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CHINA'S INTERNATIONAL POLICE AND JUDICIAL COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 2022, a Spanish NGO published a series of reports denouncing extra-territorial police practices by China. This raises the following question: does China implement international police and law enforcement cooperation? It appears that the People's Republic of China – through its Ministry of Public Security – is extensively developing this type of cooperation, be it through institutional frameworks or by utilizing a variety of tools. Police and judicial cooperation is viewed as a “creative involvement” that allows Beijing to pursue both diplomatic and security-related objectives.

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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2022, Spanish NGO Safeguard Defenders published reports denouncing China's repressive police practices towards Chinese nationals in Europe and North America – among other countries. These reports drew a great deal of attention, even raising the issue of Chinese “police stations” being set up within these countries.¹ Has China truly managed to carry out extraterritorial police and judicial activities without the approval of the states in question? Has it developed international police and judicial cooperation frameworks?

When reading these reports attentively, one notes that China's international expansion is not only led by its Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and National Defense; it now also involves its Ministry of Public Security. The latter reports to the State Council² and its responsibilities include maintaining order, combating crime and enforcing the law (and more specifically, the directives of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)). China's Ministry of Public Security is an information and surveillance body designed to maintain domestic stability. It has been a discrete yet central player in China's international expansion since the early 2000s. It is tasked with organizing international cooperation and exchanges between police and security forces. Its Department of International Cooperation comprises divisions dedicated to specific geographical areas. The Ministry of Public Security's international influence has been growing since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012.³ In February 2017, China's Public Security International Cooperation Work Conference instructed the Ministry of Public Security to strengthen international police cooperation, in order to ensure that the CCP's foreign policy is implemented effectively.⁴ Since then, the topic of international police cooperation has consistently featured in texts relating to the Ministry of Public Security: “Meanwhile, as a result of the high speed of globalization, China started to take part in more international cooperation and has a leading role in international relations. This means that the police need to focus more on international policing cooperation.”⁵ China is expanding its apparatus for police and law enforcement cooperation, as illustrated by the first ministerial meeting on police cooperation between South Pacific Islands nations and China in November 2022, during which China was represented by its Minister of Public Security and State Councilor Wang Xiaohong.⁶

Frédéric Lemieux defines police cooperation as interactions (whether intentional or not) between two or more police entities (be they public or private). These interactions consist in

1. Safeguard Defenders, *110 Overseas. Chinese Transnational Policing Gone Wild*, Investigations and Briefing Series, September 12, 2022; *Patrol and Persuade. A Follow-up Investigation to 110 Overseas*, Investigations and Briefing Series, December 5, 2022.

2. The term State Council designates the Chinese government.

3. Tao Xu, Nan Yang, “Chinese Policing: Its History from a Legal Perspective”, in Monica De Boer (dir.), *Comparative Policing from a Legal Perspective*, Northampton (USA), Research Handbooks in Comparative Law, 2018, p. 363-379.

4. Xinhua, “[2月7日，全国公安国际合作工作会议在北京召开，国务委员、公安部部长郭声琨出席](#)”, February, 7th, 2017 [On February 7, the Public Security International Cooperation Work Conference was held in Beijing, with the participation of State Councilor and Minister of Public Security Guo Shengkun]. Our translation.

5. Tao Xu, Nan Yang, “Chinese Policing: Its History from a Legal Perspective”, p. 378.

6. Reuters, “[China holds Policing Discussion with Officials of Pacific Islands Nations](#)”, *The Economic Times*, November 23, 2022.

sharing information, conducting investigations and, ultimately, arresting suspects. Police cooperation can be considered international when it crosses national borders. In order for this type of cooperation to take place, three requirements must first be met. The first relates to geopolitical considerations, which are key for creating an international environment that is conducive to such exchanges; these considerations form the basis for bilateral, regional or international frameworks for cooperation. The second regards the material resources and skills that can be mobilized; these include legal norms and judicial procedures that are recognized and shared by partnering entities. Finally, the third requirement is organizational; a more or less permanent structure must be set up in order to facilitate exchanges. Police and judicial cooperation traditionally occurs when states recognize that their territories may be threatened by transnational criminal activities.⁷ For China, however, this framework allows for the protection of Chinese interests within its partners' borders.

China is developing police, judicial and law enforcement cooperation within multiple frameworks, featuring traditional – yet highly comprehensive – tools for ensuring internal and external security.

CHINA'S INTERNATIONAL POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE INSTITUTIONAL WORLD

China's international police and judicial cooperation is based on international, regional and bilateral tools.

A significant role within international mechanisms

• *China as an active member of the United Nations and of the United Nations Police (UNPOL)...*

China, as a member of the United Nations, is able to influence the mechanisms for strengthening international norms and, *de facto*, on the police and judicial cooperation processes that these mechanisms require. Its involvement in the UN has been on the rise since the 2000s. China, among other countries, is a signatory member of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1989),⁸ of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003)⁹ and of the United Nations

7. Frédéric Lemieux, "The Nature and Structure of International Police Cooperation: An Introduction", in Frédéric Lemieux (dir.), *International Police Cooperation. Emerging Issues, Theory and Practice*, Willan Publishing, 2010, p. 1-22.

8. *United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*, adopted in Vienna on December 20, 1988 and applied starting November 11, 1990, UN Treaty Series, vol. 1582, 1990, UNTS No. 27627, p. 95.

9. *United Nations Convention against Corruption*, adopted in New York on October 30, 2005 and applied starting December 11, 2005, UN Treaty Series, vol. 2349, 2007, UNTS No. 42146, p. 41.

Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its four protocols (2003).¹⁰ China counts among the most compliant states when it comes to implementing the provisions set out by these treaties. Between 2001 and 2014, as a member of the United Nations Security Council, it supported resolutions aimed at strengthening national mechanisms to prevent and suppress the recruitment, organization or financing of terrorist groups, as well as resolutions to strengthen international cooperation to combat such groups (UNSC Resolution 217/2014).¹¹ China has also adopted resolutions to fight the illegal trafficking of migrants, including a resolution that authorizes ships to be boarded in order for their cargo to be searched (UNSC Resolution 2240, October 2015).¹²

Since the early 2000s, China has actively participated in UN peacekeeping operations, particularly through the United Nations Peacekeeping Police (UNPOL).¹³ The latter was originally deployed in the 1960s and is composed of national police and military police officers serving the United Nations. Its objective is to strengthen and/or re-establish states' national police services in order to create favorable conditions for the development of, and ultimately for a return to, long-term peace. According to the data available in 2022, the UN Police is composed of 10,000 officers from 129 countries.¹⁴ UNPOL's total budget of is of US\$ 6.38 billion, of which US\$ 316.6 million goes toward police forces and police equipment.¹⁵ UNPOL is present, for example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in northern Mali. It has also carried out special missions in Somalia and Libya. In 2012, UNPOL created the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections, designed for interventions outside of peacekeeping missions and other types of crisis response. What's more, UNPOL's forces provided support during the electoral processes in Mozambique, the Dominican Republic and Malawi.¹⁶

According to Annika S. Hansen, China is the most supportive state, alongside Russia, when it comes to expanding UNPOL's activities.¹⁷ Beijing has become a major contributor to peacekeeping missions in general and to UNPOL forces in particular. For the first time, in January 2000, China sent civilian police officers to participate in a peacekeeping operation in Timor-Leste. In August 2008, China opened its first peacekeeping police training center, designed to train both its own officers and those from other Asian countries. Nearly 30 Chinese police officers serve at UN Police headquarters. Two senior officers, including one woman, feature on UNPOL's senior management roster. Since 2000, more than 2,700 Chinese police officers have been deployed in the context of peacekeeping operations (Timor-Leste,

10. *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, adopted in New York on November 15, 2000 and applied starting September 29, 2003, UN Treaty Series, vol. 2225, 2007, UNTS No. 39574, p. 209.

11. United Nations Security Council, "[Resolution 2178 \(2014\), adopted on September 24, 2014](#)".

12. Eder Thomas et al., *China Global Law Enforcement Drive. The Need for an European Response*, *China Monitor*, MERICS, January 18, 2017.

13. UNPOL, [Official website](#).

14. UNCOPS, "[La police des Nations unies : Votre partenaire pour la paix, la sécurité et le développement pour tous et partout dans le monde](#)" [UN Police: Your Partner in Global Peace, Security and Development for All], August 31, 2022.

