



# On Development History of China's Military Economy Construction

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**Abstract.** Due to the influence of the international and domestic situation, the national security strategy and the military strategy, the central work of the state for a certain period of the time, the understanding and grasp of the law of the military economic development in theory, since the founding of New China, China's military economic construction has shown phased typical characteristics. The development history of China's military economy can be divided into five stages, namely, the period of exploration and adjustment, the period of economic priority, the period of both military and economic aspects considered, the period of overall coordination, and the period of integrated development, each with its own characteristics. The law of the development of China's military economy shows that if the construction of the economy and the construction of the national defense move in opposite directions, they will tear the relationship between the national security and the development, resulting in an inability to take care of both; only if they move forward side by side and develop in coordination can they form a joint and effectively guarantee the national security and development.

**Keywords:** Military economy construction; Development history; China.

## 1 Introduction

The construction of the military economy is an important part of the overall economic construction of the country, and the two promote each other and complement each other. The military economic construction has not only promoted the innovation of the defense technology and the development of the military industry, but also led to the upgrading of related industrial chains, promoted technological progress, and made important contributions to the country's economic construction and social harmony and stability. The military economy plays a strategic, foundational, and leading role in the national macro-economy. It is an important guarantee for the national security and a significant force for the economic growth and the technological innovation. Its importance is mainly reflected in the following aspects. Firstly, the construction of the military economy is the cornerstone of the national security and stability. The military economic construction is directly related to the national defense strength, ensuring the national sovereignty, security and development interests are not violated.

The strong national defense capability is a prerequisite for the sustainable development of the national economy. Without a safe and stable environment, the economic construction is out of the question. Secondly, the military economy has promoted the technological innovation and industrial upgrading. The military demand often leads to cutting-edge technological breakthroughs, which are then converted into the civilian industries through the integration of the military and civilian sectors, driving the economic and industrial upgrading. Thirdly, the military economic construction drives the investment and employment, and promotes the economic growth. For instance, the defense spending is a significant portion of the government expenditure, directly driving the investment in the military manufacturing, infrastructure construction, scientific research and other fields. Lastly, the military economy construction helps to optimize the economic structure and enhance the ability to resist risks. The military industry usually involves the high-end manufacturing, which helps to reduce the low-end overcapacity and improve the quality of the economy. In times of war or crisis, the military-industrial complex can quickly convert its production capacity, enhancing the resilience of the national economy.

Due to the influence of the international and domestic situation, the national security strategy and military strategy, the central work of the state for a certain period of the time, the understanding and grasp of the law of the military economic development, since the founding of New China, the relationship between the military and the economy has undergone many major adjustments, and the construction of the military economy has shown phased characteristics. According to the substantive content of the economic construction in our country, it can be divided into five different periods: the period of exploration and adjustment, the period of economic priority, the period of both military and economic aspects considered, the period of overall coordination, and the period of integrated development.

## **2 Period of Exploration and Adjustment**

### **2.1 Phase of Military and Economy Being of Equal Importance**

From the founding of New China to the convening of the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Party, the international and domestic situation was complex and changeable, the national security strategy and the military strategy changed several times, and the military economic construction of our country has been in constant exploration and adjustment. At the beginning of New China, the domestic and international environment was very bad. This has all required China to build a modern and powerful national defense as soon as possible. However, the defense foundation of New China was extremely weak and the defense industry is also completely incapable of manufacturing the advanced weapons. In this situation, the Central Committee of the Party considered the moment and the situation, and clearly put forward the idea that the economic construction and the national defense construction should be into account, emphasizing that "building a strong defense force" and "building a strong economic force" should be grasped as two major events. <sup>[1]</sup> This is the earliest exposition of our party on the military economic construction thought. The

military expenditure is maintained at a high level of 32.9%-43.1% of the total fiscal expenditure. <sup>[2]</sup>

