

An Empirical Study on Deliberate Murder in the Process of Urbanization

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Abstract

Deliberate murder is one of the criminal offences with the most severe social dangers, and has always been the focus of academic researches. From the perspective of urbanization construction, this article will make a detailed analysis on the historical trend of this crime, sort out and investigate the geographical features and perpetrators' characteristics, and put forward feasible countermeasures for prevention and control to introduce a positive theoretical value and social significance in this regard.

Key words: Urbanization; Deliberate murder; Empiricism

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INTRODUCTION

Deliberate murder refers to deliberate unlawful deprivation of life of others. Since ancient times deliberate murder has been regarded as the most extreme manifestation of infringing of human rights, thus was severely forbidden. Deliberate murder is the most typical natural crime. The behavior of deliberate murder was also the most important content of laws in ages past, and

because of its unambiguous definition, it almost did not arouse ambiguities due to legislative technical problems, so it's suitable for a longitudinal historical analysis from a criminology perspective. At the same time, deliberate murder causes grave social consequences. No matter when and where, it's the top priority for the registration and detection of public security organs. Its case number is far less than the number of thefts, fraud and other crimes, and is closer to the real situation. Therefore, incidence of deliberate murders is a more objective and feasible measurement for the stability of a society.

1. ANALYSIS ON THE TREND OF DELIBERATE MURDER

According to the data of China Law Yearbook, during 29 years from 1984 to 2012, deliberate murder rate can be divided into three stages: The first stage is the continuous rising stage (1984-1994), during which the incidence slowly increased from the historic lowest rate 0.86 cases per 100,000 people in 1984 to 2.22 cases per 100,000 people in 1994; the second stage is the high fluctuating period (1995-2000), during which the incidence remained between 2.08-2.26 cases per 100,000 people; the third stage is the declining stage (2001-2012), during which the incidence decreased from 2.16 cases per 100,000 people in 2001 to 0.83 case per 100,000 people in 2012 (see Figure 1)

Although during this period China experienced two rapid rises in the crime rate (see Figure 2), deliberate murder did not appear any sudden increase or sudden decrease, which is apparently different from the overall rising trend of crime rate. According to Durkheim's theory of suicide, poverty does not cause crime to increase, and wealth also does not necessarily cause crime to increase, but the rapid change between poverty and wealth cause crime to increase. Is the theory applicable to explain the changing number of deliberate murders?

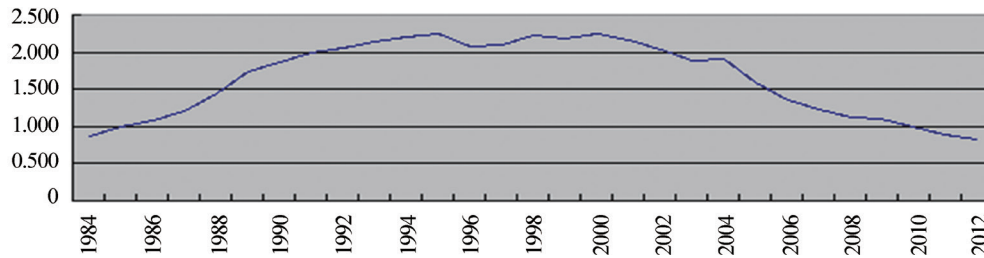


Figure 1
1984-2012 Deliberate Murder Rate Trend (Unit: case / 100,000 people)
 Source: *China Law Yearbook and China Statistical Yearbook*.

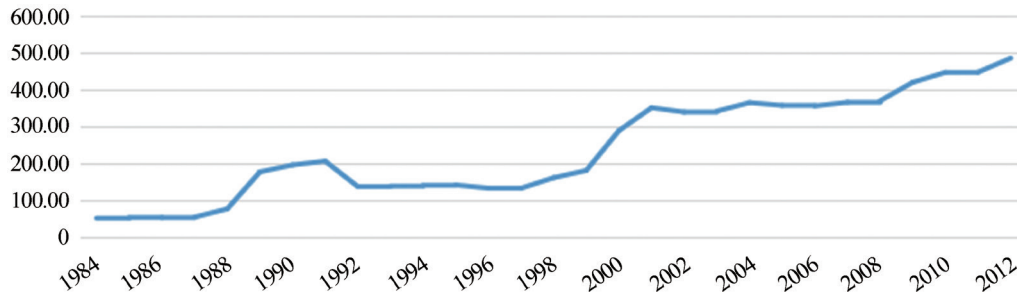


Figure 2
1984-2012 China's Crime Rate Trend (Unit: case / 100,000 people)
 Source: *China Law Yearbook*.

