

## **Beijing Dog Politics: Governing Human–Canine Relationships in China**

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### **Abstract**

This paper uses a governmentality approach to examine the political history of human–canine relationships in the People’s Republic of China, focusing on the evolution of household dog regulations in Beijing. In doing so, it ties the micropolitics of human–canine relations to transformations in political, economic, and social governance and ways of thinking about and acting on the interactions between human and nonhuman animal species. An examination of successive waves of government regulations reveals a shift from top-down authoritarian approaches to governance toward a greater recognition of (circumscribed) individual responsibility and self-governance, which is emerging under the organizing framework of “social credit.” This government-managed rearrangement is contributing to the rise of new understandings of human–canine interactions as co-constitutive relationships based in citizenship rights and obligations.

Keywords: China, dogs, government, human–animal interaction, rights, social credit

This paper investigates the subject of human–canine relationships in the People’s Republic of China (PRC)—an object of domestic government concern and international criticism. International interest has focused on allegations of ideological opposition to the keeping of household dogs and state-sponsored cruelty toward them. Writing in the 1990s, a *New York Times* reporter declared that after the PRC was founded under Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership on 1 October 1949:

... pet dogs were banned as a symbol of decadence, a criminal extravagance at a time of food shortages. If they were good for anything, they were good for dinner. (Shenon, 1994)

More recent reporting has perpetuated and extended this narrative by linking the CCP’s alleged historical disapproval of pet dogs to cruelty displayed in government anti-rabies campaigns and even to the stealing of pets to be slaughtered *en masse* at an annual dog-meat festival in South China (Get rid of your dog or we’ll club it to death, 2015; Denyer, 2016).

The emphasis of foreign correspondents on the nexus between communist ideology and animal cruelty is replicated in human–animal interaction scholarship. Peter Li and Gareth Davey (2013) ask, What explains the lack of attention to animal welfare in contemporary China, as demonstrated by endangered fauna, wildlife farming industries, poor animal husbandry practices, pet abuse, and dog-meat consumption? The authors argue that the country is not culturally inclined to animal cruelty because the philosophical traditions of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism variously endorse a non-adversarial approach to nature. They conclude that current people–

animal conflicts are a product of PRC politics: specifically, the Mao-era (1949–1976) condemnation of companion animals as epitomizing a bourgeois lifestyle; the post-1978 promotion of rapid economic development to end poverty; and the opposition of authoritarian regimes to non-governmental organizations. Yet policy change in favor of animal protection is now likely because of the rise of a new generation of animal lovers and activists and increased media attention to animal cruelty. While underscoring the need for protective legislation, this account presents a simplified view of history as progress toward an idealized state, which has been temporarily “distorted” by Chinese (communist) politics.

Scholarly literature on human–canine relationships in the PRC also turns on a basic view of history and of government–society relations as oppositional. Scott Hurley (2016, p. 130) contends that “[d]ogs have been a staple in the Chinese diet for centuries.” But during the Cultural Revolution, officially dated as lasting from 1966 to 1976, the keeping of pet dogs was banned because “it was considered to be an example of bourgeoisie extravagance and cruelty: pet dogs were often used to terrorize and bite the poor and homeless” (p. 131). These historical linkages entrenched the view that “canines should only be kept as food animals, if at all” (p. 132). Hurley (2016, pp. 140–141) concludes that the rise of pet-raising “middle-class” people, who are the mainstay of animal-activist groups and oppose dog-meat consumption, augers well for animal protection. Deborah Cao (2015, p. 102) adds that dogs were viewed as a bourgeois decadence *and* public health hazard in Mao-era China, although most people were too poor to worry about pets. She concludes that Chinese society is hurtling through a “transformation from impoverished peasant to

first-world citizen” and hence to becoming a nation of animal lovers, while noting that low-income earners also raise dogs and join activist causes (p. 102).

This paper reconsiders the history of PRC human–canine relationships using a governmentality approach. Michel Foucault (2007, pp. 87–114) coined the term “governmentality,” defined as “the conduct of conduct,” to conceptualize modern government as concerned with optimizing the interactions between “people” and “things,” including territory and resources (climate, soil, water, flora and fauna) and customary ways of thinking and acting. The word “conduct” denotes the activity of guiding others or “things,” and the ways in which individuals conduct themselves, allow themselves to be conducted, are conducted, and subsequently behave.

Foucault’s definition of government reconfigures conventional accounts of government–society relations by indicating that the fundamental goal of governance is not to dominate the persons or processes that are governed but rather to reorganize the interactions between “people” and “things” in ways calculated to achieve desired outcomes. These efforts may even result in the “making up” not only of types of people that in certain senses and contexts did not exist before (Hacking, 2006) but also of animals such as neutered dogs that socialize mainly with people (companion animals). Adopting a governmentality approach to analyze human–canine relationships in the PRC therefore requires a detailed genealogy or examination of the historical antecedents and conditions of possibility of such interactions in the different political and cultural context of contemporary China.

Human–canine interactions are an object of evolving government concern in the PRC, as demonstrated by diverse efforts to regulate dog ownership. Regulatory frameworks prohibit and encourage specific actions with the aim of eliciting certain outcomes and civic behaviors. Given the difficulties of law enforcement, their efficacy depends on the presence of self-governing citizens, or the capacity of legislation to create such citizens through the threat of policing and inducing compliance with social norms (Borthwick, 2009).

