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Dividing the People: The authoritarian bargain, development, and authoritarian citizenship

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Abstract

Autocrats must redistribute to survive, but redistribution is limited and selective. Who is entitled to redistribution underlying the authoritarian bargain? I argue redistribution is a question of citizenship. Authoritarian citizenship is characterized by particularistic membership and group-based rights rather than inclusive membership and individual rights. Autocrats use citizenship institutions to strategically limit and extend socio-economic rights to ensure both security and economic development. I apply this framework to China, where control over particularistic membership decentralized in conjunction with development strategies. Drawing on semi-structured interviews, government policies, and a database of local citizenship policies in China, I trace how local citizenship creates closure while development incentivizes strategic inclusion. By evaluating how authoritarian citizenship functions, this framework increases our understanding of individual-state relations in autocratic contexts.

Keywords: Authoritarian citizenship, authoritarian bargain, membership, China

Citizenship is usually understood as a national-level membership where all individuals are entitled to rights. But in many authoritarian states access to citizenship rights varies below the national level. Autocrats routinely divide their populations into included and excluded groups, granting some populations full access to citizenship rights while restricting or denying access to others. In China, these divisions largely followed urban and rural, local and internal migrant divisions. Formally designated local-urban residents enjoy entitlements to more and better government services than rural residents and internal migrants. Yet since 2001, local governments loosened controls on who can become a local-urban resident, expanding access to citizenship rights. Expansion occurred despite internal migrants' longstanding exclusion from government services and whose exclusion from citizenship rights have not posed a fundamental threat to the regime.[1] Under what conditions do autocratic leaders expand the population they are beholden to by expanding citizenship rights?

Autocrats use social welfare to coerce, coopt, and repress groups to maintain political stability.[2] But this rationale cannot explain the expansion of rights more broadly to groups not directly threatening the regime and those outside of elites, assuming a cohesive strategy of welfare distribution within one country. Non-rentier states depend not only on security, but also economic development to fund the redistribution on which their legitimacy depends. Yet too much redistribution, especially to the masses, is inefficient and threatens social and political hierarchies on which authoritarian governance depends.

I argue that citizenship institutions in authoritarian states are tools for autocrats to manipulate redistribution more broadly. Authoritarian citizenship is inherently particularistic, relocating membership—who is entitled to redistribution—below the national level. Autocratic leaders manipulate citizenship membership to both ensure security and generate the economic

growth on which the authoritarian bargain depends. This framework bridges the security-driven authoritarian survival literature and the economics-driven developmental state literature to show how the nominally democratic institution of citizenship is used to both provide greater redistribution and support regime survival. When economic development policies vary below the national level, so do the rules of rights entitlements. The result is a limited form of citizenship I argue characterizes authoritarian citizenship: particularistic membership with entitlements to group-based socio-economic rights.

I demonstrate this framework with the crucial, highly institutionalized case of China. The household registration system, known as *hukou,* identifies who is and is not entitled to government redistribution. A rigid, hereditary local citizenship institution, the hukou entitles local-urban citizens to a wide bundle of socio-economic rights while relegating ruralites and internal migrants to second-class and non-citizenship statuses.[3] In 2020, more than 376 million internal migrants—approximately one quarter of China's population—faced some form of exclusion from local citizenship, where the majority of citizenship rights are provided.[4] For decades, this caste-like system determined the fate of China's people by identifying local-urban residents as full citizens and internal migrants as legal outsiders excluded from government services.[5]

The Chinese case highlights how subnational particularism in authoritarian citizenship allows for decentralized control. Decentralized economic development policymaking incentivized a devolution of control over hukou policies, as citizenship institutions became tools to achieve local development. A strategic policy choice by the central government, local governments control not only what citizenship rights they redistributed—including education, healthcare, pensions, and local voting rights—but also *who is* and who *can become* entitled to

rights—citizenship membership.[6] Local governments, facing similar security and economic incentives for manipulating redistribution as central leaders, shaped their citizenship policies to support local development goals creating internal citizenship regimes. The result is a highly varied system of access to citizenship rights across the country.

Drawing on more than eighty semi-structured interviews with local bureaucrats, business representatives, and migrants themselves from 2013 until 2019 and a policy analysis of government regulations at four levels of government, I show how local governments explicitly manipulate citizenship membership by operating local naturalization regimes. Using a cluster analysis based on local naturalization policies, I show how municipalities vary in how easy it is to obtain local citizenship.[7] I then use a cross-sectional analysis to show how local governments manipulate citizenship membership to ensure stability and to advance economic development, two key drivers of the authoritarian bargain.[8]

These arguments contribute to the broad literature on authoritarian institutions, welfare and the developmental state, and citizenship. Authoritarian citizenship is an undertheorized concept,[9] which leaves many to assume a homogenous experience of subjecthood for people in non-democracies. Yet some people do enjoy socio-economic rights and limited political rights. Existing research on authoritarian citizenship focuses on bottom-up rights claiming, how individuals perform citizenship, or the development of welfare-as-citizenship.[10] This analysis turns the focus to citizenship institutions within the state, identifying membership, a defining feature of citizenship, as the object of study.

Security, Development, and the Authoritarian Bargain

Autocratic regimes use both coercion and redistribution to survive. While coercion may be necessary for survival, [11] it is often insufficient for explaining authoritarian longevity. Governance outcomes and redistributive policies create popular support for authoritarian regimes—a process often overlooked in the study of autocracy.[12] This exchange of redistribution for at least tacit political support is known as the authoritarian bargain.[13] Research on authoritarian redistribution focuses on its repressive, coercive, or cooptive power over would-be challengers to the regime.[14] These mechanisms follow a security logic—autocratic leaders provide redistribution to populations seen as a security threat.

Beyond the security-focused coercion hypothesis of redistribution, however, is an economic motivation. Distributing economic benefits through development is essential for non-rentier authoritarian survival for two primary reasons. First, pursuing economic development increases incomes and popular support for the regime through output legitimacy.[15] Second, economic development provides the state with resources necessary to fuel redistribution. In non-rentier states, the government must secure a steady inflow of resources to fuel the authoritarian bargain. Without development, states may not have resources to redistribute to friends or rivals.

This framing provides the *why* of authoritarian redistribution, bridging the literatures of the coercive and developmental state. Developmental states direct investment into targeted industries through interwoven connections between the state bureaucracy and economic elites,[16] using labor and social policies to pursue economic development. As the productivist welfare state hypothesis argues, redistribution through welfare programs target advancing economic productivity by investing in human capital.[17] Focusing on *what* is redistributed and where, these two literatures explain economically-motivated redistribution.

A remaining question, however, is *how* autocratic states maintain the balance of redistribution. Autocrats do not need to redistribute equally to all individuals in society. Doing so would undermine the special status of core supporters and would be 'inefficient,' since autocrats need not win popular elections. The primary existing theory on defining how redistribution occurs comes from the selectorate theory. Political inequalities correlate with redistributive benefits. The state's core supporters, alternative sources of power, and all others receive the most, some, and minimal redistribution, respectively.[18] But identifying these groups in a large and heterogenous society is difficult,[19] especially when considering broader redistribution policies that affect the general population like socio-economic rights such as welfare programs.

Authoritarian Citizenship

Citizenship institutions are one method autocrats use to delineate access to redistribution, defining different groups in society. Citizenship institutions provide tools for autocrats to strategically manipulate who gets what in the authoritarian bargain and provide the tools of control that allow both the security- and economically-driven redistribution. Manipulating citizenship falls under the same category as the manipulation of other nominally democratic institutions used by autocrats to order and legitimize unequal power in society.[20] These institutions provide autocrats with tools to coopt different segments of society by integrating both citizens and elites into the institutions of the state.[21] They also operate as a mechanism through which redistribution occurs, credibly committing the autocrat to allocating resources to rent-seeking elite.[22] And citizenship institutions "institutionalize dominance" of the state and the social hierarchy that supports it.[23]

At the most fundamental level, citizenship is an exclusionary status that entitles individuals to rights based on their belonging to a specific political community.[24] The three constituent features of citizenship are rights, responsibilities, and membership. Western conceptions dominate the study of citizenship, often equating citizenship with universal membership at the national level that bestows individual political rights and demands individual civic responsibilities. This conceptualization leaves little space for citizenship in non-democracies, where individuals are often assumed subjects rather than citizens.[25]

In practice, citizenship rights do exist in non-democracies but they take the form of group-based socio-economic and minor political rights.[26] Entitlement to these rights is less universal in non-democracies, with particularistic membership, leading to highly varied access to citizenship rights within one country.[27] Without the broad accountability mechanisms of democratic institutions, autocrats can discriminately provide socio-economic rights to some groups but not others, relocating citizenship membership below the national level. This conceptualization of authoritarian citizenship is not a discrete concept separate from "democratic citizenship." Instead, citizenship is as a continuum where fundamental rights depend on regime type and membership ranges from universal to highly particularistic, with some contexts falling farther from the "ideal" type of universalistic, equal membership in rights than others.[28]

I argue autocratic systems manipulate redistribution through internal citizenship regimes—institutions that relocate belonging and entitlements to citizenship rights below the national level. Only those with subnational belonging benefit from the rights of citizenship. With internal citizenship regimes, individuals can be a citizen of a particular country yet lack practical access to the rights and redistribution associated with citizenship. Internal citizenship regimes can divide a population along many different lines including economic,[29] identity,[30] or

geographic.[31] The resulting inclusion and exclusion of groups creates hierarchies with differentiated membership statuses that consequently alter access to rights and redistribution.[32] This disaggregation of the population within one polity allows the autocrat to target the provision of different goods to particular groups, helpful for fulfilling the authoritarian bargain without excessive redistribution. The resulting institutional arrangements are fragmented, layered, and subject to manipulation by the autocrat to both strategically redistribute enough to meet their side of the authoritarian bargain while also limiting their provisions of rights.

Manipulating Membership

By locating the political community of membership below the national level, authoritarian regimes create more opportunities for manipulating membership and greater subnational variation in access to rights. Manipulation includes controlling how many people gain access to permanent citizenship rights, dictating who can become full citizens, and managing the centralized and decentralized nature of citizenship regimes. Both security and economic incentives drive manipulation of membership in authoritarian citizenship. Security incentives drive the continuation of the hierarchical system while economic development drives both greater openness and decentralized control over membership.