During this period, China's economy has been on an upward trend (see Figure 3). It can be seen that the number of deliberate murders was not rising because

of the economic development; data show that changes of such cases also have no significant correlation with the speed of economic development (see Figure 4).

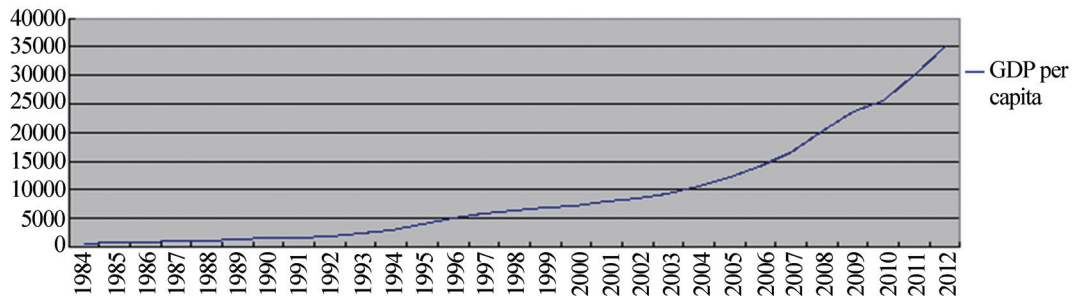


Figure 3
1984-2012 GDP Per Capita Trend (Unit: yuan)
 Source: *China Statistical Yearbook*.

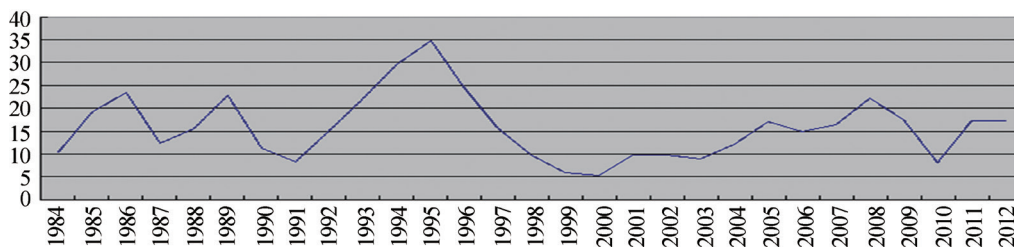


Figure 4
1984-2012 China's GDP Per Capita Annual Growing Trend (%)
 Source: *China Statistical Yearbook*.

When we carefully review the number and incidence of such crimes, we find that in 1995, the incidence reached the highest rate of 2.259 cases per 100,000 people (according to *China Statistical Yearbook and China Law*

Yearbook). In 2000 the number of cases nationwide was 28,429 with the incidence of 2.243 cases per 100,000 people. During this period the number and incidence both remained at a fluctuating high level, and from

2001 to today, the number and incidence continued to decline. In 2001, in order to reduce and control the high deliberate murder rate, places around China proposed a new requirement on the detection of this crime, namely striving to achieve 100% resolution rate. Although this requirement became highly controversial in the early days, at least it conveyed this information: Investigation organs paid unprecedentedly great attention to deliberate murder. Many local public security bureaus linked clear-up rate for the evaluation of local police magistrates under the requirement of “deliberate murder must be solved”. Taking into account self-interests, public security organs input more human, material and financial resources into the investigation of deliberate murders, and the clear-up rate got a huge boost.

