

Global Times: China's military modernization 'remarkable', bolstering its vital role as global peace stabilizer

Beijing, China Aug 14, 2025 ([IssueWire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - August 1, 2025 marks the 98th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). Over the past 98 years, the people's army under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has made indelible contributions to national independence, liberation of the people and national prosperity. It has fought in the Agrarian Revolutionary War, the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, the War of Liberation, and the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea. It has fulfilled its defense duties in Hong Kong and Macao in accordance with the law, effectively responded to various threats to national security, resolutely cracked down on all forms of separatist and sabotage activities, and actively participated in foreign military exchanges and cooperation as well as UN peacekeeping operations. Practice has fully proved that the people's military is a strong pillar for safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, and a staunch force for maintaining world peace.

The book series of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* includes several important speeches on adhering to the path of strengthening the military with Chinese characteristics. In the article "Continue to Strengthen Our Military" included in Volume II of the book series, Chinese President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, said that the military must resolutely safeguard the Party's leadership and our socialist system, our sovereignty, security and interests, and regional and world peace.

In Volume IV of the book series, Xi said when delivering an important speech during a ceremony marking the Centenary of the CPC that the achievements of the people's military on behalf of the Party and the people have been remarkable. It is a strong pillar that safeguards our socialist country and preserves national dignity, and a powerful force for protecting peace in our region and beyond.

In the ninth installment of the special series "Decoding the Book of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*," the Global Times, along with People's Daily Overseas Edition, explores the theme: following a Chinese path to military development, the Chinese military has always been a staunch force for world peace. We continue to invite Chinese and foreign scholars, translators of Xi's works, practitioners with firsthand experience, and international readers to discuss how, in the new era, the people's army fulfills its mission of building a strong military, practices the Global Security Initiative with concrete actions, takes on the responsibilities of a major country's military, and continuously makes greater contributions to maintaining world peace and stability.

In the ninth article of the "Readers' Reflections" column, Global Times talked to Maurício Santoro (Santoro), a professor of International Relations at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, and a researcher at the Brazilian Navy's Center for Political and Strategic Studies.

GT: In his speech at the ceremony marking the centenary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2021, included in Volume IV of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, President Xi stated, "We must accelerate the modernization of national defense and the armed forces. A strong country must have a strong military; only then can it guarantee the security of the nation." China has made significant progress its military modernization in recent years, especially in technological innovation. How do you assess China's achievements in this area? Which developments stand out to you, and how do you think they contribute to the

country's national interests?

Santoro: China's military modernization is truly remarkable from every perspective. The economic boom and societal prosperity following the reform and opening-up period have provided abundant resources and robust support for the modernization of its defense and armed forces.

Today, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is more efficient, modern, and science-oriented than ever before. It has made high-level achievements in sophisticated technology, such as the Internet and space domains, while cultivating a cadre of highly educated senior officers.

From a historical perspective, what impresses me the most is the development of the PLA Navy. Since the great voyages of Zheng He in the Ming Dynasty, China has once again been transforming from a major maritime country into a leading maritime power. Today, the country boasts three aircraft carriers, a substantial submarine fleet, a powerful coast guard force, and a rapidly expanding marine corps, all marking steady progress in naval modernization.

GT: In Volume III of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*, President Xi emphasized that the Chinese People's Liberation Army and the People's Armed Police Force should forever preserve their nature, purpose and character as the forces of the people, resolutely safeguard the country's sovereignty, security and development interests, and firmly uphold world peace. How do you understand the core essence of the "people's army" concept? What specific examples demonstrate this essence in the practices of the modern Chinese military? How does this concept fundamentally differ from the military doctrines of Western countries?

Santoro: In my view, the core essence of the "people's army" concept lies in its deep connection of the armed forces to the political struggles of the Chinese people under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, particularly during the 20th century's fight for liberation after the century of humiliations, and overcoming foreign interventions, warlord conflicts, and other hardships of that sad period.

We can see this connection in many important moments of Chinese history, from the Red Army, Eighth Route Army, and New Fourth Army to the PLA's role and its contributions since the founding of the People's Republic of China. In the West, many associate the PLA with guerrilla warfare, which was indeed critical during the resistance against Japanese aggression. However, the "people's army" concept is far broader, as demonstrated in large-scale conventional campaigns like the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-1953), which showcased the PLA's exceptional combat capabilities and unwavering commitment to the nation and its people.

In recent years, China's ongoing defense and military reforms, aimed at building a world-class military, reflect a steadfast commitment to the goal of building strong armed forces under new conditions put forward by President Xi. This dedication also manifests in the PLA's deep concern for the people's well-being. For instance, during the Wenchuan earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic, the PLA swiftly mobilized for disaster relief and epidemic control, protecting lives and property with concrete actions that vividly embody the "people's army" ethos.

