Research Report

Reformed Migration Control and New Targeted People: China's *Hukou* System in the 2000s*

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ABSTRACT This article outlines the latest reforms of China's *hukou* system in 1997–2002 and reports the system's functional changes and continuities. Today's *hukou* system still performs two leading functions: the widely discussed internal migration control with reformed mechanisms and the previously scarcely examined socio-political management of the targeted people (*zhongdian renkou*). An adapted and adjusted *hukou* system is expected to continue as a key component of China's institutional framework, playing a crucial role to determine socio-political stability, facilitate a rapid but uneven economic growth, and shape socio-economic stratification and spatial inequality in the PRC.

China's *hukou* (household or residential registration) system has largely survived the two-decade economic reform and opening of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the early 2000s, the *hukou* system demonstrates both significant changes and remarkable continuities in its administration and especially its leading functions. It continues to register and identify the 1.3 billion Chinese by their location and administrative categories (rural versus urban), with profound consequences to the life chances of the people in different *hukou* locations and categories.[1]

Currently, the *hukou* system still operates behind the thick curtains of informality and secrecy. Hundreds of ever-changing directives and decrees governing the system mostly remain to be classified or are "for internal use only."[2] So are the government publications that report and discuss the structure and the operations of the system. Furthermore, the national database of the collected *hukou* information (such as the size of the various segments of the targeted people) is classified as "secrets"

* I would like to thank the late Robert W. Barnett for encouragement and many others for assistance.

1. Tiejun Cheng, "Dialectics of control: the household registration (*hukou*) system in contemporary China," PhD dissertation, SUNYT-Binghamton, 1991. Tiejun Cheng and Mark Selden, "The origins and social consequences of China's *hukou* system," *The China Quarterly* (1994). Dorothy J. Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). The special issue (guest edited by Zhang Tingting) of *Chinese Law and Government,* May–June 2001. In some areas, the administrative distinction between the rural and urban residents is now being glossed over and even erased in various experimental reforms. See below.

2. The "internal only" materials are not available to the public but legally are not "state secrets." Gao Guiting (ed.), *Baowei gongzuo tonglun* (*General Discourse on Protection Work*) (Beijing: Jingguan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1994), p. 322.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741004000074 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(*mimi*), "critical secrets" (*jimi*) or even "top secrets" (*juemi*) and can only be partially released after specific approvals.[3]

The *hukou* system's much examined function of resource allocation and subsidization to the urbanites has now been reduced and even replaced by the advancing market forces, as the urban rations of food and many other supplies have now either disappeared or become insignificant.[4] The administration of the well-known function of internal migration control is now reformed, relaxed and localized, giving rise to increased mobility of the population in general and the rural labourers in particular.[5] The other highly crucial, albeit much less known, function of the *hukou* system, the management of the targeted people (*zhongdian renkou*), however, remains highly centralized, rigid and forceful.

This article seeks to outline and report the *hukou* system's functional changes and continuities. There has been significant scholarship on the changes of the migration-control function of the system in the reform years.[6] To that I will only add the latest information by describing the so-called "deep reform" of the system in 1997–2002. I will point out, however, that the migration-control function of the *hukou* system still demonstrates remarkable continuity as the governing principles of internal migration regulation remain fundamentally unchanged. I will more specifically outline and examine the management of the targeted people in some detail, hoping to show that changes of this function so far are mainly technical and marginal. There actually is a tendency for this socio-political control function to be improved and enhanced in the early 2000s.

3. For example, unreleased *hukou* data and local data on the targeted people is classified as *mimi*, the national data base of the targeted people is classified as *jimi*, and the national data of arrested criminals, especially the "counter-revolutionaries" or anti-state criminals, is classified as *juemi*. Ministry of Public Security regulations in Liu Donglin (ed.), *Gong'an baowei shouce* (*Handbook on Public Security Protection*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1989), pp. 424–25. These three types of classifications usually expire in 10, 20 and 30 years respectively although a particular piece of information can be classified "indefinitely." Gao Guiting, *General Discourse on Protection Work*, p. 323. The legal basis for classifying documents in the PRC is the PRC Law on Protecting State Secrets, which took effect on 1 May 1989.

4. Urban *hukou* holders in major cities, however, still enjoy significant state subsidies in housing, healthcare, employment and especially education. In 2001, for example, a Beijing resident could get into college with a minimum admission score that is 140 points (or 28% of the national average score) lower than the minimum score in Shangdong province. *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (*Chinese Youth Daily*), July–August 2001.

5. Kam Wing Chan and Li Zhang, "The *hukou* system and rural–urban migration in China: processes and changes," *The China Quarterly* (1999), pp. 831–840.

6. Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship*; Delia Davin, *Internal Migration in Contemporary China* (New York: Palgrave, 1999); Michael R Dutton, *Policing and Punishment in China: From Patriarchy to "The People"* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Lei Guang, "Reconstructing the rural–urban divide: peasant migration and the rise of 'orderly migration' in Contemporary China," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 10–28 (2001), pp. 471–493; Jianhong Liu, Lening Zhang and Steven F. Messner (eds.), *Crime and Social Control in a Changing China* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001); Hein Mallee, "China's household registration system under reform," in *Development and Change*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (January 1995); Kam Wing Chan and Li Zhang, "The *hukou* system and rural–urban migration," pp. 818–855; and David Zweig, *Freeing China's Farmers: Rural Restructuring in the Reform Era* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

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Hukou Administration: Improvements and Reforms

In the 2000s, the official role of the PRC *hukou* system remains unchanged. Internally, it is designed to perform one common governance duty (to collect and manage the information of citizens' personal identification, kinship and legal residence) and two "unique missions": to control internal migration through managing temporary residents/visitors; and to have a tiered management of *zhongdian renkou* (targeted people) in the population.[7]

The *hukou* system is an administrative system with sketchy legal foundations. Other than the 1958 "Regulation on *hukou* registration of the People's Republic of China" and the 1985 "Regulation on resident's personal identification card in the PRC," the system has been governed and regulated by mostly "internal" decrees and directives.[8] It is not even mentioned in the PRC Constitution or Civil Codes. There have been talks in Beijing since the 1980s about making a PRC *hukou* law to ground this important system firmly in modern legal language. Yet as at 2002 this effort is still at a very early stage with no date of completion in sight.[9]

