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# The Expanding International Reach of China's Police

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# Introduction and summary

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is using China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS), its national police service and domestic security force, across the globe in ways that threaten U.S. national security interests by influencing security sector governance to undermine respect for the rule of law and human rights. Under Chinese President Xi Jinping, the MPS has significantly expanded its overseas activities, increasingly using security cooperation as a tool to expand its influence and shape global norms.

While the U.S. foreign policy community has focused attention on the military-to-military security cooperation activities of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), there is little public understanding of how the MPS' overseas activities directly compete with U.S. security cooperation programs.

The MPS is a novel tool of CCP foreign policy used to shape in its own favor what the CCP refers to as the “global security governance system.” From Beijing's perspective, the United States and other liberal democracies have played an outsize role in designing global institutions, rules, and norms. Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Wang Yi said in 2021 that “China did not participate in the development [of the rules-based international order], so why should we comply with [the rules-based international order]?”<sup>1</sup>

The MPS' global efforts to implement the CCP's directive to “actively build a law enforcement security cooperation system with Chinese characteristics” pose significant challenges to the United States and other liberal democracies:<sup>2</sup>

- The MPS conducts transnational repression operations such as kidnapping and threatening political dissidents, human rights activists, journalists, ethnic and religious minorities, and former officials accused of corruption.
- The MPS operates under the CCP's own definitions of the rule of law and terrorism, which depart from globally established norms, simultaneously

eroding shared recognition of these concepts while creating the pretext for a wide-ranging authority to act abroad.

- MPS norm-breaking behaviors may also encourage other authoritarian regimes to act in similar ways.

These activities stand in sharp contrast to U.S. security cooperation programs that aim to advance U.S. foreign policy interests by bolstering the capacity of partners to counter shared threats while adhering to international law and liberal democratic norms.<sup>3</sup>

This report maps the universe of MPS overseas activities, which fall into three broad categories:

- 1. Unilateral actions:** transnational repression and illegal rendition campaigns
- 2. Bilateral engagement:** bilateral meetings, formal agreements, capacity building activities, material assistance, and extraterritorial joint security patrols. This report provides an [original data set](#) of the MPS' global bilateral activities to establish a baseline understanding of MPS activity outside the PRC's borders
- 3. Multilateral engagement:** creation of new international institutions and activities within established bodies such as Interpol

The threats that the MPS' activities pose to U.S. national interests merit a comprehensive approach. The Center for American Progress recommends the United States respond with the following four-part strategy to reinforce strong security sector governance principles and norms, limit MPS activity within the United States, counter MPS conduct in multilateral organizations, and deepen official and public understanding of MPS malign activities:

1. The United States, together with allies and partners, should **drive a rule-of-law vision for security sector governance cooperation** to draw attention to MPS challenges to the rule of law and human rights while reinforcing alternatives to MPS engagement for international partners.
2. Washington should **counter transnational repression occurring in the United States** by crafting new legislation to deter such activities, fully implementing existing sanctions, and focusing on helping individuals targeted by the institution.

3. The United States should **elevate its engagement in Interpol and other multilateral institutions** to shape the environment in which the MPS acts. It could, for example, reform Interpol, offer alternative candidates for leadership roles in international organizations, and track the MPS' use of global anti-corruption platforms.
4. The United States should **build a knowledge base of MPS activity** through increased monitoring of and reporting on the MPS, sharing that information with other governments, and pressing for increased transparency of partner governments' engagement with the MPS.

These policies would help reaffirm the foundations of recognized security sector governance norms in concert with allies and partners; counter and deter the worst of the MPS' global activities abroad; protect those targeted by the MPS on U.S. soil; and work to set acceptable, transparent standards for security sector activities that respect human rights.

This report comprises four sections: 1) an overview of the MPS and Beijing's vision for its role abroad; 2) the types of MPS overseas activities; 3) the threats of MPS international activities to U.S. interests; and 4) recommendations for U.S. policymakers.

# The MPS and Beijing's vision for its role abroad

The Ministry of Public Security is the People's Republic of China's national police service and domestic security force; its day-to-day responsibilities encompass law enforcement and criminal justice work, from traffic enforcement to countering violent crime.<sup>4</sup> The MPS falls under the State Council, the PRC's equivalent of a cabinet. While the MPS is a PRC government institution, it is de facto controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. The PRC is a party-state, meaning that the ruling CCP holds a monopoly over political power and the levers of government. The party "sits atop the political system, controlling appointments to government and legislative posts, and ensuring its policy priorities are enacted into law and implemented."<sup>5</sup> The MPS, as the primary overseer of domestic security, is one of the party's main tools to maintain its grip on power. The MPS is also a core part of the CCP's coercive apparatus, tasked with maintaining stability and social order according to the dictates of CCP leadership.<sup>6</sup>

## The MPS' mandate

The MPS' primary mandate is to uphold CCP rule. When police officers are sworn in, they pledge allegiance first to the CCP, second to the country, third to the people, and only fourth to uphold the law.<sup>7</sup> The institution's priorities include political policing such as "stability maintenance" (维稳 wéiwěn), a euphemism for controlling protests, riots, and other forms of dissent.<sup>8</sup> The MPS is also an "information management bureaucracy" responsible for securing the PRC's computer networks and surveillance assets.<sup>9</sup> It conducts mass surveillance and data collection throughout China, using "tens of millions of surveillance cameras throughout the country to monitor the general public."<sup>10</sup> The MPS operates the Golden Shield Project, the PRC's internet surveillance system, which enables online censorship and monitoring.<sup>11</sup> The MPS has extended the PRC's DNA collection campaign from Tibet and Xinjiang across the country, collecting DNA from millions of boys and men in order to "manage and control society."<sup>12</sup> Finally, the MPS has an international mandate to organize exchanges and collaborate with international police and security apparatuses, the topic of this report.

The expansion of the MPS' international police cooperation activities is driven by two main motivations. First, the MPS is working to advance the overseas security interests of the PRC such as combating terrorism, countering drug trade, and protecting Chinese nationals and companies in foreign countries. Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong has called for the MPS to strengthen law enforcement cooperation to “effectively resolve overseas security risks.”<sup>13</sup>

MPS overseas activity is expanding in tandem with the expansion of the PRC's overseas interests, most notably in support of President Xi's main foreign policy initiative, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). At the BRI Security Cooperation Dialogue in 2017, then-MPS Minister Guo Shengkun expressed his hope that “all [BRI participants] will establish common security and cooperative security concepts, establish and improve the ‘Belt and Road’ security cooperation mechanism.”<sup>14</sup> At the same conference, former MPS Minister Meng Jianzhu called for BRI participants to “deepen law enforcement and security cooperation.”<sup>15</sup>

Second, the MPS' global activities are driven by Beijing's discontent with the current international liberal democratic order, often characterized by “limits to state authority, such as binding international law and unalienable individual rights.”<sup>16</sup> Instead, President Xi's vision for a global order is one that would permit unchallenged CCP domestic power and create the conditions for the CCP's governance model to coexist with democracies by rejecting universal values such as respect for the rule of law and the protection of human rights.<sup>17</sup> To achieve this vision, Beijing has advocated for the supreme authority of the state to determine its own political and economic system while also pushing back against any perceived infringement upon its own sovereignty such as international monitoring and sanctioning.<sup>18</sup>

Beijing has been clear about its intent to assert greater influence over global security norms and the MPS' role in achieving this vision. In his keynote speech at the 2017 Interpol General Assembly, President Xi declared that “the current global security governance system has many incompatibilities and should be reformed and improved.”<sup>19</sup> That same year, the PRC's National Public Security International Cooperation Work Conference—a convening of the PRC's top public security and legal officials—gave the MPS a broad international mission mandate, calling on it to “grasp the new characteristics of the internationalization of public security work.”<sup>20</sup> In 2019, then-MPS Minister Zhao Kezhi directed the MPS to grow its international profile to enhance its power to influence global security norms, calling for the ministry to build

a “new system of public security international cooperation work” to ensure that CCP foreign policies are implemented.<sup>21</sup> These calls to action are clear directions to the MPS to be more active abroad.

