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A New World Cop on the Beat? China's Internal Security Outreach under the Global Security Initiative

Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Isaac Kardon,
and Cameron Waltz

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Summary

Global outreach by China's internal security agencies is expanding, and now plays an important, yet overlooked role in the overall foreign and security policy of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Nonmilitary security cooperation is emerging as the centerpiece of China's signature security effort, the Global Security Initiative (GSI). The GSI externalizes and aims to build international support for Xi Jinping's "comprehensive national security concept," which centers on protecting internal regime security. Alongside traditional military diplomacy conducted by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the PRC Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Political-Legal Commission (CPLC) now actively engage in security diplomacy and security cooperation with a growing range of foreign partners. This paper explores this activity using original data on China's nonmilitary security diplomacy at the global, regional, and bilateral levels.

Under the banner and branding of the GSI, China is building new global architecture for security cooperation centered on law enforcement and police agencies, particularly the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang) (GPSCFL). The PRC's internal security agencies are also creating and strengthening mechanisms for regional security cooperation in Southeast and Central Asia and the Pacific Islands, while pursuing lower level but maturing outreach to Africa and Latin America. These engagements occur in tandem with robust bilateral outreach—over two hundred distinct interactions over the past three years alone. Global and regional security-focused diplomatic forums promote overarching principles developed by the PRC and propagate China's preferred norms, standards, and practices around security, promoting a vision which regime security and global security are deeply entwined. This concerted diplomatic push in the nonmilitary security arena externalizes and legitimizes China's approach to internal security, while explicitly constructing global security cooperation frameworks that offer an alternative to the Western-led security order, in part because they avoid competing with it.

Introduction

International observers are accustomed to tracking and analyzing patterns in China’s military diplomacy.¹ The PLA and the Central Military Commission’s Office of International Military Cooperation (CMC–OIMC) lead global military diplomatic efforts in order to “manage the projection of external influence as an important manifestation of military soft power and set favorable conditions for crisis and, if necessary, conflict.”² Defense diplomacy and security cooperation promote China’s security-related soft power, or “military discourse power” (军事话语权), and contribute to a global security architecture and order that is favorable to the People’s Republic of China (PRC).³

Discussions about China’s growing regional and global security presence and activity have, however, generally overlooked a significant tool in the PRC’s toolkit: nonmilitary security diplomacy carried out by China’s internal security apparatus. The 2024 U.S. Department of Defense *China Military Power Report*, for example, notes China’s “growing global presence” and ongoing efforts to develop security relationships along its periphery. The report, however, restricts its discussion of the use of “police cooperation to gain security access” to four sentences and three examples from the Pacific Island Countries (PICs),⁴ when in fact China’s use of police cooperation extends far beyond those countries.

Overall, analysis of Beijing’s foreign security policy neglects an important subset of burgeoning international security relationships, led by China’s internal security apparatus rather than its military. In contrast to the large volume of research and analysis on the PLA’s international activities, there is little data-driven analysis of the civilian side of China’s security activity abroad. International observers have not yet reckoned with the scope, intensity, and impact of these activities, nor adequately accounted for the heavy political emphasis placed on it inside the Chinese national security system.

Yet in recent years, we observe China's internal security agencies expanding their physical and digital presence abroad through law enforcement, counterterrorism, and intelligence partnerships with foreign counterparts, carrying out activities that shape domestic law and order in other countries. China's nonmilitary security cooperation and security diplomacy, therefore, are important but under-recognized vectors of global impact. They expand China's presence, partnerships, and influence abroad, and serve as a key pillar of Beijing's efforts under the Global Security Initiative. They contribute to the PRC's efforts to build regional and global security architecture, as well as bilateral security relationships, that favor Chinese interests and are consistent with an approach centered on protection of regime security for the Chinese Communist Party.⁵

This paper maps the contours of China's active program of nonmilitary security cooperation, which is carried out by nominally domestic security actors and has distinct characteristics at the global, regional, and bilateral levels. It first examines China's security outreach at the global level, focusing particularly on China's long-standing engagement with Interpol, and its newer efforts via the Global Security Initiative and the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang). It then assesses regionally scoped multilateral diplomacy, analyzing China's efforts to build police-based regional security architecture in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the Pacific Islands, and noting emerging outreach to Latin America and Africa. It next examines patterns of bilateral security diplomacy, where many of the concepts outlined in global and regional forums are implemented. These relationships are nested within regional and global frameworks that create diplomatic branding, political momentum, and rhetorical consistency in China-centered security activities, and provide an overarching framework under which bilateral pillars support Beijing's broader narratives about global security and China's role in providing an alternative to the U.S.-led global security order.

New Data on China's Global Security Diplomacy

Our analysis employs a new, original dataset of China's nonmilitary security diplomacy.⁶ We document 321 total interactions between senior leaders at China's major internal security agencies and their foreign counterparts, carried out through 227 events over the last three years. The key Chinese agencies involved are: 1) the Ministry of Public Security; 2) the Ministry of State Security; and 3) the Central Political-Legal Commission, the party body that oversees China's domestic security apparatus (the political-legal system, 政法系统, which includes the above ministries as well as the Ministry of Justice, courts, and procuratorate). We scope our data collection from 2022 to 2025 to capture the resumption

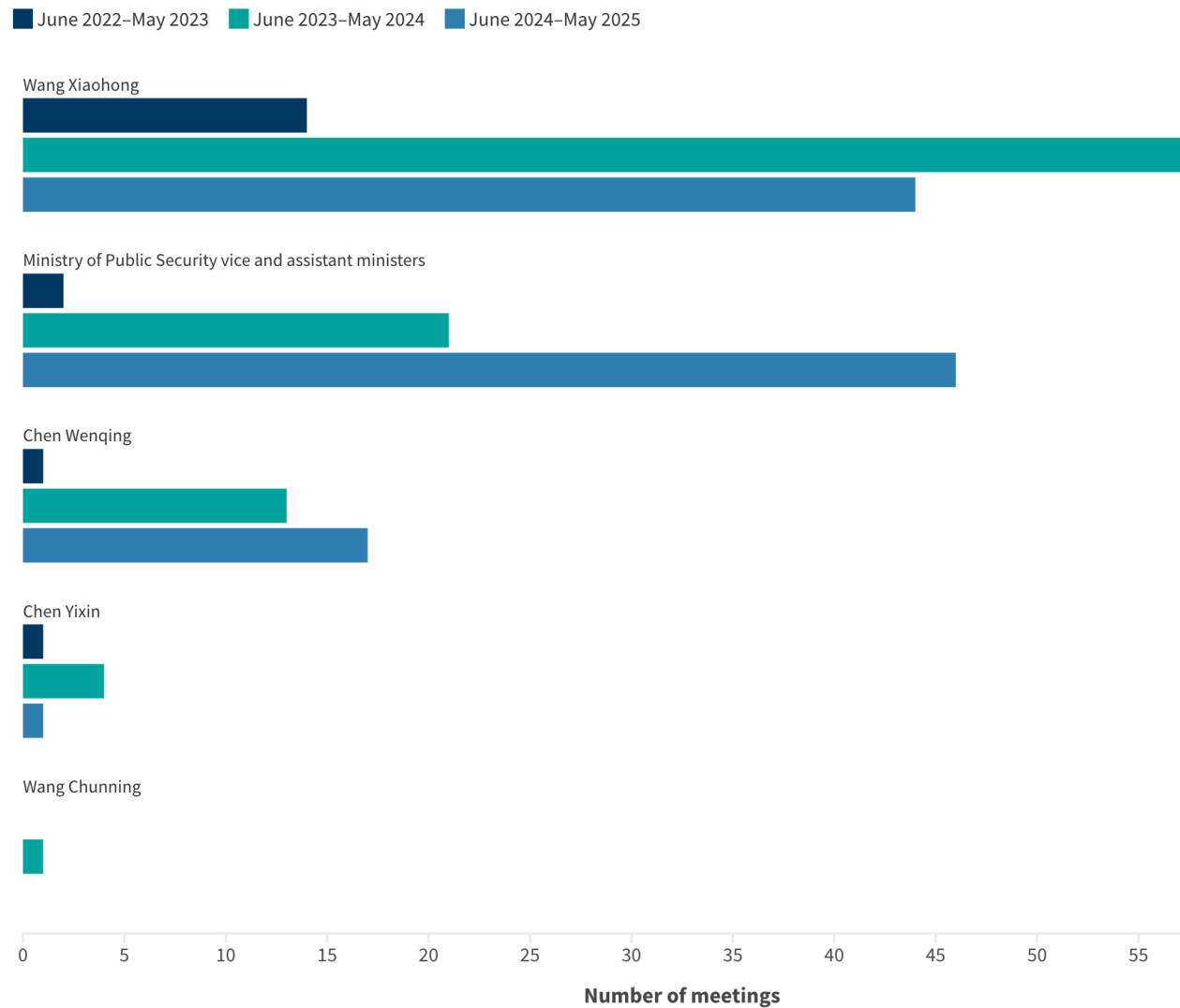
of security diplomacy after a near-complete absence during COVID-19, and in order to focus on the trends in Chinese security outreach that have occurred under the new national security leadership appointed at the Twentieth Party Congress in October 2022.⁷ For the purposes of this analysis, we focus on civilian security organs and exclude the China Coast Guard and People's Armed Police because, although these paramilitary organizations bear certain internal security responsibilities, they fall solely under the authority of the CCP Central Military Commission during this period.⁸

The paper analyzes data on the foreign diplomatic engagements carried out by the head of each organ, using a combination of official announcements, publicly available media, and other primary and secondary sources. These data show MPS to be the most visibly active actor in the party-state in terms of foreign outreach, with a total of 267 diplomatic interactions through 189 meetings in our three-year time period. The data include both bilateral and multilateral engagements, as each provides important information: for example, our data show that leaders of the PRC's civilian security organizations held a total of thirteen bilateral meetings with Russia over the past three years and attended an additional six multilateral meetings where Russian senior officials were also participants. The head of the CPLC, Chen Wenqing, had fifty-two interactions with foreign counterparts during thirty-one different meetings. MSS is relatively less active (at least as publicly reported), with only six ministerial-level meetings recorded for Minister of State Security Chen Yixin during this period—two of which were with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's former director, William Burns, and the remaining four of which were with counterparts in Southeast Asia.