15. Ibid.

16. UNPOL, [Official website](#).

17. Annika S. Hansen, *Operationalizing Conflict Prevention - The Role of United Nations Police*, Policy Briefing, Center for International Peace Operations, July 2019, p. 4.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, Sudan, South Sudan, Liberia, Cyprus and Haiti).¹⁸ These police forces are mostly composed of members of the People's Armed Police (PAP). On September 1, 2022, at the third United Nations Chiefs of Police Summit, Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong reported on China's latest activities: "We have fully implemented the solemn commitments made by President Xi Jinping at the UN Peacekeeping Summit in 2015, actively participated in UN peacekeeping operations, successfully trained more than 1,000 peacekeeping police officers from different countries in five years, sent training teams to assist Liberia, Central African Republic and other countries in their law enforcement capacity building, and get prepared for deploying Formed Police Unit to Abyei. In addition, we successfully held the International Workshop on Peacekeeping Police, and fully funded this summit."¹⁹ According to UNPOL statistics, by December 2022, China had contributed 2,211 people in total, including 25 experts, 4 police officers, 40 military officers and 2,072 soldiers and police officers.²⁰ In his 2015 speech, Xi Jinping stated that he could provide the UN with 8,000 soldiers and police officers for peacekeeping operations.

- ... and of INTERPOL

The international criminal police organization²¹ was established in 1923 and counts 195 members. China joined INTERPOL in 1984, but only became truly involved when Xi Jinping came to power in 2012. On November 10, 2016, Meng Hongwei – a member of the Communist Party and Vice Minister of Public Security since April 10, 2004 – was elected president of INTERPOL.²² In September 2017, China hosted the 86th INTERPOL General Assembly in Beijing. With nearly a thousand participants from 156 countries, this assembly remains one of the largest in the history of the organization. President Xi Jinping gave the opening speech in person and stated the following: "No country can guarantee its absolute security all by itself. China stands ready to closely cooperate and collaborate with INTERPOL members and international organizations to take an active part in global security and make a new and greater contribution to peace and the development of mankind."²³ In November 2021, at 89th INTERPOL General Assembly in Istanbul, China saw Hu Binchen elected to one of the two seats reserved for Asian countries on INTERPOL's Executive Committee (which counts thirteen members in total). From 2015 onwards, Hu

18. UNPOL, "[In Focus: Beijing hosts Senior Police Officers Course](#)", October 30, 2018.

19. UNCOPS, "[Statement by China](#)", September 22, 2022.

20. UNPOL, "[Contribution of Uniformed Personnel to UN by Country, Mission, and Personnel Type](#)", December 2022.

21. INTERPOL, [official website](#).

22. Meng Hongwei disappeared in obscure circumstances in September 2018. His resignation from office was announced on October 7, 2018 following his arrest in China. He was thought to have been investigated on suspicion of corruption. At the end of March 2019, he was officially accused of "serious violations" and expelled from the Communist Party. He reappeared for the first time on June 20, 2019, for his trial, during which he pleaded guilty of corruption. He was sentenced to 13 years and 6 months in prison and received a 2 million Yuan fine. It is likely that Meng Hongwei fell victim to a purge by Xi Jinping, who sought to eliminate one of the last people to be close to Zhu Yonkang. As a former senior public security official for the CCP and a rival of Xi Jinping, Zhu Yonkang was sentenced to life imprisonment for corruption, abuse of power and divulging state secrets. See Laurence Defranoux, "[Treize ans de prison pour Meng Hongwei, ex-président d'Interpol et super-flic chinois](#)" [Thirteen Years in prison for Ex-President of INTERPOL and Chinese super-cop Meng Hongwei], *Libération*, January 22, 2020.

23. Xi Jinping, "[坚持合作创新法治共赢 携手开展全球安全治理——在国际刑警组织第八十六届全体大会开幕式上的主旨演讲](#)" [Adhere to cooperation, innovation, rule of law and win-win cooperation, and jointly lead global security governance - Speech during the opening of the 86th INTERPOL General Assembly], September 26, 2017, our translation; INTERPOL, "[President Xi Jinping opens INTERPOL General Assembly](#)", September 29, 2017.

Binchen worked as the Deputy Director of the Department of International Cooperation under China’s Ministry of Public Security. Between 2011 and 2014, he had worked as a police counselor at the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Washington D.C.²⁴ In addition to its significant role in decision-making, China is asserting its position within INTERPOL through increasing financial contributions. Between 2017 and 2021, China has gone from being the seventh largest contributing country, with €2,031,732 in statutory contributions, to the fourth largest contributing country, with statutory contributions reaching €3,780,901. Its financial participation has increased by 86% over four years.²⁵ INTERPOL uses voluntary funding – through partnerships with government agencies, international organizations, NGOs, foundations and private entities (companies) – to fund specific programs. Beijing contributes to the organization’s funding through its INTERPOL office in China and its Ministry of Public Security, as illustrated in the table below. Two Chinese companies are also listed as contributors: Alibaba and Sinofaith. The former is an online retailer and the latter is a company that specializes in selling IP address protection services. They work alongside the organization’s other partner companies, such as Kaspersky Lab (Russia) and Onfido (UK).

Contributors	Area(s) supported	Funding	Financial reports
China’s Interpol office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foreign Fighters (extremism) Fugitive Investigations Criminal Networks Regional Police Capacity Building Projects (2015-2020) 	€2,047,000	Additional contributions 01/01/2017 – 12/31/2017
China’s Interpol office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foreign Fighters (extremism) Fugitive Investigations (2015-2019) 	€897,000	Additional contributions 01/01/2018 – 12/31/2018
Alibaba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trafficking in Illicit Goods and Counterfeiting (2018-2021) 	EUR 512,000	Additional contributions 01/01/2018 – 12/31/2018
China’s Interpol office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counter-Terrorism Program Cybercrime Program INTERPOL Organization - Operational Support 	€420,000	Additional contributions 01/01/2019 – 12/31/2019
China’s Interpol office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project “First Light” (telephone and internet fraud) Operation “Golden Strike” (ivory trafficking) Operation “Trigger” (arms trafficking) 	US\$ 500,000 US\$ 500,000 US\$ 500,000	Contribution agreements signed in 2019
Sinofaith IP Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Program on Organized and Emerging Crime 	€229,800	Contribution agreements signed in 2019
China’s Interpol office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operation “Trigger” 	US\$ 500,000	Contribution agreements signed in 2020

24. Nathalie Guibert, Frédéric Lemaître, “Un haut gradé de la sécurité publique chinoise entre à INTERPOL” [Top Chinese public security official joins INTERPOL], *Le Monde*, November 25, 2021 ; PRC US Embassy, “Police Counselor Hu Binchen Delivered a Speech at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce IP Conference”, April 23, 2014.

25. [Interpol financial data is available online.](#)

China's Interpol office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counter-Terrorism Program • Fraud and Financial Crime Program 	€279,000	Additional contributions 01/01/2021 - 12/31/2021
Ministry of Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Crime and Wildlife Program 	€250,000	Additional contributions 01/01/2021 - 12/31/2021
Sinofaith IP Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trafficking in Illicit Goods and Counterfeiting 	€125,000	Additional contributions 01/01/2021 - 12/31/2021

Source: <https://www.INTERPOL.int/fr/Qui-nous-sommes/Financement> [last accessed 02/22/2023].

• **China proposes its own international structures for police and judicial cooperation**

In 2015, China founded an international institution for police cooperation: the Lianyungang Forum (Jiangsu).²⁶ This structure is comprised of five platforms for: 1) Coordination in joint actions; 2) Information sharing; 3) Cooperation on security projects; 4) Academic exchanges; and 5) Partnerships for capacity building. It covers five security-related areas: 1) International Rail Security; 2) Transnational Pipeline Security; 3) Port City Security; 4) Major Security Projects; and 5) Liaison Mechanisms for Department Directors. The fifth edition of the Forum was held in December 2020 and focused on the theme “COVID and Security”. This edition originally aimed at coordinating police operations in order to maintain security on the Silk Road, specifically targeting Central Asia. Nevertheless, the Forum was attended by police force representatives from every continent, INTERPOL and regional organizations (including the Lancang-Mekong River Integrated Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Center).²⁷ A new conference was held from November 29 to December 2, 2022. Despite also being held in Lianyun,²⁸ it was dubbed the First Conference of the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum. The conference was organized by China’s Ministry of Public Security and was attended by foreign police training school representatives and by liaison officers from various embassies and consulates across China. What’s more, it was attended – among others – by the Ministers of Internal Security from Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Hungary and Egypt, as well as by INTERPOL President Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi. Only one private security company was invited: Chinese company Frontier Services Group.²⁹

China is also consolidating its police cooperation mechanisms through regional agreements.

26. Official website: www.lygforum.gov.cn. The site is not available anymore.

27. Ibid.

28. There is no official information about the December 2022 conference on the usual official website, suggesting that it is a new tool. Xinhua, “[The First Conference of Global Public Security Cooperation Forum \(Lianyungang\)](#)”, December 1, 2022; John S. Van Oudenaren, “[The Global Security Initiative: China Outlines a New Security Architecture](#)”, Washington, Jamestown Foundation, China Brief, 24 (3), March 3, 2023.

