The *Fengqiao* Experience: How China Relieves Its Police Officers of Pressures from the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Police officers worldwide have encountered significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, including a lack of protective equipment, overwork, and the legality of emergency policing. This study explores how police officers in China have responded to public emergencies during the pandemic, using a comprehensive and multi-channel method of data collection and analysis. The primary and secondary data were obtained from questionnaires (*N*=713), semi-structured interviews (*N*=30), and official reports. The "*Fengqiao* Experience" demonstrates how China relieves pressure on police officers during the pandemic in both the short and long run. The experimental practices of *Fengqiao*, including material support and training mechanisms, non-contact law enforcement, intelligent analysis combined with big data, grid-based governance, and joint defense mechanisms, prove to be effective. Fighting the COVID-19 pandemic is not only a test for the national governance system and its capabilities but also an opportunity to promote its modernization.

Keywords: *Fengqiao* Experience; police officer; COVID-19; grassroots social governance

The COVID-19 pandemic posed unprecedented challenges worldwide. Police and other street-level bureaucrats (SLBs) are front-line workers responding to the disease and usually work in critical situations with lacking resources, high workloads, unpredictability, and high ambiguity (Lipsky 2010). They have played a crucial role in controlling and maintaining public order and building safer communities during the COVID-19 pandemic (Alcadipani et al. 2020; Laufs and Waseem 2020; Frenkel et al. 2021). Most of the SLB research has analyzed patterns of practices or reactions to pressure (Tummers et al. 2015), whereas only a few studies have analyzed emergencies at the street level (Henderson 2014).

Emergencies are characterized by a lack of regularity and previous experience (Carter and May 2020).

Under the COVID-19 pandemic, the control and enforcement of travel bans and social distancing rules have placed additional service demands on police officers (Laufs et al. 2021). Policing is one of the most mentally demanding jobs, with long and often rotating shifts, threats of violence, increased need for hypervigilance, and lack of public support (Hartley et al. 2011; Mccraty and Atkinson 2012; Paoline 2003). Given the person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 through respiratory droplets, police officers are at greater risk of exposure due to their close contact with the public (Jennings and Perez 2020) and experience the challenges of adapting to policy changes. In the early days of the outbreak, China adopted strict measures to enforce lockdowns and quarantines (Jiang and Xie 2020). Although the Chinese police are

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still under pressure to perform their jobs, the stress has been greatly alleviated. How can these new pressures and challenges be addressed?

1 Literature Review

According to the general strain theory (GST), pressure comes from the discrepancy between environmental demands and coping resources. Margolis et al. (1974) suggest significant correlations between relative pressure and three indicators characteristic of street-level work: resource inadequacy, overload, and role ambiguity. High job demands result in job strain, which leads to reduced performance, while an abundance of job resources can help enhance job motivation, which leads to better performance (Rosen et al. 2010). Adverse environmental demand leads to strain due to the absence of adequate coping strategies (Agnew 1992). When police officers perceive the stressors as exceeding their coping resources, a negative psychological state of stress ensues, commonly accompanied by fatigue (Strahler and Luft 2019) and mood deterioration (Schlotz 2019). Based on the theoretical framework of GST, Moon and Jonson (2012) find that various types of strain result in officers being less committed to their police agencies.

Given that stress can have tremendous consequences on officers' performance and health, one approach to bringing officers safely through the pandemic is to strengthen their coping resources (Frenkel et al. 2021). The outbreak and spread of COVID-19 have changed the routine of social operations, and crime has undergone unprecedented changes (Jin, Lin, and Lin 2020). These changes have exposed some key obstacles related to communication, resource management, and the enforcement of public health restrictions (Jennings and Perez 2020). An extensive review by Laufs and Waseem (2020) revealed four categories of challenges that emerged in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: police-community relations, police officers' mental health and well-being, intra-organizational challenges, and inter-agency collaboration and cooperation. Frenkel et al. (2021) conducted an extensive survey in the spring of 2020, involving 2,567 police officers (77 percent male) from Austria, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Spain. The responsive measures they identified were: being logis-

tically prepared, enacting unambiguous laws, increasing public compliance through media communication, and improving stress regulation skills in police training.

