Back to the Cheka

The Ministry of Public Security’s political protection work

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21st February 2022

Abstract

The PRC Ministry of Public Security’s core unit’s reversion to its original name in 2019 reasserted a tradition that goes back to Soviet state security. The early CCP borrowed political protection from its Bolshevik parent, as it sought to create a ‘Chinese Cheka’. It repeatedly invoked the concept to name its main secret police organ when it faced the challenges of pacifying newly seized territory. This latest invocation coincided with accelerated efforts to impose state security in Hong Kong, the party’s most recent acquisition. The political protection name signals renewed emphasis, rather than a new purview: throughout its history, however named, the MPS 1st Bureau has been tasked with combatting threats to party power. This classic secret-police role extends abroad, notably including influence operations. The MPS’s external presentation as analogous to democratic law enforcement agencies and the 1st Bureau’s use of fronts and linked units often provide cover for influence activity.

This paper presents new evidence and analysis of the recent renaming of the MPS 1st Bureau, the place of CCP political protection in the Soviet-inherited state security tradition, that tradition’s renewal as the party prepared to dismantle Hong Kong’s political and legal system, and the Bureau’s work abroad. Once the pervasive role of the political protection bureau in MPS becomes apparent, we argue, foreign cooperation with CCP-controlled justice and law enforcement becomes inseparable from collaboration with the party’s state security work.

0 Introduction: The MPS 1st Bureau and state security

Beginning in early 2019, a system of state security agencies centred in the 1st Bureau of the PRC Ministry of Public Security (MPS) replaced ‘domestic security’ with ‘political security’ in the names of its units. The renaming, first rumoured by Hong Kong media and noted by analysts abroad, indicated a renewed emphasis on the system’s primary mission, coinciding with the harshest wave of repression so far seen in Hong Kong. This initial work remained conjectural, in the absence of conclusive evidence of the renaming and its implementation at the central level and an analysis of its implications in the context of the MPS’s work protecting state security domestically and from abroad.

The 1983 establishment of the Ministry of State Security (MSS) may have contributed to the illusion that the MPS is simply a law-enforcement police body, separate from intelligence agencies. This paper adds to the body of evidence showing that the MPS’s history, regulatory mandate and practice identify it as the PRC’s main state security organ. The MPS is a direct descendant of the secret police and intelligence units the CCP set up beginning in the 1920s. Far from disowning that tradition, the CCP under Xi continues to embrace it: the name change discussed in this paper restores to the MPS’s core unit the name of the CCP secret police that unleashed terror on the party’s first controlled territory, the short-lived Chinese Soviet Republic. The ‘political protection’ name signalled the party’s emulation of Soviet state security: it took the term from the secret police organs that evolved from Lenin’s Cheka to later organs like the GPU, NKVD and KGB. The CCP, itself arguably a creation of Bolshevik political protection, had operatives it charged with building a ‘Chinese Cheka’ trained in intelligence work in the Soviet Union. The renaming only reaffirms the purview of the MPS 1st Bureau and linked structures, consistently defined in relevant regulations as centred around classic secret police functions: fighting activities that endanger ‘state security’ and ‘social and political stability’. Again like its Soviet models, the MPS combines these domestic repression and counterintelligence functions with external operations.

In what we call a ‘good-cop act’, the CCP security apparatus exploits foreign perceptions of the MPS as equivalent to their own police to further its state security mission. Foreign judiciaries and law enforcement agencies cooperating with the MPS and other organs in the CCP political and legal system become ancillary to the protection of the party’s political security. This is not limited to direct exchanges between the 1st Bureau and foreign partners: the bureau also engages foreigners through front entities, as well as through its overlap with other units within the ministry. Enlisting foreign partners as unwitting helpers by masquerading as their analogous counterparts is a tactic hardly exclusive to the MPS: as argued elsewhere, such faux amis abound in the language of élite cooption in propaganda, diplomacy and trade.

This paper uses frontier pacification as a common concept summarising the domestic and external, cooptive and coercive activity of the CCP’s political protection system now centred in the MPS 1st Bureau, as well as its Chekist legacy. This frontier of state security is understood as comprising domains where party control is unconsolidated or challenged: newly absorbed territory (Hong Kong today, Mainland China in the early PRC, the Chinese Soviet in the 1930s, the Russian Far East for the early Bolshevik state), independent behaviour under the party-ruled state (civil society, political dissent, unmanaged religion) and non-compliance beyond state borders (fugitives, dissidents abroad, foreign entities unaligned with party policy).

The argument proceeds as follows. Section 1 provides new, authoritative evidence for the 1st Bureau’s renaming, with a mid-2019 terminus ante quem, and combines it with local-level developments to time it as a bureaucratic manifestation of a wave of stress on political security emanating from the CCP’s top leadership. Section 2 presents the history of CCP political protection as evolving from Chekist emulation, with the now-restored bureau name becoming prominent at those junctures where party control was asserted in new domains. Frontier pacification is then argued to explain both the 2019 renaming and a snapshot of 1st Bureau operations today. The wave of transmission that included the reversion to the Chekist name, section 3.1 shows, coincided with the perceived urgency to enforce state security in Hong Kong,
today’s CCP’s main territorial acquisition. In section 3.2, new evidence of 1st Bureau involvement in MPS work in areas of Myanmar controlled by CCP-backed forces establishes that the bureau’s ‘domestic’ purview extends beyond the PRC’s borders. MPS incursions into areas of Myanmar the party treats as under blurred sovereignty are still well within the domain of political security: section 3.3 samples the global scope of 1st Bureau activity, reviewing its role in influence operations in the United States and establishing its control over the MPS External Liaison Office. The cooptive aspect of MPS operations abroad discussed in section 3.4, embedded into larger influence work through ‘friendship’-themed fronts and faux ami presentations, becomes prominent in interactions with the outermost frontier of political protection, where coercive measures are costlier.

‘Law enforcement cooperation’, we conclude (section 4), is a further meme providing cover for the cooption of foreign entities into the protection of the party’s political security. Dropping the pretence of a ‘domestic’ purview, we speculate, may signal to the political protection system that its work abroad must strengthen its contribution to the global projection of CCP power.

1 Back to political protection: Xi’s MPS

In 2019, the MPS 1st Bureau, known since 1998 as the Domestic Security Protection Bureau (国内安全保卫局), reverted to its older name, Political Security Protection Bureau (政治安全保卫局). The renaming was also reflected by the bureau’s analogous units within subnational public security organs. Far from being an isolated bureaucratic triviality, the reversion to the traditional name reflected the stress on political security the party’s leadership handed down to security agencies and the judiciary from the early weeks of 2019. Nor was the renaming isolated from a larger reform of MPS structures and a purge of leading personnel that claimed one of the bureau’s own former chiefs.
1.1 The 1st Bureau’s renaming

Speculation that the MPS 1st Bureau had reverted to its old name initially appeared in Hong Kong media in June 2020, based on reports of analogous renamings at the local level. Western and Taiwanese analysts discussed these claims in the context of the history of PRC political security, highlighting the implications for Hong Kong following the establishment of a new security office.

