

# 10 Ways the United States Is Falling Behind China in National Security

By Mackenzie Eaglen

**In the realm of national security, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States may soon be on an equal footing in certain capabilities and domains. Beijing continues to leverage key structural advantages that are accelerating these gains.** Following is an overview of 10 areas in which the US security apparatus has lost its lead or is due to lag behind China's national security capabilities, absent significant efforts and intervention.



## 1. Total Military Investment

While the PRC's official military budget undercounts its actual defense investments, and the US figure overcounts its own, **a holistic analysis makes clear that China is at least matching the US in defense spending, in terms of both what it can afford and its rate of sustained growth over time.**



## 2. Hypersonic Missiles

American complacency in the race to build advanced hypersonic weapons is granting China a valuable head start.



## 3. Fleet Size and Strength

While the US Navy is stuck in neutral, with its fleet size set to decline over the next few years, **China maintains the world's largest battle force ship inventory and is making rapid strides as it continues to field a blue-water power projection fleet with a modernized arsenal.**



## 4. Integrated Air Defense System

With its web of sensors and antiaircraft weapons, **China's air defense system is a challenge to America's ability to project power in the Indo-Pacific** that could alter the calculus of conflict to favor Beijing and deter the US.



## 5. Manufacturing and Technological Industrial Base

While the United States is home to some of the most experienced and advanced shipbuilding, aerospace, technology, and defense manufacturing and innovation workforces, **China is making rapid technological advancements, boosting its industrial base output, and investing in research and development strategies to undercut the US.**



## 6. Minerals and Rare Earths

**Beijing has already demonstrated its willingness to weaponize American supply chains, including by exploiting our reliance on critical minerals,** and maintains a grip on 60 percent of global mined production of rare earth minerals and 85 percent of the world's processing capacity.



## 7. Gray-Zone Operations Short of Armed Conflict

**China has an asymmetric advantage in gray-zone operations due to its comparative willingness to use them frequently,** including by shifting the status quo of military aggression in the Taiwan Strait, threatening American allies' physical and economic security, and preventing criticism of China in the international order.



## 8. The Space Domain

While the US has voluntarily stopped all testing of direct-ascent anti-satellite missile systems, **China continues to develop and test anti-satellite weapons to deny adversaries operational capabilities in the space domain.**



## 9. Cyber Operations

**China's creeping advantage in cyberspace stems from the CCP's state-sponsored theft of American intellectual property, which gives China unlawful economic advantages.**



## 10. Artificial Intelligence

**Beijing is mounting a coordinated and rapid effort to advance AI applications in security and military domains,** and Washington cannot rely on its existing private-sector-driven dominance for long.