

**The *Hukou* System and Rural-Urban Migration in China:
Processes and Changes***

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Comments are welcome.

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Until recently, few people in mainland China would dispute the significance of the *hukou* (household registration) system in affecting their life -- indeed, in determining their fates.¹ In the West, a number of China scholars, notably Christiansen, Chan, Cheng and Selden, and Mallee,² have begun in recent years to study this important subject in relation to population mobility. Their work has significantly expanded our understanding. Unlike population registration systems in many other countries, the Chinese system was designed not merely to provide population statistics and identify personal status, but also to directly regulate population distribution and serve many other important objectives desired by the state. In fact, the *hukou* system is a major tool of social control employed by the state. Its functions go far beyond simply controlling population mobility.

Largely based on documentary research of regulations and policy documents relating to the *hukou* system, this paper seeks to contribute to this body of literature, by augmenting and updating our knowledge about the *hukou* system in relation to rural-urban migration. Specifically, this paper elucidates the complex workings of the *hukou* conversion process, especially the crucial *nongzhuanfei* process (converting the *hukou* status from agricultural to non-agricultural one), by studying at a number of aspects of the system that have only been scantily touched in the Western literature.³ On this basis, the paper also reviews changes of the *hukou* policy in the post-Mao era, such as the introduction of new types of town *hukou* and "blue-stamp" *hukou*, and discusses their consequences. We would argue that the *hukou* system was designed not as a system to block rural-urban migration, as commonly portrayed in the Western literature. Instead, it was part of a larger economic and political system set up to serve multiple state interests. Its power in controlling people's life has declined in the reform era in the wake of enormous social and economic changes and dramatic rise in rural-urban mobility. This paper reveals that the role of *hukou* system in the administration of rural-urban migration in mainland China is far more complicated than we used to understand.

The Hukou System and the Control of Rural-Urban Migration

The *hukou* system was established in cities in the PRC in 1951⁴ and extended to the rural areas in 1955.⁵ It was formalized as a permanent system in 1958.⁶ Despite of significant modifications since the early 1980s, the system remains unchanged in nature today.

¹ For some revealing stories on this subject, see Ren Xianliang, et al, "China's 'Registration Taboo'" translated in *Chinese Sociology & Anthropology*, Vol.29, No.1 (1996), pp.15-26.

² Flemming Christiansen, "Social division and peasant mobility in mainland China: the implications of hu-k'ou system," *Issues and Studies*, Vol.26, No.4 (1990), pp.78-91. Kam Wing Chan, *Cities within invisible wall: reinterpreting urbanization in post-1949 China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994). Tiejun Cheng and Mark Selden, "The origins and social consequences of China's *hukou* system," *China Quarterly (CQ)*, No.139 (1994), pp.644-668. Hein Mallee, "China's household registration system under reform," *Development and Change*, Vol.26 (1995), pp.1-29. Hein Mallee, "Reform of the *hukou* system," *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol.29, No.1 (1996).

³ For example, there are some mention of *nongzhuanfei* in Cheng and Selden, "The origins and social consequences of China's *hukou* system."

⁴ Ministry of Public Security, *Chengshi hukou guanli zanxing tiaoli (Interim Regulations on Urban Household Administration)*, issued on July 16, 1951. Also see People's Daily, July 16, 1951.

Different views have been forwarded to explain or rationalize the existence of such a control system. The official interpretation argues the *hukou* system as serving for the consolidation of socialist system and public interests.⁷ The functions of the system on regulating population distribution and controlling migration have never been the main objectives of the system as far as the government is concerned. To the government, the *hukou* system is not set up for the purpose of blocking any rural-urban migration but for the overall state administration. The *hukou* system provides the state with means and information that could be used for securing social and political order and other related objectives. In fact, the Constitution promulgated in 1954 still maintained the citizen's right of free residential choice and migration. These provisions were taken out when the Constitution was next revised in 1975.

In the literature the dominant explanation is economic and it regards the *hukou* system as an unavoidable choice under the "forging ahead" or the heavy-industry-oriented development strategy.⁸ China's resource endowments were characterized as capital-scarce but labor-abundant. The economy was largely agrarian in the early days of the PRC. Influenced by the Soviet model, China placed high priority on heavy industry to speed up its industrialization. In order to finance the expansion of heavy industry, the state underpriced agricultural products and overpriced industrial products to induce an unequal exchange between the agricultural and industrial sectors. To maintain this artificial imbalance under the condition of dual economy, the state had to create a system which blocked free flows of resources (including labor) between industry and agriculture and between city and the countryside. The *hukou* system was one of the important institutions to create and maintain such a social and economic configuration. Under this perspective, the *hukou* system has served the function of migration control.

⁵ Ministry of Internal Affairs, *Hukou dengji zanxing banfa (caoan) (Provisional Measures for Hukou Registration (draft))* in Teaching and Researching Unit of Civil Law, China People's University (ed.), *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo minfa cankao ziliao (Reference materials on the civil law of the People's Republic of China)*, Vol.I, (Beijing: China People's University, 1956), pp.146-149. See also State Council, *Guanyu jianli jingchang hukou dengji zhidu de zhishi (Directive Concerning an Establishment of Regular Household Registration System)*, issued on June 22, 1955.

⁶ Decree of the President of the People's Republic of China, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo hukou dengji tiaoli (Regulations on Household Registration in the People's Republic of China)*. January 9, 1958. See Ministry of Public Security (ed.), *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo gongan fagui huibian 1957-1993 (Compilations of PRC public security regulations (1957-1993))*, (Beijing: China People's Public Security University Press, 1984).

⁷ For detailed discussion of the official interpretation of the *hukou* system, see Luo Rui Qing (the former head of the Ministry of Public Security), "Guanyu zhonghua renmin gongheguo hukou dengji tiaoli caoan de shuoming (Interpreting the regulations on household registration in the People's Republic of China)", *People's Daily*, January 9, 1958. Also see Zhang Qingwu, "Basic facts on the household registration system," *Chinese Economic Studies*, Vol.22, No.1, (1988).

⁸ Lynn T. White, "Deviance, modernization, rations, and household register in urban China," In Amy Auerbacher Wilson, Sidney Leonard Greenblatt, and Richard Whittingham Wilson (eds.), *Deviance and Social Control in Chinese Society*, Praeger Publishers (1977), pp.151-172. Kam Wing Chan, *Cities with invisible wall*. Yi Fu Lin, Fang Cai, and Zhou Li, *Zhongguo de qiji: fazhan zhanlue he jingji gaige (The China Miracle: Development Strategy and Economic Reform)*, Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe (1994).

The Dual Classification of *Hukou* Registration

To better understand the role the *hukou* system has played in the process of rural-urban migration, we first need to examine some unique features of Chinese *hukou* system. In mainland China, all PRC nationals' personal *hukou* status is classified by two related parts: one by residential location and one by socioeconomic eligibility (often confusingly called "agricultural"/"non-agricultural"). The process of *hukou* conversion is quite complicated and has significance to our understanding of reforms and problems in the 1980s and 1990s. The following explains the nuts and bolts of the system.

The first classification of one's *hukou* registration is the "*hukou suozaidi*" (the place of *hukou* registration). It is based on one's presumed permanent residence. Under *hukou* regulation each citizen is required to register in one and only one place of regular residence. The most common categories of the place of *hukou* registration are urban centers (cities or towns) or rural settlements (villages or state farms). The local regular *hukou* registration defines one's rights for social and economic activities in a specified locality. The supply of staple food and meats, for example, was based on the local *hukou* in the period when major daily necessities were rationed.. Openings of many jobs, even today, are limited to local *hukou* holders. When people conduct business outside their place of regular *hukou* registration, they are often required to have approval or certification documents issued by the administrative authorities in their place of regular *hukou* registration.

The second classification is the "*hukou leibie*" (the "status" or type of *hukou* registration), essentially referred to the "agricultural" and "non-agricultural" *hukou*. This classification determines one's entitlement to get the state-subsidized grain and other privileges and is often more important than the *hukou* place of registration. This classification originated from the occupational division in the 1950s, but later on as the system evolved, the "agricultural" and "non-agricultural" distinction bears no necessary relationship with the actual occupations of the holders.⁹ Rather, the classification reflects different types of socioeconomic eligibility and the different relationships with the state within the established framework.

⁹ With the introduction of nationwide state monopoly and rationing system for grain in 1955, citizens living in the officially-designated urban areas and engaging in non-agricultural activities at that time were classified as non-agricultural (*feinongye*) *hukou* population; others as agricultural (*nongye*) *hukou* population. The non-agricultural *hukou* population was entitled to have state-subsidized but rationed grain supply. This qualification was attached to one's *hukou* registration. See State Council, *Guanyu shizhen lianshi dingliang gongying zanxing banfa (Interim Measures for Rationed Supply of Grain in Cities and Towns)*, issued on August 25, 1955). Later, those qualified to obtain state subsidized grain supply were all classified as non-agricultural household registration (*feinongye hukou*) by the *hukou* system, otherwise, agricultural, regardless of their actual occupations and residences. The non-agricultural *hukou* can be granted to the state bureaucracy in agricultural industry such as the state farm. In the context of *hukou* registration, non-agricultural or agricultural *hukou* is not a pure occupational division. The "agricultural" and "non-agricultural" populations here are not the same as those commonly defined by occupations. See Kam Wing Chan and Kai Yuen Tsui, "'Agricultural' and 'non-agricultural' population statistics of the People's Republic of China: definitions, findings and comparisons," *Occasional Paper No.1*, Department of Geography and Geology, University of Hong Kong, (1992).

Since two classifications are based on different criteria, urban areas contain both non-agricultural *hukou* population as well as agricultural *hukou* population.¹⁰ Similarly, non-agricultural *hukou* population may exist in urban areas *or* the countryside. While this fine point is noted in studies on urban definitions and related topics,¹¹ in the general literature they are mostly lumped or mixed together (either out of convenience or ignorance) as simply "rural" and "urban" populations.

