



Analysis

Cuban Officials, Media Use PRC Anniversary To Tout Close Ties

Cuban officials and state media marked the recent celebration of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Communist Party rule in China by emphasizing China's economic might and the importance of bilateral ties. State media also extensively covered the PRC ambassador's praise for China's economic achievements under Communist rule, but may have intended this and other coverage more to justify the Cuban Government's chosen limited economic measures than to signal any shift in Cuba's economic policy. Cuban officials have continued to cultivate close Chinese ties since the November 2008 visit by President Hu Jintao.

Senior officials and state media used the Chinese anniversary to underscore the importance of bilateral ties with what they portrayed as an economic superpower, a practice consistent with earlier signals of China's preferred status among foreign allies.^a

- President Raul Castro and several other top Party and government leaders attended the official commemoration, held at a Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) assembly hall in Havana.¹ Vice President Lazo delivered the keynote speech, hailing China's achievements in food production -- an area where Cuban officials have repeatedly stressed the need for greater self-sufficiency -- and other areas and asserting that relations were "at their greatest moment in history" (Cubavision, 1 October).²
- TeleRebelde rebroadcast China Central Television's Spanish-language coverage of the military parade and ceremony in Beijing (TeleRebelde, 1 October). Fidel Castro published a "Reflections" column hailing China's military display and Hu's remarks at the event (Cuba.cu, 7 October).³ He also highlighted China's economic strength and compared it favorably to the United States, as he has done regularly in his columns (Cuba.cu, 7 October, 28 September, 11 April, 30 March).^{4 5 6 7}
- In contrast, Raul Castro was in Russia during the ceremony held at the same FAR facility on 2 February to mark the 10th anniversary of Venezuelan President Chavez's inauguration, where the late Vice President Juan Almeida was highest-ranking official to attend. In his keynote speech, National Assembly President Alarcon described Chavez as Fidel Castro's "most brilliant follower" (Cubavision, 2 February).⁸ Fidel Castro did not address the anniversary specifically in his column, but he often quotes and praises Chavez.

Cuban media reported that trade between Cuba and China reached \$2.6 billion in 2007, making China its second-largest trading partner behind Venezuela (Cubavision, 19 November 2008).⁹

^a For more information on Cuban media treatment of relations with China, see the 10 December 2008 OSC Analysis, **Cuba Plays Up Hu's Visit, More Restrained for Medvedev's** (LAF20081210471001).

Leading state media outlets prominently featured remarks by the Chinese ambassador attributing China's success to unspecified economic reform under Communist Party leadership, likely a gesture he knew would be well received by Cuban officials. State media's focus on China's success may be an effort to justify the limited measures the Cuban Government has introduced or may be planning rather than an indication that it plans sweeping economic changes.^b

- Cubavision's newscasts on two consecutive days featured interviews with Ambassador Zhao Rongxian, who underscored the success of China's policy of reform and opening (30 September, 1 October).^{10 11 12} In similar statements published in Cuban Communist Party daily *Granma*, Zhao said Chinese GDP had quadrupled between 1980 and 2000 thanks to economic "reform and liberalization" (*Granma Online*, 30 September).¹³
- Zhao gave no specifics about the nature or extent of China's reforms, however, and emphasized instead the Chinese Communist Party's leading role in developing and implementing them. Cuban commentators were similarly vague about Chinese reforms, with leading Radio Rebelde commentator Ariel Larramendi stating only that China's "pragmatic" approach to the economy was responsible for its prosperity (30 September).¹⁴
- Most previous Cuban media coverage of China's economy noted China's achievements but was less specific about reforms; one editorial on the state-run website *CubaDebate* dismissed China's economic strength in the face of a US recession (AIN, 17 July; *Trabajadores Digital*, 14 May 2007; *CubaDebate*, 13 March 2008).^{15 16 17} A handful of articles in specialized sources claimed that Chinese workers suffered as a result of the reforms (*El Economista Online*, 28 August; *Temas Online*, April-June 2007).^{18 19}
- The Cuban media's recent emphasis on the success of Chinese economic reform may be intended to promote public support for recent austerity moves as Cuba's version of Communist Party-directed economic reform. It also may seek to boost public confidence in the economic viability of socialism in general while avoiding any meaningful distinction between the Cuban and Chinese versions.

The anniversary celebration occurred amid a series of recent high-level exchanges that Cuban media have used to reinforce an image of bilateral closeness.

- Wu Bangguo, president of China's National People's Congress, made an official visit to Havana in early September and met with Fidel and Raul Castro; a photo of Wu and Fidel shaking hands appeared on the front pages of *Granma* as well as youth daily *Juventud Rebelde* (*Granma*, 4, 3 September; *Juventud Rebelde*, 4 September).^{20 21} Cuban media provided few details about agreements reached, noting only that they dealt with telecommunications and ports and the island's telecommunications

^b For more information on Cuban media discussion of economic reform, see the 5 August OSC Report, **Cuba: Commentators Urge Further Labor Reform, Cite Obstacles** (LAP20090805420001).