A case study of Beijing’s household dog regulations reveals efforts to manage the interactions between canines, dog owners, and non-dog-owning citizens, in accordance with different and contested conceptions of what constitutes the national, municipal, public, and individual interest. Such analysis offers a sequential snapshot of irregular time periods in the PRC’s history and a micro-political, empirical example of different governing mentalities in action. In doing so, it contributes to the study of human–animal interaction by providing a more nuanced history of government–society–canine relationships in the PRC, and it also contributes to scholarship on China’s changing governmentalities by considering the hitherto neglected subject of domestic animals (Bray & Jeffreys, 2016; Jeffreys, 2009).

The discussion proceeds as follows. The paper first interrogates the claim that, circa 1949, the ownership of pet dogs was banned and/or condemned via “persistent propaganda” as “bourgeois” (Cao, 2015, p. 102; Hurley, 2016, p. 131, 137; Li & Davey, 2013, p. 39; Podberscek, 2007). It shows that dogs in Imperial- and Republican-era China were viewed mainly as work and production animals; after 1949, dogs were classified as a public health problem. The paper then details

government attempts from 1949–1994 to safeguard Beijing residents from disease by registering and eventually banning household dogs. An examination of more recent regulations reveals a shift in governing mentalities from containing dog populations to promoting “lawful, civilized and scientific” (as in professionally managed) dog-raising practices, in order to meet ongoing public health requirements and changing human–canine relationships. The analysis underscores a shift from “nanny state” top-down approaches to governance toward a greater recognition of individual responsibility and self-governance, subject to socially determined constraints, as epitomized by the emerging organizing framework of “social credit.” This government-managed rearrangement is contributing to the rise of new understandings of human–canine (companion species) interactions as co-constitutive relationships based in citizenship rights and obligations.

### **Dogs as Production Animals and Sources of Disease**

Raising dogs as companion animals is a new phenomenon in the PRC (Cao, 2015, p. 102); references in ancient Chinese texts suggest that dogs were viewed historically as work and production animals, not as “man’s best friend.” The second-century (BCE) Confucian classic, *The Book of Rites (Liji)*, categorized dogs into three types: watch dogs (*shouquan*), hunting dogs (*tianquan*), and edible dogs (*shiquan*) (Gong, Zheng, Li, & Kong, 2001, p. 1208). A second-century Chinese dictionary (*Shuowen Jiezi*) contained the character “*ran*,” which is composed of the characters for meat “*rou*” and dog “*quan*,” and thus means canine meat (Xu, 1985, p. 133). The eighteenth/nineteenth-century *Kangxi Dictionary* provides the same definition (Zhang, 2002, p. 942). The term “*ran*” does not occur in concise, modern Chinese dictionaries because dogs are now more commonly called “*gou*” and hence dog meat is “*gourou*.”

Dogs are also a documented production animal in the PRC. Dog-pelt mattresses were supplied to army volunteers during the Korean War (1950–1953) and exported to North America and Europe in the late 1970s (Sendzimir, 1995). Dog-pelt boots made in China were sold in Manhattan in the 1990s (Cheng, 1979). In the 1980s, a state-run Korean restaurant in Jilin Province met customer demand for dog meat by offering to exchange cash for dogs, reportedly receiving 1,300 dogs in one month (Shang, 1980).

Dog meat remains a delicacy in China (although surveys indicate that eating dog is not ubiquitous), as demonstrated by the controversial Yulin Lychee and Dog Meat Festival held annually since 2010 (AnimalsAsia, 2015a, p. 10). Thousands of dogs are consumed during this festival, most allegedly being stolen from rural households because dog farming is unprofitable (AnimalsAsia, 2015b; Cao, 2015, pp. 117–119). International animal-welfare organizations and around 90 Chinese organizations petitioned PRC authorities to ban the festival and dog-meat consumption in 2018; similar petitions endorsed by Hollywood celebrities have been circulated on social media (Humane Society International, 2018; Ross, Christie, Lake, & Cheung, 2016). A French supermarket chain recently bowed to pressure from animal rights' groups by removing locally-sourced dog-meat products from its China-based stores (French retailer, 2017). The human consumption of dog meat may even be banned outright in China based on a 2020 draft policy issued by the Ministry of Agriculture which judges the practice as incommensurate with animal welfare concerns and the prevention of disease transmission from animals to humans (Standaert, 2020).

Despite this history, there is limited documentary evidence to support the argument that the early CCP entrenched a “dogs are for dinner” attitude by immediately condemning pet ownership via persistent propaganda as “bourgeois.” The scholarly literature either provides no evidence for this claim (Li & Davey, 2013, p. 39) or cites anecdotes provided in recent Anglophone media reports (Wan, 2011, in Hurley, 2016, p. 131; Wines, 2010, in Cao, 2015, p. 102).

Searches for different combinations of the Chinese-language keywords “dog” (*gou*, *quan*), “pet” (*chongwu*), “bourgeois” (*zichanjieji*), and “class” (*jieji*) in the *People’s Daily* database between 1949 and 2019 reveal that only one article has ever been published on this issue—a 1958 article about rich British pet owners (<https://www.oriprobe.com/peoplesdaily.shtml>). Given that the *People’s Daily* is the official print media “voice” of the CCP, the existence of one article, written almost a decade after the PRC’s founding, suggests that any claim that central government authorities banned household dog ownership as “bourgeois” in the 1950s is apocryphal.

The *People’s Daily* article only supports the claim that dog ownership was considered to be “bourgeois” insofar as it ridicules the “absurd capitalist lifestyle” of rich Britons, as demonstrated by a pet banquet (likely a Christmas animal-welfare fundraiser) (Absurd capitalist lifestyle, 1958). (The article also provides the first use in the *People’s Daily* of the now common Chinese word for pet animals—*chongwu*, literally a loved or spoiled thing, which undermines Cao’s (2015, p. 101) assertion that the word was only coined and started to be used in the PRC in the late 1980s). Such commentary may have discouraged PRC citizens from keeping pets through fear of



political censure. However, the article does not provide evidence for a ban on dogs. Rather, it pokes fun at the concept of pampered pets (including dogs, but also a menagerie of other animals) in a manner written to appeal to the preconceptions of Chinese readers who had just emerged, impoverished, from the trauma of decades of foreign invasion and civil war and to whom the notion of pet parties probably would have seemed absurd.