From 1997 to 2000, W City’s murder detection rate remained around 75% every year, and about 50-80 murders couldn’t be cracked and became long-pending. In early 2001 when “deliberate murder must be solved” was launched, Wuhan City’s murder detection rate rose from 73% in 2000 to 83.2%; In 2002, the murder detection rate remained at the high rate of 81.7 %; in 2003, the murder detection rate rose to 91.2% exponentially, achieving the highest detection rate in W City for 14 years. (Tian, 2004)

In addition, with the progress of technologies and the unprecedented development of criminal technologies, the extensive application of video surveillance technologies make it easier to crack cases, progress and improvement of DNA technologies make it easier to extract and fix evidences, and the construction of public security information makes informational intelligence disseminate more quickly. Based on the favorable conditions above, clear-up rate of deliberate murders has reached the highest record in history. In the past five years around China, the clear-up rate of deliberate murder was more than 90%. From an economic perspective, the improvement of the detection rate is an effective way to restrain crimes. “There are two ways to reduce crimes: Firstly, increase the probability of arrest and conviction; secondly, increase the severity of the punishment, namely, aggravate punishment upon the convicted.” (Xie, 2006) Facts show that the requirement of “deliberate murder must be solved” could not directly reduce the incidence of deliberate murders, but the resulting substantial increase in the detection rate played a significant role in restraining such crimes.

2. ANALYSIS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DELIBERATE MURDER

2.1 Analysis on the Geographical Characteristics of Deliberate Murder

Looking at the geographical distribution of the incidence of deliberate murder, we find that the incidence is highest in Northeast China and North China, are the lowest in

East China, and are at a low level in Northwest China. It should be said custom and cultural environment of a region has tremendous impacts to the incidence of deliberate murder. Northeast China and North China have simple but tough folkways which strive for straight love and hatred, while the coastal areas of East China have developed economies, emphasizing that good-naturedness is a source of wealth. Because of developed economy, people cherish lives more and tend to be more tolerable when handle things, so the incidence of extreme violence is not too high. Someone conducted an experiment in C City, Northeast China and S City, East China respectively, namely, designed the same scene—if a thief pickpocketed a girl’s purse, would the passers-by give a hand. Although the scientificity and strictness of the experiment remains questionable, the results of the experiment are thought provoking. In the 15 random tests at the Cultural Square, C City, the passers-by lent a hand for 11 times, while in the 13 random tests at the Gaoyang Road Square, S City, the passers-by lent a hand only twice. With the deepening of urbanization, people’s residential density gets enhanced. From an opportunity perspective, when people live closely, they will have more conflicts due to increased exchanges, and cause crimes more easily such as deliberate injury or even deliberate murder. With the progress of urbanization, the old acquaintance social structure collapsed, especially in a metropolis with an unprecedentedly concentrated population, the increasing immigrant population shortened the physical distance between people, resulting in a general anxiety, wariness, minimized contact with strangers, and reduced chance of conflicts. The general timid character and apathy with strangers may also be a reason for the low incidence of deliberate murder in East China.

Northwest China has a vast land, sparse population, stable economy and less prominent social conflicts. Therefore, although there are many minorities, the interest and cultural conflicts are not prominent due to relatively independent settlements and infrequent contacts. Since homologous culture and acquaintance society are the important conditions to reduce crimes, extreme violence cases are not too many.

2.2 Analysis on the Perpetrator Characteristics of Deliberate Murder

An analysis on the characteristics of perpetrators of deliberate murder will help investigation authorities solve cases quickly, and is very important for analyzing the trends and rules of such cases.

2.2.1 Analysis on the Gender Characteristics of Deliberate Murder Perpetrators

The perpetrators of deliberate murder are mostly male, but the proportion of female cannot be ignored. In C City, for example, from 2001 to 2013 the arrested female perpetrators committing a deliberate murder accounted for 12.85% of the total, and this proportion did not change

a lot over the years, indicating that in such cases, the proportion of female and their roles did not change significantly.