The administrators of the *hukou* system remain the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) and the local police stations (*paichusuo*). Administrative localization has increasingly taken place in the reform era, as exemplified by the so-called "blue-stamp" *hukou* schemes that have various qualification and implementation procedures in different localities to allow the migration of selected groups of people.[10] In April 2002, Shanghai suspended granting blue-stamp *hukou* to those who had purchased a "commercial" housing unit in the city, due to "too much pressure from the new residents." But neighbouring cities like Nanjing continue to lure the rich to buy their apartments with their blue-stamp *hukou* quotas. Some other cities have now simply replaced the blue-stamp *hukou* with entry-condition based permanent *hukou*.[11]

To manage the massive files of the *hukou* system, the MPS started to establish an electronic database in 1986 and received special funding for national computerization of the system in 1992. By 2002 almost all (more than 30 thousand) police stations had computerized their *hukou* management. Some 1,180 cities and counties joined regional computer networks

7. Jiang Xianjin and Luo Feng (eds.), *Jingcha yewu shiyong quanshu – zhi'an guanli juan* (*Complete Guide of Police Works – Volume on Public Security Management*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1996), pp. 218 and 220. Bureau of Personnel and Training–Ministry of Public Security (BPT–MPS), *Huzheng guanli jiaocheng* (*The Text Book on Hukou Management*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 2000), pp. 5 and 161–173.

8. Wang Huai'an *et al.* (eds.), *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo fali quanshu* (*Complete Collections of the Laws of the People's Republic of China*) (Changchun: Jilin renmin chubanshe, 1989).

9. One Chinese National People's Congress deputy did propose a bill for *hukou* law in March 2001 (Associated Press, Beijing, 15 March 2001). But it had no chance of even being included in the legislature agenda. Author's interviews with *hukou* officials and the Chinese National People's Congress officials, summer 2002.

10. Kam Wing Chan and Li Zhang, "The *hukou* system and rural–urban migration," pp. 836–840. Blue-stamp *hukou* is named so because, instead of the regular red seal applied on the *hukou* form and booklet, the *hukou* police will apply a blue seal.

11. Author's interviews in Beijing, Shanghai and Jiangsu, summer 2002.

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for file-sharing of the *hukou* records of a total of 1.07 billion people (about 83 per cent of the total population), and 250 cities joined one single national computer network to allow for instantaneous verification of *hukou* information covering 650 million people (about half the total population).[12] In 2002, the MPS further required all hotels with at least 50 beds to have computer links to transmit the photos of all guests instantaneously to the local police station.[13]

From the late 1990s, many in China have openly criticized the *hukou* system for creating population immobility, economic irrationality, and market segmentation and retardation.[14] Others have increasingly questioned the morality and ethics of the incomplete citizenship of the excluded rural residents, the uneven regional development and the horizontal stratification in the nation.[15] External factors, such as China's accession into the World Trade Organization in 2001, the call for "conformity to international standards" especially "national citizen [equal] treatment of foreign investors and businessmen," have highlighted and energized those criticisms. So far, reforms of the *hukou* system have exclusively focused on the system's function of restricting internal migration.[16] The *hukou*-based monitoring and control of the targeted people has never even been mentioned in open publications. Internally, the general opinion of discussions has actually advocated more effective measures for socio-political control under the *hukou* system primarily in the name of public security and fighting crime.[17]

The PRC launched a new round of "deep" reform of the *hukou* system on 10 June 1997 when the State Council approved the MPS's "Experimental plans on reforming the *hukou* system in small cities and towns" and "Suggestions on improving rural *hukou* management." The experimental stage was replaced with a national implementation of the

12. Department of Politics–Ministry of Public Security (DOP–MPS), *Gong'an yewu jichu zhishi* (*Basic Knowledge of Public Security Works*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1999), pp. 75–76. *Zhongguo qingnian bao* (*Chinese Youth Daily*), Beijing, 5 January 2002.

13. "E jingcha kaishi liangxian, huji dang'an jiang dianzihua" ("E-police starts to emerge and *hukou* files will be electronic"), www.news.china.com, accessed on 19 February 2002. The police believed that several high-profile criminal cases in 2002 were solved because of the *hukou* police's routine but now faster gathering and monitoring of hotel registration information. Author's interviews in Beijing and Shanghai, 2002.

14. Wu Pengsen, "Mingongchao dui Zhongguo xibu diqu fazhan chaju de fumian yingxiang" ("The negative impact of the tide of migrant peasant workers on the economic backwardness in the western regions"), in *Shehui* (*Society*), Shanghai, No. 7 (2001), pp. 4–6. "Yiweizhe shenfen butong? tequan? jiedu hukou zhenshi yiyi" ("Does it mean different identity? Privileges? To understand the real meaning of *hukou*"), *Zhongguo qingnian bao*, 12 August 2001.

15. Liu Juhua, "Zhuanjia cheng huji zhidu yiuli yu 'xianfa' zhiwai ji bu pingdeng" ("Experts say that the *hukou* system is floating outside the constitution and extremely unfair"), *Renmin ribao* (*People's Daily*), Beijing, 4 September 2001. *Zhongguo qingnian bao*, 26 July 2001.

16. For an extensive collection of the "internal" but dominant views on the *hukou* system and its necessity, see Wang Taiyuan, *Huzheng yu renkou guanli lilun yanjiu zhongshu* (*Comprehensive Summary on the Theoretical Study on the Hukou System and Population Management*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1997).

17. For examples, see *ibid.*; Li Zhongxin, *Zhongguo shequ jingwu yanjiu* (*Study on China's Community Policing*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1999).

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reform on 30 March 2001. This round of reform, however, has been largely put on hold nationally since mid-2002 so as to secure a "stable and united environment" for the CCP's 16th Party Congress in November 2002. Whether the reform will resume or even somewhat deepen, as promised by senior officials, remains uncertain under the new leadership of Hu Jintao.