29. AN, “[FSG Delivered Keynote Speech at GPSC Forum on Behalf of Chinese Overseas Security Companies 2022-11-29](#)”.

A major commitment to regional tools

• *High stakes within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)*

Founded in 2001 by China, Russia and four Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), the SCO is a cooperation platform dedicated to the fight against cross-border organized crime, terrorism, extremism and separatism, and against all illegal trafficking (arms, ammunition, explosives, psychotropic narcotics and precursors, and human trafficking). As such, it includes a police and judicial component and mobilizes all types of security forces (border guards, customs and the military). In addition to the regular meetings between SCO members' Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense, an annual meeting for Attorneys General has been held since 2002. What's more, members' Ministries of the Interior and of Public Security have met annually since 2009.³⁰ During their meetings, the Attorneys General focus on various topics regarding public security, financial crime and the exchange of information. The Chinese Minister of Public Security represents his country during meetings for the secretaries of members' security councils, as well as at meetings for Ministries of the Interior. These meetings allow for agreements to be signed in order to coordinate the fight against various transnational crimes.³¹ The SCO's police and judicial cooperation processes are founded upon on four agreements:

1) An agreement on customs cooperation, signed in 2007, regarding the exchange of information on drug trafficking, arms trafficking, materials promoting ethnic and religious extremism and other criminal activities,³²

2) An agreement on cooperation to combat illicit trafficking in arms, ammunition and explosives, signed in 2008,³³

3) An agreement on cooperation against transnational organized crime, signed in 2010. Its scope is quite broad, covering terrorist and separatist activities, as well as corruption, money laundering, arms trafficking, drug production and trafficking,³⁴

4) An agreement on cooperation regarding border defense signed in 2015. It provides the physical framework for border control points and for the exchange of information,³⁵

In 2014, the SCO's apparatus was complemented by the creation of the National Institute for SCO International Exchange and Judicial Cooperation at Shanghai University. The latter was inaugurated by Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev and then-Chinese Minister of Internal Security Meng Jianzhu. The Institute is funded by the Chinese Ministry

30. “孟建柱出席上合组织成员国首次公安内务部长会议” [Meng Jianzhu attends the first meeting of SCO member states' Ministers of Public Security and of the Interior], May 19, 2009. Our translation.

31. Niva Yau, *China's Security Management towards Central Asia*, Philadelphia, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2022, p. 13.

32. SCO, “Agreement on Customs Cooperation and Support”, November 2, 2007, in Niva Yau, *China's Security Management towards Central Asia*.

33. SCO, “Agreement on Cooperation in Combating Illicit Trafficking in Arms, Ammunition and Explosives between the Governments of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, August 28, 2008, in Niva Yau, *China's Security Management towards Central Asia*.

34. SCO, “Agreement on Cooperation in Combating Crimes”, June 11, 2010, in Niva Yau, *China's Security Management towards Central Asia*.

35. SCO, “Agreement on Border Cooperation”, July 10, 2015, in Niva Yau, *China's Security Management towards Central Asia*.

of Public Security and aims to train border guards and other forces linked to member states' Ministries of the Interior.³⁶

- *A multitude of arrangements with Southeast Asia*

An age-old pillar of cooperation with ASEAN

Police and law enforcement cooperation between China and ASEAN is substantial and long-standing, with regards to both the formalization of institutional frameworks and the activities they carry out. On November 4, 2002, China and ASEAN signed the Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues,³⁷ thereby constituting the first formal document on non-traditional security issues in Southeast Asia. These same security issues were then incorporated into the Joint Declaration of The Heads of State/Government of The Association of Southeast Asian Nations and The People's Republic of China on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, signed in Bali on October 1, 2003.³⁸ Several memoranda of understanding and work plans have since bolstered the 2002 Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues. A first memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed in Bangkok, Thailand in January 2004.³⁹ It lists the topics that fall within the scope of non-traditional security: trafficking in illegal drugs, people smuggling including trafficking in women and children, sea piracy, terrorism, arms smuggling, money laundering, international economic crime and cybercrime (Art. 1). A second MOU was signed in 2009⁴⁰ and extended until 2017. A follow-up MOU was then signed on September 21, 2017.⁴¹

The 2009 MOU entrusts the implementation of cooperation processes to China's Ministry of Public Security and to the various appointed agencies and departments of ASEAN member states (Art. 3).⁴² In the 2017 MOU, China's Ministry of Public Security remains in charge of implementation. On the ASEAN side, implementation is entrusted to the Senior Officials

36. Raffaello Pantucci, "The Dragon's Cuddle: China's Security Power Projection into Central Asia and Lessons for the Belt and Road Initiative", in Nadège Rolland (dir.), *Securing the Belt and Road Initiative. China's Evolving Military Engagement Along the Silk Road*, Washington, The National Bureau of Asian Studies, Special Report No. 80, 2019, p. 59-69.

37. ["Joint Declaration of ASEAN and China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-traditional Security Issues \(Phnom Penh, November 4, 2002\)"](#).

38. ["2003 Joint Declaration of the Heads of State/Governments of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and The People's Republic of China on Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity"](#), signed in Bali, Indonesia, on October 8, 2003, Point 4-a. The four implementation plans from the Joint Declaration of October 8, 2003 (2005-2010; 2011-2015; 2016-2020; and 2021-2025) all feature a section on cooperation in the field of non-traditional security issues.

39. ["2004 Memorandum of Understanding Between the Governments of the Member Countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-traditional Security Issues"](#), signed in Bangkok, Thailand on January 10, 2004.

40. ["Memorandum of Understanding between the Association of Southeast Nations \(ASEAN\) and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues"](#), signed on November 18, 2009.

41. ["Memorandum of Understanding between the Association of Southeast Nations \(ASEAN\) and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues"](#), signed on September 21, 2017. The introduction to the 2017 MOU refers to both the original text from 2002 and the 2009 MOU.

42. ["Memorandum of Understanding between the Association of Southeast Nations \(ASEAN\) and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues"](#), signed on November 18, 2009.

Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC) mechanism, with support from the ASEAN Secretariat (Paragraph 3, Art. 1).⁴³ Since 2004, China has provided a greater financial contribution to the partnership than ASEAN. In line with the provisions of previous memoranda of understanding, Paragraph 4 (Art. 1) of the latest MOU (2017) specifies that all expenses related to workshops and training courses organized by China will be covered by the Government of the People's Republic of China, including meals, accommodation and local transportation [...] and fees for inviting experts. Expenses linked to international travel to China will be covered by the sending countries. Conversely, when activities are organized in a member state, these same expenses will be discussed and agreed upon by the Participants.⁴⁴

This framework has given rise to the ASEAN Plus China Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (the ninth edition was held in September 2022 in Cambodia) and the ASEAN Plus China Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (the nineteenth edition was held on July 20, 2022). These meetings constitute an opportunity to bring external partners into the conversation. In October 2015, the ASEAN+China meeting in Beijing was attended by representatives from Australia, the SCO and INTERPOL.⁴⁵ Since 2015, China has participated in the ASEAN and China Cooperative Operations in Response to Dangerous Drugs (ACCORD), founded in 2000. ASEAN and China carry out a variety of activities, including raising awareness of the dangers of drug use and improving cooperation to ensure compliance with existing laws. China is also expanding its police cooperation apparatus through the ASEAN Regional Forum.⁴⁶ Established in 1993, the latter constitutes a framework for formal consultations on security issues between its 27 members, including the European Union, the United States and Australia. Since the early 2000s, it has broached non-traditional security issues. In the wake of the Forum's twenty-second ministerial meeting – held in August 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – a workshop on strengthening the management of cross-border criminal movements was held in March 2016 in Guangzhou, China. On this occasion, China reportedly informed participants that, from January to December 2015, it had targeted foreign-based economic crime suspects through Operation "Fox Hunt."⁴⁷

Major security cooperation's component with states in the Mekong region

In December 2011, China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand agreed to create a joint security cooperation and law enforcement mechanism. This agreement provides the legal basis for annual joint river patrols.⁴⁸ The headquarters for these patrols was established in Xishuangbanna, China in 2011. In 2013, the fight against drug trafficking in the region

43. ["Memorandum of Understanding between the Association of Southeast Nations \(ASEAN\) and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Security Issues"](#), signed on September 21, 2017.

44. Ibid.

45. Xinhua, ["China, ASEAN meet on closer security cooperation"](#), October 24, 2015.

46. Mission of the PRC to the European Union, ["China's Policies on Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation"](#), January 11, 2017.