The limited documentary evidence for claims that dogs were banned on ideological grounds comes from a notice issued in September 1966 by a Red Guard faction at the Beijing Maoism Secondary School, near the start of the proclaimed “10-year-disaster” of the Cultural Revolution (Xu, 2016). In mid-1966, Chairman Mao Zedong called on youth to carry the revolution forward by pursuing class struggle and opposing old customs and ideas and attacking officials who were taking “the capitalist road.” Youth activists subsequently organized themselves into paramilitary factions, which persecuted millions of people, often intellectuals and CCP members, for alleged political transgressions. Notably, the aforementioned notice stated that Chinese people should not have bourgeois habits such as raising crickets, fish, cats and dogs, and anyone who did so would have to bear the consequences (Xu, 2016, p. 371).

While Red Guard activism in Beijing may be responsible for the claim that the CCP slaughtered dogs because of ideology, the available evidence indicates that dogs became an object of government concern in 1949 predominantly because of public health issues and especially rabies eradication. Rabies is a contagious and typically fatal but vaccine-preventable viral disease of dogs and other mammals that is transmissible through the saliva of a rabid animal to humans, causing madness and

convulsions. In the PRC, between 85 and 95% of human rabies cases are attributed to dog bites (Tang et al., 2005, p. 1970). Although aiming to eradicate rabies by 2025, the PRC still has the world's "second highest number of reported rabies cases," with over 2,000 human deaths on average reported annually for the past decade (World Health Organization, 2019).

In other words, the story of human–canine relationships in the early PRC relates more to epidemiology than a hackneyed view of Marxism. In an autobiographical novel, Esther Cheo Ying (2009) describes entering Beijing with the People's Liberation Army in 1949 and seeing thousands of diseased, starving dogs fighting with each other and uncontained pigs for food scraps and human excrement. Culling free-ranging dogs and vaccinating household dogs proved to be the immediate answer to this problem in 1949, when the CCP set about reconstructing Beijing, and rabies was categorized as a notifiable disease (a disease which is required by law to be reported to national government authorities) (Zhang et al., 2005).

As the next section's analysis of Beijing dog regulations shows, the PRC's early dog controls reflected international methods to eradicate rabies, as endorsed by the World Health Organization, albeit without humane euthanasia. These methods involve the mass vaccination of dogs and controlling the trade in and movement of dogs, including culling free-ranging populations.

### **Governing Public Health and Eradicating Rabies**

The start of Communist governance in Beijing was accompanied by multiple regulations and mobilization campaigns to engage residents with public health.

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Foucault (2003, pp. 244–246) argues that government efforts to cultivate human life processes at the level of the population (fertility, morbidity, and mortality) emerged in western societies during the mid- to late-eighteenth century. This emphasis promoted government and medical concerns with statistics and public hygiene, which are now centered on managing individual lifestyle choices and genetic risk in order to optimize an overall “state of life” through collective regulatory modification. Dogs became a target of PRC health campaigns as a part of the CCP’s concern to cultivate the life of socialist worker-citizens by controlling diseases exacerbated by poor urban hygiene following decades of civil war (1927–1937, 1946–1950) and also the Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) (which made China a western ally in World War II (WW2)).

On 5 September 1949, eight months after the CCP occupied Beijing, the People’s Government issued a notice stating that the Public Security Bureau planned to seize all free-ranging dogs to safeguard citizens, improve social order, prevent rabies, and clean up the city (Beijing Local Records Editing Committee [BLR], 2003, p. 259). People with dogs were told to keep them indoors because free-ranging dogs would be killed.

The notice echoed earlier regulations for eliminating free-ranging dogs as a public harm and protecting (healthy) household dogs as property, issued during 1934–1946 by the Nationalist-Republican government prior to the PRC’s founding. The Republican regulations stipulated that household dogs, which were categorized as guard or hunting dogs, had to be registered at a small cost with local police and identified by a collar tag; dogs without tags could be seized and killed (BLR, 2003, pp. 258–259). Registration required owner and dog identification details, in part because

owners were liable for the cost of injuries caused to other persons by their dog. Dogs had to be leashed in public and were not permitted in public venues. Rabid dogs were killed and incinerated. In 1934, around 131,000 dogs were registered in Beijing; only 9,500 dogs were registered in 1946, when civil war recommenced.

The dog registration system, formalized by the Beijing People's Government on 16 November 1950, differed from the Republican regulations by tying the right to dog ownership to annual registration and rabies eradication; the registration cost covered a rabies vaccination. The new regulations required dog owners to register their name, age, place of origin, occupation, and address and the dog's breed, age, gender, coat colour, temperament, and medical history (Beijing People's Government [BPG], 1950). All registered dogs had to wear registration tags, with vaccination dates being recorded on an immunization certificate. Dogs were prohibited in public spaces and owners were liable for injuries caused to another person by their animal. Impounded unregistered dogs could be claimed within three days providing that the owner paid the costs of impounding the dog and registered and vaccinated the dog immediately. Rabid dogs were killed and incinerated at an authorized handling site. To ensure the system's efficacy, dog owners had to report changes of address and dog deaths and replace lost and damaged registration cards; people visiting Beijing with a dog for more than a month also had to register. Hence people who wanted to raise a dog had to be known to relevant authorities and comply with registration-vaccination procedures and restrictions on dog mobility.

