



**CENTRE FOR  
ASIAN AFFAIRS**  
University of Lodz

**CAA PAPERS**

## **CHINA'S PERIPHERAL DIPLOMACY AND THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL: A BILATERAL DOCUMENT ANALYSIS**

---

**Dominik Mierzejewski**  
**Weronika Wiszniewiecka**  
March 2026

## SUMMARY

This policy brief analyses how the United Nations (UN), particularly the UN Security Council (UNSC), is embedded in China's bilateral diplomacy, with a focus on neighbouring states. Drawing on a keyword-in-context (KWIC) analysis of 894 bilateral documents, it finds that UN references are far more likely to appear in security-related contexts in China's relations with its neighbours than with more distant partners. Among land neighbours, nearly all UN mentions are framed in security terms, and references to the UNSC are proportionally higher than in other bilateral engagements. However, the UNSC is rarely treated as an operational tool for crisis management. Instead, it is framed primarily as a source of legal legitimacy, institutional authority, and reform discourse. In practice, security governance is shifted to regional organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, ASEAN-led mechanisms, and bilateral arrangements. Maritime disputes in Southeast Asia, for example, are anchored in UNCLOS and the DOC/COC process rather than in the UNSC. The findings suggest that China selectively redefines the role of the UNSC: it accepts the Council as a legitimising institution. Still, it avoids using it to govern its immediate neighbourhood, favouring regionalised and consensus-based security arrangements instead.

**This policy brief was prepared within the framework of the research project "Redefinition of Multilateralism through Relationality: Chinese Diplomacy in the United Nations." The project is funded by the National Science Centre, Poland (Narodowe Centrum Nauki) under grant UMO-2024/53/B/HS5/02879.**

## KEY FINDINGS

- The security agenda is more frequent in China's bilateral relations with its neighbours than in other bilateral engagements. This pattern suggests that "hard" issues such as security, stability, sanctions, sovereignty, and non-intervention are structurally embedded in discourse on China's regional environment rather than being positioned as the global governance agenda.
- The empirical data, especially regarding framing the UN and the UNSC, suggest that the United Nations serves as a functional instrument of China's *peripheral diplomacy* in the security domain. By signalling through bilateral documents with China's neighbors, Beijing limits the role of international organisations and limits the UN's mandate in China's neighborhood.
- Across bilateral documents, the UN Security Council is systematically framed as a source of legitimacy and institutional order rather than as an operational security mechanism, with China preferring regional organisations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, bilateral agreements, and selective legal references like discussion over Code of Conduct in South China Sea to manage security while avoiding sanctions, enforcement, or UNSC-mandated programs – internationalization of China's territorial disputes.
- In maritime domains through bilateral declarations with maritime neighbors China persuade that the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea are consistent with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), meaning China's attempt to reshape the regional order equals international law.

## INTRODUCTION

The US partial withdrawal from the United Nations marks more than a financial or administrative adjustment. It signals a broader shift in the political economy of multilateralism, altering the balance of influence within UN institutions and reshaping the strategic environment in which other major powers operate. The paper advances three interrelated questions. First, is the UN more frequently embedded in security frames in China's relations with neighbouring states than with more distant partners? Second, do references to the UNSC cluster around China's periphery, effectively channelling security issues into an institutional arena where China enjoys structural advantages? By situating China's bilateral UN discourse against the backdrop of U.S. withdrawal and institutional review, this paper contributes to broader debates on the transformation of multilateralism. It argues that, in the security domain, the UN, particularly the UNSC, functions not merely as a global forum, but as a key instrument of China's *peripheral diplomacy*: a mechanism for disciplining security debates, constraining unilateral action, and stabilising China's immediate environment under increasingly favourable institutional conditions<sup>1</sup>.

## DATA AND METHODS

Existing scholarship has broadly examined China's role in the UN through voting behaviour, leadership positions, or norm contestation in global forums. Much less attention has been paid to how the UN is embedded in China's bilateral diplomacy and, crucially, to how references to the UN are conditioned by issue framing and geographic proximity. This paper addresses that gap by examining how and when the UN appears in

---

<sup>1</sup> China's peripheral (neighbourhood) diplomacy prioritises stable and cooperative relations with countries along China's borders as the foundation of its security and development strategy. Since the 2013 neighbourhood diplomacy conference under Xi Jinping, Beijing has framed its approach around "amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness". Southeast Asia, particularly engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, has become the core testing ground for combining economic integration with crisis-management mechanisms. Over time, the strategy has shifted from defensive stabilisation of China's borders to proactive regional order-shaping through connectivity, supply-chain integration, and security coordination. In the context of intensifying U.S.–China rivalry, peripheral diplomacy functions as a geographic consolidation strategy that anchors China's influence in its immediate neighbourhood while limiting external strategic pressure.

China's bilateral documents, with particular attention to security-related discourse and explicit references to the UN Security Council (UNSC).

Empirically, the study analyses keyword-in-context (KWIC) data from Chinese bilateral documents, enabling the systematic identification of UN-related references and their surrounding discursive frames. The analysis focuses on two core dimensions.