Manipulating membership allows autocrats to limit redistribution while strategically expanding access when necessary for stability. Autocratic leaders benefit from maintaining and protecting a privileged elite group. Equal redistribution undermines the value of this elite status. Additionally, greater redistribution undermines regime resources, potentially threatening future redistribution should resources become overextended. From a security perspective, membership should only be expanded to coopt, coerce, or repress potential challengers.[33] This leads to

restrictive membership systematically and the first hypothesis: security incentives increase the need for maintaining particularistic citizenship.

Security incentives are only part of the story, however. Expanding access to citizenship rights through more open membership can also ensure economic development. Funding for redistribution is ultimately driven by economic development. Officials expand access to redistribution if doing so helps economic development. If development requires expanding access to citizenship to improve human capital, leaders manipulate membership policies to specifically extend citizenship to people who directly benefit development. This leads to the second hypothesis: economic development policies encourage more open citizenship membership policies.

The broad, central-driven goals of ensuring security and economic development hold true across subnational contexts, but security and economic incentives differentially interact with both local goals and contexts. Security goals of maintaining social hierarchies to privilege some groups and not others often do not vary subnationally. The context of applying these goals does vary, however. Large cities, with higher potential for collective action,[34] those in 'restive' regions, and localities with higher demand for government services because of larger populations are more likely to be restrictive because they present larger security challenges.

Economic incentives, however, vary in both goal and context. If particularistic citizenship membership depends on supporting economic development, a key question is the political geography of economic development policies. In highly centralized systems where development policies are dictated by central authorities, membership policies should be similarly controlled and managed by central incentives. But where economic development policies vary below the national level, internal citizenship regimes allow for decentralized control and manipulation.

Because, as I argue, internal citizenship regimes are downstream effects of economic development policies, when local governments control economic policies, so too will they control citizenship policies. Thus, while local leaders strive for economic development as central leaders do, local citizenship policies will vary dependent on the local economic development strategy.

In particular, internal citizenship regimes allow leaders to selectively include people who benefit local development policies. Who benefits local development depends on the nature of local policies. When investment in a high-tech sector drives development, for example, high-skilled migrants with technical skills are particularly valuable. But when low-wage manufacturing drives the economy, a stable workforce to run factory lines that does not necessarily depend on a college education is more beneficial. In large systems with decentralized development strategies, internal citizenship regimes allow for local adaptation to support both local development goals and contexts.[35] This leads to the third hypothesis: variation in local economic development strategy drives most local variation.

As the Chinese case presents below, the hukou system provided central authorities a form of institutionalized citizenship membership used to ensure both security and protection of resources as well as a means of manipulating redistribution to support economic development. When development policies decentralized to adapt to local contexts, central authorities devolved control over citizenship membership policies, providing local authorities power over inclusion and exclusion in locally-provided citizenship rights. Local authorities, facing similar incentives for maintaining security and advancing development, diversified hukou policies to adapt to local security contexts and, more importantly, benefit local development strategies.

Research Design

Below I use a China case study as a theory building exercise. The Chinese case is highly institutionalized, with internal citizenship regimes defined by the hukou system. The case study draws on semi-structured interviews with local bureaucrats involved in hukou policy making, hukou police officers, human resource managers, and internal migrants in six provinces and directly administered cities, as well as a nation-wide policy analysis. I collected eligibility requirements for acquiring hukou—local naturalization—for 318 of China's 333 municipalities.[36] With the assistance of three research assistants, we used a standardized instrument to collect data on all ways to obtain local-urban hukou, and thus gain local citizenship, from local public security bureau websites in each municipality. Data were collected between May and June of 2016 in order to capture local policies after the implementation of national reform in 2014.

Using data both from qualitative interviews, a cluster analysis, and a cross-sectional analysis, I show how economic factors correlate with the strategic manipulation of local citizenship policies. Different paths to development incentivize the expansion of citizenship to different groups in society.

Authoritarian Citizenship in China

As a closed authoritarian regime, legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) depends on the provision of socio-economic rights, rather than rents from natural resources or input legitimacy from democratic institutions.[37] Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the Chinese state itself purposefully defined rights as socio-economic benefits to tie state legitimacy with the provision of these rights.[38] This led to the development of socio-economic rights as the basis of citizenship rights provided by, and demanded of, the state.[39] These rights include social

protections, such as the right to education, healthcare, pensions, and old age care. Political rights, including direct elections, do exist at the local level in China, but they are dwarfed by both the provision and expectation of socioeconomic rights.[40] Local governments, rather than national governments, provide these rights, however. Municipal governments in particular design and operate the welfare programs that define citizenship rights.[41] County and township governments below the municipality regulate political rights, as voting for congresses occur at these lower levels.

Citizenship membership, and therefore entitlements to citizenship rights, is also determined at the local level. Access to rights depends on the household registration system, or hukou. The right to a particular hukou follows *jus sanguinis* lines: hukou is registered at birth and is hereditarily passed from parent to child.[42] The hukou divides people along two lines: urban and rural, local and non-local. Within each municipality, urban—or non-agricultural—hukou holders enjoy "urban rights" including healthcare, housing allowances, pensions, old-age care, unemployment, and minimum livelihood guarantees. Rural—or agricultural—hukou holders have "rural rights," which are fewer and less funded than urban rights, plus land-use rights.[43]

Local hukou holders are those registered in the county where they live. Internal migrants who cross county lines to live and work are thus considered non-citizens by the local state because their hukou is registered somewhere else. As one city official in a southern municipality put it, "those [internal migrants] are some other city's citizens. Their home government is responsible for them, not us."[44] Reforms pushed by the central government since the early 2000s peaking in 2014 reduced some of the urban-rural distinctions but have also exacerbated local-non-local distinctions.[45]

Hukou functions like the Soviet *propiska*, which embodied a "distribution mechanism for social services."[46] Most "conventional aspects of citizenship" including entitlements to rights and passing citizenship to children are reserved for the local population, identified through hukou.[47] Non-hukou populations—individuals with hukou registered in some other municipality—do not have permanent access to locally-provided rights.[48] Non-local populations also face discriminatory practices in access to education, loans, jobs in the state sector, and medical insurance, such as higher fees, restricted access, and outright denial of services.[49] Individuals who have a local-urban hukou enjoy citizenship rights whereas those without local-urban hukou registration are treated as second-class or non-citizens.[50]

This system of subnational citizenship moves beyond an unequal welfare state framework because of membership institutions. It is not only that local governments provide the bulk of citizenship rights, but also rules of membership, of *who* is entitled to these rights. This creates a quintessential case of multi-level citizenship where belonging to the local state defines access to citizenship rights.[51] The localized connection between socio-economic rights entitlements and particularistic membership defined by hukou create the internal citizenship regimes that allow the state to disaggregate hierarchies of belonging and entitlement to citizenship rights while excluding many more.

The Logic of Decentralized Control

The central government used hukou policies to secure both security and economic incentives inherent in the authoritarian bargain throughout the modern institution's history. When economic policies were highly centralized, so too were hukou policies as citizenship institutions remained a key element of economic policymaking. When economic policies shifted towards decentralized control, hukou policies followed suit.

The central government managed the hukou system as part of the command economy before 1979, dictating who could naturalize by using quotas limiting the number of new urban citizens allowed. This "strict control" only allowed transfers for state employees, college students, and limited family reunifications.[52] Labor, like land and capital, was a resource to be allocated by the state. As central economic policies decentralized over the first decades of the reform era, so too did control and management of both socio-economic rights and hukou policies, with hukou policies following the decentralization of socio-economic rights provision and coincided with greater local control over land management.

The central government decentralized responsibility for providing citizenship rights to local governments in the early 1990s as enterprise reform precipitated the need to reform welfare systems.[53] The central state subsequently devolved economic development and redistributive policies to local governments to increase efficiency and allow policy to adapt to local contexts. Local governments also gained control over naturalization processes, to adapt hukou policies to best fit local needs.[54] Small-scale reforms in the 1990s gave way to a nation-wide proliferation of naturalization policies after 2001.[55]

Decentralization of hukou policies aligned with the decentralization of authority over other factors of production, most notably land. As local markets and land financing grew in fiscal importance,[56] both central and local governments benefited from localizing hukou policies. The overall economy, driven by land-centered urbanization, grew with local flexibility in policy control. And local governments used control over local hukou policy to support urbanization plans.[57] The alignment of both land and labor decentralization created more incentives for local rural migrant integration than existed in the 1990s.

While policy proliferation—whereby local governments created new policies to manage the hukou system locally—throughout the 2000s increased the opportunities for internal migrants to gain local citizenship, by 2011, the central government identified many of these policies as "impair[ing] the national interest," especially for expanding too rapidly.[58] National-level reforms in 2014 called for a reigning in of local policy proliferation, attempting to create "a new hukou system" with greater equality between urban and rural citizens and smoother, more regularized naturalization pathways.[59] But these calls for reform were also tempered with calls for local management and controlled reform within the policy.[60] While local governments are encouraged to reform the hukou to allow for greater naturalizations from the countryside to the urban centers, significant authority over the implementation of policies remained decentralized and selectively implemented.[61]

Local Incentives for Manipulating Citizenship

Local level officials have many of the same incentives as central leaders detailed above, although through slightly different mechanisms. Security incentives largely mirror central-level incentives. Maintaining social security and stability are necessary for advancing one's career with large protests derailing political promotions.[62] Local leaders also prioritize economic development for both local and central logics. While the central state needs to secure development to maintain legitimacy from the bottom up, local officials must secure economic development to signal their abilities to supervisors above them and alignment with central goals. Officials with stronger economic development outcomes are more likely to advance in their careers, especially at the local level.[63] Locally, officials also depend on economic development to fund redistribution. Welfare programs are largely funded by local budgets rather than central coffers.[64] Without development, local governments struggle to finance redistributive policies,

undermining their local authority and legitimacy.[65] This is reflected in the economic logic of policy reform echoed by many local officials.