In the case of MPS, we also recorded interactions at the vice-ministerial and assistant-ministerial level, as these provide important information on the organizational depth and functional focus of China's security diplomacy. For example, one of the United States' more frequent MPS interlocutors is Vice Minister Xu Datong, who oversees counter-narcotics efforts for Chinese law enforcement; we interpret this as an indicator of the importance of counter-drug cooperation on fentanyl in the U.S.-China bilateral security relationship from 2022 to 2025.⁹

Figure 1 shows the increase in outreach by China's internal security agencies as the PRC exited its period of Zero COVID lockdown.

Figure 1. Annual Meeting Count by Internal Security Official (Bilateral and Multilateral)



Source: Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Isaac Kardon, and Cameron Waltz, “China Internal Security Diplomacy Dataset,” version 1.0, July 21, 2025, available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DBZIUW>.

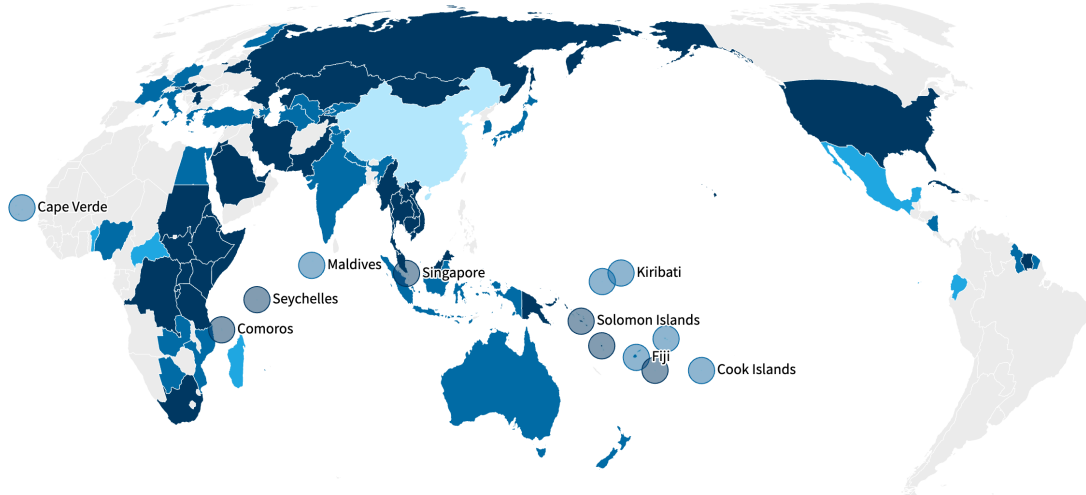
These data demonstrate the significance of the international outreach by China’s internal security agencies alongside the PLA’s military diplomacy. In 2023, for example, the PLA conducted or hosted around twenty-five “senior-level” military visits;¹⁰ Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong alone conducted at least forty diplomatic engagements with senior foreign counterparts. This example suggests that the diplomacy carried out by China’s domestic security and law enforcement agencies is a growing priority and important component of China’s foreign and security policy today.

Figures 2 and 3, below, show the geographic reach of security diplomacy conducted by China’s internal security agencies across the world.

Figure 2. Map of Meetings (Ministerial vs. Non-Ministerial, includes Multilaterals)

June 2022–May 2025

■ Ministerial and VM/AM MPS meetings ■ Ministerial meeting ■ VM/AM MPS meetings ■ China



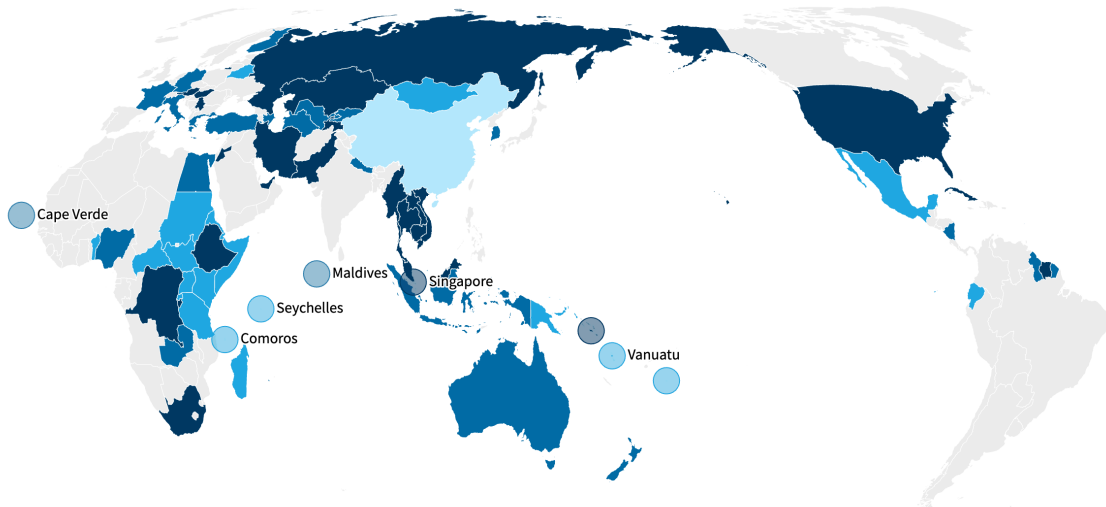
Note: This map is illustrative; boundaries, names, and designations used do not represent or imply any opinion on the part of Carnegie or the authors. Dotted lines indicated disputed boundaries.

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Figure 3. Map of Meetings (Ministerial vs. Non-Ministerial, Bilateral Only)

June 2022–May 2025

■ Ministerial and VM/AM MPS meetings ■ Ministerial meeting ■ VM/AM MPS meetings ■ China



Note: This map is illustrative; boundaries, names, and designations used do not represent or imply any opinion on the part of Carnegie or the authors. Dotted lines indicated disputed boundaries.

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This pattern of diplomacy illustrates the global depth and breadth of the security diplomacy conducted by China's domestic security and law enforcement organizations, this outreach forms a significant but under-recognized pillar of China's foreign policy and approach to global security.

China's Global Security Diplomacy: Interpol, GSI, and GPSCFL

Beijing has openly called for reform of global security governance, arguing that existing mechanisms are ill-suited for contemporary security challenges, particularly when it comes to a complex array of threats to non-traditional security. For example, in his September 2017 speech to the Eighty-Sixth General Assembly of the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), Xi asserted that “global security governance has many inadequacies” for addressing the world's changing security environment.¹¹ This section analyzes three key lines of effort in China's global multilateral security diplomacy: engagement with Interpol, the Global Security Initiative (GSI, 全球安全倡议), and the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang) (GPSCFL, 全球公共安全合作论坛—连云港). These efforts highlight the PRC's blended approach to global security governance: supporting certain aspects of the existing order, actively revising others, and building new forms of global security order where existing institutions are inadequate or unfavorable to China.

Interpol

China's earliest efforts to engage in international police diplomacy occurred through Interpol, and the agency has been an important forum for China's efforts to lead global law enforcement cooperation. Beijing has leveraged its role in this century-old institution to facilitate, publicize, and legitimize China's provision of global public security goods. Chinese representatives' conduct at Interpol also provides corroborating evidence for Beijing's priorities and objectives in global security governance reform in other venues.

The PRC joined Interpol in 1984, and as in many other international institutions, gradually went from a quiet observer to an active leader and major funder. Beijing's influence in Interpol appeared to hit its zenith in 2016, when its General Assembly elected PRC Vice Minister of Public Security Meng Hongwei as the agency's first Chinese president.¹² The following year, Xi Jinping delivered keynote remarks at Interpol's Eighty-sixth General Assembly in Beijing, where he pledged that China would upgrade the organization's communications systems and laboratories, as well as train 20,000 police officers from developing countries over the following five years.¹³

Meng’s appointment raised concern among human rights advocates that China might manipulate Interpol for illegitimate political purposes, including inappropriate use of the “red notice” system to track down dissidents or corruption suspects.¹⁴ While that concern remains, it was temporarily eclipsed by a different issue when Meng abruptly disappeared in 2018 on a trip back to China; after two weeks of silence, Chinese authorities announced he had been detained and was under investigation for corruption. Meng was forced to resign and eventually sentenced to thirteen years in prison.¹⁵ His disappearance, less than halfway through his four-year term, raised concerns over China’s leadership in Interpol and other international institutions.¹⁶

Since that time, however, Beijing has quietly worked to rebuild its standing within the organization. China won election to a seat on Interpol’s thirteen-member executive committee in 2021—its first since Meng resigned—and secured another three-year term in 2024.¹⁷ Since 2023, Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong has held six meetings with Interpol’s top leadership, including one in which its president praised China for providing funding for geographically diverse staff and contributing to several Interpol law enforcement operations. Interpol credited MPS with “provid[ing] support for a range of operational activities” and giving significant financial assistance (including for “geographical and gender diversity at the General Secretariat”).¹⁸

MPS has also worked closely with Interpol to build support for the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang). Interpol President Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi, who is simultaneously a major general in the UAE’s Ministry of the Interior and has facilitated significant bilateral police cooperation between the UAE and the PRC in that role, has been a key figure in China’s strengthened relationship with Interpol. Al-Raisi attended both the 2023 and 2024 GPSCFL meetings, and highlighted China’s “key role in supporting Interpol’s mission.”¹⁹ In June 2025, Wang bestowed a Gold Great Wall Commemorative Medal on Al-Raisi (in his Interpol capacity) and pledged to “deepen cooperation on law enforcement capacity building.”²⁰ China’s relationship with Interpol is likely to continue to grow as the PRC plays host to the agency’s Ninety-fourth General Assembly in Hong Kong in 2026, offering Xi Jinping and the PRC Ministry of Public Security another high-profile opportunity to put forward policy initiatives and enhance China’s leadership in global police cooperation.²¹