## 2.2 Phase of Giving Priority to Economic Construction

In 1954, the peace diplomacy advocated and followed by China won the sympathy and support of many developing countries at the Bandung Conference, and a relatively relaxed international and peripheral security environment for China. It was precisely for this reason that China was able to focus on the national construction. In the same year, our country adjusted its military strategy and determined the establishment of an active defense policy. However, after the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, the relations of the Chinese and Soviet parties and countries, began to show cracks, with the contradictions and struggles intensifying day by day, gradually heading towards the confrontation. Meanwhile, the US has adopted a more hostile attitude and stance towards China. The international situation during this period, while it began to change from relaxation to severity, was still relatively favorable to China's concentrating its efforts on domestic construction. Proceeding from this correct analysis and judgment, the Party and the state decisively brought the military economic construction back from wartime to peacetime track and achieved a new sublimation in the understanding of the relationship between the defense construction and the economic construction, thus initially forming the basic guiding principle that the defense construction should give way to and serve for the construction and, at the same time, take care of the defense construction. In accordance with the above guiding principles, in the past decade, the defense expenditures have been continually reduced, the number of the troops drastically cut down, and a solid first has been made in the modernization of our armed forces. At the same time, the state was able to invest more resources into the economic construction, which achieved great success. the economic construction also took into account the requirements of the militaryness, and provided strong support and cooperation for the national defense construction. the period of integrated development.

Accordingly, the defense-related science and technology industry, which serves as a link between the economic construction and the national defense construction, has put forward the principle of "military-civilian integration" since its inception. In 1956, Mao Zedong put forward the idea that the construction of the defense science and technology industry should be combined with that of civil, and required that in production, the attention should be paid to learning both military and civilian production technologies, and that in peacetime, the production should be for civilian use, and once is a special situation, it can be turned into the military production. <sup>[3]</sup> In 1957, the central government put forward the principle that the defense science and technology industry should implement the policy of "dual tasks, two sets skills, and integration of peacetime and wartime," that is, the defense science and technology industry and the construction of the defense facilities should serve the national economic construction, the focus on the national defense and the consideration of the civilian use, to achieve the military-civilian compatibility and the integration of the peacetime and wartime. According to this policy, the Party and the state have taken a series of measures,

boldly explored the national defense in practice, which not only enhanced the defense force, but also reduced the cost. [4]

### 2.3 Phase of Defense Construction Prioritization

From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, China's surrounding security environment experienced significant changes, undergoing a process from severe to partial easing, thus establishing the principle of prioritizing the defense construction over the economic construction. In the mid-1960s, the United States adopted a more hostile attitude and stance toward China. In 1964, the United States launched a massive invasion of Vietnam and dispatched military aircraft to carry out reconnaissance and harassment activities over the Chinese airspace. In 1965, the US Secretary of Defense even declared that "China is the enemy of the United States today." [5] This cannot but arouse greater vigilance and a stronger reaction in China against the aggression of the United States, and Sino-American relations become increasingly hostile. In 1964, as Sino-Soviet relations broke down. By the 1970s, the Soviet Union was increasingly strengthening its strategic deployment in the Far East, posing an ever greater threat to China. During this period, the Sino-US relations were gradually improving. In 1972, the President Richard Nixon visited China. In January 1979, China and the United States announced the establishment of the diplomatic relations. This marked a significant easing of the military pressure that China had faced for two decades on its eastern and southeastern flanks.

From 1964 onward, the Chinese leadership abandoned its earlier view that a new world war of a magnitude never before seen was imminent and that China to prepare for the worst. The national security issues have been given a more prominent position. The central government decided to make full preparations for a defensive war and began to build the defense projects, devoting a large amount of materials to the national defense construction. Under the guidance of this idea, the state's economic construction and national defense construction soon turned to a state of pre-war preparation, actively carrying out various-war preparations, the national defense construction was obviously superior to the economic construction, the economic construction gave way to the war preparations, obeying and serving the war preparations, the number of the troops increased, and the military expenditures increased. This would inevitably make the economic construction and the national defense construction incompatible. During this period, the state still adhered to the development idea that the national defense construction was superior to the economic construction. But the national economy stagnated and was on the verge of collapse.