According to the *People's Daily*, Beijing Health Bureau officials started visiting households on 11 December 1950 to vaccinate registered dogs, and unregistered dogs

were impounded from 23 December onwards (Beijing News Department, 1950). A follow-up report noted that around 13,200 dogs had been registered, 320 free-ranging animals had been impounded, and unclaimed dogs would be killed using an electric baton (Adding a dog-registration office, 1950). The 1950 dog-registration system was therefore accompanied by publicity and a short period of amnesty.

However, Ying (2009) states that authorities started seizing dogs without warning in central Beijing in 1951. It is unclear from her harrowing account whether every dog within the inner-city walls was seized or only unregistered dogs, although she says that no dog was safe. A free-ranging dog she had befriended was deliberately let outside of a residential compound when dog catchers were nearby by a colleague who disliked dogs (and perhaps Ying). Ying's account indicates that free-ranging dogs were brutally slaughtered but she does not say what happened to the impounded household dogs, which were caged separately from free-ranging dogs.

Ying's account is partly confirmed by a *People's Daily* report in July 1952 about a Patriotic Health Campaign to improve urban hygiene. The report noted that, between March and June, Beijing residents had put covers on 70,000 latrine pits, removed old manure, killed flies and rats, and filled-in mosquito-breeding ponds (Great improvements in health conditions, 1952). It added that dogs had already been more-or-less eliminated from central Beijing, but 20,000 dogs had been seized in suburban areas.

The culling of Beijing's dog population during the 1952 Patriotic Health Campaign, and perhaps as early as mid-1951, suggests that dogs were a casualty of international

Cold War politics. William Kinmond (1957, pp. 162–165), a foreign correspondent permitted to enter China in 1957, asked his interpreter why there were no dogs in Beijing. Kinmond was told that dogs had been killed during the Patriotic Health Campaign to protect the public by thwarting American germ warfare during the Korean War. “Reeling mentally” from hearing such anti-foreign propaganda, Kinmond (1957, p. 164) surmised that the dogs were killed because of food shortages: he had friends with two wolfhounds living in a foreign legation, and the legation had been advised not to bring large dogs into China because they ate too much. Simoons (1991, p. 314) contends that Kinmond’s suspicion was confirmed in 1963, when another dog-killing campaign began based on the idea that “all animals which are not useful should be wiped out because they consume precious food.” The only evidence to corroborate the latter claim is a short newspaper item, published by the *Wisconsin State Journal* in 1963 (citing a defunct, possibly fabricated Italian newsagency (Continente)), from which the above quote is taken verbatim (Chinese reds reported slaughtering dogs, 1963). Other sources suggest that most dog populations were eaten or had starved to death during the Great Chinese Famine of 1959–1961 (Yang, 2007, p. 30). However, the Korean War may have impacted negatively on Beijing dogs.

In mid-1951, and again in March 1952, the Soviet Union, North Korea, and the PRC raised charges at the United Nations that the United States (US) had used biological warfare in North Korea and China during the Korean War (Leitenberg, 1998). Recent evidence from Soviet archives suggests that these claims were fabricated to stop the US from using nuclear weapons against communist states, as it had in Japan during WW2. But PRC authorities maintain that germ warfare occurred. Japan had also conducted biological warfare in China during WW2, which presumably heightened

perceptions of “threat” given the American-military presence in Japan (Leitenberg, 1998, pp. 187–188).

In March 1952, PRC Premier Zhou Enlai urged citizens to join in the struggle against germ warfare by improving public hygiene and destroying pests. He claimed that the US had airdropped germ-carrying insects in northeast China on multiple occasions (potential human diseases included anthrax, cholera, and plague and infections such as encephalitis). A large-scale exhibit on the “American war crime of germ warfare” subsequently toured major cities to arouse public interest in the issue (Rogaski, 2002, p. 385; Yang, 2004, p. 162).

The Patriotic Health Campaign took off following media reports of biological warfare in Gannan County (Heilongjiang Province) in April 1952—voles infected with the bubonic plague virus were allegedly dropped from unidentified aircraft, which had required the preventative extermination of flies, mosquitoes, rats, and fleas and ultimately cats and dogs (Rogaski, 2002, pp. 381–382). A *People’s Daily* report, in September, indicates that dogs were prohibited in Beijing around the time of this incident on the grounds that they spread infectious diseases, can act as a host for the encephalitis virus, and cause traffic accidents (Memorandum, 1952). Hence it is possible that Ying’s (2009) account of dog extermination in Beijing in 1951 coincided with the first claim of American germ warfare.

Regardless, Beijing’s dog population would have been restricted from the mid-to-late 1950s onwards by the CCP-led introduction of centralized economic planning and food (grain) rationing, the nationalization of industry and housing, and the

reorganization of urban work and family life around the socialist work unit. Work units provided urban citizens with the basic needs of everyday life (employment, food, housing, education, and healthcare) (Bray, 2005). By the late 1950s, most Beijing residents lived, worked, and retired in a state-allocated work unit and were unable to move to another unit without official permission, which was hard to obtain. This system would have limited household dog ownership until after 1978, when market-based economic reforms gradually overturned the Mao-era system of linking food rationing and housing distribution with employment units. Dogs therefore receded as an aspect of everyday life in early Mao-era Beijing because of public health concerns and macro-socio-economic changes, not because they epitomized a bourgeois lifestyle.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that atrocities were committed against domestic animals and their owners during the Cultural Revolution in the name of the CCP and revolution. While the aforementioned Red Guard document indicates there may be some truth to this claim, the (patchy) historical record for this period once again points to public health campaigns as the main driver. As was the case with many other issues of the day, official rhetoric surrounding the exterminations of domestic animals was heavily politicized. Newspaper reports of a rabies outbreak in Nanyang (Henan Province) in 1973 present rabies eradication, and hence dog culling, as an urgent socio-political task (Zhang, 2004). A search on the Chinese Cultural Revolution Database for an expression used in those reports “*dagou*” (fight/beat dogs) produced 16 results: all about attacking people defined as class enemies—the word “dog” in Chinese being a derogatory epithet for “outsiders” and “enemies” (<http://www.chineseupress.com>; Bickers & Wasserstrom, 1995, p. 444). The potential conflation (in reality or in popular imagining) of a public health issue with the