These claims on the MPS 1st Bureau’s renaming remained conjectural, as the only evidence adduced concerned local-level organs. Below, we present evidence conclusively establishing that the MPS bureau name change had taken place by mid-2019, with its confirmation emerging in increasingly authoritative central-level sources during 2020.

- The 1st Bureau’s old ‘domestic security’ name appears to fall out of official use in early 2019. The most recent mention identified occurs in a Chengdu district government account of a February visit by 1st Bureau chief Chen Siyuan. In July 2019, 1st Bureau deputy chief Gu Bochong visited Lincang, a city in Yunnan. A government account of the meeting identified Gu’s unit with its new name.
- In August 2020, an MPS-affiliated media report on a police ceremony in Beijing used the new name to identify a 1st Bureau cadre in attendance.

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3 Hong Kong media referred to renamings in Naiman Banner (内蒙古), Inner Mongolia, in February 2019 and Jiangsu Province no later than May ("国保" 成 historians' names 应改为 "政保")，星岛日報, 3rd June 2020. In the Inner Mongolian case, this likely referred to a WeChat post describing the unveiling of a new nameplate on 1st February ("2019年2月3日室内", 微信, 3rd Feb. 2019).

4 Matthew Brazil, "Hong Kong: Chinese Security Officials Arrive", LinkedIn, 4th July 2020; idem, "Hong Kong: Much was written today...", Twitter, 5th July 2020; 梁書瑗, "北京的訊息: 駐港國安公署人事任命的意義", 防範安全雙週報 8 (31st July 2020).

8 朱思然, "公安部政治安全保卫局副局长顾伯冲到临沧调研指导工作", 临沧长安网, 1st July 2019. Gu Bochong’s career may warrant an excursus. Gu was a 1st Bureau deputy chief at least between late 2017 and mid 2020 (顾伯冲, “党的思想理论之树常青的根脉支撑”, 学习时报, via 宣讲家网, 22nd Nov. 2017; “公安部一局顾伯冲率队赴新龙场镇裕民村调研指导脱贫攻坚工作”, 兴仁市人民政府, 30th July 2020). He was previously with the ministry’s 23rd bureau (顾伯冲, “究竟什么是旺丁了苏共的理想信念大厦”, 人民论坛, 30th Sept. 2016). Gu’s earlier career was in the military, from 1997 in the PLA General Political Department ("顾伯冲", 中国作家网, for the identification, see fig. 1). He was a senior colonel by the late 2000s (江天光, "总参、总政调研组来校调研国防教育工作", 南昌航空大学, 20th Oct. 2008). He then emerged as a prominent state-media commentator (顾伯冲, "党必先忧党 惺党重在兴党", 求是, via 东南网, 17th Nov. 2009). Gu Boping, Gu Bochong’s elder brother: to the somewhat parallel careers one may add their birth in locations in or near Nantong, Jiangsu, and their given names’ shared first character ("顾伯冲去云南省政协会副主席", 中国经济网, 23rd Jan. 2014; cf. "顾伯冲"). The older Gu spent the 2000s in Yunnan, where he held senior roles in the province’s Propaganda Department and at the former 610 Office ("顾伯冲去云南省政协副主席", on the now abolished 610 system, see section 2.2). He later became a deputy chair of the Association for Yan-Huang Culture of China (中华炎黄文化研究会), a front with a formal affiliation in the propaganda system and further links to civilian and military intelligence (Livia Codarin, Laura Harth & Jichang Lulu, "Hijacking the mainstream: CCP influence agencies and their operations in Italian parliamentary and local politics", Sinopsis, 20th Nov. 2021, pp. 25 sq., 50).

1 The report, published on a news website run by the MPS newspaper People’s Public Security (人民公安报), named Hao Yunhong 郝云宏 as deputy party secretary of the Political Security Protection Bureau (参阅, "铭记训词精神 坚决完成党和人民赋予的使命任务", 中国警察网, 27th Aug. 2020). On the website and newspaper, see “联系我们”, 中国警察网; "赵克志在公安部调研时强调: 高举党的旗帜, 坚持守正创新, 为公安工作提供强大舆论支持和精神力量", MPS, via 湖南省公安厅, 7th Dec. 2019. A Guoming Daily story published two days later confirms Hao was with the 1st Bureau at the time (彭景晖, "打造党和人民满意的高素质过硬公安铁军——习近平总书记在中国人民警察警旗授旗仪式上的训词引发公安干警学习热潮", 光明日报 [29th Aug. 2020]).
The most authoritative acknowledgement of the restored name occurred in the latest version of the MPS Regulations on Jurisdiction Division of Labour for Criminal Cases, published in September 2020.\(^6\)

The new name is copiously attested in later authoritative central-level sources. An MPS university’s website used it in November 2020.\(^7\) Two months later, a Guangming Daily report on the “sweep away pornography, strike illegal publications” (扫黄打非) campaign again used it to identify ministerial units and cadres that excelled at such striking and sweeping away. Local public security organs’ accounts of interactions with the ministry yield further attestations.\(^8\)

The renaming was slow to spread to the subnational level, even though it was attested in low-level units as early as February 2019.\(^10\) Out of six province-level 1\(^{st}\) Bureau analogues in an August 2019 list of model individuals and units promoting ethnic unity published in the People’s Daily, only one used the new name.\(^11\) At least one province and one city district renamed their respective units only in late 2020.\(^12\) The reform did, however, spread throughout the country: by December 2020, at least five provinces and two major cities had applied the change.\(^13\) The odd county-level public security organ persisted in the old ‘domestic’ nomenclature as late as 2022.\(^14\)

\(^6\)公安部关于印发《公安部刑事案件管辖分工规定》的通知，公通字[2020]9号，via 新疆维吾尔自治区公安厅. For the dating, see, e.g., "公安部关于印发…", 中国刑事法律网, 21st Nov. 2020.

\(^7\)The website of the People’s Public Security University of China (PPSUC, 中国人民公安大学), a unit of the MPS, used the bureau’s new name as the affiliation of an attendee of a university event (“我校成功举办第三届‘国家安全博士生论坛’”，PPSUC, 16th Nov. 2020). We are grateful to Alex Joske for calling our attention to this item. The 1\(^{st}\) Bureau affiliation of this official around that time is confirmed by a local government source dated a month later ("公安部一局局领导、一级巡视员王学恩来义调研政保社会调查工作", 义乌市人民政府, 14th Dec. 2020). On PPSUC’s subordination to the MPS, see "学校简介", PPSUC; "People’s Public Security University of China", ASPI China Defence Universities Tracker.


\(^10\)See n. 1.