CCP goals dictate the MPS’ international work. In 2018, then-MPS Minister Zhao issued requirements for the MPS’ international cooperation activities, which included “maintaining absolute loyalty” to the party as officers carry out their work.<sup>22</sup> Liao Jinrong, director of the MPS’ International Cooperation Bureau, stated in a 2017 interview that Beijing would expand the “tentacles” of international police force cooperation wherever the CCP perceives that PRC national interests are in danger.<sup>23</sup>



# The MPS' international activities

The Ministry of Public Security's global activities fall into three categories: unilateral actions, such as transnational repression campaigns; bilateral engagements such as meetings, formal agreements, capacity building activities and material assistance to peer security apparatuses, and extraterritorial joint security patrols; and multilateral engagement, including creating new, alternative international institutions and activities within established institutions such as Interpol.

## What is transnational repression?

According to Freedom House:

The term transnational repression describes the ways a government reaches across national borders to intimidate, silence, or harm an exile, refugee, or member of diaspora who they perceive as a threat and have a political incentive to control. Methods of transnational repression include assassinations, physical assaults, detention, rendition, unlawful deportation, unexplained or enforced disappearance, physical surveillance or stalking, passport cancellation or control over other documents, Interpol abuse, digital threats, spyware, cyberattacks, social media surveillance, online harassment, and harassment of or harm to family and associates who remain in the country of origin.<sup>24</sup>

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## Unilateral action: Transnational repression and rendition campaigns

The MPS plays a key role in the CCP's ongoing, global campaign of transnational repression, most notably through its rendition campaigns but likewise through other actions to pressure and control individuals or communities beyond the PRC's borders. Freedom House highlights three distinct characteristics of the CCP's transnational repression efforts:

First, the campaign targets many groups, including multiple ethnic and religious minorities, political dissidents, human rights activists, journalists, and former insiders accused of corruption. Second, it spans the full spectrum of tactics: from direct attacks like renditions, to co-opting other countries to detain and render exiles, to mobility controls, to threats from a distance like digital threats, spyware, and coercion by proxy. Third, the sheer breadth and global scale of the campaign is unparalleled. Freedom House's conservative catalogue of direct, physical attacks since 2014 covers 214 cases originating from China, far more than any other country.<sup>25</sup>

The MPS has implemented two major global rendition campaigns: Operation Fox Hunt (猎狐行动 lièhú xíngdòng) and Operation Sky Net (天网行动 tiānwǎng xíngdòng). Operation Fox Hunt is an initiative launched in 2014 to locate and extradite alleged Chinese fugitives who fled overseas.<sup>26</sup> In 2015, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection launched Operation Sky Net, to coordinate rendition efforts across multiple PRC government agencies.<sup>27</sup> Operation Fox Hunt is now subsumed under Sky Net. In addition to using these campaigns to root out real corruption, President Xi and the CCP have used them to purge political rivals, silence critics, and eliminate perceived foreign intelligence risks.<sup>28</sup>

Renditions represent some of the MPS' most egregious norm-breaking behavior. MPS authorities have conducted Operation Fox Hunt missions overseas without informing the local country's legal or law enforcement apparatus, and in contradiction with local and international law.<sup>29</sup> These renditions are among the MPS' most clandestine activities and therefore extremely difficult to track.

Nonetheless, substantial evidence has emerged of Fox Hunt and Sky Net operations spanning the globe, including in the United States. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) alleged that from 2016 to 2019, multiple PRC officials directed individuals to “engage in efforts to coerce” a Chinese citizen

living in the United States to return to the PRC as part of Operation Fox Hunt.<sup>30</sup> This campaign included coercing the target’s father to travel to the United States from the PRC to encourage the target to return to the PRC, sending harassing messages over social media to the target’s daughter and her friends, and leaving a threatening note on the target’s door that read, “If you are willing to go back to mainland and spend 10 years in prison, your wife and children will be all right. That’s the end of this matter!”<sup>31</sup>

In March 2022, in a different case, the DOJ alleged that Sun Hoi Ying, who is still at large in the PRC, acted and conspired to act in the United States as an unregistered PRC government agent while conducting an Operation Fox Hunt mission.<sup>32</sup> According to the charging documents, Sun allegedly surveilled and pressured an ethnic-Chinese U.S. citizen to return to the PRC as part of an anti-corruption investigation.<sup>33</sup> The target’s daughter, a U.S. citizen, was allegedly held against her will in the PRC for eight months after visiting family, in an effort to pressure the target to return to the PRC.<sup>34</sup> The DOJ says that Sun Hoi Ying, the same PRC agent, while pursuing a different target, coordinated and co-conspired with an unnamed local U.S. law enforcement officer to threaten and pressure the latter target to return to the PRC.<sup>35</sup>

Under Operation Fox Hunt, MPS officers captured more than 6,000 targets in more than 120 countries from 2014 to 2020, according to the *Global Times*, a CCP-aligned newspaper.<sup>36</sup> CCP media is candid about the success and reach of these operations: *China Daily* reported that 213 targets were captured in Southeast Asia in 2015, and additional PRC media report that Operation Fox Hunt missions have been conducted in the United States, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, Malaysia, Spain, South Korea, and Vietnam.<sup>37</sup> When expanded to include Operation Sky Net, more than 8,000 individuals were arrested from 2015 to 2020.<sup>38</sup>

Some foreign governments have coordinated with the PRC government on these missions, according to PRC government sources. For example, the governments of Argentina, France, and Malaysia have cooperated with the MPS to help it arrest individuals targeted by Fox Hunt operations.<sup>39</sup> Foreign government coordination on potential Operation Fox Hunt missions requires careful due diligence given the MPS’ practice of pursuing criminal charges for political activities.

## The extralegal kidnapping of Gui Minhai

The case of Gui Minhai is the most notorious of the MPS' global rendition campaigns. Gui, an ethnic-Chinese naturalized Swedish citizen, worked in Hong Kong at Causeway Bay Books, which published and sold books with unflattering stories about the political elite in Beijing, including stories about President Xi Jinping's wife.<sup>40</sup> In 2015, Gui disappeared while staying at his vacation home in Thailand.<sup>41</sup> Three months later, Gui resurfaced in China, confessing on PRC official state television to a decade-old, alleged hit-and-run case. Many experts have contended that his confession was a false product of coercion.<sup>42</sup> Gui was one of five individuals connected to the bookstore who were detained in late 2015 but the only one to be kidnapped on foreign soil. Official PRC state media confirmed MPS involvement in the case, although the PRC government claims Gui surrendered himself to the MPS.<sup>43</sup> Thai government statements indicate MPS officers acted without the Thai government's knowledge.<sup>44</sup>

Gui was released after two years in prison but forced to remain in the PRC and required to report to local police regularly.<sup>45</sup> Then, in 2018, Gui was seized and taken away by plainclothes police officers while traveling by train to Beijing with Swedish diplomats. He was charged with meeting with the Swedish diplomats illegally and passing them secret information.<sup>46</sup> In 2020, a PRC court sentenced Gui to jail for 10 years for "illegally providing intelligence overseas," a sentence he is still serving.<sup>47</sup>

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## Bilateral engagement

### Methodology

To understand the MPS' international activities, CAP drew primarily from information from PRC embassy websites around the world to [create a database tracking the MPS' bilateral foreign engagements from 1995 to 2021](#). This data set covers bilateral exchanges and police diplomacy, formal agreements, capacity building activities, material assistance, and extraterritorial joint security patrols.

The data set offers insight into how the MPS behaves abroad and where it is being well-received by foreign governments. While public information on the MPS' overseas activities is limited and nontransparent, the database is a comprehensive public record of MPS overseas activities to date.