The 1997–2002 reform of the *hukou* system includes four aspects. First, there is a general relaxation of internal migration restrictions especially for certain selected groups of people such as elderly parents, children, and highly educated "talents" and skilled workers. A streamlining of internal migration procedures for temporary or permanent migration (*qianyi*) has also taken place nation-wide.[18]

Secondly, on 1 October 2001, the government began to abolish the decade-old rural-to-urban migration quota system in all small cities and towns (defined as county-level cities, county seats and established towns).[19] Anyone who has a stable non-agricultural income and a permanent residence in a small city or town for at least two years will automatically qualify for an urban *hukou* and become a permanent local resident.[20] Some medium and even large cities are also authorized to do the same, with a higher and more specific income, employment and residence requirement.[21] The government plans to use five years to complete this reform to "establish an integrated labour market for urban and rural residents in Eastern China … in order to eliminate market segmentation there."[22]

Thirdly, the localized practice of selective migration to the major cities, nicknamed "*hukou* for talents and investments," is further polished, repackaged and nationally adopted. Under the new regulations, major urban centres openly set high prices for their much sought-after *hukou*.[23] Highly educated workers with at least a college degree hired by local employers can now easily get local *hukou* in most Chinese cities.[24] The going rate for a set of three Beijing urban *hukou* (self, spouse and one child) involves no less than being a multi-millionaire investor or a foreign

18. Much of these relaxations have already been reported and documented in English. See Kam Wing Chan and Li Zhang, "The *hukou* system and rural–urban migration," and the special issue of *Chinese Law and Government,* May–June 2001.

19. *Renmin ribao*, Beijing, 24 September 2001, p. 9. *South China Morning Post*, 29 September 2001. *Nanfang dushibao* (*Southern Metro Daily*), Guangzhou, 8 September 2001, and China New Agency News Dispatch, Guangzhou, 24 September 2001.

20. But "all the migration registration procedures are still to be followed strictly." *Zhongguo minzhen* (*China Civil Affairs*) Beijing, No. 11 (November 2001), p. 57.

21. *Renmin ribao*, Beijing, 4 September 2001.

22. Shen Wenmin, "Guanyu huji zhidu gaige de wenda" ("Q and A on the *hukou* system reforms") *Renmin ribao – huadong ban* (*People's Daily – Eastern China Edition*), Shanghai, 29 August 2001, p. 3.

23. Chinese Central TV, *Jingji banxiaoshi* (*Half Hour on the Economy*) Beijing, 9 August 2001.

24. Beijing Municipal Government's "Regulations on encouraging Chinese who studied overseas to work or open business in Beijing," 1 May 2000. *Shenzhou xueren* (*Chinese Scholars*), Beijing, June 2000, p. 47.

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educated "talent."[25] Alternatively, one can purchase a high-end "commercial" unit or apartment to qualify as a local *hukou* applicant – a one-off spending of at least 500 thousand RMB cash, 30 times the average annual wage in Beijing.[26] Similar schemes exist in Shanghai, with a slightly lower price tag.[27] To "purchase" a major city's urban *hukou* this way is still subject to the available moving-in quota. Furthermore, openly showing off huge wealth is not very wise socially and safety-wise in a society that is increasingly polarizing in income distribution.[28] In Beijing, a city that has at least 2.37 million temporary *hukou* holders in 1999, only 715 families acquired local urban *hukou* through housing purchases.[29] Other than the needed skilled labour and the super-rich, China's major urban centres want few "outsiders."

Finally, a national wave of "erasing" the rural/urban distinction in the *hukou* system took place in 2001–2002. Some better developed provinces like Fujian, Guangdong, Jiangsu and Zhejiang simply abolished the legal distinction between agricultural and non-agricultural *hukou* and started to register people as either local or temporary residents. To acquire a local *hukou* and thus become a full member of the local community the applicant is still required to meet locally set "entry conditions" that usually include a stable and officially sanctioned local job (with varied minimum pay) and a local legal residence for at least two years.[30] Some provinces ventured further. Guizhou, one of the poorest provinces, decided to give a small city/town urban *hukou* to anyone who meets the income and residence requirements immediately, waiving the usual two-

25. According to one accounting expert, to live in Beijing and own a business qualifying for Beijing *hukou* under the new regulations (employing 100 workers and paying 800 thousand RMB tax a year), one must have a net worth of at least 8–16 million RMB. www.news.china.com. Accessed on 19 January 2002. However, the average asset size of private businesses in China was only 530 thousand RMB in the late 1990s. China News Agency, Beijing, 1 October 2001.

26. The "commercial" units are as opposed to "cost-priced" or economy (*anju*) housing that is subsidized for local urban residents only. *Business China*, Hong Kong, 30 August 1999, p. 4 and *China Daily*, Beijing, 24 April 2001. Since only local *hukou* holders can apply for mortgage loans and borrow from their pension plans to make the down-payment, "outsiders" must purchase those *hukou*-qualifying apartments with one-off cash payments. Chinese People's Bank, *Provisional Measure on the Management of Individual Housing Loans*, 28 April 1997.

27. To create a "new" image, Shanghai changed the name of its *hukou* system to "residential location" (*juzhudi*) in its propaganda materials in 2001. But the legal name of "*hukou* system" was still used in late 2002. The 1993 (revised in 1998) blue-stamp *hukou* measure was also updated to enhance the strategy to attract talent and money. The required price for getting a Shanghai *hukou* through purchasing an apartment is lower than that in Beijing. A "low" price has attracted "too many" outsiders to the booming city, so in April 2002, the Shanghai government stopped issuing blue-stamp *hukou* to those who purchased a commercial housing unit while still allowing the "talents" and investors coming in.

28. Mark O'Neil, "Dislike grows for incomers as wealth casts shadow on city," *South China Morning Post*, Hong Kong, 25 June 2001. Author's interviews in Beijing and Shanghai, 1999–2002.

29. "Jiujing shei cai shi zui xuyao Beijing hukou de ren?" ("Exactly who needs a Beijing *hukou* the most?"), www.news.china.com. Accessed on 6 January 2002.

