

OPINIONS

Observer: China's new Five-Year Plan highlights importance of technology and innovation

By Robert Lawrence Kuhn | People's Daily app

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One must view China's 14th Five-Year Plan from the perspective of the country's overarching vision: be in the "front ranks" of innovative countries by 2035, and a "global scientific power" by 2050. In

formulating the "14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25)," and in setting a long-range 15-year plan to 2035, the CPC, in its 19th Central Committee's 5th plenum in October 2020, established a "new development stage," developing a "new development philosophy" and applying a "new development paradigm."

Clearly, the new development stage, philosophy and paradigm demand that scientific and technological innovation be the top priority in order to create new development momentum by accelerating key core technology capabilities and research.



Robert Lawrence Kuhn (Photo provided to People's Daily)

The 14th Five-year Plan emphasizes artificial intelligence and machine learning, integrated circuit design and manufacturing (semiconductor chips), quantum computing, life sciences and biotechnology (including brain sciences), and new materials. Technological applications emphasize the digital economy, 5G, intelligent manufacturing, healthcare,

alternative energy and new energy vehicles, and space and sea sciences, among others.

Moreover, in light of disrupting international conditions, led by US sanctions and pressures, China must have a laser focus on self-reliance in science and technology by preparing for de-globalization and uncoupling of scientific and technological cooperation and supply chains; indigenous innovation must alleviate bottlenecks and make up for shortcomings, particularly in semiconductors.

But there are challenges: When huge funds are allocated by government and time-periods are demanded to be short, it is all too easy for resources to be misallocated, causing inefficiencies, waste, distraction and disappointment.

To avoid this, the Chinese government is tightening peer-review procedures and engaging the private sector. There are issues that are being enhanced, such as intellectual property protection, and there are concerns that must be paid attention to, such as data privacy and AI-driven unemployment.

One lens through which to view China's science and technology is that of the New Development Concepts, which fit the new development stage and drive the 14th Five-Year Plan. Of the five Concepts, innovation holds the top spot.

The lesson China learned when it fell behind the West in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries is that a closed society, even if then leading the world, cannot be sustained on its own. For China to achieve its grand goal of becoming a fully modernized socialist country by 2050, and basically so by 2035, including become a global scientific power, it must continue to open up in all aspects, including making China a desirable market for foreign companies and a desirable home for foreign talent.

The author is chairman of the Kuhn Foundation. The opinions expressed in the article reflect those of the author, and not necessarily those of the People's Daily.

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