### Bilateral police diplomacy

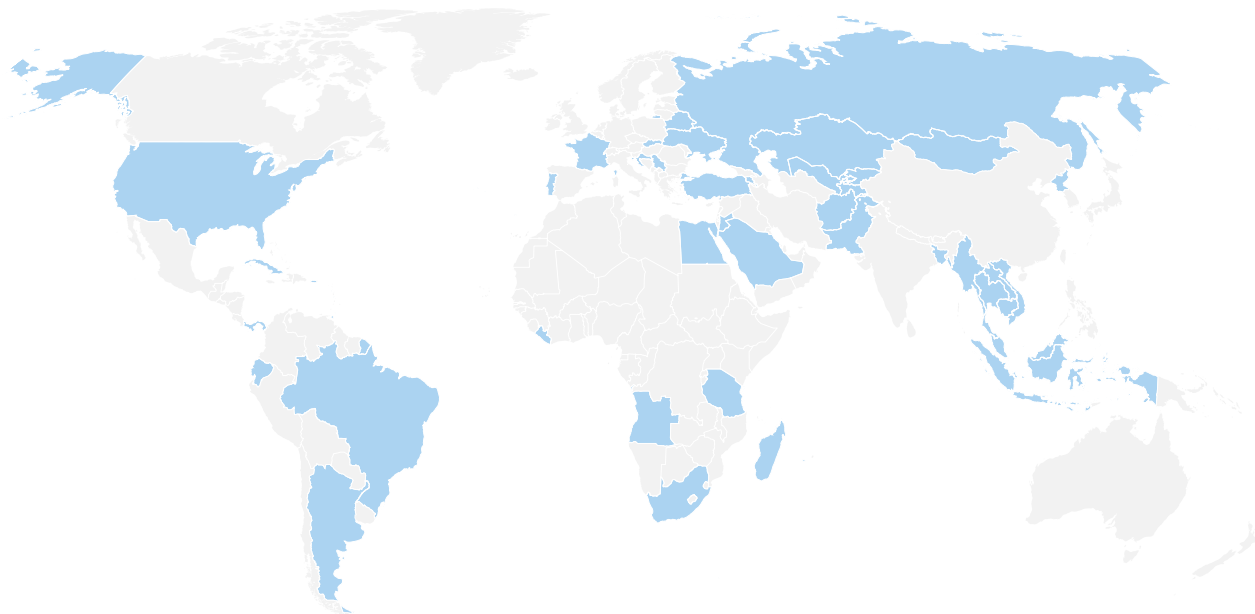
As top MPS officials pursue stronger government-government relationships, their bilateral engagement typically occurs with their institutional equals but also with heads of state and other officials in charge of national security, defense, and internal affairs.

From 1997 to 2021, senior MPS officials held 114 bilateral meetings with foreign counterparts.<sup>48</sup> The frequency of bilateral engagements generally increased over that period, with more than 60 percent of all identified MPS bilateral exchanges occurring during President Xi's time in power. The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 significantly decreased exchanges starting in that year, and the trend continued in 2021 as the PRC remained effectively in lockdown.

The topic of “stability maintenance” (维稳 *wéiwěn*), an MPS domestic priority and a euphemism for controlling protests, riots, and other forms of dissent, is a central theme of MPS bilateral public security exchanges. Topics such as maintaining stability (including social stability, regional stability, and national stability), and managing large-scale events such as protests and riots were mentioned in at least 41 different bilateral meetings with officials from 18 different countries.<sup>49</sup> Most of these 18 countries were designated as “partly free” or “not free” under Freedom House's Global Freedom Status framework.<sup>50</sup> Since President Xi assumed power in 2013, stability maintenance has doubled as a topic of discussion during MPS bilateral meetings, indicating that an increasing number of foreign governments seem interested in engaging with the MPS on issues such as controlling protests, riots, and other forms of political dissent.

FIGURE 1

### Ministry of Public Security (MPS) bilateral police diplomacy meetings around the globe, 1997–2020



#### MPS bilateral police diplomacy meetings by region, 1997–2020



Source: Center for American Progress 2022 MPS database.

Counterterrorism was the most discussed topic in bilateral exchanges, aligned with the MPS’ role as the PRC’s lead organization responsible for counterterrorism matters.<sup>51</sup> Other common topics in bilateral discussions have included transnational crime, counter-drug efforts, law enforcement cooperation and capacity building, and border security.

The MPS has focused its bilateral outreach on Asia. Governments in Asia were involved in 60 percent of bilateral exchanges, and almost half of those involved countries that border China. The MPS’ bilateral exchanges with European governments made up 13 percent, governments across Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa both accounted for around 10 percent each, and North America just more than 4 percent. The MPS held two bilateral exchanges with Middle Eastern governments. Fiji was the only country in Oceania to hold a bilateral exchange with the MPS.

## Formal agreements

The MPS signs formal documents with foreign governments to institutionalize and foster future international police cooperation. These agreements are most often signed at bilateral meetings between the MPS and foreign counterparts.

According to the CAP database, the MPS has signed 51 agreements with 31 different foreign governments.<sup>52</sup> These formal agreements include protocols of cooperation (合作议定 hézuò yìdìng), cooperation agreements (合作协议 hézuò xiéyì), memorandums of cooperation (合作备忘录 hézuò bèiwànglù), memorandums of understanding (谅解备忘录 liàngjiě bèiwànglù), cooperation documents (合作文件 hézuò wénjiàn), and letters of intent for cooperation (合作意向书 hézuò yìxiàngshū). A memorandum of understanding likely indicates a mutual understanding of the goals of cooperation, while a memorandum of cooperation indicates a greater level of determination by both parties to cooperate on shared interests. The database identifies 19 cooperation agreements, 13 memorandums of understanding, 11 cooperation documents, four protocols of cooperation, two letters of intent for cooperation, one readmission agreement, and one memorandum of cooperation.

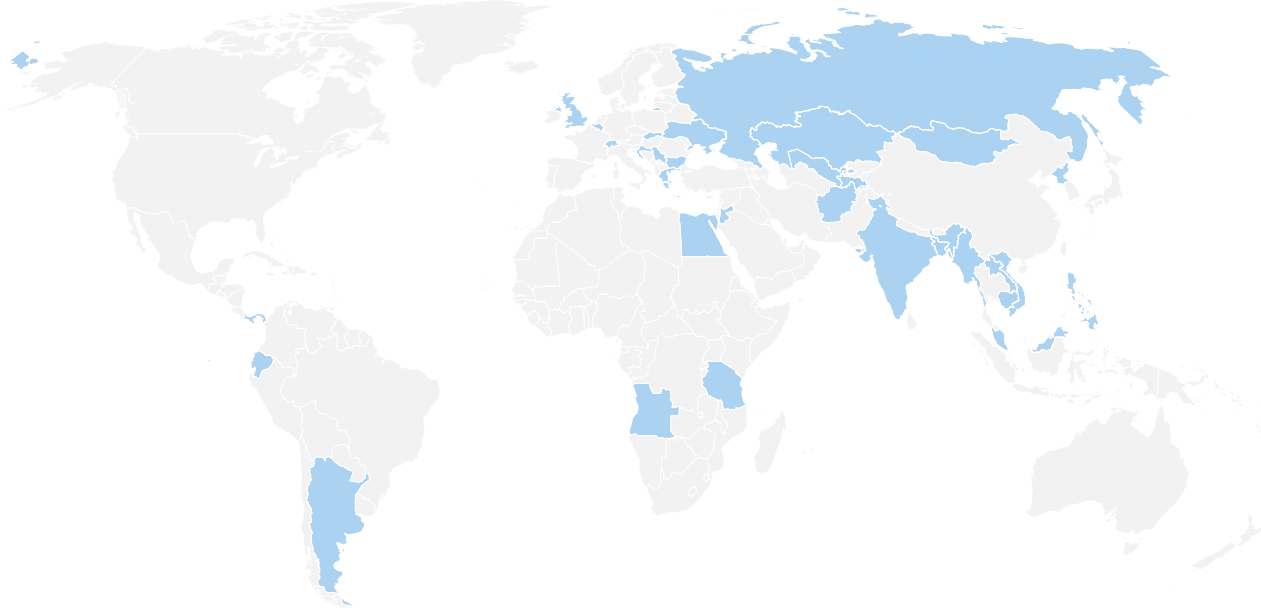
Some MPS agreements raise transparency concerns. In 2015, the MPS and Switzerland's State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) signed a secret readmission agreement—a binding arrangement to return non-nationals to another country.<sup>53</sup> Both the Swiss parliament and foreign affairs committee were not aware of the agreement at the time of its signing.<sup>54</sup> Switzerland has concluded about 50 similar agreements with other foreign governments and published their contents, but the MPS agreement did not come to light until 2020 when *NZZ am Sonntag*, a Swiss newspaper, reported about the agreement and its potential renewal five years after it was signed.<sup>55</sup> Later that same year, Safeguard Defenders, a human rights advocacy group, published the text of the agreement.<sup>56</sup>

