Article

Integrating Stability Maintenance into Comprehensive Governance: The Burgeoning "Safe China" Behemoth

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Abstract
This article examines the Xi Jinping–era stability maintenance behemoth called "Safe China." Safe China is a regime of activities that integrates "public order" policing and surveillance with "social governance." It is linked to the Chinese Communist Party's "Overall National Security Outlook" and its main task is "political security." Our analysis of Safe China recognizes *integration* as its main animating principle. Three elements of Safe China—its ideological rationale, its on-the-ground public order and social governance mechanisms, and the party's absolute leadership over its operation at the grassroots—are conducive to this integration process. Ultimately, through Safe China, the party is seeking to modernize its own governance capacity and embed its leadership more fully into grassroots society, to ensure long-lasting "peace and safety," not only for the nation but for itself.

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"Stability maintenance" 维稳 was the name given to a political-legal regime of activities for controlling social instability that was central to the political storyline of the Hu Jintao era (2002–2012). Unsurprisingly, therefore, it was a central focus of analysis in China studies research on law, justice, and domestic security during that period. Also unsurprisingly, given its political nature, studies on the topic typically covered three main areas of analysis: its ideological rationales, its on-the-ground political-legal mechanisms, and the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) leadership role over its operations both centrally and locally. Today, the Xi Jinping leadership no longer uses its predecessor's term "stability maintenance" to describe the activities and structures related to the preservation of social stability. Rather, it uses the term "*Ping'an Zhongguo*" 平安中国, or "Safe China." Safe China performs many, but not all, of the tasks of the Hu-era stability maintenance regime. However, Safe China has ambitions for far more expansive governance than the previous stability maintenance regime. This article employs the three main areas of analysis listed above as its conceptual framework and structure to examine the ideological, mechanistic, and political architecture of Safe China.

Safe China's ambitions for comprehensive governance coincide with the expanded ambitions of China's political-legal apparatus in grassroots society and are linked to the Xi Jinping–era concept of the "Overall National Security Outlook" 总体国家安全观 (Xie and Wang, 2018; Lu, 2023; Feng, 2023). The Overall National Security Outlook has been described as China's "grand strategy" (Greitens, 2021: 1) for governance in the Xi era. Safe China is in essence an organizing concept given to a regime of activities that integrates "public order" 社会治安 with "social governance" 社会治理 mechanisms, tasks, and relationships. It involves a whole-of-society approach to security, aiming to maintain social stability and generate long-lasting social order through comprehensive governance (Chu, 2020; People. com.cn, 2021; Lu, 2023; Han and Liu, 2022; Renmin ribao, 2023). As an organizing concept, it brings together both preexisting (i.e., from the Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao eras) and new (Xi-era) political-legal concepts and mechanisms under a single umbrella. What makes Safe China distinct lies in the scope of its design as a method for corralling, under one overarching system, both preexisting and new governance and public order strategies that the CCP believes are conducive to producing "societal security" 社会安全. Societal security is a term used by CCP theorists that encompasses both social stability 社会稳定 and social order 社会秩序 and that is "guided" by the requirements of the Overall National Security Outlook (Xie and Wang, 2018: 13).

A clear conceptual link exists between the overarching idea of creating a "safe" China and the discrete elements in operation that claim to make China

safe: each of its elements is a cog in a system that purports to provide comprehensive security. Safe China, however, cannot be dismissed as merely a shell since its corralling function coordinates multiple mechanisms under one roof. This creates a compounding effect for the generation and maintenance of societal security, producing what the CCP describes as comprehensive governance, both in its design and ambition (Huang, 2020, 2022; Yu, 2019; Han and Liu, 2022; Lu, 2023). Safe China is therefore more ambitious than the stability maintenance regime, which was largely related to public order and reactive in nature.

Various provincial Safe China regulations (discussed below) describe Safe China as a regime of activities comprising various instruments, including "grid management" 网格化管理, "comprehensive management of public order" 社会治安综合治理 (CMPO) centers, the "public order prevention and control system" 社会治安防控体系, and digital surveillance. They also describe numerous relationships between and among police, local governments, social welfare organizations, social organizations, and self-governance entities. These regulations testify to Safe China's current importance as China's premier social stability apparatus, such that the leadership of the party's powerful Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission 中央委员会政法委员会 (CPLC)—now represented by its Safe China Construction Organization and Coordination Small Group 平安中国建设协调小组 subcommittee—is required to be integrated into all Safe China activity (Wang, 2020).

Within China, Safe China has been studied as a concept in political-legal studies (cf. Huang, 2020, 2022; Yu, 2019; Chu, 2020). While scholars outside China have examined discrete elements classified as sitting under the Safe China regime—for example, social governance, the grid management system, and surveillance—to date there are no existing studies that explain how these aspects cohere under the canopy of Safe China. The concept of Safe China and its relationship with the elements of public order and social governance that coalesce under it have yet to be scrutinized in English-language publications. This article aims to do so by widening the focus from singular elements to the broad spectrum, analyzing Safe China's overall architecture through ideological rationalization, on-the-ground political-legal mechanisms, and the CCP's leadership.

Our analysis recognizes *integration* as Safe China's main animating principle. Our argument is twofold. First, by design, Safe China is conceived as a way to integrate multiple existing elements essential to producing long-lasting stability. Second, interaction between the three main elements of its construction—ideology, on-the-ground political-legal mechanisms, and the party's leadership—are conducive to furthering the integration process. Processes of interconnectivity that integrate these three elements into the

political-legal system make Safe China all-embracing in design and ambition if not yet in reality. By placing multiple agencies and activities together under one regime, Safe China enlarges the capacity of the party to govern myriad areas of social relations through physical and digital means, in a way that was not possible two decades ago at the height of the stability maintenance era. Through the construction of Safe China, the party is seeking to modernize its capacity to govern. Therefore, it aligns directly with the principal Xi Jinping–era governance theme of modernizing governance, first introduced at the Third Plenum of the Eighteenth Party Congress in 2013 (Meng, 2013; Guo, 2021).

Given the above arguments, below we examine the following three elements: first, the ideological rationalization of Safe China; that is, an overview of the ideological components that work to rationalize its overall "comprehensive" nature. This includes four concepts: the Overall National Security Outlook, social governance, the "Fengqiao experience" 枫桥经验, and CMPO. Second, the on-the-ground mechanisms of Safe China: grid management, CMPO centers 社会治安综合治理中心 (or 社会综治中心 for short), and smart-governance digital surveillance. Third, the party's role in leading Safe China, that is, how it integrates its leadership throughout all aspects of Safe China and how its leadership role ultimately orients Safe China toward maintaining the political security of the party.