In one particularly insightful conversation with a member of a municipal hukou policy reform working committee, one bureaucrat joked that in writing new policy to allow more migrants to gain citizenship, they tried to "guess who had money" so new citizens would not be a draw on local resources, reflecting a security logic of policymaking. But they had to balance this with factory owners complaining to the local government about insufficient labor resources. The result was a policy that attempted to balance the need to conserve resources while also supporting economic development to support both local budgets and centrally dictated incentives.[66]

Measuring Internal Citizenship Regimes

With control over membership policies decentralized in 2001, local governments used naturalization pathways to selectively include desirable populations. Changing one's hukou to naturalize in a new location—transfer hukou (zhuan hukou, or ruhu)—involves qualifying for a highly restrictive transfer program in a new city and a complicated bureaucratic process. After qualifying for a transfer, a migrant must apply via a local police station, who verifies their documents. County- then municipal-level public security bureaus review and adjudicate the application. After approval, the migrant can apply for a relocation permit in the new municipality. With the relocation permit, the migrant must return home to cancel their old hukou, obtaining an "[out-]migration permit" that authorizes their move and rescinds the existing hukou. Returning to their destination, the migrant presents both the relocation and migration permits to initiate the hukou naturalization.[67] This process involves three levels of government both in the new location and the home location, can require over 100 documents, and is meant to ensure that people hold only one hukou.[68]

Local naturalization pathways purposefully mimic international immigration regimes creating internal citizenship regimes that include some populations while excluding others.[69] Each municipality publishes naturalization pathways, or methods for entering registration (ruhu banfa) for would-be naturalizers. These naturalization pathways fall into one of four broad categories: high-skilled, residence-based, family reunions, and investment. Each naturalization pathway varies in their eligibility requirements.[70]

High-skilled naturalization: Municipalities operate two different forms of high-skilled naturalization: general pool programs and employer-recruited models. Many provincial capitals, for example, operate points-based high-skilled naturalization schemes like Canada's Federal Skilled Worker program that recruit high-skilled natualizers regardless of employment status, adding to the general labor pool. Would-be naturalizers earn points for educational background, investments, and skills certificates. Local governments admit the highest-ranked applicants each year.[71] Cities also operate employer-sponsored transfers for high-skilled workers like the H1-B in the United States. Firms sponsor their employees and new recruits, often including the opportunity to transfer hukou as either part of a hiring package or as a promotion incentive.[72] Municipalities vary in what counts as high-skilled. Approximately ten percent of municipalities have no high-skilled recruitment programs. Seven percent of municipalities require a four-year undergraduate degree while the majority of municipalities require a post-secondary degree of any kind. Just under five percent allow for high-school graduate to qualify for skill-based transfers.

Residence-based naturalization: Residence-based programs allow migrants living and working in a city for a certain number of years to qualify for naturalization. While residence-based programs gained attention in 2014 when national-level reform called all cities to begin allowing naturalizations for longer-term residents, in 2016 more than forty percent of

municipalities did not have residence programs. Of those that did, twenty-five percent of municipalities required migrant workers to have contracted employment, a high bar that upwards of 70 percent of migrants would not qualify for.[73]

Family-based naturalizations: Municipalities also allow chain, or family-based, naturalizations. But these too are limited. In some cities, spousal reunification, where one spouse changes their registration to their spouse's, needs only a marriage certificate. In others, spouses must wait ten years before becoming eligible. Almost half of all cities require children to be under the age of 18 for a parent to sponsor them for naturalization. Only twenty percent of cities have the more open policy of allowing children of any age to naturalize where their parent is registered. And siblings and extended family members do not qualify for transfers at all.

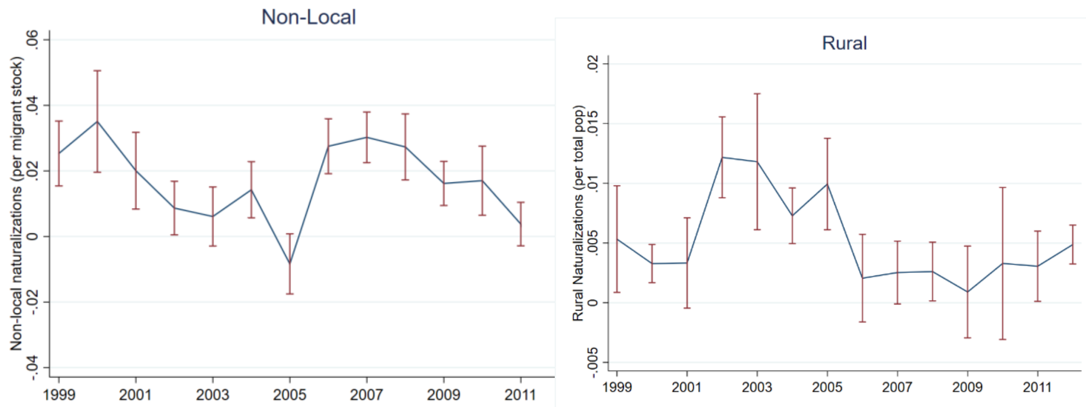
Investment-based Naturalization: Investment-based naturalization allows local investors to naturalize locally, similar to the 70 countries around the world that allow the purchase of citizenship.[74] Internal migrants can purchase houses or establish businesses that contribute tax income to qualify for naturalization through investment. The type and minimum amount required varies from the average market price of a house to many times that in business investments.

Some cities have all four types of naturalization pathways while others limit transfers to only two or three pathways. Similarly, how easy it is to access these pathways varies across cities. By making some pathways easy and some pathways difficult, the local government can strategically manipulate who has access to local citizenship and who does not.

Local governments also set quota for how many people can naturalize each year, limiting the overall number of eligible applicants who can naturalize. These quotas vary by city and by year and are not publicly available.[75] Estimates based on the growth of the urban, registered

population not due to natural growth provide rough estimates of net naturalization, however. Total number of local naturalizers is also not available, as municipalities do not report out-migration. The next best estimate is net naturalization (Figure 1), which captures some variation in naturalization processes.[76]

Figure 1 Net Naturalization Rate of Internal Migrants in Chinese Municipalities



The line represents the average net naturalizations to local-urban status for non-local and rural populations across all 287 non-autonomous municipalities per migrant population and total population, respectively. Vertical lines represent the 95% confidence interval around the mean by year.
Source: Naturalization is estimated as the growth of the registered population not attributable to natural growth. Population and natural growth estimates from the National Bureau of Statistics.

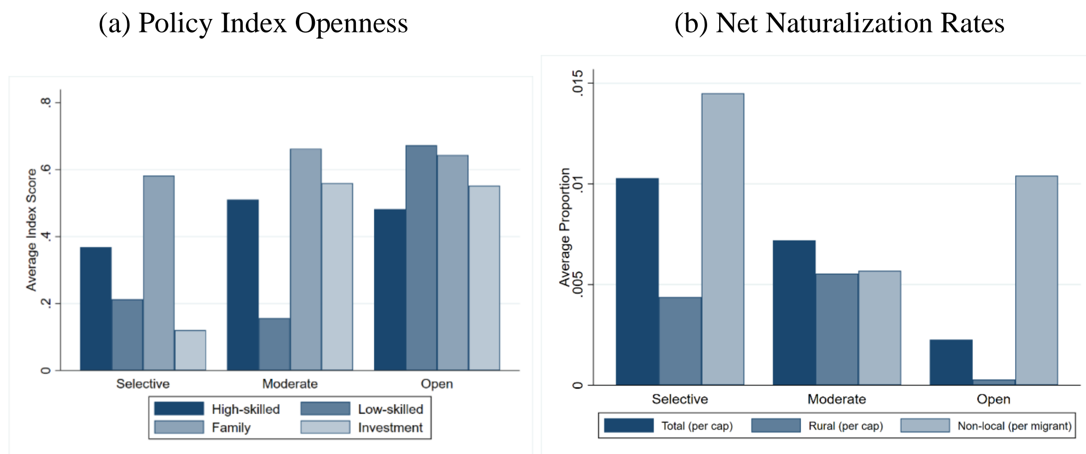
To evaluate how policies vary across municipalities, I created a naturalization policy index for each municipality. The index uses principal component analysis on measures of the administrative burdens placed on each naturalization pathway. The index measures how easy it is for migrants to qualify for local naturalization. The higher the index score, the easier it is to naturalize locally and the more open citizenship membership policies are.[77]

Based on a hierarchical clustering model, municipalities fall into one of three clusters of naturalization regimes: *selective*, *moderate*, and *open*. Selective municipalities employ relatively closed policies. This is most representative of investment pathways to local citizenship. Selective municipalities either do not allow investment-based citizenship or set high minimum investment

requirements (Figure 2). Of selective municipalities with an investment program, the average minimum investment amount was estimated around 800,000 RMB ($123,000 USD). This is dramatically higher than the investment amounts required in other clusters—146,000 and 152,000 RMB ($22,500 and $23,400 USD) in the moderate and open clusters, respectively. Selective municipalities have, on average, more closed high-skilled and family-based pathways than the other two clusters.

Figure 2 Policy Openness by Cluster

(a) Policy Index Openness (b) Net Naturalization Rates



Net naturalizations estimated as growth in the hukou population not attributable to natural growth. Estimated from statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics and provincial statistics bureaus.

On the other end of the spectrum, open municipalities maintain open policies across all pathways. Open investment policies have the lowest required minimum investments. Distinct from the other two groups is the relative openness of residence-based programs. Residence-based programs in open municipalities are less likely to require family in the local urban area or that residents explicitly relinquish land-use rights. They are also likely to have the shortest minimum residence time and are less likely to require a formal labor contract as proof of local employment. These pathways are much easier to access in the open cluster than any other cluster.

Moderate municipalities fall in between selective and open municipalities. Moderate municipalities have more open investment policies like open municipalities, but relatively restrictive residence-based programs like the selective municipalities. High-skilled programs are the most open in moderate municipalities compared to the other two clusters.

