the outcome was never in doubt given the overwhelming superiority of the coalition forces and the weakness and fragility of the Iraqi military. Writing in April 2003, PLA General Xiong Guangkai described this early stage of the war as “an extensive test of the fruits of the new U.S. military transformation” and pointed out that it would yield important lessons for Chinese military modernization [9]. Indeed, OIF largely reinforced China's previous appraisals of the growing importance of high technology equipment, C4ISR, logistics and transportation, psychological warfare, special forces, and joint operations. In particular, Xiong argued, the key difference between other recent U.S. military operations and OIF was that the latter displayed even greater advances in U.S. military technology, especially in the areas of precision-guided weapons and C4ISR capabilities. The U.S. military's performance in OIF thus reflected a further acceleration in the pace of the revolution in military affairs (RMA) [10].

The U.S. military's use of high-tech equipment and advanced C4ISR technology in the Iraq War is a particular area of interest for Chinese analysts. Indeed, a number of PLA analysts are clearly seeking to apply “lessons learned” from the U.S. military's use of high-tech equipment in its operations in Iraq to the transformation of the PLA. For example, Chinese authors have focused on the employment of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in multiple roles in the Iraq War and the potential lessons for the enhancement of the PLA's C4ISR capabilities [11]. Moreover, Chinese admiration for U.S. technological prowess is often intermingled with a keen interest in developing means to exploit the vulnerabilities of some of the U.S. military's most critical high-tech capabilities. For instance, Chinese researchers have shown a particularly strong interest in

the U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS) and its potential vulnerability to jamming. According to one Chinese aerospace industry researcher, “The GPS system has achieved clear military success, but in a complex wartime jamming environment, its vulnerability and fragility have been progressively revealed” [12].

Beyond their assessments of OIF, Chinese military analysts have also shown very strong interest in the setbacks the United States and its allies have encountered in the subsequent phase of counter-insurgency operations in Iraq. Chinese writers have also studied the tactics and operations of various insurgent groups in Iraq and how these insurgent groups have bedeviled coalition forces [13]. In contrast to Chinese analyses of the OIF phase of the war, Chinese assessments of the events of the past four years generally focus on the U.S. military's vulnerabilities rather than its strengths. Many Chinese observers conclude that the U.S. military faces a worsening predicament on the ground in Iraq. Furthermore, they doubt that the Bush administration's troop “surge” is enough to turn the situation around [14]. Finally, Chinese observers assess that the resultant lack of security is one of the major problems undermining attempts to move forward with Iraq's economic reconstruction and political development.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRC'S NATIONAL SECURITY

Although Chinese scholars continue to express concerns about U.S. willingness to engage unilaterally in preventive wars, as demonstrated by the invasion and occupation of Iraq, they also appear to have concluded that the problems the United States is facing as the conflict in Iraq drags on will have benefits for China's national security and standing in the world. Indeed, Chinese experts have concluded that the Iraq war has weakened the United States economically and militarily. They also assess that it has strained America's alliances, undermined its international image, and weakened its “soft power” [15]. Some Chinese analysts expect the United States to be less aggressive in its efforts to transform authoritarian regimes into democracies as a result of the high costs imposed by the conflict in Iraq. For example, one PLA analyst concludes that even some of the most enthusiastic proponents of the Iraq war “have begun to realize that the gap between their ambition and reality is too wide” [16].

Some Chinese analysts also appear to have concluded that the Iraq war has diminished U.S. willingness and ability to intervene militarily in other hotspots. This conclusion has potentially troubling implications for Chinese assessments of the likelihood of U.S. military intervention in a Taiwan crisis or conflict. In particular, some Chinese

assessments suggest there is a danger that Chinese analysts will overestimate the extent to which the U.S. military's prolonged involvement in Iraq would influence its capability to intervene rapidly and decisively in a Taiwan Strait conflict. Although the war in Iraq is clearly tying down a large proportion of U.S. ground forces, senior U.S. military officers have attempted to disabuse Chinese observers of the notion that this would prevent the United States from responding to China's use force against Taiwan, stating publicly that U.S. air and naval forces in the Asia Pacific region are sufficient to respond to any potential crisis [17].

Finally, Chinese assessments of the problems the United States has encountered following the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq will likely influence Beijing's thinking about what would happen in the aftermath of a war with Taiwan. Indeed, any serious analysis of the U.S. experience in Iraq would undoubtedly compel Chinese strategists to confront the possibility that the Chinese military would face a long and bloody insurgency even following a seemingly quick and decisive victory over Taiwan's armed forces. Chinese analysts would do well to heed the warning in the U.S. Defense Department's most recent report on Chinese military power that even if China managed to accomplish its operational objectives in a cross-Strait conflict, "an insurgency directed against the PRC presence could tie up PLA forces for years" [18].