The empirical basis of the study is a keyword-in-context (KWIC) table generated in MAXQDA for the search term "UN / 联合国" across the corpus of 894 Chinese bilateral documents. The unit of analysis is a single KWIC row as transferred to Excel: each row captures one occurrence of the keyword and its immediate textual neighbourhood. We treat each KWIC row as one UN mention.

This choice is analytically consequential. It standardises the unit across heterogeneous documents (different lengths, formats, and genres) and enables systematic comparisons across partner groups. It also avoids overcounting long documents by focusing on discrete occurrences rather than document-level presence/absence<sup>2</sup>.

**Operational rule:**

- 1 KWIC row = 1 mention, regardless of whether multiple mentions occur in the same document.
- If multiple keyword hits occur near each other, they remain separate mentions *unless* MAXQDA merges them into one KWIC row (in which case the merged row remains one mention by construction).

---

<sup>2</sup> Artificial intelligence tools (ChatGPT, OpenAI) were used in the preparation of this manuscript solely for language proofreading and clarification of English expression. The authors takes full responsibility for the content, interpretation, and conclusions presented in the article.

### Identifying the security frame (dictionary-based coding)

The core dependent dimension is whether a UN mention appears inside a security frame. We operationalise “security framing” using a multilingual keyword dictionary (PL/EN/ZH) applied to the KWIC context window around the keyword “UN”/“联合国”.

A mention is coded as Security frame = 1 if the KWIC context contains one or more security-related keywords. The dictionary includes (illustrative, not exhaustive) terms such as:

- English: *security, peace, peacekeeping, counterterrorism, stability, sanctions, sovereignty, non-interference*
- Chinese: *安全, 和平, 维和, 反恐, 稳定, 制裁, 主权, 不干涉*
- Plus institutional security keyword: *安理会* (Security Council)

### QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: PERIPHERY MATTERS

The table shows that land neighbours account for a high concentration of UN-related references in China’s bilateral documents. Among these states, almost all UN mentions appear in security-related contexts (452 out of 477 mentions; 94.8%). References to the UN Security Council are also more frequent in this group (197 mentions; 41.3% of all UN references), and constitute a substantial share of security-framed mentions (43.6%). By contrast, non-neighbouring states display lower proportions across all indicators (86.5% security-framed mentions; 26.0% UNSC-related mentions; 30.0% UNSC within security).

*Table 1 Distribution of UN Mentions by Country Category and Security Framing*

Variable	Land Neighbours	Other Countries
<b>Share of the security frame</b>	94.8%	86.5%
<b>Share of UNSC in all mentions</b>	41.3%	26.0%
<b>Share of the UNSC in security</b>	43.6%	30.0%
<b>Mentions with UNSC</b>	197	280
<b>Number of UN mentions</b>	477	1077
<b>Mentions in the security frame</b>	452	932

Source: see below

**Table 2 Distribution of UN Mentions by Country Category and Security Framing**

Variable	Land+Maritime Neighbours	Other Countries
Share of the security frame	94.1%	85.6%
Share of UNSC in all mentions	34.3%	28.2%
Share of the UNSC in security	36.4%	33.0%

*Explanation how the ratio was calculated: we used data collections of 894 Chinese bilateral documents and used AI model with prompts as follow: (1) normalize country names and classify neighbors; (2) detect security-related content using bilingual keyword lists; (3) identify explicit UNSC references; (4) aggregate counts and percentages by country and group; (5) generate comparative tables. This process produced a standardised comparison clarifying how land neighbours disproportionately drive the high frequency of security-framed UN and UNSC references in China's bilateral diplomacy*

## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: DIFFERENCES AMONG NEIGHBOURS

- **Afghanistan**

In joint documents signed between Beijing and Afghanistan, it is framed not as a Security Council problem but as a regional reconstruction and humanitarian governance challenge, with legitimacy and technical support provided through specialised agencies. As observed in the bilateral document, the UN appears only with other multilateral institutions<sup>3</sup>. More to the point, what is essential is the role the UN SC played, not in bilateral documents, but in papers signed with other powers regarding the situation in Afghanistan, like with Brazil, Iran, and Russia in 2025 or 2023<sup>4</sup>. In this area, China seeks to form a coalition to be ready to adopt a more assertive position on Western approaches

<sup>3</sup> China-Afghanistan. 2016. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó hé āfùhàn yīslán gònghéguó liánhé shēngmíng (quánwén)* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan [Full Text]) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676207/1207\\_676219/201605/t20160518\\_9284948.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676207/1207_676219/201605/t20160518_9284948.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>4</sup> China-Russia-Brazil-Iran. 2023. *Dì èr cì zhōng é bā yī sīguó wàizhǎng āfùhàn wèntí fēi zhèngshì huìyì liánhé shēng* (Joint Statement of the Second Informal Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of China, Russia, Pakistan, and Iran on the Afghan Issue) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/1179\\_674909/202304/t20230414\\_11059049.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/1179_674909/202304/t20230414_11059049.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

to resolving Afghan problems: “politicisation and double standards must be avoided, as this is crucial to comprehensively advancing the resolution of the Afghan issue”<sup>5</sup>.

