CHINA'S WEAPONS EXPORTS AND PRIVATE SECURITY CONTRACTORS

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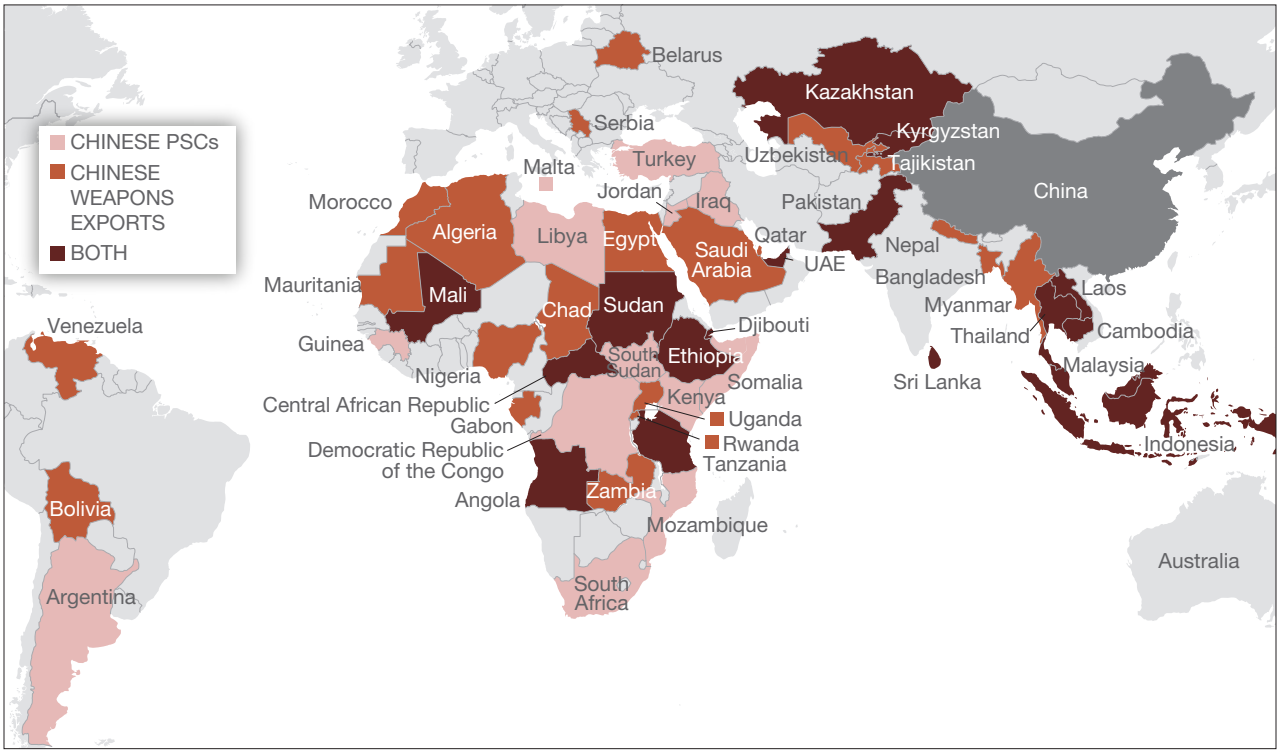
MILITARY WEAPONS EXPORTS ARE AN IMPORTANT TOOL FOR PROJECTING A COUNTRY'S INFLUENCE AROUND THE WORLD, **AND CHINA HAS MARKETED AND EXPORTED WEAPONS TO 38 COUNTRIES FROM 2018 TO 2021.**

In addition to exporting weapons,[1] China has exported private security contractors (PSCs) to protect and secure its interests, such as mining facilities, ports, and infrastructure projects, in other countries.[2] To map the spread of China's military and security influence, RAND Corporation researchers analyzed which countries have been recipients of China's military and security exports. The result is the map below.

This analysis shows that 48 countries around the world have received Chinese weapons or PSC services, including 14 countries that have received both. The map shows China's expansive influence across Africa, where seven countries (in dark red) have been the recipients of both Chinese weapons and PSCs. Another ten countries (in medium red) have received weapons only, and eight countries (in pink) have received PSCs only.

CHINESE MILITARY AND SECURITY EXPORTS

Where Is China Exporting PSCs and Weapons?



NOTES: UAE = United Arab Emirates. Australia is listed in the trade register of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, but it received only one item from China during 2018–2021, a helicopter that was not armed. Therefore, Australia was omitted from the analysis.