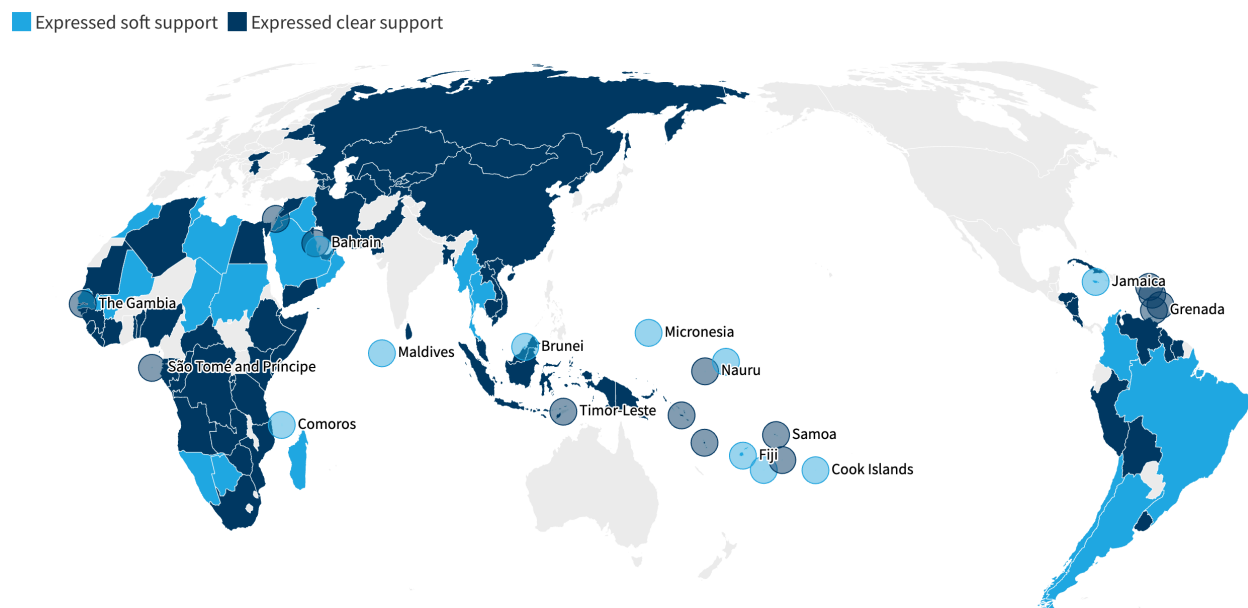
China has also engaged with other United Nations offices related to law enforcement. Wang Xiaohong and MPS Vice Minister Xu Datong have held ministerial engagements with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and with the under-secretaries-general for safety and security and peacekeeping operations. Wang and his executive vice minister have also each made appearances at the biennial UN Chiefs of Police Summit (UNCOPS).

The Global Security Initiative

Since 2022, the Global Security Initiative has become the PRC’s flagship security effort at the global level, supplanting earlier political guidance for Chinese activity in international security affairs. Xi Jinping proposed the initiative at a speech at the Boao Forum in April 2022,²² and he and other senior Chinese officials have since laid out the vision for GSI in a number of key documents and speeches.²³ GSI has been bundled with the Global Development Initiative (GDI, proposed in 2021) and Global Civilizational Initiative (GCI, proposed in 2023) to form pillars of the PRC’s proposal to create “a community of common destiny for mankind” (人类命运共同体, also translated as “community with a shared future for humankind”).²⁴ These “three global initiatives” have been now designated as “strategic guidance” for achieving Xi’s broader, largely unspecified, vision of a “shared future.”²⁵

In the past several years, Chinese diplomats have made a point of inserting language about support for GSI into various diplomatic readouts. In June 2025, the vice president of China Foreign Affairs University, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote that the GSI had gained the “support and appreciation” (支持赞赏) of 119 countries and international organizations and has been included in 123 bilateral and multilateral “political documents” (政治文件).²⁶ A map showing 113 countries that have publicly expressed support for GSI as of June 2025 appears in Figure 4.²⁷

Figure 4. Countries Expressing Support for GSI



Note: This map is illustrative; boundaries, names, and designations used do not represent or imply any opinion on the part of Carnegie or the authors. Dotted lines indicated disputed boundaries.

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Although GSI has roots in long-standing principles of Chinese foreign policy,²⁸ it is also frequently described by Chinese scholars as the “natural extension and external presentation” of Xi Jinping’s comprehensive national security concept (CNSC, 总体国家安全观), which he promulgated in April 2014.²⁹ Now elevated as an element of “Xi Jinping Thought,” the CNSC and its various components appear consistently in China’s description of the relationship between internal and external dimensions of security. Xi Jinping’s Twentieth Party Congress work report from October 2022, for example, refers to “coordinated steps to ensure external and internal security,” and goes on to describe political security as the “fundamental task” for the whole party, and international security as a “support” in national security work.³⁰ Chen Xiangyang, a scholar at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (a think tank affiliated with the Ministry of State Security) has used the phrase “internal as main and external as auxiliary” (内主外辅) to describe China’s approach to national security.³¹ The GSI was codified in the PRC’s 2023 Foreign Relations Law, and the State Council’s 2025 White Paper on National Security describes it as bringing “a global outlook to the holistic [comprehensive] approach to national security.”³² From a doctrinal standpoint, the CNSC is the prevailing political guidance informing and shaping Chinese security work at home and abroad, through GSI and its varied regional and bilateral engagements.

For the Chinese party-state leadership, many of their most urgent security concerns arise from either domestic sources or from what they view as external attempts to infiltrate China to destabilize or undermine party rule.³³ The CNSC places relatively more weight on nontraditional security threats and challenges; even in the military sphere, more than three-quarters of the PLA’s exercises with foreign militaries “focus on non-traditional security issues.”³⁴ Given this operational focus and the set of threat perceptions motivating it, Beijing assigns comparatively larger roles in its security concept to law enforcement, paramilitary, and secret police agencies that focus on internal security and political policing, and is relatively more inclined to use tools like high-tech surveillance that have been developed and refined for internal security and stability-maintenance purposes.

Under GSI, China is externalizing a national security concept that is particularly focused on regime security and non-traditional security threats, and that predominantly employs internal security forces, police, and surveillance technology in its quest for “prevention and control” (防控) of threats and risks to stability, from within and from without. This creates the intellectual foundation for China’s recent and expanding push to create new global security arrangements, architecture, and tools of law enforcement and police cooperation.³⁵ A leading Chinese scholar explains “China’s diplomatic practice in recent years vividly embodies the implementation of the CNSC and the GSI; both serve as important guiding frameworks for the formulation of China’s future national security strategy and the implementation of its foreign policy.”³⁶

China’s official 2023 GSI Concept Paper commits to “actively conduct law enforcement cooperation on the basis of respecting each country’s sovereignty, so as to jointly improve law enforcement capacity and security governance,” and pledges to “support the establishment

of a global training system to train for developing countries more law enforcement officers who are responsive to their countries' security needs."³⁷ In a later section on "platforms and mechanisms of cooperation," the concept paper emphasizes GPSCFL as a key example, and further calls for the following:

Build more international platforms and mechanisms for exchange and cooperation on addressing security challenges in such areas as counter-terrorism, cybersecurity, biosecurity, and emerging technologies, with a view to improving the governance capacity in the domain of non-traditional security. Encourage more exchanges and cooperation among university-level military and police academies. China is willing to provide other developing countries with 5,000 training opportunities in the next five years to train professionals for addressing global security issues.³⁸

A July 2024 report on GSI implementation from the China Institute of International Studies, a think tank affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, describes China exporting the GSI as a "public security asset."³⁹ Scholars at the People's Police University's College of International Law Enforcement Cooperation describe GSI as "providing systematic guiding principles and directional practical paths for international law enforcement and security cooperation on the new journey of Chinese-style [security] modernization."⁴⁰ For these practitioners, GSI is also explicitly an exercise in "branding" China's distinctive contribution to "international public goods" and a vehicle for building China's "image as a great power."⁴¹ In other words, official descriptions and scholarly overviews are not intended to provide details of GSI implementation, but rather to offer a framework of general principles and abstract goals for global security. They provide the rhetorical and conceptual scaffolding for practical diplomatic activities that carry out the leadership's vision for global and "comprehensive" national security.

The Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang)

The Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang), previously known as the Lianyungang Forum, is Beijing's premier platform for global, China-centered, public security diplomacy. Between 2015 and 2024, the GPSCFL evolved from a region-specific, topically scoped, ad hoc forum for law enforcement cooperation into China's largest, most inclusive, and highest conceptual-level platform for security diplomacy. While the forum was initially conceived as an accessory body to advance "security guarantees" for Belt and Road Initiative projects,⁴² GSI renewed its purpose and utility, and Wang Xiaohong's Ministry of Public Security repackaged and relaunched the Lianyungang Forum in its current incarnation.