- **India**

China’s joint documents with India position the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, as a central arena for institutional reform, status recognition, and coordination among major developing powers. India is framed as a legitimate claimant to enhanced influence within the UN system, including the Security Council, while China carefully balances discursive support with institutional ambiguity. The UNSC appears not as a crisis-management or enforcement body, but as a forum for reform, multilateral legitimacy, and collective action on terrorism, arms control, and non-proliferation. But this approach was previously presented, as evidenced by joint documents from 2006 and 2010<sup>6</sup>. Since then, as revealed by the Chinese MFA, no bilateral document has been negotiated; only China and India have signed documents in a trilateral format with Russia, or under the umbrella of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation or BRICS.

- **Kazakhstan**

China and Kazakhstan frame the United Nations as a central platform for sustained multilateral cooperation and strategic stability. They underline their good cooperation within international organisations such as the UN and stress coordination within broader multilateral frameworks, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). the UN General Assembly, regional mechanisms such as the SCO, and a United Nations

---

<sup>5</sup> China-Russia-Brazil-Iran. 2025. *Dì sì cì zhōng é bā yī sīguó wàizhǎng āfùhàn wèntí fēi zhèngshì huìyì liánhé shēngmíng* (Joint Statement of the Fourth Informal Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of China, Russia, Pakistan, and Iran on the Afghan Question)

[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/1179\\_674909/202509/t20250926\\_11717791.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/1179_674909/202509/t20250926_11717791.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>6</sup> China-India. 2006. *Zhōngguó hé yìndù fābiǎo “liánhé xuānyán”(quánwén)* China and India issue a joint declaration (full text)

[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677220/1207\\_677232/200611/t20061122\\_8008740.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677220/1207_677232/200611/t20061122_8008740.shtml) and China-India. 2010. *Zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó hé yìndù gònghéguó liánhé gōngbào* (Joint Communiqué of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India)

[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677220/1207\\_677232/201012/t20101216\\_8008748.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677220/1207_677232/201012/t20101216_8008748.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

Sustainable Development Centre for Central Asia and Afghanistan in Almaty<sup>7</sup>. The UN Charter serves as the foundational legal framework for maintaining international peace and security. At the same time, both sides reaffirm their commitment to strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and fully implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1540<sup>8</sup>. They also emphasise the importance of relevant UN General Assembly resolutions concerning missile defence limitations and highlight the growing urgency of preventing an arms race in outer space, linking UN norms to global strategic balance and stability, regarding the UN Security Council (UNSC), China and Kazakhstan support “reasonable and necessary” reforms to enable the Council better to fulfil its primary responsibility under the UN Charter. Reform, however, must proceed through broad democratic discussions and seek the widest possible consensus on a comprehensive “package” proposal that balances the interests of all parties. This reflects a clear preference for negotiated, inclusive adjustment rather than unilateral restructuring. At the same time, the two sides present the SCO as an effective complementary mechanism for safeguarding regional security and promoting economic and people-to-people cooperation, reinforcing the idea that UN-centred global governance and regional multilateralism operate in parallel to maintain stability and advance common development.

- **Kyrgyzstan**

Regarding the UN Security Council (UNSC), both sides support reform but insist that relevant parties should continue consultations based on consensus to find a comprehensive “package solution” that accommodates each other’s interests and

---

<sup>7</sup> China-Kazakhstan. 2024. *Zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó hé hāsàkè sītǎn gònghéguó liánhé shēngmíng* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Kazakhstan) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676500/1207\\_676512/202407/t20240703\\_11446684.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676500/1207_676512/202407/t20240703_11446684.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>8</sup> China-Kazakhstan. 2018. *Zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó hé hāsàkè sītǎn gònghéguó liánhé shēngmíng (quánwén)* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Kazakhstan [Full Text]) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676500/1207\\_676512/201706/t20170608\\_9292009.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676500/1207_676512/201706/t20170608_9292009.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

achieves the broadest possible consensus<sup>9</sup>. This position reflects earlier commitments, including the Joint Declaration on Reforming the United Nations Security Council signed on May 18, 2014. Reform is thus framed as necessary but strictly consensus-driven. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan's active engagement within multilateral institutions, such as during its chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, is presented as evidence of its readiness to contribute constructively to regional and global governance, including within the UN framework. Moreover, in 2023, Kyrgyzstan supported China's Global Security Initiative without mentioning the Security Council<sup>10</sup>. This positions the Council not only as a site of reform debate but also as a platform for regional voice and diplomatic partnership. They support the UN General Assembly resolution on "Promoting international cooperation on the peaceful uses in the context of international security," ensuring that developing countries thoroughly enjoy their right to the peaceful use of science and technology<sup>11</sup>.

- **Laos**

In China's discourse on Laos, the United Nations Security Council is absent mainly as a reference point. China and Laos frame the United Nations as the normative foundation of their bilateral and regional engagement. They explicitly affirm that "the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter" shall serve as fundamental guidelines for bilateral relations, thereby placing the UN Charter at the centre of their diplomatic conduct. This commitment is reinforced through references to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, and universally recognised norms of international law, all of which are presented as complementary legal and moral frameworks. Together, these principles underscore