putative demands of communist ideology would have conspired to limit individual dog ownership in practice. However, the possibility of complementary ideological motivations for dog culling does not undermine the hypothesis that the governmental rationality for such culls was rooted in the absence of a national system for manufacturing and administering a cheap and comprehensive rabies vaccination regime for dogs and the human victims of dog bites.

### **From Banning to Restricting Household Dog Ownership**

Dogs were officially banned in post-Mao Beijing between 1983 and mid-1995, based on national regulations issued in 1980 which prohibited household dog ownership in all cities above county level to eradicate rabies, ensure public safety, maintain the urban environment, and guarantee the normal conduct of work, study, and everyday life (Ministries of Health, Agriculture, & Foreign Trade, 1980). The national regulations followed a spike in reported human deaths from rabies—around 7,000 deaths in 1981 compared with 2,000 in 1956 and only 500 in 1978 (Tu, n.d.). Local governments were instructed to implement dog management policies, resulting in interim and revised regulations being issued in Beijing in 1983, 1986, and 1989. The regulations banned ownership of all dogs except those used for policing, research, teaching, and food (BPG, 1983, 1986, 1989). Free-ranging and unvaccinated dogs could be killed with impunity by residents, police, and military personnel.

According to the *Annals of Beijing*, provisional dog management measures were introduced in 1983 because there were 400,000 dogs in Beijing and 2,000 people were bitten by dogs during the first quarter of that year, resulting in four human deaths (BLR, 2003, p. 260). The large dog population is attributed to the Cultural

Revolution's disruption of routine government functions. This suggests that the ideology-driven Cultural Revolution period actually increased rather than reduced Beijing's dog population. Conversely, the 1983 and subsequent bans reduced the city's dog population to around 280,000 in 1986 and 110,000 in 1991 (BLR, 2003, p. 260). An environmental sanitation ban on the keeping of livestock animals, including dogs, in urban Beijing probably contributed to this decline (BPG, 1982, Article 6).

But post-Mao government efforts to promote public health by banning dogs were time-consuming and resisted, as demonstrated by a September 1983 document from Beijing's Chongwen District People's Government (1983). Chongwen authorities held 171 public meetings in August to inform 13,000 residents about the dog regulations, and they organized 100 people in five dog-catching teams involving residents, officials, and police to handle nearly 410 dogs. Officials killed around 50 dogs, residents killed another 100, and 260 dogs were "relocated." The vague reference to relocation is interesting because the Chongwen example was upheld as exemplary. Although it is not possible to verify that the relocated dogs were viewed as pets, it nonetheless appears that some people wanted them to continue to live and perhaps intended to reclaim them once the intensity of efforts to ban dogs had diminished.

The *Annals of Beijing* further suggest that the citywide ban was disobeyed, noting that changing human lifestyles had replenished the dog population to around 200,000 by 1993 (BLR, 2003, pp. 260–261). This growth relates to the rising wages and structural change that accompanied the introduction of market-based economic reforms. In 1980, a Beijing resident's average annual wage was only CNY 850—around USD 500 at the time (<https://www.ceicdata.com>). Worker-citizens were allocated food by the

communist state via ration coupons until 1993, and private and rental accommodation remained limited until housing reforms were introduced in 1998 (Hu, Y., 2011; Man, Zheng, & Ren, 2011, p. 3). By 1990, the average annual wage had risen fivefold (nearly tenfold by 1993) and a private service sector was emerging (<https://www.ceicdata.com>).

While law enforcement in 1993 reduced Beijing's dog population to fewer than 52,000 individuals, the ban continued to be flouted (BLR, 2003, p. 261). In fact, in February 1994, the *People's Daily* claimed that Beijing had succumbed to “dog fever,” as demonstrated by growth in pet services and public complaints about dog-related nuisance (barking, urine, and excrement) (Lai, 1994). Hence in September 1994, the Beijing People's Congress solicited local government and public opinions on dog management policies, convening 5,000 meetings involving 154,000 residents across the city (BLR, 2003, p. 261).

The ban was rescinded on 1 May 1995 when the Beijing Strict Regulations on Dogs, issued in December 1994, came into effect (hereafter the “1994 Regulations”), with the goal of containing rather than prohibiting dog ownership (Standing Committee, 1994). Registered dogs were permitted to live in the eight key districts of urban Beijing if individual households accepted the responsibility for and cost of eliminating rabies by vaccinating their dog.

The 1994 Regulations stipulated that all dogs must be registered with public security bureaus and vaccinated against rabies (as in 1950). In the key districts, only permanent Beijing residents who lived in single household accommodations were

allowed to register a dog, which had to be a small breed. The 1994 Regulations established a hefty fee of CNY 5,000 for initial registration, followed by an annual renewal fee of CNY 2,000. There was an incentive fee of CNY 2,000 for any dog registered within three months of the regulations coming into effect. Given that the average annual wage in Beijing in 1995 was only CNY 8,100 (<https://www.ceicdata.com>), the fees were clearly aimed to deter dog ownership even though they may have reflected management costs. The 1994 Regulations also restricted dog breeding, banned the public presence of dogs in the key districts outside of the hours of 8 p.m. and 7 a.m., and empowered police to impose fines of CNY 200–1,000 in cases involving unregistered dogs, “nuisance” dogs, and dogs seen in non-permitted spaces. They could also impound dogs in serious cases. Police could detain for 15 days any person apprehended for selling dogs in public places in the key districts, forging and re-selling dog registration cards, and obstructing officers conducting dog-related duties. The Beijing Public Security Bureau also established a dog pound.