30. *Hunan ribao* (*Hunan Daily*), Changsha, 20 January 2002 and *Renmin ribao – huadongban* (*People's Daily – East China Edition*), Shanghai, 9 January 2002. *Nanfang dushi bao* (*Southern Urban Daily*), Guangzhou, 8 September 2001. *Xinhua Daily Telegraph*, Beijing, 24 December 2001.

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year waiting period. Shanxi, another less developed province, used urban *hukou* to reward migrant ruralites who have moved to remote regions to reclaim desert land through tree-planting.[31] However, merely eight months into the reform, in mid-2002, Beijing ordered this national wave to remove the rural/urban distinction to stop, pending "further instructions." The suspension is primarily because of the lack of funding and infrastructure to accommodate new urban residents' massive needs in education, health care and social welfare quickly.[32]

The 1997–2002 *hukou* reform has relaxed and decentralized internal migration control mechanisms (mainly in the small cities and towns) but has not touched the socio-political control functions of the system. The majority of the over 100 million migrants or "floating population" still appear to be unable to change the location of their *hukou* permanently. In Ningbo, Zhejiang province, a national model of the *hukou* reform, only about 30 thousand migrants, less than 2 per cent of the two million migrants from the countryside (who constitute one-third of the city's total population) are expected to qualify for local *hukou* during the reform.[33] In Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, only 11 thousand migrant workers (out of 300 thousand in the city) were qualified to apply for local *hukou* in 2001. A key problem has been the difficulty for a migrant to find a stable job in the city, which has already been plagued by high unemployment for years.[34]

Limited and controlled, the latest *hukou* reform has started to change the unsightly and discriminatory legal distinction between rural and urban *hukou* holders. It is a major, albeit highly symbolic, victory of the advancing market institution and new norms of citizenship and human rights in China. However, "the *hukou* system has not been abolished but only enhanced and improved with scientific means," declared a *hukou* expert associated with the MPS. The universal residential registration, the basic principles of internal migration control (see Appendix 1), and the uniquely Chinese-style socio-political control through the management of targeted people all continue and will be further "strengthened." The *hukou* reforms are to be "well-synchronized; must consider the rational flow and allocation of talents and labour, and guarantee the stability of socio-economic order."[35]

31. *Xinhua Daily Telegraph*, Beijing, 9 August 2001.
32. *China News Weekly*, Beijing and *Huaxi dushi bao* (*Western China Metro News*), Chengdu, 5 September 2002.
33. "Ningbo hukou bilei hongran daota" ("The *hukou* barriers collapsing"), in *Nanfang zhoumu* (*Southern Weekend*), Guangzhou, 31 August 2001. *Zhongguo qingnian bao*, 17 September 2001.
34. Josephine Ma, "Farmers turn noses up at life in the city," *South China Morning Post*, Hong Kong, 17 October 2001.
35. Wang Taiyuan's interview with People's Net News on 1 October 2001. Accessed on 19 January 2002.

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Reformed Internal Migration Control

China's current internal migration control under the *hukou* system has a mixture of changes and continuities. First, state employment is still the main avenue for permanent change of one's *hukou* location and type. An urban *hukou* is automatically granted to anyone who becomes an official or cadre at or above the level of section chief (*kezhang*) or township head, or a military officer at or above the rank of platoon leader. The higher the rank the higher the mobility. For those senior cadres (*gaogan*) or cadres above the prefecture head/bureau chief level (or military officers at or above the rank of division commander), they and their immediate family members can practically choose any city other than Beijing to live after leaving office.[36] A Beijing *hukou* is readily available at any time to those "Party and state leaders" (at or above the CCP Central Committee secretary, State Council councillor/vice-premier, CNPC vice-chairman or commander of a military region).

Secondly, the rich have now achieved a *de facto* national mobility in the PRC. Under the localized schemes of selectively granting transitional (blue-stamp) or even permanent *hukou*, businessmen and all sorts of wealthy people can now easily acquire a local urban *hukou* in any city. They just have either to make a large job-creating investment or to spend great sums of cash on real estate purchases.[37]

Thirdly, a *de facto* mobility is now granted to the highly educated and the talented. A graduate of any state-accredited college, graduate school or selected professional school is guaranteed an urban *hukou* upon graduation in the place where his state-assigned job is, or his guaranteed urban *hukou* will be automatically relocated to the city or township nearest to his original hometown. A skilled worker can now easily get a blue-stamp or even a permanent *hukou* in most cities if his employer is qualified and willing to sponsor him. Expelled or dropout college students must be relocated to their home town or village without an urban *hukou* guarantee.[38] This way, both the Chinese "virtuocracy" and "meritocracy" are granted mobility privileges above the confines of the *hukou* system.

Those who have received postgraduate degrees are granted more mobility. A PhD degree holder (and his immediate family) in any field, for example, is now allowed to relocate his *hukou* to any city of his choice, with or without a local employment or family ties.[39] A master's degree can also allow its holder to take advantage of various local

36. CCP Central Organization Department *et al*., *Notice on Reaffirmation of Restricting Cadres Moving into Beijing*, 1 May 1981.

37. See the various regulations governing blue-stamp *hukou* issued by the municipal governments of Dalian, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Shanghai, Taiyuan, 1992–2002. www.news.china.com. Accessed on 23 March 2002.

38. Wang Hongjun (ed.), *Gongmin dao gong'an jiguan banshi zhinan* (*Guide to Citizens' Handling of Various Matters in the Public Security Agencies*) (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin gong'an daxue chubanshe, 1999), p. 33.

39. For the special *hukou* policy regarding the PhD degree holders and their families, see Personnel Ministry documents [1992], Nos. 11, 16 and 23, in Legal Bureau of Personnel Ministry (ed.), *Renshi gongzuo wenjian xunbian (15)* (*Selected Documents on Personnel Works–15*) (Beijing: Zhongguo renshi chubanshe, 1993), pp. 393–420.