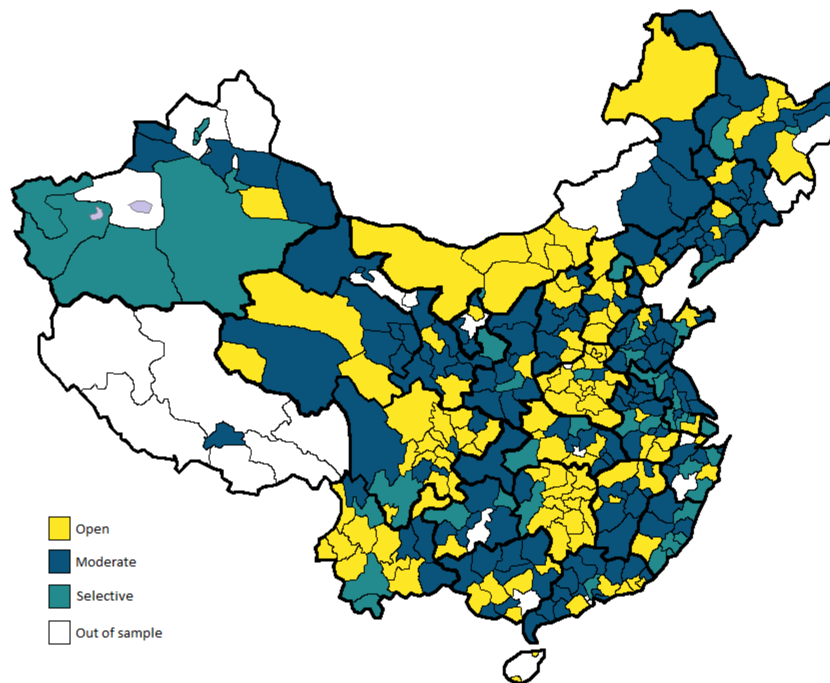
Based on estimates of naturalization in the five years before the policy index, policy openness does not correlate with more naturalizations. Figure 3 panel (b) presents the estimated naturalization rates of rural and migrant populations by policy cluster. Selective municipalities have the highest net naturalizations per total population at just above one percent. Open municipalities have the lowest rate at less than 0.2 percent of the total population. The aggregate number of naturalizations has an inverse relationship with relative policy openness.

The other notable pattern is the populations targeted for naturalization. Both selective and moderate municipalities maintain around a 0.5 percent naturalization rate of their rural populations. *Open* municipalities, however, have a net naturalization rate of near zero. Non-local migrants have higher net naturalization rates in selective municipalities than in any other cluster, followed by open municipalities and then moderate municipalities, with approximately 0.5 percent of migrant populations naturalizing.

Looking geographically, all three clusters are found across China (Figure 3). Open municipalities do have a central trend: more central municipalities fall into the open cluster than the other two regions, and this is statistically distinct (χ^2: 20.97, p=0.000). Selective municipalities exist in every region, although not in every province. There are three clusters of selective municipalities: one in Xinjiang, China’s far northwestern province;[78] the Fujian coast south of the Yangtze River delta; and in southern Jiangsu. Of the four directly-administered

municipalities, Beijing and Shanghai fall into the selective cluster while Tianjin and Chongqing fall into the moderate cluster.

Figure 3 Distribution of Clusters across China



Correlates of Internal Citizenship Regime Openness

The Security Imperative

The hukou long privileged urban residents, especially those in larger metropolitan areas. Privileged membership coincided with economically and politically important spaces. Urban residents drove the economic machinery of China's reform era. They also posed the largest challenge to the regime: urban concentration of people means regime destabilizing collective action is more likely.[79] Both central and local leaders need to redistribute to these populations to prevent challenges.

The first function of China's internal citizenship regimes, then, is to protect and limit the number of people in this privileged urban group. Chinese planners of the 1950s feared "blind migration"—the mass movement of people without a national vision of the whole economic system—should they allow market forces to drive the economy. With too much blind migration, planners argued, individuals could overwhelm strategically important locations such as capital cities and centers of industrial production. Hukou, and tying rights provision to that registration, prevented excessive and destabilizing urbanization and allowed the central government to divide the population.[80] By limiting the movement of the divided groups, the state could prevent "the wrong" people from getting access to key areas and make sure there were not too many people demanding more of the state than it could—or wanted to—provide. Across multiple interviews with county and municipal-level bureaucrats, security motivations drove the need to remain restrictive in hukou policies, protecting local resources.[81]

In China, just as in many other places around the world, the "right" type of migrants are more welcome than the "wrong" type. Generally spoken of as "troublemakers" in the Chinese context, the wrong type can be specific or general. Specific populations identified as troublemakers often disallowed from changing their hukou include those with criminal backgrounds and those with even suspicion of criminal activity face greater barriers to entry.[82] The "targeted population" (*zhongdian renkou*)—individuals who are expected likely to be socially disruptive—are routinely tracked and excluded from local citizenship.[83] The wrong type can also be general. Ethnic minorities are often targeted as populations to control, with limitations on minority migration and local governments not wanting to integrate them. Conversely, officials encouraged majority Han Chinese to move to western, minority-dominated areas as a means of "encouraging integration" of these regions and diluting the concentration of

minorities.[84] These security related concerns created conservative incentives to maintain the hukou system as a tool to exclude unwanted populations. This follows the logic of the first hypothesis.

While all municipalities are sensitive to social stability, security concerns are likely to vary across municipalities with different attributes. Large cities are the most strategically important because they have the highest demand on government resources.[85] Local citizens in these cities have the highest expectation for redistribution and can themselves create social disruption when their privileged status is challenged.[86] Similarly, where migration is high, greater demand pressures mean relaxed rules could let more people in than the system can handle, leading to stricter policies. Additionally, city officials often see migrant populations as a source of crime, with "lower quality (*suzhi di*)" people lacking formal connections locally driving much of the crime in the city.[87] Finally, cities with larger ethnic minority populations are regularly identified as security threats. In these areas, it is particularly important to manage the population to manage central party control.

The Economic Imperative

The security hypothesis explains the continuation of the hukou system but does not fully explain why socio-economic rights are extended to populations traditionally excluded from government redistribution that do not pose a clear regime threat. Keeping everyone out of the cities is just as unsustainable as fully opening all doors to all migrants. Strict hukou controls increased inequality, reduced the returns to education and human capital and created labor market disequilibria that hurt overall development goals.

Economic development is the primary driving force behind incentives to liberalize the system. Development involves the concentration of capital, especially in urban centers, and capital creates demand for labor. Fluid labor markets are necessary for market-based

development, where capital investments like building a factory also necessitate workers to operate the factory. The introduction of market forces as a means of development in China encouraged increasing factor mobility, reducing state control on land, labor, and capital.[88] As economic development increased, especially as China introduced market forces as a means of development, there were greater incentives to reduce hukou restrictions so that labor markets could adapt more fluidly to market forces.[89]

The incentives to increase labor mobility did not directly increase the need for labor inclusion in local citizenship. Local officials who needed labor would rather allow migrants in temporarily without having to foot the bill for long-term social welfare provisions, when possible. Incentives for longer-term inclusion, however, are directly tied to the type of development strategies employed at the local level. The hukou provided a tool to selectively open doors to 'desirable migrants' defined by local development strategy when their long-term inclusion aligned with development strategies.

In the largest cities, hukou transfer programs remained the most selective.[90] But most other municipalities opened in selective, targeted ways, and not always to the highly educated. High-skilled naturalizations—targeting those with college degrees and technical skills—are particularly lucrative when the local economy hosts foreign production. This outward-led development approach depends on higher skilled workers to encourage technology transfer and to attract foreign contracts.[91] Naturalizing high-skilled workers is an investment in the city's future development, even after contracts with foreign firms end, as naturalized high-skilled workers remain in the city, working for other companies with their gained experience and knowledge.[92] And foreign firms are much less willing to go into markets that do not already have a sufficiently large pool of high-skilled labor.[93]

While high-skilled workers are broadly attractive to city governments because they are less likely to depend on public resources, not all localities have the benefit of a foreign-driven economy. Naturalization pathways based on residence, investing in social welfare fund, or sending children to school are also tools to target the naturalization of local-rural residents in support of bottom-up development. Development policies dependent on agricultural upgrading and cultivating a stable working class detach naturalizations from skill and emphasize local migrants instead. Recognizing the need for broader recruitment of a working class, a smaller municipality in Guangdong implemented a "hukou through education" program, where children of migrants could qualify for naturalization after completing middle school locally. The city developed this program because large manufacturing firms complained worker turnover was high and by allowing children to naturalize, their parents would be more likely to stay in the city.[94]

Similarly, during the 2000s, hukou in exchange for land rose significantly. Early 21st century development programs focused on urbanization of land and capital, with local governments expanding cities through fixed assets investments.[95] The process was highly lucrative for the local government, which captured rents from the sale and development of rural land.[96] Many local governments began offering hukou to rural residents facing land-taking as a means of incorporating people into the urban center, not just the land they came from, and as a justification for usurping their land-use rights.[97] Cash-strapped inland municipalities created land-for-hukou exchanges whereby rural residents could qualify for naturalizing in the city by giving up their rural farmland.[98] These bottom-up processes targeted very different migrants from outward-driven development policies, divorcing naturalization from skill and focusing instead on the divisions between urban and rural citizens within one municipality.

These economic drivers—foreign firm production and rural production development—encourage different manipulation of naturalization policies. Foreign production should ease restrictions on high-skilled naturalizations the best match the need of foreign firms. Rural development, on the other hand, should increase the openness of low-skilled naturalization, especially those that target the local rural populations.

OLS Results

To identify broader correlates from security and economic incentives to manipulate citizenship, I present results from an OLS model of key economic and security variables on the policy indices (Figure 4).