Integrating Rationales for Safe China

"*Ping'an*" 平安 embodies connotations of "peace" (i.e., generating stability by pacifying and minimizing risk) and "safety" (i.e., maintaining both political and social stability through social control). In seeking to achieve both, Safe China integrates multiple governance tools essential to societal security. The CPLC, which oversees all judicial, policing, security, and social governance matters, also leads Safe China endeavors across the nation today. The CPLC has a history of identifying itself with the prefix Ping'an. In the 1950s, for instance, CPLC administration buildings in Beijing and other localities were named "Ping'an buildings" 平安大楼. Ping'an was first used to describe public order activities in the mid-1990s in a few isolated areas, including Guangdong and Zhejiang (Yu, 2019). At that time, policing authorities began developing grassroots "Ping'an localities" such as "Ping'an townships," "Ping'an villages," "Ping'an schools," and "Ping'an enterprises." By the early 2000s, Shanxi, Jiangxi, Shandong, Zhejiang, Fujian, and other provinces had decided to carry out localized Ping'an activities (Yu, 2019). The first national policy document relating to "Ping'an construction" came in 2005, titled "Opinions on Deepening the Development of Ping'an

Construction" 关于深入开展平安建设的意见. Its content focused on public security and stability maintenance (Feng, 2023).

Run directly by the party through the CPLC and its subordinate bodies at all levels, Safe China is expanding at a rapid pace, but it is not a completed project. Hence, party authorities talk of Safe China in the language of "building," using the terms "constructing Safe China" or "Safe China construction." The CPLC's website is today called Chinapeace.gov.cn ("China peace" here refers to the concept of Ping'an); it features daily news items on Safe China innovations and achievements. According to one CPLC website news report, "Safe China is being built one brick at a time" 一砖一瓦建设平安中国 (Dong, 2022). More precisely, CPLC authorities talk of constructing Safe China in terms of building one "small Ping'an" 小平安 program at a time; that is, in one geographical or social governance or social service provision area (Meng, 2013; Yu, 2019). In 2013, Xi Jinping's first CPLC head, Meng Jianzhu, described constructing Safe China in terms of a strategy of bringing together an array of discrete "small Ping'an" programs to make a nationwide "grand Ping'an" (or "Great Peace") 大平安 strategy (Meng, 2013). This is a vital conceptual aspect of Safe China; that is, it is creating a compounding effect through an interconnected regime of individual social governance or public order governance activities to create a whole-of-society "grand Ping'an."

Safe China's construction process has been ongoing for well over a decade, and it has an ever more expansive political life in China today. Searching Baidu, China's largest search engine, returns millions of mentions in government posts, traditional media reports, and social media posts containing the precise terms "constructing Safe China" 建设平安中国 or "Safe China construction" 平安中国建设. In addition, returning many more million mentions from Baidu is the prefix Ping'an attached to geographical locations from the village to the province levels (e.g., Ping'an Zhejiang) or to small-scale stability initiatives at the local level, including "Ping'an communities" 平安社区, "Ping'an streets" 平安街道, "Ping'an families" 平安家庭, "Ping'an tourism" 平安出行, "Ping'an construction sites" 平安工地, "Ping'an communities" 平安社区, "Ping'an campuses" 平安学校, "Ping'an large courtyards" 平安院子, "Ping'an industries" 平安企业, and so on.

After the Fourth Plenum of the Nineteenth Party Congress in 2019, which announced the "acceleration" of constructing a "higher level" of Safe China, the CCP Central Committee required the CPLC to establish the Safe China Construction Organization and Coordination Small Group in Beijing, with subordinate bodies in all provinces. Soon after, province-level Ping'an construction regulations began to be passed in people's congresses in mid-2021, making them the go-to blueprint for institutionalizing Safe China. The

regulations are an important step in the construction process since they provide clarity on both the leadership responsibility system and the target management responsibility system in relation to various government and party agencies that operate under Safe China. To date, legislators in around one-fourth of China's provinces and autonomous regions have passed legal regulations that have institutionalized Safe China at the province level (see Table 1).

Safe China involves a whole-of-society approach to security. According to the above regulations, governmental, community, and policing actors work under the leadership of the CCP's Safe China Construction Organization and Coordination Small Group in various capacities. These actors variously include local governments and their agencies, including the police; emergency response services; environmental protection agencies; conflict risk prevention and resolution agencies; courts; people's procuratorates; social and psychological services; universities, schools, and kindergartens; drug prevention agencies; grassroots self-governing mass organizations and voluntary service organizations; industry associations; chambers of commerce; social organizations including trade unions; communist youth leagues; women's federations; financial institutions; transportation and postal agencies; village and residential committees; property management committees; and data management departments, among others.

All provincial regulations follow a similar structure, with each containing up to nine chapters and up to seventy-one articles. Chapter headings variously include "Construction of Ping'an Infrastructure and Working Systems," "Social Risk Prevention and Control," "Social Participation [also known as "co-governance"] and Grassroots Social Governance," "Resolution of Social Contradictions and Disputes," "Digital Security Construction," and "[Party] Supervision of Ping'an Construction." These regulations all highlight that the intended purpose of Safe China is to produce and maintain societal security by creating the conditions for the party-state to effectively and comprehensively govern all aspects of society. The regulations also indicate that this fusion of arrangements for public order governance and social governance (including provision of welfare and basic local government services) is intended to (1) deal with basic local government and welfare problems through the grid management system; (2) deal with social conflicts or disputes through services such as mediation and community mental health care in CMPO centers; (3) prevent and control crime and social disorder through the public order and prevention and control system, using data collected through the grid management system and sent for analysis to CMPO centers; (4) surveil local populations for crime prevention, through digital surveillance, grid management, and "smart cities" infrastructure; (5) train citizens in

Table 1. Regional Ping'an Construction Legislation, 2021–2024.