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policies that offer preference and flexibility in *hukou* registration and relocation. Some localities have tried to attract people who have won national or international awards such as an Olympic medal by granting them up to three local urban *hukou*.[40] As a consequence, an internal brain drain develops in China where the highly educated and talented are flocking to the desired metropolitan areas even when that means they have to abandon their profession or speciality or take undesirable jobs.[41] This highly prized mobility and other privileges attached to degrees and academic titles and ranks have led to the widespread occurrence of "academic corruption" that has sometimes made academic degrees and credentials purchasable in universities and academic circles.[42]

Fourthly, reforms have made marriage a new way of internal migration. After 1998, the children of a rural–urban or cross-region couple can choose to inherit either the mother's or the father's *hukou* type and location.[43] That change removed one major barrier in China's internal migration, since traditionally and culturally, a rural–urban marriage usually takes place between an urban male and a rural female and rarely the contrary. Marriage, it seems, now has become a more meaningful way for *hukou* relocation, at least for the next generation. Hence in one central district of Beijing, for example, marriages between Beijing *hukou* holders and non-Beijing *hukou* holders suddenly jumped from 11 per cent of all marriages registered in the district in 1998 to 22 per cent in 1999.[44]

Fifthly, the government has manipulated the *hukou* system to direct internal migration. "Upward" *hukou* changes have been granted to people such as science and technology personnel, excavation workers, state workers of "hardships" in remote areas, correctional officers (prison managers), veterans with extraordinary or first degree disabilities, exonerated purged cadres, those who were sent to work on the Tibetan Plateau, workers of travelling jobs such as sailors and geographers, and peasants

40. Not only do many urban centres use their attractive *hukou* to selectively admit "useful" new residents, some wealthy rural communities (such as the highly promoted and very prosperous Jinghua Corporation or Group No. Five of Eastern Street of Xiaoji township of Xinxiang county in Henan province) also "use [local] *hukou* to attract and reward outside talents." Cao Jinqing, *Huanghe bian de Zhongguo: yi ge xuezhe dui xiangcun shehui de guanca yu sikao* (*China by the Yellow River: A Scholarly Observation and Reflection of the Rural Society*) (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi chubanshe, 2000), pp. 442.

41. To mitigate the internal brain drain, the government also requires the universities to admit some *daipei sheng* (students educated specifically for their hometowns). They are paid for their education by their hometowns/provinces and must return after graduation or face a heavy fine. Author's interview with senior university officials in Shanghai. 2000.

42. See the cases reported in Yang Shoujian, *Zhongguo xueshu fubai pipan* (*Critique of China's Academic Corruption*) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 2001), especially pp. 95–143 and 187–303. For an investigation about the "dark inside" of graduate programme admissions, see *Zhongguo qingnian bao*, 28 November 2000.

43. Still, if the father's or stepfather's *hukou* is in a major or large city, the child will have to wait for the available quota. State Council approved Ministry of Public Security Document *Guanyu jiejue dangqian hukou guanli gongzuo zhong de ji ge tuochu wenti de yijian* (*Suggestions on Solving Some of the Major Issues in the Current Hukou Management Work*), Beijing, July 1998.

44. Ji Chuanpai, "Yidi hunyin duo qilai" ("Cross-region marriages increased"), in *Beijing ribao* (*Beijing Daily*), 27 August 1999

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whose land has been taken over by the state for urbanization and economic development.[45]

The *hukou* police still register each temple, monastery, church, mosque and shrine as a "collective household." After being approved and accepted by the legally registered and accredited religious organizations,[46] a clerk, priest or monk from a rural area can be granted a non-agricultural or urban *hukou* at the place where he lives and works as a full-time cleric away from his family. Upon leaving the religious organization or returning to secular life, however, the clerks are to restore their original *hukou* type and location.[47]

Finally, *hukou* relocation has been frequently used as a legal weapon. The PRC courts commonly add an additional penalty to certain sentences, banning the convict's *hukou* relocation back to his home town after serving the jail time. His *hukou* will become a local *hukou* in the city or town nearest to his labour camp or prison, usually in less developed and scarcely populated areas. Repeat offenders or those who attempted to escape "must not regain the *hukou* they had from major and medium cities (cities that have over 300 thousand urban *hukou* holders)."[48] They may regain their original urban *hukou* if they can prove satisfactory rehabilitation after three years.[49] Over the decades, such a forced permanent re-settlement has actually created some new townships and villages in western China.

Social Control and the Targeted People

The PRC police are the administrators of the *hukou* system and each police station (*paichusuo*) has full-time *hukou* officers in charge of a *hukou* zone. For every 500–700 households in a police precinct (or as many as 2,000 in some areas), there is one nationally mandated full-time field *hukou* police officer who is responsible for getting to know every resident in the households. The field officer often works as a plain-clothes but well-known detective in the neighbourhood to collect, verify and update *hukou* information, in the name of managing the system and safeguarding political order, social stability and public security.

In the early 2000s, China has a total of over 300 thousand *hukou* police field officers. They are to collect and update information in eight categories on each resident in the precinct: basic information (the information on the *hukou* registration form)[50]; current behaviour including political

45. State Council document [1992], No. 65, and Personnel Ministry documents [1992], Nos. 11, 16 and 23. In Legal Bureau of Personnel Ministry *Selected Documents on Personnel Works*, pp. 548–551.

46. The PRC's national network of religious association and bureaus of civil affairs are responsible for accrediting and registering religious organizations.

47. Wang Hongjun, *Guide to Citizens' Handling of Various Matters*, pp. 45–46.

48. Chen Chunnong, *Gongmin falü guwen* (*Legal Reference for Citizens*) (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 1986), pp. 166–67.