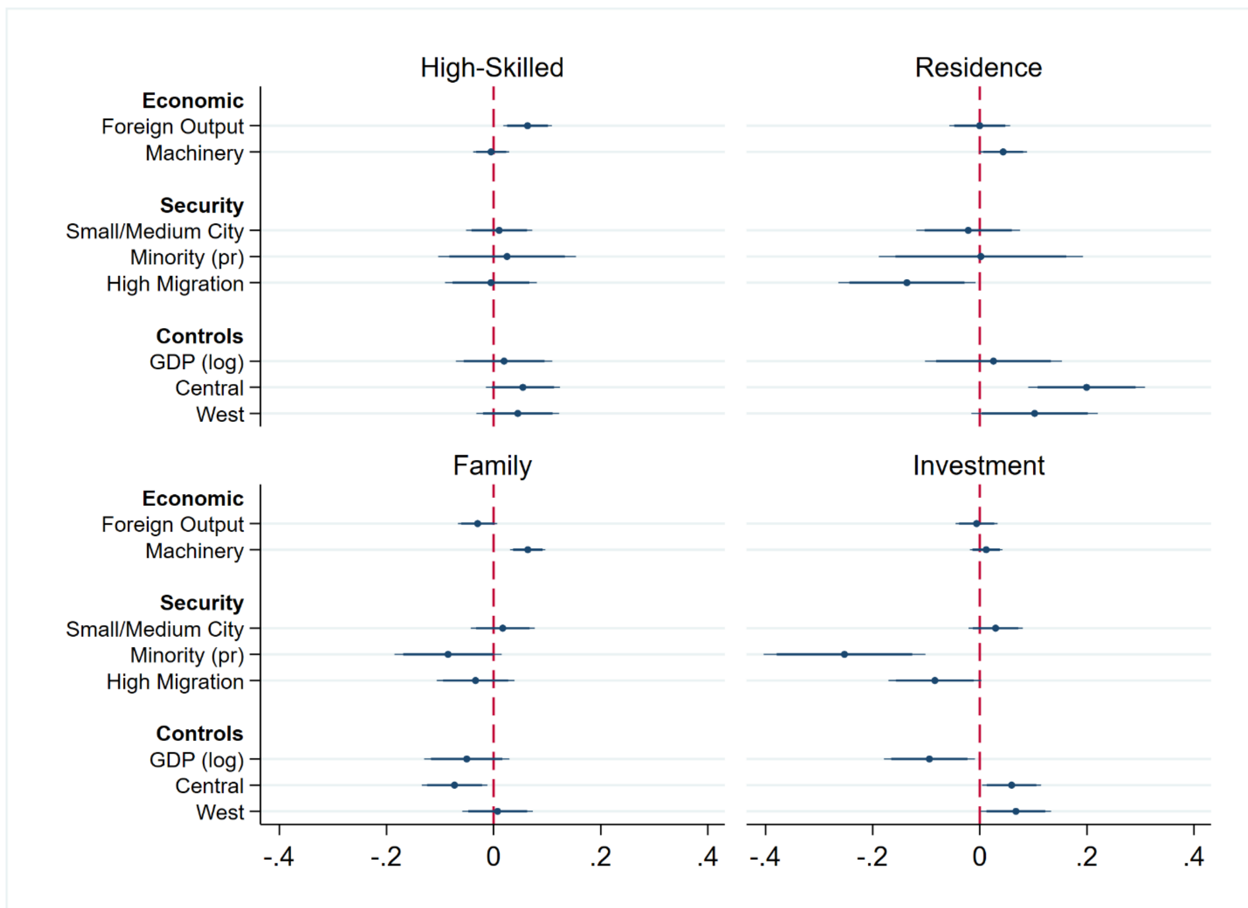
While security incentives primarily encourage the continuation of the hierarchical hukou system (H1), there may be local variation in the severity of security threats. Small and medium cities are less strategically important and are thus "safer" for more open policies. Municipalities with larger minority populations are subject to greater security management, thus making more restrictive policies likely. Finally, higher demand from larger migrant populations makes open policies riskier, so municipalities with higher rates of in-migration should be more restrictive. The security variables are negatively correlated with all but high-skilled naturalization policies. Having a large migrant population decreases the openness of residence and investment-based policies.

Having a larger minority population also decreases the openness of family and investment-based policies. Initially, this result may seem counter intuitive. Beijing has long encouraged migration of majority Han migrants to minority areas.[99] But many naturalization policies, especially family, residence, and investment pathways, primarily target local-rural migrants.[100] Leaders in areas with a larger minority population would be more willing to

encourage non-local migrants while keeping local-rural migrants out of the city, thus reducing the relative openness of naturalization policies in general.[101]

Interestingly, city size is not significantly correlated with any of the policy indices, meaning small and medium cities are no more or less open than their larger counterparts. Overall, the security incentives primarily encourage the continuation of the hukou system broadly rather than driving significant local variation. As theorized above, overall stability goals are more consistent and outweigh local context variation.

Figure 4 Marginal Effects of Economic and Security Correlates with Naturalization Policy Openness



Note: Dependent variables are index variables measuring the relative openness of naturalization in each municipality. Higher numbers signify easier/more open naturalization. Spikes represent

90 and 95 percent confidence intervals. All models include migration quartile controls and robust standard errors. Detailed variable descriptions available in the Appendix.

Overall, economic development measured as logged GDP does not have a strong influence on openness providing little support for the second hypothesis. Municipal GDP is only correlated with investment, with higher GDP negatively correlated with investment openness. One reason for the limited finding, however, is that different development policies incentivize different forms of openness—the third hypothesis. To capture variation in local development policy, I use two indicators that best capture the mechanism linking development strategy with labor. For outward oriented development, I use foreign firm production as a percent of overall output. Moreso than FDI or trade, foreign firm output highlights the need for high-skilled labor and the potential for technology transfer because of the local impacts of foreign production. For bottom-up development, I use heavy machinery use in agricultural production per arable land. Machinery is considered a labor-replacing technology adaptation whereas other forms of technology in agricultural production, such as fertilizer, are labor-enhancing. As machinery use increases, less agricultural labor is needs for production, causing greater disruption for local rural populations.

Foreign output as a percent of local GDP is positively and significantly correlated with high-skilled naturalizations. The foreign economy is negatively correlated with family naturalizations, however. This balance of more high-skilled workers with stricter family transfers highlights the selectivity of naturalization regimes.

The use of machinery in agricultural production, on the other hand, is positively and significantly correlated with naturalization policy openness for residence and family-based naturalizations. These naturalization pathways are specifically designed to target local residents

who move to the city. By encouraging naturalizations of these populations, the municipality can "free up" rural land to be used for urban expansion. This is especially useful in contexts of mechanized rural production, which replaces rural labor.

The development policies that result from these negotiations are not mutually exclusive: local leaders may employ several at the same time. They may emphasize or target one over the other, but they can, and are, implemented simultaneously. A city trying to secure a contract with a foreign firm may also be expanding its suburbs to develop its local area. Pursuing multiple pathways means naturalization policies will be the most open to the most people.

Discussion

Citizenship membership institutions in authoritarian contexts relocate the level of exclusion inherent in citizenship within the polity instead of outside the polity. This shift highlights citizenship as an institution prime for manipulation by authoritarian governments. Autocrats can expand citizenship membership to coopt challenging populations, but they also expand access to citizenship when necessary to secure resources for redistribution, namely, to support economic development. Balancing these forces leads to a limited form of citizenship.

Internal citizenship regimes in China created an extremely flexible system of inclusion and exclusion, manipulated to ensure the continued economic growth while also ensuring social stability. The balance between limiting and granting access to socio-economic rights shows the interaction of both economic and security logics in the authoritarian bargain. The autocrat needs to provide socio-economic rights to ensure social stability. Doing so requires privileging some groups over others for redistribution. Internal citizenship regimes allow the autocrat to identify and limit access to privileged status and thus access to redistribution. But redistribution also

depends on ensuring economic development on which redistribution depends. In the Chinese case, local membership rules delineating who is and is not a local citizen become tools to selectively include non-citizens who support development goals. Who is allowed in depends on the local development strategy. This flexibility helps support central strategies such as directed improvisation, whereby the central government not only allows, but encourages variation in local policies to achieve broader societal goals.[102]

In balancing the two drivers—security and economics—the results presented above highlight that security interests drive broad continuation of the system but have a relatively limited impact on local variation. Economic drivers have short term gains that can be highly motivating for local officials whereas security interests of limiting the access to full local citizenship have long term costs. Because local officials have relatively short tenures in any one city,[103] their incentives align more closely with economic drivers. As a downstream effect of economic policies, this fragmented system of particularistic membership leads to significant variation in access to citizenship rights and many different experiences of citizenship within one country context.

In the Chinese case, the central government decentralized both the provision of citizenship rights and control over membership requirements, to allow local governments to manage their economy and labor markets while limiting the expectations of redistribution from Beijing. Local officials then used membership institutions to strategically manipulate their local labor market in accordance with local development strategies, while also ensuring social stability and security. The result is a highly varied national landscape with significant differences in citizenship rights generosity and membership rules. This local-level variation should not be seen as a deficiency of the system, with limited central control over wayward agents. Instead, it is a

benefit of the fragmented nature of particularistic, subnational citizenship. Central leaders explicitly allow and encourage local variation to increase the efficiency of redistribution to support development and stability. Even major central reforms, such as the New-Type Urbanization Reform in 2014, highlight the need for policies to be dictated by local conditions. While principle-agent problems certainly exist in this policymaking space, the central government can and does encourage greater variation in citizenship policies so that hukou policies support economic growth.

The framework presented here posits an alternative understanding of citizenship, one that depends neither on direct political participation nor universal membership. Non-democratic forms of citizenship place greater emphasis on the differential relationship between individuals and the state, rather than on classical citizenship's emphasis on the normative equalizing force of liberal democratic values. The implication of this argument is that increased access to citizenship does not necessarily foretell expanding democratic values. Instead, a rise in citizenship rights can coincide with the strengthening of an authoritarian regime.

The purpose of this article is to build theory identifying and describing the ways authoritarian citizenship functions. Direct comparisons with the Chinese system include Vietnam and former Soviet states that still operate *propiska*-like registration systems, including most Central Asian states.[104] Even Russia continues to distribute socio-economic rights through local citizenship regimes.[105] These systems use geographically defined internal citizenship regimes to structure access to citizenship rights. Geography is only one form of division, however. More scholarly attention is needed to identify the variation in how internal citizenship regimes play out in contexts where other lines of division create citizens and non-citizens in authoritarian contexts, such as identity groups. This new direction for research greatly diversifies the field of

citizenship studies by incorporating non-democratic work into the citizenship framework, rather than relegating individual-state relations in non-democracies to blanket subjecthood.

