

China’s Military-Civil Fusion Strategy: A View from Chinese Strategists

Executive Summary

Introduction

Every leader of the PRC from Mao Zedong to Hu Jintao has pursued some form of military-civil integration. CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping has gone a step further by making its current form, Military-Civil Fusion (MCF), a hallmark policy initiative of his administration. In 2014, MCF was elevated to the level a national grand strategy “in response to complex security threats and as a means of gaining strategic advantages.” MCF is integral to Xi’s vision for a strong military and national rejuvenation.

While MCF has been the subject of several studies, existing English language analysis of the strategy has failed to articulate its full ambitions. Most characterizations present MCF as simply a means of transferring advanced technology to the PLA or highlight its implications for particular capabilities or technologies. This report, grounded on speeches by Xi Jinping and publications by Chinese military scholars heavily involved in articulating strategy within the Chinese government, captures MCF strategy’s full agenda and explains the ways in which it connects to other national strategic priorities. In doing so it attempts to avoid the danger posed by overemphasis on a particular aspect of the strategy—and the risk of missing the implications for China’s broader ambitions.

Principal Findings

Military-Civil Fusion is China’s path to victory in a global confrontation of systems. According to Chinese strategists, modern, informatized warfare is characterized by a systems confrontation that pits states’ respective defense strategies, systems, and degree of civil-military synergy against one another (See p. 36). The side most able to adapt and muster the will and strength of society as a whole to support security and development goals will prevail. In their view, Military-Civil Fusion represents an approach to governance that could directly support China’s transformation into a powerful nation and its ability to prevail in a long-term strategic competition. Xi assesses MCF as “conducive to the transformation and structural change of China’s model for economic growth and development, and is conducive to enhancing the national warfighting capacity and defense capability.” Without it, China will struggle to achieve its strategic goals.

MCF has clearly defined near-term goals and a roadmap for achieving them. The near-term goal of the MCF strategy is achieving a state of “MCF deep development” characterized by streamlined processes and resource sharing to achieve interconnectivity, higher efficiency, and optimal allocation of resources (See pp. 25-35). In its roadmap, MCF development occurs in 12 domains identified as having high levels of commonality between civilian and defense systems and great potential for further integration. These include six traditional domains, three major security domains, a growing number of nascent technological areas. Each domain is examined in detail in Section 3 of the report.

Domains Prioritized for MCF Development

Six Traditional Domains	Three Major Security Domains	“n” Nascent Technological Areas
1. Fundamental (Infrastructure)	1. Maritime	1. Biotechnology
2. Manufacturing	2. Space	2. New Energy
3. Science and Technology	3. Cyberspace Security and Informatization	3. Artificial Intelligence
4. Education		
5. Social Services		
6. Emergency and Public Safety		

Xi Jinping wants to promote MCF from a higher standpoint, on a wider scale, and at a deeper level. Xi regards previous efforts at integrating civilian and military sectors as having under-delivered. As a result, there is real urgency in his calls to achieve concrete results and to rapidly transition from “early-state fusion” to “deep fusion” (See pp. 23-24). Chinese sources describe military-civil “deep fusion” as enabled by the formation of the six *Systems of Systems (SoS)*, which are dynamic ecosystems linking the defense and civilian sectors. Together, the domains and the six SoSs form the backbone of the MCF strategy (See pp. 30-31).

The Six Systems of Systems (SoS)

Defense Infrastructure	+	Civilian Infrastructure	=	Fundamental Domain Resource Sharing SoS
Defense Technology Industrial Base	+	Civilian Technology Industrial Base	=	Advanced Defense Technology Industrial SoS
Defense Innovation System	+	Civilian Innovation System	=	Military-Civil Coordinated Technology Innovation SoS
Military Personnel Cultivation System	+	National Education System	=	Military Personnel Cultivation SoS
Military Logistics System	+	State Social Service System	=	Socialized Support and Sustainment for the PLA SoS
National Defense Mobilization System	+	State Emergency Management System	=	National Defense Mobilization SoS

The end goal of the MCF strategy is to gradually build up China’s unified military-civil system of strategies and strategic capability. Chinese leaders and strategists want to unify and coordinate military and civilian development strategies, bringing the totality of China’s capabilities to bear in strategic systems competition (See pp. 36-38). This report examined the linkages between the various pieces of the MCF strategy and China’s other national strategic priorities to understand how MCF advances the PRC’s overarching security and development goals (right).

The Hierarchy of China’s National Strategies	
1 st Tier: National Strategies at the “Most Macro Level”	Belt and Road Initiative (pp.104-106) Innovation-Driven Development (pp. 73-83)
2 nd Tier: National Strategies for Critical Domains	Manufacturing Power Nation (pp. 59-72) Maritime Power Nation (pp. 94-96) Cyber Power Nation (pp. 97-98) Space Power Nation (pp. 99-100) Artificial Intelligence 2.0 (p. 103)
3 rd Tier: Regional Development Strategies	Northeast Revitalization Western Revitalization (p. 57, 72)

The MCF strategy supports China’s global ambitions. China has two national strategies, *Going Out* and the *Belt and Road Initiative*, that actively promote expansion of its presence and national economic interests abroad. Chinese strategists reason that the globalization of great powers’ interests will inevitably require development of capabilities to protect overseas national interests. The MCF strategy complements and supports both strategies. Efforts include the “going out” of the national defense industry, the development of overseas logistics facilities, and international military exchange activities under the *Belt and Road Initiative* (See pp.104-106).

MCF has made notable progress toward enhancing interconnectivity and resource sharing in these domains during the 13th Five Year Plan period (2016-2020). Evaluating China’s capabilities will require ongoing monitoring of MCF developments to provide accurate assessments. For example:

- A management structure for MCF development has been assembled that permeates the entire Party, state, and military structure of the PRC from Beijing to the provinces.
- The Central Military Commission S&T Committee created mechanisms to rapidly leverage civilian technologies in response to defense technology innovation needs.
- A new MCF policy promotes scientific data-sharing across a wide range of national scientific research facilities.
- 118 civilian universities now have some form of personnel education and training agreement with the PLA.
- PLAAF Logistics Department signed agreements with five leading logistics and delivery service companies.
- The Space-Earth Integrated Information Network Megaproject is underway (See p. 98).
- The PLA Army is working with civilian telecoms to improve its information infrastructure (See p. 100).

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