47. AN, "Co-Chairs Summary Report ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on Strengthening Cooperation in the Management of Cross-border Movement of Criminals - Guangzhou, China, March 9-16, 2016".

48. Xinhua, ["China launches joint patrols along Mekong River with neighbors"](#), December 12, 2011.

gave rise to a specifically designed tool (the Safe Mekong Initiative). The latter is based out of several centers of operation in different member countries, with a change of command every three months. In December 2022, command was transferred to the new center in Myanmar (Taunggyi), which was created as part of a program that benefitted from US\$ 499,400 in funding.⁴⁹ Member countries' Ministries of Public Security meet every two years, and their governing bodies meet every year. On October 21, 2015, a ministerial meeting was held in Beijing on strengthening law enforcement and security cooperation along the Mekong River. During this meeting, a text providing a new framework for the cooperation mechanism was approved.⁵⁰ The text endorsed the creation of the Lancang-Mekong River Integrated Law Enforcement Security Centre, which opened in December 2017 in Kunming, Yunnan, China and hosts liaison officers from different member states. This international partnership focuses on illegal migration, on the capture and repatriation of fugitives and, since July 2022, on combating criminal activities and illegal firearms. Cambodia and Vietnam attend these meetings as observers.⁵¹ In March 2016, this regional partnership was included in the Sanya Declaration, through which member countries extend their cooperation to their respective economic areas.⁵²

China is also part of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT process). This high-level policy dialogue in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) focuses on migration issues and includes China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. The COMMIT process began with a series of informal discussions between representatives of several GMS governments in mid-2003, which then lead to the signing of a MOU in 2004. Member states combine their efforts to prevent trafficking, to protect and repatriate/reintegrate trafficking victims and to prosecute traffickers.⁵³

• *Police and judicial cooperation expands into Africa*

China is developing institutional frameworks for police and judicial cooperation with African regional organizations. First of all, the strategic action plans adopted at the 2012 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation feature a detailed section on these topics. During the Forum's latest summit (held in November 2021), the Dakar Action Plan (2022-2024) was adopted, thereby confirming China's intention of strengthening its police and law enforcement cooperation mechanisms with the African continent. "The two sides will deepen counter-terrorism cooperation, strengthen intelligence sharing, investigation collaboration and coordination of actions in cracking down on international terrorist organizations. The two sides will strengthen practical cooperation in areas including combating crimes that infringe upon the safety of life, COVID-related crimes, smuggling and trafficking of wildlife, narcotics control, cyber security, community policing, fugitives' repatriation

49. Myanmar News Agency, "[Safe Mekong Coordination Centre opens in Myanmar's Shan State](#)", *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, December 2, 2022.

50. "Integrated Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Center-History". This is not available anymore.

51. Xinhua, "[Mekong Countries to strengthen Law Enforcement Cooperation](#)", December 28, 2016.

52. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, "[Sanya Declaration of the First Lancang-Mekong Cooperation \(LMC\) Leaders' Meeting](#)", March 23, 2016.

53. IOM, "[Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking](#)".

and asset recovery.”⁵⁴ In the Dakar Action Plan, China states that it intends to strengthen its collaboration with the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), which was founded in 2014 following the Algiers Declaration. AFRIPOL is modeled on INTERPOL’s framework. It presents itself as a technical institution intended to “establish a framework for police cooperation at the strategic, operational and tactical levels between Member State police institutions.”⁵⁵ In terms of bilateral police cooperation, China’s main partner states are members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). What’s more, Beijing has a special diplomatic representative on the ground: the Chinese ambassador to Botswana. In addition to providing logistical support to the military/police/civilian Southern African Standby Force Mechanism (SASFM), China also works with the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-operation Organization (SARPCCO).⁵⁶

- *A formalized topic in Sino-European relations*

While China’s desire to work with the European Union on non-traditional security issues has been apparent since the early 2000s, Sino-European cooperation on police and judicial matters only took shape in 2014.⁵⁷ The policy paper titled “Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation” (2014)⁵⁸ emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation in terms of law enforcement, cyber-security and cybercrime. China signed a strategic cooperation agreement with EUROPOL in April 2017. Article 1 states that “[t]he purpose of this agreement is to establish cooperative relations between Europol and the Ministry of Public Security of the People’s Republic of China in order to support the law enforcement authorities of the Member States of the European Union and the Ministry of Public Security of the People’s Republic of China in preventing and combating organized crime, terrorism, and other forms of international crime referred to in Article 3, in particular through the exchange of technical, strategic, and operational information between Europol and the Ministry of Public Security of the People’s Republic of China.”⁵⁹ The agreement provides for regular exchanges and consultations between EUROPOL and the Ministry of Public Security of the People’s Republic of China, as well as between each of the parties’ contact points. The department representatives for the areas mentioned in Article 7 of the agreement may convene when required.⁶⁰ China counts among the 60 contact points for EUROJUST, the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation.⁶¹

54. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, “[Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Dakar Action Plan \(2022-2024\) 2021-11-30](#)”, Point 6.1.6.

55. AFRIPOL, “[Statute of the African Mechanism for Police Cooperation -Art 3-a](#)”, January 30, 2017.

56. [Southern African Development Community](#), Police SARPCCO.

57. Monica Den Boer, “The Internationalisation of Higher Police Education: Perspectives on the Cooperation between the EU and China”, in CEPOL, *Global trends in Law Enforcement Training and Education*, European Science and Research Bulletin, No. 3, 2016, p. 107-112.

58. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, “[China’s Policy Paper on the EU: Deepen the China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Mutual Benefit and Win-win Cooperation](#)”, April 2, 2014.

59. EUROPOL-MPS PRC, “[Agreement on Strategic Co-operation between the European Police Office and the Ministry of Public Security of the People’s Republic of China](#)”, signed on April 19, 2017.

60. *Ibid.*, art. 7.

61. EUROJUST, “[International Agreements with Third Countries](#)”.

Finally, China is also developing bilateral partnerships in the field of police and judicial cooperation.

Multiplying bilateral cooperation projects

Most of these interactions are formal, yet some are rather unconventional.

• *Formalized cooperation*

Firstly, this form of cooperation is embodied by bilateral police diplomacy, in the form of meetings between different Ministries of Public Security. From 1997 to 2021, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security has held 114 bilateral meetings, including 3 with France and 5 with the United States.⁶² These meetings have – in some instance – become permanent, as in the case of the China-Myanmar meeting on cooperation and law enforcement, or the China-Malaysia joint working group formed by each nation’s Departments of Internal Affairs and Public Security.⁶³ Such mechanisms also exist between China and SCO member countries. Between 2001 and 2020, ten of the bilateral meetings between China and Kyrgyzstan have broached judicial and criminal issues, while directly mentioning the Chinese Ministry of Public Security.⁶⁴

Secondly, China’s police cooperation takes on a classic form, i.e. bilateral agreements. According to the website of the Chinese Ministry of Public Security’s Department of International Cooperation, China claims to have set up cooperation mechanisms with 110 countries and signed agreements on more than 400 intergovernmental or departmental tools for law enforcement cooperation.⁶⁵ China’s partners are primarily located in Asia, including Vietnam,⁶⁶ yet similar agreements have also been signed with African states (South Africa, Kenya, Algeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe). In 1998, the United States and China signed an agreement to establish a law enforcement joint liaison group. Annual meetings were held (and made public) until 2016 under this framework.⁶⁷ European states have not been left out either: a 2017 study conducted by the Meric Institute counts fifteen agreements on mutual legal assistance.⁶⁸ In 2004, Italy signed an agreement to fight crime, followed by a treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters in 2015⁶⁹ and an agreement to organize joint

62. Jordan Link, “[The Expanding International Reach of China’s Police](#)”, Center for American Progress, October 17, 2022.

63. Ministry of Public Security of the PRC, “[International Cooperation Departments of China’s Public Security Organs: Empowering the Building of a New Pattern for Global Security Governance Through Extensive Consultation, Joint Contribution and Shared Benefits](#)”, May 24, 2022

64. Niva Yau, *China’s Security Management towards Central Asia*, op. cit, Appendix 1.

65. Ministry of Public Security of the PRC, “[International Cooperation Departments of China’s Public Security Organs: Empowering the Building of a New Pattern for Global Security Governance Through Extensive Consultation, Joint Contribution and Shared Benefits](#)”.

66. Benoît de Tréglodé, “Délimitation maritime et coopération sino-vietnamienne dans le golfe du Tonkin (1994-2016)” [Maritime Delimitation and Sino-Vietnamese Cooperation in the Gulf of Tonkin], *Perspectives chinoises*, 3, 2016, p. 33-41.

67. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, “[China-US Joint Liaison Group on Law Enforcement Cooperation \(JLG\) Holds the 14th Plenary Session](#)”.