GT: This year marks the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. In his speech at the ceremony marking the centenary of the CPC, President Xi emphasized, "Peace, concord, and harmony are goals that China has pursued and carried forward for more than 5,000 years. The Chinese nation does not carry aggressive or hegemonic traits in its genes." In

today's volatile geopolitical landscape, how do these commitments contribute to global peace and security, particularly in fostering a peaceful environment for developing nations? What concrete contributions has China-Brazil cooperation on genuine multilateralism made toward a multipolar world and a fairer international order?

Santoro: Amid global conflicts and instability, President Xi has repeatedly emphasized in key speeches the importance of peace and stability for nations. A stable international environment was vital during China's reform and opening-up period and has also benefited its neighbors, particularly ASEAN countries.

However, recent years have seen large-scale conflicts erupt in Europe and Gaza, with the US and the European Union pressuring other nations to align with their stances. Against this backdrop, China's commitment to "peace, concord, and harmony" positions it as a vital force for maintaining global and regional stability. Since 1990, the Chinese military has participated in 25 UN peacekeeping missions, deploying over 50,000 personnel to more than 20 countries and regions, demonstrating a responsible great power's unwavering commitment to peace.

For example, in South Sudan and Mali, Chinese peacekeepers and medical teams have played key roles in stabilizing security, rebuilding infrastructure, and safeguarding local populations' health. Also, for years, the Chinese Navy has conducted escort missions in the Gulf of Aden and Somali waters, ensuring the safety of Chinese and foreign commercial vessels and humanitarian aid ships, underscoring its commitment to securing global maritime routes and peace.

Brazil and China are working closely on bilateral and global issues. For instance, the two countries proposed a six-point consensus to politically resolve the Ukraine crisis, aiming to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict. They also actively promote BRICS cooperation, with the group's expanding "circle of friends." Together, they counter trade protectionism and advocate for reforms in multilateral institutions to better meet the needs of the Global South.

GT: In May 2025, US Defense Secretary Hegseth delivered a speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, heavily promoting the so-called "China threat" narrative and making negative remarks on issues related to Taiwan region and the South China Sea, which provoked strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition from China. How do you analyze the core motivations behind the US and certain countries continuously hyping the "China threat" narrative in recent years? How should these countries rationally view China's progress in defense and military modernization, as well as its positive role in maintaining world peace and promoting a multipolar world order?

Santoro: Brazil knows exactly how the Chinese people feel when US officials disrespect China - whether by falsely branding it as some kind of "threat" or downplaying its achievements in economic development and international trade. For example, the US has announced investigations into Brazil's digital payment platform Pix, developed by our central bank, on grounds of "unfair trade practices," mirroring the sanctions imposed on Huawei. In both cases, Global South institutions have created superior products and services, even surpassing their US counterparts, prompting unwarranted US sanctions in frustration.

China is immensely important to Brazil, particularly in trade and investment. Amid tensions with the US, China's image in Brazil has significantly improved. Many Brazilians view China as a reliable friend and partner, capable of countering the unpredictability of the US. Both nations should deepen mutual understanding and strengthen educational and cultural ties, as much of the information about China in

Brazil still comes through American or European lenses, often carrying their biases.

Brazil and China should also enhance defense cooperation. Brazilians do not perceive China as a threat, yet our military equipment and training have historically relied on the US and EU. Opportunities exist to expand collaboration in high-tech fields like space programs or artificial intelligence, building on existing civilian initiatives.

GT: China is the rotating chair of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for 2024–2025 and will host the SCO Summit in Tianjin this autumn. At the “SCO Plus” Astana Summit in July 2024, President Xi said “We should jointly advocate an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, practice true multilateralism, and make global governance more just and equitable. The SCO should make its important contribution to eliminating the deficits in peace, development, security and governance.” How do you evaluate the SCO’s specific contributions to promoting global security and fairness? What are your expectations and key priorities for the 2025 Tianjin Summit in advancing these goals?

Santoro: The establishment of the SCO marked a turning point in international security, showcasing China’s commitment to addressing global challenges like terrorism through new institutions. The SCO serves as a vital platform for tackling issues in Central Asia and Afghanistan and could play a significant role in mediating India-Pakistan tensions over Kashmir.

Notably, China and the SCO have avoided NATO’s pitfalls. Unlike NATO, a rigid military alliance entrenched in Cold War-style confrontations with Russia, the SCO operates with a flexible, inclusive framework focused on global security challenges rather than targeting specific nations. With its expanding membership, the SCO could evolve into a platform akin to BRICS, attracting developing nations and emerging markets seeking a multipolar world order.

The 2025 Tianjin Summit will convene amid complex global security challenges, including the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, tensions involving Israel, Iran, and Gaza, and renewed India-Pakistan friction. These issues lack simple solutions, but I hope the SCO summit will propose innovative approaches to address them.

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