

context of more than 5,000 years of Chinese civilization – it should be clear to us that corruption and backwardness inevitably expose a country to attack, humiliation, and loss of sovereignty. Second, linking the war to endeavors of the CPC over more than 90 years, the development of the People's Republic of China over more than 60 years, and progression of China's reform and opening up over more than 30 years, it should be clear that there would be no New China without the CPC, that only socialism can save China, and that only socialism with Chinese characteristics can enable China to develop. Such historical comparisons will help us to become more confident in our path, theories, and system, thereby strengthening our resolve to pursue the Chinese Dream.

Lasting for almost nine months, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 was a complex war that came about due to a host of political, economic, military, technological, and cultural factors. In studying this war, we must adopt the viewpoint of dialectical materialism – which holds that in order to understand something we should study it comprehensively, dynamically, and in terms of its relations with other things, through comparisons and repeated reviews – carrying out comprehensive analysis and examination in order to arrive at conclusions that closely reflect historical realities. This requires that we approach the war from a broad perspective, examining not just the Westernization Movement of the late Qing Dynasty, but also the Meiji Reform in Japan; not just the major engagements, but also the war as a whole; not just the fighting at sea, but also the fighting on land; and not just the direct consequences of China's defeat, but also its far-reaching impacts on China and the Chinese people.

To identify why China was defeated in the war, we must penetrate the surface of the supposed reasons, grasping their principal contradictions as well as the principal aspects of those contradictions. In recent years, China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 has been studied from a number of different angles. In my opinion, apart from the obvious external factor of imperialist aggression, there were two important internal factors that contributed to China's defeat: corruption and backwardness. This corruption and backwardness were of an all-encompassing nature. Corruption inevitably led to demoralization, while backwardness resulted in vulnerability to attack. This is the conclusion we can draw from the Sino-Japanese War, but it is also the conclusion we can draw from the entire modern history of China.

We look back at the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 so that we can emerge from its shadow, and we reflect on defeat so that we can prepare ourselves for victory. That said, our discussion of the Sino-Japanese War should not be limited to just principles and theories. Rather, we must draw links between the war and what we are doing at present, highlighting key points that are worthy of our attention.

II. Assuming our historical responsibility to strengthen the armed forces with a view to realizing the Chinese Dream

There is an old Chinese saying that an itch is harder to bear than an ache, and humiliation is harder to bear than poverty. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 saw the total destruction of the Beiyang Fleet and the crushing defeat of China's land forces. As a direct consequence of this defeat, China was forced to surrender national sovereignty under humiliating terms. The Chinese people were plunged into a sorry plight, being bullied and trampled over at will by foreign aggressors. This period of history tells us two things: first, that military strength is a key supporting pillar of a country's overall strength; and second, that the development of national defense and military capabilities is necessary to safeguard a country's national security. Without strong national defense and military capabilities, there is no guarantee of our independence, security, and development. In the end, it is people that would suffer.

The pursuit of peace, development, and cooperation has emerged as an irreversible trend of our times. However, as China undergoes a crucial transformation from a big country to a major one, its path ahead will hardly be plain sailing.

The Sino-Japanese War may be long behind us, but the warning bells of history are still ringing. While we hope for

peace, we must have the ability to guard it by any means necessary. As a last resort, military action must be both reliable and effective when called for. Only then will we have the confidence to hold our ground. Our armed forces must be strong enough to assume the following tasks. First, they must have the capacity to ensure China's political security, providing a strong guarantee for the governing position of the CPC and the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Second, they must have the capacity to preserve China's unity, creating favorable conditions for the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations and the ultimate resolution of the Taiwan issue. Third, they must have the capacity to safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, having the courage to meet aggressors on the battlefield and claim victory. Fourth, they must have the capacity to preserve an important period of strategic opportunity for China's development, and to safeguard its developmental interests. Fifth, they must have the capacity to maintain regional and world peace, thereby contributing to the cause of human progress.

The building of a strong people's army is a continuous undertaking of monumental proportions, one in which each generation will have its own role to play. Now the historical responsibility of strengthening China's armed forces has come to us. In assuming this mission, we must be clear about our goal, firm in our convictions, and devoted in our efforts, so as to provide a solid assurance for the realization of the Chinese Dream.

III. Drawing on reform and innovation to strengthen the armed forces

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 taught us just how devastating a military disadvantage can be for a country's national security. The military sector is one of the most innovative of all sectors. It is also the sector that needs innovation the most. Only by constantly innovating and establishing innovation as the "new normal" will we be able to seize the initiative and gain the upper hand in the midst of fierce contention and competition.

