

Chinese Delegates Discuss Requirements for the PLA to Lead the Next Military Revolution

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OE Watch Commentary

2021 marks the beginning of China's 14th Five-Year Program for National Economic and Social Development and Long-Term Goals for 2035. Part of the 14th Five-Year Plan reportedly offers a blueprint for China to achieve the goal of building up the People's Liberation Army (PLA) by 2027, the 100th anniversary of its founding. The following article, published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, the official newspaper of the Central Military Commission, explains that the 14th Five-Year Plan lays out a strategic plan for China to accelerate the modernization of its national defense and military.

The evolution of warfare is accelerating and “the construction of an intelligent military system has become a major trend in the development of the world's militaries.” In order to “leapfrog” the West, Li Daoming, a Navy representative, is pushing to accelerate construction of an advanced combat theory system and to “seize the initiative in the world's military revolution.” Wang Haidou, an Army representative, argues that in order to “leapfrog in intelligent buildout,” along with developing innovative products, China has to “master cutting-edge military technologies.” These comments underscore China's desire to lead the way in developing intelligent, autonomous systems. Intelligitization, a Chinese term, is viewed as the next generation of warfare. (See “China's Concept of ‘Intelligitization’: Self-Teaching Systems,” *OE Watch*, March 2021).

Another key conclusion from the article is that while China continues to aspire to lead the next “revolution of military affairs,” the PLA must focus on developing a talent base needed to support these and other military objectives.

While China has been making great progress in upgrading military weapons and equipment, there seems to be a general consensus among the delegates that having trained military personnel capable of operating these systems continues to be a challenge. Wang Xiaoxia, a professor at the Rocket Corps Non-Commissioned Officer School, argues that in training new military talent, the PLA first needs a new educational system that integrates military academy education, military training, and military vocational education.

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Another representative points out that “without the support of a stable pool of talent, it will be difficult to keep up with the pace of transformation.” This representative further argues that developing qualified talent is essential to meeting new military requirements “of the integrated development of mechanization, informationization, and intelligitization” and that developing trained and qualified personnel should always stay ahead of the overall development of the military. Finally, Huang Xin, a representative from the 74th Group Army, sees modern warfare as a contest between high-quality talent.

Source: Qian Xiaohu and Han Chen, “军队代表委员热议“十四五”规划开局和全面深化改革工作 (PLA Delegate Members Hold Heated Discussions on the Start of the 14th Five-Year Plan and the Work of Comprehensively Deepening Reforms),” *Jiefangjun Bao* (PLA Daily, the official newspaper of the Central Military Commission), 5 March 2021. http://81.cn/yw/2021-03/05/content_9996713.htm

Sail through the waves, set sail after dreams. The “Proposals of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Formulating the 14th Five-Year Program for National Economic and Social Development and Long-Term Goals for 2035” orchestrated a lofty blueprint for starting the new journey of building a socialist modern country in a comprehensive way and marching towards the second centenary goal. This important document also made a strategic plan for accelerating the modernization of national defense and the military, clearly proposing to improve the strategic ability to defend national sovereignty, security, and development of interests, and to ensure the attainment of the goals for the centenary of the Chinese military in 2027.

“On the track of the world's new military revolution, China is still playing catch-up.” Representative Zhan Houshun from the Air Force said that only by racing against time and hurrying up can we nurture opportunities in a crisis and start a new game amid changes.

Representative Wang Haidou from the Army said: “If you want to leapfrog in intelligent buildout, you must first master cutting-edge military technology and develop independent innovative products.”...

“We must have a few more ‘trump cards’.” ... In his view, the military information network is the key material basis to promote the development of the integration of mechanization, informatization and intelligence of our army, and to win the future intelligent warfare.

Representative Wang Xiaoxia, a professor at the Rocket Corps Non-Commissioned Officer School, said that to train new military talent, it is necessary to accelerate the formation of a new military talent training system that integrates the “trinity” of military academy education, military training, and military vocational education, and promotes both the coupling and in-depth development of military vocational education and actual combat.