The agreement states MPS officials “will be invited ...without official status” to Switzerland for up to two weeks in order to interview alleged Chinese citizens overstaying their visas, evaluate if they are Chinese citizens, and then submit reports to the Swiss government on each individual interview conducted.<sup>57</sup> The Swiss agreement also committed to keeping the identity of the MPS agents confidential and contained no clauses regarding supervising MPS agents outside their work functions with SEM.<sup>58</sup> According to professor Margaret Lewis, an expert on Chinese criminal justice and human rights, it is unusual that the PRC would send officials abroad to interview low-level targets such as individuals overstaying their visas.<sup>59</sup> Rather, she argues that it is more likely that MPS

agents would travel abroad to interview “people who are ... of interest to the PRC government.”<sup>60</sup> Given that MPS agents would be invited to Switzerland without official status, they could in turn potentially travel to the 26 other countries within the Schengen Area. SEM stated that the agreement resulted in one MPS visit to Switzerland in 2016.<sup>61</sup> That same year, 13 individuals were returned to China from Switzerland.<sup>62</sup>

FIGURE 2

**Ministry of Public Security (MPS) formal agreements signed around the globe, 1995–2020**



**MPS formal agreements signed by region, 1995–2020**



Source: Center for American Progress 2022 MPS database.

An April 2022 security agreement between the PRC and Solomon Islands has reinforced concerns in Washington and among allies in the region about the military-to-military security cooperation activities of the People’s Liberation Army. In fact, the potential domestic security-related cooperation between the PRC and Solomon Islands also merits close attention, and considered U.S. policy engagement with Solomon Islands’ authorities. A leaked draft of the security agreement stated that “Solomon Islands may, according to its own



needs, request China to send police, armed police, military personnel and other law enforcement and armed forces to Solomon Islands to assist in maintaining social order.”<sup>63</sup>

The PRC’s public security cooperation with Egypt demonstrates the potential downstream human-rights-related consequences of formal security cooperation agreements. In June 2017, the Egyptian government announced the signing of an MPS-Ministry of Interior cooperation agreement, which would address “the spread of terrorism and extremist ideologies.”<sup>64</sup> Weeks later, Egypt detained more than 200 Uyghurs residing in Egypt, a step some suspect came in response to a request from Beijing.<sup>65</sup> Egypt is also one of the largest recipients of U.S. security cooperation, to the tune of more than \$50 billion since 1978.<sup>66</sup> To date, it is unclear if the U.S. government has evaluated whether or how U.S. and MPS assistance activities, including for training and equipment for Egyptian law enforcement entities, have overlapped and potentially run counter to U.S. security assistance objectives.

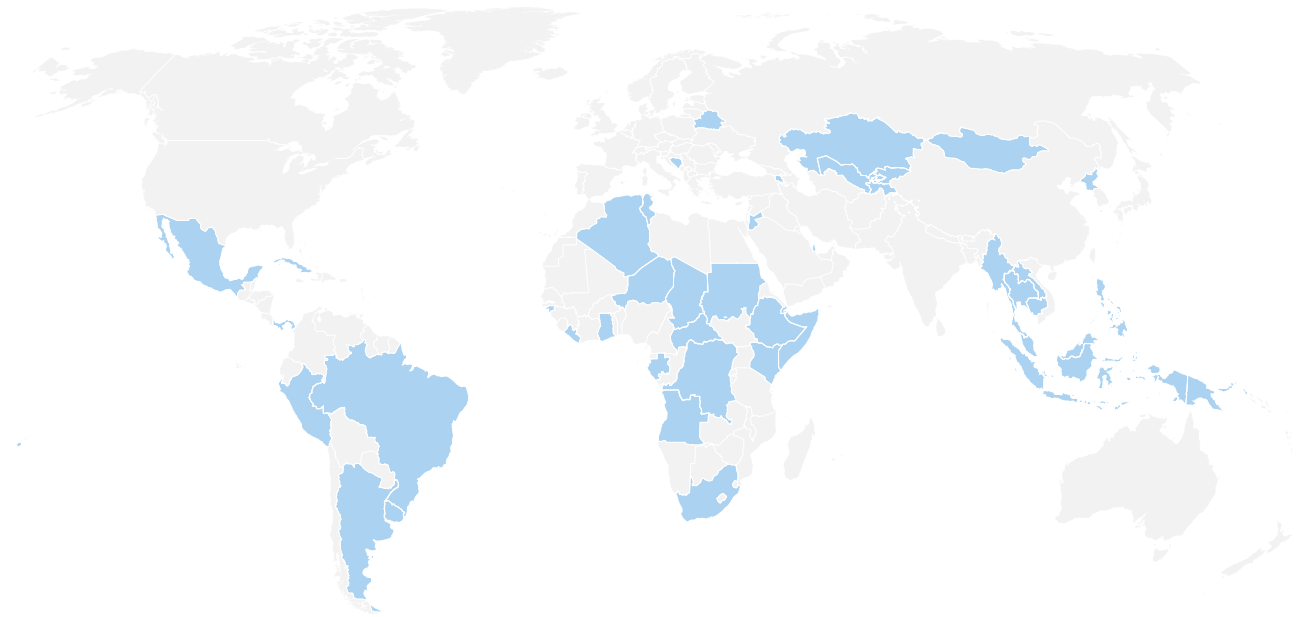
### **Capacity building cooperation**

The MPS devotes significant resources to capacity building efforts with foreign public security apparatuses. President Xi announced at the 2017 Interpol General Assembly that the MPS would seek to “train 20,000 law enforcement officers in developing countries.”<sup>67</sup> According to PRC state media, the MPS has since achieved this goal.<sup>68</sup>

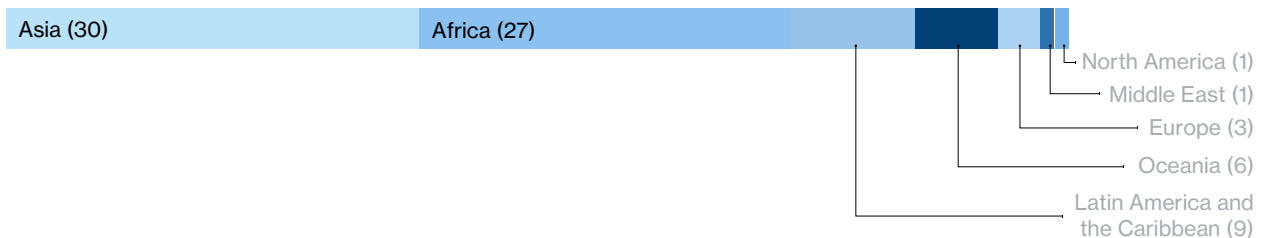
In total, CAP identified 77 MPS training sessions for foreign public security forces. The overwhelming majority – 73 of the 77 – have occurred during President Xi’s time in power, with a noticeable spike from 2017 to 2018, likely coinciding with the policy directive from the 2017 speech at the Interpol General Assembly. Asia received the most training sessions – almost 40 percent. Africa received the next-largest share at 35 percent. Latin America and the Caribbean received 12 percent. Oceania and Europe received 8 percent and 4 percent, respectively. In the Middle East, only Qatar received MPS training. In North America, Mexico took part in one MPS training.