The dual classification of *hukou* registration is important for the state to facilitate rural-urban migration control in the sense that the *hukou* registration creates two bureaucratic barriers for rural-urban migrants. Using the residence classification, the state confines people's activities in specific localities. By the "agricultural/non-agricultural" classification, the state separates the society into two parts, and imposes huge barriers for people with agricultural *hukou* to convert their *hukou* status. Conversion of one's *hukou* registration is far from a matter of personal choice. The designation of *hukou* registration place and status for a person is inherited from that of his or her mother. Indeed, this is very much a "birth-subscribed" system.¹² Change of the *hukou* registration (either the registered place or the registered status or both) has to go through a process of seeking approval from the government. And this is not easily granted in the case of rural-urban migration.

With the dual classification, any officially sanctioned rural-urban migration (referred to as the "formal" rural-urban migration in this paper) is required to complete a corresponding dual approval process: changing the place of regular *hukou* registration and converting the *hukou* status from agricultural to non-agricultural one. The latter is an important process commonly called *nongzhuanfei* in China. In other words, formal rural-urban migration involves both a geographical spatial change in one's residential place and a conversion in one's entitlement status (see row A in Table 1). In applying for changing the place of regular *hukou* registration, the applicant needs to present appropriate documents to the public security authorities to obtain a migration permit.¹³ In the case of *nongzhuanfei*, one has to satisfy the qualifications stipulated by

¹⁰ This was a major source of confusion of "urban" population definitions, as has been first examined by Chan and Xu. See Kam Wing Chan and Xueqiang Xu, "Urban population growth and urbanization in China since 1949: reconstructing a baseline," *CQ* No.104 (1985), pp.583-613.

¹¹ See Kam Wing Chan and Xueqiang Xu, "Urban population growth and urbanization in China since 1949". Laurence Ma and Gonghao Cui, "Administrative changes and urban population in China," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol.77, No.3 (1987), pp.375-395. Kam Wing Chan and Kai Yuen Tsui, "'Agricultural' and 'non-agricultural' population statistics of the People's Republic China". Kam Wing Chan, "Urbanization and rural-urban migration in China since 1982: a new baseline", in *Modern China*, Vol.20, No.3 (1994), pp.243-281. Harry Xiaoying Wu, "Rural to urban migration in the People's Republic of China," in *CQ* No.139 (1994), pp.669-698. And Li Zhang and Simon Xiaobin Zhao, "Reexamining China's 'urban' concept and the level of urbanization," *CQ* No.154 (June 1998), pp.331-381.

¹² Sulamith Heins Potter, "The position of peasants in Modern China's social order," *Modern China*, Vol.9 No.4, (1983), pp.465-499.

¹³ According to Article 10 and Article 13 of *Regulations on Household Registration in the People's Republic of China*, in both cases of moving out and moving in, one usually needs to apply for both a permit to move (*zhun qian zhen*) and a migration certificate (*qian yi zhen*) issued by the police in the destination and the origination respectively. The *hukou* registration authority will check up on the situation, the number of people moving, the reasons for the move, the time of moving, their origin or destination, and so forth. There are different requirements for applying for a permit to move and a migration certificate to urban areas, depending on the situation. Those who are recruited by the state or admitted by the high-education institutes are automatically entitled to migration

the state and go through the official channels. The granting of a full urban residence status is often contingent upon successfully completing *nongzhuanfei*.¹⁴ In fact, *nongzhuanfei* implies an urban residence status in most cases.

The Dual Control Mechanism of *Nongzhuanfei* (Conversion from *Hukou* Status from Agricultural to Non-agricultural)

The key to regulating formal rural-to-urban migration under the *hukou* system is to control *nongzhuanfei*. To further complicate things, *nongzhuanfei* is subject to *simultaneous* "policy" (*zhengce*) and "quota" (*zhibiao*) controls.¹⁵ The policy control defines the qualifications of people entitled to non-agricultural *hukou*, whereas the quota control regulates the number of qualified people who are able to get the non-agricultural *hukou*.¹⁶ In order to be eligible for *nongzhuanfei*, a person has to first satisfy the conditions laid out under the policy control whilst obtaining a space under the quota control at the same time. If one fulfils the former criterion but does not have a space, he or she will not be able to succeed *nongzhuanfei*. The principal way it works is very similar to the US immigration visa permit system used to regulate admission of immigrants, with some exceptions.¹⁷ Therefore, through both policy and quota controls, the state regulates the kinds of people and the size it wants to admit into the urban areas each time.

Furthermore, there are two channels through which *nongzhuanfei* is granted: the "regular" channels and the "special" channels (see Table 2).

papers if such recruitment or admission requires relocation, upon the presence of valid recruitment or admission documents (see Appendix 2 for the documents required for *hukou* registration in cities). Those who move for personal reasons must satisfy the principles and requirements set by the MPS since 1962 in order to obtain migratory documents (see Appendix 1 for the qualifications). Lynn T. White offers more detailed information on how to apply for Shanghai's household registration, one of the three top cities where immigration has been strictly controlled up to now. See Lynn T. White, "Migration and politics on the Shanghai Delta," *Issues and Studies*, Vol.30, No.9 (1994), pp.63-95.

¹⁴ In the case of migration from rural settlements to suburban counties, *nongzhuanfei* is not required. However, since 1964 the agricultural *hukou* population in cities and towns (majority of them reside in city suburbs) are not officially treated as urban and are not counted in the official statistics of *chengzhen* ("urban") population. See Chan and Xu, "Urban population growth...".

¹⁵ For reasons to control formal rural-urban migration, which is a result of *nongzhuanfei*, see Kam Wing Chan, *Cities with Invisible Walls*, Chapter 3.

¹⁶ No source has detailed the basis on which annual quotas were set. One intellectual guess is that the "base rate" method, which was so popular in deciding output plans in the traditional planning system, was used. The method is based on the previous year figure of non-agricultural *hukou* population plus a growth rate determined by the planner.

¹⁷ In the US system the criteria for determining eligibility are transparent, and the US system has a waiting list based on the date on which the application is processed. This is not true in the Chinese case where processing of applications works entirely in a "black-box". The precise criteria for eligibility are often not made public. Nor is there a waiting list based on the date of filing applications. Such practices have given rise to opportunities of corruption for many officials.

Regular Channel: The common categories include recruitment by a state-owned enterprise (*zhaogong*), enrolment in an institution of higher education (*zhaosheng*), promotion to senior administrative jobs (*zhaogan*), and migration for personal reasons. The qualifications for conversion through this channel have not changed much over time, although the quota varies annually.

Special Channel: The categories of conversion of *hukou* status under this are defined by temporary policies concerning *nongzhuanfei* for certain groups of people under special circumstances. Most commonly, these involve workers changing from temporary to regular positions in state enterprises, and other special situations that arise from time to time (like return of rusticated youths in the early reform era). This channel gives the state the flexibility to deal with unanticipated, special situations. This channel also includes *nongzhuanfei* granted to a small proportion of demobilized military servicemen who are assigned urban jobs. The *hukou* spaces under the special channel come out of occasional but extra, special quotas for these transfers. As one can see from the ways these policies were designed, very often a non-agricultural *hukou* status was used as a reward for those who had borne special hardships (see discussions in next section). Conversely, one could lose one's non-agricultural status by committing certain serious crime.¹⁸

Many governmental departments have de facto approving *nongzhuanfei* powers through their policies, though the final issuance is in the hands of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). Within the regular channel, the policies of recruitment, enrollment, and promotion are made by labour, education, and personnel authorities, respectively, and the transfer quotas associated with these policies are ultimately set by the economic planning bureaucracy when they formulate the annual economic plans. Migration for personal reasons, mostly referring to sick or disabled spouses or parents, or dependent children relocating to the urban areas to be looked after by their family members, is controlled by the policies of MPS (see Appendix 1) and is restricted by the quota set by the MPS.¹⁹ In many cases, policies for the *hukou* transfer under the special channel are joint decisions of various government departments (see Table 2).

¹⁸ Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Judicature, *Guanyu laodong jiaoyang he zhuxiao lao jiao renyuan chengshi hukou wenti de tongzhi* (Circular concerning reeducation through labor and cancellation of urban hukou of reform-through-labor persons), issued on March 26, 1984.

¹⁹ Under the *hukou* system, one who has successfully obtained a formal urban *hukou* does not necessarily mean that one's family members are also entitled for formal urban *hukou* registration. Instead, they need to apply for *nongzhuanfei* from local police and were subject to the quota control if they want to get urban *hukou* for the reason of family reunion. The Ministry of Public Security formulated detailed qualifications and quotas for this kind of people (Appendix 1). The annual quota for the transfer from agricultural to non-agricultural *hukou* set by the police was fixed at 2 per thousand of non-agricultural *hukou* population in 1977 and was changed to 1.5 in 1988. See Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu chuli hukou qianyi wenti de tongzhi* (Circular Concerning the Regulations of Transfer of Hukou Registration), issued on April 17, 1962. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu jiaqiang hukou guanli gongzuo de yijian* (Suggestions Concerning the Reinforcement of Hukou Administration), issued on December 8, 1962. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu chuli hukou qianyi de guiding* (The Regulations of Transfer of Hukou Registration), issued in 1977. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu yinfa "guanyu hukou qianyi de wenti jieda" de tongzhi* (Circular for Circulating Questions and Answers Concerning the Transfer of Hukou System), issued in 1978.