In short, from the founding of New China to the pre-reform and opening-up period, due to the influence of such objective factors as the international domestic situation, the state's development strategy, and the military strategy, our Party and state's efforts to explore the relationship between the economic construction and the national defense construction have been in adjustment. During this period, the strategic layout of the economic and national defense construction was optimized through the "Third Front" construction, and the national defense industry accelerated its development accordance with the requirements of "Dual Tasks, Two Sets of Capabilities, and In-

tegration of Peacetime and Wartime," laying the foundation for China's national defense industry its status as a major power. But in this period, due to the lag in the economic construction, ultimately constrained the sustained development of the national defense construction. While the defense spending was excessive, it severely impacted the normal development of the national economy, not only causing adverse effects on the nation's economic construction and improvement people's living standards, but also directly leading to a widening gap between our military's equipment level and combat capability and those of foreign militaries. By the late 1970s, the overall gap between our national defense technology and the world's advanced level had widened to about 20 years.

### 3 Period of Economic Priority

In December 1978, two momentous events occurred in China that changed the destinies and the world order. One was the convening of the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, which established the economic construction as the central task of the Party and the state, shifted the focus of the national development from giving priority to the national defense to the economic construction, and officially launched China's reform and opening-up period. The other is the establishment of the diplomatic relations between China and the United States, and the gradual improvement of China's peripheral security environment.

After the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, the CPC Central Committee scientifically analyzed and accurately judged the overall situation of the strategic situation and the major changes in China's national security environment, and believed that peace and development had become the theme of the times, that the growth of the forces for the world exceeded the growth of the forces for war, and that it was possible to avoid a new world war for a long time.<sup>[6]</sup> Based on this scientific judgment, our Party made the strategic decision to transfer the focus of the work of the Party and the state to the economic development, and put forward the idea that the economic construction should be the central task and that the national defense construction should be subordinate to the overall situation of the economic construction. In order to make the national defense construction subordinate to and serve the overall situation of the economic construction, the Party and the state have taken a series of major measures, the need to forge ahead on a path of building a lean military with Chinese characteristics. The national defense and the armed forces focus on quality, the military expenditures were repeatedly squeezed and the armed forces were reduced in size, with the army being reduced by 27 percent in 1980 and 17.5 percent in 1982. Furthermore, the layout of the defense industry is continuously adjusted, and some military facilities such as airports, docks, warehouses, and military-only railway lines opened to the military by the army to cultivate dual-use military and civilian talents. These policies and measures have greatly relieved the national financial pressure and effectively supported the country's economic construction.

Many beneficial attempts were made during this period to coordinate the economic construction with the defense construction, with the focus on the military-civilian integration policy for the national defense science industry. Under the guidance of this principle, the defense industry has carried out a large-scale "Military to Civilian, Internal to External" transformation, realizing the transition a single military product type to a civil-military integrated type, and initially forming a civil-military integrated defense industry system, making new contributions to the development of the national.

Of course, while emphasizing the military's obedience and service to the overall situation of the national economic construction, we should also strengthen the national defense and military construction. Because the modernization of the national defense is an important aspect of the modernization of our socialist society, it itself involves the overall situation of the national construction and security. Under the guidance of the thought of taking the economic construction as the central task and making the national defense construction subordinate to and serve the overall economic construction, the Party and the state have taken a series of major measures, continuously reduced the scale of the defense expenditures, drastically reduced the number of the military personnel, adjusted the layout of the national defense science, technology, industry, implemented the principle of "Combining Military with Civilian, Combining Peacetime with Wartime, Giving Priority to Military Products, and Using the Civilian Sector to Support Military", and the military has actively supported the economic construction through such measures as opening up the facilities and equipment, training the dual-use talents, and transforming the military technology, thus promoting the steady of the country's economic strength and laying a solid foundation for the national defense construction. But due to the low military expenditure during this period, in the context of the country's continuous and rapid economic development, the proportion of the defense spending has declining, resulting in a significant lack of the investment in defense science and technology, a slowdown in the pace of the modernization of the national defense and the military, and an inadequate fulfillment of the defense needs. This has led to an imbalance between the defense and the economic development, not only widening the gap between the military's modernization level and the world's advanced level but profoundly affecting the overall leap and sustainable development capacity of the national defense strength.