FIGURE 3

### Ministry of Public Security (MPS) capacity building cooperation around the globe, 2004–2021



#### MPS capacity building cooperation by region, 2004–2021



Source: Center for American Progress 2022 MPS database

The MPS has trained police from 10 different countries (Argentina, Fiji, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Myanmar, North Korea, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Tunisia, and Uzbekistan) on stability maintenance (维稳 *wéiwěn*), a euphemism for controlling protests, riots, and other forms of dissent.

- In Myanmar, Panama, and Papua New Guinea, the MPS trained police counterparts in large-scale event security.<sup>69</sup>
- Police in Argentina and Tunisia have been trained by the MPS in maintaining and securing stability.<sup>70</sup>
- In Fiji and Liberia, police were trained in riot control tactics.<sup>71</sup>

- The MPS trained police in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on China’s use of facial recognition technology to maintain order at tourist sites.<sup>72</sup>
- The MPS trained North Korean counterparts in 2021 on “disaster response capabilities,” which appeared to some extent to be “aimed at bolstering Pyongyang’s ability to put down unrest by force.”<sup>73</sup>

The MPS also held a “Police Public Relations Education and Training Seminar,” where it taught Singaporean officials how to deal with the media during public security crises.<sup>74</sup>

The MPS is increasing its training on cyber and technology topics.<sup>75</sup> Specific topics include electronic data forensics and technology, network attack and defense technology, enhancing law enforcement capabilities with big data, artificial intelligence (AI), and applying big data and AI in counterterrorism efforts.<sup>76</sup> Developing cyber capabilities for internal public security, such as utilizing AI and big data for social control, are increasingly becoming domestic priorities for the CCP. These topics collectively reflect the sectors in which the PRC is developing cutting-edge technologies—and where it can therefore develop global use frameworks more easily than through traditional policing norms due to the technology’s novel nature.

The MPS has offered training sessions on China’s legal and judicial systems to officials in 12 countries.<sup>77</sup> MPS-led legal education has increased significantly under President Xi. Foreign police officers have attended training sessions on China’s judicial system, counterterrorism legislation, counter-drug legislation, and cybersecurity laws. Some PRC legal training sessions to foreign officials have influenced legal development in other countries by meeting demand signals from those countries. For example, Edwin Ngonyani, Tanzania’s deputy minister for transportation and communications, made public remarks at an August 2017 “China-Tanzania New Media Roundtable” calling for greater government control of the internet and increased cyber tracking abilities.<sup>78</sup> He stated, “Our Chinese friends have managed to block ... media in their country and replaced them with their homegrown sites that are safe, constructive, and popular. We aren’t there yet, but while we are still using these platforms we should guard against their misuse.”<sup>79</sup> In November 2017, Tanzanian officials attended a two-week training program for BRI countries on how to manage public opinion online.<sup>80</sup> In June 2018, seven months later, Tanzania’s government passed severe internet restrictions, closing all unregistered blogs and websites.<sup>81</sup>

MPS police training is driven by dual purposes. On one hand, the MPS meets demand signals of its foreign counterparts. On the other hand, MPS training comes with implicit and sometimes explicit expectations that partners pursue positive policies toward Beijing. Shan Daguo, the vice dean of the Criminal Investigation Police University of China, delivered a clear message to Uzbek police authorities participating in an MPS counter-drug training course:

I hope you will continue to pay attention to and care about the development of friendly relations with China after your return to your home country, become friendly messengers of [the] Chinese people, and contribute to the joint maintenance of regional security and stability.<sup>82</sup>

Political drivers are not a unique MPS phenomenon; many countries use police cooperation to influence global practices.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, political messaging tied to concerning elements in MPS training run counter to principles such as transparency, rule of law, due process, and respect for human rights, which democracies seek to advance with these same governments.

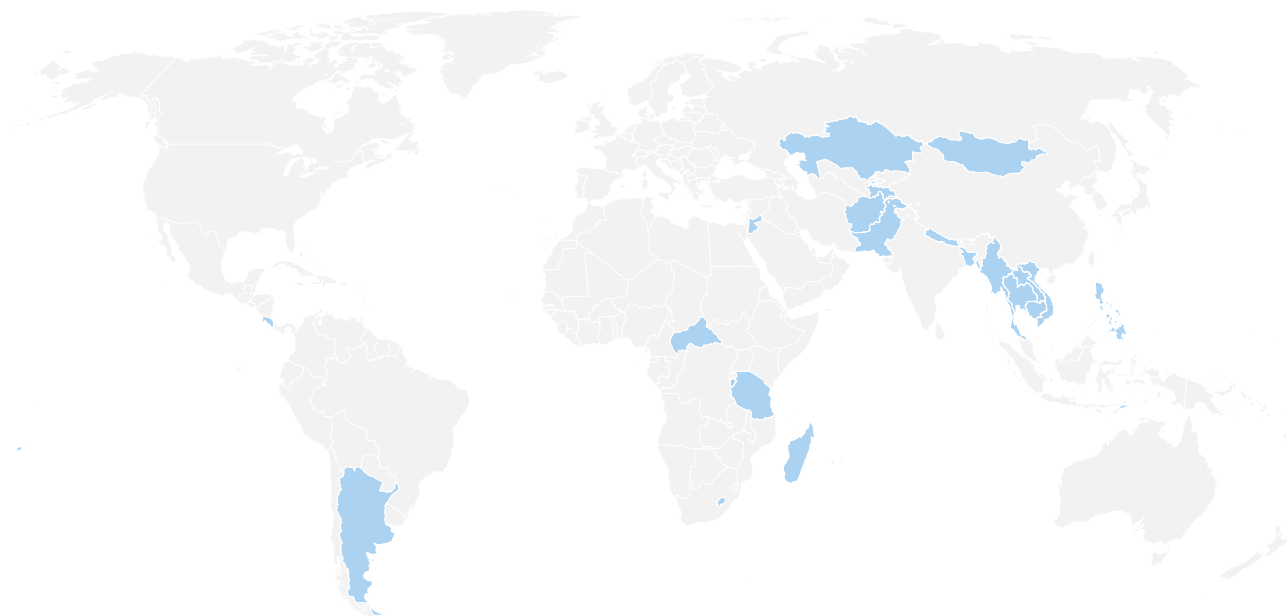
## **Material assistance**

The MPS also provides material assistance to foreign police and security apparatuses, ranging from donations of police equipment and investigative technologies to the construction of facilities for partner security institutions. Many of these contributions appear to be typical police equipment, some of which could indeed increase the investigative effectiveness of partner countries' police forces. But the MPS has also provided equipment and technologies that could easily be used for illiberal purposes; given the MPS' track record and organization goals, this is likely.

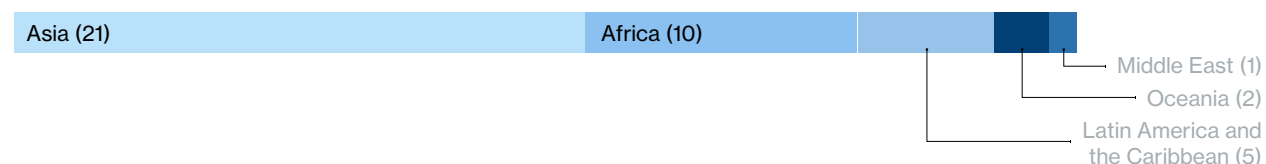
The CAP database shows that from 2006 to 2021, the MPS provided material assistance to 22 different countries on 39 different occasions. The MPS transferred police vehicles, bulletproof vests, long-distance night vision devices, uniforms, reflective vests, gas masks, computers, and printers to foreign partners. The MPS also supported construction projects – rehabilitating and expanding a police academy in Tanzania, constructing new facilities for Tajikistan's counternarcotics agency, and building a new police academy in Costa Rica.<sup>84</sup> After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MPS delivered COVID-19-related personal protective equipment (PPE) to Argentina, Cambodia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

FIGURE 4

### Ministry of Public Security (MPS) material assistance around the globe, 2006–2021



#### MPS material assistance by region, 2006–2021



Source: Center for American Progress 2022 MPS database.