CLOSER TO CHINA, BEIJING MIGHT BE USING **MILITARY AND SECURITY EXPORTS TO COUNTER U.S. INFLUENCE.**

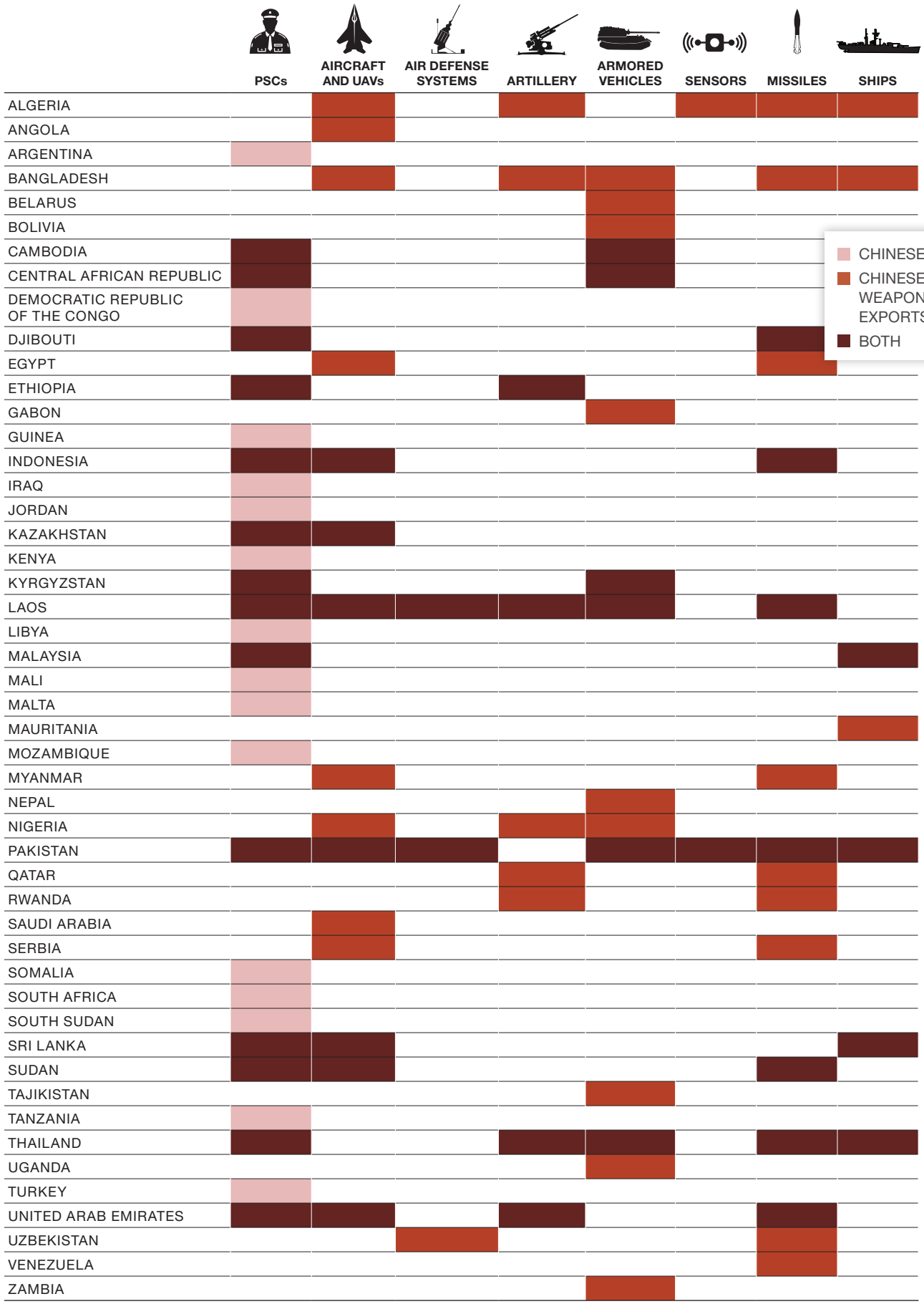
The region around the South China Sea provides stark examples of this counterinfluence; several countries, including Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Indonesia, are the recipients of both Chinese weapons exports and PSCs, while other countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines, and Japan, have received neither, signaling their security or self-reliance from China.

All of the sources that the researchers consulted are provided in the bibliography at the end of this tool. In many cases, multiple sources were used for each country.

The following table provides a more detailed analysis than the map by showing the types of weapon systems that were purchased by each country.[3]

CHINESE MILITARY AND SECURITY EXPORTS

Which Countries Receive Which Exports?



NOTE: UAV = unmanned aerial vehicle.

[1] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Arms Transfers Database," last updated March 14, 2022.

[2] Emil Avdaliani, "For China, Private Military Companies Are the Future," *National Interest*, November 8, 2021; Helena Legarda and Meia Nouwens, *Guardians of the Belt and Road: The Internationalization of China's Private Security Companies*, Berlin: Mercator Institute for China Studies, August 16, 2018; Max Markusen, *A Stealth Industry: The Quiet Expansion of Chinese Private Security Companies*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2022; Paul Nantulya, "Chinese Security Contractors in Africa," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 8, 2020; Paul Nantulya, "Chinese Security Firms Spread Along the African Belt and Road," Africa Center for Strategic Studies, June 15, 2021; Cortney Weinbaum, "China's Security Contractors Have Avoided the Fate of Russia's Military Contractors, So Far," *RealClearDefense*, March 11, 2022; Jingdong Yuan, "China's Private Security Companies and the Protection of Chinese Economic Interests Abroad," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 33, Nos. 1–2, 2022.

[3] The definitions for the types of weapon systems can be found at Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Coverage," webpage, undated.

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ABOUT THIS TOOL

This tool provides a visualization of two elements of China's military and security influence around the world: weapons exports and private security contractors (PSCs). RAND researchers examined publicly available data and literature to identify countries that received Chinese weapons exports, PSCs, or both during 2018–2021. This analytic tool will be useful for researchers and analysts examining China's defense and security influence.

RAND NATIONAL SECURITY RESEARCH DIVISION

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