49. Wang Hongjun, *Guide to Citizens' Handling of Various Matters*, pp. 48–49.

50. The form is in BPT-MPS 2000, pp. 66–67. For an English description of it, see Zhang Tingting, *Chinese Law and Government*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741004000074 Published online by Cambridge University Press

activities; family and personal financial status and life style; personal friends and relations (including love relations); physical features including body size and body shape; usage of accent and slang; personal character and hobbies; and daily associations and other "consequential" past activities.[51]

In addition to the state-paid police officers who are all urban *hukou* holders (even when they work in the rural areas), each police station usually has a large number of assistants. The police assistants are not state employees and are hired by police stations from the local communities, and hence can be rural *hukou* holders. They are paid by the station and the local (usually the township or district) government.[52]

The *hukou* police rely heavily on the "public security activists" such as the street or residential committee members and the so-called "eyes and ears of public security" (*zhi'an ermu*), secret informants cultivated and used by the police to collect, verify and update information on every resident in the neighbourhood.[53] According to official regulations, each urban *hukou* zone usually has one to several street or residential committees. Each committee typically has 100 to 600 households and the households are organized into residential groups of 15 to 40 households each.[54]

The unfeasibility of monitoring everyone, even with massive mobilization of the residents, prompted the police to focus its resources on the most threatening and most undesirable people, the so-called targeted people (*zhongdian renkou*), from the embryonic days of the PRC *hukou* system in 1949. Modelled after the Qing dynasty's *hukou* practice of "other" or "special" records (*lingce*), the police have a tiered or layered (*fencengci*) population management, allowing the state to segment and control the targeted people and hence achieve an effective and efficient control of the population, "to protect good people and restrict bad people."[55] The reform era has made comprehensive monitoring of the people even less practical as there has been an impressive advance of the market economy and opening to the world, political decentralization and social relaxation, increased population mobility, deep and extensive political cynicism among the citizens, and the widespread corruption of

51. For the details of these duties, see BPT-MPS 2000, pp. 148–151.

52. The police assistants are commonly called *lianfang duiyuan* (joint-defence team members) or *zhi'an yuan* (public security personnel). They normally get paid about one-third to half of a police officer's salary. Some of their pay comes from the income of the various fines collected by the police station. (A police station typically gets to use 60% of the fines it collected). Cao Jinqing, *China by the Yellow River*, pp. 464–65.

53. Those informants indeed play a crucial, albeit secretive, role in the operation of the targeted people management and the Chinese police work in general. For instructions to the local police on how to recruit, cultivate, manage and utilize informants, see MPS-Personnel Training Bureau, *Zhi'an jicheng jichu jiaocheng* (*Basic Textbook on Public Security in the Local Communities*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1999), pp. 234–252.

54. Chen Chunnong, *Legal Reference for Citizens*, pp 112–13. The street committee system was set up in the mid-1950s and continued in the early 2000s.

55. Sun Yao, *Hukou guanlixue jiaocheng* (*Textbook on Hukou Management*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1994), pp. 104 and 37.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741004000074 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the PRC officials including the police. Hence an even higher need for the targeted people scheme.

The MPS periodically and secretly informs the *hukou* police nationwide on who should be classified as targeted people and requires the police to monitor them in a more-or-less uniform way. For example, in a major city like Beijing, the *hukou* police are now required to know only two of the eight categories of information about the general population (basic information and current behaviour). But for the targeted people, they are expected to compile and update information in all eight categories plus meeting some *ad hoc* information requests.[56] Furthermore, the police are instructed to monitor the targeted people openly and secretly as closely as possible, review their cases and "educate" them as necessary, and detain them at the earliest warning signs. Often, especially during periodical national or regional *yanda* (strike hard against crime) or *saohei* (sweeping organized crime) campaigns, the targeted people, together with undocumented "floating" people, are pre-emptively detained and interrogated without evidence of criminal activities.[57]

Targeted people management appears to be highly useful. In one city, nearly 40 per cent of criminal cases were reported to be solved based on the information provided by the targeted people management work.[58] The even more secretive police work of "political investigation" and anti-espionage operations by the MPS and the Ministry of State Security, also appear frequently to utilize the assistance of targeted people management.[59]

The Evolution of the Black List

In the "Draft of the provisional regulation on the management of the special population," issued by the MPS on 12 August 1950, five types of people were listed as special residents to be closely monitored and controlled: bandits, spies, local tyrants, cadres of reactionary parties and groups, and leaders of reactionary superstition sects and secret societies. Naturally, these special residents usually became the main targets of the numerous political campaigns. In Beijing alone, 12.5 per cent of all the arrests during the "suppressing counter-revolutionaries" (*zhenfan*) of 1950–52 and 74.5 per cent of all the arrests during the subsequent

56. Interview with *hukou* police in Chongwen District, Beijing, 1999–2001.

57. Xi Guoguang *et al*. (eds.), *Zhongguo renmin gong'an shigao* (*Draft History of the Chinese People's Public Security*) (Beijing: Jingguan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), pp. 371–380. Started in 1983 and with increased frequency (from once every 1–2 years in the mid-1980s to more than once a year by the late 1990s), the PRC has launched many "harsh striking" campaigns for various reasons, sometimes just to "clean things up" for important dates such as National Day or major international events.

58. A 1998 police report from Shijiazhuang, the capital of Hebei province, in Li Zhongxin, *Study on China's Community Policing*, p. 53.

59. MPS-Education Bureau (ed.), *Zhengzhi zhencha* (*Political Investigation*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1996), and MPS, *Baowei gongzuo* (*Protection Work*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1997). The often clandestine police work of "political investigation," however, is banned inside the CCP itself (Gao Guiting, *General Discourse on Protection Work*, p. 142).

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"eliminating counter-revolutionaries" (*sufan*) were provided by the *hukou* police based on the files of special residents.[60]

The name of the special population changed in September 1953 to *zhongdian renkou* (targeted people) and the list became longer with new additions: non-repentant family members of the counter-revolutionaries, landlords in exile, various types of "class enemies," and "suspicious" people from outside China. Targeted people management was formalized in the MPS "Provisional regulations on the management work of the targeted people" issued in 1956 and revised in 1957. These directives were effective until the 1980s, with periodical additions to the blacklist.[61]

In December 1980, the MPS revised and reissued the provisional regulation on targeted people management. The new blacklist included only four better-clarified types of residents: those suspected of counter-revolutionary activities, suspected of other criminal activities, posing a threat to public order, and suspicious ex-convicts. In order to address the rising rate of juvenile crime, the minimal age of the targeted people was lowered from 16 to 14. Several old categories of "class enemies" were dropped. After the political scare and social upheavals in 1989 and the rise of common crime, Beijing tightened its targeted people control by issuing, on 30 November 1991, a "Notice on strengthening targeted people management," which once again re-established a long list of the specified and targeted segments of the population by extending it to include six categories and 23 types of residents.