---

<sup>9</sup> China-Kirgistan. 2023. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó hé hāsàkè sītǎn gònghéguó liánhé shēngmíng* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Kazakhstan) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676548/1207\\_676560/202305/t20230518\\_11079705.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676548/1207_676560/202305/t20230518_11079705.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>10</sup>China-Kirgistan. 2023. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó hé jī'ěrjísī gònghéguó guānyú jiànlì xīn shídài quánmiàn zhànlüè huòbàn guānxì de liánhé xuānyán (quánwén)* (Joint Declaration of the People's Republic of China and the Kyrgyz Republic on Establishing a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for a New Era [Full Text]) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676548/1207\\_676560/202305/t20230518\\_11079705.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676548/1207_676560/202305/t20230518_11079705.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem.

sovereign equality, non-interference, peaceful dispute settlement, and mutual respect as the core standards guiding their cooperation. Security cooperation is instead conducted through bilateral party-to-party and state-to-state mechanisms, as well as ASEAN- and Mekong-centred subregional platforms. The absence of Security Council references indicates that, for close socialist allies such as Laos, China does not instrumentalise the Council even as a legitimacy arena, relying instead on direct political alignment and alternative global initiatives such as the Global Security Initiative<sup>12</sup>.

- **Mongolia**

Regarding the UN Security Council (UNSC), China and Mongolia agree that reform is necessary to make the Council more transparent, democratic, and representative. They stress that reform should seek consensus through extensive consultations conducted on the basis of equality and fairness. They should fully take into account the interests of developing countries and small and medium-sized states. At the same time, they highlight the need to strengthen cooperation within regional multilateral frameworks to maintain peace and promote common development, noting that organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation play an essential role in fostering regional stability and cooperation alongside the UN framework<sup>13</sup>.

- **Nepal**

China–Nepal bilateral documents consistently frame the United Nations as an important reference point for international cooperation and legitimacy, yet the function of this framing evolves. In the 2009 joint statement, the UN appears mainly within a developmental framework. China refers to commitments made during the United

---

<sup>12</sup> China-Laos. 2023. *Zhōngguó gòngchǎndǎng hé làowō rénmin gémìng dǎng guānyú gòujiàn zhōng lǎo mìngyùn gòngtóngtǐ xíngdòng jìhuà (2024-2028 nián) (quánwén)* Action Plan of the Communist Party of China and the Lao People's Revolutionary Party on Building a China-Laos Community with a Shared Future (2024-2028) (Full Text)

[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676644/1207\\_676656/202310/t20231021\\_11165420.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676644/1207_676656/202310/t20231021_11165420.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>13</sup> China-Mongolia. 2022. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó hé ménggǔ guó guānyú xīn shídài tuījìn quánmiàn zhànlüè huǒbàn guānxi de liánhé shēngmíng* ( Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and Mongolia on Advancing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in the New Era)

[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676740/1207\\_676752/202211/t20221128\\_10981908.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676740/1207_676752/202211/t20221128_10981908.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

Nations High-Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals when announcing the gradual introduction of zero-tariff treatment for 95% of Nepal's exports<sup>14</sup>. Then the framing shifts toward a normative understanding of international order. The document stresses that bilateral relations are conducted in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and the principles of non-interference and sovereign equality. In this context, the UN become embedded within a broader narrative of multilateral cooperation among developing countries<sup>15</sup>. A significant discursive shift appears in the 2024 communiqué, where the UN is referenced in connection with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758. Nepal explicitly recalls the resolution while reaffirming the One-China principle and recognising the government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate representative of China. Taiwan is described as an inseparable part of Chinese territory, and Nepal supports China's efforts toward national reunification<sup>16</sup>.

- **Pakistan**

China and Pakistan frame the United Nations as the primary legal and normative foundation of international order, repeatedly invoking the *UN Charter* and binding Security Council resolutions as authoritative references for dispute settlement and conflict management. They emphasise that relevant Security Council resolutions "are binding and should be effectively implemented," particularly in contexts that require a ceasefire or stabilisation. In this framework, the UN is presented as the legitimate arena for peaceful dispute resolution, opposition to unilateral actions, and the safeguarding of

---

<sup>14</sup> China-Nepal. 2009. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó hé nǐbó'ěr liánbāng mínzhǔ gònghéguó liánhé shēngmíng (quánwén)* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal [Full Text])

[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676812/1207\\_676824/200912/t20091231\\_7990821.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676812/1207_676824/200912/t20091231_7990821.shtml) [accessed March 16, 2026].

<sup>15</sup> China-Nepal. 2016. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó hé nǐbó'ěr liánhé shēngmíng* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and Nepal)

[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676812/1207\\_676824/201603/t20160323\\_7990823.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676812/1207_676824/201603/t20160323_7990823.shtml) [accessed March 16, 2026].

<sup>16</sup> China-Nepal. 2024. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó hé nǐbó'ěr liánhé shēngmíng (quánwén)* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and Nepal [Full Text]) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676812/1207\\_676824/202412/t20241218\\_11497221.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676812/1207_676824/202412/t20241218_11497221.shtml) [accessed March 16, 2026].

international fairness and justice. This legalistic framing extends to sensitive territorial disputes, including Kashmir, which China describes as a historical issue that should be resolved peacefully in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant Security Council resolutions, and bilateral agreements<sup>17</sup>. The UN Security Council (UNSC) is portrayed as both a responsibility-bearing institution and a strategic platform for coordination among the Global South. Pakistan's non-permanent membership (2025–2026) and its presidency of the Council are framed as opportunities to deepen bilateral coordination in multilateral forums and to safeguard the common interests of developing countries. In discussions on Afghanistan, both sides argue that relevant Security Council members should assume responsibility for reconstruction and humanitarian assistance, thereby broadening the Council's mandate beyond narrow security concerns. On reform, China and Pakistan support strengthening the United Nations and its Security Council to better fulfil responsibilities under the Charter, while insisting that reform should enhance the representation and voice of developing countries and proceed through extensive consultations to reach a comprehensive solution acceptable to all parties.