Lacking personal protective equipment (PPE) poses severe challenges for law enforcement agencies (Jeff and Smith 2007). Police agencies should be prepared for pandemics by stockpiling PPE, including masks, gloves, gowns, eyewear, and hand sanitizers, to ensure immediate and sufficient supply at all times (Brito, Luna, and Sanberg 2009; Stogner, Miller, and McLean 2020). In the early days of the COVID-19 outbreak, various parts of China, especially large and medium-sized cities, implemented exceptional measures such as lockdowns, travel bans, and social distancing rules. Although local lockdowns and social distancing policies are reported to facilitate police work, social distancing increases the number of service calls (Jennings and Perez 2020). Many of these measures require public security organs to significantly increase the number of police officers and their dispatch frequency. Therefore, providing adequate police services to citizens is challenging (Mehdizadeh and Kamkar 2020). Furthermore, public health policies during the pandemic have limited positive interactions between the police and the community through outreach initiatives or community activities (Jennings and Perez 2020). While public health departments lead the actual response to the pandemic, law enforcement agencies are expected to be "the voice of authority, calm, and guidance" (Brito, Luna, and Sanberg 2009). These challenges are even more pressing in developing countries (Alcadipani et al. 2020).

Waseem (2021) investigated the crisis in Pakistan using an analytical framework of "procedural informality" and found that informal governance through interpersonal connections within the private sector helped improve police-civilian interactions and the legitimacy of policing in a crisis. Luong (2021) observed the policing approaches that contribute to limiting the spread of the virus in Vietnam. Luong concluded that proactive activities, information campaigns, protective measures, and forms of prevention were prioritized in community-based policing to prevent and combat COVID-19. These new policing approaches normally require technology (Stanier and Nunan

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2021). It is critical to identify the personnel characteristics and behaviors linked to a successful response to the spread of COVID-19 (Stogner, Miller, and McLean 2020). While effective and successful police responses to emergencies can protect people and ensure public safety and well-being, ineffective police responses can undermine trust in the police (Bonkiewicz and Ruback 2012). This study explored how police officers in a province of China, Zhejiang, have effectively responded to these public emergencies during the pandemic.

The coastal province of Zhejiang is the birthplace of the *Fengqiao* Experience, the model of modern grassroots social governance in China. In the guiding policy documents of the Chinese central government,[1] the *Fengqiao* Experience is a successful test for grassroots social governance (Chu 2019). In 2013, President Xi Jin Ping called for upholding, developing, and innovating the *Fengqiao* Experience. At present, the whole country is promoting the construction of *Fengqiao-style police stations*.[2] To develop the modern approach to

policing and build a pilot demonstration area of modern governance in the province, the Zhejiang Public Security Bureau has made great efforts to build service-oriented, law-based, digital, and humanistic public security (Jin 2021). In 2021, Zhejiang issued the "No. 1 Document" to strengthen the capacity of police stations in the new era and pioneered the *Fengqiao Index evaluation system*. Zhejiang province was the first to raise the risk management response to the highest level in the early days of the outbreak when there were still no confirmed cases (Wu, Xiao, and Yang 2021). In 2021, five police stations in Zhejiang province achieved national "*Fengqiao-style Police Stations*". Zhejiang recognized an inclusive public governance logic that relies on professionalism and innovation (Lian 2021). In China's 14th Five-Year Plan, the central government supported Zhejiang's high-quality development and construction of a common prosperity demonstration zone in which safety (*pinganjianshe*) is the core.

