

# **PARTY-MILITARY RELATIONS IN CHINA**

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*EAI Background Brief No. 726*

Date of Publication: 31 May 2012

## Executive Summary

1. In his government report to the National People's Congress in March 2012, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (温家宝) brought up the issue of party-military relations. According to him, China should adhere to the fundamental principle of the Party having absolute leadership over the military.
2. This principle was introduced by Mao Zedong (毛泽东), the founding father of the red army, in the 1920s but party-military relations have since evolved.
3. Before 1949, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was indeed the army of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). But the PLA became the army of the state as well after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC).
4. After the Cultural Revolution, the CCP leadership rebuilt state apparatuses and introduced a State Central Military Commission in accordance with a new Constitution of the People's Republic of China.
5. Since the Party Central Military Commission is also the organ of military leadership in China and its membership is the same as the membership of the State Central Military Commission, the two Central Military Commissions are in fact the same institution. This is known as "one institution, two different names" (*"yi tao banzi, liang kuai paizi"* "一套班子，两块牌子").
6. However, the top leader of the Party is not necessarily the top leader of the military in China. From June 1981 to November 1989, top Party leaders were Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦), Zhao Ziyang (赵紫阳), and Jiang Zemin (江泽民), consecutively. But the top military leader was Deng Xiaoping (邓小平).
7. After Jiang Zemin took over as chairman of the Party Central Military Commission in November 1989, the top Party leader also became the commander-in-chief of the military in China. However, after Jiang's

retirement from the Central Committee of the CCP and its Politburo in November 2002, he stayed on as chairman of the Party Central Military Commission.

8. Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) became general secretary of the Party in November 2002 but assumed the chairmanship position of the Party Central Military Commission in September 2004.
9. At the forthcoming Eighteenth National Party Congress in the fall of this year, Hu would have two options: to follow the examples of Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin and to stay on as chairman of the Party Central Military Commission after his retirement from the Central Committee of the CCP and its Politburo; or to retire from all of his Party posts.
10. In the former, Hu would play the important role of a facilitator, helping with the gradual and smooth transition of one generation leadership to the next. In the latter, Hu would set a precedent for his successor to take over as both general secretary of the Party and chairman of the Central Military Commission simultaneously, thus ensuring the absolute leadership of the Party over the military.