

# Back to the Future: The Rise of Militarization in China in the 2020s

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## Summary

China is ramping up efforts to safeguard its national security in a world ruptured by hot and cold wars. A key approach is militarization, which is the mobilization of major parts of the nation and economy to prepare for militarized competition and armed conflict across multiple domains. This can be seen from calls from top leaders like Xi Jinping to prepare for the most “extreme” circumstances to the growing presence of defense industry representatives in top-level political and bureaucratic institutions like the Politburo. Prime goals of this militarization effort include forging a tight integration of the civilian and defense economies and ensuring the defense industrial base can meet the military’s expansive needs. This militarization process is poised to accelerate over the next decade. Whether a militarized China is more prone to going to war is up for debate, but its leaders want to ensure that the country will be ready.

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## Key Findings

- The People's Republic of China originated as a highly militarized state in 1949 because of existential threats to its survival. This lasted until the country embarked on economic development at the beginning of the 1980s. National security assumed growing importance under Xi Jinping's rule from the early 2010s, and militarization-related priorities began to gain traction in the early 2020s. This emphasis on militarized preparedness was highlighted by Xi's call in 2023 for "extreme thinking."
- The militarization of China's politics and the bureaucracy is becoming increasingly visible, with defense industry leaders being appointed to the Politburo, top provincial roles, and key state ministries.
- National Strategic Integration (NSI) appears to be the policy approach primarily responsible for guiding militarization. NSI is opaque and still in its infancy, but it seeks to establish a deeply integrated civil-military system of systems across many economic and technological domains. Another objective of NSI is supporting the efforts of the People's Liberation Army to become a world-class fighting force by its 2027 centenary.
- Chinese militarization efforts have focused on strengthening the defense science, technology, and industrial base, and there is growing evidence that this sector is operating at a wartime pace. Chinese policymakers make a distinction between the traditional and new defense industrial bases, the latter of which focuses on emerging technologies and expanding China's capabilities in space, cyber, and information warfare.
- Comparative studies suggest militarized states are more likely to go to war than civilian regimes. Elements of militaristic ideology are beginning to gain influence in Chinese political culture, making the use of force a more palatable policy option. China is increasingly flexing its military power, and the pace and scale of China's militarization drive is likely to accelerate.

## Introduction

As the Trump administration seeks to remake the global trading system to its advantage, China has stood out for its strident opposition and tit-for-tat response to U.S. plans. This uncompromising stance has been made possible because of extensive preparations that the Xi Jinping regime has made over the past decade in anticipation of deepening economic ruptures with its archrival. The People's Republic of China (PRC) has also been gearing up for an even more expansive showdown with the United States revolving around protracted militarized competition and armed conflict.

This policy brief examines the rise of militarization in China since the beginning of the 2020s.

The definition of militarization used here is the strategic process by which states that perceive their national security as endangered prepare for adversarial confrontation that includes war.

This is carried out by pursuing efforts to build militarized power and capabilities across the economic, political, social, military, and external domains. Militarization is about mobilizing countries and economies as a whole—not just military establishments—to prepare them for militarized competition and armed conflict across multiple domains.

This brief examines a number of issues that together provide a detailed picture of the current state of, and future trends in, China's militarization process, including:

- The PRC's extensive history of engaging in militarization
- Xi's call for militarization through the mantra of "extreme thinking"
- The militarization of the political and bureaucratic domains
- National Strategic Integration, which is the fledgling policy approach central to guiding the militarization process
- The role of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in militarization, especially focused on its evolving strategic threat assessments and how that is impacting military strategy
- Militarization activities taking place in the defense industrial base
- The economic costs of militarization
- A global resurgence in militarization, especially following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The brief concludes by considering whether militarization makes China more prone to go to war. This raises the issue of the prevalence and influence of militarism—the ideological thinking, beliefs, and intentions behind a country's war preparations—in top-level Chinese policymaking and strategic culture.