Table 1 Characteristics of Different Types of Rural-Urban Migrants with Reference to the *Hukou* System

Types	Necessary Changes in		Registration with local police	Control Mechanism	Urban-entry Fee	Entitlements to the state-provided benefits	Transferability of <i>hukou</i> status to other urban centers	Possibility of converting to full urban status
	Place of <i>hukou</i> registration	Status of <i>hukou</i> registration (<i>nongzhuanfei</i>)						
A. "Formal" migrants e.g. Recruitment by state-owned enterprises, Enrollment in institution of higher education	Yes	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to both policy and quota controls set by the central government 	Not required	Full	Yes	Not applicable
B. "Self-supplied food grain" <i>hukou</i> holders	Yes	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to approval by local governments 	Subject to local regulations	No	No	No
C. "Blue-stamp" <i>hukou</i> holders	Yes	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to approval by local governments 	Required	Partial	No	Yes but conditional*
D. Urban migrants under the small town <i>hukou</i> reform scheme	Yes	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to qualification and quota controls set by the central government 	Not Required	Full	Yes	Yes but conditional*
E. Registered Temporary population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Conventional" temporary population* Job-seeking temporary population* 	No	No	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to apply for the Certificate of Temporary Residence if staying longer than 3 months 	Not Required	No	Not applicable	No
	No	No	Yes		Annual Administration fee	No	Not applicable	No
F. Non-registered temporary/"floating population"	No	No	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to apply for the Certificate of Temporary Residence if staying longer than 3 months 	Not applicable	No	Not applicable	No

Notes:

* See the text for explanations of these terms or conditions.

Table 2 Channels of *Nongzhuanfei* and Policy Approval Authorities

Category	Policy Approval Authorities	Quota Issuer	Quota	
Regular Channel	Recruitment by state-owned enterprises	Ministry of Labor	State Planning Commission	Annual Issuance
	Enrolment by tertiary institutes	State Education Commission	State Planning Commission	Annual Issuance
	Promotion to administrative posts	Ministry of Personnel	State Planning Commission	Annual Issuance
	Personal reasons	Ministry of Public Security	Ministry of Public Security	Fixed ^a
Special Channel	Transfer from temporary to regular positions	Relevant government departments	State Planning Commission	Occasional Issuance
	Military demobilization	Central Military Commission of CCP, Ministry of Civil Affairs	State Council	Occasional Issuance
	Land requisition by the state	State Council	State Council	Based on the size of land requisition

Notes: a: See footnote 19 for more discussion on this quota.

Sources: compiled from various government documents relating to employment, education, *hukou* administration, military services, etc.

The Role of the *Hukou* System in the Control of Rural-Urban Migration

The above has described an approval process of formal rural-urban migration that is much more complicated than has been portrayed in the existing Western literature. The complication also lies in the fact that while the *hukou* system has played an important role in the limiting the flows of people from the rural sector to the urban sector, there are other significant factors involved in the process.

Formal rural-urban migration is administratively handled by the public security authorities, which have the executive power to implement the *hukou* laws and regulations²⁰ In 1962 the MPS intensified the control of formal rural-urban migration and specified more precisely the rule. The new stipulations were that formal migration from rural to urban areas should be "rigorously" controlled but the flows in the opposite direction was allowed. Urban residents were allowed to move between cities but migration from small to big cities especially to Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Wuhan, and Guangzhou should be "severely" controlled.²¹

²⁰ The MPS took charge of only city's *hukou* registration between 1950 and 1955. Since 1956 its power has extended to the countryside. See State Council: *Guanyu nongcun hukou dengji, tongji gongzuo he guoji gongzuo yigui gongan bumen jieban de tongzhi* (Circular Concerning Ministry of Public Security Taking Over in Charge of Rural Household Registration, Statistics and Naturalization), issued on January 13, 1956.

²¹ See Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu chuli hukou qianyi wenti de tongzhi* (Circular Concerning the Regulations of Transfer of *Hukou* Registration), issued on April 17, 1962. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu*

Stricter control over formal migration was implemented in 1977.²² In addition to those laid out in the 1962 policy, migration from towns to cities, or from small cities to big cities, or from the countryside to urban suburbs were to be further controlled and limited. Changes from urban areas to the countryside, from cities to towns, from big cities to small cities, from the countryside to the countryside were generally not controlled, provided that there were "proper" reasons. Second, for the cases of *nongzhuanfei* directly permitted by the MPS, relatively detailed qualifications and the overall quotas were known (see Appendix 1).

However, as said before, many governments departments other than the MPS have real decision-making powers in granting *nongzhuanfei*. Although a permit to move and a migration certificate must be issued by the police and all migrants are required to complete the procedures of *hukou* transfer administered by the police, the police is not the sole authority responsible for approving *nongzhuanfei*. Appendix 2 catalogues the main documents required for *hukou* registration in cities. These documents must be inspected by the police when processing formal rural-urban migration. Such approvals are automatic provided the permits are deemed valid. So, in reality, many new formal urban in-migrants were admitted under policies of many other government departments (as shown in Appendix 2), depending upon the reasons of migration. According to one survey, of all formal migration to Beijing, 63% were approved by various government departments, 24% by higher-education institutes, 10% by military departments, and only 3% by the public security authorities. Other big cities had similar experience.²³ These figures show that the cases exclusively decided and controlled by the public security authorities contributed a very small percentage of total formal rural-urban migration.

In fact, while the *hukou* regulations explicitly stipulate the *procedures* for migration, they do not specify the *qualifications* for migration.²⁴ Different types of migration require different qualifications and documents, which are decided by various government departments and not the MPS. This leaves some significant latitude for different departments to interpret and design their own policies outside the *hukou* system.

jiaqiang hukou guanli gongzuo de yijian (*Suggestions Concerning the Reinforcement of Hukou Administration*), issued on December 8, 1962.

²² See Ministry of Public Security, *chuli huku qianyi de guiding* (*The Regulations of Transfer of Hukou Registration*), issued on 1977. Ministry of Public Security, *Yinfa guanyu hukou qianyi de wenti jieda de tongzhi* (*Circular on Circulating Questions and Answers Concerning the Transfer of Hukou*), document no. [1978]71.

²³ The Beijing survey was cited in Guangren Liu (ed.), *Hukou guanli xue* (*On hukou registration administration*), (Beijing: China Procuratorial Press, 1992), p.284. Examples of other cities can be found in Suiquan Yang, *Zhongguo renkou falu zhidu yanjiu* (*Study of China's population law system*), (Beijing: Law Publishing Press, 1995).

²⁴ According to the 1951 regulation, every urban household was required to fill out a standard *hukou* obtained form from the Public Security units. Would-be migrants need to cancel their current *hukou* registration and apply for a migration certificate when they intended to move outside the jurisdiction place of their *hukou* registration (*hukou quanxia qu*) (roughly the administrative area of a street committee in a city or the administrative area of a township). In-migrants needed to present a migration certificate, if they had one, or other "appropriate" documents. The MPS's 1955 directive stipulated similar requirements in the rural areas. Although more detailed procedures for rural to urban migration were given in the 1958 regulation (e.g. stipulating that what kinds of document should be presented in case of moving to cities), the regulation itself said nothing about the qualifications to get these documents.

The dual control mechanism of *nongzhuanfei* and the dual approval process of formal rural-urban migration show that rural-urban migration is strictly and heavily regulated, but they are not simply controlled by the *hukou* system. In the early period of the PRC the state did not use the *hukou* system to impose control over people's residential mobility, except that of criminals and "class enemies" (such as ex-*Guomindang* officials and soldiers) who were under surveillance, and the migration toward border areas.²⁵ The government made efforts to relocate people from big cities to the countryside, the relocation was largely voluntary, without much coercion (though many of those resettled were defenseless "class enemies"). There were no legal or administrative barriers to entry to cities,²⁶ consistent with what was proclaimed in the Chinese first Constitution in 1954, which stipulated that all citizens had the freedom of migration.

Migration control through the *hukou* system administered executed by the police mainly serves to check unauthorized or "undocumented" migration. Past experience shows that illegal migration (those without a migration certificate) was seldom really prosecuted. When the government wanted to weed these people out, undocumented migrants were extradited. Furthermore, the real power of the *hukou* system in regulating migration does not come from just the system itself but lies in its integration with other social and economic control mechanisms. Particularly in the pre-reform period, formal migration operated within a political and economic environment such that economic activities were strictly administered by the plan system, with the state monopolizing the distribution of important goods. Few of these were available in the market at affordable prices, and people's daily lives were closely connected to and monitored by various state administrative organizations. Urban employment and labor transfers were controlled by the government. There were few chances for urban employment outside state channels. The state's monopoly of living necessities made it hard for anyone to survive outside one's *hukou* registration place without proper documents. People's daily lives were tightly bound to the work units (*danwei*) and surveilled by the police and the residential organizations (the street residents' committees in the case of city and the village committees in the case of the countryside). Violation of the *hukou* regulations could be easily found out. As always, this does not mean that the system is totally watertight. Undocumented migrants (often called "black households") did exist in cities. Overall, the *hukou* system worked with other mechanisms to form multi-layered structure of control with each single institution controlling one or more aspects of rural-urban migration; they were interrelated and complementary to each other. The effectiveness of *hukou* system on migration control depends much on the proper functioning of other institutions. Without them, the *hukou* system cannot function well to control rural-urban migration, as in the case of the reform period (to be examined in the next section).

Like many other institutions in mainland China, the *hukou* system is a state tool that serves the state interest and priorities in economic growth (industrialization) and in maintaining public security (political stability). In this context, its main functions have been to confine the population within the various state-defined segments and to assure the manageability. Judging from the

²⁵ The first article of interim regulations on urban household registration in 1951 stated that the formulation of the regulation was for maintaining social order and citizens' security, and securing citizens' freedom on residence choice and migration. See Ministry of Public Security, *Interim Regulations on Urban Household Administration*.