Administrative Region	Regulation	Year	Source
Guangdong	"Guangdong Province Ping'an Construction Regulations" 广东省省平安建设条例	2021	Guangdong Provincial People's Congress, 2021
Xinjiang	"Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Ping'an Construction Regulations" 新疆维吾尔自治区平安建设条例	2021	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region People's Congress, 2021
Tianjin (province-level municipality)	"Tianjin Municipality Ping'an Construction Regulations" 天津市平安建设条例	2022	Tianjin Municipal People's Congress, 2022
Tibet	"Tibet Autonomous Region Ping'an Construction Regulations" 西藏自治区平安建设条例	2022	Tibet Autonomous Region People's Congress, 2022
Jiangxi	"Jiangxi Province Ping'an Construction Regulations" 江西省平安建设条例	2022	Jiangxi Provincial People's Congress, 2022
Gansu	"Gansu Province Ping'an Construction Regulations" 甘肃省平安建设条例	2023	Gansu Provincial People's Congress, 2023
Zhejiang	"Zhejiang Province Ping'an Construction Regulations" 浙江省平安建设条例	2023	Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress, 2023
Shanxi	"Shanxi Province Ping'an Construction Regulations" 山西省平安建设条例	2023	Shanxi Provincial People's Congress, 2023
Hubei	"Hubei Province Ping'an Construction Regulations" 湖北省平安建设条例	2023	Hubei Provincial People's Congress, 2023
Hebei	"Hebei Province Ping'an Construction Regulations (Draft)" 河北省平安建设条例(草案)	2024	Hebei ribao, 2024

good moral behavior through the work of local self-government committees and social organizations, CMPO centers, and other locations; and (6) coordinate emergency services in local areas.

As the above list suggests, Safe China now embraces myriad activities associated with governance and public order, from providing basic grassroots and other social services and cracking down on crime to across-the-board data gathering and usage of these data for far-reaching surveillance. Constructing Safe China has thus provided the party with a valuable opportunity to address the fragmentation that has long been used to characterize Chinese governance (Han and Liu, 2022; Lu, 2023). The story of how Safe China has moved the ideological dial from fragmented to comprehensive governance starts with its rationalization. Just as stability maintenance required its own political backstory and rationalization so too does Safe China. Rationalization is important since it enables "those who govern and those who are governed to be informed about how they are governed and why, in order for the state to best position them to cooperate" (Trevaskes, 2013: 53). The political storyline of Safe China's penetration into all aspects of grassroots governance under Xi Jinping, so as to move from fragmented to comprehensive governance, begins with its rationalization relating to the concept of security. As we will argue below, under Xi Jinping, ideas and understandings about how to tackle "profound changes unseen in a century" (Lu, 2023; Wang, 2023: 532) have changed the way that the party approaches its governance of society.

Safe China did not appear nationally under Xi Jinping in 2013 with a ready-made ideology. Rather, as CPLC head Guo Shengkun described it in 2021, Safe China has "expanded its connotations over time" (Guo, 2021). A number of ideological concepts related to Safe China have been integrated into the political storyline of Safe China and over time have been introduced in party plenums and other policy announcement contexts. In other words, the party has picked up a number of discrete ideological concepts and embedded them into the storyline of Safe China in a rolling fashion over time. The activities listed in all provincial Safe China regulations provide a useful indication of what these key concepts are and how they relate to specific tasks. As was mentioned previously, these four concepts are the Overall National Security Outlook, social governance, the Fengqiao experience, and CMPO.

The order and wording in which the key activities are presented in provincial Safe China construction regulations differ slightly from one region to another, but all position political security as the principal task. They all also share the following tasks: maintaining national political security (based on the concept of the Overall National Security Outlook); preventing and

resolving risks in key areas (based on the concept of CMPO); cracking down on various illegal and criminal acts in accordance with the law (based on the concept of CMPO); improving the public order prevention and control system (based on the concept of CMPO); improving network governance 网络治理 (based on the concepts of the Overall National Security Outlook and CMPO); promoting prevention, mediation, and resolution of social conflicts and disputes (based on the concepts of social governance and the Fengqiao experience); and improving the grassroots social governance mechanisms (based on the concepts of social governance and the Fengqiao experience).

Below, we will outline the rationalization for Safe China, which is in essence an aggregation of the ideological claims found in the four main concepts listed above. Together, these ideological claims seek to bring discursive unity to Safe China, forming a connective chain of rationalization that works not only to explain, but crucially to expand, the remit of Safe China, since it is intended to make governance increasingly more comprehensive. The discussion below makes apparent how the party has expanded the remit of Safe China by creating close ideological connections between these four concepts and particularly by relating to the Overall National Security Outlook.

The Overall National Security Outlook

The Overall National Security Outlook is a concept based on the claim that a comprehensive and all-encompassing vision of security is required to grasp and respond to the enormity of social change in China, which is "unseen in a century." As China's "grand strategy" (Greitens, 2021: 1) in the Xi era, this concept of security has widened the aperture of what the party now deems risky or capable of inducing social disorder: national security risks can reside in the political, economic, military, ideological, cultural, and social realms. "National security is the top priority" and "security is a prerequisite for development" were mantras introduced in the mid-2010s that reinforced the policy shift from prioritizing economic growth to foregrounding security as the touchstone of governance (Yang, 2018; 12371.cn, 2021; Huang, 2022; Wang, 2023). The concept of "overall" (alternatively translated as "holistic") in the Overall National Security Outlook is the main focus for how the party now approaches societal security since it reflects a "maximalist" (Blanchette, 2022: 3) understanding of societal risks. Broadening the boundaries of what is deemed risky or capable of inducing instability in turn broadens the boundaries and dimensions of the party's response, that is, building a security regime, including Safe China, that matches the breadth and dimensions of its perceived security risks. Safe China fulfills the requirements of this grand strategy since it sees risk not just in terms of magnitude but also in terms of

social interconnectedness. As governance scholar Lu Bin explains, "Safe China emphasizes that security issues in various fields are closely related to one another, connect with one another, and influence one another. Security problems in one area may trigger a series of chain reactions, leading to security problems in multiple areas" (Lu, 2023).

The Safe China concept has expanded over time in parallel with the ideological expansion of Xi's Overall National Security Outlook. Governance analyst Feng Weiguo puts it this way: "The discussion of national security in the report of the Twentieth Party Congress, especially the proposal of a new security pattern, means that the party and the country have newer and higher requirements for the goals and tasks of building a Safe China. In fact, the construction of Safe China is a dynamic development process in practice, with its content constantly expanding and standard requirements constantly improving" (Feng, 2023). Indeed, both Safe China and the National Security Outlook have expanded a vision of security over time to incorporate political security 政治安全 as the main priority. Over time, this "maximalist" conceptualization of security has blurred the lines of distinction between national security and party security, making political and ideological security the current core of the Overall National Security Outlook (Blanchette, 2022: 4). "Political security" has new elasticity, insofar as it is now not merely about traditional political security risks such as espionage but also about the "security of national sovereignty, the political regime, the social system, and socialist ideology" (Huang, 2022: 34). This point is significant, since political security is now the key motivating factor in expanding the tentacles of the party down into grassroots society, in part, through the Safe China apparatus.