2 Methodology and Data

In this study, we emphasize that divergent results could explain the complex aspects of a phenomenon (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010). Our data were derived largely from official documentation, archival records, interviews, open-source databases, direct observations, participant observation and other scholars' research. In particular, we evaluated the pressure experienced by police officers by conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews and collected data based on the results of questionnaires. We initially conducted 30 in-depth interviews with front-line police officers (18 sergeants and 12 constables) in April 2021. The interviewees were participants in a training course for front-line operational cadres of public security organs around Zhejiang (from April to May 2021). According to the interviewees' answers, we found the responses included material support, mental training, non-contact law enforcement, intelligent analysis, grid governance and joint response, which was consistent with the requirements of the "Fengqiao-Style police stations".

Most of the interviews were conducted in person at the Zhejiang Police Training Center, and the rest were conducted online. The interviewees' personal details

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[1] Including "Several Opinions on Adhering to the Priority Development of Agriculture and Rural Areas and Doing the Work of 'Agriculture, Rural Areas and Farmers' issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council" (中共中央、国务院[关于坚持农业农村优先发展 做好 "三农" 工作的若干意见(2019)]), "Regulations of the Communist Party of China on Rural Organization Work" (中国共产党农村组织工作条例[2019]), "Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Several Major Issues on Promoting the Modernization of China's Governance and Governance Capability" (中共中央[推进国家治理体现和治理能力现代化若干重大问题的决定(2019)]), "The CPC Central Committee's Proposal on Formulating the Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and 2035 Long-range Goals" (中共中央[关于制定国民经济与社会发展第十四个五年规划和 2035 远景目标的建议(2020)]).

[2] The "Fengqiao Experience index evaluation system" was developed by the research team of Zhejiang University and launched at the third New Era "Fengqiao Experience" high-end Summit in 2022. The evaluation system contains six first-level indicators, which are the leadership of the Party, the major role of the people, multiple coordination, four approaches of integration, contradiction resolution, and peace and harmony. In the next step, the research group will release the evaluation results of the "Fengqiao Experience Index" in the New era, and publish the "Fengqiao Experience Index Report" in both Chinese and English. Dominik Mierzejewski, The Zhejiang Model: Old-New Tools for Managing Contradictions and Creating Win-Win Outcomes in Center-Local Governance, *China Brief*, 22 (19):6-11. https://jamestown.org/program/the-zhejiang-model-old-new-tools-for-managing-contradictions-and-creating-win-win-outcomes-in-center-local-governance/

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have been omitted to ensure anonymity. Following the interviews, we reviewed central and local government policy documents from police agencies on COVID-19 prevention and control, and the latest research statistics from published literature and official websites. Then, we conducted two rounds of first-hand data collection and analysis in this study. In the first round data collection, we adopted the theoretical sampling method and distributed 82 valid questionnaires in person to police officers in police stations that were seeking the provincial government credential of "Fengqiao-Style police stations".

In the second round, we adopted cluster sampling to expand the coverage of interviewees and increase the number of data samples, making the samples more representative. We randomly selected 30 representatives from 200 police officers who had worked in police stations for several years all over Zhejiang province. They graduated from Zhejiang Police College in the last five years and worked as representatives to distribute questionnaires in our study. Most of them took advantage of the weekly regular meetings at their police stations to issue the questionnaire to their colleagues.

This questionnaire survey won the consent and support of the leaders of each representative police station, which was conducive to collecting more valid feedback. More than 1000 questionnaires were indirectly distributed to the police officers through online software, Tencent Questionnaire, of which 631 were automatically selected by the software as valid in November 2021. In sum, 713 were valid (546 male, 167 female) which were representative of about 71,000 police officers in Zhejiang province.[3] Most valid responses came from young police officers aged between 20 and 29. The survey respondents came from 10 cities in Zhejiang Province (see Table 1). The wording of the questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

3 Pressures on Police Officers and *Fengqiao-Style* Response to COVID-19

China adopts a "dynamic zero policy" in dealing with COVID-19, which requires the police to handle occasional high-pressure outbreaks. Through questionnaires and interviews, we evaluated the pressure experienced by police officers. Seventy-two percent of respondents felt more pressure during the pandemic than before the lockdown, while 25 percent considered their level of pressure unchanged (see Figure 1). Fifty-three percent felt more pressure after the lockdown than during the outbreak, while 39 percent reported unaffected and 8 percent reported decreased levels of pressure.