- **Tajikistan**

China and Tajikistan frame the United Nations as the core guarantor of international peace, sovereign equality, and the rule of law. They oppose the use or threat of force outside UN authorisation and reject attempts by any state or group of states to monopolise global or regional affairs. In this context, they stress the imperative to uphold unconditionally and strictly observe foundational arms-control agreements, describing the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty as a cornerstone of strategic stability and a basis for further reductions in strategic offensive arms. The UN system is thus portrayed as the primary framework for maintaining global security and preventing unilateral military dominance. Regarding the UN Security Council (UNSC), both sides support reform but

---

<sup>17</sup> For example China-Pakistan. 2026. *Zhōngguó hé bājīsītǎn dì qī cì wàizhǎng zhànlüè duìhuà liánhé xīnwén gōngbào* (Joint Press Communiqué of the Seventh Strategic Dialogue between the Foreign Ministers of China and Pakistan) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/1179\\_674909/202601/t20260105\\_11806393.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/1179_674909/202601/t20260105_11806393.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

insist it must prioritise increasing the representation of developing countries, giving more small and medium-sized nations a voice in decision-making. Reform should proceed through extensive democratic consultations and result in a comprehensive “package solution” capable of achieving the broadest possible consensus. At the same time, they reaffirm the Council’s vital role in safeguarding world peace and security, advocating adjustments that enhance inclusivity while preserving institutional authority and unity.

- **Vietnam**

China and Vietnam frame the United Nations as a central pillar of multilateral coordination while embedding it within a broader regional security architecture. Both sides agree to strengthen cooperation within the United Nations, alongside mechanisms such as China-ASEAN, ASEAN-China-Japan-Korea, and APEC, and to maintain close communication on regional and global security affairs<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, the UN platform was seen as part of efforts to combat non-traditional security threats such as corruption and online crime<sup>19</sup>. Bilaterally, to secure the basic principles of the UN Charter, they deepen cooperation through party-to-party relations, as a priority, then ministerial and vice-ministerial security dialogues, enhanced intelligence sharing, counter-terrorism coordination, and joint efforts to combat cross-border crime<sup>20</sup>. International law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), is explicitly invoked as a guiding framework for addressing maritime disputes. In this context, both sides reaffirm the importance of fully and effectively implementing the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea and working toward a practical and

---

<sup>18</sup> China-Vietnam. 2024. *Zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó hé yuènnán shèhuì zhǔyì gònghéguó guānyú chíxù shēnhuà quánmiàn zhànlüè hézuò huòbàn guānxì, jiākuài gòujiàn jùyǒu zhànlüè yìyì de zhōngyuè míngyùn gòngtóngtǐ de liánhé shēngmíng* (Joint Statement between the People’s Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on Continuing to Deepen the Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership and Accelerating the Building of a China-Vietnam Community with a Shared Future of Strategic Significance) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677292/1207\\_677304/202504/t20250415\\_11594984.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677292/1207_677304/202504/t20250415_11594984.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> China-Vietnam. 2011. *Zhōngyuè shuāngbiān zhòngyào wénjiàn* (Important bilateral documents between China and Vietnam) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677292/1207\\_677304/201105/t20110511\\_9308636.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677292/1207_677304/201105/t20110511_9308636.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, consistent with international law, including UNCLOS, while refraining from actions that could complicate or escalate tensions. Interestingly, the joint declaration in 2022 indicated that the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea are consistent with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), meaning China's regional order equals international law<sup>21</sup>. By contrast, the UN Security Council is largely absent from maritime security discussions. The UN Security Council (UNSC) was only mentioned in a joint document signed between 2005 and 2008. China and Vietnam emphasise that their roles, authorities, and efficiency should be enhanced to safeguard world peace and security, address emerging threats, and promote the common development of member states. Reform should proceed from the long-term interests of the United Nations, adhere to the principle of democratisation in international relations, and increase the representation of developing countries through extensive consultations. Solutions must balance the interests of all parties and be achieved through consensus<sup>22</sup>. China's support for Vietnam's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council further underscores its commitment to coordination within the UN framework. The most striking was the cooperation between military forces with deep exchanges of experience in United Nations peacekeeping operations and in party-building and political work within the armed forces<sup>23</sup>.

- **Brunei**

China and Brunei frame the United Nations and international law as the foundational framework for regional peace, maritime stability, and multilateral cooperation. Both sides

---

<sup>21</sup> China-Vietnam. 2022. *Guānyú jìnyībù jiāqiáng hé shēnhuà zhōngguó quánmiàn zhànlüè hézuò huǒbàn guānxì de liánhé shēngmíng* (Joint Statement on Further Strengthening and Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership between China and Vietnam) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677292/1207\\_677304/202211/t20221102\\_10795594.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677292/1207_677304/202211/t20221102_10795594.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>22</sup> China-Vietnam. 2011. op.cit.