Social Governance

While the National Security Outlook is the main ideological touchstone rationalizing the extensiveness of Safe China activity, it is the concept of social governance that is the connective tissue between ideology and on-the-ground practice. Social governance is an upgrade to the concept of "social management" 社会管理 from the Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao eras (Steinhardt and Zhao, 2014; Jiang, 2014; Snape, 2019; Chen, 2020; People.com.cn, 2021). Its broad remit is to provide multiple governmental and community mechanisms for conflict resolution, welfare services provision, and public order governance, all now categorized as mechanisms for creating and maintaining societal security. By design, social governance is intended to help preempt social instability by providing adequate services to citizens while at the same time monitoring them. The underlying ideological intention here is to "break away

from the one-dimensional logic of maintaining public order and embed social governance into the national security system to obtain an overall grasp [of security], so as to achieve overall planning of national security from a strategic and comprehensive perspective" (Lu, 2023).

First officially touted at the Third Plenum of the Eighteenth Party Congress in 2013, the party identified the concept of social governance as an important means of actualizing its leadership over governance at the local level across China (Meng, 2013; Jiang, 2014). Governance scholars articulate three defining aspects of social governance: first, the goal of social governance is to help bring about the construction of Safe China; second, it is the responsibility of the political-legal authorities; third, these organs must rely on the Safe China construction system and its mechanisms to unite departments, thus enabling top-down linkage and cooperation, to form a social governance pattern of "co-construction, co-governance, and sharing" 共建, 共治, 共享 (Han and Liu, 2022).

Social governance is also described as a way of allowing adequate space for organizations in civil society (residential and village committees, social organizations, and volunteer organizations) to have agency in local governance decision making (Lu, 2023). This, too, is articulated as "co-governance, co-construction, and sharing." Local party organizations are charged with helping to improve the cultivation of local organizations that help maintain stability, run professional mediation services, and provide public welfare, public service assistance, and charity to local residents (Renmin ribao, 2023).

The Fengqiao Experience

The Xi-era concept of social governance in particular and Safe China in general has its origins partly in the ideology of the Fengqiao experience. Both immediately before and during the social instability of the 2000s, the party-state endeavored, with limited success, to create models of grassroots governance that would preempt social instability. Various models aimed to build up grassroots communities as a way of rethinking the party-state's responses to social unrest through an embrace of the concept of "community." This rethinking included models from various large cities in China including the Shenyang "self-governance model" 自治性模式 and the Shanghai "administration model" 行政性模式 (Steinhardt and Zhao, 2014). But the model that endured past the "harmonious society's" 和谐社会 use-by date of late 2012 was "Ping'an construction."

In 2004 when Xi Jinping was party secretary of Zhejiang, political-legal authorities in Zhejiang caught hold of the term "Ping'an construction" to express the idea of constructing a particular type of harmonious society by combining the work of party organizations, political-legal agencies (mainly

the police), and community groups to construct "comprehensive governance" (Chu, 2019; People.com.cn, 2021). From 2005, "Ping'an construction" began to appear in national party documents including those of the Fifth Plenum of the Sixteenth Party Congress (Yu, 2019). The insights from that experience of comprehensively interlinking people and institutional arrangements horizontally and vertically to strengthen governance capacity, while institutionally embedding the party and its authority within this integrated governance system, were clearly profound for Xi. Ultimately, they have become so in practice for the entire Chinese nation over which Xi now presides.

The idea of "Ping'an Zhejiang" in the early 2000s drew on understandings of how to prevent social instability by building up grassroots communities through various forms of community cooperation drawn from the Fengqiao experience. The Fengqiao experience was an early-1960s model of mobilizing the masses for community-led policing (Chu, 2019; Yu, 2019). It was brought into the political limelight in 1963 by Mao Zedong, who praised political-legal workers in Fengqiao 枫桥 township for their work preventing social instability by involving community members themselves in public order maintenance (Chu, 2019; People.com.cn, 2021).

Four decades later, Safe Zhejiang was born from this thinking. Billed in 2004 as "comprehensive" (Chu, 2019), its ambition was to bring together community and policing efforts to effect the management of society in Zhejiang through the grassroots. Its goal was explicitly preventive rather than solely reactive; not merely responding to social instability but proactively shaping social life to prevent it. The concept of "co-construction, co-governance, and sharing" was developed from the "Zhejiang experience" 浙江经验 (Chu, 2019; Yu, 2019; People.com.cn, 2021; Chinapeace.gov.cn, 2023). Xi Jinping recognized the importance of proactive engagement by self-governance village and residential committees, community groups, and social organizations in the party's programs, with the aim of producing "social vitality" 社会活力 (Chu, 2019; People.com.cn, 2021). In a move said to be inspired by the Fengqiao experience (Yang, 2018; Chu, 2019; Chu, 2020), today self-governance entities, which, as noted above, include residential and village committees, along with social organizations, are tasked with joint prevention and control-focused activities and promoting the inclusion of content related to Safe China construction into residential and village regulations. In addition, both self-governance and volunteer service organizations are expected to carry out services to maintain social stability, publicize Safe China and the rule of law, resolve conflicts and disputes, and provide guidance on mental health and moral virtue, all under the party's leadership (Chu, 2019; Chu, 2020; Chinapeace.gov.cn, 2023).

Comprehensive Management of Public Order

As noted above, social governance entails both social service provision and public order governance. The public order governance aspect of the system involves policing social movements by responding to risks from members of society, including risks to political security, public order, public safety, network security, and risks arising from social conflicts and disputes (Renmin ribao, 2023). In 2018, senior party authorities claimed that these risks had become more acute, prompting the CCP Central Committee, through the auspices of the CPLC, to call for the acceleration of systems to modernize social governance in order to deal with these risks. On July 17, 2018, *People's Daily* published an article by Chen Yixin, secretary general of the CPLC, formally proposing the concept of "accelerating the modernization of municipal social governance" (Chen, 2021; Political and Legal Affairs Commission of Nanning, 2022). It precipitated the CPLC's leadership in shaping social governance innovations across China and culminated in the 2020 "Opinions on Accelerating the Modernization of Social Governance and Creating a New Situation for the Construction of Safe China" 关于加快推进社会治理现代化开创平安中国建设新局面的意见, promulgated by the CCP Central Committee and the State Council (Chen, 2021; Political and Legal Affairs Commission of Nanning, 2022). Central to this acceleration process was the system of CMPO.