#### CONCLUSION

In all, Chinese analysts assess that the war in Iraq represents a major strategic failure for the United States. Despite the quick victory of coalition forces in OIF, they write, sectarian violence and the shortcomings of the Iraqi government have frustrated Washington's attempts to achieve its overall political objectives, and the U.S. military has become bogged down in an increasingly costly and unpopular conflict. In short, as one Chinese scholar puts it, the United States "won the war, but lost the peace" [19]. As for the military dimension of the conflict, Chinese analysts have seized the opportunity to study the world's premier military in action. Chinese writings on military operations in Iraq indicate that China is further refining its understanding of the U.S. military's strengths, seeking to identify and prepare to exploit its potential vulnerabilities, and applying the "lessons learned" from the Iraq war to the ongoing modernization of the PLA.

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*of the Navy, or Department of Defense.*

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## Washington's Weakening Influence: Sino-Indian Competition over Burma

By Drew Thompson

When President George W. Bush met Chinese President Hu Jintao at the APEC meeting in Sydney on September 6, trade and Taiwan appeared to dominate their agenda. Little notice, however, was made of one of President Bush's talking points: Burma. The U.S. government has long sought to isolate Burma due to the persistent human rights abuses that have occurred since the military junta refused to recognize the results of a 1990 election. Recent protests over rising fuel prices in Burma's main city of Rangoon resulted in the detention of protestors and dissidents, ensuring that President Bush would raise the issue during his relatively brief face-to-face meeting with President Hu.

U.S. officials are expectant that they can encourage China to use its long-standing political and economic influence with the Burmese ruling generals to improve its human rights practices and release the winner of the 1990 elections, Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest. Unfortunately, a significant gap remains between Chinese and U.S. interests in Burma and there is little likelihood that China will abandon its

realist approach to its neighbor and become embroiled in Burma's domestic politics at the behest of the United States.

### A STATE OF INSECURITY

Late last month, protesters in Rangoon took to the streets to protest recent fuel price increases. The government responded swiftly, arresting dissidents associated with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, ensuring that what has been a low-grade crisis for the past 20 years features more prominently on the U.S. political agenda. Burma, the *nom de guerre* used by the U.S. State Department, has been in a constant state of disarray stemming from economic sanctions, political isolation and government mismanagement. In addition to ethnic unrest and widespread poverty, the country faces a constant energy crisis at home, despite oil and gas reserves both on and offshore. Trucks, taxis, buses and private cars spend hours each week in long fuel lines, while black market gas stations line highways beyond city limits. Electricity outages are a daily occurrence, and generators dot the sidewalks in front of shops in Rangoon and Mandalay.

A member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) since 1997, Burma's erratic leadership has long caused embarrassment to the other members, in addition to challenging the grouping's desire to be a relevant and effective regional force. Bound by treaty and shared principles not to interfere in each other's internal politics, ASEAN members are determined to employ a "constructive engagement" strategy with Burma. Additionally, both Chinese and U.S. interests have to be taken seriously by ASEAN member nations. As China's economic and political presence increases steadily, ASEAN nations have to be particularly cautious not to get caught between an increasingly assertive China and the region's dominant power, the United States.

### GROWING COMPETITION FROM INDIA

China has significant historic, political, and economic ties to Burma, while India struggles to catch up. Burma was the first non-communist country to recognize the People's Republic of China in 1949. The China-Burma border dispute was settled in 1960, compared to the China-India border that remains contested today. China has been a staunch supporter of the current military junta, providing arms and diplomatic support in the UN, as well as aid for infrastructure and projects to increase cross-border commerce. Moreover, northern Burma has a large ethnic Chinese population, creating cultural ties that facilitate trade, both legitimate and illicit, between the two countries. China considers Burma to be securely within its sphere of

influence and sees India's attempts to increase its presence as a direct challenge.

With proven natural gas reserves of about 2.48 trillion cubic meters representing 1.4 percent of the world supply and little capital or infrastructure to exploit it, Burma is increasingly at the center of a growing competition between India and China to develop and transport offshore natural gas to their respective home markets [1]. Compared to China, India's growing need to import energy is often overlooked. Indian economic growth is second only to China with GDP increases of approximately 9 percent over the past two years, and like China, India is dependent on oil and gas imports to fuel its expanding economy [2]. India is the sixth largest energy importer and its import growth rate is climbing faster than China [3]. Last month, India's oil minister publicly expressed his concerns that it is losing out to China in the race to ensure its energy security. Though subsequently disputed by other parties, the minister illustrated his point by announcing that Burma had awarded China the right to build a pipeline from two offshore gas fields in which Indian state-owned companies hold a 30 percent minority stake (Reuters, August 14). Regardless of the accuracy of the minister's remarks (or the poor transparency of the award process), Indian concerns about the success of Chinese investments in Burma's infrastructure and energy sectors are genuine. Chinese media have recently announced agreements to develop three offshore gas fields and to build a pipeline connecting the port of Sittwe with southwest China (Xinhua, April 21).