## The PRC's Long History of Militarization

The PRC has lived under the shadow of militarization for more than three decades of its 75-year history. The country was on a permanent war footing between its founding in 1949 and the early 1980s as its survival was threatened at various times by the United States and the Soviet Union. A large proportion of China's industrial economy was dedicated to militarized production and the country pursued economic autarky. This prolonged period of militarization, economic isolation, and zealous central planning crippled economic development and left China well behind the developed world.

As China opened up and liberalized its economy from the 1980s, it also undertook a far-reaching demilitarization process to drastically reduce the defense burden. This saw a significant reduction in the size of the PLA and the defense industrial base, which allowed resources to be shifted to the civilian economy. This demilitarization drive played an important role in the transformation of China into the global economic powerhouse that it is today. The current remilitarization of the country could signal a return to this earlier security-obsessed era, especially if it is coupled with autarky and increased control by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

## Xi's Call for "Extreme Thinking"

Since taking office in 2012, China's paramount leader Xi Jinping has prioritized the building of China as a world-class innovation, national security, and military power. Up until the mid-to-late 2010s, China was still on friendly cooperative terms with the United States and other Western countries and had access to their technology markets, which Chinese entities eagerly engaged with.

When the United States began to impose economic sanctions against China as part of its strategy of great power competition from 2018, China quickly responded by ramping up the securitization of its economy by hardening supply chain resilience, lessening dependence on foreign technologies, and building up domestic markets. As this economic securitization gathered momentum in the early 2020s, Xi also began to emphasize the importance of militarizing the Chinese economy.

In a speech to the country's national security establishment in May 2023, Xi said there must be adherence to "extreme thinking."<sup>1</sup> Xi offered no detailed explanation of what the term meant, but Chinese analysts say extreme thinking is associated with the process of preparing for wartime contingencies—or, in other words, militarization.

Xi's understated call to promote extreme thinking was intended for the civilian system, as the military and defense industrial establishments were already engaged in an accelerated drive to build up their warfighting and production capabilities. While there has been little public official mention of extreme thinking since Xi's remarks, the call to action has been received loud and clear within the Chinese bureaucracy.

A high-level policy document issued in December 2024 by 14 government ministries stressed the need to strengthen the country's emergency communication capabilities for "extreme circumstances" because of instructions from Xi on the need to "adapt to the higher requirements for emergency communications in extreme scenarios and major security and emergency situations in the new era."<sup>2</sup>



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## The Militarization of the Political and Bureaucratic Domains

Signs of militarization in China are becoming more visible. Evidence of this in the policymaking arena is the elevation of leaders from the defense industrial constituency to the upper echelons of political and bureaucratic power. At the 20th Party Congress in 2022, four officials closely tied to the defense industry were appointed members of the Politburo, accounting for nearly 20 percent of its lineup, which is the largest-ever level of representation by the defense industry in one of the party's top political institutions.

In addition, a sizeable number of long-serving defense industry officials have been placed in powerful positions overseeing key economic and provincial portfolios. Of the country's 34 provincial-level administrations, 20 percent—six provincial party secretaries and one governor—have defense industry backgrounds, including in major provinces and municipalities such as Chongqing, Xinjiang, Liaoning, and Heilongjiang.

But the growing presence and clout of the defense industrial constituency in the higher tiers of party and state power does not mean that civilian rule is under threat or being marginalized. On the contrary, Xi has significantly tightened his and the Communist Party's control over the military and broader defense establishment. One of his main tools in achieving complete military obedience is a permanent anti-corruption and political rectification campaign that has seen the ouster of hundreds of generals, including those holding high-level military posts such as defense minister and Central Military Commission vice chairman. Consequently, the militarization taking place in the Chinese political and bureaucratic system is mission oriented and focused on achieving national security goals, rather than the politically motivated militarization associated with military takeover of civilian rule.

