



CHINA January 2018

Chinese soldiers urged to fear neither hardship nor death

In a speech pronounced at a military assembly in the northern province of Hebei, Chinese President Xi Jinping urged about 7.000 services, men and women, to fear “neither hardship nor death” as they implemented the Communist party’s orders.

The military should “create an elite and powerful force that is always ready for the fight, capable of combat and sure to win in order to fulfil the tasks bestowed by the Party and the people in the new era,” added Xi, who was recently anointed one of modern China’s most powerful rulers.

“As Xi Jinping announced his instructions, there was prolonged and thunderous applause,” the party’s official newspaper, the People’s Daily, reported in a front-page story, alongside a photograph showing Xi clad in combat fatigues and black leather gloves.

The newspaper claimed troops had gathered in 4.000 separate locations across China to hear their commander-in-chief’s speech. Turning to the red flag of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), they vowed to “resolutely obey Chairman Xi’s order”.

The Global Times, a party-run tabloid newspaper, called President Xi’s participation in the army assembly– the latest in a series of high-profile military reviews in mainland China and Hong Kong – a “landmark” event.

“This is the first time since the founding of the country that instructions on military training have been directly issued by the chairman of the CMC (Central Military Commission), and it shows that improving combat readiness is now a strategic mission for the Chinese military,” Xu Guangyu, a retired major general, told the newspaper.

Elenoire Laudier – *Sinologist at Ca’ Foscari University, Venice, and at Melbourne University. Senior Analyst on China at NATO Defense College Foundation.*