²⁶ Tiejun Cheng and Mark Selden, "The origins and social consequences of China's *hukou* system."

policy documents and the practice, it is clear that the *hukou* system's statistical function of tracking population by residence is only secondary. In fact, as being examined in greater detail elsewhere, the *hukou* classification, with all its possible combination of categories, has greatly complicated the task of defining urban and rural populations.²⁷

The household registration system is not the PRC's invention; nor is it totally new to China. What has been implemented since 1949 is quite unique, however. Since formal rural-urban migration requires *nongzhuanfei*, which is subject to both policy and quota controls, as well as other economic and social mechanisms are administratively involved in the *nongzhuanfei* process, formal rural-urban migration was fully bureaucratized. The procedures of *hukou* registration certify people's reasons for legal residence in any Chinese urban area. These procedures, along with other policies related to them, allow the state to decide where people should work and reside, leaving very little room for individual's preferences and decisions in the process.

In short, the *hukou* system acted as a domestic passport system to draw a chasm in the Chinese society, which served to produce and reproduce social segregation and social disparity. While economic dualism (rural/urban) is characteristic of most developing countries and is also existent in China, the *hukou* system has reproduced a much stronger social dualism through both economic and, more importantly, institutional means such as the *hukou* system. The outcome is that there was also a rigid dual society in pre-reform China than in many countries. The major features of economic dualism and social dualism are summarized in Table 3. Parallel to the industry-agriculture economic dualism, the society was segmented into the agricultural *hukou* holders and non-agricultural *hukou* holders, with vastly different opportunities, obligations and socioeconomic statuses.²⁸ Such a correspondence in dualism in economy and society also speaks to the importance of the industrialization strategy on the socioeconomic configuration.

²⁷ See, for example, Kam Wing Chan and Xueqiang Xu, "Urban population growth and urbanization in China since 1949."

²⁸ See Kam Wing Chan, "Post-Mao China: a two-class urban society in making," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol.20, No.1 (1996), pp.134-150. Shen Mingmin, "Zhongguo reyuán jiégòu yú èryuán shèhuì tǐzhì fàxi (The dual economic system and dual social system in China)," *Hong Kong Journal of Social Science*, No.9 (Spring 1997), pp.85-113.

Table 3 Dual Economy and Dual Society in the Pre-reform Era

<u>Economy</u>	
Industry	Agriculture
Priority sector	Non-priority sector
State owned	Non-state sector
State support and control	Self-reliance
Monopoly profits through unequal sectoral exchange	As provider of cheap resources for the state sector
<u>Society</u>	
(based on <i>hukou</i> classification)	
"Non-agricultural" Households	"Agricultural" Households
Political stability and control	Self-reliant; subject to less central control
State-provided employment and welfare	Employment and welfare based on local collectives
Restricted entry	Tied to land and agriculture

Changes of the Hukou Policies Since 1980

Reforms of the social and economic systems within which the *hukou* system operated were initiated since the late 1970s. The significant economic and social changes in the last two decades have put a lot of pressures on the pre-existing *hukou* system, leading to a number of important changes. With a significant increase in population mobility initiated by economic reforms, the population tends to be more outside their place of *hukou* registration. In general, the population has been more mobile in the reform era than before. Increase in mobility has started to challenge the traditional *hukou* registration system, which was built upon an immobile population and controlled migration.

Improving Administration of Population Registration

Faced with a more mobile population, the MPS introduced a series of measures to enhance and improve the population registration system. First, a system for administration of temporary residents was set up.²⁹ Temporary residents in the 1958 *hukou* Regulations were defined as those with short-term stay and without local regular *hukou*. Before 1985, only temporary stay in cities was required to register; in 1985, the system of registration was extended to towns. People of age 16 and over who intend to stay in urban areas for more than three months are required to apply

²⁹ Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu "changzhu renkou dengji biao" de shiyong guiding (Stipulations for Use of the Registration Form for Regular Residents)*, issued on March 14, 1985. Ministry of Public Security, *Chengzhen zanzhu renkou guanli de zanxing guiding (Provisional Regulations on the Administration of Temporary Urban Population)*, issued on July 13, 1985.

for the Certificate of Temporary Residence (CTR, *zanzhuzheng*).³⁰ The CTR is usually valid for one year and can be renewed. MPS has made an effort to improve the detailed records/database of urban population. Changes in the regular *hukou* population are counted monthly. Two types of temporary residents are differentiated.

- (1) "Conventional" temporary population (*changgui zanzhu renkou*), referring to outside people providing domestic services, studying, visiting relatives and friends, seeking medical services, sight-seeing, and on business trip; and
- (2) Job-seeking temporary population (*mousheng zanzhu renkou*), covering outside people doing business, working in manufacturing and service sectors.

These people are required to get the CTR. Since the mid-1980s, almost all provincial and city governments have drawn up their own stipulations for the administration of the temporary population residing within their jurisdictions.

Secondly, MPS has computerized the recording system of population registration.³¹ The formats of the *hukou* registration book and the *hukou* conversions have been standardized for computerization.³² Thirdly, the *hukou* registration is regularly rectified, especially before approaching any big events such as a population census.³³

³⁰ Basic documents required for applying for the CTR include a personal IDC; a certification document issued by an administrative unit at or above village level in applicant's place of *hukou* registration, and a certificate of marital status issued by the family planning committee at or above village level.

³¹ Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu shiyong weijisuanji guanli renkou jiben xinxi de tongzhi* (Circular for Using Micro-Computers to Administrate Population Information), issued on November 5, 1986. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu yinfa 'renkou xinxitong jianshe renwu he jishi yaoqiu' de tongzhi* (Circular for the Tasks and Technical Requirements of Setting Up Population Information Database), issued on July 4, 1992. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu shiyong jisuanji tianxie hukou qianyizhen de tongzhi* (Circular for Using Computers to Fill In the Certificate of Hukou Transfer), issued on July 21, 1992.

³² Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu shixing tongyi de hukou zhunqianzhen de tongzhi* (Circular for Using the Standardized Certificate for the Transfer of Hukou Registration), issued on February 25, 1980. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu dui hukou dengjibu, hukoubu gaige de tongzhi* (Circular on Reforming the Formats of the Hukou Registration Book and the Hukou Book), issued on July 16, 1981. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu qiyong xinde hukou qianyizhen, hukou zhunqianzhen de tongzhi* (Circular on Using New Certificate of Hukou Transfer and New Certificate of Hukou Transfer Permission), issued on July 11, 1994.

³³ State Council, *Pizhuang guowuyuan renkou pucha lingtao xiaozu, gonganbu guanyu zai quanguo disanci renkou puchaqian renzhen jinxing zhengdun hukou gongzuo de baogao de tongzhi* (Circular for Ratifying and Transmitting the Report Submitted by Leading Group of Population Census of the State Council and the Ministry of Public Security Concerning the Rectification of Hukou Registration Before the Third National Population Census), issued on October 31, 1980. State Council, *Pizhuang guowuyuan renkou pucha lingtao xiaozu, gonganbu guanyu zai quanguo disici renkou puchaqian jinxing zhengdun hukou gongzuo de baogao de tongzhi* (Circular for Ratifying and Circulating the Report Submitted by Leading Group of Population Census of the State Council and the Ministry of Public Security Concerning the Rectification of Hukou Registration before the Fourth National Population Census), issued on December 8, 1989.

Another major device used by the MPS in improving the administration of *hukou* registration is the system of citizen identity cards (IDC). The system was proposed in 1983³⁴ and experimented first in Beijing in 1984.³⁵ It was nationwide in 1985.³⁶ The application of the citizen IDC system changes the administration of population registration from one book per household in cities and towns and one book per village in the countryside to one card per person nationwide. Compared with other documents (including the *hukou* book), there are several advantages in using the citizen IDC to verify a person's identity.³⁷ Citizen IDC are easy to computerize and difficult to counterfeit technically. With a wide application, the citizen IDC has become the most important personal document to facilitate individuals' economic activities, such as applying for a job not in one's place of *hukou* registration), and the administration of outsiders by local governments. With a control code, a registered regular address, and the stamp endorsed by the police unit in the registration area on the citizen IDC, the authority can readily identify any outsider by examining his/her card. For those who legally and permanently change their places of regular *hukou* registration, they are required to change their citizen IDC. By improving registration and issuance of citizen IDC, the government has the records and information of a substantial portion of "non-local" population. In one official commentary, it is reported that there were about 80 million peasant workers (*mingong*) in the country in 1995, with 44 million of them being registered as temporary residents with the public security authorities.³⁸

Changes in the Policy Control

In the reform period, dual classification of personal *hukou* status is still maintained. The mechanisms of dual channel and dual control of formal rural-urban migration have continued to

³⁴ Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu jiaqiang he gaige gongan gongzuo de ruogan wenti (Several Questions Regarding to Strengthen and Reform Public Security Work)*, issued in May 1983.

³⁵ Ministry of Public Security, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jumin shenfenzhen shixing tiaoli (Interim Regulations on the PRC Citizen Identity Card)*, issued on May 7, 1984.

³⁶ National People's Congress, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo jumin shenfenzhen tiaoli (Regulations on PRC Citizen Identity Card)*, issued on September 6, 1985.

³⁷ For the conditions of applying for and using citizen ID, please refer to the following documents issued by the MPS. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu zhifa linshi shenfenzhen youguan wenti de tongzhi (Circular on Issues of Issuance of Temporary Citizen Identity Card)*, issued on September 12, 1989. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu linshi shenfenzhen guanli zanxing guiding (Interim Regulations on the Administration of Temporary Citizen Identity Card)*, issued on October 15, 1989. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu yanjin maimai, zhuanjie jumin shenfenzhen de tongzhi (Circular on Strictly Prohibiting Sale and Transfer of Citizen Identity Card)*, issued on September 18, 1992. Ministry of Public Security, et. al. *Guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang jumin shenfenzhen shiyong hecha gongzuo de tongzhi (Circular on Further Enhancing Investigation of Using Citizen Identity Card)*, issued on December 2, 1992. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu yange zhixing jumin shenfenzhen, linshi shenfenzhen fangfanwei guiding de tongzhi (Circular on Strictly Following the Issuing Scope of Citizen Identity Card and Temporary Citizen Identity Card)*, issued on January 7, 1993. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu jiaqiang he gaijin linshi shenfenzhen guanli gongzuo de tongzhi (Circular on Enhancing and Improving Administration of Temporary Citizen Identity Card)*, issued on May 1, 1993. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu jianjue chachu weizao, bianzao he shiyong jia jumin shenfenzhen huodong de tongzhi (Circular on Seriously Investigating and Punishing the Activities of Forging, Altering and Using False Citizen Identity Card)*, issued on February 22, 1994.