1. Back to political protection: Xi’s MPS

Figure 2: MSS infographic for State Security Education Day 2021. In this tree of state security, political security appears at the top, at the end of a stem from which all other securities (economic, territorial, cyber, cultural, military, nuclear...) branch out. Source: 四川电影电视学院实验中学.

1.2 Xi’s revival of political security and its transmission to the MPS

The 1st Bureau’s renaming cannot be dismissed as a display of bureaucratic nostalgia at the ministerial level. It reflected the higher CCP leadership’s emphasis on political security as a principle guiding legal and security work. These directives reached the ministry in early 2019, as it underwent a purge and reorganisation that affected the 1st Bureau as well.

The bureau name change followed a renewed stress on political security handed down from high levels of the party to the political and legal system, a network of party-state agencies that comprises justice and security agencies. The last Politburo meeting of 2018 approved new CCP Political and Legal Work Regulations. They enshrined into party doctrine the duty of political and legal organs’ party organisations to tackle “major issues or incidents affecting the state’s political security and social stability”, seeking Central Committee guidance on state security matters, “especially political security, centred in the security of political power and system security”.

In mid-January, Xi’s speech to the Central Political and Legal Work Conference hailed his Central Committee’s measures to “protect political security, social stability and the people’s peaceful life”. The day after the conference closed, MPS minister Zhao Kezhi 赵克志...

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15For a fuller discussion of political security in CCP political-legal work under Xi and its role in external engagements, see Matthew D. Johnson, “The east rises, borders fade: China’s political-legal extrusion in Europe”, forthcoming.
18“习近平出席中央政法工作会议并发表重要讲话”, 新华网, 16th Jan. 2019. That quote from the speech would serve as the title of a commentator article on the front page of the People’s Daily at the closure of the conference, as well as of the speech’s Xinhua summary reproduced in the anthology On the Governance of China (“人民日评论员：更好维护政治安全社会安定人民安宁”, 人民日报, 17th Jan. 2019; 习近平谈治国理政, vol. 3, 外文出版社, 2020, pp. 352 sqq.)
1 Back to political protection: Xi’s MPS

admonished subnational public security officials to prevent "colour revolutions" by "firmly wielding political security protection". Within weeks, local public security organs began to implement the 'political security' renaming. Law enforcement officials heard the party leadership's demands on political security again that year, less than a month before the Tian’anmen anniversary, at the first National Public Security Work Conference held in 16 years. Xi reminded assembled provincial and city public security chiefs of the need to uphold the "total state security outlook" to "create a secure and stable social and political environment", forging the "iron-like discipline" and "firm and correct political orientation" of a force "on which the party centre can rely".

The renaming took place as the 1


20 See n. 1. The political security emphasis was also visible at the local level in early 2019, with public security officials stressing the need to "create a secure and stable political and social environment" ahead of the PRC’s 70th anniversary ("[固始] 县召开全县公安工作会议", Root in Henan, 4th Apr. 2019).
22 Early 2019 MPS structural reforms included units transferred to and from the ministry ("公安部内设机构大调整: 多部门整合做强办案部门, 设情报指挥中心", 南方都市报, via 搜狐, 13th May 2019; 付静 & 石杨, "忠诚之师担当神圣使命 公安铁军书写崭新篇章", 人民公安报 [10th May 2019], via 中国警察网; "公安边防、警卫部队举行集体换装和入警宣誓仪式", 新华社, 1st Jan. 2019). We are grateful to Tobiáš Lipold for drawing our attention to these sources.
25 Chen’s appointment was made public in February 2019, the date of the earliest known renamings (see n. 1). He was previously at the Beijing Public Security Bureau ("从北京调入公安部半年后陈思源任公安部副部长", 南方都市报, via 搜狐, 20th Aug. 2019). However, already in January he visited Macau as the person in charge of an MPS office the 1


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2 Pacifying the frontier: The Chekist roots of CCP political protection

The 2019 restoration of the MPS’s core bureau’s historical name signalled the Xi era’s embrace of a continuity reforms and renamings had superficially obscured. The history of the bureau and its predecessors can help elucidate the connotations the party leadership foregrounded by reaffirming its ‘political protection’ mission. In the Leninist security tradition, the term has often become prominent at junctures the demanded the imposition of party control on newly seized, or newly challenging, domains.

The circumstances of the CCP’s own establishment prompt an understanding of political protection as the defence of the party-controlled space from threats from frontier domains. The Bolsheviks set up and long funded the CCP as one of the outposts combatting those threats — notably through the Comintern, effectively a component of the Soviet foreign intelligence apparatus. The (so far seemingly overlooked) fact that the Bolshevik intelligence operative in charge of the CCP’s 1st Congress happened to report at the time to an organ with ‘political protection’ in its name felicitously highlights the CCP’s role in Moscow’s policy and anticipates the concept’s future significance.

As the CCP began to evolve into an autonomous entity, its leaders felt an urge to set up a ‘Chinese Cheka’: cadres sent to the USSR ‘to study political protection’ would form the core of the CCP’s first intelligence organs. Among these, the first one capable of emulating Chekist terror was set up as soon as the CCP managed to control patches of territory. The Political Protection Bureau, the Chinese Soviet’s secret police, was a predecessor of the state security organ the CCP, like the other triumphant parties in Stalin’s post-war bloc, established upon seizing state power — the MPS. This secret police mission, this section shows, lives on in the MPS’s core unit, unaffected by its temporary renamings as something else than ‘political protection bureau’.

2.1 A Chekist op gone wrong: The CCP as a creature of Bolshevik political protection

The concept of political protection developed in the Leninist tradition together with the need to guard the frontiers of an expanding communist polity. The Cheka and its successor agencies were instructed to treat physical border security as inseparable from ideological security. The 1922 Politburo order establishing the GPU listed among its roles the “political protection of the borders”. This implied keeping out counterrevolutionaries as well as counterrevolutionary ideas threatening Soviet rule, a particularly challenging task in the Far East, where the Bolsheviks struggled to establish control. State security’s frontier was never merely geographic.

The CCP’s very establishment as a Bolshevik satellite group may be seen in the context of Leninist intelligence agencies’ work to protect the nascent communist state

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26 Reproduced in, e.g., Ф.Э. Джеряинский и охрана границ Советского государства, Воениздат, 1977, p. 86.
from threats from the east. The Comintern envoy likely responsible for funding the emerging CCP’s activities, in particular the organisation of its first congress in 1921, was a military intelligence officer in the Far Eastern Republic, a Bolshevik-controlled buffer state. By the time of the CCP’s first congress, the Far Eastern Republic had merged military intelligence into its civilian counterpart, State Political Protection — in turn absorbed by the OGPU upon the republic’s reunification into Russia the following year.

