

媒体：湖南掀起“解放思想大讨论”，会是大变革前奏吗？专家解读

The Paper Discussion: Great Debate on Emancipating the Mind

Media: Hunan Kicks Off the Big Debate on ‘Emancipating the Mind’ – A Harbinger to Big Changes in Future? Expert View

Translated by Manju Rani Hara

Associate Professor, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, School of Language,
Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Email: hara.manju@gmail.com

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From the Editor's Desk:

“Great Discussion on Emancipating the Mind” – the exact phrase has been an integral part of the CPC ideological debates since the Party was founded more than a century ago. In the Party's historical context, politically speaking the phrase has come to symbolise three phases in the development of the People's Republic of China led by the CPC. Namely, liberating the mind under Mao Zedong (平等主义 or Egalitarianism); Deng Xiaoping's (改革开放 or Reforms) and Xi Jinping's (社会主义新时代 or New Socialist Era). As it is decoded by scholars within the PRC, “Emancipating the Mind” during Mao meant liberation from the feudal mindset; under Deng it was advocated to transform from “egalitarianism” to “market economy or private economy”; and currently under Xi Jinping its emphasis is on liberation of thought from Deng's 多劳多得 or “work more to earn more” mindset towards Xi's 共同富裕 *gòngtóng fùyù* or Common Prosperity.

澎湃新闻 *péngpài xīnwén* or *The Paper* (newspaper) in Chinese and its sister publication in English, *Sixth Tone*, were launched in the years 2014 and 2016, respectively. The two media publications were funded and owned by the Shanghai

United Media Group with an initial capital of \$16 million. The main purpose behind the state-initiated move was to capture the readership of mobile internet users among the educated urban Chinese who were increasingly inclined to reading the international media such as the *Financial Times* and *The New York Times* (both in Chinese and in English versions). In terms of both theme and content, the two publications were granted a greater leeway and autonomy as compared with other (state-owned) publications in China. Both *The Paper* (thepaper.cn) and *Sixth Tone* (sixthtone.com) are easily accessible on the internet and are online publications.

Translation:

According to a report published in the Hunan Daily dated February 18, Hunan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China issued a notification to launch a large-scale discussion on “Emancipating the Mind” in the province.

Several Hunan government officials associated with the decision have confirmed the news that they are currently engaged in the process of arranging relevant implementation plan.

In an interview, Zhang Xixian, a professor at the Central Party School, has said that the Central Committee

(CPCCC) encourages innovation among local Party committees. He believes that a nationwide ideological liberation movement is needed, and Hunan has effectively fired the first shot.

At present, when all parts of the China need an ideological emancipation, Hunan has already fired its first shot.

Is this a prelude to the big changes in future?

From the perspective of history of China's development, the liberation of thought has undoubtedly been of great importance.

“Every era in our country requires a major ideological liberation at its inception, serving as a precursor to accomplishing all tasks in that era,” Zhang Xixian told reporters. He added that since Marxism entered China, the country has undergone several ideological liberations. Now, as we embark on the second century of our new journey, China's development landscape has changed. We should not cling to past development models; a major ideological liberation is necessary.

As mentioned in the “Notice of Hunan Provincial committee of the Communist Party of China on launch of ‘Emancipation of the Mind’ debate throughout the province”, the 40 years of history of Hunan's Reform and Opening up has demonstrated that, when people's minds were emancipated, they innovated and explored, and the development was both good and fast; and whenever their minds were restricted or conservative, they were over-cautious and timid, sticking to routines and thus the development was sluggish and slow.

The Hunan Daily media affiliate, *Xiangban*, has stated: “All major changes begin with liberating the mind.”

Will the debate initiated by Hunan province on ‘Emancipation of mind’ be a prelude to a major ideological transformation?

Zhang Xixian thinks that the reforms need to start with a new attitude based on everyone's preparation at the thought level. At least when it comes to Hunan province, it maybe the prelude to the big changes. At the same time, for the big change and development of the whole country and the Party, Hunan has fired its first signal shot.

Yu Xin'an, former president of the Henan Academy of Social Sciences and president of the Henan Central Plains Innovation and Development Research Institute, has said in an interview that, going by the current scenario, this discussion on "Emancipation of the Mind" was not a call by the central government, but merely by the Hunan province, and thus, not much should be read into it.

Yu said: "At present, it perhaps is a signal of reforms within the Hunan province."

The discussion on "Emancipation of the Mind" is well under way, will it spread throughout the country?

According to the above mentioned "Notice", the 'big discussion' would start in early February 2024 and end in late March.

On February 18, some government officials from various districts and counties in Hunan Province confirmed that they are already in receipt of the notice and have started to arrange relevant implementation plans.

An official responsible for the publicity department of a district in Changsha expressed that the district is still planning and arranging on how to implement the great discussion on "Emancipation of the

Mind." "We must definitely make a detailed plan according to the document, but I haven't so far received any concrete plans in my hands yet."

The official thinks that it can be felt that Hunan Province is going to witness great progress this year.

