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CMSI Translations #12: Strengthen Command Capabilities to Win Future Naval Battles

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翻译

TRANSLATIONS

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Strengthen Command Capabilities to Win Future Naval Battles[1]

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Chairman Xi Jinping's emphasis on "strengthening command capabilities" has indicated the direction of effort and injected a powerful impetus for all-level commanders to fulfill their main responsibilities, meet challenges from adversaries, and win future naval battles. Observing the emerging patterns of new combat capabilities in new domains and reviewing the year's work to prepare for war, in the case of new combat platforms, commanders' ability to strengthen their command capabilities is reflected in their dual responsibility for both the platform and the system. This includes the responsibilities to scientifically coordinate maneuver and firepower to address threats from individual ships and aircraft, to fulfill responsibilities for domain specific operational tasks, and to serve as a system hub for new combat power and shaping advantageous combat postures for the formations and systems. These responsibilities expand the meaning of command capabilities and place higher demands on commanders.

Commanders need to be familiar with the battlefield. PLA Marshal Liu Bocheng once said, "If the five elements are not properly grasped, you will be utterly defeated." These "five elements" refer to the mission, the enemy situation, our situation, the terrain, and time. Only by thoroughly understanding these five elements can one truly grasp the mission and understand the battlefield. The physical space of future battlefields is expanding further, and the "cloud environment" based on network information systems is increasingly becoming the "invisible support" for battlefield construction. Extreme battlefield environments—such as high altitudes, extreme distances, extreme depths, and extremely small spaces—are entering the practice of war, and the battlefield space is becoming full-spectrum and full-domain**.** Platforms with new qualities are being deployed into unfamiliar sea and air spaces for research and training. [Commanders must] deeply study military geography, vigorously use the enemy to train our troops (*nadi lianbing*),[2] and properly cultivate "personnel with expertise on our opponents"

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[1] 为功 [Wei Gong], 练强指挥能力 打赢未来海战 ["Strengthen Command Capabilities to Win Future Naval Battles"], 人民海军 [*People's Navy*], 11 January 2023, p. 4.

People's Navy is the official newspaper of the PLA Navy. "Wei Gong" is a pseudonym.

[2] **Translator's Note:** The term "use the enemy to train our troops" (拿敌练兵) refers to using peacetime encounters with foreign forces as a means to train Chinese forces through simulated attacks and testing one's own skills/capabilities against those of the future adversary. For more information on this concept,

(*duishoutong*) who are well-versed both internally and externally as well as "think tanks" that know both ourselves and the enemy.

Commanders need to ascertain the situation. The "fog of war" pervades the battlefield, and deception is without exception an inherent trait of military strategists. Whether it is "distributed lethality" or "manned-unmanned cooperative operations," no matter how good the opponent's concepts are, they must operate under the constraints of physical laws. They also depend on the ability to exchange information below the sea-sky line, in space, or beyond the mountains, as well as on the creation and utilization of time windows. This leaves ample room for us to adopt various countermeasures. The opportunities for victory in battle are hidden within information and data. We collect massive amounts of data every day, but the key is how to analyze and utilize this data. Data that cannot be transformed into actual actions for combat preparation and warfighting is dead data; simply reporting or locking away acquired data is equivalent to having no data. Extracting from data the "miracle elixir" to defeat the enemy should be a matter of conscious thought and action for every commander.

Commanders need to make precise decisions. [They must] focus on the different characteristics of using the troops with new combat capabilities in new domains, such as new-type main battle ships that are meant to operate in distant seas, take on heavy responsibilities, and engage in tough battles. Such ships will face continuous, multi-dimensional saturation attacks from opponents, while also undertaking the heavy responsibility of systems operations including assaulting the land from the sea (*youhai xianglu*)[3] and controlling the air from the sea (*yihai zhikong*). The high rate of fire of shipborne weapons and equipment and the high difficulty of replenishment at sea determine the limited nature of the "capability window" for naval combat. The basic principle of eliminating the enemy and preserving oneself requires commanders to master different tactics for different combat targets, as well as master different countermeasures for anti-ship missiles, intelligent munitions, drone swarms, and other targets. They must understand the limitations on the capabilities of personnel and equipment, seize the most advantageous timing, choose the most appropriate equipment, calculate the most optimal plans, and complete missions both "quickly" and "economically."

Commanders need to remain calm in changing situations. The only constant on the battlefield is endless change, and commanders' ability to calmly and decisively adapt is honed through risk, danger, and loss. Wargaming brings operational plans to life, Red-Blue opposition-force exercises bring battlefield situations to life, and practicing damage control—such as occurred during the rescuing the USS STARK frigate—brings actual-combat experience to life. The essence of realistic combat training is to truly bring these real combat scenarios to life. Only then can commanders' adaptability and capacity for handling contingencies be perfected.

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see https://jamestown.org/program/using-the-enemy-to-train-the-troops-beijings-new-approach-to-prepare-its-navy-for-war/

[3] **Translator's Note:** The term *youhai xianglu* (由海向陆) literally means "from the sea to the land."

Commanders need to conduct after-action reviews and close the loop. The prerequisite for further progress after a battle is to conduct a review after that battle; otherwise, progress will stagnate. Even if we have not fought the battle ourselves, reviewing others' battles can be highly beneficial, such as in the case of the U.S. military reviewing the Falklands War between the United Kingdom and Argentina. Especially for global challenges like anti-submarine warfare, the quality of the after-action review affects the lessons learned and their consolidation by commanders and operators, directly determining success or failure. Without after-action review, there is no closing of the loop, but merely reviewing does not mean achieving closure. It is also necessary to establish a feedback mechanism that integrates front-line combat applications, equipment demonstrations, and scientific research and production. This allows commanders and scientists to interact, experience, and grow together, achieving a positive interaction between realistic combat experience and technological progress, truly closing the loop.