## National Strategic Integration

The Chinese policy approach that is central to guiding the militarization process is called Integrated National Strategic Systems and Capabilities (INSS, 一体化国家战略体系和能力), which for brevity will be referred to as National Strategic Integration (NSI).<sup>3</sup> Xi's desire to forge a strategic economy that seamlessly links the civilian, military, and strategic domains is nothing new and his administration has been pursuing the related strategy of military-civil fusion (MCF) since the mid-2010s. But NSI appears to be a bigger, bolder, and broader undertaking than MCF, and involves integrating the highest and most strategic parts of China's economic, technological, military, and national security systems. NSI will be a key instrument in Beijing's policy toolkit as it engages in the security-centric component of great power competition with the United States and its allies.

NSI is a top-level system-of-systems construct intended to coordinate and pool together strategic capabilities and resources from across civil and military, central and provincial, and state and private sector jurisdictions to create a more capable and integrated system able to perform better than the sum of its constituent parts in the execution of strategic and national security tasks. Xi Jinping has referred to the construction and improvement of NSI as a complex systems engineering undertaking.

NSI has so far been a black box with very little public information on its activities and how it is set up and operates. However, the tight veil of secrecy surrounding NSI was pulled back slightly when Xi talked about the NSI concept publicly for the first time to military delegates at the National People's Congress in 2023.

Xi identified several key priorities for NSI, some of which were especially relevant to militarization.<sup>4</sup>

- Strengthen the defense industrial base to enhance resilience of its industrial infrastructure and supply chains and improve its structural layout
- Increase the country's strategic reserve capacity and intensify efforts to build strategic infrastructure and integrate strategic resources
- Improve coordination of national development and national security, especially between economic and national defense construction
- Support the PLA in its pursuit of its 2027 centenary goals and build the armed forces into a world-class leader over the longer term

The structure and organization of NSI is opaque, but a PLA scholar said that the Central Military Civil Fusion Development Commission (CMCFDC) has been "responsible for the top-level design, overall layout, coordination, promotion, and supervision of the implementation of the INSS" in close liaison with central and local-level agencies.<sup>5</sup> This analyst said that the involvement of the CMCFDC means that an "institutional system has been established whose specific duty is to provide a strong organizational guarantee for the continuous promotion of the INSS." The role of the CMCFDC as the principal organizational vehicle for NSI indicates a very close relationship between MCF and NSI.

Xi himself indicated, in March 2023 remarks, that centralized and unified leadership by the CCP Central Committee would be imperative for NSI. The CMCFDC and the newly established Central Science and Technology Commission are most likely the principal agencies in charge of leading and coordinating the implementation of NSI.

## The PLA and Militarization

The PLA has been engaged in a long-term military modernization drive dating back to the beginning of the 1990s, but this effort has generally been conducted at a peacetime tempo to upgrade aging capabilities and keep pace with global developments. It has not been directly aimed at any specific country, with a few notable exceptions. The first is the PLA's efforts to develop the capabilities necessary to win a war in the Taiwan Strait since the early 1990s. The second is the PLA's development of strategic deterrence capabilities against the United States in the aftermath of the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in 1999. Third is the militarization of Chinese-held islands and shoals in the South China Sea since the beginning of the 2010s. While the Taiwan and U.S. issues have added urgency and intensity to the PLA's rearmament and renewal process in select areas such as ballistic missiles and naval capabilities, the overall pace and scale of the modernization drive was deliberate and moderate until the mid-to-late 2010s.

This measured approach is also reflected in China's Military Strategic Guidelines (MSG), its national military strategy. The latest version of the MSG came out in 2019, and its central guidance is to plan and prepare for "informatized local wars," which is a continuation of the previous 2014 MSG.<sup>6</sup> This means that the PLA sees any future wars that it should prepare to contest as being conflicts fought with limited aims occurring on China's periphery.