³⁸ *Renmin ribao*, July 9, 1995. A1.

function. But the policy control has been changed to cope with some problems inherited from the pre-reform era, along with reforms of the centrally planned economic system.

In sharp contrast to the policies in the 1970s, the policy control in the reform era is characterized by substantial opening of the special channel of *nongzhuanfei* to assuage people's discontents with the pre-reform *hukou* policies. Since 1980, openings for granting *nongzhuanfei* to certain categories of people have increased substantially, covering workers in a wide range of industries and occupations (Table 4). Such policies were issued by various governmental departments according to the interests of individual departments. Most of them were done out of political consideration, as indicated by the documents listed in Table 4. From 1979 to 1995 the non-agricultural *hukou* population grew at an average of 7.8 million per year, or 3.7%, compared to an average of 2.5 million or 1.9% per year in the period between 1963 and 1978.³⁹

Table 4 Ad Hoc Policies Concerning *Nongzhuanfei* After 1980

Issued Date (dd/mm/yy)	Issuer	Document
19/08/1980	State Council	<i>Pizhuan guojia nongye weiyuanhui, liangshibu, gonganbu, minzhengbu guanyu jieque guoying nongye qishiye zhigong hukou liangshi guanxi de jige wenti de qingshi baogao</i> (On ratifying and circulating the requested report submitted by State Agricultural Commission, Ministry of Grain, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Civil Affairs concerning several questions about the granting of urban household status and the supplying of food grain by the state for the workers of state-owned agricultural enterprises and institutions.)
03/09/1980	Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Grain, State Personnel Bureau	<i>Guanyu jieque bufen zhuangye jishu ganbu de nongcun jiashu qianwang chengzhen you guojia gongying liangshi wenti de guiding</i> (Provisions on permitting rural family members of selected technical personnel and cadres to settle down in urban places and entitle them to get state-supplied grain.)
20/02/1981	Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Grain, State Personnel Bureau	<i>Guanyu xiada jieque bufen zhuangye jishu ganbu de nongcun jiashu qianwang chengzhen zhibiao de tongzhi</i> (Circular on the quota of urban household status for the rural family members of selected technical staff and cadres.)
05/06/1981	State Council, Central Military Council of CCP	<i>Guanyu tuoshan jieque bianfang haidao he yuanli juminqu budui ganbu sui jun jiashu laodong jiuye he zinu ruxue wenti de tongzhi</i> (Circular for the proper assignment of family members' employment and children's education for the army cadres served in the frontier islands and places remote from residential areas.)
20/07/1983	Ministry of Labor and Personnel, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Commerce	<i>Guanyu jieque buduizhong bufen wujunji de zhuangye jishu ganbu de nongcun jiashu qianwang chengzhen wenti de tongzhi</i> (Circular concerning the arrangement of relocation to urban areas of some rural family members of technical staff who serve in the army but his name is not in the authorized soldier list.)
08/1983	State Council	<i>Pizhun jingtong tielu you sacheng zhi tongliao yanxian bufen zhigong jiashu you nongye renkou zhuangwei feinongye renkou de tongzhi</i> (Circular on approving the conversion of some agricultural population into non-agricultural population for family members of railway-related workers working in railways from Sai city to Tong city.)
24/11/1983	Ministry of Labor and Personnel, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Commerce	<i>Guanyu chi nongyeliang de tuixiu ganbu gaiban lixiu hou gaibian kouliang gongying banfa de tongzhi</i> (Circular concerning the change of grain-supply from by brigade into by state for retired cadre whose retire-status has been redefined to the post-left.)
25/02/1984	Ministry of Labor and Personnel, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Commerce	<i>Guanyu zuohao yijiubasinian bufen zhuan ye jishu ganbu nongcun jiashu qianwang chengzhen gongzuo de tongzhi</i> (Circular on proper arrangement of the 1984 rural family members of selected technical staff and cadres to settle down in urban places.)
06/07/1984	State Council	<i>Tongyi meitanbu, gonganbu, shangyebu, laodongrenshibu guanyu meikuang jingxia zhigong jiashu luo chengzhen hukou de baogao</i> (On approving the request submitted by Ministry of Coal, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of

³⁹ The figures are computed from Population Research Institute, Chinese Academy Social Science, *Zhongguo renkou nianjian 1996* (Almanac of China's Population 1996, (Beijing: Zhongguo minhang chubanshe), p.308. These figures include the natural increase of non-agricultural *hukou* population. See also Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu zhuanfa "bufen shengshi hukou nongzhuanfei gongzuo zuotanhui jiyao" de tongzhi* (On Circulating the Minutes of the Working Forum Concerning *Hukou* Transfer from Agricultural to Non-agricultural Status), issued on May 4, 1991.

<u>Issued Date</u> (dd/mm/yy)	<u>Issuer</u>	<u>Document</u>
06/07/1984	State Council	<i>Labor and Personnel concerning granting urban household registration for the family members of miners.)</i> <i>Pizhuan meitanbu deng bumen guanyu meikuang jingxia zhigong jiashu luo chengzhen hukou shidian gongzuo zongjie he zai quanguo meikuang tuixing luohu gongzuo yijian de baogao de tongzhi (Circular on approving and circulating the report submitted by Ministry of Coal and other departments on assessing the pilot experience about the granting urban household registration for family members of miners and expanding the similar policy to all mines.)</i>
28/11/1984	Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Labor and Personnel, Ministry of Commerce, Supreme People's Procuratory	<i>Guanyu jieque renmin jianchayuan laogai lao jiao jiancha paichu jigou ganbu de nongcun jiashu qianwang paichu jigou suozaidiqu luohu you guojia gongying kouliang wenti de guiding (Provisions for permitting rural family members of cadres who work for local-level People's Procuratory and the substations of reeducation and Reform for criminals through labor to settle down in the areas where the cadres work and to entitle to get state-supplied grain.)</i>
28/04/1985	General Office of State Council	<i>Guanyu Beijingshi renmin zhengfu, laodongrenshibu qingshi jieque bufen ganbu nongcun jiashu jinjing luohu wenti de fuhan (Response to Beijing Government, Ministry of Labor concerning the arrangement for rural family members of selected cadres to settle down in Beijing.)</i>
[1985]no.262	Ministry of Labor and Personnel, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Commerce, General Department of Logistics of the PLA	<i>Guanyu xiada sanxian jiangu diqu jundui qishiye danwei zhigong de nongcun jiashu qianwang chengzhen zhibiao de tongzhi (Circular for providing quotas of urban household registration for rural family members of workers and staff who work for ministry enterprises in the Third-Front areas.)</i>
[1986]no.558	Ministry of Labor and Personnel, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Commerce, General Department of Logistics of the PLA	<i>Guanyu jieque sanxian jiangu diqu jundui qishiye danwei zhigong jiashu nongzhuangfei youguan wenti de tongzhi (Circular on some issues granting the offering of urban household registration for rural family members of workers and staff who work for ministry enterprises in the Three-Front areas.)</i>
22/08/1988	Ministry of Public Security	<i>Zhuanfa anshanshi gonganju guanyu nongzhuangfei hukou shenpi zhidu gaige qingkuang de baogao de tongzhi (Circular on circulating the report from Anshan Public Security Bureau on reforming the system of investigating and converting agricultural to non-agricultural hukou)</i>
21/02/1989	State Council, Central Military Council of CCP	<i>Pizhuan gonganbu, zongzhengzhibu deng bumen guanyu bianfang haidao deng budui bufen nongcun hukou junguan jiashu kezai yuanji zhuangwei chengzhen hukou de yijian de tongzhi (Circular for approving the suggestions by Ministry of Public Security, General Office of Politics of the PLA etc. on permitting some rural family members of army's cadres who serve in frontier areas and islands to get urban household registration in their home towns.)</i>
01/04/1989	State Council, Central Military Council of CCP	<i>Circular on approving and circulating the report submitted by General Office of Politics of PLA and other departments concerning appropriate arrangement of job redeployment and migration settle-down for the spouses of army's cadres.</i>
29/07/1989	General Office of Ministry of Personnel	<i>Guanyu jieque sanxian jungong qiye zhigong jiashu nongzhuangfei wenti de han (The letter concerning granting of urban household registration for family members of workers and staff who work for military enterprises in the Three-Front areas.)</i>
15/07/1990	General Office of State Council	<i>Zhuanfa guojia jiwei deng bumen guanyu nongzhuangfei zhengce guanli gongzuo fengong yijian baogao de tongzhi (On Circularizing the suggestion submitted by State Planning Commission, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Commerce concerning the division of responsibilities for administrating the conversion of agricultural hukou into non-agricultural hukou.)</i>
11/12/1990	Ministry of Labor	<i>Dui linyebu guanye jieque jiceng linye gongzuozhan linshigong nongzhuangfei zhibiao wenti de baogao de fuhan (Reply to the request submitted by Ministry of Forestry for specific quota for the conversion of agricultural hukou into non-agricultural hukou for the temporary foresters who work in basic-level forestry station.)</i>
04/05/1991	Ministry of Public Security	<i>Guanyu zhuanfa bufen shengshi hukou nongzhuangfei gongzuo zuotanhui jiyao de tongzhi (Circular on circulating summary of the working forum concerning hukou convert from agricultural to non-agricultural.)</i>
22/06/1992	State Council	<i>Pizhuan renshibu deng bumen guanyu bufen zhuangye jishu he dangzheng guanli ganbu jiashu nongzhuangfei wenti yijian de tongzhi (Circular on approving the proposals of Ministry of Personnel, State Planning Commission, Ministry of Commerce, and Ministry of Public Security on changing the residence registration of family members of some professionals, technical staff, and the party's and government's administrative cadres from rural to urban areas.)</i>
02/11/1992	State Council	<i>Pizhuan jiaotongbu deng bumen guanyu jieque jiazhu nongcun yuanyang chuanyuan jiashu nongzhuangfei wenti yijian de tongzhi (Circular on approving the proposal of Ministry of Transport, State Planning Commission, Ministry of Public Security, and Ministry of Commerce on granting the urban household registration for rural family members of oceangoing crews.)</i>
28/05/1993	State Council	<i>Pizhuan guojia jishengwei deng bu men guanyu jieque nongcun jiceng jihua shengyu gongzuo renyuan nongzhuangfei wenti yijian de tongzhi (Circular on approving the</i>