In the early 2000s, the *hukou* police manuals began to require the police be "discreet" and "respect the legal rights and confidentiality" of the specially monitored targeted people. As evidence of the progress of time and the advancement of new practices of litigation in Chinese society,[62] the legally and ethically questionable targeted people management is now operated in designed secrecy. The names of and the information collected about the targeted residents must be classified as state secrets. Even the concept of *zhongdian renkou* is treated as an "internal term" and the police are "strictly prohibited" from using it outside the police system.[63] The secrecy and low legality of the scheme naturally affect its enforcement. Local police report internally that it has become harder to manage the targeted people because the police can not cite any law or regulation to mobilize the community for assistance and co-operation in an era when increasing number of residents are mobile and aware of their legal rights.[64]

The current definition of the targeted people is in the PRC "Regulation on targeted people management" issued on 21 March 1985 and revised on

60. Sun Yao, *Textbook on Hukou Management*, p. 105.
61. BPT-MPS 2000, p. 195.
62. There has been a noticeable increase of legal cases in which Chinese citizens sue to settle disputes even with the government since the 1990s. For one case report, see Elisabeth Rosenthal, "Chinese, too, start to sue to protect their rights," *International Herald Tribune*, 18 June 2001, p. 2.
63. BPT-MPS 2000, pp. 162–64.
64. Chongqing police reports in 1998, in Li Zhongxin, *Study on China's Community Policing*, p. 43.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741004000074 Published online by Cambridge University Press

25 May 1998. This "internal" regulation finally codified, in relatively precise legal language, the targeted people management that was "provisional" for over three decades. It stipulates that both permanent residents and temporary *hukou* holders can be listed as targeted people. The total list of targeted people consists of five categories and 20 types of residents (see Appendix 2). Since statistically migrants, especially migrating peasants, are responsible for most of the crimes in the cities, the floaters are commonly an extra group of targeted people not included in the official list.[65]

In practice, a police station decides its blacklist of targeted people based on information collected through tips from informants, police case files, *hukou* files, circulars from other public security agencies, and reports from special industries (hotels, night clubs, massage parlours and video galleries).[66] The supervising public security bureaus at or above the county/city level must approve changes to the list (adding or dropping people). For category one listings, the public security bureau at or above the prefecture level must approve any changes. For each police station, there could be as many as 200 secretively listed and monitored targeted people.[67] One relatively large police station located in central Tianjin city, with 39 full-time police (12 of them *hukou* police), had 35,784 residents, 34,626 of whom were local urban *hukou* holders. It listed 247 targeted people in 1998: six in category one, 30 in category two, 205 in category three, one in category four and five in category five.[68]

People in different tiers of the targeted people list are generally unaware of their exact category, although it is often possible to find out one's listing from the local *hukou* police or their informants via friends, relatives or connections (*guanxi*). The statistical information about targeted people management must be reported to the MPS to be included in a national database that is classified as a critical state secret.[69]

Listing does not always mean effectively monitoring or controlling. In a medium-sized city of 1.1 million people, there were 22,046 residents listed by the police as targeted people in 1998. About 12 per cent of them, however, were found to be "unmonitored and uncontrolled" due to population migration.[70] Internal police studies concluded that the changed social environment in China, which has led to the public increasingly

65. During 1998–2002, the police officers interviewed in various cities believed that the criminals apprehended in the Chinese cities now are mostly (60 to even 90%) rural migrants, with or without a temporary *hukou*.

66. BPT-MPS 2000, p. 170. For the internal instructions to the police on how to specially manage the employees and customers of these industries, see DOP-MPS 1999, pp. 96–112.

67. Police internal reports from Chongqing and Henan, in Li Zhongxin, *Study on China's Community Policing*, pp. 43 and 144.

68. Tianjin's Gansu Road police station internal report in 1998, in *ibid.* pp. 180, 186 and 190.

69. National data on the targeted people are classified as *jimi* (critical secrets), more secretive than just *mimi* (state secrets). Liu Donglin, *Handbook on Public Security Protection*, p. 425.

70. Police report from Xinxiang city, Henan province, in Li Zhongxin, *Study on China's Community Policing*, pp. 60–61. In a county in Jiangxi province, one police station was found in 1996 to have only two out of its 23 targeted people effectively monitored. *Ibid.* p. 108.

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despising secret dossiers, informants, intolerance, and persecution by association and suspicion, is a leading cause for the widespread "inadequacy" of targeted people management.[71]

In the last decade, the Chinese police have been fighting the often violent Muslim separatist and terrorist groups in Xinjiang. *Hukou*-based social control proved to be an effective tool even in that remote region where many non-Han ethnic groups live.[72] In 1999–2002, during the CCP's national campaign against the *falun gong* sect, many known *falun gong* activists in the major cities like Beijing and Shanghai were put on the local targeted people list and monitored and "educated" closely by the police. During National Day celebrations, they were often "advised" by the police stationed right at their door "not to go out." A repentance statement by an inactive *falun gong* member would usually reduce the police surveillance and gradually remove him from the list.[73]

Conclusion

With reforms and improvements, the *hukou* system now still allows Beijing to rule and organize the Chinese people through dividing them into segments bounded and controlled by their *hukou* type and location. This omnipresent and powerful, albeit adapted and adjusted, system is alive and well, and performs important functions in China's socio-political control, economic development, and social and spatial stratification.

A leading function of the *hukou* system remains the control of internal migration. Adaptations and reforms have led to the decentralization of this operation. New measures have been devised to allow for a varied degree of *de facto* mobility for the powerful, rich, educated and talented, and needed manual labourers. In 2001–2002, the legal distinction of agricultural and non-agricultural *hukou* and the migration quota in small cities and towns started to be replaced by the locally set "entry conditions" that still nevertheless function as effective tools for the government to regulate and restrict internal migration.