One component of the 2019 MSG that appears to begin to consider the deterioration in China's external security environment is the section on strategic assessment, which explains the global strategic context in which the PLA must plan and prepare its strategies and operations. PLA officials involved in drawing up the 2019 MSG said the "international strategic situation has undergone profound and complex changes" that are leading to "major changes that have not

been seen in a century, which will inevitably bring about uncertain factors that have not been seen in a century. The predictable and unpredictable risks and challenges of national security have increased, requiring the military strategic guidance to adapt to the needs of national security and development."<sup>7</sup> The biggest threats and challenges to China's national security are the United States and Taiwan, and the 2019 Defense White Paper describes the Taiwan issue as a "fight against separatists [that] is becoming more acute."<sup>8</sup>

Shortly after the completion of the 2019 MSG, the PLA's strategic assessment of its security environment appears to have turned more negative in alignment with the national leadership's worsening perspective. This downward strategic assessment and the implications for the PLA's planning and preparations is demonstrated in the 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP, 2021–25), in which the PLA is ordered to significantly accelerate the pace of its military modernization and bring forward key elements of the implementation timetable from 2035 to 2027, which is the 100th anniversary of the founding of the PLA.

The objectives and programming activities of the 2027 timetable have been kept deliberately vague, but the FYP states the PLA will increase its "strategic capability to defend national sovereignty, national security and development interests, and ensure achievement of the centennial objective of building" a modern military by 2027. This accelerated timetable for defense development is an important piece of evidence showing China's turn towards militarization.



Xi offered more details as to what was contained in the 2027 guidance in his 20th Party Congress keynote speech.<sup>9</sup>

- Build a strong strategic deterrence system
- Increase the ratio of new domain forces
- Speed development of unmanned, intelligentized combat capabilities, and promote the coordinated development and application of network information systems
- Improve the command systems for joint operations and enhancing reconnaissance and early warning capabilities, joint strikes, battlefield support, and integrated logistics support
- Implement major projects to develop defense science and technology, weapons, and equipment, and move faster to translate science and technology advances into combat capabilities
- Consolidate and enhance integrated national strategies and strategic capabilities through better sharing of resources and production factors between the military and civilian sectors
- Improve the layout of the defense science, technology, and industrial systems and step up capacity building in these areas
- Improve defense mobilization capacity and reserve forces

These last three components—the defense industrial base, mobilization, and NSI—are important elements of the militarization process as they require significant engagement with civilian sectors.

The PLA had already undergone a far-reaching makeover in Xi's first decade in power, but his new instructions have elevated the pace, scale, and revolutionary nature of change to the Chinese defense establishment to decisively turn it from a primarily defensive, conventionally armed, ground force-centric, and industrial-age peacetime outfit with limited power projection

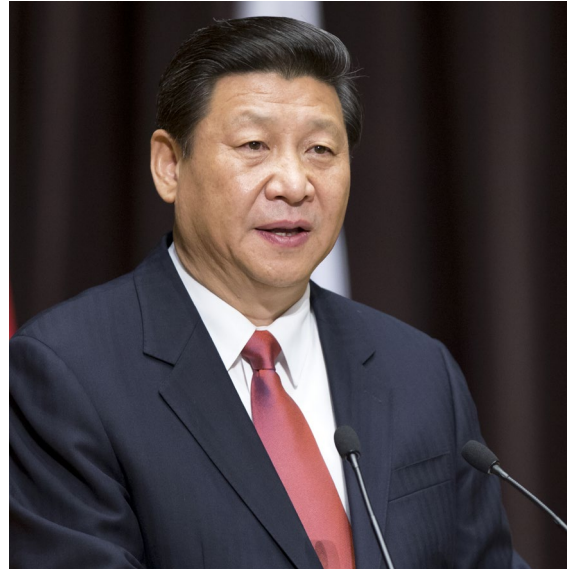


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capabilities into a far more globally capable, offensive, nuclear-armed, joint, and information-era war-ready force able to compete with the United States and its allies.

This focus on militarization has been sharpened by the lessons the Chinese defense and national security establishments are learning from the Russia-Ukraine war. Russia went to war against Ukraine in 2022 without militarizing the country beforehand, and consequently had to scramble to transform the economy into a wartime mode as the conflict became increasingly protracted and attritional in nature. Although China has publicly avoided taking sides in the war, Beijing has provided ample dual-use technological and industrial assistance to Moscow. This has given Chinese policymakers first-hand insight into the critical need to prepare its economic, industrial, and technological sectors for wartime contingencies well ahead of time.