<sup>23</sup> China-Vietnam. 2015. *Zhōngguó liánhé shēngmíng (quánwén)* (China-Vietnam Joint Statement [Full Text]) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677292/1207\\_677304/201511/t20151106\\_8012258.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677292/1207_677304/201511/t20151106_8012258.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

emphasise that territorial and jurisdictional disputes should be resolved through peaceful dialogue and consultation by the directly concerned sovereign states, in accordance with recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). They reaffirm their commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), highlighting the importance of maintaining regional peace, stability, and security, enhancing mutual trust, and strengthening cooperation. In this context, UNCLOS and the DOC are presented as complementary legal and political instruments guiding responsible maritime governance<sup>24</sup>. Beyond naval issues, both sides maintain communication on broader global matters such as UN Security Council reform and climate change, situating their bilateral partnership within a wider multilateral framework. They jointly uphold multilateralism, resist protectionism, safeguard the multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organisation at its core, and promote open, inclusive, and mutually beneficial economic growth<sup>25</sup>. While their references to the UN Security Council (UNSC) are less detailed, their engagement in reform discussions signals a shared interest in strengthening the Council's effectiveness within a multilateral, law-based order.

- **Indonesia**

China and Indonesia frame the United Nations and international law as the foundational pillars of maritime stability, sovereign equality, and multilateral cooperation. Both sides recognise ASEAN's role in promoting maritime security and enhancing mutual trust in the South China Sea in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). They reaffirm their commitment to

---

<sup>24</sup> China-Brunei. 2020. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó héwén lái dá lǚ sà lán guó zhèngfǔ jiān liánhé zhǐdǎo wěiyuánhùi shǒuci huìyì liánhé xīnwén gǎo* (Joint Press Release on the First Meeting of the Intergovernmental Joint Steering Committee between the People's Republic of China and Brunei Darussalam) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677004/1207\\_677016/202001/t20200122\\_8002599.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677004/1207_677016/202001/t20200122_8002599.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>25</sup> China-Brunei. 2019. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó héwén lái dá lǚ sà lán guó liánhé shēngmíng* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and Brunei Darussalam) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677004/1207\\_677016/201908/t20190823\\_9305005.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677004/1207_677016/201908/t20190823_9305005.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

maintaining freedom of navigation and overflight, exercising self-restraint, and refraining from actions that could complicate or escalate tensions. In commemorating milestones such as the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and the Bandung Conference, the two countries situate their partnership within a broader historical commitment to the principles of the UN Charter, sovereign equality, and peaceful coexistence<sup>26</sup>. Regarding the UN Security Council (UNSC), China and Indonesia support reform to enable the Council to fulfil its mandate to maintain international peace and security, as mandated by the UN Charter. Reform should proceed through democratic and patient consultations, seeking a comprehensive “package” solution to all issues involved and advancing in a direction that safeguards the overall interests of the United Nations and the unity of its Member States<sup>27</sup>. But this was only mentioned in the 2013 declaration. Crucially, maritime security and the South China Sea are systematically displaced away from the UNSC and anchored instead in UNCLOS, DOC/COC negotiations, and ASEAN-led mechanisms. In terms of hard security, Indonesia is the only Southeast Asian case in your corpus to feature nuclear and missile-related issues. Yet, they are framed normatively: support for the SEANWFZ, respect for arms-control treaties, and the stabilising role of the ABM Treaty. These references serve to reinforce strategic restraint and legal order, not to justify coercive UNSC action<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, like Malaysia, Beijing and Jakarta expressed strong support for Palestine’s full membership in the United Nations. They reiterated their commitment to advancing the implementation of United Nations

<sup>26</sup> China-Indonesia. 2023. *Zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó hé yìn dù ní xī yǎ gònghéguó guānyú shēnhuà quán fāngwèi zhànlüè hézuò de liánhé shēngmíng (quánwén)* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Indonesia on Deepening All-Round Strategic Cooperation [Full Text]) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677244/1207\\_677256/202310/t20231018\\_11163274.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677244/1207_677256/202310/t20231018_11163274.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>27</sup> China-Indonesia. 2013. *Zhōng yìnní quánmiàn zhànlüè huǒbàn guānxì wèilái guīhuà (quánwén)* (Future Plans for the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between China and Indonesia (Full Text)) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677244/1207\\_677256/201310/t20131004\\_8010704.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677244/1207_677256/201310/t20131004_8010704.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>28</sup> China-Indonesia. 2024. *Zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó hé yìn dù ní xī yǎ gònghéguó guānyú tuījìn quánmiàn zhànlüè huǒbàn guānxì hé zhōng yìnní míngyùn gòngtóngtǐ jiànshè de liánhé shēngmíng (quánwén)* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Indonesia on Advancing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and Building a China-Indonesia Community with a Shared Future [Full Text]) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_677244/1207\\_677256/202412/t20241218\\_11497865.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_677244/1207_677256/202412/t20241218_11497865.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

General Assembly Resolution A/RES/ES-10/24, adopted at the Tenth Emergency Special Session<sup>29</sup>.

