

Readme

Mapping China's Borderlands: Dashboard, Data Package (V 1.0)

August 2025

This dataset provides a consolidation of information gathered from multiple sources to quantify how China invests in and engages with its land and maritime border neighbors across three dimensions—security, development, and civilization/diplomacy—in an effort to gain influence and shape the regional order. This dashboard was compiled in collaboration between the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) and AidData to identify thirteen indicators across 28 countries sharing maritime or land borders (or close proximity to) the People's Republic China. These data have been showcased in the NBR Dashboard [Mapping China's Borderlands](#).

The data package contains 3 files used to produce figures in the dashboard and provide documentation for researchers:

1. China's Borderland Engagements (mapping_borderlands_data_release_v1.0.xlsx)
2. Codebook for Dataset Variables (mapping_borderlands_codebook.csv)
3. Readme (mapping_borderlands_readme.pdf)

All values contained in these databases are synthesized from raw numbers, transformed to be in 2024 USD constant and mapped to our sectors of interest.

About the Project

The *Mapping China's Borderlands* research project investigates how China invests in, engages with, and deepens its presence within its land and maritime border neighbors in an attempt to reshape its immediate periphery. This research effort constitutes the second phase of NBR's *Mapping China's Strategic Space* project. The first phase defined strategic space as a realm vital to the pursuit of China's national economic and security objectives and to the enduring survival of the Chinese state. Beijing aspires to freely wield its influence and assert its leadership over this realm.

The borderland areas surrounding China's national territory are a critical component of its strategic space. Whereas China's geopolitical horizons stretch globally, its capacity to exercise control and effectively exert its transformative power over the full extent of its desired strategic space is still uncertain. By contrast, the country's contiguous regions, situated in its immediate reach, present opportunities for making use of power and wealth asymmetries—testing out methods that may become trademarks of a future globally dominant China, and laying the ground for an entirely reconfigured Asia. In addition, shaping a cooperative neighborhood appears as the necessary preliminary step toward ensuring that Beijing's global ambitions can eventually come to pass.

The *Mapping China's Borderlands* project examines the practice of Chinese statecraft in the fourteen countries with which it shares a land border (North Korea, Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam) and in six countries with which it shares or claims a maritime border (South Korea, Japan, Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, and Indonesia). Following Beijing's own priorities as defined by the Global Initiatives on Development, Security, and Civilization (GDI, GSI, and GCI), the project's analysis is conducted across the economic, security, and political domains.

The Borderlands Dashboard visually presents data collected on parameters across the three domains to track China's engagement with its borderlands neighbors since 2013, the year when the Chinese party-state began designating them as China's “periphery.”

Due to data licensing agreements, the raw databases that have been used in the report are not shared here. These data can be directly downloaded or solicited from their respective sources. For further information on data sources and any methodological details, please see the original source documentation).

Data were compiled in June 2025 by AidData Senior Policy Specialist Bryan Burgess, please direct questions to bvburgess@aiddata.org.

Citation

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Data Coverage

Year Coverage: 1999-2024¹

Geographical Coverage: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Vietnam.

Database Sources

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Database Field Definitions

This database is organized to capture Chinese engagement with its neighbors across three dimensions— security, development, and civilization.

Variable Name	Full Name	Definition	Year Coverage	Calculation Method Notes
year	Year	Year	1999-2024	
recipient	Recipient	Recipient or partner country name.	1999-2024	
Dimension 1: Security Indicators				
sec_01_arms_transfer_tiv	Official Arms Transfers Committed	Value of total arms transfers committed per year. SIPRI Trend-indicator value (TIV) Millions. Source: SIPRI Arms Transfer Database.	1999-2024	
sec_01_arms_transfer_tiv_delivered	Official Arms Transfers Delivered	Value of total arms transfers delivered per year. SIPRI TIV Millions. Source: SIPRI Arms Transfer Database.	1999-2024	
sec_01_arms_transfer_orders_ct	Official Arms Orders Count	Count of total arms transfers committed per year. Source: SIPRI Arms Transfer Database.	1999-2024	
sec_01_missing_transfertiv	Missing Official Arms Transfer Deliveries	Value of total arms transfers that were not delivered per year. SIPRI TIV Millions. Source: SIPRI Arms Transfer Database.	1999-2024	
sec_02_surveillance_usd	Surveillance Technology and Systems Project Value	Value of PRC OF projects to surveillance systems, safe city projects, x-ray or port scanners, and police units, by year. USD 2024 Constant. Source: AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0.	2001-2021	Text matching for 'surveill* safe city scanner police', then filtering out health, ag, and social sector projects, restricting outputs to Government and Civil Society, Trade, Transport and Storage, and Other Multisector sectors.