## Militarization Policies Towards the Traditional and New Defense Industrial Bases

The defense science, technology, and industrial base (DSTIB) is a core focus of militarization efforts. An important measurement of militarization is the scale and pace of defense-related output that is being produced and where it is going. There is growing evidence to indicate that a significant portion of the Chinese DSTIB is operating at a wartime tempo to accelerate the flow of weapons to the PLA. This includes the shipbuilding, space and missile, nuclear, aviation, and defense electronics sectors.

In the case of the naval shipbuilding industry, the PLA Navy almost doubled the size of its major surface and submarine combatant force between 2010–20 from 131 to 211 vessels, according to the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence. That is an annual production rate of eight warships.<sup>10</sup> Admiral Samuel Paparo, commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, said in May 2025 that the Chinese naval industry manufactures two submarines and six warships annually, compared to 1.4 submarines and 1.8 warships coming out of U.S. shipyards.<sup>11</sup> This level of output has increased in both quantity and quality since the beginning of the 2020s as the PLA Navy brings into service larger, more capable and advanced vessels such as aircraft carriers and cruisers.

Between 2017–24, the Chinese shipbuilding industry built eight Renhai-class cruisers with another two under construction.<sup>12</sup> In 2024, the Chinese naval shipbuilding industry had an estimated two-dozen submarines, frigates, destroyers, amphibious assault ships, cruisers, and aircraft carriers under construction or being outfitted, ready to enter service in the second half of the 2020s.<sup>13</sup> This would further extend the PLA Navy's status as the world's largest navy in terms of the number of warships it operates.

The nuclear weapons industry is engaged in a similarly intensive efforts to rapidly build up the country's arsenal. The U.S. Defense Department estimated in 2024 that China had more than 600 operational nuclear warheads in its stockpile and projected that this arsenal would increase to more than 1,000 by 2030.<sup>14</sup> When Xi came to power, China's nuclear inventory was estimated to be around 180 weapons. This means the Chinese nuclear weapons industry is producing around 35 nuclear weapons annually, which includes intercontinental and submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

Since the early 2020s, the Chinese authorities have begun to distinguish between two types of defense industrialization efforts: a long-standing mainstream process for the traditional DSTIB, and an alternative pathway for emerging defense and dual-use technological and industrial domains. Xi first raised this differentiated approach in his 20th Party Congress work report when he talked about the need to “improve the layout of the defense science, technology, and industrial system and step up capacity building.”

For the traditional DSTIB, Xi highlighted two top priorities. First was the requirement of building “a strong strategic deterrence system,” which refers to a large increase in the size of strategic capabilities such as nuclear weapons to deter the United States, as well as other deterrence capabilities to deal with key contingencies such as in the Taiwan Strait. Second was the demand for faster implementation of major projects to develop weapons and equipment, and the need for more rapid translation of research and development into combat output. This would require significantly improving the workings of the defense innovation and acquisition systems, especially to help the development of high-end, cutting-edge weapons platforms.

For the new and emerging DSTIB, Xi gave two pieces of guidance. First was the need to increase the size of “new domain forces,” which refer to space, cybersecurity, and information support capabilities. Second was a call to speed up the development of unmanned intelligentized combat capabilities and network information systems, which would include drones, big data, and artificial intelligence (AI)-enhanced systems.

At the 2024 National People’s Congress, Xi talked more about the need for the defense establishment to meet the challenge of a profoundly changing defense technology landscape. He said that “a rare opportunity” has opened up for “strategic capacity building in emerging fields,” pointing out that these strategic emerging capabilities are an important element of NSI.<sup>15</sup> Several domains were highlighted.