These regulations were not relaxed until the early 2000s, when new policies signaled a shift toward managing rather than trying to contain the household dog population. On 5 September 2003, the Standing Committee of the Beijing People’s Congress (2003) released the Regulations on the Management of Dog Raising in Beijing (hereafter “the 2003 Regulations”). A few weeks later new measures were issued to support the dog registration and annual inspection procedures (hereafter “the 2003 Measures”), followed by supplementary measures in 2006 (BPG, 2003, 2006). These controls, which were still in effect as at late-2019, acknowledged the increasing public perception of dogs as companion animals while introducing new ways of governing

Beijing's registered population of 2.5 million dogs (Beijing Public Security Bureau [BPSB], 2018).

### **Governing Dogs as Companion Animals**

Human–canine relationships in present-day Beijing are governed via a web of government departments, community organizations, and individuals, with the goal of promoting a “lawful, civilized and scientific” dog-raising society (BPG, 2006). Public security bureaus manage an annual dog registration system and the trade in dogs. Dogs must be bought from certified breeders and businesses. Health bureaus manage rabies eradication. Authorized animal hospitals handle canine vaccination and quarantine. Industrial and commercial departments supervise canine-related businesses. State-owned media provide public education on dog registration-vaccination and sanitation. Residents' committees, staffed by neighborhood volunteers, negotiate local agreements on appropriate canine and dog-owning behaviors. This network of organizations and actors is creating new types of canine-related professionals and dog owners and is turning household dogs into companion animals.

The 2003 Regulations and Measures aim to safeguard public health by outlining government responsibilities *and* promoting socially responsible dog ownership (BPG, 2003; Standing Committee, 2003). Dog registration fees were reduced to CNY 1,000 for the first year and 500 per annum thereafter to encourage registration-vaccination and resolve the problem of people “hiding” (not registering) dogs.” This action halved the previous fees, while the average annual wage in Beijing tripled between 1995 and 2003 and had risen to 15 times higher by 2016 (<https://www.ceicdata.com>). A

corollary aim was to limit dog-related police corruption—taking bribes rather than confiscating unregistered and “nuisance” dogs and complicating registration to elicit a bribe.

A Beijing household may raise one dog only providing that the person who registers a dog is a legal subject who complies with all the relevant regulations. An individual must have legal identity papers, full civic capacity, a fixed residence occupied by one household, recent certification from their residents’ committee permitting dog ownership, and an up-to-date dog registration certificate issued by a local public security bureau (BPG, 2003, Articles 4 & 5; Standing Committee, 2003, Articles 8 & 10).

A Beijing resident consequently has to undertake a complex set of procedures to own a dog lawfully. They must first go to a residents’ committee with proof that they live locally and sign an agreement accepting responsibility for their dog’s behaviors. That agreement must be taken to a public security bureau within 30 days to register the dog, along with a citizen ID card (or foreign passport), a property deed or rental agreement to verify their address, the dog, passport-style photographs of the dog, a Beijing Animal Health and Immunity Certificate, and registration fees. Dog registrations must be renewed between 1 May and 30 June annually; registered dogs must wear a registration-vaccination tag.

Variations to the registration fees encourage de-sexing to reduce dog breeding and aggression and therefore acknowledge the increasing value placed on dogs as assistants and companions (BPG, 2003, Articles 11–12). Fees are discounted on one

occasion with proof that the dog has been neutered at an authorized animal hospital.

Guide dogs are exempt from registration fees. Widowed people aged 60 years and over who live on their own pay a reduced initial fee.

Owners must subsequently carry their dog registration certification when walking their dog. They must notify local public security bureaus within a specified time about lost registration certificates, changes of address, the relocation of a dog to another household, and the death or loss of a dog, or risk being fined up to CNY 500 (2,000 for businesses) and prevented from registering another dog (BPG, 2003). Unregistered dogs are classified as strays. Failure to produce a registration certificate when asked by police can result in a dog being confiscated until the owner produces a certificate and pays a substantial fine. Nowadays, stray dogs may be claimed or adopted within seven days.

Only one dog per household of a permissible breed and size is permitted. Registered dogs in the key districts, excluding assistance dogs, must be less than 35 centimeters in height (measured from the ground to shoulder). Small breeds recommended by the Beijing Public Security Bureau (n.d.) as suiting the city's high-density, apartment living include Chihuahua, Pug, and Pekingese; the excluded large breeds include Doberman, German Shepherd, and Great Dane. Police can fine businesses and individuals for breeding and raising a prohibited breed (CNY 10,000 and 5,000, respectively) (BPSB, 2013). Offenders have 10 days to relocate prohibited dogs or hand them in to the police, and citizens are encouraged to report violations.

The 2003 Regulations and Measures also require people to care for and control household dogs. Dog owners must not abuse or abandon dogs, although penalties presumably only flow from public complaints and the apprehension of an identifiable dog (Standing Committee, 2003, Articles 17 & 18). Owners must clean up their dog's excrement, prevent neighborhood disturbances, and compensate any person harmed by their dog. Former time restrictions on the public presence of dogs have been removed. However, dogs must be leashed and walked by an adult when in public, and they are not permitted in Tiananmen Square, parks, shops, restaurants, cinemas, schools, and hospitals. Dogs are prohibited from entering apartment-block elevators during busy periods (unless muzzled or caged) and from riding on public transportation other than in driver-consenting taxis. Local residents' committees may enforce additional restrictions (BPG, 2003, Article 8).