To learn about the types and sources of pressure experienced by police officers, we used a multiple-response questionnaire (for results see table 2, for the questionnaire see appendix) that covered health pressure, workload, relational pressure, and judicial pressure. Sixty-one percent of the respondents reported health pressure, while between 44 and 48 percent reported workload, relational pressure, and judicial efficiency. More than 50 percent attributed the pressure to infection, isolation/lockdown, and work overload; while 45 percent of the participants identified tackling new crimes as the source of pressure.

Through interviews, we found that the challenges faced by the public security organs carrying out police activities during COVID-19 brought multiple pressures to the police, and the pressure faced by the police themselves brought challenges to the police work.

A survey conducted by a research team at Jiangsu Police College shows that 56 percent of police officers believe that the logistics of material supply fail to meet the front-line demands and that physical protection is highly inadequate (Cai and Tang 2020). Our interviews with police officers found that most of them faced PPE shortages in the early stage of the pandemic. Even during the critical stage, each front-line police officer was allotted only three masks per week and no protective clothing (Zhu 2020). Only 43 percent of front-line police wore medical masks and goggles, and only 5 percent wore standard protective clothing (Cai and Tang 2020).

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[3] Source: Zhejiang Public Security History Compilation Committee, 2022. *Zhejiang Public Security Yearbook 2021*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Press.

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Table 1: Profile of respondents (questionnaire and semi-structured interviews)
1a: Semi-structured interviews

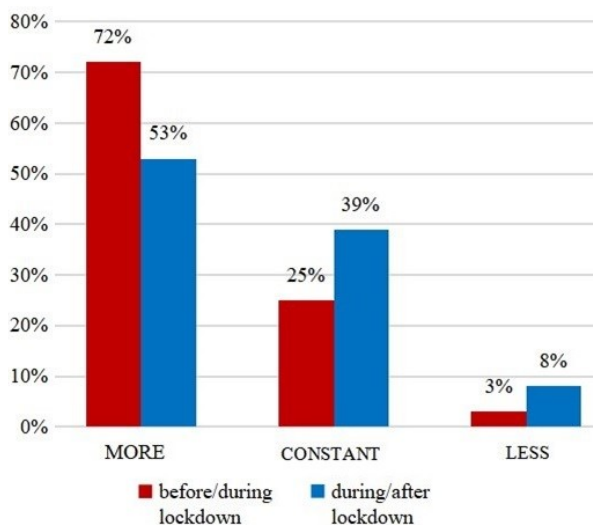| Interviewee locations (City)	Interviewed Number (N=30)	Number of Police Officers (N≈71,000)	Population (N≈50,689.000)
Hangzhou (Hz)	5	≈12,900	8,138,000
Jinhua (Jh)	4	6,548	4,939,000
Jiaxing (Jx)	2	5,145	3,673,800
Lishui (Ls)	2	3,773	2,707,400
Ningbo (Nb)	6	≈10,800	6,136,000
Quzhou (Qz)	1	3,455	2,568,600
Shaoxing (Sx)	2	5,363	4,476,400
Taizhou (Tz)	4	6,884	6,069,800
Wenzhou (Wz)	3	≈10,900	8,337,500
Zhoushan (Zs)	1	2,369	962,000
Huzhou (Hz)	0	3,498	2,680,500

1b: Questionnaire

Characteristic	Number (N=713)
Gender	
Male	546
Female	167
Age	
20 – 29	428
30 – 39	187
40 – 49	70
50 – 59	28

Note: Source of the number of police officers and population: Zhejiang Public Security.
History Compilation Committee of Zhejiang Public Security, 2022. Zhejiang Public Security Yearbook 2021. Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Press.