Issued Date (dd/mm/yy)	Issuer	Document
		<i>proposals of the State Family Planning Commission, State Planning Commission, Ministry of Public Security, and Ministry of Domestic Trade on changing the rural family planning personnel at grassroots level into workers with urban household registration.</i>

The “Self-supplied Food Grain” Town *Hukou*

After decollectivization in the early 1980s, it was obvious that China needed to deal with the rapidly swelling surplus rural labor. To this end, the State Council conditionally opened the door of market towns for peasants in 1984. Peasants were allowed to get a new type of urban *hukou*, called “self-supplied food grain” *hukou*, in market towns, provided that they satisfied a number of requirements.⁴⁰ The main requirements are that these migrants must either run businesses or be employed in enterprises,⁴¹ and have own accommodations in market towns. They must also self-provide their own food grain. The State Council stipulated that the people with this kind of *hukou* be counted as non-agricultural *hukou* population though in practice that might be the case.

“Self-supplied food grain” town *hukou* possessed more symbolic than practical value in terms of actual benefits received. This kind of “urban” *hukou* is not the same as *nongzhuanfei* (see also Table 1, row B). Holders are not eligible for state subsidized welfare; and they cannot move to other urban areas of administrative status higher than that particular town. If people holding this kind of *hukou* want to migrate to cities or convert their *hukou* status to a non-agricultural one, they must still go through the same regular *nongzhuanfei* procedures. In the mid-1980s, this type of *hukou* had certain appeal to some peasant migrant workers, as the channel of *nongzhuanfei* was almost totally closed to them. However, as opportunities for other types of *hukou* opened, this type *hukou* did not receive much popularity in the later years. In 1992 the application of “self-supplied food grain” *hukou* was officially terminated.

⁴⁰ The following documents stipulate the conditions to get market towns *hukou*. State Council, *Guanyu nongmin jinru jizhen luohu wenti de tongzhi* (Directive Concerning Issues of Peasants Settling Down in Market Towns), issued on October 13, 1984. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu guanqie shishi “guowuyuan guanyu nongmin jinru jizhen luohu wenti de tongzhi” de tongzhi* (Circular for Implementing the State Council’s Directive Concerning Issues of Peasants Settling Down in Market Towns), issued on November 3, 1984. Labor Planning Bureau of Ministry of Labor and Personnel, *Guanyu pizhun dao jizhen wugong, jingshang, banfuwuye de nongmin he jiashu luohuhuo de laodongli ziyuan guanli deng wenti de fuhan* (On Instructions for the Administration of Peasant Laborers and Their Family Members Who Are Permitted to Settle Down in Market Towns and Involved in Non-agricultural Activities), issued on December 6, 1984. Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu zili kouliang hukou ren yuan nongzhuanfei banli huliang guanxi youguan wenti de tongzhi* (Circular on Procedures of Non-agricultural *Hukou* Transfer and Grain Supply for Those Who “Self-supply” Their Grain), issued on May 13, 1991. For an academic discussion on this policy, see Hein Mallee, “Reforming the *hukou* system: the experiment with the ‘urban registration with self-supplied grain’,” in Dong Lisheng (ed.), *Administrative reform in the People’s Republic of China since 1978*, (Leiden: International Institute for Asian Studies, Working Paper Series I, 1994), pp.100-120.

⁴¹ A survey of towns in Shanghai suburban counties reveals that most of the employed had worked in enterprises for a number of years and were originally from the local areas. It does not appear that this *zili hukou* was open to all rural migrant workers. See Baoshu Zhu, “Nongcun renkou xian shaochengzhen zhuan yi de xindongtai he xinwenti,” (New Situation and New Problems Concerning Rural Population Migrating to Small Towns), *Zhongguo renkou kexue*, No.1, (1991) pp.49-55.

The “Blue-Stamp” Urban *Hukou*

The “blue-stamp” urban *hukou* was formally launched in 1992 under MPS’s “*Circular on Application of Locally-Valid Urban Hukou Registration*”,⁴² although some localities started this practice much earlier.⁴³ Unlike the “self-supplied food grain” *hukou* which was limited to only for certain business peasants and their family members in towns, the “blue-stamp” urban *hukou* is open to a wider population and more cities and towns, including large cities. The geographical coverage encompasses administratively-defined “small” cities and towns, and special economic zones (including those in large cities). Eligibility is primarily based on the assessed “contributions” to the urban economy. The detailed criteria are listed in Table 5. In addition, those who are entitled to non-agricultural *hukou* (such as peasants with their land requisitioned by the state, person suffered from prolonged separation of spouses, and persons rehabilitated from politically unjust treatment) but still cannot get one because of a quota constraint also qualify for blue-stamp *hukou*.⁴⁴ The criteria listed in the table are fairly general; understandingly, interpretations and implementation of them vary from province to province and from city to city.

Table 5 Qualifications for the “Blue-stamp” Urban *Hukou*

Areas Covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administratively-defined “small” cities and towns; • Special economic zones, economic and technical development zones, and the high-tech development zones of big cities. These zones must be licensed by the State Council or the governments at the provincial level.
Eligible People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatives of overseas Chinese or Hong Kong or Macao investors; • Management and technical staff (including their close relatives) who are employed by investors; • Domestic investors and their close relatives; • relatives of overseas Chinese, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan compatriots who, with permission, purchase or build urban housing with foreign currency;

⁴² The “locally-valid” urban *hukou* is distinguished from the formal urban *hukou* by having a blue stamp on the *hukou* book. Formal urban *hukou* carries a red stamp.

⁴³ Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu shixing dangdi youxiao chengzhen jumin hukou zhidu de tongzhi* (Circular on Application of Locally-Valid Urban Hukou Registration), issued in August 1992. Guangdong Provincial Government, *Pizhuan sheng gonganting guanyu fangkuan he gaige hukou qianyi zhengce baogao de tongzhi* (Circular on Circulating the Report Presented by Public Security Bureau on Releasing Control and Reforming of Hukou Transfer Policy), issued in October 1992. Zhejiang Provincial Government, *Pizhuan sheng gonganting guanyu nongmin jinchengzhen luohu wenti yijian de tongzhi* (Circular on Circulating the Suggestions from Public Security Bureau on the Issues Concerning Peasants Settling Down in Urban Areas), Document No.[1992]278. Shangdong Provincial Government, *Guanyu shixing shangdongsheng difang chengzhen hukou* (Circular on experiment of Locally-Valid Urban Hukou), issued in October 1992. Hebei Planning Commission, Public Security Bureau, and Grain Bureau, *Guanyu banli dangdi youxiao chengzhen hukou de linshi guiding* (Interim Stipulations on Application of Locally-Valid Urban Hukou), issued on July 24, 1992. General Office of Xiamen Municipality Government, *Xiamenshi banli lanying hukou de zanxing guiding* (Interim Stipulations on Application of “Blue-Stamped” Hukou in Xiamen Municipality), issued on April 1, 1993. Before these documents were approved, it is widely reported that small cities and towns had sold urban *hukou* to outsiders.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Public Security, Circular on Application of Locally-valid Urban Hukou Registration. See also Zhijing Xin and Qihong Yu, *Zhongguo huji zhidu gaige* (Reform of Chinese hukou system), (Beijing: Zhongguo Zhengfa Daxue Chubanshe, 1996).

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- Persons and their close relatives who, with permission, purchase urban housing at market prices or build urban housing by their own capital;
 - Professionals and technical staff and their close relatives who work in developing areas;
 - Outstanding persons and their close relatives who make significant contributions to the urban economy
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Source: Ministry of Public Security, *Circular on Application of Locally-valid Urban Hukou Registration*, issued in August 1992.

Many aspects of “blue-stamp” urban *hukou* differentiate it from the formal urban *hukou* (obtained through *nongzhuanfei*). The central government's rationale for this program was based on the principle of “local need, local benefit, local responsibility, local validity”. This was to give local urban governments some flexibility of addressing their own needs. Under the situation that the central government does not fully relax the policies and quotas for *nongzhuanfei*, the “blue-stamp” urban *hukou* is a policy alternative to ‘legalize’ a part of the de facto urban population without committing central financial obligations.

The blue-stamp *hukou* program, therefore, is left to local governments. Applicants, in addition to having means of living in the urban areas to which they intend to move, are required pay fees for urban infrastructural construction. The amount varies regionally, ranging from a few thousand yuan to Y50,000.⁴⁵ The number of such *hukou* granting depends on local conditions and is the decision of local governments. Local governments are asked to guarantee the political, if not economic, rights and obligations of the “blue-stamp” urban *hukou* holders to be at least the same as those of local regular urban residents. The “blue-stamp” urban *hukou* holders are required to resume their original *hukou* status when moving out of the registered urban areas. In terms of *hukou* registration administration, “blue-stamp” urban *hukou* holders do not need to apply for a migration certificate in their regular *hukou* registration place; and they do not need to apply for or change or replace or change their citizen IDC in the city where they are moving in. This means actually that these people are still not considered as having gone through the *nongzhuanfei* process in the eyes of the (central) government or with respect to the *hukou* system (see also Table 1 row B).