The key to reform and innovation is to free our minds. Failure to do so will rule out any chance of progress. The failure of the Westernization Movement towards the end of the Qing Dynasty was mainly due to the conservatism of China's feudal rulers and bureaucrats at the time. Likewise, the defeat of Qing Dynasty forces in the Sino-Japanese War was mainly the result of outdated military thinking and command. Today, China's efforts to strengthen its armed forces represent a pioneering undertaking. As we work towards this goal, we are certain to encounter a host of new situations and problems, and this means we will be required to embrace new concepts, perspectives, approaches, and standards. With the possibility of future conflicts in mind, we must closely identify contemporary trends, embrace new ways of thinking, renew our military theories and strategic guidelines, and foster an advanced military culture, so as to lay down guiding principles and theoretical foundations for our efforts to strengthen the armed forces.

Deng Xiaoping famously said that science and technology constitute the primary productive force. The Westernization Movement of the late Qing Dynasty lasted for more than 30 years. But at its end China's defense industries were still grossly underdeveloped. China was still heavily dependent on foreign countries for arms, having failed to establish a modern framework of independent military industries. There are profound lessons to be learned from this failure. While China has come a long way in equipping its armed forces, it still lags behind some of the world's military powers. We still rely on other countries for many core technologies that are crucial to the effectiveness of our armed forces. Therefore, in developing military technology, weapons, and equipment, we must set our sights on the cutting edge of military science and technology, employ a strategy of strengthening the armed forces through science and technology, and raise our capacity for innovation by relying on our own strength.

A modernized military must employ modernized forms of organization. China's military reform at the end of the Qing Dynasty succeeded in upgrading weapons and equipment, but failed to make substantial advances in the reform of military institutions, which was where the real bottleneck lay. In deepening the reform of the armed forces today, we must continue to pursue our goal of strengthening the armed forces and work to further release and

enhance the vitality of our military. With a view to modernizing the way in which the military is organized, we must prioritize the establishment of joint-operation command mechanisms through reform, and engage in a coordinated effort to promote the reform of the leadership and management system, the overhaul of the military policy making system, and the deepening of military-civilian integration.

People are the key actors in reform and innovation. In the late Qing Dynasty, China struggled to carry out thorough military reform, and thus establish a truly modern army, because it suffered from an acute shortage of modern military talent. Likewise, on the battlefield it was unable to seize and maintain the upper hand because it lacked personnel who were well versed in advanced techniques and tactics. At present, we face the major and urgent strategic task of training the talent that we will need to ensure victory in a limited, high-tech war. To meet the requirements of information-driven, integrated warfare, we must devote major efforts to training a new breed of military talent, particularly outstanding talent in joint-operation command and highly specialized technical personnel.

IV. The importance of good discipline and conduct in strengthening the armed forces

China's defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 was not only the result of inferior weapons, equipment, and tactics; it was also the result of poor discipline and conduct. Since its establishment more than 80 years ago, China's army has established a tradition of sound discipline and conduct through the course of its experiences both on and off the battlefield. This has become one of the most distinctive features of our people's army, and one of its major political advantages. In order to attain our goal of strengthening the armed forces, it is essential that we carry forward the fine traditions and ways of conduct of the CPC and the Chinese military.

First, we must remain loyal to the CPC.

China's armed forces are and will always be subject to the command of the CPC. This is the political guarantee that will ensure our armed forces can win the battles they are called upon to fight. It is therefore essential that we resolutely uphold the fundamental principle and system of absolute leadership over the armed forces by the CPC, ensuring that we follow the instructions of the CPC at times of peace, obey the commands of the CPC at times of war, play our due role at critical moments, and remain loyal to the CPC at all times and under all circumstances.

Second, we must commit ourselves to developing China's military.

As soldiers, we should devote our energies to our main tasks, becoming competent commanders, able fighters, and experts in our respective posts. Learning from veteran revolutionaries, we must remember our tasks, shoulder our responsibilities, and retain our passion at all times.

Third, we must strengthen our fighting spirit.

China's military is known around the world for its immense fighting spirit. At the core of this spirit is the courage to bear hardships and to look death in the face. We must continue to forge the mettle of revolutionary soldiers, carrying forward the dauntless spirit and strong resilience that have become a tradition in our armed forces. We must train our men and officers to fear neither hardships nor death; build forces that can be called upon to win battles at any time; and forge an army that is highly mobile, effectively commanded, adept at attack and defense, and logistically well supported.

Fourth, we must take a tough stance on corruption.

High standards must be set and maintained in a continued drive to combat corruption. Adopting a zero-tolerance stance, we must ensure that all cases of corruption are resolutely dealt with and that all acts of corruption are strictly punished. We must have the courage to keep the pressure on corruption with unsparing efforts. Under no circumstances can the armed forces become an enclave for corruption.

Fifth, we must engage in practical efforts and achieve real results.

We must work in a solid, pragmatic, and effective fashion, carrying out the various initiatives and tasks that have been assigned to us quickly and thoroughly. Where problems are uncovered, we must focus on finding a pragmatic solution. With the persistence to see our plan through, we must step up our efforts to strengthen the armed forces, advance reform, and prepare for possible military conflict, engaging in an all-out push to realize the CPC's target of strengthening the armed forces under new circumstances.