CMPO was a policing system created in the early 1980s under Deng Xiaoping (Biddulph, 2007; Trevaskes, 2010). It was promulgated as a key concept for controlling crime; handling illegal activities such as prostitution, gambling, and pornography; and for surveilling "target populations" 重点人口. In the 1980s it was an important form of the "dictatorship of the people" as well as an important means of developing the structure of the criminal justice system by dividing party-state responses to crime into two forms: preventing minor crime and "striking hard" at serious crime (Biddulph, 2007; Trevaskes, 2010). While it encompasses elements of preventing and of striking hard, its emphasis is prevention, through an "all-round" approach to crime control.

Though not consistently promoted in the media over the past four decades, CMPO has remained a mainstay of crime control and prevention, involving multiple agencies (mainly police) tasked with managing specific populations such as target populations and the "floating population" of migrant workers, specific crime categories such as organized crime and prostitution rings, and specific localities such as rental apartment blocks and regions on the outskirts of cities (Biddulph, 2007; Trevaskes, 2010). Formal establishment of Safe China as a national strategy at the start of the Xi era brought a resurgence of

discourse, policy, and practice for CMPO, including the establishment of close to 600,000 CMPO centers across the nation.

Integrating the Four Concepts

Security is the common thread running through these four concepts. How China is to develop long-lasting security involves weaving and integrating various discrete aspects of the security imperative in each of these four concepts into an overall rationalization. Cross-references to these terms in policies and pronouncements create a sense of discursive unity while at the same time serving to enlarge the conceptual space within which Safe China operates. Below are three examples from provincial Safe China regulations that demonstrate this expansive conceptual and policy space. Integrating various aspects of social governance and public order through descriptions of what constitutes "Ping'an construction" in these regulations gives definition to Safe China as being comprehensive in reach.

For instance, the "Zhejiang Province Ping'an Construction Regulations" (Zhejiang being the home of the Fengqiao experience) define Zhejiang's Ping'an goals in these terms:

> Ping'an construction work adheres to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party; adheres to the people-centered approach and implements the Overall National Security Outlook; adheres to the principle of coordinating economic development and security; adheres to and develops the Fengqiao experience . . . and insists on advancing [Ping'an construction] in an integrated manner with the construction of the rule of law in Zhejiang. (Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress, 2023: Art. 3)

In Xinjiang, the equivalent regulations set out a slightly different yet equally "integrative" definition of Ping'an construction:

> Ping'an construction work adheres to the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era; adheres to the Overall National Security Outlook; fully and accurately implements the party's strategy for governing Xinjiang in the new era; and firmly adheres to the general goal of social stability and long-term stability, the modernization of the governance system, and grassroots social governance innovation. Ping'an construction activities are the focal points to promote innovation in ideas, systems and mechanisms, and methods and means; to promote the modernization of social governance systems and governance capacity-building; and to comprehensively enhance the sense of gain, happiness, and security of the people of all ethnic groups. (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region People's Congress, 2021: Art. 2)

And in Gansu, the emphasis is again on a slightly different definition of Ping'an construction work. But it shares a similar general ethos, which is to mobilize the whole of society in efforts to protect people, the nation, and the party:

> The term "Ping'an construction" in these regulations refers to organizing and mobilizing the whole of society; strengthening and innovating social governance; improving the level of social governance; preventing and defusing various risks according to the law; preventing and reducing crime; preventing and reducing accidents in production and public safety; building a pattern of co-construction, co-governance, and sharing; and ensuring national security, social stability, and the people's peace. (Gansu Provincial People's Congress, 2023: Art. 2)

Integrating the Mechanisms of Safe China

In the previous section we noted that the four main existing ideological concepts have been integrated into Safe China's political storyline over time, embedded in a rolling fashion into its rationalization. In a similar way, a number of existing discrete mechanisms have been embedded into Safe China in a rolling fashion, now increasingly cohering through the above-mentioned Ping'an regulations. Institutionalizing the interconnectivity between and among existing government units and community organizations entails integrating existing resources and mechanisms of public order (including both community policing and crime control) and social governance (auxiliary social welfare provision and conflict identification and management). This is the job of authorities at all levels from the province down that are responsible for implementing Ping'an construction through the public order prevention and control system (including the CMPO centers), grid management, and other activities, as is described in the "Guangdong Province Ping'an Construction Regulations":

> Comprehensive management of public order centers shall integrate social governance resources; innovate social governance methods; improve dispatching, sub-operations, and collaborative work mechanisms; and coordinate and promote the investigation and prevention of violations and crimes, the investigation and resolution of conflicts and disputes, and the investigation of and response to potential public order risks. (Guangdong Provincial People's Congress, 2021: Art. 7)

Institutionalizing the integration and interconnectivity of governance mechanisms includes digital integration. For instance, the "Zhejiang Province Ping'an Construction Regulations" stipulate that digital integration is to be

achieved through the leadership of the local Ping'an construction organization and coordination agency, which is required to

> organize relevant departments to promote the deep integration of the internet, the Internet of Things, big data, and artificial intelligence with Ping'an construction; coordinate the promotion of the construction and networked application of public video surveillance systems; and give full play to the role of public video surveillance systems in preventing risks, mediating conflicts and disputes, informatization verification, cracking down on crimes, and other aspects. (Zhejiang Provincial People's Congress, 2023: Art. 53)

Understanding the integration process of Safe China's on-the-ground mechanisms starts with the concept of the "public order prevention and control system" that existed before the 2013 national rollout of Safe China. Its title describes it as a "system," but in reality it is a conceptual umbrella used to integrate and coordinate social governance and public order governance arrangements (Gong and Li, 2016; Li, 2019; Li, 2022). It is often described by public security personnel and analysts as "three dimensional" in nature since its reach is comprehensive (Gong and Li, 2016, Li, 2019; Li, 2022). Through its on-the-ground mechanisms, it aspires to be able to monitor all "people, places, things, events, and organizations" 人, 地, 物, 事, 组 through "integration" (Gov.cn, 2015). One study by a local public security bureau in Shandong that examined over 2,700 scholarly articles on this system identified the most widely accepted understanding of its function to be "integrating public security resources" (Gong and Li, 2016: 8). Integration is to enable, and to be enabled by, closer multiagency communication, cooperation, and information sharing about people, places, things, events, and organizations. With its origins in the national policy on CMPO, it inevitably emphasizes prevention of social harm through a "comprehensive" approach to social control. The public order prevention and control system was first announced publicly in 2001 when the CCP Central Committee and the State Council issued the "Opinions on Further Strengthening the Comprehensive Management of Public Order" 关于进一步加强社会治安综合治理的意见. Here authorities proposed the establishment of public order and control systems across the nation (Gong and Li, 2016; Li, 2022), which developed in some cities from that time (Li, 2022). But it was not until 2015 that the potential of the public order and control system to function as the hub of Safe China activity was fully recognized. In 2015, the CCP Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the "Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of the Public Order Prevention and Control System" 关于加强社会治安防控体系建设的意见 (hereafter the "2015