For example, the MPS delivered “police supplies” to the Bangladesh Ministry of Home Affairs with the intention of “maintain[ing] social security and stability in Bangladesh.”<sup>85</sup> In 2006, the MPS helped the Pakistani Ministry of Interior build a DNA laboratory,<sup>86</sup> and did the same for Argentina in 2018.<sup>87</sup> The MPS’ use of DNA surveillance within China to track and detail Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities and to enhance surveillance over the majority Han population should raise concerns for these recipient countries.<sup>88</sup>

The MPS has also built basing facilities for partner security apparatuses. In October 2021, the MPS agreed to construct a base for an organized crime response unit for Tajikistan’s Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>89</sup> The base will be located in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province of Tajikistan, which borders Afghanistan’s Wakhan Corridor. The base reflects Beijing’s and Tajikistan’s shared interests in security along the Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan border, especially in light of the 2021 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban takeover.

## Extraterritorial joint security patrols

The MPS also conducts extraterritorial joint security patrols with certain foreign police services, which are intended to protect Chinese tourists and overseas Chinese citizens during the height of tourist season, according to CCP news sources.<sup>90</sup> For example, the MPS has conducted bilateral joint patrols with police officers in Croatia, Italy, and Serbia.<sup>91</sup>

The MPS has also conducted multilateral law enforcement patrols with Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand along the Mekong River, under the “China-Laos-Myanmar-Thailand Mekong River Joint Patrol Law Enforcement Operation.” The operation aims to increase shipping security, provide opportunities for the MPS to gain familiarity with the region, and improve intelligence sharing and coordination.<sup>92</sup> According to PRC government sources, this joint patrol was conducted at least 114 times from 2011 to 2022, more than 10 times per year, on average.<sup>93</sup> In 2020, one of the three PRC law enforcement vessels that participated in the patrols remained after they were over and “continued to conduct a one-week combat drill in Laos.”<sup>94</sup>

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## Multilateral cooperation efforts

In its effort to counter and offer an alternative model for global security governance, the CCP has created new international organizations and worked to build influence within existing multilateral institutions. The MPS’ primary institution-building effort is the creation of the International Law Enforcement Cooperation Forum on the New Eurasian Continental Bridge Safety Corridor, commonly shortened to the Lianyungang Forum (连云港论坛 Liányúngǎng lùntán). The most notable example of MPS efforts to shape norms in existing multilateral bodies can be found in its behaviors within Interpol.

### The Lianyungang Forum

President Xi used his 2017 Interpol address to draw attention to the Lianyungang Forum, a Beijing-led international law enforcement and security forum created to expand cooperation between the MPS and other security and law enforcement agencies around the globe. At the forum, the MPS holds international convenings, trains foreign police officers, provides opportunities for information sharing, and promotes Chinese security technologies. MPS leadership has also called for

the Lianyungang Forum to increase cooperation in “intelligence exchanges, case investigations, joint operations, and rapid repatriation.”<sup>95</sup>

The Lianyungang Forum convenes police and security sector officials from 30 to 40 countries annually. International organizations such as Interpol and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have also sent representatives. Participants have ranged from liberal democracies—including Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, South Korea, and South Africa—to authoritarian regimes such as Russia and Belarus.<sup>96</sup>

The Lianyungang Forum, originally designed to coordinate security within the BRI, has evolved into a wider mechanism for pursuing MPS interests. The first Lianyungang Forum was held in 2015 in Jiangsu Province’s port city of Lianyungang under the theme of “establishing a new structure for law enforcement and security cooperation” along the New Asia-Europe Continental Bridge, one of the main corridors of the BRI.<sup>97</sup> The themes of the annual forum, last held in December 2020,<sup>98</sup> also reflect the interests of participants. For example, the theme of 2020’s convening was the “Security Situation and International Law Enforcement Cooperation under the Normalization of Pandemic Prevention and Control,” a clear response to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>99</sup>

The MPS hosts a police equipment and public security technology and equipment exhibition alongside the Lianyungang Forum, with the stated purpose of driving the development of China’s domestic security equipment industry.<sup>100</sup> The exhibition features thousands of products and technologies, including video surveillance and image processing technology, drones, facial recognition systems, smart-transportation and smart-city technologies, armored vehicles, and weapons.<sup>101</sup> Exhibitors include more than 200 security-related companies with close ties to Beijing, such as Huawei, ZTE, Dahua, and Hikvision.<sup>102</sup> The Jiangsu Security Association, an organizing body for the Lianyungang Forum, praised the platform for providing Chinese security companies with more business opportunities, as private contractors frequently use the expo to secure new business agreements.<sup>103</sup>

The expo has featured Chinese companies that are now on the Treasury Department’s Non-Specially Designated Nationals Chinese Military-Industrial Complex Companies List.<sup>104</sup> The security technology and equipment expo demonstrates clear coordination between the MPS and Chinese technology companies, a common problem for foreign governments and businesses trying to distinguish the public and private sectors in China’s military-industrial complex.

Over time, the forum agenda has expanded to include topics beyond day-to-day policing. Since 2017, Lianyungang has also held a subforum on securing transnational oil and gas pipelines.<sup>105</sup> During the first subforum, attendees agreed to establish regular meetings and consultations, intelligence and information exchanges, and risk assessment and early warning mechanisms, as well as to develop law enforcement capacity building to maintain oil and gas pipeline security.<sup>106</sup> The following year, participants agreed to establish a port city security cooperation mechanism, an international train security cooperation mechanism, a transnational oil and gas pipeline security cooperation mechanism, and security mechanisms specific to certain BRI projects.<sup>107</sup> This wide range of topics demonstrates the growing overseas connections that the MPS is striving to build.

The Lianyungang Forum has also been used as an opportunity to train foreign police officers.<sup>108</sup> According to Chinese government documents, as of 2018, 600 officers had been trained at the Lianyungang training center.<sup>109</sup>

Finally, the Lianyungang Forum has been used as a coordination platform from which to conduct arrests abroad. In 2018, the Chinese government reported that Lianyungang police arrested 36 fugitives abroad via cooperation facilitated by the forum.<sup>110</sup> In 2017, China and South Korea exchanged more than 50 fugitives through a Lianyungang cooperation mechanism.<sup>111</sup>

## **Interpol**

The MPS also engages with existing multilateral institutions such as the International Criminal Police Organization, otherwise known as Interpol. The MPS uses Interpol to pursue political dissidents via the Red Notice system, counter to the true criminal investigative purposes of the system.

With 195 member states, Interpol seeks to facilitate international police cooperation to share and access data related to crimes and criminals.<sup>112</sup> Each Interpol member hosts within its state territory an Interpol National Central Bureau (NCB) office, which connects a country's law enforcement apparatus with other countries' apparatuses and with Interpol's General Secretariat via a global police communication network.<sup>113</sup> NCBs can perform many functions, such as sharing criminal data and cooperating on investigations.<sup>114</sup> Interpol can also issue Red Notices, requests to law enforcement agencies across the globe to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition or surrender.<sup>115</sup> China's NCB is part of the MPS' International Cooperation Bureau.<sup>116</sup>



Beijing and the MPS are frequently accused of abusing the Red Notice system.<sup>117</sup> Interpol's constitution states that the organization's aims are to ensure and promote cooperation between police authorities within the limit of the law, following the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Interpol is forbidden under Article 3 of its constitution from undertaking "any intervention or activities of a political, military, religious or racial character."<sup>118</sup> However, Beijing and the MPS have reportedly violated Interpol's rules while facing few consequences for issuing Red Notices against Chinese nationals abroad for what seem to be transparently political purposes.<sup>119</sup>