As the CCP evolved from an underfunded component of Bolshevik external security into an armed force imposing Soviet rule over conquered Chinese territory, it developed its own political protection structures. Like much of the party, and later state, apparatus, the young CCP’s security organs learnt from their Soviet counterparts. In 1925, Zhou Enlai told Chen Geng, later one of the PLA’s ten senior generals, that Chen could become “China’s Cheka”. The next year, the CCP Central Committee sent Chen to the Soviet Union to study “Soviet political protection work”. Chen and other Soviet-trained operatives would indeed hold senior roles in the CCP’s first intelligence organs, set up under Zhou’s leadership beginning in the late 1920s. The concept of political protection was inscribed in the CCP’s institutional make-up in 1931, as the party’s declaration of a Soviet state created a need to pacify these areas. The State Political Protection Bureau (国家政治保卫局) was established to “investigate, suppress and eliminate” counterrevolutionary activities. Like with its Russian predecessor, the Bureau’s systematic use of torture made its vast investigations quickly lead to the execution of thousands of imagined enemies among 

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28Nominally an alliance of revolutionary movements, the Comintern was an instrument of Soviet policy, which treated foreign communist parties as sections of the Moscow-led International. The Comintern Executive Committee’s International Liaison Department (Отдел международной связи, OMS) — its “brain and inner sanctum”, as a Comintern leader’s widow put it; “the world communist movement’s nervous system”, in the words of an OMS head’s son — functioned as one of the Bolsheviks’ intelligence agencies (Aino Kuusinen, Der Gott stürzt seine Engel, Molden, 1972, p. 49; В. И. Ленин, Основы политической стратегии, Rockhampton, 2004, p. 174). The OMS maintained close relations and cooperated with the other Soviet external intelligence units, the GPU Foreign Department and the Red Army Intelligence Directorate, the GRU’s predecessor (ibid., pp. 184 sqq.). The OMS set up an illegal liaison station in Shanghai in September 1921 (И. Сотников, “Большевиский пункт Отдела международной связи ИКИ в 1920-1930-х гг.”, Проблемы Дальнего Востока 5 (2014); for a more carefully sourced account of its later history, see Frederic S. Litten, “The Noulens Affair”, The China Quarterly 138 (1994)).

29Vladimir Neiman (Viktor Berg), known in China under the pseudonym Nikolsky, began serving in the Far Eastern Republican People’s Revolutionary Army’s intelligence department in 1921. Neiman, sent by the Comintern’s Far Eastern Secretariat, supplied funds to Comintern workers in China (A. Карпов, “Нейман-Никольский — участник I съезда КПК”, Проблемы Дальнего Востока 4 (2006)). A year after the first congress, the CCP was still almost entirely dependent on Comintern funds (石川禎浩, 中国共产党的成立史, 岩波書店, 2001, p. 274). A better-known Comintern envoy who attended the first congress, Henk Sneevliet, limited himself, in his own account, to following the secretariat’s instructions relayed by Nikolsky (Bericht des Genossen H. Maring für die Executive, via Archief Henk Sneevliet, 11th July 1922, p. 2).


32Party-approved historiography attributes the words to Chen Duxiu 陈独秀, then the CCP general secretary (穆欣, 陈独秀传, 上海人民出版社, p. 50, cf. 陈庚传, p. 41).


Pacifying the frontier

party and Red Army ranks and the population of the Soviet areas, in a campaign of terror only stopped by the Long March.\(^{35}\)

Although the CCP would eventually turn against its Soviet parent and retroactively disavow much of its influence, the early CCP security system’s nature as a local Cheka has not left the CCP’s institutional memory — as it were, Chekist pride has proved too resilient for the Sino-Soviet split to erase. In a 1941 speech, two years after the Political Protection Bureau’s roles had been absorbed into those of the Central Social Affairs Department (中央社会部), Liu Shaoqi 刘少奇 reminded security personnel that, just like the Bolsheviks could not have maintained the success of the October Revolution without protection work, “a good CCP member should regard being in charge of protection work as the highest honour”.\(^{36}\) In 2015, an article in a PLA journal recalled that the Chinese Soviet government “learnt and borrowed from the Soviet Union’s Chekist system’s successful experience in the foundation of the state to establish the Cheka of the East that the CCP created”.\(^{37}\)

### 2.2 The MPS’s core bureau: The ‘Chinese Cheka’ from Mao to Xi

Faced with the task of pacifying China’s territory and population after seizing state power in 1949, the CCP institutionalised Chekist political security structures into a ministry, with its first numbered unit dedicated to political protection. The MPS Political Protection Bureau (政治保卫局), the ministry’s largest and most powerful, was tasked with maintaining political order and countering hostile intelligence forces.\(^{38}\) Subsequent bureaucratic reforms, including the institutional disruptions of the Cultural Revolution, did not dilute the political security mission of the MPS core unit, renamed Domestic Security Bureau in 1998.\(^{39}\)

Even while removed from the 1\(^{st}\) Bureau’s name, political protection remained in the spirit, as well as the letter, of its mandate. MPS regulations defining criminal cases handled by its subunits have consistently included categories of activity “endangering state security”, labels regularly used to criminalise dissent, such as “inciting subversion of state power” and “separatism”.\(^{40}\) Far from reforming away from the Chekist tradition, updates in 2015 and 2020 added further political offences, respectively incorporating newly defined manifestations of “extremism” and making explicit common citizens’ liability for divulging “state secrets”.\(^{41}\)

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\(^{36}\)Yancheng speech, quoted in 郭華倫, 中國共產黨史論, 國立政治大學國際關係研究會, 1968, p. 228; cf. 刘少奇年谱, via.gov.cn, 中央文献出版社, 1996.


\(^{39}\)Except for a two-year interruption in the 1950s, the bureau maintained its original name until the PLA’s takeover of the ministry, which turned it into its Political Protection Group in 1970 (政治保卫组) (Dutton, op. cit., p. 362 n. 30; Schoenhals, op. cit., pp. 31 sq.). It became the MPS Bureau for Investigating Counterrevolutionaries (对反革命侦察局) during the 1983 reform of the security apparatus and reverted to its original name in 1989 (“公安部内设机构沿革”, 湖北法治网, 25th Dec. 2006).

\(^{40}\)Crimes against “state security” and “social order” under the 1\(^{st}\) Bureau’s purview further include treason, espionage, illegally obtaining and possessing state secrets and insulting national symbols (*公安部关于印发《公安部刑事案件管辖分工规定》的通知*, 公通字 [1998]80 号, reproduced in 公安法律规章司法解释全书, 中国法制出版社, 2005, pp. 3-152 sqq.).

\(^{41}\)The 2015 amendment reflected the addition to the *Criminal Law* of crimes such as “possessing materials that propagate extremism” (Art. 120-6) and the passing of the new *Counter-Terrorism Law*, both introducing new legal instruments to support ethnic, religious and political persecution (*公安部关于印发《公安部刑事案件管辖分工补充规定 (三) 》的通知*, 公通字 [2015]36 号, via 崇义县人民政府; 公安部关于印发
Pacifying the frontier

Figure 3: A sign inside the Bengbu Public Security Bureau in 2013, showing domestic security and anti-cult units on the same floor. Courtesy of Wu Lebao 吴乐宝。

ment documents continued to describe local 1st Bureau analogues as being responsible for “political protection” and maintaining “social and political stability”.