Opinions") (Gov.cn, 2015). The 2015 Opinions outline how Safe China is to operate through the public order prevention and control network, principally through three main mechanisms: the grid management system, CMPO centers, and smart governance systems, in particular the Sharp Eyes Project 雪亮工程 surveillance system.

Achieving full "visualization" 可视化 (Peterson, 2022: 207) of "people, places, things, events, and organizations" through multiple sets of aggregated data enables the party-state to be aware of the movements, behavior, and public service requirements of individuals. The party-state has devised a number of ways to do this, by delivering public services to people through the grid management system, while at the same time using data it has obtained through governing the behavior and movements of those same people. Combining CMPO and social governance through grid management and other prevention and control mechanisms enables "data fusion" 数据融合 (Peterson, 2022: 207). The ambition here is to expand governance capacity by creating the conditions for comprehensive governance. Given this ambition, the party requires the Safe China apparatus as a whole to be more than the sum of its individual public order governance and social governance parts. The political logic underpinning this integration of social governance and public order governance is certainly strategic: it requires that while individual agencies operate to fulfill their basic functions, they have the additional responsibility to feed into the system data on people, places, things, events, and organizations. Political-legal officials claim that fusing information from a variety of sources produces the outcome where "one plus one is greater than two" ("1＋1＞2") (Political and Legal Affairs Commission of Chengdu, Sichuan, 2019). This logic is built on a "service-equals-governance-equals-security" rationale, that is, the idea that providing public services to individuals presents the opportunity to monitor their activities, a task that can be used to inform and therefore enable effective governing over these people and in turn reduce risks to societal security and stability. This is reflected in the propaganda slogan that "governance and service are one and the same thing" 治理就是服务 (cf. Li and Ren, 2019).

Grid Management

Grid management has drawn increasing scholarly attention in recent years (Tang and Wu, 2018; Li and Ren, 2019; Chen, 2020; Mittelstaedt, 2022; Gao and Cartier, 2022; Chen and Greitens, 2022; Xu and He, 2022). The idea that "social governance" and "service" are one and the same thing finds its most obvious expression in the grid management system. Organized in rural and urban areas nationwide, grid management systems across the country divide

residential zones into grids of roughly two hundred to five hundred house-holds (Gao and Cartier, 2022). It is nowadays both the basic unit of grassroots government in China (Gao and Cartier, 2022: 4) and a system of social governance. Local grid management systems vary in size between regions. They are administered at the submunicipal levels and their services are attached to the comprehensive management centers at each of these levels. Though first established in Beijing in 2004, the system has expanded to near-total nation-wide coverage only over the past decade. The 2015 Opinions call for the promotion of Safe China and the modernization of governance capacity through the grid management system by strengthening the construction of public order prevention and control networks so that information can be mastered, conflicts resolved, insecurity prevented and controlled, and services made convenient for the people (Gov.cn, 2015).

Grid management workers (paid and voluntary) who provide public-welfare-type services to households at the grassroots level gather information about households that is continuously recorded on the grid. This enables the workers to simultaneously monitor households through digital as well as physical means, using both data-based surveillance and mundane on-the-ground observation (Tang and Wu, 2018; Li and Ren, 2019; Mittelstaedt, 2022; Chen and Greitens, 2022; Gao and Cartier, 2022). Grid management workers are therefore seen as "mobile eyes" (Xu and He, 2022: 849). These workers upload the information they collect to a local grid command center for analysis, and if the information concerns behavior deemed serious in terms of its potential to induce instability, this information is transferred up the organizational chain to a local comprehensive management center for action if necessary (Xu and He, 2022). Information about individuals or households involved in any potentially instability-inducing circumstances is fed into the comprehensive management command center and integrated or "fused" with other data on them, and, when required, aggregated data on an individual is fed back out to grid workers or local government officials and police at the grassroots to investigate. In this way, local authorities use the information collected by grid management workers to determine the best approach to demobilizing aggrieved citizens to avoid the escalation of conflicts (Chen and Greitens, 2022: 509). This approach embodies the idea of "closing the information loop" through "grid management + CMPO + smart governance surveillance" (Yu, 2019).

Surveillance

Grid management is the basic source of information collected by local authorities who monitor stability on the ground. Surveillance system information

platforms collect these data and aggregate them with other digital surveillance data (Huang and Tsai, 2022; Trevaskes and Bernot, 2023). The 2015 Opinions call for the Safe China–related construction of comprehensive data platforms that are "vertically connected [and] horizontally integrated. . . . Improving the degree of system interconnection, information exchange and resource sharing [by] . . . incorporating the informatization of public order prevention and control into the overall planning of smart city construction" (Gov.cn, 2015). Surveillance platforms at various levels feed data on people, places, things, events, and organizations to a local command center or to a larger CMPO center at the subdistrict level, and then on to the municipal level. Public security analysts in local neighborhood command centers or larger municipal comprehensive management centers monitor the movements of whole populations (mass surveillance) or of targeted individuals (Trevaskes and Bernot, 2023). The public order prevention and control system also allows surveillance data to be connected to the national police intelligence system (Li, 2019).

