



China: Achieving Strength through Big Data and “New Quality Combat Forces”

OE Watch Commentary: China has been developing what it refers to as “new quality combat forces” (新质作战力量) and focusing on using cutting-edge technologies to try to gain asymmetric advantages. Articles on the subject, such as the two accompanying excerpted articles have been popping up in various media sources over the past months, indicating the growing importance.

In the article published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, the daily newspaper of the Central Military Commission of the PLA, the authors write about offsetting technological differences through offensive measures that use new cutting-edge technologies. They add that since China’s use of force is either equal to or inferior to its adversaries or competitors, the strategy is to “gain greater weight for asymmetric winning.” One way to gain greater weight is through the use of “new-type weaponry” that is based on providing support to data link technology, with information systems at the core. This new equipment is based on support of data link technology.

“Steal the firewood from under the pot,” is a parable included in the 36 strategies of ancient China. This parable can be explained by, when facing an enemy too powerful to engage directly, first weaken him by undermining his foundation and attacking his source of power. The authors of the first article explain that it is important to actively implement the tactic of attacking the opponent’s weaknesses by playing up your own strengths. In doing so, the goal is to beef up their own forces equipped with new cutting-edge technologies through informatized defensive operations in air defense, missile defense, counter precision strike, counter-special assault, and counter-biological raid operations in an effort to ensure combat power in ground operations remain intact.

The article published by *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* offers more details and examples of how the PLA Army can apply “big data” to hone its “new quality combat forces.” This term, “new quality combat forces,” seems to have come about only in the past two or three years. The article includes a section that describes how to use these forces as the “iron fist” to win battles. It describes the future battlefield as consisting of new-quality combat forces for special operations, cyber operations, and long-range operations that have a high degree of technological elements, special operational mechanisms, and unique operational effects, significantly more so than today. This new type army force system will be of an “appropriate size and structure.” It will be merged into joint operations and be versatile in staging three-dimensional operations and great efforts will be placed in developing special operations forces and the aviation forces to strengthen efforts in reconnaissance and early warning efforts. These new type forces will play a leading role in the main battle force. They will be the “cream of the elite forces for ground operations” and will be able to overpower opponents “in one stroke on the battlefield.” All of these technologies being put into place may seem somewhat obscure, but it is clear that China is pursuing an approach that differs from the traditional building up of forces that might be seen in a Clausewitz-style of warfare.

China has long lagged behind in technological capability. Some in the country believe they are now poised to pave the way to new technological development in information and other systems in hopes of creating an asymmetric advantage that will allow it to defeat any adversary that might otherwise equal them in strength. At the center of its efforts will be a serious push to use big data as a means to boost combat power. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: “Hui Yong and Sun Qianggen, “善用“奇器”谋取非对称优势 (Making Good Use of ‘Cutting Edge Technology’ for Asymmetric Advantage),” *Xinhua*, 14 June 2018. http://www.xinhuanet.com/mil/2018-06/14/c_129894397.htm

The Army’s asymmetric operations in the age of information, through the innovative development and combined implementation of new cutting-edge technologies, may deliver fatal overloaded destruction to the enemy’s operational system, and may also effectively protect one’s own operational system, thus producing operational effects that go beyond conventional expectations and achieving a superb result of asymmetrical winning.

... it is essential to actively implement the tactic of “attacking the opponent’s weaknesses by giving playing to one’s strengths”, and beef up the high-effectiveness protection capabilities of the forces equipped with new cutting-edge technologies through carrying out informatized defensive operations in the forms of air defense, missile defense, counter-precision strike, counter-special assault, counter-biochemical raid operations, thus guaranteeing that one’s combat power can be effectively maintained in ground operations. It is essential to step up the informatized technological upgrading and transformation of the existing defensive weapon systems and platforms for ground operations, step up the input and use of the cutting-edge defensive technological forces...

Source: Li Dayong, “这是新型陆军建设发展史上一个标志性事件 (A Landmark Event in the Annals of the New-Type Army’s Building and Development),” *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao*, 31 May 2018. http://zqb.cyol.com/html/2018-05/31/nw.D110000zgqnb_20180531_1-12.htm

“The new-quality combat forces plays a leading role in the main battle force as a sharp dagger and an iron fist. They are the cream of the elite forces for ground operations, and are able to overpower opponents in one stroke on the battlefield!”...

According to what these authors learned, since the founding of the Army’s leading organ, they have focused on the building of a modernized new-type Army force system featuring an appropriate quantity size and an appropriate organizational structure, being effectively merged into joint operations, and being versatile in staging three-dimensional operations throughout the whole territory, with great efforts being made to develop the special operations forces and the aviation forces, to optimize and strengthen the reconnaissance, early warn, and information support forces, to modernize and reorganize the assault, long-range precision strike, air defense and missile defense forces, to actively foster the forces for unmanned operations and for cyber offensive and defense, thus pushing the building of digitalized, three-dimensional, special operations, unmanned, modularized Army forces up to a higher new level.