¹ Period of coverage varies among variables due to availability and coverage offered by used sources.

sec_02_surveillance_ct	Surveillance Technology and Systems Project Count	Count of PRC OF projects to surveillance systems, safe city projects, x-ray or port scanners, and police units, by year. Source: <i>AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0.</i>	2001-2021	Text matching for 'surveill* safe city scanner police', then filtering out health, ag, and social sector projects, restricting outputs to Government and Civil Society, Trade, Transport and Storage, and Other Multisector sectors.
sec_03_military_engagement_ct	Senior-level Military Engagements Count	Count of meetings between PRC and the border country's senior-level officials. Includes both Naval Port Calls and Senior Level Visits. Source: Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Chinese Military Diplomacy Database	1999-2024	
sec_04_joint_exercise_ct	Joint Exercises Count	Count of military exercises between PRC and the border country. Source: Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Chinese Military Diplomacy Database	1999-2024	
Dimension 2: Development Indicators				
dev_01_currency_swapp_line_extant	Currency Swap Agreement In Place	Existence of People's Bank of China currency swap lines per year. Source: Council on Foreign Relations Central Bank Currency Swaps Tracker.	2009-2024	Y/N Binary
dev_01_currency_swapp_usd	Currency Swap Agreement Drawn Value	Maximum amount drawn in USD equivalent from People's Bank of China currency swap lines. USD 2024 Constant. Source: Council on Foreign Relations Central Bank Currency Swaps Tracker.	2009-2024	Deflated adjustment from CFR estimates.
dev_02_infrastructure_usd	Infrastructure Project Value	Value of PRC OF projects to infrastructure by year. USD 2024 Constant. Source: <i>AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0.</i>	2001-2021	Filter on GCDF 3.0 'Infrastructure' tag.
dev_02_infrastructure_ct	Infrastructure Project Count	Count of PRC OF projects to infrastructure by year. Source: <i>AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0.</i>	2001-2021	Filter on GCDF 3.0 'Infrastructure' tag.
dev_03_fdi_usd	Chinese FDI Value	Chinese Outward FDI Position. USD 2024 Constant. Source: IMF Direct Investment Positions by Counterpart Economy dataset.	2009-2024	Reported FDI from IMF data, less coverage but more reliable.
dev_03_fdi_derived_usd	Derived Chinese FDI Value	Derived Chinese Outward FDI Position. USD 2024 Constant. Source: IMF Direct Investment Positions by Counterpart Economy dataset.	2009-2024	Derived FDI from IMD data, less reliable but better coverage.
dev_04_sez_usd	Special Economic Zone Project Value	Value of China OF Projects in SEZs or Industrial Zones. USD 2024 Constant. Source: <i>AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0.</i>	2012-2021	Entries from the original dataset that represent a form of SEZ, EEZ, or industrial zone-related financing by China to its maritime of land border neighbors since 2012. The presence of 'SEZ,' 'EEZ,' 'zone,' and 'industrial zone' in the original dataset's 'description' variable was used to indicate whether the data point represented a relevant engagement. Data points filtered by this criteria were reviewed to confirm they accurately represented engagements during the time period of interest.
dev_04_sez_proj_ct	Special Economic Zone Project Count	Count of China OF Projects in SEZs or Industrial Zones. Source: <i>AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0.</i>	2012-2021	Entries from the original dataset that represent a form of SEZ, EEZ, or industrial zone-related financing by China to its maritime of land border neighbors since 2012. The presence of 'SEZ,' 'EEZ,' 'zone,' and 'industrial zone' in the original dataset's 'description' variable was used to indicate whether the data point represented a relevant engagement. Data points filtered by this criteria were reviewed to confirm they accurately represented