#### **Maritime capabilities**

This concerned preparing for “maritime military struggles, protection of maritime rights and interests, development of the maritime economy, and improving the management of the oceans.”



#### **Aerospace capabilities**

The focus here is on optimizing the structure of the aerospace sector and promoting its construction.



#### **Cybersecurity**

Building up a cyberspace defense system and improving the national network security system.



#### **Intelligentized technology projects**

Planning and implementation of major intelligentized technology projects that includes artificial intelligence, advanced robotics, and smart automation capabilities.

Xi said that the development of these strategic emerging capabilities required close coordination between “new quality productive forces” (NQPF) and “new quality combat effectiveness” (NQCE). NQPF is Xi’s mission-oriented strategic guidance of applying technological innovation in new and emerging domains to support the rapid development of advanced manufacturing capabilities focused on strategic emerging industries. NQCE is a new generation of diversified and efficient combat capabilities brought about by combining new and emerging technologies with innovative combat concepts and techniques, especially through advanced informatized and intelligentized systems and precision strike capabilities. Informatization as it relates to NQCE concerns the rapid acquisition, transmission, and processing of battlefield information, while NQCE, from an intelligentized systems approach, is the application of advanced AI-related technologies, big data, and autonomous and intelligent technologies such as unmanned combat systems and intelligent decision support systems to improve combat effectiveness.

NQCE requires the Chinese DSTIB to significantly expand from its traditional areas of concentration on conventional and strategic weapons research, development, and production and invest in new and emerging strategic industries. Some of these domains like maritime and space are within the core competencies of the shipbuilding and missile industries, but other emerging arenas such as cyber, AI, and intelligentization will require the forging of truly new industrial capabilities.

## The Militarization Burden

Militarization and high levels of defense spending go hand in hand, but this is not the case for China, at least according to official Chinese data, which show that the annual defense budget has been in a tight range of between 1.2–1.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) since the 1990s. While strong economic growth between the 1990s and early 2010s allowed the defense budget to increase at double-digit rates for much of this period, a significant slowdown in GDP growth since then should have meant lower rates of increase and, consequently, a more restrained pace of defense modernization. But the PLA has instead been increasing the pace and scale of its military buildup.

Western estimates put the Chinese defense budget between 25–40 percent higher than Chinese government figures.<sup>16</sup> This would mean China's actual defense spending is around 2 percent of GDP, which would be in the vicinity of what France (2 percent in 2024) and Germany (2.1 percent) allocate, but well below what the United States spends (3.4 percent).

However, the defense budget does not adequately capture the complete range of activities and domains involved with militarization, such as dual-use activities. A broader measure of the economic costs of militarization is required. One concept that would cover much of the militarization footprint is the techno-security burden, which refers to a core base of entities whose responsibilities are primarily devoted to national security, as well as a broader techno-strategic base covering a diverse array of organizations with more secondary affiliations to national security affairs. A 2022 study of the Chinese techno-security state estimated the techno-security burden to be 5–6 percent of GDP, which, while high, is still affordable and sustainable on a long-term basis.<sup>17</sup> By comparison, the U.S. techno-security burden is between 6–7 percent of GDP.

## The Global Militarization Resurgence

China's turn towards militarization at the start of the 2020s was just ahead of a resurgence in militarization activities across the world—and especially Europe—following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In the run-up to its invasion, Russia did not embark on a full-scale militarization drive, in order to avoid exposing its strategic intentions and because it expected to win quickly, so did not anticipate the need for a major mobilization of its national resources. But Russia had to rapidly transform itself into a wartime enterprise as the war became prolonged and attritional in nature.

Western and Central European countries also began to take gradual steps to shift from a post-Cold War mindset to a pre-war posture. This was far from easy or smooth, as their military establishments and defense industrial bases had been extensively hollowed out since the 1990s. A simple quantitative gauge to indicate the willingness of a country to invest in its military capabilities is defense spending as a proportion of GDP, and NATO had set a guideline that individual members' defense expenditures should be 2 percent of GDP in 2014.<sup>18</sup> But only six of 32 NATO members met this target in 2021. In 2024, two years after the start of the Russia-Ukraine War, 23 NATO countries were spending above this guideline.<sup>19</sup> European militarization activities received another major jolt after the second Trump administration came into power in 2025 and began to openly question U.S. treaty commitments to NATO and Europe.