Pacifying the frontiers of permissible belief also falls under the 1st Bureau’s purview. In the last few decades the bureau has, together with a system of linked structures, worked to suppress religious organisations outside those the party controls. While the anti-cult bureaucracy developed to combat Falun Gong, a qigong-inspired group initially supported by the MPS that the CCP later came to see as a threat, its scope extends to other heterodox movements. The 1st Bureau’s role in the suppression of Falun Gong goes back to the campaign’s early days. The MPS set up a dedicated Anti-Cult Bureau (反邪教局), its 26th, which then gradually merged back into the

42中共祁东县委机构编制委员会关于印发祁东县公安局主要职责内设机构和人员编制规定的通知 (2020); cf. 中华人民共和国刑法（修订）, via 中国人大网; 中华人民共和国反恐怖主义法, via 中国人大网.


45In 1999, as the campaign began in earnest, it was the 1st Bureau that ordered local public security to monitor the movement (河北日报, 1st Aug. 1999, cited in James W. Tong, Revenge of the Forbidden City: The Suppression of the Falungong in China, 1999-2005, OUP, 2009, pp. 37 sqq.). As early as 2000, active and former 1st Bureau officials participated in activities seeking international support for Falun Gong repression. See
A nation-wide party-state bureaucracy that coordinated anti-cult work, anchored in the ‘610 Office’, also overlapped with that under the 1st Bureau until its absorption into the MPS in 2018. The abolition of the 610 system may be seen as linked to the purging of the security apparatus, which also affected anti-cult cadres.

In 2019, the anti-cult bureau was reconstituted as the fourth, led by a cadre transferred from the first. The 4th Bureau’s new name suggests that it has taken over the duties of the abolished 610 system.

1st Bureau. A nationwide party-state bureaucracy that coordinated anti-cult work, anchored in the ‘610 Office’, also overlapped with that under the 1st Bureau until its absorption into the MPS in 2018. The abolition of the 610 system may be seen as linked to the purging of the security apparatus, which also affected anti-cult cadres.

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Geoff Wade & Jichang Lulu, “The China Association for Friendship (中国友谊促进会) and its links with the Ministry of Public Security”, forthcoming.

The 26th Bureau’s chief between 2003 and 2007 might have been the last not to concurrently lead the 1st Bureau. The bureaus shared at least a deputy chief by 2008, and three consecutive chiefs since 2011 (孙志强同志简历, 天津纪检监察网, 27th Nov. 2020; “任少康同志简历”, CCDI, 6th May 2019; “孙力军被免去公安部副部长职务 11个月已获释”, 中国经营网, 8th May 2020). In addition to their leadership, the bureaus came to share some subunits by the late 2010s, suggesting they had effectively merged (高昌明·张公委[2014]1号, 中共张家港市公安局委员会; “吉林省公务员局 吉林省公安厅关于表彰全省公安机关优秀基层单位和优秀基层民警的决定”, 吉林省公务员局, Jan. 2015; “徽县县公安局局荣获全国公安机关先进集体”, 中国纪检监察网, 28th Apr. 2016; “南通市通州区公安局领导分工”, 南通市通州区人民政府, 15th Nov. 2016). On the system under the Central Leading Small Group on Preventing and Dealing With the Cult Issue (中央防范和处理邪教问题领导小组) and its (‘610’) office, see Tong, op. cit., ch. 6, whose claims should however be differentially assessed based on the authoritativeness of the sources cited. At least three 610 Office chiefs in the 2010s were concurrently MPS deputy ministers (李东生涉嫌严重违纪违法接受调查, CCDI, 28th Apr. 2013; “刘金国不再担任610办公室主任”, 新华社, 26th May 2015; 公安部黄明副部长到新会展派出所视察指导基层警务工作, 成都市公安局高新技术产业开发区分局, 21st Nov. 2017). The system was abolished in 2018, with the leading small group and the 610 Office respectively absorbed by the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission and the MPS (中央防范和处理邪教问题领导小组办公室, 中共中央印发《深化党和国家机构改革方案》, 新华网, 21st Mar. 2018). During 2018 and 2019, the reform spread to the subnational level, collapsing provincial to county-level 610 offices into the corresponding security organs (江省机构改革方案获中央批复 (附机构设置表), 新华社, 26th Oct. 2018; “安徽省机构改革方案已获批准”, 安徽纪检监察网, 31st Oct. 2018; 黑龙江省关于市级机构改革的总体意见, 新华社, 2018[44]号, 通过黑龙江省委机构编制委员会办公室, 2018年黑龙江省关于市级机构改革的总体意见, 31st Oct. 2018). Any lingering local 610 offices would likely have already been mere nameplates of local 1st Bureau equivalents to which the reform would have meant no change in practice. On the implications of local coalescence between agencies, see Charmion Koh et al., “Unbundling systems: Foreign affairs reform in China’s provinces”, Sinopsis, 11th Apr. 2021, p. 4; Jichang Lulu, Filip Jirouš & Rachel Lee, “Xi’s centralisation of external propaganda: SCIO and the Central Propaganda Department”, Sinopsis, 25th Jan. 2021.

The purge of 610 Office deputy head Peng Bo 潘波 for reasons that included “deviating” from party policy on “online public opinion struggle” in turn links to the earlier reform of the cyberspace affairs system, at the intersection of security and propaganda (“原中央防范和处理邪教问题领导小组办公室副主任因犯严重违法违纪被开除党籍”, CCDI, 17th Aug. 2021; “原中央防范和处理邪教问题领导小组办公室副主任彭波被依法采取刑事强制措施”, 最高人民法院, 13th Dec. 2021; for Peng’s past as a cyberspace affairs cadre, Lulu, Jirouš & Lee, op. cit., n. 16).

Feng Bo 潘波 was a “national police team member of the 19th National People’s Congress” (原中央防范和处理邪教问题领导小组办公室副主任彭波严重违纪违法被开除党籍), CCDI, 21st Nov. 2021; “原中央防范和处理邪教问题领导小组办公室副主任彭波被开除党籍”, 最高人民法院, 13th Dec. 2021; for Peng’s past as a cyberspace affairs cadre, Lulu, Jirouš & Lee, op. cit., n. 16).