- **Malaysia**

China and Malaysia frame the United Nations as the principal arena for advancing multilateralism, peaceful dispute settlement, and strategic stability. Both sides call for the Security Council to reconsider Palestine's application for full UN membership in accordance with General Assembly Resolution A/RES/ES-10/23 and fully support the resumption of a political settlement based on the two-state solution, aiming for a comprehensive, just, and lasting resolution<sup>30</sup>. They reaffirm the importance of resolving international disputes peacefully and of promoting confidence-building in the Asia-Pacific and globally. Arms-control agreements, including the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, are described as vital to maintaining international peace, security, and strategic stability, and both sides stress the need to uphold and strengthen universally effective norms on arms reduction<sup>31</sup>. Beyond traditional security, cooperation extends to digital governance, with both countries supporting multilateral platforms open to all states as the most effective way to address digital security challenges and promote inclusive global digital development.

Only in 2005, regarding the UN Security Council (UNSC), China and Malaysia emphasised constructive cooperation during Malaysia's tenure as a non-permanent member,

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>30</sup> China-Malaysia. 2024. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó zhèngfǔ hé mǎláixīyà zhèngfǔ guānyú shēnhuà tíshēng quánmiàn zhànlüè huòbàn guānxi, gòng jiàn zhōng mǎ míngyùn gòngtóngtǐ de liánhé shēngmíng (quánwén)* (Joint Statement between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Malaysia on Deepening and Upgrading the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and Building a China-Malaysia Community with a Shared Future [Full Text]) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676716/1207\\_676728/202406/t20240620\\_11439039.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676716/1207_676728/202406/t20240620_11439039.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>31</sup> China-Malaysia. 2025. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó hé mǎláixīyà guānyú gòujiàn gāo shuǐpíng zhànlüè xìng zhōng mǎ míngyùn gòngtóngtǐ de liánhé shēngmíng* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and Malaysia on Building a High-Level Strategic China-Malaysia Community with a Shared Future) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676716/1207\\_676728/202504/t20250417\\_11595807.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676716/1207_676728/202504/t20250417_11595807.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

highlighting shared responsibility for maintaining peace and security<sup>32</sup>. Both sides support reform aimed at enhancing the UN's role, authority, and efficiency, notably the Council's capacity to respond to emerging challenges. Reform should proceed from the long-term interests of the United Nations, guided by the democratisation of international relations, and prioritise increasing the representation of developing countries through extensive consultations. Solutions must balance the interests of all parties and preserve institutional unity<sup>33</sup>. Regional security questions, especially those in the South China Sea, are systematically excluded from the UNSC's domain. They are instead anchored in UNCLOS, ASEAN-led mechanisms (DOC/COC), and bilateral maritime dialogue, accompanied by explicit warnings against the involvement of "non-directly concerned parties."<sup>34</sup>

- **The Philippines**

China and the Philippines frame the United Nations and international law as the central normative framework for managing disputes and sustaining multilateral cooperation. Both sides reaffirm their commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, and other universally recognised principles of international law<sup>35</sup>. They emphasise that territorial and maritime disputes should be resolved peacefully through consultation and negotiation between directly concerned

---

<sup>32</sup> China-Malaysia. 2016. *Zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó hé mǎ lái xī yǎ liánhé xīnwén shēngmíng (quánwén)* (Joint Press Statement between the People's Republic of China and Malaysia (Full Text)) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676716/1207\\_676728/201611/t20161103\\_7985412.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676716/1207_676728/201611/t20161103_7985412.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>33</sup> China-Malaysia. 2005. *Zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó hé mǎ lái xī yǎ liánhé gōngbào (quánwén)* (Joint Communiqué between the People's Republic of China and Malaysia [Full Text]) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676716/1207\\_676728/200512/t20051215\\_9298174.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676716/1207_676728/200512/t20051215_9298174.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>34</sup> China-Malaysia. 2024. Op. Cit.

<sup>35</sup> China-The Philippines. 2015. *Zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó wàijiāo bù guānyú yìng fēilùbīn gònghéguó qǐngqiú jiànli de nánhǎi zhòngcái àn zhòngcái tíng guānyú guǎnxiá quán hàn kě shòulǐ xìng wèntí cáijué de shēngmíng* (Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China on the Award of the Arbitral Tribunal Established at the Request of the Republic of the Philippines in the South China Sea Arbitration Case Regarding Jurisdiction and Admissibility) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676452/1207\\_676464/201510/t20151030\\_7977737.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676452/1207_676464/201510/t20151030_7977737.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

sovereign states, and reaffirm the importance of fully and effectively implementing the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC), while advancing consultations on a Code of Conduct. China reiterates its position regarding dispute settlement under UNCLOS, asserting its right to choose methods of resolution independently and rejecting compulsory arbitration in some instances, while stressing that negotiations should be conducted in good faith<sup>36</sup>. China supported its position by citing historical records, e.g., Indonesian Foreign Minister Malik's statement. Since "we recognise that there is only one China," he said, "this means that, for us, these islands belong to the People's Republic of China."<sup>37</sup>

In the broader multilateral sphere, both sides support strengthening multilateralism and open regionalism, including cooperation among developing countries to promote a fair and balanced global trade system. They agree to enhance communication on the Global Security Initiative and explore practical cooperation within its framework. Regarding the UN Security Council (UNSC) and UN reform, both sides advocate necessary and reasonable reforms to enhance the role, authority, and effectiveness of the United Nations. Reform should prioritise development issues, safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries, and increase their voice and representation in international affairs, including within the Security Council<sup>38</sup>.