In China today, the Sharp Eyes Project, also known in English as "Snow Bright," is the main surveillance program that operates at all levels of society down to the street level. Sharp Eyes provides comprehensive coverage of municipal districts, counties, townships, and villages using both public and private cameras that nowadays have facial, vehicle, and license plate recognition capabilities. These surveillance systems, sold by big tech companies (Huang and Tsai, 2022; Trevaskes and Bernot, 2023), nowadays come with the capacity to aggregate an individual's biometric and other data, to construct "virtual identities" using information on people's mobile devices, including WeChat, together with geographic information systems (GIS) data (Peterson, 2022: 208). As noted above, "data fusion" functions achieve "visualization" of individuals through multiple sets of aggregated data that are fed into not only the policing domain but also "smart city" infrastructure (Li, 2018). Such infrastructure includes "Ping'an clouds" 平安云 run by political-legal authorities that are connected to more restrictive "police cloud" 警务云 platforms (for police use only), some of which have the ability to conduct "behavior trajectory analysis," "social relationship analysis," and "biological analysis" that are shared among different government and policing departments (Qian et al., 2020: 356). Villages, towns, and cities across the country now boast about the smart governance innovations that connect "online Sharp Eyes" with "offline masses' eyes" (Li, 2018) and with urban smart city digital infrastructure.

CMPO Centers

CMPO centers, which are run by local political and legal affairs commission members under the overall supervision of CCP committee heads, handle

crime control, conflict resolution, and a number of limited public welfare services (Tang and Wu, 2018; Fuzhou Municipal People's Government Development Research Center, 2020; Dong, 2022). These centers are also the site of community social conflict resolution and training in moral education (Dong, 2022). They are a key means of integrating Safe China mechanisms since they are a one-stop shop for all aspects of social governance initiatives related to public order, including prevention and mediation activities to resolve disputes. These centers are collection points for any intelligence information affecting social harmony and stability. They also help coordinate various bodies—social organizations and state organs such as courts, police stations, and civil affairs offices—in mediation, conflict resolution, and training and education activities (Tang and Wu, 2018; Fuzhou Municipal People's Government Development Research Center, 2020; Dong, 2022).

These days, CMPO centers are the organizational hub of Ping'an activity at all levels, from communities or *shequ* 社区, townships, counties, and cities up to provinces. They also house data collection platforms and act to coordinate the multidirectional flow of information vertically and horizontally between and among the many areas of local governance (Tang and Wu, 2018; Fuzhou Municipal People's Government Development Research Center, 2020). As of mid-2022, nationwide there were over 583,000 CMPO centers where political-legal workers gather data, resolve disputes, and surveil populations (Dong, 2022; Chinapeace.gov.cn, 2023). These centers collect information accumulated by China's 4.5 million grid management workers (Dong, 2022). Municipal-level comprehensive management centers contain a data center 数据中心 that analyzes and judges how to respond to suspicious or risky behavior, as described below in the case of Chengdu:

> Based on the integrated data from the city's comprehensive management center, through dynamic multidimensional data analysis, varied information can be harvested to support customized analysis, statistical analysis, and response assessment. Charts and graphs intuitively display analytical results and can provide information support for leaders to understand the city's security situation in real time through scientific decision making, [thus] providing a basis for comprehensive, accurate, and dynamic data-based decision making for the city's public order prevention and control arrangements and deployment. (Political and Legal Affairs Commission of Chengdu, Sichuan, 2019)

While most large cities already had comprehensive management centers in one form or another by 2015, in that year central authorities required such centers to be built at all levels of administration down to the village and *shequ* level to promote integration (Gov.cn, 2015). In many places these centers are linked to the smart city grid information platform and are

incorporated into the city cloud platform (Heihe ribao, 2023). The functions of the CMPO centers are extensive. For instance, the Chengdu municipal CMPO center integrates surveillance technology, comprehensive management of public order, receiving letters and visits by disaffected citizens, stability maintenance, emergency management, and data analysis of real-time events. The center has various teams that manage discrete areas including special population groups such as the migrant population and parolees, youth justice, investigation and mediation of conflicts and disputes, stability on educational campuses, manufacturing-sector accidents, and so forth. It also functions as a hub for statistical analysis of early-warning research on various matters, especially where assessment of these data may require government or public security units to respond to a particular social stability issue. It also has GIS-based map displays, which provide platform support for governance over, and service of, special population groups. This platform support also extends to other functions such as the management and patrolling of various units and sites, and the management and analysis of various safety incidents (Political and Legal Affairs Commission of Chengdu, Sichuan, 2019). Like the hundreds of thousands of other centers around the country, the Chengdu center has a mobile app system that transfers information from the grid management system to mobile terminals. Grid management staff out on the streets use the app to both report dangers, conflicts, disputes, and other incidents and obtain information about an event or an individual. The local neighborhood grid management command center processes real-time reporting by individuals who have installed set-top boxes on their televisions at home, making it easier for members of the public to report incidents. A useful function of the "Sharp Eyes + grid management" interface is its use of video surveillance and analysis platforms located in comprehensive management centers, which can send and receive data on "special groups of people in public places" (Political and Legal Affairs Commission of Chengdu, Sichuan, 2019).

Integrating Party Leadership into Safe China

We noted above that the party has expanded its vision of the Overall National Security Outlook over time to incorporate political security, which is now China's primary security priority. What applies to the expansion in the rationalization of China's grand strategy for security in general also applies to the concept of Safe China in particular. The idea of making political security the primary priority of Safe China began to appear in statements in late 2017, after Xi Jinping put forward a new assertion about the basic requirements of "taking political security as the foundation" and "improving the national

security system" in the report of the Nineteenth Party Congress (Yang, 2018; Wang, 2019; Guo, 2021). Party theorists and propagandists now rationalize expanding the remit of Safe China activity to include the all-important ingredient of political security because the nation's people cannot enjoy a stable social order and harmony without political stability (Wang, 2019; 12371.cn, 2021; Huang, 2020, 2022).

After the Nineteenth Party Congress in 2017, the refocusing of Safe China and the Overall National Security Outlook toward political security embedded party organizations and party leadership further into grassroots society, down to the lowest levels. As the various provincial Ping'an construction regulations attest to, this arrangement is deemed by the party as the most effective way to coordinate and supervise the actions of government and community workers across grid management, smart governance, social organization participation, and the work of CMPO centers. Areas that promote their Safe China activities in media releases increasingly highlight the role of local party committees in coordinating Safe China activity. In Heihe, Heilongjiang province, for example, party leadership has grown into a "six-level-linkage party organizational chain system" 六级联动党的组织链条体系 encompassing the city, district, township/street, village, residential building complex, and large residential courtyards. As an article in *Heihe Daily* 黑河日报 described, "party-building" 党建 drives and activates the "nerve endings" of grassroots governance. In order to build an integrated organizational system encompassing all aspects of the city, and which "is vertical from top to bottom, horizontal from one edge to the other, interpenetrating, and with coordinated development," authorities promote a "party organization + grid construction process" (Heihe ribao, 2023).