This competition for regional influence and resources is shaping geo-strategic perceptions in both China and India. India, which straddles the vital sea lanes linking the Persian Gulf to Asia is concerned about a growing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean and Middle East. Chinese-funded ports and bases reportedly under construction in Burma, Bangladesh and Pakistan increase India's concerns that China might someday challenge them in the Indian Ocean, validating their desire to build another aircraft carrier. China's opaque military build up is an additional cause for India's concern, as China's academics debate the geopolitical impact of having their own aircraft carrier while PLA generals consider the technical complexities of building and operating one (*China Brief*, March 21).

#### BURMA IS NOT SUDAN

China, as opposed to India, faces considerably more pressure from the international community to use its influence in countries such as Burma and Sudan. China's permanent seat on the UN Security Council, an expanding global economic footprint, and its comparable success over

India in the energy-security "race" exposes it to greater censure. While Indian officials are questioned about their Burmese ties, which include military aid to the junta, India's democratic government and comparably better human rights record shields it to some extent (though India's own human rights record is far from spotless) (Bangkok Post, September 14). Although India imports 3 million tons of "equity crude" per year from Sudan and holds a 25 percent stake in the production consortium, India has received much less criticism from U.S. activists. China National Petroleum holds a 40 percent controlling stake in the venture and imports more than twice India's volume of crude [4]. While China had previously resisted pressuring the Sudanese government to address the Darfur issue, it has become more proactive in working with the Sudanese government and supporting a peacekeeping plan, winning public support from the UN and even some U.S. officials.

Just as China has demonstrated some flexibility interpreting its long-standing "non-interference" ideology with Sudan, there are some indications that China will also seek to play a positive role in Burma. China is particularly sensitive to criticism in the run-up to the 2008 Olympics, which has provided a platform for activists advocating for various interests. First Lady Laura Bush has been vocal about the political repression in Burma and sees China as a logical instrument with leverage to drive political change. She has met with activists and called UN secretary Ban Ki-moon to discuss the issue of Burma [5]. In a recent interview reported by Wall Street Journal, the First Lady stated her strategy: "China does have a huge amount of influence over Burma," she says. "They share a border, for one thing. But also, they . . . use the natural resources out of Burma," and in the end "they prop up a government that— a failed state, really, is what they're propping up, just like in the Sudan." Mrs. Bush adds that "right now, after cooperating with China in the six-party talks with North Korea, and with the Chinese Olympics coming up, I think this is a really good time for activists and advocates for Burma and the Sudan and other countries to put pressure on China" [6].

Like in Sudan, China has recently taken an interest in ensuring that U.S. interests in Burma are considered. This June in Beijing, a senior State Department official met with Burma's minister of foreign affairs in an unusually direct meeting brokered by the Chinese. The last time a similar senior-level U.S.-Burma meeting took place was in 2003 [7].

However, there are undoubtedly limits to China's willingness and ability to be a "responsible stakeholder" in the case of Burma. While China enjoys good relations with the ruling Burmese generals, *guanxi* alone is unlikely cause political reforms to take place. Burma is not wholly dependent on

China for trade and international political protection and can afford to say “no.” In addition, Burma’s generals view China’s growing political and economic influence in the region with increasing discomfort, and India’s interest in Burma’s energy sector offers a convenient hedge, and an opportunity to obtain better economic terms for licensing access to its energy. Mindful that its leverage is not as strong as critics might suggest, China has been careful to point out that, while not antagonistic, they do not necessarily share ownership with U.S. interests. One Chinese official, when informally queried about human rights in Burma, stated the Chinese position succinctly, saying, “This is your issue.” That said, the United States and China do have some mutual interests in Burma, such as anti-narcotics efforts and other humanitarian and non-traditional security issues, which can form a basis for partnership.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The United States, ASEAN, India and China are all aware that the people of Burma suffer from extensive poverty induced by horrendous governance, though there is no consensus about how best to address that challenge. Fostering change will require continued U.S. attention and dialogue with regional friends, including ASEAN members, India and China to influence the Burmese generals to implement meaningful political reforms. Collaborative efforts that improve the human security situation in Burma is one potential avenue for cooperation that will ease suffering and contribute to long-term efforts to improve the political situation.

Washington must recognize, however, that China and India have a growing need for energy, and Burma is a strategic consideration in both countries’ calculations. A U.S. strategy to promote democracy and human rights in Burma should recognize that ASEAN, Chinese and Indian interests do not necessarily coincide with its human rights agenda. For instance, India, the largest democracy, has shown little interest in “exporting” its political system. Likewise, the United States must recognize that China’s influence in Burma has its limits, particularly as India wages its own effort to woo the generals. Finding common ground on political as well as energy issues will increase the likelihood of success in bringing political reform and stability to Burma, while at the same time providing for China and India’s energy security.

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