Hukou Reform in Small Cities and Towns: The Pilot Scheme

Following the *hukou* reform in market towns in 1984, the government recently took another step to reform *hukou* policies for small towns and small county-level cities (most of which were upgraded from towns in the past few years). As part of a pilot scheme of comprehensive reforms in small towns and cities, the State Council approved in June 1997 a policy document by MPS

⁴⁵ See Zhijing Xin and Qihong Yu, *Reform of Chinese hukou system*. It is also reported in Qufu, Shandong, the fee was Y3,000 per head. See Kam Wing Chan, "Urbanization and Urban Infrastructure Services in the PRC," in Christine Wong (ed.) *Financing Local Government in the People's Republic of China*, (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.83-125.

allowing 450 pilot towns and cities to grant urban *hukou* for qualified rural *hukou* holders.⁴⁶ At the current stage, the scheme is restricted to built-up areas of those county-level cities and designated towns. The provincial governments are allowed to select some small cities and towns with a higher level of economic and infrastructural development and with financial success for a two-year experiment. If the scheme is successful, it will be extended to other cities. Rural *hukou* holders who have stable non-agricultural jobs or stable living support and have regular accommodations in those selected cities and towns are qualified to apply for regular urban *hukou* after residing there for more than two years. Their close relatives are also qualified. The qualifications for getting a town *hukou* under this reform scheme are not much different in nature from those of “self-supplied food grain” town *hukou*, except that the migrants will have to give up their use right of land in the countryside. Successful applicants will then have the same right as those regular urban residents in respect to education, employment, subsidized foodstuffs, social security and welfare benefits in the specified town or city.

Unlike the “blue-stamp” urban *hukou* which are subject to the “admission” charge, qualified applicants for this scheme do not have to pay this type of fees to the local governments, according to the State Council. It, however, appears that this new *hukou* type has the same benefits as other urban *hukou* in that city or town. Since regular urban residents still receive state-subsidized welfare, the number of urban *hukou* conferees under this reform is subject to quota control. Quotas are set by planning departments in cooperation with related bureaucracies. This reform can be regarded as a moderately significant move towards further opening up small urban centres for rural migrants and granting them legal resident status.

At this point, the real attitude of local governments towards the recent small town *hukou* reform is not totally certain, partly because the small town *hukou* reform is still in the early stage and partly because local governments are not allowed to charge entry-fees while at the same time are asked to provide the same level of social welfare as that of local formal urban *hukou* holders to these new comers. It appears that this program will increase the local government's fiscal burden and that it is in direct competition with the blue-stamp urban *hukou* program, which has been a cashcow for some local governments.

Consequences of Hukou Policy Reforms

The pre-form *hukou* system was set up on the premise of a non-market economy without “spontaneous”, “anarchical” migration of population. The new reality in the reform era has posed many challenges to the state to continue exercising tight control of rural-urban migration and micro-manage its outcomes. On the one hand, there is no significant change in the nature of the *hukou* system. The *hukou* system reforms in the 1980s and 1990s have been characterized by conditionally opening urban residency to rural people and relaxing, to some extent, the policy but not the quota control of *nongzhuangfei*. But the two essential features of the *hukou* system – the dual classification of one's *hukou* registration and the dual control mechanism of *nongzhuangfei* – basically remain unchanged. One's socio-economic eligibility is still linked with his/her *hukou*

⁴⁶ Ministry of Public Security, *Xiaochengzhen huji guanli zhidu gaige shidian fangan (Pilot Schemes for Reforming Hukou Administration System in Small Towns)*, proposed on May 20, 1997 and approved by State Council on June 11, 1997. Also see *China Daily*, August 16, 1997.

status. On the other hand, economic reforms since the late 1970s have changed the previous multi-layered control structure in which the *hukou* system was an integrated part, thus weakening the effectiveness of the *hukou* system on monitoring and controlling the mobility of the population. Under the economic reforms, job openings and the distribution of daily necessity control are no longer monopolized by the state. There are many jobs in the non-state sector, and almost all daily necessities are amply available on the market today. State-subsidized welfare for urban people has been reduced. Street Committees are more keen on making money than performing social surveillance. The ongoing economic reforms and *hukou* system reforms have generated a series of new dilemmas in the administration of population distribution and rural-urban migration with many important consequences.

Pressure for *Nongzhuanfei* and Control Difficulties

Since a non-agricultural *hukou* status entails more privileges and opportunities, there is always a great demand for it at almost any time. As examined before, many central ministries and agencies have the power to make policies that stipulate the conditions for *nongzhuanfei*, presumably in response to situations within their jurisdictions. As one can expect, out of own departmental interests, these ministries tend to set policies that favor the maximum *nongzhuanfei* possibility for their own employees. This is especially serious in the 1980s when rehabilitation and redress of past mistakes took place, evident in the numerous special policies made by various ministries in the 1980s. Hence, large numbers of people are eligible for *nongzhuanfei* under various policies, as shown in Table 4. On the other hand, the central government (mainly through the State Planning Commission and State Council) has continued to exercise tight control over the quotas allowable in each category. This laxness in policy control and the continued tightness in quota control has generated a huge imbalance between the number of those eligible for *nongzhuanfei* and the number of actual openings. As expected, there were a lot of bad feelings and frustrations among those who were eligible but who did not get the *hukou* status converted. Unlike the US immigration visa permit system in which the rules and waiting time are relatively transparent, the Chinese *hukou* conversion process has operated largely in a black box with no transparency. This has only aggravated the discontents of those waiting for *nongzhuanfei*, putting a lot of pressure on the current *nongzhuanfei* system.

Prevalence of the Floating Population and New Socioeconomic Divide in the City

The floating population mainly refers to those residing in places other than their *hukou* registration place. At present it is estimated that there are some 80-100 million floating population in the country, compared to a few millions back in the late 1970s.⁴⁷ Many of these people are *de facto* urban residents but they have not gone through the *nongzhuanfei* process. The rising predominance of the “floating population” since the mid-1980s is a consequence of a rapidly expanding market economy and a still tightly controlled *nongzhuanfei* regime. The former has generated enormous labor mobility (which is also tolerated, if not totally welcomed, by the government), while the latter (the quotas) has not expanded adequately to accommodate the

⁴⁷ Kam Wing Chan, “Internal migration in China: an introductory overview,” *Chinese Environment and Development*, Vol.7, Nos. 1&2 (Spring/Summer 1996), pp.3-13.

increased demand. Economic reforms have opened more possibilities for rural people to work in urban areas, especially in large cities. Although there are some opportunities for peasant migrants to be legally registered (such as through the "self-supplied food grain households" scheme and the pilot town scheme), they are exclusively confined to towns (and small cities) where the state's social welfare obligations are minimal. For most peasant migrants in large cities, the opportunities are very limited, and even when available, they are open only to a few of the rich business migrants. For the majority, they have to settle with mostly a temporary resident status⁴⁸ or none at all.

With the opening of the city gate to peasants since the early 1980s, the institutional dualism based on the *hukou* divide, while continues to exist, has been exported to the city.⁴⁹ Though the Chinese urban society in the Mao period had never come close to be a real equal society, the urban social structure was relatively homogenous, made up of a great mass of wage workers in state or quasi-state sector and a tiny class of privileged cadres. In the reform era, the expansion of personal mobility and other factors have given rise a new dimension of social stratification within cities. Most notably, this divide is based on different types of urban *hukou* (temporary vs permanent, informal versus formal) introduced by the *hukou* reforms. Among urban residents, various *hukou* registrations reflect not as much residential variance as status difference. Most important of all, there continue to exist huge differences in economic opportunity and social position between those with urban *hukou* and those without (summarized in Table 6).⁵⁰ These caste-like disparities based on institutions not only raise the question of equity but they are also sources of discontents of the disenfranchised.

In short, a dual social structure has emerged in the cities: on the one side are those for whom jobs, housing, education, subsidized food, and medical care are an entitlement, and on the other are those who must scramble for those goods or even do without, as Solinger has characterized.⁵¹ This breakdown is primarily, but not entirely, a matter of urban-*hukou* holders versus those with a rural registration. For the latter group, the prospect of moving up, getting accepted and assimilated is meager at best. In fact, the opportunity structure of today for most of these migrants still bears heavily the stamp of social stratification forged over decades by the old command system. Huge social and economic disparities exist between the peasant migrants and full-status urbanites. Before the reform, the dualism was displayed almost totally in spatial (rural/urban) terms; today, while the geographical divide has been largely broken down and millions of peasants have been "freed", their old position in the social hierarchy has not been fundamentally altered.

⁴⁸ Under the current *hukou* policy, peasants who are working in urban areas can only apply for the Certificate of Temporary Residence (CTR), which needs to be renewed every year. Renewal of CTR is subject to approval.

⁴⁹ Kam Wing Chan, *Cities with invisible wall*. Kam Wing Chan, "Post-Mao China: a two-class urban society in the making." Wang, Feng, "Invisible walls within cities: migration and the emergence of a dual society in urban China," (Paper prepared for Conference on Social Consequences of Chinese Economic Reform, Harvard University, May 23-24, 1997)

⁵⁰ Kam Wing Chan, "Post-Mao China: a two-class urban society in the making."

⁵¹ Dorothy Solinger. "The Floating Population in the Cities: Chances for Assimilation?" in Deborah Davis et al. eds. *Urban Spaces: Autonomy and Community in Contemporary China*. Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, (1995), pp. 113-39.