Figure 1: Police officers' experience of pressure

Source: authors' survey

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Table 2: Performance and the source of pressure

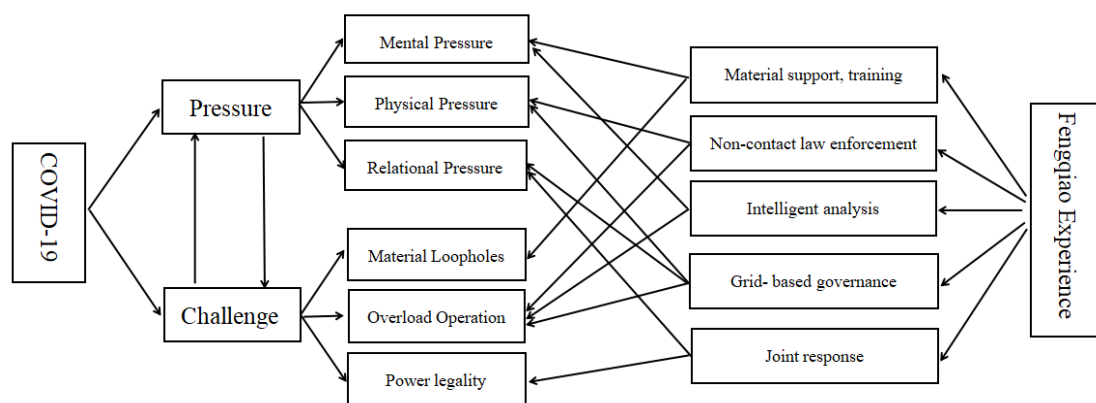| Pressure	Percentage	Sources	Percentage
Health pressure	61%	Infection	60%
Workload pressure	44%	Isolation/lockdown	54%
Relational pressure	46%	Workload	70%
Judicial pressure	48%	New crimes	45%

Source: authors' survey

Pressure can ignite challenges, which can in turn re-model pressure. COVID-19 has also posed a new threat to the police. This pandemic has raised many novel challenges in the police's working environment (Frenkel et al. 2021). The COVID-19 Stringency Index shows how the intensity of China's pandemic response policies has changed over time. The survey conducted by Jiangsu Police College found that 67 percent of police officers believe their work intensity has significantly increased and their normal working conditions have been affected (Cai and Tang 2020). The overuse of police services has weakened the immunity of many front-line police officers, thus making them vulnerable to diseases. According to the same survey, 50 percent of police believe that the risk to their physical health has increased significantly (Cai and Tang 2020). Officers all recognized a need to be more diligent (Mehdizadeh and Kamkar 2020). China's judicial regulations, including criminal law and judicial interpretations, empower the police to respond to such changes. The exercise of emergency policing has led to an increased demand for police forces. Regardless, police officers are expected to do an excellent job in pandemic prevention. According to the COVID-19 Stringency Index, China has adopted the most strin-

gent measures among the world's major economies.[4] Existing research has offered some models, such as grid-based model governance (Tang 2020) and technology-led policing (Sprick 2019), to explain how China relieves the pressures and dissolves the challenges of COVID-19. However, these models do not reflect China's systematic and special measures used to manage the pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, China's coping mechanisms have included "'wartime' material support and training mechanisms" ("战时"物资与训练机制), non-contact law enforcement (非接触式执法), intelligent analysis with big data (大数据智能分析), grid-based model governance (网格式治理), and joint defence mechanisms (联防联控机制). All these mechanisms prove effective as a model of Chinese modernization of policing, recognized as the "*Fengqiao* Experience of the New Era" ("*Fengqiao* Experience" for short).

In this study, the interviewees were mainly from the police forces of various cities and prefectures in Zhejiang Province. Figure 2 below shows how *Fengqiao-style* policing responds to the challenges imposed by COVID-19.

Figure 2: Fengqiao-style response to COVID-19

Source: designed by the authors.