#### **4 Period of Taking into Account Both Economic Construction and National Defense Construction**

Since the 1990s, the domestic and foreign political and economic situation has undergone qualitative changes. With the drastic changes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the world pattern evolved from a bipolar to a multipolar one, forming a situation of "One Superpower and Multiple Powers". In the economic field, the world economy is developing towards integration, and the comprehensive national power competition with science and technology and economy as the core is becoming increasingly fierce. In the field of the science and technology, a new

round of the technological revolution is flourishing, and high-tech, especially information technology, is widely used in various fields society. In the military field, the new military revolution has had a revolutionary impact on the future forms of the war, the military strategy, the operational theory, the combat style, the equipment system and the military personnel, and the form of the information warfare has begun to show its edge. In the field of security, a series of high-tech wars and the event of "9.11" have brought the new insecurity factors to the international, the traditional security threats have been reduced, and the non-traditional security situation such as the emergencies, the terrorism and the economic crisis has become increasingly prominent. These successive changes have made all countries have a new understanding of the relationship between the economic power, the technological power and the military power. All the major countries in the world have the pace of the economic construction and the defense adjustment.

Domestically, during this period, China's economy and society entered a comprehensive transition period. In the face of the new features of changes in the domestic and the international environment, the Central Committee emphasizes that the national defense construction and the economic are dialectically unified, and that if the economy is built up, everything else can be easily handled. Conversely, the national defense construction is also for the purpose of protecting the faster development of the economic construction. On this basis, the Central Committee has put forward the principle of "Always adhering to the principle of taking the economic construction as the central task, and taking into and coordinating the development of the economic construction and the modernization of the national defense".<sup>[7]</sup> Maintaining the continuous development of the economy, greatly enhancing the economic strength of the country, is the foundation for solving all problems, including the modernization of the national, and is also the key to our improvement of the international competitiveness, withstanding the pressure of the hegemonism and the power politics, and maintaining the national independence and sovereignty. On the other hand, if we do not strive to strengthen our national defense and improve the modernization level of the military equipment as our economy develops, we may be a disadvantage in case of war and find it difficult to effectively safeguard our national security. The national defense construction and the military struggle preparation must be able to ensure the interests and security of the country. Accordingly, the central government has taken major measures to strengthen the national defense construction, and defense spending has shown an upward trend year by year. Such as in 2002, the defense expenditure accounted for 1.6% of GDP, and the absolute volume also increased.<sup>[8]</sup>

The idea of "Attending to both the economic construction and the national defense construction and developing them in a coordinated way" is a reflection of our Party's initiative to pace with the times and its spirit of exploration, as well as a deepening and elevation of its understanding of the relationship between the economic construction and the national defense construction. In 1998, the "China Defense White Paper" first publicly put forward the principle of "Coordinated Development of National Defense Construction and Economic Construction", which shows the profound grasp of the Party and the state on the law of the development of the economic construction and the national defense construction, and is a scientific guide to correctly handle the

relationship of the two. <sup>[9]</sup> Under the guidance of this idea, the state has concentrated its efforts on the economic construction, while also strengthening the national defense, actively promoted the two-way transformation of the civil military technologies, fully relied on the national education to train the military personnel, and gradually carried out the military social security work, thus taking a new step in the coordinated development of the economic construction and the national defense.