Notes

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[1] On the contrary, exclusion is a driving force for regime control and durability. Fei-ling Wang, *Organizing through Division and Exclusion: China's Hukou System,* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). See also Martin King Whyte, *Myth of the Social Volcano*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

[2] Michael Albertus, Sofia Fenner, and Dan Slater, *Coercive Distribution,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Xian Huang, *Social Protection under Authoritarianism: Health Politics and Policy in China*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Jennifer Pan, *Welfare for Autocrats: How Social Assistance in China Cares for its Rulers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[3] Dorothy J. Solinger, *Contesting Citizenship in Urban China: Peasant Migrants, the State, and the Logic of the Market*, (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1999); Wang.

[4] National Bureau of Statistics, "Main Data of the Seventh National Population Census," http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/202105/t20210510_1817185.html. Accessed December 2021.

[5] Kam Wing Chan, "The Chinese Hukou System at 50," *Eurasian Geography and Economics,* 50 (2009), 197-221; Tiejun Cheng and Mark Selden, "The Origins and Social Consequences of China's Hukou System," *The China Quarterly,* 139 (September 1994), 644-668; Wang.

[6] Samantha A. Vortherms, "Localized Citizenships: Household Registration as an Internal Citizenship Institution," in Zhonghua Guo and Sujian Guo, eds., *Theorizing Chinese Citizenship*, (Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 85-108; Samantha A. Vortherms, "Hukou as a Case of Multi-level Citizenship," in Zhonghua Guo, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Citizenship*, (New York: Routledge, 2021), 132-142.

[7] China has four levels of subnational governments: provinces, municipalities (prefectures), counties, and townships. Municipalities are large regions with an urban core and rural areas and satellite cities around it. These are often called "cities" in the Chinese context.

[8] Details on data and methodology can be found in the Appendix. IRB on file with author.

[9] Greg Distelhorst and Diana Fu, "Performing Authoritarian Citizenship: Public Transcripts in China," *Perspectives on Politics,* 17 (March 2019), 106-121.

[10] Baogang He, "Deliberative citizenship and deliberative governance: a case study of one deliberative experimental in China," *Citizenship Studies,* 22 (2018), 294-311; Kevin J. O'Brien, "Villagers, Elections, and Citizenship in Contemporary China," *Modern China,* 27 (October 2001), 407-435; Kevin J. O'Brien and Lianjiang Li, "Accommodating 'Democracy' in a One-Party State: Introducing Village Elections in China," *The China Quarterly,* 162 (June 2000), 465-489; Distelhorst and Fu; Merle Goldman, *From Comrade to Citizen: The Struggle for Political Rights in China*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Solinger; Roel Meijer and Nils Butenschøn, "Introduction: The Crisis of Citizenship in the Arab World," in

Roel Meijer and Nils Butenschøn, eds., *The Crisis of Citizenship in the Arab World*, (Boston: Brill, 2017), 1-38.

[11] Suzanne Scoggins, "Rethinking Authoritarian Resilience and the Coercive Apparatus," *Comparative Politics*, 53 (January 2021), 309-330.

[12] Adam Przeworski "Formal Models of Authoritarian Regimes: A Critique," *Perspectives on Politics* (Firstview 2022).

[13] Raj M. Desai, Anders Olofsgård, and Tarik M. Yousef, "The Logic of Authoritarian Bargains," *Economics and Politics*, 21 (March 2009), 93-125.

[14] Albertus, Fenner, and Slater; Gandhi; Pan.

[15] Andrew J. Nathan, "China's Path from Communism," *Journal of Democracy,* 4 (April 1993), 30-42.

[16] Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975*. (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1982); Ziya Öniş, "The Logic of the Developmental State," *Comparative Politics, 24* (October 1991), 109-126.

[17] Ian Holliday, "Productivist Welfare Capitalism: Social Policy in East Asia," *Political Studies,* 48 (September 2000), 706-723.

[18] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson and James D. Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Philip G. Roeder, *Red Sunset: The Failure of Soviet Politics*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[19] Mary E. Gallagher and Jonathan K. Hanson, "Power Tool or Dull Blade? Selectorate Theory for Autocracies," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18 (2015), 367-385.

[20] Jennifer Gandhi, *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic party survival and*

its demise in Mexico, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Melanie Manion, *Information for Autocrats: Representation in Chinese Local Congresses*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Andreas Schedler, "Elections without Democracy: The Menu of Manipulation," *Journal of Democracy,* 13 (April 2002), 36-50.

[21] Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections Under Authoritarianism," *Annual Review of Political Science,* 12 (2009), 403-22.

[22] Lisa Blaydes, *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[23] Similar to other nominally democratic institutions. See Blaydes.

[24] Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); T.H. Marshall and T. Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class*, (London: Pluto Press, 1992); Bryan S. Turner, *Contemporary Problems in the Theory of Citizenship and Social Theory*, (London: Sage, 1993).

[25] As Lohr argues, subjecthood is membership to the imperial leadership whereas citizenship includes rights entitlements. Eric Lohr, *Russian Citizenship: From Empire to Soviet Union*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[26] Merle Goldman and Elizabeth J. Perry, "Political Citizenship in Modern China." in Merle Goldman and Elizabeth J. Perry, eds., *Changing Meanings of Citizenship in Modern China*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 1-22; Elizabeth J. Perry, "Chinese Conceptions of Rights: From Mencius to Mao," *Perspectives on Politics*, 6 (March 2008), 37-50.

[27] Responsibilities are also defined as group-based expectations like supporting national security.

[28] Lohr.

[29] Economic citizenship regimes, for example, provide rights to those with formal employment. Yujeong Yang, "The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Chinese Dual-Pension Regimes in the Era of Labor Migration and Labor Informalization," *Politics & Society,* 49 (June 2021), 147-180.

[30] Identity-based citizenship regimes divide people by social identity categories such as race or religion. Cemil Boyraz, "The Alevi question and the limits of citizenship in Turkey," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* 46 (December 2019), 767-780.

[31] Geography-based citizenship uses location to define members and nonmembers such as the Soviet—and subsequent post-Soviet—*propiska,* the Vietnamese *ho khau*, and the Chinese hukou. Cynthia Buckley, "The Myth of Managed Migration: Migration Control and Market in the Soviet Period," *Slavic Review,* 54 (Winter 1995), 896-916.

[32] Authoritarian citizenship also draws parallels to imperial subjecthood, especially in transitioning periods where imperial subjects gained greater rights from their membership status and membership was highly particularistic. On imperial citizenship see Lohr; Hilde De Weerdt, "Citizenship and subjecthood in the historiography of imperial China," in Zhonghua Guo (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Chinese Citizenship*, (New York: Routledge, 2021), 32-47; Vivienne Shue, "Party-state, nation, empire: rethinking the grammar of Chinese Governance," *Journal of Chinese Governance*, 3 (August 2018), 268-291.

[33] Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski, "Cooperation, Cooptation, and Rebellion under Dictatorships," *Economics and Politics*, 18 (2006), 1-26.

[34] Restricting access to cities is particularly important for maintaining social stability in democracies. Jeremy Wallace, *Cities and Stability: Urbanization, Redistribution, and Regime Survival in China,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[35] This is similar to the process of "directed improvisation" found in poverty relief policies. Yuen Yuen Ang, *How China Escaped the Poverty Trap*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016).

[36] I use the phrase municipalities to refer to Chinese prefecture-level cities (*dijishi*). Municipalities vary in size and include an urban core, rural counties surrounding the urban districts, and many include county-level satellite cities.

[37] Socio-economic rights include the provision of minimum livelihoods and improvements in material conditions. Perry.

[38] Michael Keane, "Redefining Chinese Citizenship," *Economy and Society,* 30 (February 2001), 1-17; Biliang Hu and Tony Saich, "Developing Social Citizenship? A Case Study of Education and Health Services in Yantian Village of Guangdong Province," *China and World Economy,* 20 (May/June 2012), 69-87.

[39] Bruce Gilley, "Legitimacy and Institutional Change: The Case of China," *Comparative Political Studies,* 41 (March 2008), 259-284; Thomas Janoski, "Citizenship in China: A Comparison of Rights with the East and West," *Journal of Chinese Political Science,* 19 (June 2014), 365-385. Perry.

[40] Direct elections occur for village committees, neighborhood committees, and local People's Congresses in counties and townships. Goldman and Perry; O'Brien and Li; Manion.

[41] Elisabeth J. Croll, "Social Welfare Reform: Trends and Tensions," *China Quarterly,* 159 (September 1999), 684-699.

[42] Before 1999, *hukou* status was inherited matriarchically only. Maas distinguishes between state citizenship and local citizenship as state citizenship is defined by birth-right citizenship and municipal, or local, citizenship is defined by residency. He does so to distinguish hierarchies,

that state citizenship is more definitive and closer to the broader conceptions of citizenship. But in the Chinese case, local citizenship *is also* birth-right based, pushing this form of citizenship as a more important implementation of citizenship. Maas, "Multilevel Citizenship," in Ayelet Shachar, Rainer Bauboeck, Irene Bloemraad, and Maarten Vink (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 661.

[43] Croll; Xian Huang, "Expansion of Chinese Social Health Insurance: Who Gets what, When and How?" *Journal of Contemporary China,* 23 (March 2014), 923-951.

[44] Interview with a municipal level official, Guangdong, 2014.

[45] For example, some cities now operate unified resident hukou with no division between urban and rural, but new polities at the provincial level and below show a shift to hyper-local definitions of local citizens instead. See, for example, Hunan Provincial Government, Implementation Opinions of the People's Government of Hunan Province on Further Promoting the Reform of the Household Registration System (May 2016).

[46] Buckley, 898.