Table 6 *Hukou* and Non-*hukou* Rural-urban Migrants

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Hukou Migrants</u>	<u>Non-Hukou Migrants</u>
Household registration status	Non-agricultural and local	Agricultural and non-local
Entitlement to state-supplied social benefits and opportunities	Full	From nil to temporary entitlements
Legal urban resident status	Full status	Illegal or temporary
The socio-economic sector the migrants move to	State sector and non-state sector	Mostly to non-state sector also as temporary workers in state enterprises
Mechanism of effecting migration	Transfers determined by bureaucratic decisions within plan limits	“Spontaneous” based on personal contacts and market information
Stability of moves	Permanent	Seasonal or semi-permanent
Labor characteristics of principal migrants		
Skill level	Skilled and low-skilled workers	Mostly unskilled or low-skilled labor
Employment type	Mostly permanent jobs	Temporary or semi-permanent jobs in non-state enterprises; or self-employment
Housing	Same as other urban residents	Low-cost shelters or homeless

Source: Kam Wing Chan, “Post-Mao China: a two-class urban society in the making.”

Urban *Hukou* Sales as Local Government Revenues

Under the fiscal decentralization reforms since the 1980s to give more autonomy to local governments in financing their activities, local governments have been quick to discover the revenue potential of the new urban *hukou* and, in fact, have been aggressively exploiting it to their advantages. As there is no shortage of demand for a non-agricultural *hukou*, local governments have used the sales of urban *hukou* as a revenue-generating means. Thus the urban *hukou* has become a priced commodity. The central government in fact forbade local governments to sell urban *hukou*. The repeated memos from the central government serve to underline the popularity of the practice and its resilience.⁵² In recent years, however, in many places, including large cities, the charge is often in the form of *zengrongfei* (fees for expanding urban infrastructure).⁵³ With increasing fiscal decentralization initiated by central government in the reform era, local governments have been quite insistent that they need to raise urban construction funds in order to accommodate more and more in-migrants. This kind of practice is legalized with the introduction

⁵² See General Office of State Council, *Guanyu zhizhi yixie shixian gongkai chumai chengzhen hukou de tongzhi* (Circular on Stopping the Overt “Sale” of Urban *Hukou* in Certain Cities and Counties), issued on October 29, 1988. Ministry of Public Security, *Guanyu jianque zhizhi gongkai chumai feinongye hukou cuowu zuofa de jinji tongzhi* (Urgent Circular on Stopping the Overt “Sale” of Non-agricultural *Hukou*), issued on May 4, 1992. According to a report from People’s Daily, only in the first half of July 1992, Henan province sold more than 40,000 urban *hukou*, with the sale price from RMB6,000 to 30,000 per *hukou*. See [*Qingkuang Huibian* (Case Compilation)] no.471, People’s Daily, August 7, 1992.

⁵³ For example, when applying for a “blue-stamp” *hukou* in Guangzhou, the applicant has to pay RMB 20,000 to 40,000 *zengrongfei*, depending on the city district the applicant wants to live. See Guangzhou Daily, February 19, 1998.

of the blue-stamp *hukou*. This further weakens the central control of issuance of urban *hukou*. The commodification of the urban *hukou* has created a market for those who can afford. The price of an urban *hukou* varies geographically, largely depending on the location and urban administrative status of the place. Generally, the higher the administrative status of a city and the harder it is to migrate to, the higher the *hukou* price will be. One estimate reports that by early 1994, three million urban *hukou* books had been sold to peasants throughout the country, generating a total revenue of RMB25 billion.⁵⁴

Conclusion

This paper has provided a documentary account of the origins and changes of the *hukou* system and examined its functions and problems in relation to rural-urban migration since the 1950s. We have analyzed the dual control operation of the *nongzhuanfei* and the difficulties in implementing it. The original system was set up on the premise of a command system with a strong state sector and limited labor mobility. This is increasingly incompatible with a more marketized economy and with greater population mobility. New forces have outgrown the confines of the system, leading to a number of changes in the last two decades. This paper has reviewed these changes and examined some of the major consequences.

It is clear that the *hukou* system is one of important institutions on which the Chinese planned economy and society is based. It is a tool of the authoritarian regime. As long as the authoritarian rule is maintained, the state wants -- and needs -- to keep the *hukou* system. In review, despite all the reforms, the essential elements of the *hukou* system are still there and will not be changed overnight. The *hukou* system still functions to constrain personal free migration and contribute to societal segregation.

The gross inequality of the system has triggered a number of harsh critiques within China, the most notable being *The Unbalanced China* by Guo and Liu.⁵⁵ Many scholars have also argued for the, if not immediate, abolition of the system. Inside the government, there have been serious concerns about managing the population, especially migrants and discussions of measures to reform or revamp the system. In the early 1990s the State Council led a study that involved more than ten government departments to find ways to improve the existing *hukou* system and the *nongzhuanfei* policy in light of the new situations.⁵⁶ In the Fifth Plenary Session of the Seventh National People's Congress in March 1992 and in the first Plenary Session of the Eighth National People's Congress in spring 1993, several motions were put forward on reforming the *hukou* system and the policy regarding formal rural-urban migration.⁵⁷ The primary focus of those motions is on delinking the association between residence status and socioeconomic eligibility. So far nothing really substantive has been passed, but the trend is toward further relaxing the control

⁵⁴ *Sing Tao Daily*, February 8, 1994.

⁵⁵ Shutain Guo and Chunbin Liu, *Xiheng de Zhongguo (An Unbalanced China)*, Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, (1990).

⁵⁶ Personal interview with the officials in the Ministry of Public Security, September, 1997, Beijing. Also see Zhijing Xin and Qihong Yu, *Reform of Chinese hukou system*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

of nongzhuanfei. The State Council has also planned to draft the PRC's household registration law and national migration law to legalize the conditions and procedures for household registration, transfer of household registration, and administration of household registration.

Despite all the reforms, the pre-existing *hukou* system remains relatively unscathed because of the continuing significant disparities between the state ("non-agricultural") and non-state ("agricultural") sectors. As long as this fundamental societal configuration remains unchanged, the *hukou* -- as it is today -- cannot be done away with. It is both the basis and product of an authoritarian and segmented society. To the state, in order to maintain its vast administrative power, it is necessary to keep this tool. However, the *hukou* system can only function effectively in a closed command economy. There is little wonder that it under rising pressure and it is increasingly incompatible with China's moves to a market economy. Given the complexity of the system and its interconnectedness with so many other social and economic mechanisms, its demise, however, will have to wait for a much more thorough and fundamental restructuring of the Chinese society than what we have seen so far. Zhu Rongji's new round of reforms, especially the reform of the state-owned enterprises, appears to be a very important step in that direction.

At a superficial level, however, China can fairly easily delink the two functions currently held by the *hukou* system: to classify and record people's (rural/urban) residence, and to determine one's socioeconomic eligibility. These two aspects need not be tied together in one single system. Instead, they can be separated without many problems. If one's *hukou* status (rural/urban) is mainly statistical, without major bearing on the eligibility for state-provided welfare benefits, students of China perhaps can some day look to the end of the Chinese statistical mess of urban/rural definitions. Of course, such a separation will not change any fundamentals of the existing societal configuration..

Appendix 1 Qualifications for *Nongzhuanfei* through the MPS

Applicant	Conditions
Non-agricultural <i>hukou</i> holder's spouse	Permanently disabled or chronically sick, unable to take care of oneself, and without any relatives in the countryside to rely on.
Non-agricultural <i>hukou</i> holder's parents	Aging and unable to take care of oneself, and without any relatives in the countryside to rely on.
Non-agricultural <i>hukou</i> holder's children or adopted children	Under 15 years old, without any relatives in the countryside to rely on.
Resettled urban youth	Seriously sick or disabled; or having serious hardship in their family; with the permission of "Educated Youth" Office at or above the county level.
Family members of workers and staff working in Qinghai-Tibet Plateau	Unable to adapt the climate of Qinghai-Tibet Plateau
Children of female workers in geological industry and prospecting team	Unable to be fostered by their mothers due to the mobility nature of work, with family members residing in urban areas.

Source: Ministry of Public Security, *The Regulations of Transfer of Hukou Registration*. Approved by the State Council on November 8, 1977.

Appendix 2 Required Documents for *hukou* Registration in Cities

Reasons for in-migration	Main Document Required	Document Issuer
Employment	Certificate of employment	Labor Bureau at or above the county level
Job Transfer / Job Promotion	Certification Letter	Personnel Department or Labor Bureau at or above the county level
Education	Admission Letter	Institutes of tertiary education
Demobilization of Serviceman	Certification Letter	Regiments or Military Units at or above the county level
Return from Overseas	Certification Letter	Chinese Embassy
Personal Reason	Certificate of Transfer	Police Unit at or above the county level
Homeless Orphans Adopted by Urban Civil Affairs Department	Certification Letter	Civil Affairs Department at municipal level
Released from prison	Certificate of Release	Judicial Department at or above the county level
<i>Hukou</i> Resumption	Certificate of Transfer	Police Unit at or above the county level

Sources:

Wang, Fang (ed.) (1992), *Dangdai zhongguo de gongan gongzuo (Police work in contemporary China)*. Beijing: Contemporary China Press.

Yang, Suiquan (1995), *Zhongguo renkou falu zhidu yanjiu (Study of China's population law system)*. Beijing: Law Publishing Press.

Wang, Jingron (1994), *Gongan fazhi tonglun (On police laws and regulations)*. Beijing: Mass Press.

Zhang, Qingwu et. al, (1995), *Hukou guanli yi renkou puchai (Hukou administration and census)*. In State Statistical Bureau (ed.), *Collection of research papers on analyses of 1990 census data*. Beijing: China Statistical Press.

Appendix 3 Glossary of Terms about the *Hukou* System

- Permit to move (*zhun qian zhen*)
- Migration certificate (*qian yi zhen*)
- Certificate of temporary residence (*zhan zhu zhen*)
- Converting the *hukou* status from agricultural to non-agricultural one (*nongzhuanfei*)
- The place of *hukou* registration (*hukou suozaidi*)
- The status of *hukou* registration (*hukou leibie*)
- The administrative area of *hukou* registration (*hukou guanxia qu*)