## **5 Period of Overall Coordination of Economic Construction and National Defense Construction**

Entering the new century, the peace and development remain the theme of the times, the basic situation of the international politics remains generally stable, and the new international security mechanism being formed and developed. China's development still faces some potential threats and difficulties. The United States is reorganizing and strengthening its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, reinforcing military alliances, and accelerating the deployment of missile defense, and there are still unstable factors in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan has stepped up its efforts to push forward the constitutional revision process, adjust military security policies, develop and decide to deploy the missile defense systems, and its foreign military have increased significantly. Some countries continue to strengthen their military deployment and military alliances in the Asia-Pacific region, and some countries are even expanding the functions and scope of the activities of their armed. These unfavorable factors show that the geostrategic environment around China is still quite complicated, and the risk of war still exists, which demands that China must have the ability to contain war. <sup>[10]</sup> This period also saw China's relations with major powers at their best in history. The overall situation of China-US relations is stable and developing, and the two countries are committed to promoting a constructive cooperative relationship. China has also established a strategic cooperative relationship with Russia and has carried out extensive cooperation in energy, technology and other fields. China's relations with the EU are growing increasingly close, and many EU countries have established strategic partnerships with China. China has engaged in extensive cooperation and exchanges with the neighboring countries and has normalized relations with almost all of its neighbors. These situations have provided good opportunities for China's development. <sup>[11]</sup> Domestically, since the reform and opening up, our country has seized the opportunity to accelerate development and successfully achieved the first and second strategic goals of the three-socialist modernization construction. In the new century, our country is to continue to achieve the third step strategic goal of the socialist modernization construction, and build a moderately prosperous society in all respects. This goal is of the key significance to China's socio-economic development, marking a new stage of the comprehensive development.

The international and domestic situation above shows that in the foreseeable future, China can continue to strive for a relatively peaceful international environment, concentrate on its own economic, and make full use of the new opportunities provided by the economic globalization and the new technological revolution, speed up the strate-

gic adjustment and optimization of China's economic structure, improve the market economic system, and continuously enhance China's international competitiveness and influence in the process of full integration into the world economic system. Therefore, the report of the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that the first 20 years of the 21st century is an important strategic opportunity period that China must firmly grasp and can make great achievements. The Party Central Committee firmly seized and made use of the period of the strategic opportunities, and at the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it solemnly established the principle of the coordinated development of the economic construction and the national defense construction. In March 2006, the Fourth Session of the Tenth National People's Congress adopted the "*Outline of the Eleventh Five-Year for the National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China*", which clearly states that during the "Eleventh Five-Year Plan" period, in accordance the requirements of maintaining the national security, unity, and development interests, efforts should be made to strengthen the modernization of the national defense and the armed forces, and to form a good developing situation of the national defense construction and the economic construction in coordination. The relevant contents of the development program passed by the National People's Congress and the Party's meeting show that the problem of the coordinated development of the national defense and economic construction has been transformed from the level of concept and consciousness to that of the policy and law, and from the theory to practice. <sup>[12]</sup> In October 2007, the report of the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China pointed out that we must stand at the height of the overall situation of the national security and development strategy, coordinate the economic construction and the national defense construction, and realize the unity of enriching the country and strengthening the military in the process of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. <sup>[13]</sup> Under the guidance of the principle of coordinating the economic development and the national defense development, China has gradually increased its defense input on the basis of the sustained economic growth, and initially built a system of the military-civilian integration and the military-civilian cooperation in the weapons research and production, the military personnel training, the military supply, and the national defense mobilization. The economic construction and the national defense construction have achieved coordinated interaction at a higher level and a deeper level. The construction of the national defense and the armed forces has gradually entered a new period of rapid development.