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capabilities and modernize its ports; AFP reported that Cuba received \$600 million in Chinese loans and grants during Wu's visit (AIN, AFP, 2 September).^{22 23}

- Foreign Minister Rodriguez visited Beijing while Wu was in Havana, meeting with PRC Vice President Xi Jinping, who was quoted by Cuban media as highlighting the importance China gives to relations with Cuba. Rodriguez also met with Chinese counterpart Yang Jiechi and delivered a speech on the viability of Cuba's socialist system at the Academy of Social Sciences (Prensa Latina, 2 September).²⁴
- Council of Ministers Vice President Cabrisas traveled to China shortly after Rodriguez to participate in a joint commission on trade and to extend bilateral cooperation on biotechnology (Prensa Latina, 9 September; AIN, 8 September).^{25 26} On 13 October, Fidel Castro Diaz-Balart, a science adviser to the Council of State and Fidel Castro's oldest son, met with Chinese Science and Technology Minister Wan Gang to discuss deepening collaboration on nanotechnology (Prensa Latina, 13 October).²⁷

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¹ [OSC | | LAP20091001499003 | 1 October 2009 | | FYI -- Raul Castro Attends China's 60th Anniversary Celebration in Havana | | (U) | (U) | Havana Cubavision in Spanish -- Government owned, government-controlled television station]

² [OSC | | LAP20091001499003 | 1 October 2009 | | FYI -- Raul Castro Attends China's 60th Anniversary Celebration in Havana | | (U) | (U) | Havana Cubavision in Spanish -- Government owned, government-controlled television station]

³ [OSC | | LAP20091007361002 | 7 October 2009 | | Cuba: Fidel Castro Commentary Praises China's Accomplishments | | (U) | (U) | Havana Cuba.cu in English -- English-language government portal maintained by Center for Automated Exchange of Information, Cenai; daily updates; URL: <http://www.cuba.cu>]

⁴ [OSC | | LAP20091007361002 | 7 October 2009 | | Cuba: Fidel Castro Commentary Praises China's Accomplishments | | (U) | (U) | Havana Cuba.cu in English -- English-language government portal maintained by Center for Automated Exchange of Information, Cenai; daily updates; URL: <http://www.cuba.cu>]

⁵ [OSC | | LAP20090928380002 | 28 September 2009 | | Cuba: Fidel Castro Criticizes G20 | | (U) | (U) | Havana Cuba.cu in English -- English-language government portal maintained by Center for Automated Exchange of Information, Cenai; daily updates; URL: <http://www.cuba.cu>]

⁶ [OSC | | LAP20090413361001 | 11 April 2009 | | Cuba: Fidel Castro Discusses Hugo Chavez's Overseas Trip, Evo Morales's Efforts | | (U) | (U) | Havana Cuba.cu in English -- Government portal maintained by Center for Automated Exchange of Information, Cenai; daily updates; URL: <http://www.cuba.cu/>]

⁷ [OSC | | LAP20090330380002 | 30 March 2009 | | Cuba: Fidel Castro Comments on Chinese Economy, Biden Remarks on Cuba | | (U) | (U) | Havana Cuba.cu in Spanish -- Spanish-language government portal maintained by Center for Automated Exchange of Information, Cenai; daily updates; URL: <http://www.cuba.cu>]

⁸ [OSC | | LAP20090203391001 | 2 February 2009 | | FYI -- Cuban Ceremony Marks Decade of Chavez Presidency | | (U) | (U) |]

⁹ [OSC | | FEA20081119793324 | 19 November 2008 | | Cuba, China Sign Accords, Defer Credit Payments | | (U) | (U) |]

¹⁰ [OSC | | LAP20091001464001 | 30 September 2009 | | Cuban Media Highlights Development of Chinese Socialist Market Economy | | (U) | (U) | Havana Cubavision in Spanish -- Government owned, government-controlled television station]

¹¹ [OSC | | LAP20090930361002 | 30 September 2009 | | Program Summary: Havana Cubavision NTV Spanish 1700 GMT 30 Sep 09 [HAV] | | (U) | (U) | Havana Cubavision in Spanish -- government owned, government-controlled television station]

¹² [OSC | | LAP20091001361001 | 1 October 2009 | | Program Summary: Havana Cubavision NTV Spanish 1700 GMT 1 Oct 09 [HAV] | | (U) | (U) | Havana Cubavision in Spanish -- government owned, government-controlled television station]

¹³ [Online Publication | | Granma | | 30 September 2009 | | <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2009/09/30/interna/artic06.html> | 30 September 2009 |]