The first iteration of the Lianyungang Forum was carried out by MPS in 2015 under the name International Law Enforcement Cooperation Forum on Secure Corridor of the New Eurasian Land Bridge.⁴³ The forum was originally envisioned as a dialogue platform for transnational law enforcement cooperation to protect Belt and Road Initiative projects

along the New Eurasian Landbridge, an evolving trans-continental rail corridor with terminus points at Lianyungang and Rotterdam.⁴⁴ Thereafter, the forum was progressively institutionalized and broadened to include countries and policy issues outside of Eurasia, and established cooperation mechanisms for joint law enforcement and capacity-building activities.⁴⁵ The forum rapidly expanded from its original twelve Eurasian country participants to as many as thirty countries representing all regions except North America in 2018.⁴⁶ However, the forum appeared to lose steam when it was not renewed in 2019, then only held its fifth session virtually at the tail end of 2020, before it was skipped again in 2021.⁴⁷

Following Xi's announcement of the Global Security Initiative in 2022, the Ministry of Public Security revived and reorganized the Lianyungang Forum as a key element of GSI. This revitalization involved several changes. First, the forum would no longer be directly sponsored by MPS; its organization was reassigned to the China Friendship Association (CFA, 中国友谊促进会), a nongovernmental organization which some researchers have alleged to be a front for MPS intelligence.⁴⁸ Second, MPS established an international board of directors to "guide the strategic interests of the forum," while leaving the actual content, agenda, and organization of forum meetings to be managed by CFA.⁴⁹ Lastly, the forum was renamed the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang), and rebranded as a fundamentally global, rather than regional platform.⁵⁰ In GPSCFL's own description, these reforms served to "transform and upgrade" the Lianyungang Forum into a "non-governmental, non-profit international forum" now held annually.⁵¹ MPS has taken the opportunity presented by GSI to rebrand the forum as less China-centric, to promote its multilateralism, and to encourage foreign buy-in.

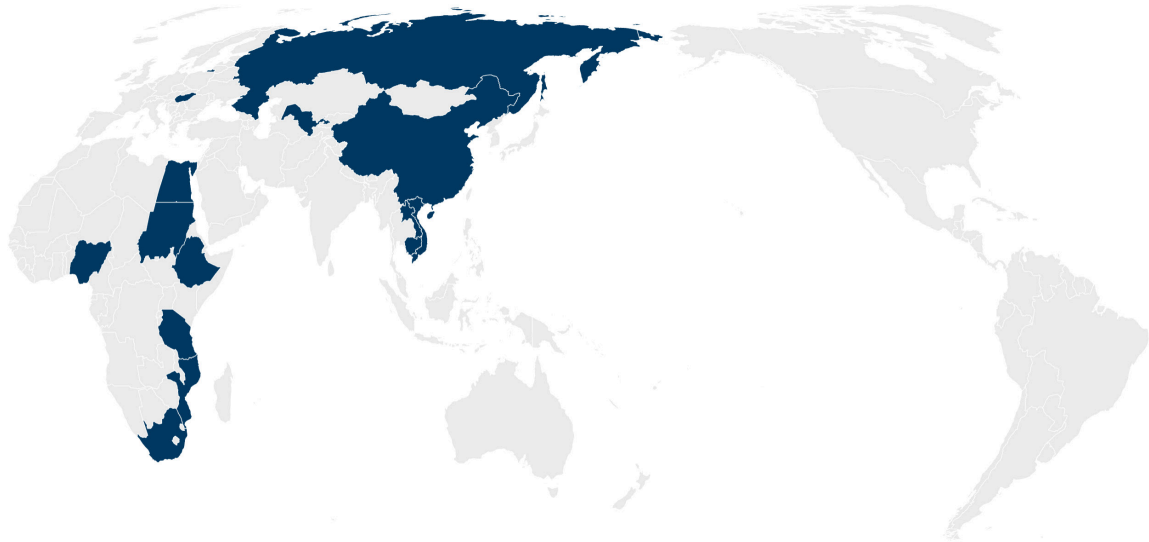
Since reestablishing GPSCFL in 2022, MPS has elevated the forum's profile and provided it with significant political backing to expand programming and attract foreign dignitaries and experts. In China's official GSI concept paper, GPSCFL is given top billing alongside the Beijing Xiangshan Forum—China's alternative to the Shangri-La Dialogue, hosted by the Ministry of National Defense—and the China-Africa Peace Security Forum as primary platforms for security outreach and participation in global security governance.⁵² In recent years, Wang Xiaohong has attended, delivered a keynote address, and conducted multiple bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the event.⁵³

GPSCFL's organizers boast that its 2024 session attracted over 2,100 participants, including officials, experts, and scholars from "122 countries, regions, and international organizations," with attendees ranging from the deputy head-of-state level to lower-level public security officials.⁵⁴ A map of known participants in the GPSCFL appears in Figure 5.⁵⁵

These numbers suggest that the MPS-backed GPSCFL has now become the largest global security forum hosted by the PRC, exceeding similar forums by a significant margin, in terms of both the total number of participants and of participating countries. The Xiangshan Forum, for example, which is affiliated with China's Ministry of National Defense and is now held in the same month as GPSCFL, attracted "more than 500 representatives from over 90 countries and international organizations" in September 2024.⁵⁶ The Great Wall International Forum on Counterterrorism in August 2024, hosted by the People's Armed

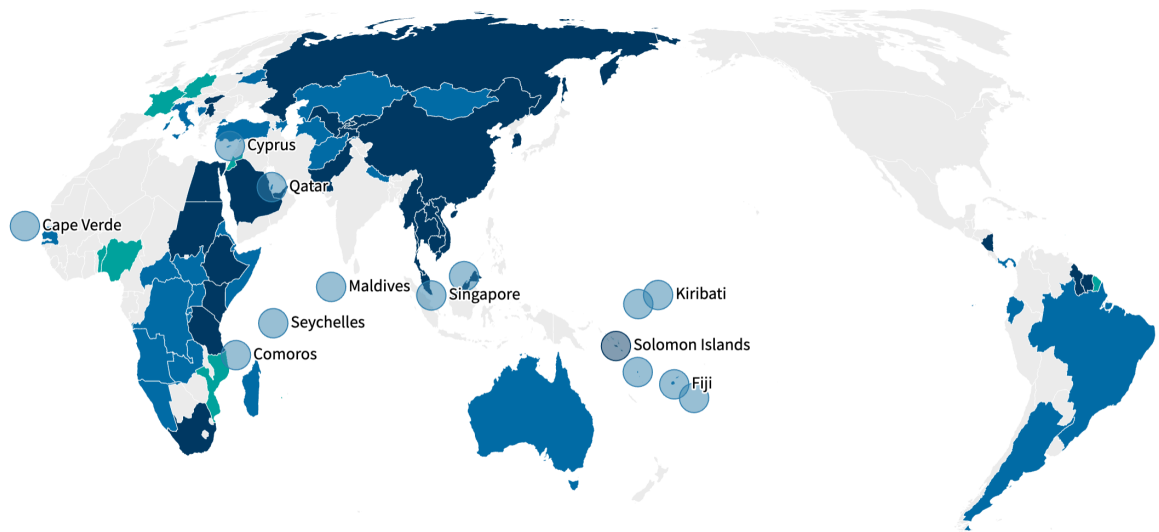
Figure 5. Official Country Participation in China's Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang)

2022



2024

■ Returning participants
 ■ New participants in 2024
 ■ Did not return for 2024



Note: This map is illustrative; boundaries, names, and designations used do not represent or imply any opinion on the part of Carnegie or the authors. Dotted lines indicated disputed boundaries.

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Police, hosted “over 170 delegates from more than 50 similar foreign armed forces,” while the World Peace Forum in July 2025, co-organized by Tsinghua University and the Chinese People’s Institute for Foreign Affairs, brought in over “1,200 guests from 86 countries and regions.”⁵⁷

In the past several years, GPSCFL’s national backing, international attendance, and scope of activities have all expanded. The core forum takes two to three days, but the organizers also convene as many as twelve topic-specific sub-forums held before, during, and after the main GPSCFL sessions—sometimes in other cities as far flung as Sanya, Shenyang, and Shenzhen.⁵⁸ These meetings are less conceptual and normative than the main forum, convening experts and lower-level officials for more substantive engagements. The sub-forums aim to produce consensus documents, international policy plans, and coordination mechanisms in functional areas like unmanned aerial vehicle safety, data security, immigration, tourism, law enforcement capacity-building, and forensics technology.⁵⁹ These sub-forums may be a way of achieving the goal of “building new platforms and mechanisms” to address the emerging and non-traditional security issues outlined in the 2023 GSI concept paper (as quoted above), but it is difficult to know that with certainty: according to official readouts, the signatories and contents produced in these sub-forums are not publicly disclosed.⁶⁰

The GPSCFL generates several benefits for China. First, Chinese experts have posited that it elevates China’s credibility as a contributor to international public security, improves the image and attractiveness of its systems and principles of law enforcement, and heightens the international influence of China’s police.⁶¹ In 2024, for example, the GPSCFL agenda included a tour of Yancheng City, where China has a major police training base held out as a model for foreign law enforcement officials.⁶² Moreover, the forum provides China convening power, as well as a platform to announce international law enforcement cooperation goals: in 2024, for instance, Wang Xiaohong announced China’s intention to train 3,000 foreign police officers in the next year.⁶³

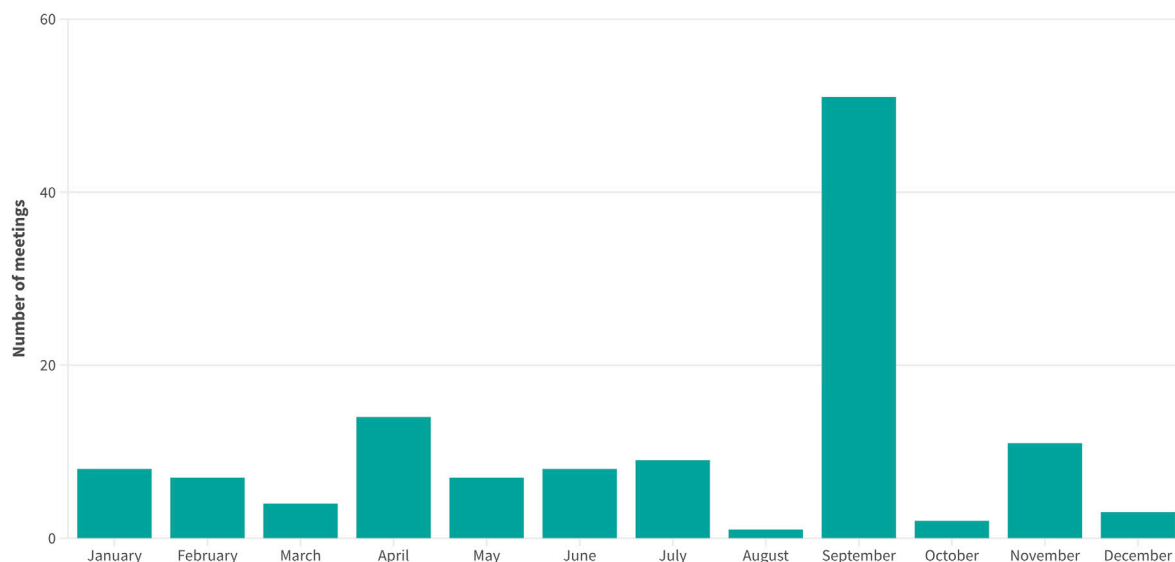
Second, the GPSCFL enables China to disseminate its conception of public security by steering the direction of global security governance and setting the agenda on key issues that shape transnational law enforcement cooperation. China can use the GPSCFL and its sub-forums for global standard-setting in public security: the 2023 forum, for example, convened a seminar to develop a new Global Public Security Index (全球公共安全指数), which the 2024 forum organizers said would evaluate countries based on their public safety performance and be used as the basis for future research reports.⁶⁴ Moreover, through the sub-forums in particular, the PRC can gain a first-mover advantage, convening international experts and officials to set the terms of discussion in emerging domains such as the use of artificial intelligence in law enforcement. Chinese organizers and observers regularly tout GPSCFL consensus documents as key achievements.⁶⁵