				engagements during the time period of interest.
dev_04_sez_unique_si te	Unique Special Economic Zone Touchpoints	Number of unique SEZs or Industrial Zones engaged by China per year. Source: <i>AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0.</i>	2012-2021	Entries from the original dataset that represent a form of SEZ, EEZ, or industrial zone-related financing by China to its maritime or land border neighbors since 2012. The presence of 'SEZ,' 'EEZ,' 'zone,' and 'industrial zone' in the original dataset's 'description' variable was used to indicate whether the data point represented a relevant engagement. Data points filtered by this criteria were reviewed to confirm they accurately represented engagements during the time period of interest. Reviewed for unique SEZ locations.
Dimension 3: Civilization Indicators				
civ_01_united_front_p resence	United Front Presence	Presence of United Front chapter (Chapters of the Council for the Promotion of the Peaceful Reunification of China). Source: Jamestown Foundation.	2019	Binary Y/N. Indicator applied to all years, though data is only contemporary as of 2019.
civ_02_healthcare_usd	Healthcare Project Value	Value of PRC OF projects to health sector by year. USD 2024 Constant. Source: <i>AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0.</i>	2001-2021	Filter on GCDF 3.0 'HEALTH' sector tag.
civ_02_healthcare_ct	Healthcare Project Count	Count of PRC OF projects to health sector by year. Source: <i>AidData's Global Chinese Development Finance Dataset, Version 3.0.</i>	2001-2021	Filter on GCDF 3.0 'HEALTH' sector tag.
civ_03_outbound_visit s_ct	Outbound High- level Political Visits Count	The total number of visits by heads of state and heads of government from China to target countries. Source: China's Global Public Diplomacy Dashboard Dataset (Version 3.0)	1999-2021	
civ_03_inbound_visits _ct	Inbound High- level Political Visits Count	The total number of visits by heads of state and heads of government from target countries to China. Source: China's Global Public Diplomacy Dashboard Dataset (Version 3.0)	1999-2021	
civ_03_total_visits_ct	High-level Political Visits Count	Combined visits by heads of state and heads of government from target countries to China and from China to target countries. Source: China's Global Public Diplomacy Dashboard Dataset (Version 3.0)	1999-2021	
civ_04_cspcs_ct	Content Sharing Partnerships Count	Number of new content sharing partnerships established in a country in a given year. Source: China's Global Public Diplomacy Dashboard Dataset (Version 3.0)	1999-2021	
civ_05_judicial_engag ement_ct	Judicial Engagements Count	Count of PRC-led judicial diplomacy engagements from 2014-2025 between the Supreme People's Court (SPC) and its foreign counterparts in China's 20 land and maritime border neighbors. Source: National Bureau of Asian Research.	2014-2024	The data was pulled from press releases on the websites of the SPC, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, and ASEAN. Where additional information was needed, we also consulted press releases on the webpages of the SPC's relevant foreign counterparts.

civ_06_ci_ct	Confucius Institutes Operating Count	Cumulative number of Confucius Institutes operating within each receiving country per year. Confucius Institutes (CIs) are non-profit, but government-operated organizations with the mandate to promote Chinese language and culture. CIs are usually set up as a partnership with a local university in the receiving country (or secondary schools in the case of Confucius Classrooms) and have the additional objective to promote local cooperation with Chinese businesses. Source: China's Global Public Diplomacy Dashboard Dataset (Version 3.0)	1999-2021	
civ_06_cc_ct	Confucius Classrooms Operating Count	The total number of Confucius Classrooms (CCs) operating in a receiving country each year. Source: China's Global Public Diplomacy Dashboard Dataset (Version 3.0)	1999-2021	
civ_06_ci_cc_ct	Confucius Institutes and Classrooms Operating Count	Combined number of Confucius Institutes(CIs) and Confucius Classrooms (CCs) operating in a receiving country each year. Source: China's Global Public Diplomacy Dashboard Dataset (Version 3.0)	1999-2021	
lat	Latitude	Country centroid latitude. Source: Open Street Map.	1999-2024	Used label node from OSM.
lon	Longitude	Country centroid longitude. Source: Open Street Map.	1999-2024	Used label node from OSM.

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