## **MPS manipulation of Interpol Red Notices**

Dolkun Isa, the president of the World Uyghur Congress, has faced challenges after being the subject of an MPS-initiated Red Notice in 1997. When he lived in China, Isa organized a large-scale student protest in 1988, "call[ing] for democracy and an end to the mistreatment and oppression of the Uyghur."<sup>120</sup> He was then placed under house arrest for four months, expelled from Xinjiang University, and eventually fled China.<sup>121</sup> The PRC issued the Red Notice in 1997 and then listed Isa in 2003 as one of its most-wanted terrorists,<sup>122</sup> a charge that Isa and his supporters maintain is politically motivated.<sup>123</sup> The Red Notice and terrorist designation has severely obstructed Isa's advocacy work. Isa was detained for two days in South Korea in 2009, on his way to attend the World Forum for Democratization in Asia.<sup>124</sup> In 2017, Isa was forced to leave U.N. premises at the behest of Chinese diplomats and U.N. Under-Secretary-General of Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo because he intended to speak about the oppression of Uyghurs at the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.<sup>125</sup> Also in 2017, Isa was detained in Italy as he headed to the Italian Senate to draw attention to restrictive policies toward Uyghurs in China.<sup>126</sup> In 2018, Interpol removed the Red Notice against Isa.<sup>127</sup>

Chinese activist Wang Zaigang has also faced transnational repression as the result of the MPS issuing what he believes is a politically motivated Red Notice seeking his arrest. Wang moved to the United States in 2014 and has been an active participant in the overseas Chinese democracy movement.<sup>128</sup> Wang believes his Red Notice was issued as retaliation for his pro-democracy activism, including attending events to commemorate the Tiananmen Square massacre and protesting at President Xi's Seattle visit in 2015.<sup>129</sup> The Red Notice claims Wang committed collusion in a construction project bidding process in his home province of Heilongjiang.<sup>130</sup> In 2016, Wang was arrested in the U.S. pursuant to the Red Notice.<sup>131</sup> In 2017, a federal immigration court in Hawaii granted Wang asylum.<sup>132</sup>

# The challenges to U.S. interests posed by MPS global activities

The nature and scope of the Ministry of Public Security's increasing international activities pose several challenges to the United States and others that support an international rules-based order. First, the MPS has demonstrated a blatant disregard for the rule of law, due process, and fundamental human rights. It has sent operatives abroad to execute transnational repression actions without obtaining permission or providing foreknowledge to countries in whose territories the MPS acts. It has forcibly returned individuals it deems a threat through extralegal means and has abused the Interpol Red Notice system to target overseas Uyghurs and other critics of the Chinese Communist Party. Its conduct undermines the well-being of individuals within China and overseas.

Second, the MPS' international police cooperation efforts are normalizing the institution and expanding its influence in advancing the CCP's vision to reshape security governance norms, in direct competition with U.S. strategy and vision for security cooperation with partners across the globe. The MPS builds relationships with foreign governments and security apparatuses, including through seemingly legitimate methods, developing formal and informal influence and access to pursue broader aims. Many of the states receiving PRC assistance are also recipients of U.S. assistance. The MPS also provides opportunities for other governments to adopt illiberal practices from training in crowd control and counterterrorism tactics to making available Chinese technology to replicate the PRC government's tactics of repression in their own territories. Many of these contributions could indeed increase the investigative effectiveness of partner countries' police forces. But when coupled with MPS training that aims to suppress dissent, and given that MPS-provided equipment and technologies could be used for illiberal purposes, the effect risks threats to the civil rights of citizens of countries receiving the assistance.

Even seemingly apolitical MPS activities can be problematic. MPS cyber-operations training likely includes lessons on how to install and maintain surveillance networks and analyze and integrate complex data sources into policing. While increased cyber capabilities for law enforcement can be a good thing if well-regulated in a democratic society, increased cyber capabilities for police forces operating under authoritarian governments can easily undermine personal freedoms and pose risks for U.S.-provided technologies. Likewise, transfer of technologies such as DNA-analysis equipment could increase the investigative effectiveness of a partner country's police force, but MPS' use of DNA surveillance to track Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities within its own borders should prompt concern that its partners could replicate its illiberal policing practices.<sup>133</sup>

Finally, Beijing's efforts to implement its own global governance vision pose a direct challenge to liberal democratic principles, including the rule of law. For example, Beijing has actively pushed an alternative definition of human rights by advocating for "human rights with Chinese characteristics," which are defined by the state rather than viewed as moral or inalienable rights of individuals.<sup>134</sup> President Xi often purposefully misconstrues the term "rule of law" to mean the "rule by law" governance system of the People's Republic of China in which the CCP uses the law as a political tool without the consent of the governed in order to achieve its political aims.<sup>135</sup> The PRC also operates under a broader definition of terrorism than the United States and Europe, which Beijing wishes to leverage to target political dissidents and ethnic minorities. In the United States and Europe, terrorism is typically understood as "[a] criminal act that is intentionally violent, or is dangerous to human life" with the intent of "coercing or intimidating the government into altering foreign or domestic policy."<sup>136</sup> While the PRC's definition of terrorism also deems illegal similar criminal acts, it includes acts that would be considered legal in liberal democracies, such as protesting. For example, the PRC's 2015 Counterterrorism Law also outlaws "advocacy or behavior" aimed at "realizing political or ideology objectives through means of violence, destruction, intimidation, or other methods of creating social panic."<sup>137</sup> The Counterterrorism Law's intentionally broad language allows PRC authorities to apply a label of terrorism to almost any political act the party perceives as threatening its monopoly on power.

And fundamentally, it is the PRC's domestic repression and the MPS' mandate to uphold the CCP's rule that discredits the MPS' international security cooperation efforts. As stated above, the PRC's domestic legal apparatus operates

fundamentally differently than those of liberal democracies, with a different interpretation of the concept of “rule of law.” Rather than holding all people, institutions, and entities accountable to the same laws, the CCP uses the law to control Chinese society while concurrently excluding itself from that same legal accountability.<sup>138</sup> Statements made by Sun Xinyang, then-member of the Standing Committee of the Jiangxi Provincial Party Committee and the secretary of the Provincial Discipline Inspection Commission, reveal the CCP’s intent to act in extralegal ways as it seeks to apprehend allegedly corrupt individuals and dissidents: “overseas is not outside the law; fleeing abroad is not a way out.”<sup>139</sup> The MPS is the CCP’s main tool in extending this framework abroad.

The CCP’s global security perspective is driven by its desire to stay in power. The CCP’s security sector behaviors, ranging from unilateral actions such as Operation Fox Hunt and Operation Sky Net to detain political targets to creating regional institutions to proliferate Chinese technologies potentially wielded for illiberal means, are incompatible with principles including the rule of law, accountability, or respect for human rights—concepts that underpin the liberal democratic order that ensures the security and prosperity of the United States and its allies. The United States and other democracies have identified Beijing’s desire to reshape global norms but have not focused specifically on the CCP’s intentions to shape security forces and security sector governance around the world to be more malleable for CCP interests. The United States and its allies must find ways to counter these ambitions, particularly in the realm of security sector governance, in an era of strategic competition.

Despite the identified risks of MPS overseas behavior, not everything the MPS does inherently challenges the rule of law, human rights, and U.S. interests. Many governments engage in comparable bilateral and multilateral public security activities. For example, MPS donations of personal protective equipment during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic were a net positive for the global community. Rather, risks associated with MPS behavior in any category of overseas activity depend on the content of the engagement and how partner countries work with the MPS.

# Policy recommendations

Countering the Ministry of Public Security’s increasingly malign role in the People’s Republic of China’s foreign policy toolkit requires the United States to take a multiprong approach. A core objective should be to counter and deter the MPS’ willingness and ability to conduct activities abroad that break local and/or international law, undermine international norms on security sector governance, and endanger civilians. At the same time, the United States must address the fact that in certain circumstances the MPS is meeting public security demand signals from countries that share the PRC’s authoritarian values.

The United States should pursue a four-part strategy that focuses on: 1) driving a rule-of-law vision for security sector governance cooperation with international partners; 2) countering transnational repression occurring in the United States; 3) engaging in Interpol and other multilateral institutions; and 4) building a knowledge base of MPS activity.