The decade-old socio-political control through the tiered focal management of targeted segments of the population continues. It has had very little relaxation although its administration has had some rationalization in the direction of crime-fighting and more awareness of the individual's legal rights. The economic and cultural changes in the past decades have also practically weakened the effectiveness of the targeted people scheme. Still largely operating in secrecy, the social control function of the *hukou* system is expected to continue as a pillar of the PRC's unparalleled organization of the largest nation on earth. In the summer of

71. Wang Taiyuan, *Comprehensive Summary*, pp. 319–323.

72. Classified police case studies found that the *hukou* database and the targeted people management were highly useful in the destruction of several terrorist cells in Xinjiang. Cheng Zhiyong and Bo Xiao (eds.), *Qiangzhan yu qiang'an* (*Gun-battles and Gun-cases: Selections on the Case Reports on the Anti-violent Terrorism in Xinjiang*) (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 2000), pp. 129–130, 164 and 253–54.

73. Author's interviews in Beijing and Shanghai, 2001–2002.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741004000074 Published online by Cambridge University Press

2001, when the rural-to-urban migration quota was partially eliminated in the PRC, one MPS senior official called for further "reducing the undue burden on the *hukou* system by getting rid of its economic and education functions" so to "enhance the *hukou* system" and "restore its original" main mission of population management and social control.[74] Indeed, the police have been internally calling for a further enhancement of targeted people management in their battle against Muslim terrorist cells in western China.[75]

Appendix 1: **Principles of China's Control of Internal Migration**

In the first PRC Constitution of 1954, all citizens were constitutionally guaranteed the right of internal migration. That right was taken away in the 1974 PRC Constitution and the current PRC Constitution (adopted in 1982, amended in 1988 and 1998).

The basic principles of internal migration control were first articulated in the Ministry of Public Security's "Rules on handling *hukou* relocation" (adopted on 14 August 1964 and reaffirmed on 9 November 1977). More than 300 additional documents and decrees made these principles operational.[76] The rural-to-urban migration quota has been used since 1980 with only 0.2 per cent to 0.5 per cent of the total agricultural population allowed annually to become urban residents.[77] The current migration control principles are:

Congyan kongzhi (strict control): "*Hukou* relocation from the rural to urban areas; or from other cities to Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin metropolises must be controlled as restrictively as possible."
Shidang kongzhi (appropriate control): "*Hukou* relocation from township to city; from small city to large city; from ordinary village to outskirts of city/township, … should be controlled appropriately."
Buyu kongzhi (no control): "*Hukou* relocation from city/township to village; from city to township; from large city to small city; and between similar cities, townships, or villages, with proper reasons (such as marriage), should be approved."
Guli liudong (encourage migration): "*Hukou* relocation by college graduates and professionals from city/township to village, from interior to border regions, from an area or unit that has plenty of technical talents to a place where there is shortage of such talents should be encouraged with various means."[78]

74. Interviews reported by China Net's News Centre on http://www.newsw.china.com, 20 August 2001. Accessed on 23 March 2002.
75. The lack of a good management of the targeted people in many remote towns and villages was concluded by the police as a major reason causing "unnecessary" delays and police casualties in the campaigns against terrorist cells, since some of the cell members were on the targeted people list but somehow easily slipped out of the police monitoring and control. Cheng and Bo, *Gun-battles and Gun-cases*, pp. 147–48, 214, 316 and 331.
76. Wang Zhongfang, *1995 Zhongguo falü nianjan* (*Legal Yearbook of China, 1995*) (Beijing: Zhongguo falü nianjan chubanshe, 1996).
77. Sun Yao, *Textbook on Hukou Management*, p. 141.
78. BPT-MPS 2000, p. 121. Wang Taiyuan, *Comprehensive Summary*, p. 235.

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Internally, the general purpose of internal migration control is described as "to encourage the dispersal of the population and make it harder to migrate to major cities, … harder to migrate to south-eastern regions, … To make it easier for people with high qualities (or professionals) to relocate, harder for low quality people (or general labour) to migrate; … and to prevent a 'blind floating' of low quality population."[79]

Appendix 2: **Current List of the *Zhongdian Renkou* (Targeted People)**

Category One

Residents suspected of threatening national security. Under this category, there are seven types of people subject to the police's focal management and control:

1. People suspected of being subversive activists, separatists, traitors and defectors.
2. People suspected of being part of riots, mob, uprisings or other destabilizing and/or sabotaging activities.
3. People suspected of developing, joining and communicating with hostile organizations that destabilize and threaten national security and stability.
4. People suspected of joining cults, sects and gangsters or of using religion for illegal or criminal activities.
5. People suspected of engaging in propaganda and agitation to sabotage ethnic solidarity and/or resist state laws.
6. People suspected of being a spy or collecting, searching for, purchasing or illegally providing state secrets or intelligence.
7. People suspected of having other activities that are threats to national security.

Category Two

Residents suspected of serious criminal activities:

1. People suspected of having violated citizens' physical and personal rights through activities such as murder, rape, bodily injury, and trafficking of women and children.
2. People suspected of having violated public and private property rights through activities such as robbery, stealing and fraud.
3. People suspected of having violated public security through activities such as arson, bombing, poison, and the illegally manufacture, sale, transport, storing or stealing of firearms, ammunition and explosives.
4. People suspected of the trafficking, sale, transport and production of narcotics.
5. People suspected of being involved in domestic and foreign underground societies or gangs.
6. People suspected of having sabotaged monetary order through activ-

79. BPT-MPS 2000, p. 139.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741004000074 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ities such as counterfeiting of currency, national treasury bonds and other securities or sale/purchasing counterfeits.
7. People suspected of having engaged in financial fraud such as illegal fund-raising and lending, or fraud involving financial documents, credit letters, insurance and credit cards.
8. People suspected of having often organized gambling activities.
9. People suspected of having organized, hosted and pimped for prostitution activities.
10. People suspected of having other serious criminal activities.

Category Three

Residents who, due to the intensification of various conflicts, have shown early signs of violent revenge, making trouble and other violent acts.

Category Four

Residents who were ex-convicts as a result of "purposeful crimes" and released within the last five years.

Category Five

Narcotics users.

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