

Handout 1: Timeline of the Hukou System

1700 B.C.E.	Under the Shang Dynasty, many of the areas that we now call China united into one political state for the first time.
3rd century B.C.E.	During the Qin Dynasty, a system of registering individuals by the household they belong to was established. This type of system reappears in future Chinese dynasties.
1644	At the start of the Qing Dynasty, the emperor implements the “baojia” system, in which individuals need to register with the government by household. Neighboring households are then grouped together in a system that allows for more government control. This is seen by some as a precursor for China’s current hukou system.
1842	China is defeated in the Opium Wars against Great Britain. This begins the “Century of Humiliation,” in which foreign industrialized powers exert influence over China’s economic and political affairs.
1899-1901	Nicknamed the “Boxer Rebellion,” a period of revolts by peasant from northern China against foreign influence in China further weakens the power of China’s Qing Dynasty.
1912	China’s system of dynasties, which has existed for over one thousand years, ends after military uprisings. The country becomes a republic.
1928	Chiang Kai-Shek becomes the leader of China’s nationalist party. Meanwhile communist forces, led by Mao Zedong, organize to take control of China.
1931-1945	Japan brutally invades and occupies much of mainland China during World War II. China fights on the side of the Allies.
1949	After a civil war, the nationalists (led by Chiang Kai-Shek) flee mainland China and the communists (led by Mao Zedong) declare victory. Mao Zedong renames the communist country the “People’s Republic of China” and becomes its first leader.
1950	Under the new communist reforms, the land of wealthy farmers and landowners is seized and redistributed to millions of poor people in rural areas.

1953	Private ownership of land is now illegal in China. Farmers are turned into collectively owned cooperatives. People in rural areas need to depend on the food they produce for survival, while people in urban areas receive food rations.
January 9, 1958	China's leader Mao Zedong establishes a policy regulating the household registration ("Hukou") system. This makes the system much more widespread, standardized, and enforced. Chinese citizens are mandated to register be registered with the system when they are born and are assigned either rural or urban hukou.
1959	Hunger becomes widespread in rural China due to mismanagement of agricultural reforms. 15-30 million people are estimated to die from famine. Urban residents continue to receive grain rations and are much less affected by the food shortages.
1976	Mao Zedong, who has been the leader of China since it became a communist state in 1949, dies. Deng Xiaoping takes charge and starts to implement changes.
1978	Reforms of the hukou or household registration system begin. The system starts to become more locally-administered and it becomes easier for individuals with rural hukou to move to urban areas. Their hukou does not change, however, and those with rural hukou cannot access social services in urban areas.
1979	China establishes the "one-child" policy in order to control its population growth. Under the policy, couples can legally only have one child. In this year, the U.S. also recognizes the People's Republic of China as the country's official government for the first time. Prior to this, the U.S. only recognized the exiled nationalist government in Taiwan.
1984	The city of Shenzhen in Guangdong province starts to allow "temporary residence permits" (TRPs), which allow migrants to legally work and live in areas outside of their hukou registration. Despite legal status, temporary residents with rural hukou do not have access to many social services in urban areas.
September 6, 1985	Beijing implements the Regulation on Resident's Personal

	Identification Card. This allows workers in Beijing with hukou from other areas to remain in the city, but prevents them from accessing public services there, such as retirement benefits, healthcare.
Late 1980s	Chinese citizens no longer need to obtain permission letters from local governments in order to legally travel within China. Instead, they can show identity cards. This makes it much less complicated to travel domestically.
Early 1990s	Government eliminates grain rations tied to a place of one's household registration (hukou).
February, 1994	The <i>South China Post</i> , a Hong Kong newspaper, publishes an article called "Registration system set to be abolished."
1998	An individual's hukou is influenced by the father's hukou as well as the mother's. Before this year, only the mother's hukou was considered.
2001	Workers with rural hukou who have lodging and a legal source of employment in a small town are allowed to live in town. Larger cities expand the number of rural residents allowed to apply for resident permits.
2004	The practice of sending Chinese citizens in living in cities where they did not have a hukou (unregistered migrants) back to their place of registration has almost entirely stopped. Migrants are now able to live in cities without the appropriate hukou, but still cannot access public services such as healthcare and public schools.
2014	Local and national governments in China start to work toward combining rural and urban hukou into a single category so that all residents can access services. This has not yet been accomplished.
2018	Over 13 million people with rural hukou living in China's cities are given urban hukou. An additional 24 million are given residence permits by the Chinese government. Reforms are expected to continue.

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