## **6 Period of Integrated Development of Economic Construction and National Defense Construction**

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the Central Committee of the Party has profoundly seen the tortuous understanding and practical achievements our Party and country in dealing with the relationship between the economic construction and the national defense construction, and put forward the major strategic thought of the coordinated, balanced and compatible development of the

economic construction and the defense construction, which fully reflects the historical inheritance of our Party and country's understanding of the law of the coordinated development of the economic construction and the national defense construction at different times. The broad vision, strategic foresight, practical path and value concept embodied in this thought are the vivid practice and latest achievements of the Party and state's thought the coordinated development of the economic construction and the national defense construction in contemporary China, and are the enrichment and perfection of the Party and state's thought on the coordinated development of the economic construction and the national defense construction. China's military economic construction has embarked on a new journey of the development.

The strategic goal of the idea is to realize the unity of enriching the country and strengthening the military. It is not enough to maintain the national security and development only with strong economic power. Only when the military is strong and the deterrence is enhanced can it provide a reliable security guarantee for the economic development, maintain the stable external environment needed for the economic development, strive for as much time as possible for the economic construction. So We must strengthen our national defense and armed forces while developing our economy and achieving national prosperity so that to ensure that the PLA can, at all times, deal with various challenges and tests to the national security with ease, and provide reliable security guarantees for the economic construction.

The fundamental method of the idea is the overall planning. In recent years, as the revolution in science and technology, the revolution in industries and the new military reform have been accelerating, the intersection between the national defense economy and the economy, the military technology and the civilian technology, and the integration of the army building and social development are becoming increasingly wide and deep. This requires us to plan the economic construction and the national defense construction as a whole from the perspective of the overall development of the country, strengthen the overall planning and design at the national level, integrate and share important resources, and coordinate the construction of the major projects, so as to root the modernization of the national defense and the army in the system of the national economic social development.

The basic path of the idea is the deep integration of the military and civilian. Forming a comprehensive, multi-field, and high-efficiency pattern of the deep integration of the military and civilian development is the inevitable choice for China to realize the unity of the security and development, and the unity of enriching the country and strengthening the military. First, we must insist on the integration of all elements to promote the two-way flow and infiltration and compatibility of the information, technology, talent, capital, facilities, and between the military and the civilian sectors. Second, we need to integrate the multiple domains, extend from mainly serving large and medium-sized state-owned enterprises to diverse the economic entities, and expand from the traditional security areas to new security areas. The third is to adhere to the efficient integration, and to motivate the high-quality resources to serve the national defense construction by giving full play to the decisive role of the market in the allocation of the resources.

The powerful guarantee for the idea is the implementation of the rule of law. We must carry out the basic strategy of running the country and the military according to law, and be good at using the thinking and methods of rule of law to improve the level of legalization for the coordinated development of the economic construction and the national defense construction, build a comprehensive, relevant, and effective system of civil-military integration laws and regulations, and clarify the power boundaries and law enforcement requirements of different levels and departments and improve the law enforcement supervision mechanism. The coordinated, balanced and compatible development of the economic construction and the national defense construction must be vigorously promoted on the track of the rule of law.

## 7 Conclusion

Above all, China's military economic construction and development have shown typical stages. This development law shows that if the construction of the economy and the construction of the national defense go their separate ways, it will inevitably tear the relationship between the national security and, resulting in an inability to take care of both. The military economy construction is not only a "safeguard project" for maintaining the national security, but also a "growth engine" to drive the technological and industrial progress. In the national macro-economy, it is both a "safety valve" and a "booster", and plays an irreplaceable role in achieving-quality development and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The phased regularity of the military economic construction has important guiding significance for the formulation of the macro-strategies and policies in our country, especially in terms of the macroeconomic and industrial policies. The stage law of military economic development determines that the economic strategy must be adapted to the time. The military economic demands, technical levels, and changes in the international environment at different stages require the economic policies to be dynamically adjusted to ensure the coordination of the national defense security and the economic development. China is currently in the stage of "military-civilian integration plus strong military through science and technology". The policy should take into account both the national and economic development, and find a high-efficient and sustainable path of the military economic development with Chinese characteristics.

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