The 4th Bureau is now the Bureau for Work on Preventing and Dealing with Evil Cult Crimes (防范和处理邪教犯罪工作局), echoing the full name of the former leading small group and its office (“全国公安机关局长会议参观中国警察博物馆重温人民公安史”, MPS, via 百色市人民政府, 21st Jan. 2021).
3 Expanding the frontier: The 1st Bureau in Hong Kong and abroad

The CCP’s most significant territorial acquisition since the Mao era renewed the challenges of bringing an unruly society under totalitarian control. The task of pacifying Hong Kong engaged the resources of ‘China’s Cheka’ long before the 1997 transfer. After it, more robust institutional resources had to be deployed faster than a tactical compromise with the UK might have contemplated. 1st Bureau cadre are now among the leaders of Hong Kong’s new state security police. The accelerated absorption of the mock-diasystemic colony into the totalitarian one-party state renewed the importance of political protection, a concept the CCP invoked as it seized territory — and the CCP’s own birth as an outpost of Chekist protection. The urgency of this task may indeed explain the outburst of Chekist rhetoric the party centre sent down the political-legal system, causing the MPS’s core to revert to its old name.

Today’s Political Security Protection Bureau’s mission near the border of the party’s controlled territory is to help terminate Hong Kong’s liberties. Its purview does not, however, cease at the border. Political security units play a role in policing areas of Myanmar controlled by CCP-supported armed groups, a domain the CCP treats as combining the domestic and the foreign. Beyond these blurred borders, the Bureau joins the CCP’s influence agencies, spread across party, state and military structures and used to coopt elite figures into CCP-compliant, consonant or innocuous attitudes. The 1st Bureau leads MPS influence operations abroad, using classic Leninist ‘friendship’ tropes to manipulate those it cannot subdue.

The Bureau’s overseas operations are not disjoint from the larger CCP security system’s efforts to enlist foreign justice and law enforcement into collaborating with its extraterritorial projection. In these exchanges, the superficially plausible presentation of state security as equivalent to law enforcement under democratic control acts as the outermost shell of political protection work.

3.1 Procrastinate no further: Political protection in Hong Kong

The 1st Bureau’s responsibility for MPS Hong Kong work long precedes the handover. By 1983, the MPS operated from Xinhua News Agency’s Hong Kong headquarters, sharing security and intelligence tasks with the new MSS. In the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre, the 1st Bureau was involved in countering Operation Yellowbird, an effort to smuggle members of the protest movement into the British colony. In 1994, the bureau received a dedicated external nameplate, the MPS Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (THKMAO). For much of its recent existence, the office has been led by the 1st Bureau chief. Illustrating the 1st Bureau’s role in Hong Kong, it was its THKMAO nameplate that the

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51 许家屯，许家屯香港回忆录，联经，1993，ch. 2; Christine Loh, *Underground Front: The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong UP, 2010, pp. 94 sq.
52 江迅, “黄雀行動背後港人拚命救危內情”, 亞洲週刊 23 (June 2009).
54 Out of four recent 1st Bureau chiefs, only Bai Xiaokang (2011–2013) may not have concurrently headed the office (“尚冰、陈智敏兼任国家网信办副主任”, 中国经济网, via 人民网, 23rd Jan. 2015; “特區與內地簽署通報機制新安排文本”, GovHK, 14th Dec. 2017; “王小洪简历”, “行政长官崔世安与公安部常务副部长王小洪会面”; cf. n. 60). The 1st Bureau-THKMAO arrangement is mirrored at the subnational level (“湖南省郴州市公安局 2018年度部门决算说明”, 郴州市公安局, 30th Sept. 2019; “沈亚
Expanding the frontier

ministry used to sign a criminal information exchange agreement with Hong Kong law enforcement authorities in 2017. The party reasserted political security as the MPS’s central task as it sped up efforts to impose it on Hong Kong. The regulations that define the 1st Bureau’s purview reflect this urgency: their 2020 amendment tasks the bureau with investigating the crime of “disrespecting the national anthem”, added to PRC law as booing the March of the Volunteers became an increasingly popular form of protest. The 2019 transmission of the revitalisation of political security through the CCP political-legal system reached Hong Kong as well: a week after the National Public Security Conference, the PRC government’s Hong Kong Liaison Office discussed it in a study session. As media commentary in Hong Kong noted at the time, the proposed extradition bill that would lead to large protests in the spring of 2019 was first proposed by the city’s security bureau barely a month after the MPS minister’s warning on “colour revolutions”. The foregrounding of the 1st Bureau’s political security purview culminated in its embedding in Hong Kong’s new state security police. In 2020, the new state security law that formalised the abrupt termination of the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ model and Hong Kong’s judicial independence created a Hong Kong state security office, with leading roles held by MPS and MSS officials. The MPS’s participation built on the 1st Bureau’s existing Hong Kong affairs portfolio: the state security office’s inaugural MPS deputy director is Li Jiangzhou 李江舟, a former 1st Bureau chief and long-time official with the bureau’s THKMAO nameplate.

3.2 The near abroad: The MPS across the Myanmar border

Evidence presented below indicates the 1st Bureau’s purview extends to operations in areas held by PRC-supported armed groups in inside Myanmar territory. MPS extraterritorial operations, such as those under the ‘Skynet’ (天网) initiative, have included repatriating fugitive PRC officials from Myanmar. The armed group-held areas, where CCP security agencies operate with relative freedom, illustrate the transition between political protection’s domestic and extraterritorial domains.

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55. “内地与香港特别行政区关于就采取刑事强制措施或刑事检控等情况相互通报机制的安排”签
Expanding the frontier

Figure 4: Yunnan public security official Guo Bao (left) meets United Wa State Party general secretary Bao Youxiang in Wa State, Myanmar, Dec. 2021. Source: 佤邦新闻.

The first public use of the 1st Bureau’s new name recorded in this paper occurred in a Myanmar work context. In his mid-2019 visit to Lincang, deputy bureau chief Gu Bochong urged local public security officials to “bring into play Lincang’s advantageous location along the border to do intelligence work well and improve capacity building abroad”. Like much of the province, Lincang borders areas of Myanmar held by PRC-backed ethnic armed groups.

Public security structures play a prominent role in the province’s relationship with these areas: a former deputy chief of the Yunnan Public Security Department now acts as an envoy travelling into Myanmar territory for talks with ethnic armed groups (Fig. 4). In addition to providing equipment and other support to the groups’ law enforcement bodies, Yunnan public security organs themselves dispatch personnel.