68. Eder Thomas et al., *China Global Law Enforcement Drive*.

69. University press of the People’s Public Security University of China, “[从中意联巡队员到警务合作推动者——专访意大利驻华警务联络官卢吉多](#)” [From member of the Sino-Italian joint patrol to facilitator of police cooperation - Interview with Guido Sublege, Liaison Officer of the Italian police in China], July 26, 2021. Our translation.

patrols in 2016. In July 2017, Filippo Bubbico, the Italian Deputy-Minister of the Interior, signed a security cooperation agreement with a delegation from the Chinese Ministry of Public Security.⁷⁰ France signed an agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters with China on April 18, 2005. The decree for its implementation was published in October 2007.⁷¹ One of China's latest bilateral agreements to date is the one signed between Beijing and the Solomon Islands in March 2022, which formalizes pre-existing police cooperation mechanisms: Beijing had provided assistance to the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force following the Honiara riots of November 2021.⁷²

Thirdly, China's cooperation tools include extradition and readmission agreements that allow both signatories to retrieve persons who have committed crimes in foreign countries. China's legal basis for cooperation on this topic is its Extradition Law (2000/12/28), which is based on Article 44 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. By December 2022, Beijing had signed (and ratified) extradition treaties with 45 countries, with an additional 14 that remained to be ratified by one of the parties.⁷³ By 2021, 13 African states had signed similar agreements with China, compared to only one in 2018.⁷⁴ In Europe, 7 states – including France and Italy – have signed extradition agreements with Beijing. China has also struck bilateral agreements on the transfer of convicted persons. Beijing has signed such agreements with Ukraine, Russia, Spain, Portugal, South Korea, Australia and Kyrgyzstan.⁷⁵

Finally, China's bilateral cooperation is embodied by agents or liaison officers, who are deployed and stationed at embassies and consulates in partner states. China sent its first liaison officers to the United States in 1998. In 2023, according to the official website of the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, China boasts 97 police liaison officers stationed at 55 embassies or consulates across 48 countries. It has reportedly deployed 231 liaison officers to ensure the security of Chinese state-owned companies operating overseas.⁷⁶

• *Less conventional cooperation*

Reports by NGO Safeguard Defenders have highlighted the existence of other forms of Chinese police cooperation and activity, without necessarily describing all of its various

70. Italian Ministry of the Interior, "[Bubbico riceve delegazione del ministero della Pubblica sicurezza cinese](#)" [Bubbico welcomes delegation from China's Ministry of Public Security], July 24, 2017.

71. Republic of France, "[Décret No. 2007-1450 du 9 Octobre 2007 portant publication de l'accord d'entraide judiciaire en matière pénale entre le Gouvernement de la République française et le Gouvernement de la République populaire de Chine](#)" [Decree No. 2007-1450 of October 9, 2007 on the publication of the agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters between the Government of the Republic of France and the Government of the People's Republic of China], signed in Paris on April 18, 2005.

72. Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, "[China-Solomon Islands Security Agreement and Competition for Influence in Oceania](#)", *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, December 2, 2022.

73. Safeguard Defenders, "[China Expands System of Extradition Treaties](#)", January 25, 2023.

74. Paul Nantulya, "China's growing Police and Law-Enforcement Cooperation in Africa", in Nadège Rolland (dir.), *Political Front Lines. China's Pursuit of Influence in Africa*, Washington, The National Bureau for Asian Research, 2022, p. 54.

75. Lin Han, "Reviewing International Anti-corruption Cooperation Arrangements in China – based on the Implementation Review Mechanism of UNCAC", *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 77, 2022, p. 141.

76. Ministry of Public Security of the PRC, "[International Cooperation Departments of China's Public Security Organs: Empowering the Building of a New Pattern for Global Security Governance Through Extensive Consultation, Joint Contribution and Shared Benefits](#)".

intricacies.⁷⁷ A first example is China's community or neighborhood policing, with operations involving Chinese or Chinese ethnic populations in host countries. These legal mechanisms are set up by local – and often municipal – police authorities and supported by various associations in order to carry out community policing missions (information gathering, patrols and language training). This is the case of the Chinese Community Police Center in Vancouver (Canada). The latter was created in 1992 by several Chinese associations: the Chinese Volunteers Association, the Chinese Cultural Center, the Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association and the Chinese Freemasons Association. Local authorities officially recognize its authority. Its mission is to maintain and strengthen positive relations and communication between the police and Chinese speakers (be it Mandarin or other regional languages). In doing so, it gives Chinese speakers access to Canadian police and justice-related services. The center also conducts prevention and victim protection programs. Since 2000, it has organized volunteer patrols (on foot and by bicycle) through the local Chinatown.⁷⁸

South Africa is also home to this type of center. Matt Schrader explains that the latter were established by Chinese expatriates starting in 2004 to facilitate “more effective cooperation with local police through services such as translation and language training.”⁷⁹ The South African police authorities support these centers (13 in total across South Africa). However, as Matt Schrader points out, the problem is that “the centers appear to have a more complicated relationship with the PRC government than they generally acknowledge publicly.”⁸⁰ A 2017 article in the *Jingji Ribao* (Economic Daily) on the workings of Chinese international police cooperation states the following: “In South Africa, Chinese police liaison officers have joined forces with leading overseas local Chinese associations to establish a Chinese police and civilian center. When Chinese and overseas Chinese encounter problems, they can report them to the police and civilian center. The center will then communicate and coordinate with the local police to solve the problem.”⁸¹ In South Africa, however, there is no mention of such official processes. What's more, both the Chinese consulate and South African police authorities dispute the fact that these centers constitute actual “*police stations*.”⁸²

It would appear that these centers in South Africa are related to the Chinese authorities in other ways. One of Beijing's tools to maintain a “link” with its expatriate communities is to offer certain personalities a position in an associative structure driven by the Chinese government and, more specifically since 2018, by the United Front Department.⁸³ The two leaders of the Chinese police center from Johannesburg in South Africa, Wu

77. Safeguard Defenders, “[China Expands System of Extradition Treaties](#)”.

78. [Chinese Community Policing Center, Vancouver – Official website](#).

79. Matt Schrader, ““Chinese Assistance Centers” Grow under United Front Work Department Global Presence”, The Jamestown Foundation, *China Brief*, 19 (1), 2019.

80. Ibid.

81. Tianjiao Jiang, “[为世界更安全贡献“中国力量”](#)” [Contributing toward “Chinese power” for a safer world], *Jingji Ribao*, October 9, 2017. Our translation.

82. AFP, “[Are The Chinese Opening Police Stations in South Africa?](#)”, November 23, 2018.

83. Carine Pina, “La Chine et sa diaspora : la mobilité au service de la puissance” [China and its diaspora: mobility at the service of power], *Questions internationales*, 116, “La Chine et les Chinois dans le monde” [China and Chinese people around the world], November-December 2022, p. 12-21.

Shaokang and Li Xinzhu, were members of the Association for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification in South Africa. Finally, Schrader's article notes that the websites of the Chinese police centers in South Africa state that they belong to the network of Overseas Chinese Service Centers,⁸⁴ thereby reinforcing the institutional blurring that surrounds them. The former Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council, which has been under direct control of the United Front Department since 2018, decided to open these service centers in 2014. They are presented as structures run by volunteers in order to assist migrants and expatriates during various expatriation procedures and/or relations with consular services. By 2022, South Africa counted 47 such centers. This includes one in Johannesburg – created on November 25, 2015⁸⁵ – that appears to be distinct from the capital's main police center.

Secondly, the Spanish NGO's reports illustrate the fact that Chinese local authorities (be they provincial, district- or city-wide) have set up police stations in countries and cities that host large Chinese communities.⁸⁶ Upstream, online platforms were created in China in order to facilitate procedures involving public security services for Chinese nationals abroad, including the renewal of driving licenses and vehicle registration. The Chinese authorities portray these “police stations for overseas Chinese” – which are often set up within local associations – as support for said public security services on the ground. Though the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing mobility restrictions certainly encouraged the creation of additional “police” outposts overseas, the latter definitely predated the health crisis. The 2017 Jingji Ribao (Economic Daily) article broaches innovations in the management of police-related issues. It goes on to present the initiative launched by the municipality of Nantong (Jiangsu), which is the place of origin of many Chinese migrants living abroad: “In February 2016, the city of Nantong's public security department founded the first national joint police service center.”⁸⁷ Photographs of these centers were posted on their respective websites and social media, featuring the phrase “Overseas Police Service Station of the City of [...]”. Since Spanish NGO Safeguard Defenders published its reports, many of these photographs have disappeared. The use of administrative and political tools on a provincial or municipal level is typical of the way Chinese authorities manage international ties with its citizens overseas. It constitutes a way for China to fly under national radars by regionalizing its presence, one that might otherwise trigger national sensitivities in the states where Chinese migrants and their descendants have settled.

