



China: The Changing Dynamics of Mobilization Under Informatized Warfare

OE Watch Commentary: “Mobilization is born for war and executed toward war.” That is how the accompanying Chinese article, published recently in *Jiefangjun Bao*, begins. The article is part six of a series of articles on the concepts and roles of informatized warfare in various military functions, in this case mobilization.

China’s National Defense Mobilization Law went into effect in July 2010. According to the law, the National People’s Congress Standing Committee has the power to place the national economy and civilians in China, to include foreign assets, in a war-time footing if state sovereignty, unification, territorial integrity, or security is threatened. In 2010, theorists and military scholars were still researching the concept of informatized warfare as new technologies were coming online. Ten years later, with the future battlefield becoming so complex, the face of mobilization is changing as well.

The PLA has embraced the concept of science and technology, bringing the military and the mobilization effort to new heights. The authors of the article explain that the rapidly changing revolution in informatized warfare will change the form and methods of mobilization. They look at the strategic functions of national defense mobilization in the new age and ask the question of how China might “seize future commanding heights and establish a powerful, new-type mobilization support setup” that can fully support an actual combat.

The authors explain that the future of informatized warfare extends beyond the concept of military strength. It also comprises “comprehensive national power.” In this era of informatized warfare, the side that is able to set up/mobilize the fastest will be at an advantage over the other.

In the era of informatized warfare, the entire inner dynamics of the future battlefield has evolved. For example, support is no longer needed predominantly for a ground battlefield, but rather it has expanded to a multi-dimensional space in land, sea, air, electromagnetics, and cyber. It has gone from a campaign level to a strategic level. A mobilization system, according to the authors, needs to consider the construction of the entire support model.

Because of technology, joint operations are becoming increasingly precise under the conditions of informatized warfare (precision strike, precision support). Because of the growing complexity of warfare (joint operations involve multiple armed services... technology, increasingly rapid decision making), the traditional mobilization method, which had once been used during the age of mechanized warfare, will no longer suffice. It needs to be much more precise and calculated. The authors refer to “precision mobilization support,” saying it needs to be turned into a powerful “lever” for the enhancement of combat strength.

The authors anticipate that the ongoing competition for superiority in science and technology will only intensify, and whoever masters advanced science and technology and can form deterrence and combat strength through rapid mobilization and agglomeration, will become a ‘disruptor’ of conventional superiority and a ‘dominator’ in future rivalries and military struggles among great powers.

They also paint a picture of a “hybrid war” in which lines are blurred between military and civilian participation (civil-military integration), between the front and rear, and between strategic, campaign, and tactical operations. Because of these increasingly blurred lines, intelligent technology becomes more critical and therefore intelligent mobilization is stepping up the tempo and becoming increasingly important at all levels. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“...Whoever masters advanced science and technology and is capable of forming deterrence and combat strength through rapid mobilization and agglomeration will become a ‘disruptor’ of conventional superiority and a ‘dominator’ in future rivalries and military struggles among great powers.”

Source: Yu Yunxian and Yuan Zongyi, “信息化战争应有怎样的动员观 (What Kind of Mobilization Concept Should Informatized Warfare Have?),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 2 April 2020. http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2020-04/02/content_258063.htm

Mobilization is born for war and executed toward war. With the rapid development of the S&T revolution, a number of new-type combat forces with extremely high operational effectiveness have taken the stage of war and helped bring about essential changes to the form and operational mode of informatized warfare, and consequently, fundamental transformations will definitely be made to the ideas, demands, methods and so forth of national defense mobilization as well...

Given that joint operations involve multiple combat-engaging armed services, vast battlefields, and intensive use of technology, and, at the same time, come with high intensity, a quick tempo, and massive consumption of goods and materials, the task of mobilization support is extremely heavy and arduous.

We can anticipate that the contest for S&T supremacy in the future military sphere will be more intensified. All major powers in the world today, who are vigorously adapting to new changes and pushing ahead with transformation, are studying how to convert intangible quality S&T potential into tangible war capabilities, thereby seizing the strategic new heights in military S&T innovation. Hence, whoever masters advanced science and technology and is capable of forming deterrence and combat strength through rapid mobilization and agglomeration will become a “disruptor” of conventional superiority and a “dominator” in future rivalries and military struggles among great powers. Thus we are required to firmly establish the idea of science and technology being the core mobilization power...

...The age of intelligent mobilization has quietly come and is moving up-tempo to the forefront of war and becoming an important component, and by taking part in the entire process of joint operations with all elements involved at all times, it has evolved into a key factor in informatized warfare and a “linchpin” vital to the outcome of war.

...This is not only an attempt to actively adapt to and design the rules of future warfare, but also the key to gaining an early start and winning the initiative in future informatized joint operations.

In the age of globalization, international, regional, and business-to-business cooperation is getting closer and closer, and the allocation and turnover of such important resources as goods and materials, technology, talent, and equipment is getting more handy and smooth region-wide or even worldwide. This is an inevitable trend of economic and social development, and also provides an even broader platform for national defense mobilization.