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62 See section 1.1.
63朱清然, op. cit.
64 These relationships partially continue the CCP’s support for the defunct Communist Party of Burma (CPB). The CPB’s imprint is apparent in, e.g., the United Wa State Party’s (UWSP) political structures, inherited from the CPB and mirroring the CPB’s (Tom Kramer, The United Wa State Party: Narco-Army or Ethnic Nationalist Party?, East-West Center, 2007, p. 37). For recent work on Wa society and politics in China and Myanmar, see Bertil Lintner, The Wa of Myanmar and China’s Quest for Global Dominance, NIAS Press, 2021; Magnus Fiskesjö, Stories from an Ancient Land: Perspectives on Wa History and Culture, Berghahn, 2021). The UWSP-led Wa State People’s Political Consultative Conference, modelled on the CCP’s top united front organ, illustrates the CCP’s enduring organisational legacy (“佤邦政协第二届全邦委员会会议邦康举行”, 佤邦新闻, via Sina, 15th Dec. 2016; “佤邦政协第三届委员代表会议 18日上午开幕”, 佤邦新闻, via Youtube, 20th Mar. 2021).
65 Former PSD deputy chief Guo Bao 郭宝 met UWSP general secretary Bao Youxiang 鲍有祥 in late December 2021 (“鲍有祥主席亲切会见中国云南省涉缅办副主任、邻国涉外事务专员郭宝”, 佤邦新闻, via Youtube, 21st Dec. 2021). In 2019, Guo visited both Wa State and Mong La, held by the National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA), another CPB-descended group (“吴再林主席亲切会见中国云南省禁毒委副主任郭宝一行”, 缅甸掸邦东部第四特区资讯网, 1st July 2019; “中国云南省禁毒委副主任郭宝一行到访我区”, 缅甸掸邦东部第四特区资讯网, via Sina, 27th Dec. 2019). For Guo’s career and his identification with the cross-border envoy, see “云南任免周建忠、郭宝、李翌、李翌职务”, 经济日报, 7th Aug. 2019; “郭宝副厅长看望慰问英勇牺牲民警李敬忠家属”, 云南省公安厅. The envoy’s name’s pronunciation happens to differ only in tone from the abbreviation of the 1st Bureau’s old name (国保), and its spelling only in one character from the bureau’s affectionate homophone ‘national treasure’ (国宝).
into their controlled territory to collect intelligence and conduct arrests. In a 2014 case, after a month-long investigation, PRC public security officers arrested in a hotel in Mai Ja Yang, Kachin and “brought to justice” a fugitive CCP cadre, with the involvement of “Myanmar police” (likely referring to armed-group forces) lasting only the hours it took to hand him over across the border.67 In 2019, Yunnan police sent a team into Myanmar to locate and detain a fugitive “with the help of local police”, again with less than a day needed between his capture and repatriation from Wa State.68 Yunnan public security personnel have also conducted operations infiltrating drug trafficking groups in Kokang.69

This engagement with Myanmar directly involves the political protection system centred in the MPS 1st Bureau. Yunnan local-level domestic security personnel have participated in visits to ethnic armed group-controlled areas.70 1st Bureau analogues at the county level and below recruit Burmese translators, with duties such as their unit’s “day-to-day contact with Myanmar”.71 Security-protection organs recruit Burmese translators as far from the border as Liaoning.72

3.3 The 1st Bureau’s operations overseas

The 1st Bureau’s activities are not limited to the PRC’s territory or border areas. Its involvement in global influence operations points to the party’s understanding of political protection as including the international domain.

The MPS External Liaison Office (对外联络办公室) is likely a 1st Bureau nameplate. As with the Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao affairs unit, multiple local government sources identify external liaison offices as nameplates of local 1st Bureau equivalents.73 At the central level, personnel overlap between the bureau and the office is consistent with a nameplate relationship.74 The office lacks the public visibility of other MPS bureaus.75

Expanding the frontier
Expanding the frontier

Descriptions of the office’s activities and its use of front companies and other entities typically involved in intelligence work indicate that the office’s focus might be on covert activity.\(^7\)

Media reports based on leaked Malaysian government documents offer a glimpse into the 1\(^{st}\) Bureau’s intelligence capabilities and its involvement in international operations. In 2016, the 1\(^{st}\) Bureau’s then-chief Sun Lijun assured Malaysian officials that PRC organs were conducting “full operational surveillance” of Hong Kong-based reporters of a US newspaper investigating corruption involving a Malaysian government fund.\(^7\) US court documents also accuse Sun Lijun of hiring a Republican fundraiser to lobby for the deportation of a fugitive PRC businessman.\(^7\)

The operation shows the 1\(^{st}\) Bureau’s use of networks active in US influence work over several election cycles. A defendant in the Trump administration influence case that involved the 1\(^{st}\) Bureau chief is the daughter of a couple involved in illegal donations to the Clinton campaign in 1997.\(^7\) A further defendant in the case had previously been charged with illegally contributing to Barack Obama’s 2012 reelection campaign.\(^8\)

The 1\(^{st}\) Bureau chief’s broad mandate to negotiate in the US and Malaysian influence cases signals the organ’s importance within the political system. According to a media account of leaked meeting minutes, Sun Lijun conveyed to Malaysian officials a PRC offer to use the country’s “leverage on other nations” to stop investig-

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\(^7\)E.g., the MPS maintains a unit dedicated to Interpol cooperation (張起厚, op. cit.).
\(^7\)Joske, op. cit., where links are also discussed between the External Liaison Office and the family of Marshal Ye Jianying 叶剑英, historically linked with military intelligence.
\(^7\)According to minutes of meetings leaked to the Wall Street Journal, Sun said the PRC was tapping the journalists’ residences, offices and electronic devices to “establish all links that [Wall Street Journal Hong Kong] has with Malaysia-related individuals” (Tom Wright & Bradley Hope, “China Offered to Bail Out Troubled Malaysian Fund in Return for Deals”, The Wall Street Journal [7th Jan. 2019]).
\(^7\)Aruna Viswanatha & Rebecca Ballhaus, “New Details Revealed of RNC Fundraiser’s Lobbying for China”, The Wall Street Journal (24th July 2020); United States v. Nickie Mali Lum Davis, Information, D. Haw., 17th Aug. 2020. The newspaper story refers to Sun as vice minister, while the court document calls the individual in question a minister. A later press release on an indictment in the case referred to him as a vice minister (“U.S. Entertainer/Businessman and Malaysian National Charged with Back-Channel Lobbying Campaign to Drop 1MDB Investigation and Remove Chinese Dissident from U.S.”, US Department of Justice, 11th June 2021). Sun was a vice minister when the document was filed, but not when the events took place. He has never been a minister: given his arrest and expulsion from the party, a promotion does not seem imminent (cf. n. 24). Other US media subsequently repeated the identification of the PRC official with Sun, also citing unnamed sources (Spencer S. Hsu, “Major RNC, Trump fundraiser Elliott Broidy pleads guilty to acting as unregistered foreign agent”, The Washington Post [20th Oct. 2020]). The Republican operative pleaded guilty to the charges but was later pardoned (“Elliott Broidy Pleads Guilty for Back-Channel Lobbying Campaign to Drop 1MDB Investigation and Remove Chinese Dissident from U.S.”, US Department of Justice, 20th Oct. 2020; “Pardons Granted by President Donald J. Trump (2017-2021)”, US Department of Justice).

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\(^7\)“Feds allege Hawaii woman was key player in illegal lobbying scheme”, iLind, 21st Aug. 2020; George Lardner Jr., “2 Donors Agree to Plead Guilty in Justice Dept. Probe of Democratic Fund-Raising”, The Washington Post (22nd May 1997).
Expanding the frontier

ations on the Malaysian fund. A charging document in the Trump administration lobbying case quotes Sun’s offer to “return certain US citizens held hostage”, accept illegal immigrants for deportation and provide “new assistance with regard to North Korea.”