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## Drive a rule-of-law vision for security sector governance cooperation with international partners

**Rally an international coalition to reaffirm a rule-of-law-based vision for security sector governance cooperation.** The PRC and liberal democracies have advanced competing visions of the principles that should guide international law enforcement cooperation; U.S. policymakers should work with allies and partners to protect the definitions, interpretations, and consensus around core liberal democratic ideals such as the rule of law, transparency, and respect for human rights. Beijing’s and the MPS’ willingness to operate under alternative definitions of concepts such as “terrorism” and “the rule of law” pose long-term threats to the consensus that undergirds the current international order. The Biden administration should convene like-minded allies and partners for an international summit on security sector governance, focused on assessing how MPS activities threaten shared interests, defining norms, condemning practices

that violate international law and impinge on human rights protections, and reaffirming international consensus on best practices for security cooperation. The administration could use this opportunity to highlight its own reforms in security sector governance, such as efforts on mitigating civilian harm and working to prioritize human rights in security cooperation, as areas for collaboration with allies and partners—and set a clear example of the difference in approach between U.S. and PRC security cooperation goals and tactics.

**Target outreach to countries receiving MPS assistance.** The United States and its international partners should conduct targeted outreach to governments that work closely with the MPS—particularly countries that also receive U.S. assistance—to understand their motives and consider whether alternative U.S.- or partner-led programs could address their needs. The goal of outreach should be to ensure PRC programs are not filling voids that U.S. programs could be filling, while also gathering information on PRC efforts to shape norms and policies around the rule of law and other important principles.

**Reinforce U.S. assistance alternatives.** The United States cannot simply warn other countries about the dangers of the MPS without offering a viable alternative; it must offer a positive vision for public security and international police cooperation to foreign partners. It should increase funding for programs such as the State Department’s International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEA) and activities sponsored by its Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).<sup>149</sup> Congress should mandate that the INL increase its outreach efforts to better understand the perspectives of potential partners.

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## Counter transnational repression occurring in the United States

**Assess gaps in legal authorities to fight against transnational repression in the United States.** U.S. agencies at the front lines fighting against transnational repression, such as the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, and the FBI, should meet with at-risk communities, civil society, and advocacy groups to discuss how best to deter different types of transnational repression, what legal authorities are most effective in responding to MPS activities, and ways to counter these activities while protecting civil rights and personal privacy.

**Write new law to better equip U.S. officials in the fight against transnational repression in the United States.** There is no specific provision in U.S. code that outlaws foreign actors from conducting transnational repression actions on U.S. soil. Prosecution of transnational repression cases relies on a patchwork of laws that empower different authorities to address some parts of transnational repression efforts. In addition, many of the existing laws are outdated because they do not account for the use of the internet—for example, digital threats, cyberattacks, and spyware—as a means of conducting transnational repression. Legislation should first define transnational repression in clear legal terms, a move that will allow prosecutors to target offenders with greater ease.<sup>141</sup> Congress should also revise the visa process to require entrants to the United States to disclose whether they are being directed by a foreign government entity to commit transnational repression.

**Use existing tools to deter MPS unilateral action.** The United States should use targeted sanctions against MPS agents conducting illegal activities in the United States as well as PRC officials who order operations to coerce, threaten, or kidnap civilians on American soil.<sup>142</sup> Beyond implicated MPS officials, the United States should target decision-makers within the National Supervision Commission, which directs and oversees MPS' unilateral operations, and leaders within the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, which helps coordinate unilateral actions across multiple Chinese government agencies.<sup>143</sup> Targeted sanctions could include denying or revoking visas for entry into the United States, freezing U.S.-based assets, and sanctioning family members. The United States should use existing tools at its disposal, such as the Global Magnitsky Act and the Khashoggi Ban, to deter Chinese Communist Party officials and MPS agents.

**Support those in the United States most at risk of facing transnational repression.** Given Beijing's and the MPS' political priorities, Uyghurs and Chinese political activists and dissidents face the most risk of transnational repression. The United States should implement policies to protect these groups, as advocated for by the Uyghur Human Rights Project, including by increasing refugee quotas, creating a refugee resettlement program for Uyghurs, and expediting the process of documentation for Uyghurs.<sup>144</sup> The FBI and other law enforcement entities can help counter transnational repression by increasing education for and sharing unclassified intelligence with local law enforcement and immigration authorities in areas with high concentrations of vulnerable diasporas.<sup>145</sup>

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## Engage in Interpol and other multilateral institutions

**Reform Interpol's Red Notice system.** The United States, in concert with other concerned countries, should push Interpol to operate more transparently and to counter abuse of the Red Notice system to achieve political aims, particularly by autocratic regimes.<sup>146</sup> For example, Interpol should make public more details related to Red Notices, such as the total number of requests made by each country every year. The United States should urge that more of Interpol's budget be allocated to increase the ability to screen Red Notices before they are implemented to ensure the notices are not politically motivated.

**Elect responsible leaders for Interpol.** The United States should advance candidates from the United States and like-minded democratic countries for leadership positions in multilateral institutions such as Interpol.

**Track the MPS' activities in other multilateral bodies, focusing on anti-corruption platforms.** PRC government sources state that Beijing will work within existing platforms such as the U.N. Convention against Corruption, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the G-20, and Interpol to “incorporate anti-corruption international cooperation into the [PRC's] national diplomatic strategy.”<sup>147</sup> Given the MPS' role in the PRC's politically motivated anti-corruption efforts and manipulation of Interpol, the United States should study more closely the MPS' anti-corruption engagement within international organizations to ensure that the PRC and MPS are not using these institutions for political purposes.

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## Build a knowledge base of MPS activity

**Congress should mandate a regular report on MPS activities.** Given the understudied nature of the MPS and its increasing role in the CCP's foreign policy apparatus, the United States should devote resources to further understanding the institution. Congress should mandate that the Office of the Director of National Intelligence prepare both classified and unclassified assessments of the MPS' domestic and overseas activities, and that the unclassified version be released publicly. Specifically, the report should detail the tactics the MPS uses to surveil, control, and repress Chinese citizens domestically; track MPS transnational repression efforts globally; determine the drivers that lead other countries to partner with the MPS; identify other



international organizations the MPS leverages; and assess the MPS' ongoing and future goals regarding critical technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and biotech.

**Inform foreign governments about the MPS.** The United States should brief foreign governments and policy experts on the challenges posed by the MPS and its domestic activities that abuse the rule of law, violate human rights, and undermine human security and regional stability. The United States should help other countries understand the MPS' doctrines and missions, its role in transnational repression, and the threats MPS activities pose to their national interests. U.S. officials should encourage countries not to engage with the MPS and to instead consider alternative U.S.-led security cooperation programs that can meet the interests of foreign security forces.

**Release information on past U.S.-MPS engagement.** The lack of transparency around MPS activities complicates efforts to track its increased global activity or hold its partners accountable, as evidenced by the 2015 MPS-Switzerland readmission agreement. The United States should lead by example and declassify and release any formal U.S.-MPS agreements, if any exist, while calling on other countries to share any agreements they have signed with the MPS. This approach will help the global community compare experiences and discern the intent of the MPS while also identifying any potential vulnerabilities the MPS could have exploited while conducting foreign operations.

# Conclusion

The Ministry of Public Security has become an increasingly important part of Beijing’s foreign policy toolkit. With clear orders to “grasp the new characteristics of the internationalization of public security work,”<sup>148</sup> the MPS’ global activities threaten to undermine broadly recognized norms and standards in the areas of rule of law and security sector governance. Through its bilateral outreach, the MPS creates opportunities to normalize some of the most authoritarian and illiberal aspects of Chinese Communist Party rule, including putting down protests or tracking dissidents using artificial intelligence and big data. The MPS has used Interpol to achieve political objectives while also standing up the Lianyungang Forum to serve as a one-stop shop for multilateral security engagement such as proliferating Chinese technology companies and offering capacity building opportunities for foreign security apparatuses. MPS agents have illegally threatened and coerced individuals on foreign soil through transnational repression efforts, including unilateral rendition campaigns. Through its external engagements, the MPS helps further extend the repressive hand of the CCP.

By implementing the policies outlined in this report, the United States— together with partners and allies—can reaffirm an international consensus around security sector norms and strengthen an approach to security sector governance built around the protection of human rights and the promotion of a rules-based international order.

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## Research note

All Chinese-language sources are saved as PDFs on file with the author and are available upon request.

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