[47] Vortherms 2015; Samantha A. Vortherms, "China's Missing Children: Political Barriers to Citizenship through the Household Registration System," *The China Quarterly,* 238 (June 2019), 309-330; Li Zhang, "Economic Migration and Urban Citizenship in China: The Role of Points Systems," *Population and Development Review,* 38 (September 2012), 503-533.

[48] Alan Smart and Josephine Smart, "Local Citizenship: Welfare Reform Urban/Rural Status, and Exclusion in China," *Environment and Planning A,* 33 (October 2001), 1853-69; Zhang; Li Zhang and G. X. Wang, "Urban citizenship of rural migrants in reform-era China," *Citizenship Studies,* 14 (2010), 145-166.

[49] Huang 2014; Zhang. For example, one white collar worker without local *hukou* in southern China was only able to reimburse 25 percent of a hospital bill for surgery because their health insurance was in a different province. Interview with a migrant small business owner, Guangdong, 2015.

[50] Chan 2009; Cheng and Selden; Vortherms 2015.

[51] Vesela Kovacheva, Dita Vogel, Xiaonan Zhang, and Bill Jordon, "Comparing the development of free movement and social citizenship for internal migrants in the European Union and China—Converging trends?" *Citizenship Studies,* 16 (2012), 545-561. Maas. Vortherms 2021.

[52] Ministry of Public Security "Regulation Regarding Dealing with Hukou Transfer," 1977; State Council, "Notification Regarding Strictly Controlling Overly Rapid Increase in '*Nongzhuanfei,'*" 1989.

[53] Croll.

[54] Ministry of Public Security, "Opinions on Accelerating Reform of the Small City and Town Household Registration Management System," 2001; Ministry of Public Security, "Notification Regarding the Use of New Hukou Relocation Certificates and Hukou Permits for Resettlement," 1994.

[55] Ministry of Public Security 2001. Interview with municipal-level policy research group, Guangdong 2013; municipal-level policy research group, Sichuan 2013.

[56] Lin Ye and Alfred M. Wu, "Urbanization, Land Development, and Land Financing: Evidence from Chinese Cities," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 36 (November 2014), 354-368.

[57] Shaohua Zhan, "*Hukou* Reform and Land Politics in China: Rise of a Tripartite Alliance," *The China Journal*, 78 (July 2017), 25-49.

[58] State Council, "Notice of the General Office of the State Council on Actively and Steadily Promoting the Reform of the Household Registration System," 2011.

[59] State Council, "Opinions of the State Council on Further Promotion of Reform of the Household Registration System," 2014.

[60] Articles 1 and 2, respectively.

[61] Kam Wing Chan, "What the 2020 Chinese Census Tells Us About Progress in Hukou Reform," *China Brief,* 21 (July 2021), 11-17; Author's local policy database.

[62] Cai (Vera) Zuo, "Promoting City Leaders: The Structure of Political Incentives in China," *China Quarterly*, 224 (December 2015), 955-984.

[63] Eun Kyong Choi, "Patronage and Performance: Factors in the Political Mobility of Provincial Leaders in Post-Deng China," *China Quarterly*, 212 (December 2012), 965-981; Hongbin Li and Li-An Zhou, "Political turnover and economic performance: the incentive role of personnel control in China," *Journal of Public Economics*, 89 (September 2005), 1743-1762; Pierre Landry, *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[64] Huang 2020.

[65] Interview, municipal level policy maker in Central China 2013.

[66] Interview, municipal level policy maker in Southern China, 2012.

[67] Interviews with county-level *hukou* police officer in Southern China 2014; county-level *hukou* detective in Southern China 2015. Public security bureau diagram of the naturalization process available in the appendix.

[68] Interviews with county-level hukou detective in Southern China 2015; county-level hukou police officer in Eastern China 2013.

[69] Local governments specifically studied international immigration regimes to create their *hukou* policies. Interview with central-level policy planner, Beijing, 2014.

[70] Figure A2 in the appendix presents examples of how four naturalization pathways can vary across cities in China.

[71] See Zhang for overview of the points-based program. Guangzhou, for example, has a minimum application threshold of 100 points for their point-based system in 2014. In that same year, the city received approximately 200,000 applications and granted *hukou* to 6,000 of the highest ranked applicants. Interview with policy bureaucrat, Guangdong, 2015.

[72] Interview with employee at a state-owned enterprise, Beijing 2016; Interview with human resource manager, Guangdong 2014. Samantha A. Vortherms and Gordon G. Liu, "Hukou as Benefits: Demand for hukou and wages in China," *Urban Studies*, 59 (November 22), 3167–3183.

[73] China Household Income Survey 2013 Migrant Household Panel.

[74] Xin Xu, Ahmen El-Ashram, and Judith Gold, "Too much of a good thing? Prudent management of inflows under economic citizenship programs," International Monetary Fund, (2015), WP/15/93.

[75] Interview, *hukou* detective, Guangdong, 2014.

[76] Net naturalizations leave many things to be desired as an indicator, such as the inability to separate out the forces of in versus out migration. This is why net naturalizations is not the primary dependent variable of the analysis but rather weak evidence of hukou policy manipulation.

[77] A principal component analysis also suggests a master index combining all of the measures is inappropriate, with the primary principle explaining only 25 percent of the overall variation. See Appendix for detailed methodology.

[78] Xinjiang has a long history of government sponsored Han migration, which might make the prevalence of selective municipalities puzzling. But the vast majority of hukou naturalization policies interact with local migrants, those from the countryside. Interview with a policy bureaucrat, Guangdong, 2014. Strict policies prevent local, rural migrants, many of whom are ethnic minorities, from entering the city.

[79] Wallace.

[80] Wang; Wallace.

[81] Interviews such as with municipal military official, Southern China 2014; interview with county-level bureaucrat, Central China 2013. This theme of using hukou policies to protect local resources was also found by Dorothy Solinger, The Modalities of Geographical Mobility in China and their Impacts, 1980–2010," in Delia Davin and Barbara Harriss-White (eds.), *China-India: Pathways of Economic and Social Development*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 139-156.

[82] The imperial institutions the *hukou* is based on were used first to identify and effectively exile criminals, see Tiejun Cheng, "Dialectics of Control: The household registration (*hukou*) system in contemporary China," Ph.D. Dissertation (State University of New York at Binghampton, 1991).

[83] For a discussion of the targeted populations, see Wang and Pan. The targeted population is more likely to receive "repressive assistance" from the state, but less likely to enjoy broad, institutional inclusions in the hukou system.

[84] Stanley W. Toops, "The Demography of Xinjiang," in S. Frederick Starr, ed., *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland: China's Muslim Borderland*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 241-263; Lianhe Hu and Angang Hu, "The 'Melting Pot' and the 'Hors d'Oeuvre Platter': Two Grand Models of Overseas Ethnic Policies)," *Chinese Social Sciences Today,* 231 (2011), in Chinese; Angang Hu and Lianhe Hu, "Second Generation Minzu Policies: Promoting Organic Ethnic Blending and Prosperity," *Journal of Xinjiang Shifan University (Philosophy and Sociology Edition),* 32 (2011), 1-13, in Chinese.

[85] Wallace.

[86] For example, local-urban parents protested a new policy to expand quota for students from rural and impoverished areas in universities. https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1945104/thousands-chinese-parents-take-streets-protest. Accessed June 2017.

[87] Migrants as a source of crime and instability was the leading theme in interviews about hukou policy with city bureaucrats across all levels. In particular, interviews with municipal military official, Southern China 2014; interview with county-level bureaucrat, Central China 2013.

[88] Gary P. Freeman and Alan K. Kessler, "Political Economy and Migration Policy," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 34 (March 2008), 655-678.

[89] Jason Young, *China's Hukou System: Markets, Migrants, and Institutional Change*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[90] Tao Liu and Qiujie Shi, "Acquiring a Beijing hukou: Who Is Eligible and Who Is Successful?" *The China Quarterly,* 243 (December 2020), 855-868.

[91] Ben W. Ansell, "Traders, Teachers, and Tyrants: Democracy, Globalization, and Public Investment in Education," *International Organization,* 62 (Spring 2008), 289-322.

[92] Interview, municipal official, Guangdong, 2014.

[93] Interview, foreign firm founder, Beijing, 2017.

[94] Interview, municipal-level bureaucrat, Guangdong, 2013.

[95] Kyle Jaros, *China's Urban Champions: The Politics of Spatial Development*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

[96] Meg E Rithmire, *Land Bargains and Chinese Capitalism: The Politics of Property Rights under Reform*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Susan Whiting, "Values in Land: Fiscal Pressures, Land Disputes and Justice Claims in Rural and Peri-urban China," *Urban Studies,* 48 (February 2011), 569-587.

[97] Interviews with county-level land bureau official, Sichuan 2013; academic in a policy working group, Zhejiang, 2016; migrant rights lawyer, Guangdong, 2013; Meina Cai, "Land for welfare in China," *Land Use Policy,* 55 (September 2016), 1-12.

[98] Interview, county-level bureaucrat from Chongqing, interviewed in Sichuan, 2014.

[99] Toops.

[100] Interviews with municipal-level official, Sichuan 2013; county-level public security bureau official, Jiangsu 2013.

[101] This result for Xinjiang is echoed in the cluster analysis. Most of Xinjiang's municipalities fall into the selective cluster, characterized by higher levels of non-local naturalization compared with local-rural naturalization (Figures 3 and 4).

[102] Ang.

[103] The average tenure for a mayor and party secretary at the municipal level is between 3 and 4 years. Landry.

[104] Malika Tukmadiyeva, "Propiska as a Tool of Discrimination in Central Asia," The Central Asia Fellowship Papers, (2016).

[105] Noah Rubins, "Recent Development: The Demise and Resurrection of the Propiska: Freedom of Movement in the Russian Federation." *Harvard International Law Journal* 39 (1998): 545-66.