The third benefit provided by the GPSCFL to the PRC is a defined and efficient venue in which to reinforce or expand bilateral engagement with current or potential security partners. This is similar to the PRC Ministry of National Defense-hosted Xiangshan Forum, which allows “senior PLA leaders to engage most of their counterparts at a single meeting in Beijing, rather than travelling to the region for individual bilateral meetings.”⁶⁶ MPS takes advantage

of the influx of foreign senior law enforcement officials visiting China to convene sideline ministerial meetings and chair regional summits with groupings from regions including Africa, Central Asia, and the Pacific Islands. In the days before and after the 2024 GPSCFL, for example, Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong held twenty-five bilateral and four multilateral ministerial-level meetings with representatives who attended the GPSCFL, and another eleven sideline meetings during the forum itself. In addition, China's Vice Ministers and Assistant Ministers of Public Security held another twenty-four sideline bilaterals during the same period, for a total of forty-nine high-level MPS meetings surrounding Lianyungang last year. These meetings accounted for close to 40 percent of all PRC security diplomacy interactions in 2024, as illustrated by Figure 6.

Lastly, GPSCFL presents an opportunity for China to market its law enforcement technologies to foreign customers. During the 2024 forum, the Ministry of Public Security hosted what it referred to as the inaugural Public Security Tech Expo, which invited forty-five Chinese surveillance, forensics, and law enforcement technology companies to show their wares.⁶⁷ GPSCFL is not the only such expo supported or hosted by MPS,⁶⁸ but it provides an important opportunity to encourage participant countries to adopt China's security platforms, to normalize China's development of advanced surveillance and security technology and its use in policing, and to build international consensus around China's preferred norms by proposing international standards for development and use of these technologies. Moreover, as China's security technology firms have sought new sources of profit overseas, and industry leaders have expressed concern about price wars and consolidation at home, the expo serves as an opportunity to maintain alignment between China's internal security apparatus and the firms it relies on to conduct many of its domestic missions.⁶⁹

Figure 6. PRC Security Diplomacy Meetings by Month (2024)



Source: Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Isaac Kardon, and Cameron Waltz, "China Internal Security Diplomacy Dataset," version 1.0, July 21, 2025, available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DBZIUW>.

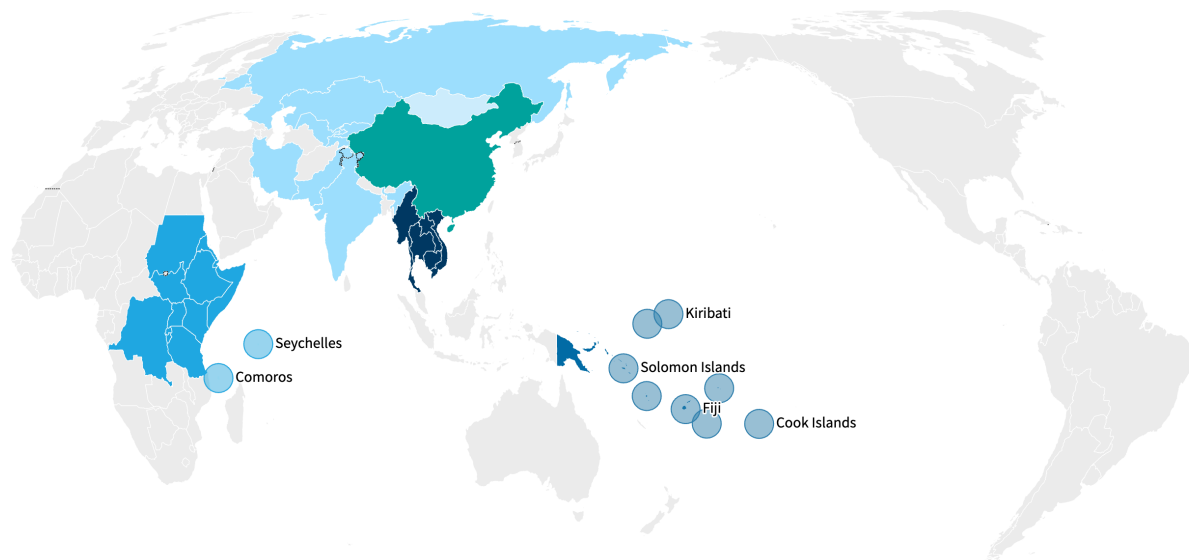
China's Regional Security Diplomacy

China's regional security diplomacy is most prevalent along its periphery—the Pacific Island Countries (PICs), the Lancang-Mekong region of Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. Beijing is also beginning to enhance its security outreach to Africa and Latin America. This regional security diplomacy is nested within its global framework; the GSI concept paper, for example, identifies Asia as a “pilot area” for GSI.⁷⁰

In each of the regions we identify, China is constructing regionally-scoped forums, organizations, and mechanisms to strengthen public security diplomacy and to enhance cooperation aimed at countering non-traditional security threats specific to that region. Its security diplomacy focuses on counterterrorism in Central Asia; on counter-narcotics, anti-fraud, and maritime smuggling in Southeast Asia; and on law enforcement capacity building in the Pacific Islands. The main forums used in China's regionally-based security outreach appear in Figure 7.⁷¹

Figure 7. China's Regional Security Forums

■ China ■ Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) ■ Ministerial Dialogue on Police Capacity Building and Cooperation Between China and Pacific Island Countries
■ China-East Africa Ministerial Dialogue on Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation ■ Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)
■ Observer state of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)



Note: This map is illustrative; boundaries, names, and designations used do not represent or imply any opinion on the part of Carnegie or the authors. Dotted lines indicated disputed boundaries. Although Mongolia is an observer state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, it has participated in SCO security dialogues recorded in our dataset.

Source: Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Isaac Kardon, and Cameron Waltz, “China Internal Security Diplomacy Dataset,” version 1.0, July 21, 2025, available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DBZIUW>.

China's regionally-based approach to strengthening police and civilian security outreach is also consistent with its growing emphasis on neighboring-country diplomacy to promote national security, discussed in a Central Work Conference on the topic in April 2025.⁷² Neighboring regions are “the focal point for safeguarding national security and the foremost priority in the overall planning of foreign affairs.”⁷³ Asia, especially Southeast Asia, is also the highest-priority area for China's military diplomacy, making parallel examination of nonmilitary security diplomacy in Asia's sub-regions a helpful complement to existing data.⁷⁴

The Pacific Islands

China has used nonmilitary security outreach to advance its “access, presence, and posture” in the Pacific Islands—a form of security cooperation that may be particularly useful in a region where many countries do not have militaries.⁷⁵ The 2023 GSI concept paper proposed to “increase the provision of materials, funds, and talents to help [Pacific] island countries improve their ability to deal with non-traditional security threats,”⁷⁶ tailoring China's message to a region that in 2018 identified climate change as the primary threat.⁷⁷ While discussions in Washington have focused primarily on whether and how the PLA might establish bases in the South Pacific in the future, we highlight a phenomenon that is already underway, but has thus far has been largely overlooked: a slate of police-led security cooperation programs that Beijing uses to pursue objectives centered on improving domestic political stability, upgrading law enforcement capacity, and protecting Chinese assets and citizens.⁷⁸

China's police presence in the region began with a bilateral memorandum of understanding with Fiji in 2011.⁷⁹ In 2015, China agreed to building a \$33 million training academy, the Samoa Police Training Academy; the project was delayed by COVID-19 and other factors but was eventually completed in 2024, and was described by Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mataafa as “the first law enforcement training center built in Samoa.”⁸⁰ In the months following November 2021 riots in Honiara, China also deployed police to the Solomons; that presence has since become entrenched.⁸¹

China's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, proposed a broader-based multilateral regional security cooperation pact with the ten Pacific Island countries that recognize the PRC in May 2022. Heads of state from the Federated States of Micronesia and Fiji led a successful push to reject China's Common Development Vision, which included an offer to provide police training and other forms of cooperation.⁸² Although this particular effort to construct a broader regional security framework failed, China is building an approximately 30,000-square-meter China-Pacific Island Countries Police Training Center on the campus of Fujian Police Academy, as a specialized police training base exclusively for Pacific Island countries.⁸³ In addition, it has pursued non-traditional security cooperation through disaster management initiatives, including a new Center for Disaster Risk Reduction Cooperation in Guangdong that opened in February 2023.⁸⁴

Additionally, China’s MPS has launched regular ministerial-level “dialogues on police capacity-building and cooperation” with regional counterparts. The first of these dialogues occurred by videoconference in November 2022, and was co-chaired by the Solomon Islands.⁸⁵ The second dialogue occurred in December 2023 in Beijing.⁸⁶ The third dialogue occurred in September 2024, and included Vanuatu, Tonga, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, and Samoa; the readout noted that Wang met with officials from Fiji, which co-chaired the dialogue, ahead of time.⁸⁷

Table 1. China Pacific Islands Police Dialogue

Date	Location	Participants (*co-chair)
November 2022	Videoconference	Solomon Islands*, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Vanuatu.
December 2023	Beijing	Samoa*, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu.
September 2024	Fuzhou, Fujian	Fiji*, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu.