For the United States, the maintenance of a large-scale military, defense industrial, and national security establishment has been a central pillar of national power since World War II. This means that militarization has sometimes seeped into policies, processes, and institutional culture. This was especially the case during periods of high threat such as the Cold War and the global war on terror.

The second Trump administration is embracing militarization and militaristic thinking and practices it on a far greater scale and intensity than any previous peacetime administration. This has included the militarization of the entire U.S. border with Mexico, declaring that the United States is being invaded to justify the use of wartime laws to deal with domestic issues, seeking the sovereign takeover of foreign lands such as Greenland, the Panama Canal, and Canada, and promising to ramp up defense spending to \$1 trillion in 2026, compared to \$850 billion in 2025.

## Does Militarization Make China More Likely to Go to War?

The central purpose of China's militarization drive is to prepare the country for protracted militarized competition and war. But does militarization also make it more likely that China will go to war? Comparative studies of militarization find a greater probability of militarized states going to war than civilian regimes.<sup>20</sup>

Militarism is the most useful concept with which to assess China's political and strategic intentions driving its militarization. Militarism concerns the ideological thinking, beliefs, and intentions behind a country's preparations for going to war. Militaristic ideology sees war as normal and desirable, so the use of force becomes a readily available and even preferred policy option.

Militarism as a political ideology has made steady inroads into the policy thinking and strategic culture of the Xi regime. This is most apparent in the increasingly aggressive flexing of Chinese military power around its borders in the Taiwan Strait, South and East China Seas, and Sino-Indian border. This militaristic behavior has so far been limited and cautious, although Chinese activities have been growing more threatening and intensive in the past few years, especially towards Taiwan. While the Chinese authorities are willing to engage in gray-zone activities that come close to—and occasionally cross over into—violent conflict, they remain committed for now to stay below that threshold.

Another prominent feature of militarism is the penetration of militaristic values and beliefs into mainstream social practices and political life. This has become more evident in China in the Xi era. This extends from popular culture such as military-themed blockbuster films to increasingly robust legal protection of military-related interests and values through new and enhanced laws.

China in the mid-2020s has a growing but still early-stage militarization process, and increasingly active but constrained militaristic impulses. But as the country's external military and national security environment becomes more complicated, threatening, and urgent, the pace and scale of China's militarization drive will accelerate and its willingness to use these capabilities is also likely to increase.

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16. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimated China’s defense budget in 2024 was \$314 billion, which is 35 percent higher than the official Chinese figure of \$233 billion. See “Unprecedented rise in global military expenditure as European and Middle East spending surges,” SIPRI, April 28, 2025, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2025/unprecedented-rise-global-military-expenditure-european-and-middle-east-spending-surges>. The U.S. Defense Department does not offer its own estimates, but points out in its 2024 Chinese military power report that a survey of multiple unspecified models employing market exchange rates and purchasing power parity indicated actual Chinese defense expenditures were between 40 percent to 90 percent higher than the official Chinese figure. *Military and Security Developments Involving the PRC 2024*, Op Cit, p148.
17. Tai Ming Cheung, *Innovate to Dominate: The Rise of the Chinese Techno-Security State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022).
18. “Defense Expenditures and NATO’s 2% Guideline”, North Atlantic Treaty Organization website, April 3, 2025, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49198.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49198.htm).
19. “Who’s at 2 Percent? Look How NATO Allies Have Increased Their Defense Spending Since Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine”, *Atlantic Council*, July 4, 2024, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/econographics/whos-at-2-percent-look-how-nato-allies-have-increased-their-defense-spending-since-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/>.
20. See Julian Schofield, *Militarization and War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) for a number of case studies.

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