China has positioned itself on all existing and conceivable fronts when it comes to mechanisms for international police and judicial cooperation. In doing so, it has harnessed the main tools in this field.

84. Matt Schrader, ““Chinese Assistance Centers” Grow under United Front Work Department Global Presence”.

85. Zhongguo Qiaoguan, no title: [List of Overseas Service Centers](#).

86. Following the publication of the NGO's reports, local authorities in the countries concerned – particularly in Europe and North America – conducted investigations into these tools. Journalists, in particular from *Der Spiegel*, took up the investigation and confirmed that these structures were indeed “police stations” set up by local authorities in the places of origin of overseas Chinese nationals (Qiao Qian), such as Qingtian or Whenzhou.

87. Tianjiao Jiang, “为世界更安全贡献中国力量” [Contributing toward “Chinese power” for a safer world]. Our translation.

CHINESE POLICE AND JUDICIAL COOPERATION HARNESSES A VARIETY OF TOOLS

Traditionally, police and law enforcement cooperation takes on at least three main forms: capacity building, i.e. sharing knowledge and expertise; providing equipment; and organizing joint operations.

Systematic training

Beijing provides a significant amount of training, in line with the training that China itself had previously received from the United States, France and Europe (via CEPOL). The Global Security Initiative Paper of February 2023 reiterates Beijing's intention to expand these programs. The Paper proceeds to "[e]ncourage 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."⁸⁸ China boasts no less than 37 police universities and colleges,⁸⁹ 5 of which are directly under the control of the Ministry of Public Security: the People's Public Security University of China, the Chinese People's Armed Police Force Academy, the Criminal Investigation Police University of China, the Railway Police College and the China Maritime Police Academy. The 32 others fall under the jurisdiction of individual provinces, regions or autonomous municipalities. Most of them are greatly invested in international cooperation and academic exchanges. The People's Public Security University of China holds an annual international police forum, which brings international professionals and experts together and offers courses for police officers from Asia and Africa. This is also the case at province-run institutions: Hubei University of Police provides training programs for police officers from Myanmar and Laos; and Zhejiang Police College hosted one of the China-EU training programs in 2012.⁹⁰

These training programs systematically lead to exchanges with partner countries. Their curricula are diversified and outline the Chinese judicial system and legal corpus. They also teach a variety of practices for police investigations, law enforcement and public relations from a police standpoint. Between 2000 and 2019, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security organized 16 training courses for the Kyrgyz Ministry of Internal Affairs' security forces, including the Kyrgyz investigation department (September 2018 and 2019) and drug control department (November 2018).⁹¹ The National Institute for SCO on International Exchanges and Judicial Cooperation offers courses on Chinese interpretations and practices regarding laws and norms. Between 2014 and 2018, the center reportedly trained around 300 executives. Training programs for counterterrorism and the fight against drug

88. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, "[The Global Security Initiative Paper](#)", February 21, 2023.

89. Zheng Chen, "Police Higher Education in China", in Colin Rogers, Bernhard Frevel, *Higher Education and Police. An International View*, University of South Wales, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 107-121.

90. Tao Xu, Haiyan Fu, "Police Education and Training in China - the case of Zhejiang Police College", in CEPOL, *Global Trends in Law Enforcement and Education*, CEPOL European Science and Research Bulletin, No. 3, 2016, p. 101-106.

91. Niva Yau, *China's Security Management towards Central Asia*, op. cit, Annexes.

trafficking, cybercrime and transnational crimes have also been highlighted.⁹² A Police Academy Directors Forum was held at the People's Public Security University of China and hosted over 100 police academy directors.⁹³ This meeting was held at the same time as the first Lianyungang Global Security 2022 conference. Under the ASEAN-China MOUs, the exchange of personnel and joint training are key components in the field of cooperation. Paragraph 2.2.b of the 2017 MOU states that "China will organize workshops to promote the exchange of law enforcement experiences and best practices in dealing with the non-traditional security issues [...]."⁹⁴ In July 2019, the Lancang-Mekong River Integrated Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Center held a workshop on early warning in the context of counterterrorism on the Mekong River.⁹⁵ China is also investing in police cooperation with its African partners and/or some of their regional organizations. According to Paul Nantulya's study, China is thought to have trained more than 2,000 law enforcement personnel and officers between 2018 and 2021.⁹⁶ Mainland states are granted access to training in the context of the International Law Enforcement Strengthening Program, which includes 25 Chinese police training institutions. For example: since 2009, following an agreement signed with the African Union, counterterrorism police forces from member states received training from Shandong Police Academy. In November 2019, the same institute trained 25 law enforcement and justice professionals from Rwanda. These exchanges benefit from significant Chinese funding, which makes them all the more popular: between 2000 and 2018, the number of scholarships in this field is said to have increased from 2,000 to 50,000.⁹⁷ Finally, certain training courses include language training (Chinese), particularly for law enforcement officers who are in contact with Chinese nationals (expatriate communities and tourists).

Major material assistance

China's police cooperation with developing countries in Asia and Africa includes an important material component, which allows Beijing to export its weapons, surveillance and scientific research (DNA) technologies. This equipment is donated or sold through soft loans.⁹⁸ Following its recent agreements with the Solomon Islands, Beijing donated 20 vehicles, 2 vehicles with mounted water cannons and 30 motorcycles in November 2022.⁹⁹ Similarly, according to Paul Nantulya, China lent US\$ 3.5 billion to African states between 2003 and 2017, in order for them to acquire communication systems, patrol boats and police

92. Raffaello Pantucci, "The Dragon's Cuddle".

93. "我校成功承办全球公共安全合作论坛（连云港）警察院校分论坛" [Our school successfully hosted the Global Public Safety Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang) - Police Academy President's Subforum - December 14, 2022]. Our translation.

94. "[Memorandum of Understanding between the ASEAN and the Government of the people's republic of China on Cooperation in the Field of Non Traditional Security issues](#)", 2017.

95. Lancang-Mekong River Integrated Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Center, "LMLECC Held Workshop on Early Warning of Anti-terrorism", August 6, 2019.

96. Paul Nantulya, "China's growing Police and Law-Enforcement Cooperation in Africa", p. 51.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. Two days before, Australia delivered 60 MK18 assault rifles and 13 vehicles (see Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, "[China-Solomon Islands Security Agreement and Competition for Influence in Oceania](#)").

vehicles.¹⁰⁰ In June 2019, China's Ministry of Public Security reportedly signed an agreement with its Kyrgyz counterpart to provide the latter with equipment worth ¥30 million (US\$ 1,096,958). Niva Yau's study reports five other agreements for equipment shipments or purchases between the two countries,¹⁰¹ all of which involve the Chinese Ministry of Public Security. In 2019, Chinese company Huawei reportedly donated a facial recognition system to the Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs. In 2018, China-based Hikivision reportedly provided facial recognition programs and cameras to equip airports, ports and other points of entry into Zimbabwe.¹⁰² Chinese material assistance takes on various forms: building and equipping a police academy in Tanzania and Costa Rica; building an anti-drug trafficking agency in Tajikistan; and providing equipment and training in DNA sampling and preservation for Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Lianyungang Forum constituted an opportunity to promote equipment and technologies developed by Chinese private companies, as well as the Chinese military-civilian complex. Some of China's partner countries in police cooperation are entering the "smart city" market, thereby helping China to complete the exportation of its homeland security management model. For example, in March 2018, the government of Zimbabwe signed an agreement with Chinese startup CloudWalk Technology to develop facial recognition programs.¹⁰³

A solid foundation for extraterritorial operations

Most often, China's joint operations are explicitly planned out. The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation primarily concerns joint river patrols to combat cross-border organized crime. From 2011 to January 2023, China and its partners conducted 125 patrols on the Mekong River. By 2022, the partnership is thought to have mobilized 12 boats and 2,700 members of personnel for its 12 patrol units.¹⁰⁴ Other joint operations (information gathering, investigations and arrests) have been conducted since July 2022. The latter gave rise to regular meetings on arms trafficking and firearms-related crimes involving Chinese nationals, held at the Lancang-Mekong River Integrated Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Center up until September 2022.¹⁰⁵ These joint operations take place within the SCO framework, but are usually conducted by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) or the People's Armed Forces (PAP). They sometimes involve police and judicial forces and may be conducted bilaterally. In March 2015, there was mention of a joint operation between the Chinese and Kazakh counter-narcotics departments, which lead to traffickers being arrested. A similar operation reportedly took place with police officers from Tajikistan in November 2014.¹⁰⁶ In a more recent – and unusual – context, joint police patrols have been organized within the framework of China's bilateral cooperation with certain European states. The

100. Paul Nantulya, "China's growing Police and Law-Enforcement Cooperation in Africa".

101. Niva Yau, *China's Security Management towards Central Asia*.

102. Minority Staff Report Prepared for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, "The New Big Brother: China and Digital Authoritarianism", Washington, July 1, 2020, p. 35.