Source: Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Isaac Kardon, and Cameron Waltz, “China Internal Security Diplomacy Dataset,” version 1.0, July 21, 2025, available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DBZIUW>.

China also pledged increased law enforcement support for countries in the region (along with support in other domains) in May 2025 at a foreign ministers’ meeting in Xiamen, Fujian, which included representatives from eleven of the member states of the Pacific Islands Forum.⁸⁸ Recent language included in the foreign ministers’ meeting indicated an intent to hold the fourth Ministerial Dialogue on Police Capacity Building and Cooperation Between China and PICs later in 2025.⁸⁹ Nested within China’s regional outreach is a concerted bilateral outreach program to more receptive countries in the region, discussed in more detail in the section on bilateral diplomacy below.

Southeast Asia

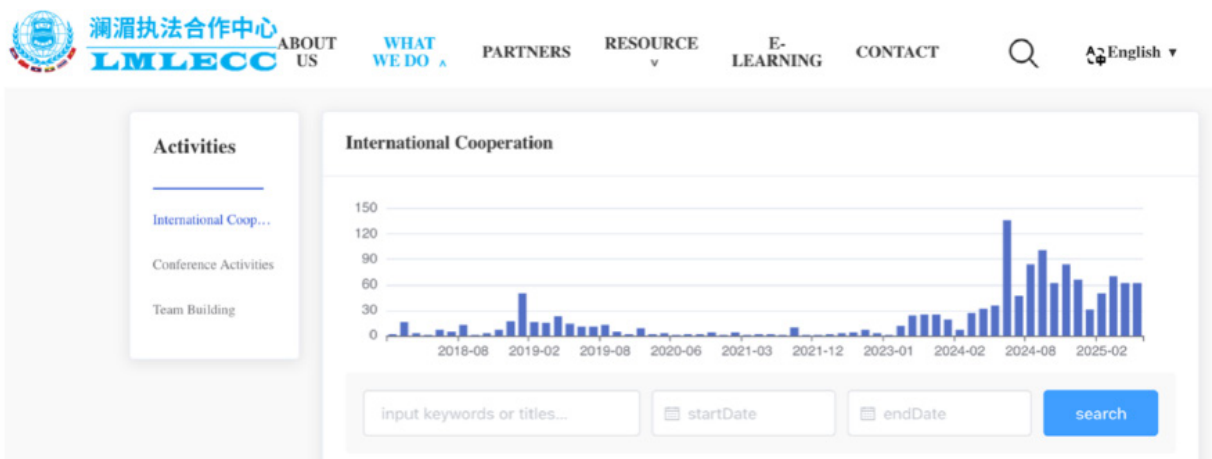
Southeast Asian nations have been the most frequent targets of China’s nonmilitary security diplomacy, accounting for 27.4 percent of the PRC’s bilateral interactions. The region is prioritized as a “pilot area” for GSI, and China’s security diplomacy in the region focuses on a hybrid of political security threats and non-traditional security concerns, particularly counter-drug and anti-fraud cooperation and efforts to combat cross-border smuggling.

China’s 2023 GSI concept paper specifically discusses Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC), a forum proposed by China and launched in 2016 with the five riparian countries: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. In 2017, the MFA established an LMC Secretariat, and in December of that year, the parties established a Lancang-Mekong River Integrated Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Center (LMLECC, 澜沧江-湄公河综合执法安全合作中心), based in Kunming, Yunnan province.⁹⁰ LMLECC was

subsequently brought under the framework of GSI. The 2023 GSI concept paper pledges to “support efforts to promote cooperation in non-traditional security areas under the framework of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC), implement relevant cooperation projects under the LMC Special Fund, and strive to foster a pilot zone for GSI to jointly safeguard regional peace and stability.”⁹¹ LMLECC’s Secretary-General and one of his four deputies are Chinese officials who have previous international law enforcement experience: Acting Secretary-General, Dr. You Xiaowen, served as police counselor in the Chinese embassy in Canada, while deputy Jiang Shui previously worked at Interpol.⁹²

Chinese public security scholars write that the Center is an example of GSI implementation, emphasizing its function to institutionalize dialogue frameworks, externalize internal security norms, and establish “protective policing partnerships” keyed on “early warning and prevention,”⁹³ echoing China’s overall national security objective of “prevention and control.” In an interesting example of the complex nature of China’s security cooperation and the interplay between domestic and global security dynamics, Deputy Secretary-General of LMLECC, Chinese official Jiang Shui, gave a lecture in October 2024 to Xinjiang Police College, where he discussed efforts to combat transnational regional crime, and noted that “global issues call for global countermeasures.”⁹⁴ The LMLECC website shows a marked increase in “international cooperation” in 2023–2024, as shown in Figure 8.⁹⁵

Figure 8. Screenshot from LMLECC Showing Temporal Trend in “International Cooperation”



Source: “International Cooperation,” Lancang-Mekong Law Enforcement Cooperation Center, accessed 31 May 2025, <http://lm-lesc-center.org/navigation?pid=47&id=50>.

In March 2024, the LMC agreed on a five-year Plan of Action for 2023–2027. The document begins by noting that it will “complement international and regional initiatives and cooperations,” including the Global Security Initiative, and two of its pillars are “Cooperation on Law Enforcement and Justice” and “Non-Traditional Security Cooperation.”⁹⁶ The readout from the January 2025 Senior Officials’ Meeting on Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation (SOM-LMC) referenced the aims of implementing the five-year work plan, enhancing law enforcement and security cooperation, and promoting “establishment of a community with a shared future among Lancang-Mekong countries”—linking the regional body’s work to GSI. The SOM-LMC was held in Kunming, and included representatives from the “General Commissariat of National Police/Ministry of Interior of Cambodia, Ministry of Public Security of China, Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of National Defense of Laos, Ministry of Home Affairs of Myanmar, Royal Thai Police, and Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam.”⁹⁷ The document also appeared to reference plans to convene a “ministerial-level meeting on law enforcement and security cooperation as soon as possible.”

The LMC’s 2024 Five-Year Action Plan adopts an ambitious agenda to expand and create new regional security architecture based largely on China’s concept of security. Under the LMC/LMLECC, China, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand conduct regular joint patrols and law enforcement operations on the river; in September 2024, for example, the 145th joint patrol lasted four days and involved seven vessels and over 130 personnel, with a Chinese boat as the operation’s command vessel.⁹⁸ The LMC website also highlights a steady stream of law enforcement activities, primarily successful anti-fraud and counter-drug operations, many of which are conducted by member-states’ law enforcement agencies.

The five-year work plan also outlines efforts to establish related sub-centers, including an intelligence center and an emergency coordination and communication center, the latter of which “aims to minimize the social stability risks caused by sudden public security incidents in member countries.”⁹⁹ The goal, the website says, is to build the LMLECC into a comprehensive hub that coordinates and prevents transnational crimes in the region, integrates and exchanges information, strengthens law enforcement capacity building, provides high-quality services to member-countries’ law enforcement agencies, responds to changes in the regional security situation and its challenges, and “provides security guarantees for cooperation and development.” Whether the institution succeeds in building that kind of regional security architecture remains to be seen, but the ambition has been clearly stated. While much of LMLECC’s public content focuses on operations that are part of standard criminal law enforcement (such as anti-fraud and counter-narcotics), Chinese sources also call it the “first international intergovernmental organization in the field of political security” in the region, and other references to maintaining social stability reinforce the Center’s duality of purpose in Beijing’s eyes.¹⁰⁰

China has also worked through ASEAN, and in ad hoc groupings within ASEAN, to address non-traditional security issues at a regional level. The action plan to implement the ASEAN-China Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity (2021–2025) refers to

ongoing implementation and potential renewal of another work plan on non-traditional security (covering 2019 to 2023), and outlines efforts to strengthen dialogue, information sharing, exchanges, and other cooperation on transnational crime, illicit wildlife trafficking, and non-traditional security issues, including “terrorism, illicit drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, money laundering, sea piracy, arms smuggling, international economic crime and cybercrime.” It also proposes to promote “closer cooperation and coordination of law enforcement agencies between ASEAN and China.”¹⁰¹ Other regional security outreach involves smaller or more ad hoc groupings, such as a 2023 MPS anti-fraud initiative that resulted in the setup of a joint police operations center with Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand.¹⁰²

Central Asia

China’s regional security diplomacy has also been robust in Central Asia, accounting for 10.4 percent of its bilateral security interactions from mid-2022 to mid-2025. The acute nature of Beijing’s threat perceptions surrounding the “three evils” (terrorism, separatism, and extremism, 三股势力), focused on the Uyghur Muslim minority, has led to long-standing emphasis on security in the PRC’s diplomacy with the countries that neighbor the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.¹⁰³ Some of China’s cross-border and regional security cooperation is conducted through the People’s Armed Police; for example, China’s two reported security facilities in eastern Tajikistan, at least one ostensibly a “joint counterterrorism center,” are commonly thought to be PAP facilities.¹⁰⁴ However, the role of civilian agencies in forging regional security cooperation is notable and growing.