3.4 Good cops: Friendship as the outer layer of political protection

Outside the borders of totalitarian control, political security vocabulary mutates into that of friendship and peace. The overlap between the 1st Bureau’s external engagements and those of other MPS units invites a reassessment of law enforcement cooperation. Since the most important unit linked to foreign exchanges is the political protection bureau, such non-hostile interactions are best seen as a good-cop act ultimately pursuing the unit’s main goal of protecting political security.

Like other organs in the CCP security, foreign affairs, trade, military and united front apparatuses, the MPS maintains a friendship-themed front for influence work outside official channels. The China Association for Friendship (CAFF, 中国友谊促进会), is effectively a front for the MPS 1st Bureau: former 1st Bureau chiefs and other leading bureau cadre typically hold top roles at CAFF. The euphemistic naming hardly blurs CAFF’s focus on political security. The front and its personnel have cultivated ties with security forces, think tanks and sitting and former officials in countries from Taiwan to the US, seeking cooperation in areas such as “counterterrorism”, cyber-security and the fight against “cults”, mirroring categories that domestically label aspects of the protection of the party’s power.

The MPS’s system of Foreign Non-Government Organisation Management Offices (境外非政府组织管理办公室), with which foreign NGOs must register, also appears to be controlled by the 1st Bureau.

Away from the strident affirmation of the MPS’s core political protection mission, its interlocutors in democratic states often treat it as similar to accountable law enforcement organs of which the ministry is only a faux ami. Exploiting foreign acceptance of party-state agencies’ external presentation is a basic tactic of CCP influence work. Dozens of states maintain extradition treaties, as well as legal and financial information sharing agreements with the PRC. Courts and law enforcement agencies assist the party-state’s repression tasks by acting on Interpol notices, by now effectively co-opted as an instrument of authoritarian projection.

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Wright & Hope, op. cit.; US v. Lum Davis, p. 32.
Viswanatha & Ballhaus, op. cit.; US v. Lum Davis, p. 32.
For a sample of CCP influence agencies across the political system, see Codarin et al., op. cit., pp. 11 sqq.
CAFF’s institutional position, history and activities are discussed in more detail in Wade & Lulu, op. cit.
Multiple local foreign NGO management offices, from the provincial to the county level, are nameplates of the corresponding 1st Bureau equivalents, or at least share their leadership (“领导干部任职前公示”, 广西壮族自治区公安厅, 10th May 2018; “盐城市人民政府关于刘杰、朱长征同志职务任免的通知”, 政府信息公开平台, 20 Apr. 2018; “江山市人民政府关于刘杰、朱长征同志职务任免的通知”, 政府信息公开平台, 20 Apr. 2018; “晋江市公安局主要机构设置及职责”, 晋江市人民政府, 27th Mar. 2021; “黎平县公安局机构设置”, 黎平县人民政府, 22nd Nov. 2021). This suggests the central-level office may also be a 1st Bureau nameplate.
For a recent overview, see “No room to run: China’s expanded mis(use) of Interpol since the rise of Xi Jinping”, Safeguard Defenders, 15th Nov. 2021.
enforcement cooperation agency, signed a "strategic cooperation agreement" with the MPS, building on years of MPS cultivation of ties with European officials. In 2015, a Polish state-affiliated think-tank report concluded from an analysis of Xiist security work that EU members "should put security issues on the agenda in their relations with China", with possible "first steps" in "tangible China-Europe security cooperation" including "intelligence sharing".  

Personnel links and function overlap with other MPS units can effectively make the 1st Bureau a participant in exchanges where it is not a foreign partner’s direct interlocutor. In 2011, MPS personnel visited French forensic police organs to learn about such topics as the use of DNA databases, then in its infancy in China. While the PRC delegation was affiliated with the MPS Physical Evidence Identification Centre (物证鉴定中心) and local-level analogues, its leader, the centre’s then-party secretary, has a decades-long association with the 1st Bureau. 

4 Conclusion

By restoring the MPS core unit’s name, the party reasserted the ministry’s identity as the PRC’s main state security organ. The stress on political protection was likely motivated by challenges to totalitarian rule in Hong Kong. This new emphasis was an intensification of unbroken party policy, rather than a Xiist novum: even while euphemistically named, the bureau’s purview continued to include the classic secret police functions that defined its establishment.

The Leninist tradition had repeatedly invoked the concept of political protection to label the pacification of unruly domains, beginning with the Soviet agencies the MPS’s predecessors learnt from. It rhymes with Moscow dispatching a political protection operative to oversee the CCP’s birth that, 99 years later, Leninism’s new centre would appoint Political Security Protection Bureau cadre to manage a state security organ pacifying newly absorbed territory.

Cooperation with the MPS enlists foreign state institutions as ancillary executors of political security protection work. Classic propaganda tactics wrap efforts to extend the security apparatus’ international reach in rhetoric palatable to Western politicians and officials. The ministry’s external portrayal as a law-enforcement agency analogous to those subordinate to democratic governments is a mode of this ‘good-cop’ tactic. In another mode, ‘friendship’ as a euphemism for submission frames aspects of the 1st Bureau’s engagement with officials appointed to serve constituents in

89Johnson, "The east rises...", section 4.
90Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar, "China’s Security Activities Extend beyond Asia", Strategic file 18.81 (Nov. 2015), Polish Institute of International Affairs.
91The Centre was known as the MPS 2nd Research Institute until 1996 (“公安部内设机构沿革”；“国家级司法鉴定机构公布 负责人就遴选工作答问”, 中央政府门户网站, 22nd Oct. 2010; pace Tanner, op. cit.). As an example of the Centre’s continuing interest in the subject, a recent MPS-cofunded study had a coauthor from the Centre’s analogue under the Tibet Public Security Department, who was responsible for sample collection (Hui Li et al., "Concordance and characterization of massively parallel sequencing at 58 STRs in a Tibetan population", Molecular Genetics & Genomic Medicine 9.4 [2021]).
democratic politics. ‘Friendship’ and ‘cooperation’ likewise framed earlier efforts to protect and extend Leninist political security, such as the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia.

In addition to a renewed stress on political security, the shedding of the 1st Bureau’s ‘domestic’ name could point to a stronger role in the party’s external influence work.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Alex Joske and Martin Hála for helpful comments and discussion on early drafts of this paper. Joske, Matthew Johnson and Tobiáš Lipold kindly shared relevant sources. Wu Lebao generously contributed a photograph taken inside public security facilities. Responsibility for lingering errors lies solely with the authors.

Sinopsis is a project implemented by the non-profit association AcaMedia z.ú., in scholarly collaboration with the Department of Sinology at Charles University in Prague. The Estonian Foreign Policy Institute (EFPI) at the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS), a foreign policy, security and defence think tank, coorganised the 2021 edition of Mapping China’s footprint in the world, the annual Sinopsis research workshop.