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4 Material Support and Mental Training

Material resources are essential for handling major infectious diseases. The availability of coping resources determines police stress levels (Frenkel et al. 2021). At the beginning of the pandemic, China's Ministry of Public Security suggested that priority should be given to the front-line police when allocating supplies (Interviewee Jh1, April 28, 2021). China has established an accurate emergency management mechanism for materials at the provincial level to prevent a shortage of medical supplies. Zhejiang quickly formulated the "Measures for the Management of Materials for Pandemic Prevention and Control and Disposition" (疫情防控处置物资管理办法). The province formed special teams for material procurement to streamline procedures and improve the efficiency of emergency procurement (Zhu 2020). Supplying medical protective materials also added to the pressure on the public security organs in Zhejiang Province in the first month after the COVID-19 outbreak (Zhu 2020).

Public security organs attached great importance to police officers' mental health during the pandemic. The Hangzhou Municipal Public Security Bureau set up two teams of instructors for pandemic prevention and control and psychological skills training, while also producing more than ten series of training videos. Additionally, they uploaded more than twenty microcourses online (Interviewee Hz1, May 3, 2021). To relieve pressure and improve the effectiveness of police officers, the Ningbo Municipal Public Security Bureau hired psychiatrists to provide assistance and requested senior officers to visit their subordinates (Interviewee Nb1, April 25, 2021).

5 Non-Contact Law Enforcement

Technology-intensive methods facilitate interaction between the police and civilians and prevent unnecessary police infection and casualties. Since 2018, the Ministry of Public Security has issued several regulations to improve support for police officers in their

work.[5] Unlike contact law enforcement, non-contact technology focuses on "remote operation" (Ge 2020).[6]

Facing these challenges, local police officers maximize the advantages of police drones (警用无人机) in non-contact scenarios. To assist in policing, police drones use technologies such as remote control, artificial intelligence recognition, and drone platform management to gradually replace human inspection. Police drones improve the situational awareness of a given area, such as roads and other critical regions. Equipped with thermal imaging, police drones conduct nighttime high-altitude patrols over the city's main streets and some strictly controlled villages. Taizhou Public Security Bureau developed a three-dimensional mechanism for police drones to prevent and control the pandemic. It deployed 95 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to participate in COVID-19 prevention and control and monitored vehicle flow at the highway entrances with heavy traffic (Interviewee Tz1, April 26, 2021).

Many cities across China use drones to educate the public on pandemic prevention. For example, police drones carry speakers that are used to broadcast information about pandemic prevention, control, and treatment at places where people gather.[7] When the traffic queues before checkpoints were heavy, the UAV speaker would be used to remind the drivers and passengers to get ready for inspection (Interviewee Tz1, April 26, 2021). Taizhou deployed police UAVs to key districts to publicize policies and persuade people to leave the gathering points found by aircraft patrols (Interviewee Tz1, April 26, 2021). Remote temperature measurement by drones facilitated pandemic preven-

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[5] "Interim Provisions on the Management of Police Unmanned Aircraft" (警用无人驾驶航空器管理暂行规定), "Registration and Management Measures for Police Unmanned Aircraft" (警用无人驾驶航空器登记管理办法), "Measures of Managing Police Drone Pilot Training and Licensing" (警用无人驾驶航空器驾驶员培训及执照管理办法).

[6] For instance: the use of electronic equipment to monitor and search specific tracks, information equipment to detect the tracks of residence returning from severely affected areas, and unmanned aerial vehicles and other equipment to collect information about specific people.

[7] To fight the epidemic, Taizhou police used drones to publicize pandemic prevention and control measures to citizens; source: Sina, February 12, 2020, https://zj.sina.cn/taizhou/2020-02-12/detail-iimxxstf0755091.d.html.

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tion and control, while effectively preventing the various risks of contact detection (Xing 2020).