2.2.2 Analysis on the Age Characteristics of Deliberate Murder Perpetrators

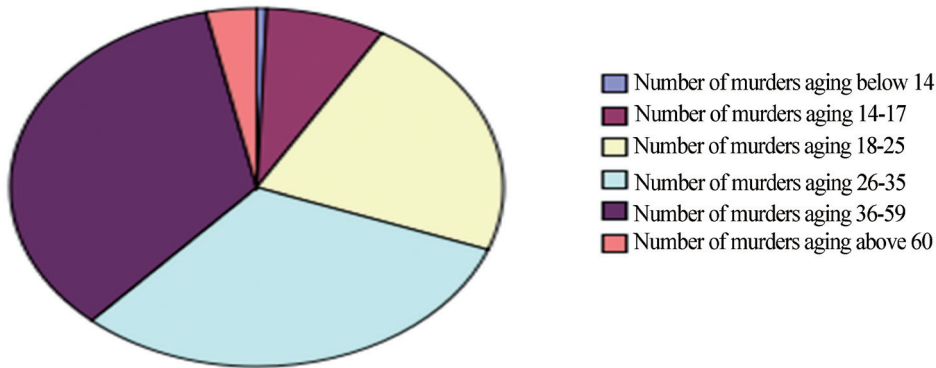


Figure 5
 2001- 2013 C City Deliberate Murder Perpetrator Age Distribution Diagram
 Source: *China Police Yearbook*.

However, if case number is divided by age, which is the average case number for each age, then the case numbers for the 26-35-year old and the 18-25-year old are almost the same, and are much higher than other age groups, so 18-35-year old is the age group with the highest murder incidence. Meanwhile, from

Taking into account age distribution of the perpetrators committing a deliberate murder in C City from 2001 to 2013, the perpetrators aging 36-59 are the most, accounting for 35.04% of the total; followed by the 26-35 years old, next are the 18-25 years old (see Figure 5).

a vertical perspective, the proportion of 26-35-year-old perpetrators decreased rapidly, while the proportion of 36-59-year-old perpetrators increased quickly (see Figure 6), so it can be seen that age distribution of the criminals of such crimes tends to be gradually even.

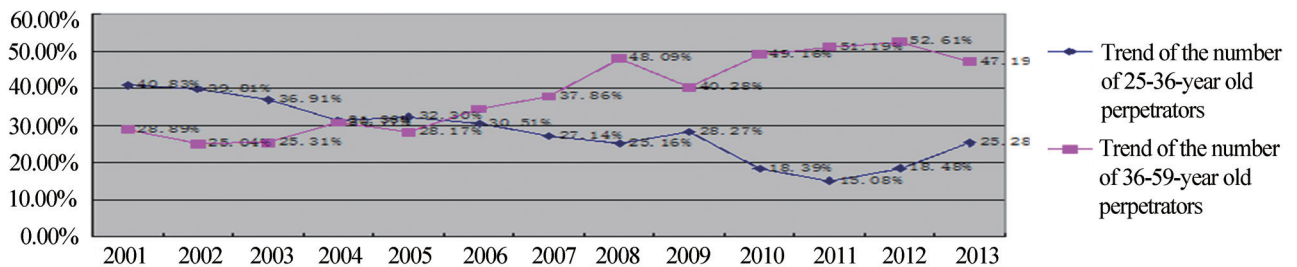


Figure 6
 2001- 2013 26-35-Year-Old and 36-59-Year Old Perpetrator Number Trend
 Source: *China Police Yearbook*.

2.2.3 Analysis on the Household Registration Characteristics of Deliberate Murder Perpetrators

In C City, for example, perpetrators of deliberate murder have distinctive characteristics in household registration: The vast majority are local perpetrators. According to 2001-2013 data, local perpetrators accounted for 78.37% of the total, which also confirmed the assertion that deliberate murders were mostly done by acquaintances. “78.5% of the murders were done by acquaintances, most of who are intimate lovers, couples, friends or neighbors” (Gao & Zha, 2006); perpetrators from other counties came the second, and perpetrators from other provinces came the last. This is because C City is a labor-exporting city, immigrant workers are relatively

less. As the total floating population keeps growing, the proportions of the latter two are increasing year by year.

2.2.4 Analysis on the Recidivism Characteristics of Deliberate Murder Perpetrators

Over the past decade, deliberate murder recidivism rate -recidivism rate of the people released from prison remained at a low level (see Figure 7). C City had a higher recidivism rate in deliberate murder from 2001 to 2004, but it was no more than 5% annually except for 2004, showing that the vast majority of the perpetrators of such crimes had no criminal record, which was apparently different from theft, drug trafficking and other crimes.