At the bottom of the political tree, political developments since 2017 have seen a general shift "toward a more Party-centered approach, with clear efforts to reconstitute the CCP as the locus of neighborhood governance" (Kan and Ku, 2021: 79). One key political and legal affairs commission member in all townships across the nation now oversees all social governance and Safe China activity under the direction of the township party committee (Renmin ribao, 2023). Promoting social governance through party building at the rural grassroots has involved the expansion of party-building activity through the creation of new "red communities" and "red residential properties" that serve as recruitment bases to attract both old and young members of society, including "'new rural sages' 新乡贤 such as wealth experts, village talents, veterans, and college-student village representatives." This strategy aims to "integrate decentralized, individualized and socially atomized individuals into the grassroots governance framework" (Han and Liu, 2022: 133).

At the top of the political tree, the release of the 2019 "CCP Regulations on Political-Legal Work" 中国共产党政法工作条例 (hereafter the "2019 Regulations") (Gov.cn, 2019), and subsequent "implementation rules" 实施细则 issued at the provincial and municipal levels, precipitated a more direct supervisory role for party committees over political-legal affairs. More importantly, the 2019 Regulations identified, for the first time, the party's "absolute leadership" 绝对领导 over all political-legal work, making the political-legal system the only system outside the military system that is led, "in absolute terms," by the party (Yu and Yang, 2019; Huang, 2020). In addition, the 2019 Regulations also earmarked Safe China as a top priority in Xi-era political-legal work. Article 5 of the 2019 Regulations states that the main tasks of political-legal work are "to carry out work under the strong leadership of the CCP Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core, to promote the construction of Safe China" (Gov.cn, 2019). The release of the 2019 Regulations coincided with the Fourth Plenum of the Nineteenth Party Congress in 2019 that elevated Safe China to a "new level" of importance according to the then-head of the CPLC (Guo, 2021).

An important new step in the development of Safe China came in April 2020 with the establishment of the new Safe China Construction Organization and Coordination Small Group that is positioned within the CPLC but, importantly, responsible directly to the CCP Central Committee (Li, 2020; Wang, 2020). This new body is responsible for the overall planning, organization and coordination, supervision, and assessment of all Ping'an construction initiatives across the nation. Four specialized teams were established under the broader group, covering municipal social governance, public order, political security, and public safety (Wang, 2020). After mid-2020, similar teams were replicated in local jurisdictions across China (Wang, 2020). These teams are responsible for integrating the deployment, organization and coordination, and guidance and supervision of the Ping'an construction work within their jurisdictions. In the Ping'an construction accountability chain, local governments are subordinate to the local Ping'an construction organization and coordination agency. Their work is to implement and to incorporate Ping'an construction into their economic and social development plans and annual plans, perform Ping'an-construction-related duties, and include funds for Ping'an construction work in their annual budgets at each corresponding level.

The Safe China Construction Organization and Coordination Small Group also ensures that Safe China's primary priority—political security—remains in top position and, importantly, gives the party the potential to expand its definition of what is political security according to changes in its security outlook. Not only is political security now the top priority of Safe China, as

reflected in the provincial regulations, but what is included as "political secu-rity" has now taken on a "maximalist" vision similar to the connection between political security and ideological security under the Overall National Security Outlook (Blanchette, 2022). For instance, the "Tianjin Municipality Ping'an Construction Regulations" devote an entire chapter to political secu-rity, going beyond the conventional list of national security threats. Political security now includes implementing ideological fortification: promoting "advanced socialist culture" and promoting the "excellent traditional cul-ture"; "strengthening patriotism, collectivism, and socialism with Chinese characteristics" and "educating, cultivating and practicing socialist core val-ues"; "preventing and resisting the influence of bad culture" and "firmly maintaining ideological security"; "adhering to the main line of building the consciousness of people across the Chinese nation"; "deepening the educa-tion of ethnic unity and progress"; "actively guiding religions to adapt to socialist society"; "protecting physical and mental health"; and "protecting the national education system," among other activities (Tianjin Municipal People's Congress, 2022). These tasks capture the essence of the Safe China project. It is intended not merely to maintain stability in the present but also to create the conditions under long-term harmony and stability for the "grand Ping'an" strategy to usher in an age of national rejuvenation by integrating ideology, mechanisms, and organizations of control for the primary priority of political security, all under the party's integrated leadership.

Conclusion

The CCP's Overall National Security Outlook is China's "grand strategy" for governance. Under Xi Jinping, the party has broadened the boundaries of the types of social behavior and thought it deems capable of threatening national security and inducing instability. The party is constructing a regime of activi-ties to respond comprehensively to multiple security risks and is doing so under the umbrella of Ping'an Zhongguo. Ping'an embodies the concepts of "peace" and "safety." Rendered in English as "Safe China," Ping'an Zhongguo links national security with societal security. In so doing, Safe China's regime of activities focuses on both public order (i.e., policing-related activities) and on minimizing the myriad risks that might lead to social disorder (e.g., pov-erty, crime, moral decadence, anxiety, and other mental health issues, emer-gencies, and so on). Broadening the aperture of what the party deems to be a threat to security has required it to broaden the aperture of its response. In other words, the party is seeking to build a totalizing stability generation and maintenance regime that can respond comprehensively, and in a coordinated way, to the breadth and various dimensions of its (self-defined) risks.

Integration is the animating principle of Safe China. This security behemoth aims to integrate ideology, mechanisms, organizations of control, and crucially, information, all under one roof. Placing multiple public order and social governance mechanisms under the umbrella of Safe China is a strategy aimed at integrating these mechanisms to produce a compounding effect. And as we have argued above, by more deeply integrating the party within and across governance capacity building, the Safe China framework is designed for the political security of the party itself. It is intended to create a more governable society, that is, a risk-free society. This is to be achieved by generating "peace" through pacifying potential discontent via service provision and "safety" through maintaining stability through social control.

Under the Ping'an banner, the party is configuring horizontal and vertical interlinkages between and across all who are governed and all who are involved in governing, aiming to achieve comprehensive management. By establishing this all-embracing infrastructure, the party leadership is working to lock in its own version of socialist understanding and behavior, in a nation now prospering economically through the operation of the market. But perhaps most crucial of all, through this Ping'an approach to "modernizing governance capacity," the party leadership inextricably embeds the party and party supremacy into the state, society, and nation. The full-scale penetration and ineluctable grasp of Ping'an seeks to ensure the party's absolute leadership and authority, far into the future.

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