Across joint statements and extensive Ministry of Foreign Affairs position papers, the UNSC is absent from discussions of the South China Sea. Instead, disputes are framed as sovereignty and maritime delimitation issues to be resolved exclusively through bilateral

---

<sup>36</sup> China-The Philippines. 2024. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó wàijiāo bù guānyú fēilùbīn gònghéguó chūtái "hǎiyáng qūyù fǎ" hé "qúndǎo hǎidào fǎ" de shēngmíng* ( Statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China regarding the enactment of the "Marine Area Law" and the "Archipelago Maritime Law" by the Republic of the Philippines ) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/1179\\_674909/202411/t20241108\\_11523583.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/1179_674909/202411/t20241108_11523583.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>37</sup> China-The Philippines. 2016. *Zhōnghuá rénmin gònghéguó yǔ fēilùbīn gònghéguó liánhé shēngmíng* (Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of the Philippines) [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676452/1207\\_676464/201610/t20161021\\_9290946.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676452/1207_676464/201610/t20161021_9290946.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem.

negotiations and ASEAN-centred mechanisms, notably the DOC and the prospective Code of Conduct (COC). International law occupies a central place, but its function is deliberately constrained. Moreover, it allows China to accuse the Philippines of violating the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and seriously infringing upon China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests<sup>39</sup>. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the UN Charter are repeatedly invoked to legitimise negotiation, restraint, and peaceful settlement. In contrast, third-party adjudication and compulsory dispute settlement, including arbitration and any role for UN bodies, are explicitly rejected. The exercise of Security Council functions is even cited as an area excluded from compulsory dispute settlement, as stated in the Position Document. China firmly believes that friendly consultations and negotiations between the directly concerned sovereign states constitute the most effective means of peacefully resolving maritime disputes between China and its neighbouring countries.<sup>40</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Across China's neighbourhood diplomacy, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is not treated as a uniform or automatic instrument of security governance. Instead, China and its neighbouring states assign the Council differentiated, highly selective roles, revealing a deliberate separation between global legitimacy and regional governance.

First, the UNSC is rarely used as an operational security tool in China's neighbourhood. With the notable exception of Pakistan, the Council does not function as a venue for crisis management, enforcement, or dispute settlement. Even in contexts of acute insecurity, such as Afghanistan, terrorism, or maritime disputes, the UNSC is systematically

---

<sup>39</sup> China-The Philippines. 2014. *Zhōnghuá rénmín gònghéguó zhèngfǔ guānyú fēilùbīn gònghéguó suǒ tí nánhǎi zhòngcái àn guǎnxiá quán wèntí de lichǎng wénjiàn* ( Position Paper of the Government of the People's Republic of China on the Jurisdiction of the South China Sea Arbitration Case Initiated by the Republic of the Philippines )

[https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gj\\_676203/yz\\_676205/1206\\_676452/1207\\_676464/201412/t20141207\\_7977735.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gj_676203/yz_676205/1206_676452/1207_676464/201412/t20141207_7977735.shtml) [accessed February 18, 2026].

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

marginalised. This pattern suggests that proximity to China's core interests correlates with a declining willingness to internationalise security through the Council.

Second, the UNSC is most consistently framed as a source of legal and symbolic legitimacy rather than governance capacity. In Central Asian cases (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Mongolia), references to the Council emphasise legality, procedural authority, and consensus-based reform. However, practical security cooperation is displaced to regional mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), or to global treaty regimes (NPT, CTBT). This reflects a clear division of labour: the UNSC anchors norms, while regions deliver policy.

Third, for status-seeking, building reputation, or norm-shaping, the UNSC primarily serves as an arena for representation and institutional reform. China acknowledges their claims to enhanced influence and Global South representation, but avoids translating this discourse into UNSC-based initiatives or mandates. The Council thus becomes a forum for negotiating hierarchy and authority, not for implementing security solutions.

Fourth, in Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, and most starkly the Philippines, the UNSC is excluded from maritime and territorial disputes. International law is embraced, but channelled through UNCLOS, DOC/COC processes, and bilateral consultations.

To sum up, the cross-country comparison demonstrates that China accepts the UNSC outright. Instead, it redefines its function: the Council is acceptable as a constitutional source of legitimacy, reform discourse, and legal authority, but not as a mechanism for governing China's neighbourhood. Security governance is regionalised and insulated from global enforcement. In this sense, China's neighbourhood strategy treats the UNSC less as a manager of local order and more as a distant legitimating institution, acknowledged but deliberately kept at arm's length.



**CENTRE FOR  
ASIAN AFFAIRS**  
University of Lodz

# RESEARCH OPINION ADVICE

FIRST OF THIS KIND UNIVERSITY BASED  
THINK-TANK IN POLAND

OPINION-FORMING UNIT

POLITICAL AND BUSINESS ADVICE

ASIA EXPERIENCED TEAM

[www.osa.uni.lodz.pl](http://www.osa.uni.lodz.pl)