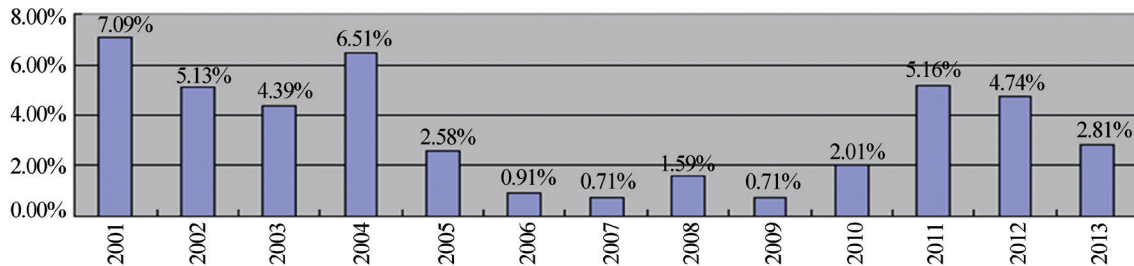


Figure 7
2001- 2013 C City Deliberate Murder Perpetrator Recidivism Rate (%)
Source: *China Police Yearbook*.

3. PREVENTION AND CONTROL SUGGESTIONS FOR DELIBERATE MURDER

3.1 Fully Play the Role of Community in Mediating Conflicts

The reasons for the murders are mostly concentrated in five categories: Emotional dispute, family conflict, trivia dispute, interest conflict and revenge killing, out of which emotional dispute (referring to the emotional conflicts between lovers outside family) is the most prominent factor. These five categories jointly account for nearly 90%, 89.2% to be precise. (Wu, 2013)

With the advancement of urbanization, original social structures collapsed, and relatively concentrated population settlement pattern based on community followed, so community committees play an important role in solving social conflicts. Effective resolution of social conflicts can eliminate deliberate murders and restrain such crimes from the source.

3.2 Establish an Effective Situational Prevention System

Facts show that a situational crime prevention system represented by video surveillance system plays an irreplaceable role in fighting against street crimes. Situational crime prevention system also has a good effect in restraining deliberate murder. Therefore, the establishment and improvement of a scientific and reasonable surveillance video system are also an important means to prevent deliberate murder.

3.3 Increase the Detection Rate of Deliberate Murder

The investigations over the past decade prove that an enhanced detection rate is the most powerful weapon to restrain deliberate murder. When the detection rate is high enough, the offender's chances before a crime will be challenged, and he has to face this choice: After committing the crime he will be almost inevitably subject

to legal punishment, so whether is it worth exchanging his own life for the victim's life. Driven by the human instinct of pursuing interests and avoiding risks, people often choose to give up his criminal mind.

CONCLUSION

Urbanization brings about a significant change in China's social structure, and the number and means of deliberate murders also change significantly. During 29 years from 1984 to 2012, with the concentrated population in urbanization, deliberate murder rate in the first ten years (1984-1995). Although urbanization was steadily developed from then on, owing to the great attention from investigation authorities and rapid development of investigative technologies, etc., the murder detection rate rose unprecedentedly, resulting in an continuing downward trend in deliberate murder rate (2001-2012); from a geographical perspective, in Guangdong, Shanghai and other places where new urbanization has been achieved at a higher level, the deliberate murder rate was low. In Jilin, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Guizhou and other cities and towns where urbanization is in progress, the deliberate murder rate was high; from a population perspective, female perpetrators took a very small proportion in deliberate murders. Perpetrators were evenly distributed from age 14 to 60, and with the explosion of floating population brought by urbanization, the proportion of people from other provinces committing the crime was on the rise.

In the process of new urbanization, the improvement of community governance makes it easier to resolve social conflicts; the establishment of situational crime prevention system can effectively control street crimes; the continuing rising detection rate can make the people intending to commit a murder think twice, and restrain the happening of deliberate murders. With the sustainable development of new urbanization, the society will become more stable and orderly, and with the continuing efforts of relevant

departments, such crimes are bound to be effectively controlled.

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