Beijing’s regional security diplomacy engagements have been institutionalized under the multilateral Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) framework, as well as through diplomatic engagement with the China-Central Asia C+C5, a newer mechanism created by China. China’s efforts in Central Asia stand out to Chinese security experts as “as a model of regional law enforcement and security cooperation,” covering “sensitive areas such as counterterrorism and cybersecurity cooperation,” in contrast to the shallower and less institutionalized cooperation with ASEAN nations on topics such as narcotics and telecoms fraud.¹⁰⁵ Comparative analysis of China’s cooperation with ASEAN states, SCO states, and Central and Eastern European states, conducted by a scholar at Jiangsu Police College, found SCO cooperation to be the deepest and most operationally mature of China’s regional efforts, due to high levels of mutual political trust.¹⁰⁶ Established mechanisms under the SCO, in particular, allow “clear legal basis for law enforcement and security cooperation” involving counterterrorism operations and intelligence sharing that has proved harder to foster in other regional settings.¹⁰⁷

Founded in June 2001, the SCO was China’s first and most direct effort to create an alternative regional security organization; it has been foundational architecture through which China experimented with regional security cooperation for two decades before GSI began. Alongside China, the SCO’s founding members are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan; the SCO roster now includes Belarus, India, Iran, and

Pakistan, and other observers and aspiring members (among them Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Türkiye).¹⁰⁸ Chinese leaders have stressed that the SCO supports “universally recognized norms of international law” in its “joint efforts to consolidate peace, security, and stability through multilateral cooperation.”¹⁰⁹ A twenty-year retrospective on the SCO affirmed the organization’s “constantly converging” views and practices of security cooperation, highlighting its “solid legal basis for jointly combatting the ‘three evils,’” the institutionalization of its secretariat and connections between officials from public security, judicial, prosecutorial, and defense organs, and its “continuous improvement of practical security mechanisms” for counterterrorism and law enforcement (emphasizing capacity-building, intelligence exchanges, de-radicalization programs, and efforts to combat cyberterrorism).¹¹⁰

Although it predates the GSI, the SCO has become one of China’s more efficient vehicles for propagating GSI-related activities and preferred international security norms. At the SCO summit in Uzbekistan in 2022, for example, Xi Jinping offered to train 2,000 law enforcement personnel and assist with counterterrorism cooperation, both hallmarks of GSI.¹¹¹ In 2023, as the senior representative to the SCO Security Council Secretaries’ meeting, Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong expressed China’s willingness “to work with all parties to implement the GSI.”¹¹² Chinese scholars describe the SCO as “highly coupled” with the GSI, to the extent that GSI implementation is “the inherent meaning of the SCO” intended to address an “imbalance between the supply of and the demand for public security goods in Eurasia.”¹¹³ Foreign leaders have also taken to Chinese media to cheerlead the SCO’s “Shanghai Spirit” and characterize it as “highly consistent” with the GSI.¹¹⁴

China’s regional security engagement with Central Asia is, as with Southeast Asia, a mix of efforts aimed at non-traditional security threats (in this instance, counterterrorism) and regime security. The SCO’s Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (地区反恐怖机构, RATS), is a relatively mature security cooperation platform, having facilitated routine vice-ministerial level meetings, multilateral counterterrorism exercises and operations, and intelligence sharing for over two decades. In July 2024, the organization conducted the Antiterrorism Interaction-2024 drill in Xinjiang, marking the first instance that all SCO member states participated in a joint live counterterrorism exercise.¹¹⁵ China’s participation in RATS has been led by MPS vice ministers since its establishment in 2004, with these officials focusing on practical “joint measures” to check transnational terrorism in the region, to “identify and cut off the transfer channels for people to participate in terrorist activities in terrorist-prone areas” as well as their travels between SCO countries.¹¹⁶ RATS cooperation has extended into provincial-level exchanges with foreign security officials to focus on issues of transnational terrorism and border control.¹¹⁷

SCO countries have engaged in more intensive security cooperation on the basis of political commonality with China, in their shared emphasis on regime security and political stability. Many have adopted China’s language, and some of its priorities, in subsuming disparate anti-state activities under organizational rhetoric about the “three evils.”¹¹⁸ In March 2023 remarks that referenced the Global Security Initiative, Wang Xiaohong also emphasized the

need to “contain and crack down” on the three evils, and urged strengthened “cooperation to combat transnational crime, such as telecom and internet fraud, online gambling and drug trafficking,” calling for “joint efforts to foster a new regional security structure.”¹¹⁹ Speaking to the forty-second meeting of the RATS Council in September 2024, Wang also referenced the SCO’s “consensus” on “implementing the GSI” and “pushing SCO law enforcement and security cooperation to a new level.”¹²⁰ His remarks suggest that China views the SCO as a foundation, not a ceiling, for its regional security outreach.

Consistent with that view, Beijing has also created new mechanisms for regional security cooperation and diplomacy beyond the SCO that serve these hybrid interests in combatting transnational crime, conducting counterterrorism, and promoting regime security. One is the China-Central Asia (C+C5) Summit, which was held for the first time in Xi’an in May 2023, with participation from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. A Secretariat for the organization, based in Xi’an, was established in March 2024.¹²¹

The organization’s role is not limited to security, but security has been a central element of SCO cooperation. Prior to the May 2023 summit, Chinese organizers played up the notion that “security is the foundation of development” along the 3,300-kilometer common border between China and the Central Asian nations, whose efforts at joint law enforcement and security cooperation “keeps pace with the times.”¹²² At the summit, Xi Jinping took the dais to urge his counterparts to:

*Act on the Global Security Initiative, and stand firm against external attempts to interfere in domestic affairs of regional countries or instigate color revolutions. We should remain zero-tolerant to the three forces of terrorism, separatism and extremism, and strive to resolve security conundrums in the region. . . . China is ready to help Central Asian countries strengthen capacity building on law enforcement, security and defense, support their independent efforts to safeguard regional security and fight terrorism, and work with them to promote cyber-security.*¹²³

In September 2024, Beijing hosted an inaugural China-Central Asia ministerial conference on public security and internal affairs in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province—on the sidelines of the GPSCFL which occurred there at the same time. At the ministerial conference, Wang Xiaohong repeated Xi’s earlier message, calling for a “new chapter in law enforcement and security cooperation between China and Central Asia.” He proposed that the countries involved “enhance the capability for counterterrorism and transnational crime fighting, and build an efficient and pragmatic cooperation platform” under the GSI and “shared future” frameworks.¹²⁴

In April 2025, a foreign ministers’ meeting of the C+C5 reaffirmed that “Central Asian countries value and are willing to actively implement the Global Security Initiative.” The meeting also reiterated China’s intent to position itself as a regional security provider while promoting non-Western multilateralism and “opposing external interference” in countries’

internal affairs. It recognized the establishment of a ministerial mechanism for cooperation on public security (among other issue areas).¹²⁵ The shorter English-language summary stated that “all parties believe that China is a stabilizing factor in a turbulent world” and pledged to “work with China to combat the ‘three forces’ of terrorism, extremism, and separatism, and transnational crimes to safeguard regional peace and tranquility.”¹²⁶ In a region in which states are challenged by internal strife, transnational terrorism, and Russia’s unpredictability, China is using its security diplomacy to position itself as a bulwark of regional stability—at both internal and international levels.¹²⁷

Other Regional Multilateral Outreach

Although China’s security diplomacy has been primarily concentrated on its periphery, the PRC has begun to extend its outreach to Africa and Latin America, recently launching its first multilateral security cooperation efforts in the former and expressing interest in expanding cooperation with the latter. These efforts bear watching, as they may be important indicators of China’s aims and ability to rewrite global security order beyond its immediate geographic neighborhood.

In September 2024, when he delivered the opening address for the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Xi Jinping announced that China would train 1,000 police officers, provide police equipment assistance, and create a “demonstration zone” of GSI cooperation for Africa.¹²⁸ Days later, Wang Xiaohong convened the first China-East Africa Ministerial Dialogue on Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation, intended to serve as a regular summit on law enforcement security with the region.¹²⁹ This new platform engaged the fourteen member states of the East African Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPPCO), and appears to be structurally similar to the multilateral, ministerial-level police dialogue that China hosts with Pacific Islands Countries. In addition to Xi’s promises at FOCAC, Wang Xiaohong pledged that China would work with the EAPPCO and its members to jointly enhance capacity building and personnel exchanges.¹³⁰ Later reporting revealed that all but one attendee signed an agreement to “cooperate in operations . . . to prevent cross-border crime.”¹³¹

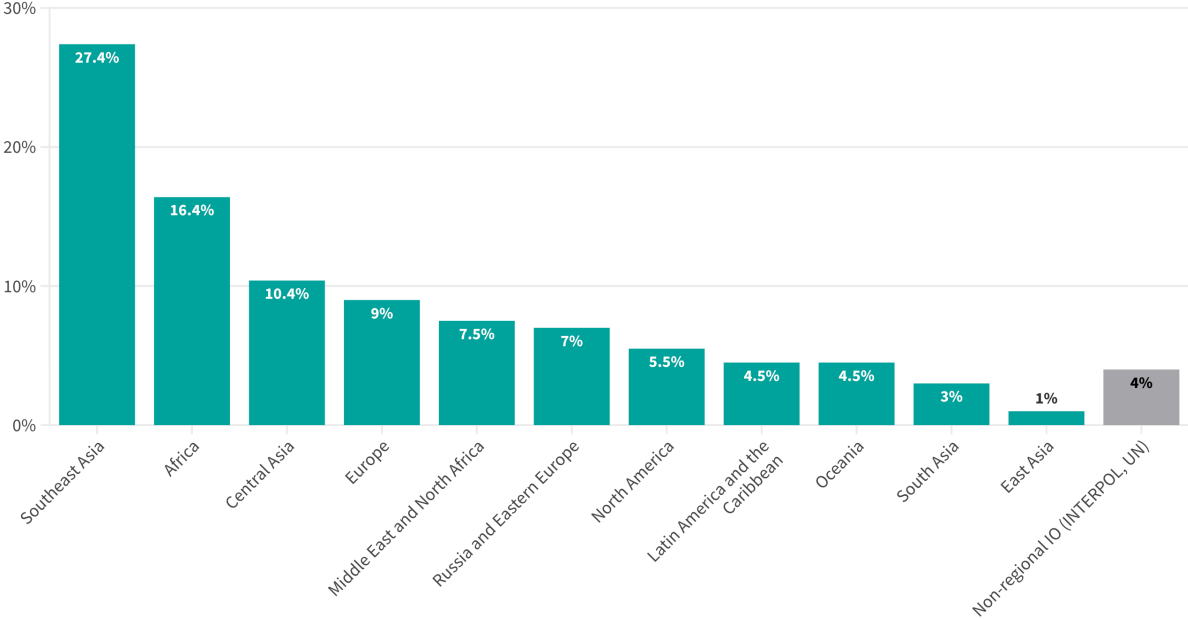
China does not currently have a regional diplomacy framework for multilateral law enforcement cooperation in Latin America, but it has offered a public indication of its intent to deepen law enforcement cooperation and engagement in the region. At the fourth ministerial meeting of the China-CELAC (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) Forum in May 2025, Xi Jinping pledged to continue working with countries in Latin America to implement GSI. He proposed that China and the thirty-three Latin American countries “cooperate more closely in disaster governance, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, anti-corruption, narcotics control and combating transnational organized crime so as to safeguard security and stability in the region,” and offered law enforcement equipment and “training programs tailored to the needs of CELAC member states.”¹³²