The reporter got in touch with many experts from the Hunan Academy of Social Sciences and from the Party School, who stated that they have barely seen the document circulated by the Provincial Party Committee today (February 18, 2024) and have not yet read it in depth. Thus, they declined the reporter's request for an interview.

"The central government encourages innovative work at the level of the local Party Committees, and when it comes to Party work, it is only normal for the provinces to take the first shot. Then, based on the extent of its impact, it is assessed whether to push the programme for a full implementation", said Zhang Xixian, professor at the Central Party School.

Some experts also think judging from the current indications, it is impossible to conclude that this arrangement in Hunan Province is a national-level experiment.

The effects and impact that will follow, still needs to be observed.

The reporter contacted an official who is in-charge of the news section of the Publicity Department in the Hunan Provincial Party Committee on 18 February on WeChat, but has not received any response so far.

Going by the information available in the public domain, the “great debate” is in full swing. The local media reported that “Party organisations at various levels, and the majority of party cadres and the masses, across the Hunan province, should positively respond to the call of the Provincial Party Committee, must swing into action, and start off the big wave of discussion on ‘Emancipation of the Mind’”.

According to the media reports, “Emancipating the Mind” has become an important phrase at all levels across departments, on the first day of work right after the Spring Festival.

At 9 in the morning, the Party Committee of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of Hunan Province launched the “Great Discussion on Emancipating the Mind” activity

deployed by the Provincial Party Committee in provincial departments by analysing cases of breaking inertia thinking.

Into the new year, the first meeting held by the Party Group of the Hunan Provincial Disabled Persons Federation was also about the “Emancipation of Mind” discussion, and to establish the important tasks on how to implement the discussion.

The Shimen County Party Committee, in the Second Collective (extensive) Study Session of the Theoretical Study Center Group in 2024, actively responded to the Province-wide call for discussion on liberating the mind.

What issues will this ‘grand discussion’ address? Why is it being conducted at the county or higher levels?

Hunan Province proposed to address, through in-depth study and discussion, issues such as insufficient confidence in development, weak sense of mission, and inadequate sense of responsibility at the core of their thinking, and to resolve the questions of for whom to establish political achievements, what kind of political achievements to establish, and how to establish political achievements.

According to the news report, the province proposed 10 key “turnarounds” regarding the main tasks of the major discussion which directly address the core issues. These include:

1. Fundamentally reverse the obsession with simply judging success by GDP growth;
2. To reverse the anxiety of not proactively changing the development model and being unwilling to bear the pain of transformation;
3. Reverse the impulse to fabricate data and create false results;
4. Reverse the path dependence of recklessly borrowing money regardless of risks, blindly following trends in project development, and pursuing grandiose projects;
5. We must reverse the “superior-only” mentality that ignores objective reality, disregards rules, and is “not afraid of the masses’ dissatisfaction, but afraid of the leaders’ lack of attention”;
6. To reverse the extensive economic development model that relies solely on resource and capital investment to stimulate growth;
7. Reverse the utilitarian tendency that is obsessed with “creating a temporary buzz” rather than “benefiting the community”;
8. Reverse the practice of making empty promises in decision-making and reneging on implementation;
9. Reverse the “ostrich mentality” of deliberately avoiding and covering up contradictions and problems;
10. We must reverse the “lying down” mentality of “preferring to do nothing in order to avoid trouble.”

As reckoned by the Central Party School professor Zhang Xixian, these tasks highlight a problem-oriented approach. “As we move from the past few decades of reform and opening up to a new journey, we have exposed a series of prominent problems. How to embark on this new journey? First and foremost, we must adhere to a problem-oriented approach”, Zhang Xixian stated.

In contrast, Yu Xin'an is more forthcoming when he noted that Hunan's proposal to emancipate the mind was highly targeted. He believes that currently, a "*laissez-faire*" or "*half-laissez-faire*" mentality, where officials are "afraid to take responsibility and act", is prevalent. The mental state of officials is incompatible with the needs of actual development, and it is necessary to liberate officials from this state.

"China is currently facing a complex development environment, so it is very meaningful to propose the liberation of thought," said Yu Xin'an. "In addition to cadres, it is especially important for party committees and governments at all levels to liberate their minds," Yu further added.

The reporters pointed out that this major discussion activity was mainly carried out in units at the county and departmental levels and above.

To which, Zhang Xixian noted that cadres at the county and department levels and above are the backbone of the ruling force. Solving the problems facing China hinges on leading cadres at the county and department levels and above. Liberating their minds is of great significance in this era.

Series Editor: Hemant Adlakha

Hemant Adlakha is Vice-Chairperson, and Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Email: haidemeng@gmail.com

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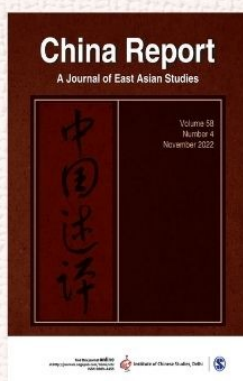


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INSTITUTE OF CHINESE STUDIES
B-371 (3rd Floor), Chittaranjan Park,
Kalkaji, New Delhi 110019
Landline: +91-11-40564823



info@icsin.org



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