103. Ibid.

104. Xinhua, "[125th Joint Patrol on Mekong River Begins](#)", January 15, 2023.

105. Lancang-Mekong River Integrated Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Center.

106. Niva Yau, *China's Security Management towards Central Asia*.

first Sino-Italian patrol took place from May 2 to 13, 2016 in Rome and Milan.¹⁰⁷ This exercise has since been repeated at least four times on Italian soil, as well as in China. Similar patrols were held in Serbia¹⁰⁸ in 2018 and Croatia in 2019. The main aim of these patrols is to reassure Chinese tourists.

The existence of prior police and security partnership agreements may facilitate *ad hoc* cooperation for combating criminal activities carried out by Chinese nationals abroad – and/or boost China’s ability to pursue persons abroad whom it suspects or accuses of criminal activities. Therefore, Beijing relies on various information exchange mechanisms at the national, regional (Lianyungang Forum) and international (INTERPOL) level. It also relies on Chinese liaison officers¹⁰⁹ and on extradition and readmission agreements. According to the Chinese authorities and the NGOs that have denounced abusive Chinese extraterritorial police activities,¹¹⁰ Beijing has heavily relied on all of these mechanisms to conduct two international operations: “Fox Hunt” (猎狐) and “Sky Net” (天网). In the wake of the anti-corruption campaigns launched in China by Xi Jinping in 2012, the Ministry of Public Security (in collaboration with prosecutors and the CCP’s Central Commission for Discipline Inspection) launched a new operation in July 2014: it aimed to track down and bring back to China any person accused of corruption, embezzlement or tax evasion having fled abroad. In 2015, this operation is thought to have become part of Operation “Sky Net”, which involved the Bank of China: this operation aimed at prosecuting money laundering and fake passport trafficking offenses.¹¹¹ Chinese law enforcement activities abroad do not always receive as much publicity. What’s more, these operations may involve *de facto* and *ad hoc* cooperation between different law enforcement agencies through informal cooperation networks.

While entirely justified and efficient in principle, China’s pursuit of extraterritorial activities in these areas is – at times – far from unquestionable. The first question concerns the compatibility of the Chinese authorities’ definitions regarding crimes that threaten Chinese internal security. The latter include political “crimes” which are used to criminalize citizens who are critical of the government (dissidence, Uyghur and Hong Kong populations in exile since 2019). A second question arises regarding Chinese policing methods. China has been accused, among other things, of abusing INTERPOL’s “red notice” system in order to arrest and repatriate Chinese nationals that China has accused of crimes and misdemeanors, which ultimately turned out to be “political crimes.”¹¹² China uses special methods (pressure on families residing in China, harassment of people abroad and even kidnapping) to ensure the “voluntary” return of the people it accuses.¹¹³ Questions surrounding

107. *Zhongguo Ribao* [China Daily], “孟宏伟会见中意联合警务巡逻中方警员” [Meng Hongwei met with Chinese police officers from the Sino-Italian joint police patrol], May 19, 2016. Our translation.

108. Reuters, “[Chinese Police Officers join Serbian Colleagues on the Beat in Belgrade](#)”, September 2019.

109. Tianjiao Jiang, “[为世界更安全贡献“中国力量”](#)”. Our translation.

110. Safeguard Defenders, *[Involuntary Returns. China’s Covert Operation to force ‘Fugitives’ Overseas back Home](#)*, Report, January 2022.

111. In April 2018, the operation was entrusted to the newly established National Supervisory Commission (国家监察委员会), which has become China’s leading anti-corruption body.

112. Safeguard Defenders, *[No Room to Run. China’s Expanded \(mis\)use of INTERPOL since the Rise of Xi Jinping](#)*, November 15, 2021.

113. *Ibid.*

the probity of China's methods also include the "deliberate vagueness" that continues to enshroud its "police centers". In fact, these methods have already led to diplomatic friction with the United States, Canada and Australia. In 2015, Washington officially asked Beijing to stop sending agents into U.S. territory with business or tourist visas in order to arrest Chinese nationals.¹¹⁴ In the fall of 2022, following the report by NGO Safeguard Defenders on these "police centers", the Netherlands, Ireland and New York City closed several such centers. Germany followed suit in March 2023.¹¹⁵ On April 17, 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice announced that two people had been arrested and charged with illegally operating a Chinese police station in Manhattan.¹¹⁶ However, these issues must be put into perspective: Beijing is conducting similar cooperative activities with states that are less regarding of individual rights, which may prove even more problematic.

China covers most aspects of police and judicial cooperation, making it a significant asset for promoting Chinese security concepts.

POLICE AND JUDICIAL COOPERATION THAT SERVES CHINESE SECURITY

In our opinion, China's police and judicial cooperation is driven by two major objectives: to appear (or to be?) responsible as a state and to be (or to appear?) influential on security issues.

A responsible state?

- *A responsible state with regard to its citizens and their interests abroad*

The growing presence of China's security forces and its Ministry of Public Security on the international stage is undoubtedly linked to the growing Chinese presence abroad (be it Chinese nationals or material interests), particularly in high-risk areas. This phenomenon, which became obvious at the end of the 1990s, has become more pronounced since the first two decades of the 2000s and Xi Jinping's Silk Road project. Wang Yizhou, a theorist of the protection of Chinese interests, writes: "It's not an exaggeration to say that the Chinese people have been "prospecting, drilling and transporting all over the world [...] Without rising interests overseas, the Chinese would not have such a strong desire for the stable development of the outside world, nor is it likely to take the initiative to undertake more international obligations [...]"¹¹⁷

114. Mark Mazzetti, Dan Levin, "[Obama Administration Warns Beijing About Covert Agents Operating in U.S.](#)", *The New York Times*, December 17, 2015.

115. Yitong Wu, "[China yet to close two Overseas Police Stations in Germany after Official Request](#)", Radio Free Asia, March 16, 2023.

116. The United States Department of Justice, "[Two Arrested for Operating Illegal Overseas Police Station of the Chinese Government](#)", April 17, 2023.

117. Yizhou Wang, *Creative Involvement. A New Direction in China's Diplomacy*, Routledge, coll. "China perspectives", 2017, p. 42-43.

Since Jiang Zemin, concerns regarding the protection of Chinese interests overseas have been latent. It was under his leadership that the international expansion of the Chinese armed forces entered into consideration. This period coincides with the start of China's more convincing involvement in the United Nations peacekeeping forces and UNPOL. The first explicit references to non-traditional security threats, including abroad, appeared under Hu Jintao's leadership. At the same time, China developed a broad vision of national security, one that includes the protection of individuals and their property "overseas". Hu Jintao's leadership is consistent with the development of China's consular capabilities. In 2004, at the 10th Conference of Chinese Diplomatic Envoys Stationed Abroad, Hu Jintao insisted that one of latter's major missions was to protect the rights and interests of Chinese nationals overseas. This speech came a month after China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs created the Department of External Security Affairs, which complements the work carried out by the Department of Consular Affairs. During the same year, the need to include the expansion of Chinese interests overseas – as part of China's overall security interests – was mentioned for the first time in a Chinese Defense White Paper.¹¹⁸ Hu Jintao's leadership also marked the start of more in-depth thought on the Chinese army's ability to intervene in situations other than war.¹¹⁹

The consolidation of Chinese interests abroad would soon come to require more than mere consular capabilities. The operation to rescue 35,000 Chinese nationals from Libya in March 2011 marked a turning point in the design and implementation of processes to protect Chinese interests abroad. It constitutes China's first (long-distance) military deployment operation in Africa and the Mediterranean to be aimed at protecting its national interests. This led a new requirement to arise, i.e. the need for China to reflect upon the importance of deploying military forces abroad for this type of mission, yet without crossing its own threshold of non-interference. Under Xi Jinping's leadership, the concept of security was broadened from national to explicitly international, and from traditional security issues to non-traditional ones.¹²⁰ China's actions abroad are presented as being inevitably based on "creative involvement": "In a word, "creative involvement" refers to a new optimistic attitude, i.e., in the second decade of the 21st century, China will be more actively involved in international affairs and play a better role. And it requires that various departments related to diplomacy and the public in China should strengthen their enterprise and fight for favorable situations, participate in regional and global affairs more actively, come up with more programs, and provide more public products and assistance [...]."¹²¹

The wealth of international activity by China's Ministry of Public Security is, in our opinion, part of this process of "creative involvement". Its role in protecting Chinese interests abroad has been growing progressively since the early 2000s – an evolution that can be directly attributed to the then Minister of Public Security, Zhou Yonkan. Following the attacks on Chinese nationals in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2004, Zhou Yonkan initiated

118. Andrea Ghiselli, *Protecting China's Interests Overseas. Securitization and Foreign Policy*, Oxford University Press, 2021, Chap. 1.