China's Bilateral Security Diplomacy

The final pillar of China's security diplomacy is bilateral meetings and engagements. From mid-2022 to mid-2025, Chinese internal security officials conducted a total of 201 bilateral meetings with officials from sixty-nine different countries. Of the 201 meetings, 131 were organized individually with foreign counterparts, and the remaining seventy were "sideline bilaterals" held in conjunction with multilateral meetings.

In conjunction with the multilateral regional outreach shown in Figure 4 above, bilateral meeting counts provide a sense of how China distributes attention across different regions within its global security diplomacy portfolio (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Regional Breakdown of Bilateral Meetings (June 2022–May 2025)



Source: Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Isaac Kardon, and Cameron Waltz, "China Internal Security Diplomacy Dataset," version 1.0, July 21, 2025, available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DBZIUV>.

Bilateral engagements, when considered separately or in combination with multilateral meetings with senior Chinese police and law enforcement officials, can also indicate the overall prioritization of China’s foreign policy relationships, as Table 2 below suggests.

Table 2 shows, for example, the importance that China’s internal security apparatus places on cooperation with both Russia and Vietnam.¹³³ It also demonstrates that bilateral engagements are used to bolster and complement regionally-scoped multilateral outreach in Southeast Asia and Central Asia.

Notably, our data show that countries in Africa receive a significant amount of attention in terms of bilateral security diplomacy organized by the PRC, despite not having a regional multilateral forum to discuss these issues with the PRC until late 2024. Indeed, this paper identifies East Africa as a focus of China’s effort to construct regional security mechanisms, but Africa already receives the second-most bilateral outreach of any part of the world. This pattern suggests that China perceives significant reasons to engage in police-led security cooperation with countries in the region. MPS hosted fourteen sideline bilateral meetings with foreign counterparts alongside the 2024 China-East Africa Ministerial Dialogue,

Table 2. Countries with the Most Meetings (Cumulative, June 2022–May 2025)

Rank	Country/IO	Bilateral Meetings	Rank	Country/IO	All Diplomatic Meetings
1	Vietnam	15	1	Russia	19
2	Russia	13	2	Vietnam	16
3	United States	11	3	Kazakhstan	14
4	Cambodia	10	4	Kyrgyzstan	13
5	Thailand	8	5	Tajikistan	12
6	Malaysia	7	6	Cambodia	11
7	Kazakhstan	6	6	Pakistan	11
7	Myanmar	6	6	United States	11
9	Interpol	5	9	Uzbekistan	10
9	Kyrgyzstan	5	10	Thailand	9
9	Singapore	5			
9	South Africa	5			
9	Tajikistan	5			

Source: Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Isaac Kardon, and Cameron Waltz, “China Internal Security Diplomacy Dataset,” version 1.0, July 21, 2025, available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DBZIUW>.

almost half of China’s ministerial-level meetings in the region since 2022. This burst of bilateral engagement in the context of a regional multilateral dialogue suggests that Beijing can use regional forums to catalyze bilateral security relationships, and to organize security outreach in the region more efficiently and systematically.

Another way to think about prioritization in Chinese foreign policy is to consider the seniority of the official sent to conduct security diplomacy. Of the leaders we examine here, Chen Wenqing sits on the Politburo, while Ministers Chen Yixin and Wang Xiaohong are both members of the CCP Central Committee. (Wang is also Chen Wenqing’s deputy on the CPLC.) Table 3 shows the list of countries engaged with most frequently in the past three years by Chen Wenqing and Wang Xiaohong, respectively.

Most of the countries in both columns are important strategic partners of the PRC; a significant number of them are autocracies. Chen, as the head of a party body (the CPLC), tends to conduct security cooperation and outreach meetings with ideologically aligned countries, though not exclusively. He is, for example, the primary internal security official to

Table 3. Countries with the Most Bilateral Meetings by Agency (June 2022–May 2025)

Rank	Country/IO	CPLC Bilateral Meetings	Rank	Country/IO	MPS Bilateral Meetings
1	Russia	5	1	Cambodia	9
2	Singapore	4	1	United States	9
3	Vietnam	3	1	Vietnam	9
4	Germany	2	4	Russia	8
4	Serbia	2	5	Malaysia	7
6	Hungary	1	5	Thailand	7
6	Iran	1	7	Kazakhstan	6
6	Italy	1	7	Myanmar	6
6	Jordan	1	9	Interpol	5
6	Saudi Arabia	1	9	Kyrgyzstan	5
6	South Africa	1	11	Ethiopia	4
6	Tajikistan	1	11	Pakistan	4
6	Türkiye	1	11	Solomon Islands	4
6	Uzbekistan	1	11	South Africa	4
			11	Tajikistan	4

Source: Sheena Chestnut Greitens, Isaac Kardon, and Cameron Waltz, “China Internal Security Diplomacy Dataset,” version 1.0, July 21, 2025, available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DBZIUW>.

liaise with Russian counterparts throughout this period.¹³⁴ Perhaps because his diplomatic engagement carries more seniority, it is also more selective. MPS, on the other hand, tends to engage government-to-government with a broader range of interlocutors, especially when the vice-ministerial and assistant-ministerial levels are included in the analysis (as evidenced by, among other things, the presence of the United States as one of the most frequent interlocutors in the 2022 to 2025 period).

The final way in which this data helps to identify relative prioritization among China's internal security and law enforcement partners results from more closely examining a specific subset of bilateral engagements: those held on the sideline of multilateral events. These events provide an indication of how China weights the relative importance of its security partners within the various regional or multilateral frameworks it has constructed. Sideline bilaterals are done in a context where time and manpower constraints force senior MPS officials to make decisions about which countries and leaders to prioritize over others. This reports infers that in this context, the countries that get higher-level meetings, or meetings at all, are likely countries that a) China finds most valuable or necessary as security partners; b) are most willing to cooperate with China; c) are leaders within the regional/multilateral groupings who can pull along or influence others; or d) some combination of these and other factors.

For example, of the eight countries that attended the 2024 Pacific Islands security dialogue, only the Solomon Islands and Fiji got private ministerial meetings (Fiji ahead of time, as it was co-chair of the event alongside the PRC), and only Tonga and Vanuatu got private vice-ministerial meetings. Most of these countries (with the exception of Kiribati) have the highest possible level of strategic partnership with China. As noted above, China's multilateral outreach to the region has nested within it a concerted and substantive bilateral outreach program to countries in the region that welcome Chinese security assistance, particularly the Solomon Islands,¹³⁵ Samoa,¹³⁶ Vanuatu,¹³⁷ Kiribati,¹³⁸ and, after a pause, Fiji.¹³⁹ China's security agreement with the Solomon Islands, finalized in July 2023, raised particular concern as an earlier version of a bilateral security pact, leaked in 2022, would have allowed both Chinese police and armed forces to operate in the Solomon Islands at the government's request.¹⁴⁰ Counts of diplomatic meetings, therefore, appear to reflect relationships that are not just diplomatically performative, but that tend to correlate with deeper patterns of security assistance and cooperation.

Conclusion

Global outreach by China's internal security agencies is expanding. This nonmilitary security diplomacy, conducted in particular by the Ministry of Public Security and the CCP's Central Political-Legal Commission, plays a crucial but overlooked role in Chinese foreign security policy. It forms a key part of China's implementation of Xi's Global Security Initiative and creates a diplomatic platform for security engagement that externalizes China's

“comprehensive national security concept.” This outreach cultivates international support and legitimizes Beijing’s efforts to assure domestic stability and regime security for the Chinese Communist Party. China’s approach does not produce symmetrical, head-to-head competition with Western-led international security order, which is most developed in the military domain. Instead, Beijing is creating China-centered alternative institutions and mechanisms in areas of global security where existing order is weak.

The data presented here suggest that the GSI is not simply “old wine in new bottles.” China is using the GSI as an organizing framework for new global, regional, and bilateral security outreach and cooperation. Chinese leaders are actively building new security architecture at all three levels that propagates Beijing’s understanding of and approach to security: a vision in which regime security and international security are deeply entwined. At the global level, Beijing is using the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang) to set worldwide standards around public security, and to disseminate China’s domestic practices and principles for law enforcement, surveillance, counterterrorism, and other vital internal security functions. At the regional level, Beijing is working to strengthen existing diplomatic forums and institutions for regional security cooperation and build new ones. These mechanisms are most robust in Central and Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, while Chinese public security officials are actively pursuing new regional security arrangements in Africa and Latin America. Beijing’s efforts blend practical law enforcement cooperation that is not particularly ideological in nature with efforts to suppress internal unrest and opposition to achieve regime security, both for Beijing and its security partners. Diplomatic interactions and cooperation at the bilateral level tend to buttress and put concrete plans underneath the overarching principles and frameworks outlined at the global and regional levels, collectively strengthening patterns of cooperation centered on China’s preferred approach and rewriting global security governance in the process.

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