¹⁴ [OSC | | LAP20090930380007 | 30 September 2009 | | Program Summary: Havana Radio Rebelde 1000 GMT 30 Sep 09 | | (U) | (U) | Havana Radio Rebelde in Spanish -- leading government radio station; Cuba's preeminent domestic radio network]

¹⁵ [OSC | | <http://www.ain.cubaweb.cu/2009/julio/17edchina.htm> | 17 July 2009 | | China: economía próspera vs calamidades | | (U) | [Description of Source: Havana ACN in Spanish -- Official news agency; a division of AIN (Cuba's National News Agency); URL: <http://www.ain.cu/>]

¹⁶ [OSC | | http://www.trabajadores.cu/materiales_especiales/columnistas/juan-dufflar-amel/china-los-frutos-de-una-economia-planificada | 14 May 2007 | | China: Los frutos de una economía planificada | | (U) | Havana Trabajadores Digital in Spanish -- Weekly publication by the Cuban Workers Federation, CTC; URL: <http://www.trabajadores.cu/>]

¹⁷ [OSC | | <http://www.cubadebate.cu/opinion/2008/03/13/la-economia-latinoamericana-y-la-recesion-economica/> | 13 March 2008 | | La economía latinoamericana y la recesión económica | | (U) | Havana CubaDebate.cu in Spanish -- State-controlled website publishing articles by journalists from Cuba and abroad meant to counteract "media terrorism" against Cuba; URL: <http://www.cubadebate.cu/>]

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¹⁸ [OSC | | <http://www.eleconomista.cubaweb.cu/2009/nro363/economia-china.html> | 28 August 2009 | | Los secretos de la economia china | | (U) | Description of Source: Havana El Economista de Cuba Edicion Online in Spanish -- Digital publication of the National Association of Cuban Economists and Accountants; URL:

<http://www.eleconomista.cubaweb.cu/>]

¹⁹ [OSC | | http://www.temas.cult.cu/articulo.php?titulo=La%20modernizaci%F3n%20econ%F3mica%20en%20China:%20%BFotra%20herej%EDa?&autor=Julio%20A.%20D%EDaz%20V%E1zquez&datos=Profesor%20titular.%20Centro%20de%20Investigaciones%20de%20Econom%EDa%20Internacional.%20Universidad%20de%20La%20Habana.&numero=50-51%20abril-septiembre%202007&link=revistas/50-51/07_DiazVazquez.pdf&num=50-51&name=Transiciones%20y%20postransiciones | 30 June 2007 | | La modernizacion economica en China: otra herejia? | | (U) | Description of Source: Havana Temas Magazine Online in Spanish -- Cuban Government quarterly theoretical journal on society and ideas, although the publication also claims no affiliation with any state organization or institution. Internet: <http://www.temas.cult.cu/>.]

²⁰ [OSC | | LAP20090904380001 | 4 September 2009 | | Cuba: Photos of Fidel Castro's Meeting With Chinese Leader | | (U) | (U) | Havana Granma Online in Spanish -- Website of the official daily of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba; URL: <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/>]

²¹ [OSC | | LAP20090903380002 | 3 September 2009 | | Cuba: President Castro Meets With Chinese Legislator | | (U) | (U) | Havana Granma Online in Spanish -- Website of the official daily of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba; URL: <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/>]

²² [Internet Site | | AIN | | 2 September 2009 | |

<http://www.ain.cubaweb.cu/2009/septiembre/septiembre02iggfirma.htm> | 14 October 2009 |]

²³ [Internet Site | | AFP | | 2 September 2009 | |

http://ve.invertia.com/noticias/noticia.aspx?idNoticia=200909022143_AFP_214300-TX-UZJ11&idtel= | 14 October 2009 |]

²⁴ [OSC | | LAP20090903380004 | 2 September 2009 | | Cuban Foreign Minister Meets With Chinese Officials | | (U) | (U) | Havana Prensa Latina in Spanish -- Government news agency; URL: <http://www.prensalatina.com.mx/>]

²⁵ [OSC | | LAP20090903380002 | 9 September 2009 | | Cuba: Vice President Cabrisas, China's Trade Minister Hold Talks | | (U) | (U) | Havana Prensa Latina in English -- English-language website of government news agency; URL: <http://www.plenglish.com.mx/>]

²⁶ [OSC | | LAP20090908464007 | 8 September 2009 | | Cuba, China Renew Biotechnology Cooperation | | (U) | (U) | Havana ACN in Spanish -- Official news agency; a division of AIN (Cuba's National News Agency); URL: <http://www.ain.cu/>]

²⁷ [OSC | | LAP20091014380002 | 13 October 2009 | | Cuba: Castro Diaz-Balart in China | | (U) | (U) | Havana Prensa Latina in English -- English-language website of government news agency; URL: <http://www.plenglish.com.mx/>]

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