119. Ibid.

120. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC, "The Global Security Initiative Paper", Paragraph 6.

121. Yizhou Wang, *Creative Involvement*, p. 6-7.

the first working conference on the protection of Chinese nationals and entities abroad, raising the issue of intergovernmental coordination for crisis management.¹²² The Ministry would then go on to integrate the issue of protecting Chinese interests overseas to its police and judicial cooperation processes, which it develops through its International Relations Department. The involvement of police forces, joint police-army forces (PAP) and judicial authorities constitutes an efficient and “responsible” way to protect Chinese interests. China can achieve this directly, by collaborating with foreign security institutions, as illustrated by the joint river patrols on the Mekong River. Methods that are more indirect involve equipping and training local security forces. This constitutes a way of “making up” for certain states’ shortcomings in terms of security and, in so doing, of helping to reduce risks and unrest. It has become evident that China generally offers to collaborate in the wake of serious incidents – particularly ones that affect Chinese nationals and their interests. For example, this was the case of China’s material assistance to the Solomon Islands’ police force after November 2021. China’s aid followed riots in the capital Honiara, which mainly affected the city’s Chinatown district.¹²³ Thus, China’s protection of Chinese nationals and property abroad is highly targeted and self-interested. This aspect is sometimes criticized, as is the case in South Africa.

- *A state that is responsible towards its partner states*

The growing presence of Chinese nationals abroad has posed, and still poses, security issues for host country authorities, who have complained about said presence to Beijing. These issues are caused by ordinary incivilities, by Chinese tourists or migrants not respecting customs regulations, as well as by tortious activities (illegal immigration) or criminal undertakings (organized crime, trafficking, money laundering, online scamming, etc.). Police cooperation with China allows partner states to fight these criminal activities; it therefore constitutes a guarantee of Beijing’s willingness to act responsibly towards its partner states, while acting as a condition for the protection of Chinese interests within these states’ borders. Beijing’s growing interest for non-traditional security issues, as well as the means it provides to face them, contribute to painting a positive picture of China in the minds of a large majority of states in Africa, Asia, South America and sometimes Europe.

- *A state that is responsible towards, and in the eyes of, its population in China*

Police and judicial cooperation enables the Chinese authorities to fight transnational criminal activities that affect its national security. In addition to border-related crimes, the Chinese population is increasingly confronted with Internet-based criminal activities (scams and website hacking). In a recent case, the criminals in question were operating from abroad (Myanmar and Cambodia).¹²⁴ This is also thought to be the case of Chinese nationals extradited to China by Spain. China’s internal narrative regarding the resolution of these cases helps to convey – among its population – the image of a state concerned with

122. Mathieu Duchâtel *et al.*, *Protecting China’s Overseas Interests. The Slow Shift away from Non-interference*, SIPRI Policy Paper 41, June 2014, p. 63.

123. Patricia O’Brien, “[The Deep Roots of the Solomon Islands’ Ongoing Political Crisis](#)”, *Critical Questions*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, Washington D.C., December 10, 2021.

124. Safeguard Defenders, *Involuntary Returns. China’s Covert Operation to force ‘Fugitives’ Overseas back Home*, Report, January 2022.

preserving national security. What's more, the Chinese population is thought to be sensitive to this type of actions.¹²⁵ The latter have reportedly been closely following all information available on the Libyan evacuation, as well as the case from 2011 in which thirteen sailors were murdered by drug traffickers on the Thai-Myanmar border on the Mekong River.¹²⁶ China deployed more than 200 officers to help track down and arrest Nam Kaw, the main drug lord involved in the case. Nam Kaw was eventually arrested and extradited to China in 2013, where he was sentenced to death. The authorities' narrative regarding these operations to protect Chinese interests abroad was even depicted in fiction film, which were very popular among the Chinese.¹²⁷ The Mekong River case inspired a television series produced by the Ministry of Public Security in 2014: *Operation Mekong*. The affair in Libya strongly inspired the film *Wolf Warrior 2*, China's biggest box office hit (US\$ 896 million in revenue).¹²⁸

An influential state?

Since Xi Jinping came to power, one of his openly stated foreign policy goals has been to "lead the reform of the global governance system." China's increasing involvement in international police and judicial cooperation is part of this framework. In 2017, during his speech at the INTERPOL General Assembly, President Xi Jinping stated that "the existing global security governance system features many incompatibilities and needs to be reformed and improved."¹²⁹ Police and judicial cooperation can help China achieve these goals: in international arenas, China is promoting the more systematic use of international cooperation to combat terrorist, separatist and religious extremist activities, as well as drug trafficking and transnational crime. It uses these arguments to try to influence the definition and implementation of judicial norms and practices in this area in a way that it considers more efficient, i.e., more in line with its own practices.¹³⁰ For example, it advocates a punitive approach to extraditions. China is working to ensure that these multilateral cooperation mechanisms against criminal activities are strictly refocused on state actors, while excluding NGOs. It also promotes its own definition of corruption, terrorism, extradition, repatriation and asset recovery.¹³¹ China aims to deepen the debates on extraterritorial activities and on the way a citizen is defined (nationality law). Internally, China has considerably developed the extraterritoriality clauses in its legal corpus. What's more, "voluntary" or forced repatriations have even targeted people who had given up their Chinese nationality

125. Andrea Ghiselli, *Protecting China's Interests Overseas. Securitization and Foreign Policy*, Oxford University Press, 2021, p.145.

126. The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation agreements were signed as a result of these events.

127. Andrea Ghiselli, *Protecting China's Interests Overseas*, p. 175 and after.

128. Ibid.

129. Xi Jinping, "坚持合作创新法治共赢 携手开展全球安全治理—在国际刑警组织第八十六届全体大会开幕式上的主旨演讲" [Adhere to cooperation, innovation, rule of law and win-win cooperation, and jointly lead global security governance - Speech during the opening of the 86th INTERPOL General Assembly].

130. Since 2014, China has showed that it is willing to use international law to protect its own sovereignty, national security and the development of its own interests (Rudolf Moritz, [Belt And Road Initiative, The: Implications For The International Order, Series On China's Belt And Road Initiative](#), vol. 14, World Scientific, 2021).

131. Eder Thomas et al., *China Global Law Enforcement Drive*.

for a foreign one. It can also be argued that China's regional and bilateral cooperation in police and judicial matters will increase China's influence on the overall understanding and use of state's sword arm. In addition to a significant material dependence on China for police and judicial cooperation, the issue of China's semantic and conceptual influence is also at play. As Frédéric Lemieux points out: "[i]nternational police cooperation is highly politicized and the training often reflects nationalist or organizational agendas. [...] In fact, police cooperation training can constitute a perfect political forum for influencing global or regional law-enforcement practices."¹³²

CONCLUSION

Since the start of the 21st century, Chinese authorities have developed their presence within international frameworks, including in United Nations and INTERPOL police forces. China has since proposed its own structures for cooperation. Beijing is taking advantage of regional cooperation mechanisms in Asia and Africa, while developing important police and judicial cooperation within bilateral frameworks. China complements these arrangements by signing extradition agreements and sending liaison officers abroad. Thus implemented, its political and judicial cooperation efforts cover all areas: from personnel training to equipment, as well as joint or extra-territorial operations. Beijing sometimes tries to extend beyond these frameworks, while relying on latter to create community-based centers abroad. The latter allow China to carry out police activities for the benefit of, or against, its own nationals.

Due to the presence of its interests abroad (both human and material), China is becoming a major partner to many states in the fight against non-traditional security threats. By doing so, China is able to protect (or show that it intends to protect) both its own interests abroad, as well as those of host states. China portrays itself as a responsible state and is able to influence many of its partners very effectively. Police and judicial cooperation constitutes highly fertile ground for the reconfiguration of governance principles towards an authoritarian state model. However, China's current endeavors are focused on legal norms that will allow it to spread its ideal of global governance, in particular within international forums.¹³³

132. Frédéric Lemieux, *International Police Cooperation. Emerging Issues, Theory and Practice*, p. 16.

133. "This project involves powerful Chinese diplomatic activism in regional forums and especially in multilateral organizations, notably the United Nations. Beijing's objective is ambitious: to shape a new, post-Western world order, in which the United States and its allies would be marginalized". (Alice Ekman, "L'influence croissante de la Chine aux Nations unies" [China's growing influence at the United Nations], *Questions internationales*, 116, November-December 2022, p. 56-63).

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