

# **State within a state. The socioeconomic dimension of Chinese hukou system.**

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Over the years, household registration policy, commonly known as *hukou* or *hujū* system, has become the basis of division of the Chinese society. *Hukou* system, built on the separation of population classified as ‘agricultural’ from the ‘non-agricultural’, organizes almost all aspects of social, economic and political life in the People’s Republic of China. Therefore, it should be acknowledged as the most effective and most powerful tool of social control. Diversification of rights and privileges arising from possessing specific *hukou* statuses led to emergence of permanent social divisions and inequalities. Directly and indirectly it also limited the chances of social advance. Nonetheless, *hukou* system can be characterized as exceptionally solid, which results not only from efficiency of the authorities responsible for its implementation, but most of all from high level of social legitimization. The latter arises from continuation of a centuries-old tradition of controlling and organizing the population, rigorously enforced by the subsequent regimes. *Hukou* system still influences the structure and activity of Chinese society. In the economic reform era the authorities took series of actions aiming at rebuilding and modernization of *hukou*, however, its complete and instantaneous abolishment still seems to be a venture loaded with high social, economic and political risk.