

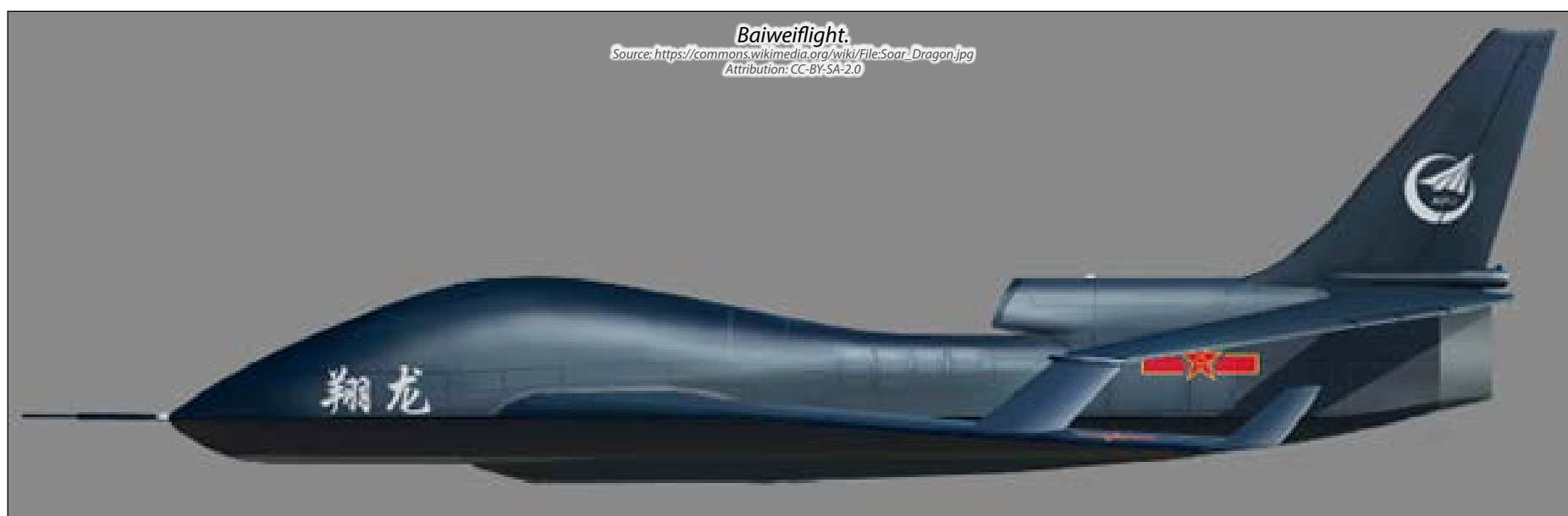


# China: Employing UAVs in Intelligentized Air Operations

**OE Watch Commentary:** Artificial intelligence is viewed by the Chinese as a growing force that will change the form of war, and Chinese military analysts are looking more closely at “intelligentized” operations. For example, in the following article excerpt, published in *People’s Daily*, the authors explain that unmanned air combat operations will create foreseeable qualitative changes in future “intelligentized” air operations. They go on to outline five different ways unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) can be used to enhance air power. In the first method, described as “air mobile operations,” UAVs can be dispatched in advance to conduct forward penetration under more volatile situations. Second, in “air block operations at close quarters,” UAVs get into the combat mix to collect and distribute real-time intelligence and target information. This provides an all-around situational awareness about the battlefield. Third, in “air block operations,” manned aircraft remain outside of firepower range and covertly command UAVs to perform the different combat tasks. Fourth, in “operation to seek air supremacy,” UAVs, through their comprehensive capabilities, protect manned aircraft. This allows the manned aircraft to focus on the overall battlefield situation. Finally, in “strategic air attack,” the UAV’s endurance, lower detectability, and ultra-long range raid capabilities significantly improve an aircraft’s penetration and survivability in wartime.

The authors argue that in order to develop UAV technology, existing technology first needs to be improved, more high-end talent needs to be trained, and technical difficulties need to be overcome. They believe that China’s UAV industry is bound to be on the rise. They argue that UAVs will benefit the military sector and possibly even the civilian sector. Finally, they conclude that artificial intelligence will be the key driver to the success of UAV combat capability. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

***“...UAV intelligent coordinated air operation will not only bring great revolutionary changes to the methods of air operations in the future, but also impact and disrupt the methods of operations for aviation forces.”***



**Source:** “智能化战争下的空中无人作战 (Unmanned Air Combat Operations Under Intelligentization,” *People’s Daily*, 15 September 2020. <http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0915/c1011-31861929.html>

*As a foreseeable brand-new combat force and an effective channel for the development of system-of-systems operations, the UAV intelligent coordinated air operation will not only bring great revolutionary changes to the methods of air operations in the future, but also impact and disrupt the methods of operations for aviation forces.*

*The employment of air power in operations mainly includes five methods of operations, namely, air mobile operation, air support operation at close quarters, air block operation, operation to seek air supremacy, and strategic air attack operation.*

*... As a key technology identified in the future of unmanned combat aircraft, artificial intelligence will become the foremost disruptive technology in the next step of development. Once a breakthrough is made, the intelligent coordination, intelligent mission, and intelligent flight capability of unmanned combat aircraft will become a reality and the main force in future air operations.*

*... With China’s S&T development and the continuous enhancement of China’s national defense strength, China’s UAV industry is bound to be on the rise. UAVs can not only be used in the military sector, but also will show its might in the civilian sector.*

*In the long run, artificial intelligence will become an important driver of UAV combat capability.*