Methodological Appendix

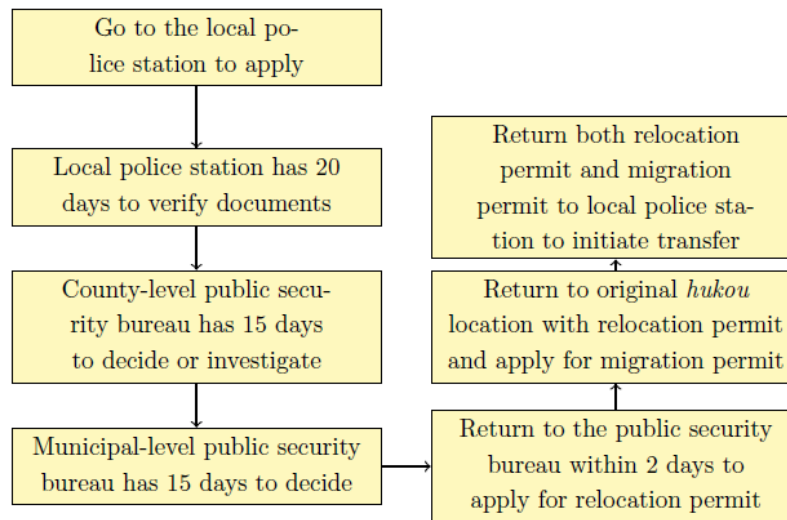
Semi-structured Interviews

This analysis draws on more than 60 semi-structured interviews conducted by the author between 2013 and 2017. Interviews were conducted in Beijing, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hunan, Guangdong, and Sichuan. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a location of the interviewee's choice. Most occurred in public spaces such as coffee shops or restaurants, though a few in offices. Interviewees were recruited both through cold calling and through snow-ball techniques. Interviews were conducted one-on-one without an interpreter, unless otherwise noted where interviews were conducted in a small group. To reduce the risk of disclosure of interviewee identity, I did not record conversations. Instead, with the permission of the interviewee, I took notes during and after the conversation. All quotations in the manuscript are quotes from notes.

Subnational Policy Analysis

Core data for this paper come from a subnational policy database built by the author. Hukou naturalization policies, the pathways available for internal migrants to qualify and process a hukou transfer. Figure A1 outlines the formal process of transferring hukou.

Figure A1 Process of *Hukou* Naturalization



The flow chart emphasizes the hierarchical power structure of the decision, suggesting the lowest level government has little control over the decisions Interview with hukou police officer, Jiangsu, 2015.
Translated by author from Public Security Bureau website.

Before a migrant can begin to process a transfer, however, they must qualify for one of the city's naturalization pathways. To measure the relative openness the naturalization pathways, I collected data on the administrative burdens and restrictions for each "entry track" available for migrants.[106] I developed the list of policy indicators through researching policies online through local public security bureaus and after consultation with local hukou police officers in three

different cities. While a comparative international immigration framework was the starting point for the list of indicators, I adapted the questions as necessary to fit the Chinese context to fully cover the paths to local urban hukou.

Table A1 identifies the four naturalization pathways identified through the policy analysis. Each pathway is broken down into sub-indicies to cover the primary opportunities for hukou transfer. Indicators of pathway openness identify how difficult it is for each pathway. For example, family pathways primarily varied by the amount of paperwork, such as certification that the family (woman) has not violated family planning policies, and age limits required for each. Employer selected high-skilled pathways varied in the certification requirements considered high-skilled, with some welcoming "junior technicians" and others requiring "master technicians." Education-based programs varied in whether a bachelor's degree qualified migrants for transfer or if a permanent, long-term contract was necessary. Figure A2 provides descriptive variation on one specific indicator for each naturalization pathway.

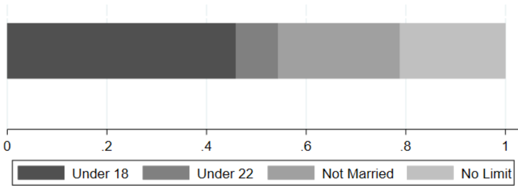
Table A1 Main Indicators of Policy Indices

Pathway	Sub-indices	Indices
Family	Child registration: newborn, non-newborn	- Paperwork (#) - Age limits
	Spouse	- Age and/or length limits
	Parent	- Age and/or length limits
High Skilled	Employer selected	- Certification Level Minimum Requirement - Education Work Requirements
	General Pool: points-based, certified high-skilled work	- Program type (none, point-based, college, both; work only)
Residence	Rural Integration: land-exchange, settlement	- Program type (land exchange, employment based, housing/settlement)
Investment	Capital investment: housing purchase, firm	- Minimum investment amount

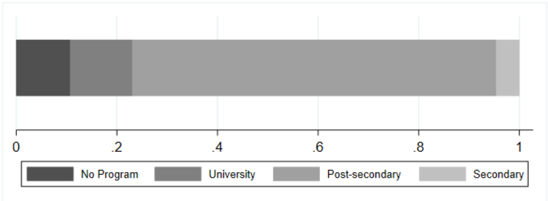
Figure A2: Example Indicators of Variation in Naturalization Pathway Requirements; proportion of municipalities

[106] I use the IMPALA framework of entry tracks to disaggregate the types of naturalization policies available, which target different types of migrants. For more discussion of entry tracks, see Michel Beine, Anna Boucher, Brian Burgoon, Mary Crock, Justin Gest, Michael Hiscox, Patrick McGovern, Hillel Rapoport, Joep Schaper, and Eiko Thielemann. "Comparing Immigration Policies: An Overview from the IMPALA Database," *International Migration Review,* 50 (2015), 827-863.

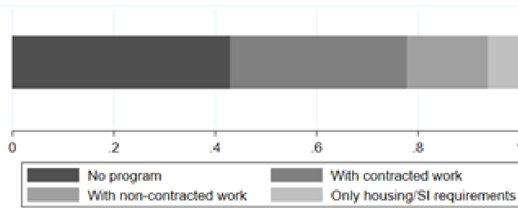
(a) Family: Maximum Age for Child Naturalization



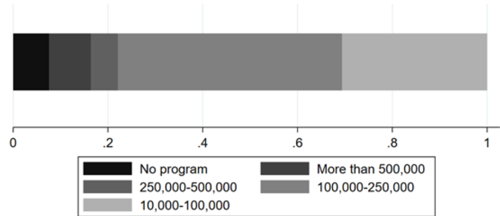
(b) High-skilled Education Level Required for Education-based Naturalization



(c) Residence-based: Work and Housing Requirements for Residence-based Transfers



(d) Investment: Minimum Investment Amount



Where multiple indicators are identified within one pathway, I use principal component analysis to aggregate an index measure. PCA is a data aggregation technique used to combine

multiple indicators of the same concept into one measure. The index created encapsulates the vector of most variation in the underlying data. PCA was chosen as the aggregation technique because it does not superimpose assumptions about how different measures should be weighted in comparison with each other, reducing bias introduced by researcher assumptions.

The central government announced a focus on hukou reform in fall 2014.[107] Given the trickle-down nature of policy change in China, data were not collected until after local governments announced reforms after the 2014 central policy directive. Approximately 60 percent of cities in the sample published local regulations of policy reform meant to apply during the 2015-2020 five-year plan in reaction to central government policies. These policies are reflected in the policy database. I attempted to collect a census of cities but in 16 cities there was insufficient data. Minority municipalities, especially in Tibet, are underrepresented in the final sample.

Note on Naturalization Numbers

These naturalization estimates should be interpreted with some caution. First, these estimates are of net naturalizations. Based on available data, I cannot distinguish naturalization into and transfer out of a city, but their net effect. The low rural naturalizations in *open* municipalities is likely due, in part, to large out-migration in these municipalities. This out-migration, however, is not being outpaced by local attempts to urbanize the population, an important balance to keep in mind. Second, population data is subject to manipulation. There is evidence of manipulation, of municipal governments over-reporting rural-to-urban transfers at the peak of urbanization campaigns, for example. Third, these naturalization numbers consider both the availability of local naturalization and migrants' desire to naturalize.[108]

Table A2. Full Results Table for Cross Sectional Analysis

VARIABLES	(1) High-Skilled	(2) Residence	(3) Family	(4) Investment
Foreign Output	0.0634***	-0.000202	-0.0299	-0.00602
	(0.0231)	(0.0289)	(0.0186)	(0.0199)
Machinery	-0.00472	0.0436*	0.0638***	0.0120
	(0.0170)	(0.0226)	(0.0167)	(0.0155)
Small/Medium City	0.0104	-0.0216	0.0171	0.0295
	(0.0314)	(0.0493)	(0.0303)	(0.0258)
Minority (pr)	0.0251	0.00204	-0.0850*	-0.253***
	(0.0653)	(0.0967)	(0.0508)	(0.0767)
Migrants per cap (2nd quartile)	0.0996***	-0.0157	0.0324	0.0301
	(0.0347)	(0.0518)	(0.0314)	(0.0269)
Migrants per cap (3rd quartile)	-0.00954	-0.0926*	0.0376	-0.000144
	(0.0362)	(0.0546)	(0.0343)	(0.0337)
Migrants per cap (4th quartile)	-0.00497	-0.136**	-0.0337	-0.0839*
	(0.0435)	(0.0652)	(0.0368)	(0.0440)
GDP (log)	0.0195	0.0256	-0.0501	-0.0940**
	(0.0457)	(0.0649)	(0.0404)	(0.0431)
Region: Central	0.0547	0.199***	-0.0730**	0.0594**
	(0.0351)	(0.0553)	(0.0311)	(0.0280)
Region: West	0.0451	0.102*	0.00740	0.0674**
	(0.0393)	(0.0600)	(0.0334)	(0.0333)
Constant	0.317**	0.228	0.778***	0.742***
	(0.156)	(0.229)	(0.136)	(0.142)
Observations	282	282	282	282
R-squared	0.070	0.111	0.113	0.213

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

[107] State Council 2014.

[108] On variation in demand for hukou, see Hengyu Gu, Ziliang Liu, and Tiyan Shen. 2020. "Spatial pattern and determinants of migrant workers' interprovincial hukou transfer intention in China: Evidence from a National Migrant Population Dynamic Monitoring Survey in 2016." *Population, Space and Place* 26 (2):e2250; and Samantha A. Vortherms, "Hukou as Benefits: Demand for hukou and wages in China," *Urban Studies*. (April 2022).