The elaborate matrix of regulatory requirements that makes up the Beijing dog registration system functions to subtly reorient human–canine relations and delineate a “regime of care” that organizes those relations, as with companion animal legislation in western societies (Borthwick, 2009). Similar to earlier regulations, the 2003 Regulations and Measures are focused on public health goals. However, while earlier regulations primarily viewed dog populations as vectors of disease that had to be contained, the 2003 Regulations and Measures acknowledge the integration of dogs as a companion species into contemporary urban society. They also make more explicit the duty of care with respect to both dogs and other people that people who raise dogs must assume.



Through more technologically advanced and detailed registration and identification procedures, the 2003 Measures implicitly elevate the status of dogs to that of companions and individual dependents of urban households. The dog registration certificate, now a plastic identification card, contains a passport-style full-body photograph of the dog and details the dog's name, gender, breed, registration date and number (and microchip number where applicable), and the owner's name, telephone number, and address. The use of photographic identity cards individualizes and arguably "humanizes" registered dogs, linking them to specific households that are responsible for their care. Additionally, by condemning the abuse of household dogs, the 2003 Regulations both reflect and encourage the trend increase in societal intolerance of animal cruelty in China.

The growth in Beijing's dog population is promoting new forms of cross-species sociality and social tensions. A 2017 pet industry White Paper claims that more than 80% of surveyed Chinese households ( $n = 50,000$ ) consider dogs and cats as equivalent to children or family members; 16% see them as pets or friends, and only 1% view them as productive animals (Chongxingqiu, 2017). The PRC's pet industry is also expanding rapidly because more retirees and young educated people are raising dogs and cats, with the typical dog owner spending CNY 6,800 on products and services (Chongxingqiu, 2017). In Beijing, these services include birthday parties, hotels, restaurants, spas, pet sitters, and funeral services (Bank of Beijing, 2015). At the same time, the growth in Beijing's canine population has resulted in enhanced government efforts to ensure that people who raise dogs self-govern their relationship with their dog and the public behaviors of their dog in accordance with social and legal expectations.

### **Civilizing Human–Canine Relationships**

PRC urban citizens can now enter into a “rightful” companion relationship with a dog provided that they adopt certain self-governing behaviors to minimize dog-related public disputes and harm. A social media post in August 2018, which attracted more than 19 million views, offers an extreme example of anti- and pro-dog attitudes. It stated that unleashed dogs were a public nuisance in Beijing and that poisoning them with an anti-tuberculosis drug left in food scattered around residential compounds would force “uncivilized dog owners” to accept responsibility for their animals (#Isoniazid dog poisoning#, 2018; Zhang, 2018). This tactic has been used in Russia by vigilante “stray-dog hunters” ostensibly concerned to protect children (Oliphant, 2015). Although the post attracted some sympathizers, most respondents condemned the author for failing to recognize that dogs cannot be killed with impunity because they are legal property and/or sentient creatures with a right to life.

Dog-related disputes now also feature in Beijing civil court cases. A search for the Chinese term “pet” on the Beijing Court website ([www.bjcourt.gov.cn](http://www.bjcourt.gov.cn)) indicates that dog-related cases typically comprise neighbor disputes about public nuisance and hence attempts to make owners responsible for controlling their dog’s behavior (Chaoyang Court, 2016; Shunyi Court, 2017). They also include compensation cases over human injuries caused by dogs (scares and bites) or the traffic-related death or injury of unleashed dogs (Beijing Second Intermediate Court, 2017; Yanqing Court, 2017). Many cases involve large breeds, indicating that bans on big dogs are neither

complied with nor strictly enforced. Other compensation cases relate to dog deaths because of “faulty” medical treatment and the purchase of sick or “fake pedigree” puppies (Beijing Third Intermediate Court, 2017; Haidian Court, 2017).

The Beijing People’s Government has attempted to limit dog-related discord by promoting socially responsible, self-governing human–canine relationships via “civilized dog-raising programs” (*wenming yangquan*). In 2016, such programs were run under the title of “Being a civilized and polite Beijinger—raising a dog civic-mindedly” (Beijing launches a public welfare program on civilized dog ownership, 2016). A raft of government programs have been unified under the rubric of “building socialist spiritual civilization,” but recent programs focus on building a civic culture by fostering national values and civic-minded citizens.

In 2018, a civilized dog-raising program was developed with community consultation by the Publicity Department in Tongzhou District—now Beijing’s government administration center—as a showcase of socially responsible and community-based dog management (Zou, 2018). As a part of the Tongzhou and other programs, professionals were hired to run free, community-based canine welfare and entertainment events, which were publicized using broadcast and social media (Beijing launches, 2016; Zou, 2018). Such events included information about dog registration-vaccination, nutrition, and humane euthanasia, showed interested residents how to control barking, aggression, and indiscriminate eating, and displayed the utility of dog-obedience training. In Tongzhou, information about responsible dog ownership is displayed on outdoor LED dog-shaped display screens activated by infrared sensors. Dog owners can also access paper from composting machines

equipped with biometric fingerprint scanners to pick up dog excrement and can obtain dog toys by exchanging “reward points” for registering with and using the service (Chi, 2018; Zou, 2018).

The Tongzhou program concluded with a short period of intensive law enforcement, followed by further dog-themed edutainment programs involving volunteers from residents’ committees and animal welfare groups to induce compliance with the principles of raising a dog civic-mindedly. The dual emphasis on law enforcement *and* community edutainment aims to incentivize individuals to voluntarily adopt appropriate dog-raising behaviors. The “social” dimension of the program requires Beijing residents to create the incentives for each other to act in the desired manner without direct government intervention. This has involved a further shift away from managing dog ownership in a top-down manner through government departments and toward using community organizations and incentive systems to promote self-governing human–canine relationships.

Experiments with dog management policies in other cities underscore the shift toward using law, technology, and society to create civic-minded human–canine relationships. In the award-winning Baibuting residential community of Wuhan, people–dog relationships are organized through community pacts (Ke, 2011). The Baibuting pact stipulates that resident dogs must be registered and vaccinated annually, must not harm or disturb human residents, can only be walked outside on a leash between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., and dog owners must clean-up their animal’s excrement. Residents can inform the residents’ committee about non-compliance, with consistently “bad” dog owners being cautioned or reported to police.

Other cities have introduced demerit point schemes to penalize abusive and irresponsible dog owners. Since 2016, authorities in Shaoxing's Yuecheng District (Zhejiang Province) have microchipped dogs as a part of their dog registration system, and thus they have digital data (Ma, 2016). The system involves a 12-point annual deduction scheme for dog-related abuse and public-order violations, with registration being revoked when an individual reaches 0 points. People who abuse their dog lose 12 points immediately, while those who walk an unleashed dog and fail to clean-up excrement lose 3 points per violation. In Xi'an (Shaanxi Province), police have created dog-issue telephone hot-lines and banned abusive dog owners from registering a dog for five years (She & Miao, 2018).

Draft dog management regulations issued in 2018 in Jiaxing (Zhejiang Province) and Suzhou (Jiangsu Province) aim to incentivize civic-minded human–canine relationships by linking dog registration to the cities' trial social credit systems.

China's nascent Social Credit System aims to use information technology to create a culture of trustworthiness by providing positive or negative feedback to individuals and businesses about the lawfulness and appropriateness of their conduct (Creemers, 2018). While often portrayed in international media as a practical instantiation of the Orwellian nightmare of total government control, the system to date is not a single, integrated entity, but rather is composed of diverse **public-private** initiatives.

Originally proposed in the 2000s as a means to demonstrate financial credit-worthiness (because relatively few Chinese citizens had bank accounts), its purposes now include efforts to discipline government officials and incentivize domestic consumption and civic conduct.

The Jiaxing-Suzhou draft regulations propose tying an individual's dog registration number to their national identity card number and publicizing information about those who violate the regulations (Commission of Legislative Affairs, 2018; Suzhou People's Congress Office, 2018). They suggest using residents' pacts and demerit point schemes to guarantee responsible dog-ownership practices. They further suggest that anyone who fails on 3–4 occasions to register-vaccinate their dog or who abuses or abandons their dog will lose the right to register a dog for varying periods, with non-registered and abused dogs being rehomed.

In short, China's dog management policies increasingly imply that urban citizens have the right to enter into a relationship with a dog of an approved breed and size provided that they register and care for the animal and consistently manage dog behaviors in socially responsible ways. The work of meeting these requirements makes a dog more than property. Urban residents who want to raise a dog have to adopt self-governing behaviors to meet agreed-upon social obligations, as outlined in dog regulations and community pacts. They have to train their dog, or work with and gain the trust of the dog, to ensure that it will retain the right to live by behaving appropriately in public. They also have to keep the dog entertained at home to ensure that it does not bark consistently. This work co-constitutes humans and dogs as companion species engaged in an active relationship with rights based on the fulfilment of social obligations.

## **Conclusion**

This paper uses a governmentality approach to provide a history of Beijing household dog regulations and reveal the changing emphases of government efforts to optimize human–canine interactions in the PRC. In the process, it highlights shifting conceptions of dogs as production animals (food), guard or guide dogs (assistants), a public health problem (vectors of disease), pets (personal property), and family members (a companion species). It also ties the micropolitics of human–canine interactions to broader transformations in political, economic, and social governance. These transformations have been accompanied by a shift away from government attempts to cultivate human life through authoritarian means toward encouraging individuals to accept some delimited responsibility for managing public health and the urban environment. PRC urban citizens can now enter into a “rightful” relationship with a dog provided that they adopt certain self-governing behaviors to meet national-, municipal- and community-level legal and social expectations relating to canine healthcare and appropriate public behaviors.

An examination of the political history of human–canine relationships in the PRC draws attention to a major shift in governing rationalities. The interactions between people and household dogs are no longer governed based on “nanny-state” considerations of “what is good for people”: not discharging the government’s duty of care through top-down means but rather through greater acceptance of individual responsibility. People can self-govern their interactions with companion animals subject to a set of (ultimately) socially determined constraints that define acceptable behavior. Notions of “social credit” are becoming a new way of governing such interactions because the social credit system aims to incentivize Chinese citizens to embrace individual self-government. The example of human–canine interactions,

however small in scale it may seem as a demonstration of political trends, thus sheds light on how this work-in-progress is evolving and hints at the kind of society that could emerge as this method is applied to more spheres of human experience.

The example of human–canine interactions in Beijing also illustrates the fluid and evolving nature of citizenship rights and obligations in the PRC. Citizenship in contemporary China is formed and enacted through changing assemblages of institutional, community, and individual expectations and associated obligations. Humans become modern “city-zens,” and household dogs are co-constituted as relational city-zens through efforts to achieve the optimal governance of the interactions between “people” and “things” in specific national and local cultural contexts and political communities. Achieving meaningful animal welfare protections in China will require interested parties to work within and through these assemblages.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The author states there are no conflicts of interest.

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