Public security authorities have been improving online services to reduce the flow of people and the opportunities for interpersonal contact. Jiaxing encouraged the resumption of work through the Zhe Li Office (浙里办) and Red Boat Guard (红船卫士).[8] Jinhua implemented the "intelligent lockdown" (智能封控) measures. Once a person is in isolation or quarantine is implemented, the community police and grid personnel check and report back to the headquarters immediately (Interviewee Jh 2, April 28, 2021).[9]

6 Intelligent Analysis Combined With Big Data

Zhejiang province pioneered China's sophisticated intelligent control network with the "*five-color epidemic map + three-color health code + sophisticated intelligent control index*" (五色疫情图+三色健康码+精密智控指数). Relying on the "City Brain" (城市大脑) police operating system, for example, Hangzhou has built an actual policing model and used big data to seek practical results in "finding people and guarding the city" (Interviewee Hz2, May 3, 2021). According to the interviewees, information on people who have close contact with the virus in Zhejiang is imported into the "City Brain": people and vehicles are checked and their names and number plates recorded at inspection sites. Moreover, round-the-clock, two-way control and precise inspection of health, transportation, and territorial areas are conducted to locate and eradicate the source of infection. During the first week of the city lockdown in Hangzhou, 879,000 vehicles were checked and controlled, and 676,000 people were inspected (Interviewee Hz2, May 3, 2021).

Intelligent analysis maximizes the use of big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and other cutting-edge technologies, such as "digital control" in several steps (Zhu and Du 2020). The first step is to strengthen rapid information verification. During the early stage of the pandemic, the government convened all informal service units, selected the core members among them, and established an emergency command center. Wenzhou built a data center for pandemic prevention to support prevention work (Interviewee Wz1, April 29, 2021). Jiaxing set up a *special task force* (工作专班) and collaborated with three major telecommunication operators to conduct targeted research and assessment. Cases were thoroughly organized based on the data acquired from tickets, cars, people, and networks using classified modeling and classification research. According to a police officer from Jiaxing, "25,353 people from key epidemic areas of Hubei entered Jiaxing during the first week, and all 35 confirmed cases in the city appeared on the list, with an accuracy rate of 100 percent" (Interviewee Jx1, April 29, 2021).

The second task is to transmit information and strengthen command and dispatch. The command center built "'wartime' work channels"[10] and unblocked the information communication channels between the command center and various public security organs. These provided accurate data for further deployment of front-line teams and ensured the immediate transmission of a warning. The center's on-duty leader is responsible for the comprehensive monitoring of pandemic-related online public opinions in real time. The leader could accurately understand various local risks to ensure that people were confident that the infection would be identified and controlled. Jiaxing implemented closed-loop management and control. It launched a *blanket search* where a village (community), front-line workers, and volunteers worked together to ensure that the list of confirmed infected persons would not be leaked and the information would be inserted into the database in real time (Interviewee Jx1, April 29, 2021).

In the context of pandemic prevention and control, local public security agencies strengthened policing

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[8] Zhe li Office (浙里办) and Red Boat Guard (红船卫士) are government service apps launched by Zhejiang provincial government and Jiaxing municipal government. The government uses digital infrastructure to empower grassroots social governance and resolve contradictions at the most local level of government. Dominik Mierzejewski, The Zhejiang Model: Old-New Tools for Managing Contradictions and Creating Win-Win Outcomes in Center-Local Governance, *China Brief*, 22 (19):6-11. https://jamestown.org/program/the-zhejiang-model-old-new-tools-for-managing-contradictions-and-creating-win-win-outcomes-in-center-local-governance/

[9] Grid personnel is a full-time staff member who supports the service and risk screening within a neighbourhood unit.

[10] Wartime refers to a state of emergency, not a state of war in a narrow sense.

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governance through science and technology. They gradually formed an integrated service mechanism of "intelligence, command, and action" ("情指行" 一体化勤务机制), which promoted dynamic prevention, control and efficient management (动态防控、高效管理) (Wang et al. 2020). These actions shifted passive and manpower-intensive responses to proactive, preventive, and technology-intensive measures.

7 Grid-Based Governance

Police officers in China are embedded in the network of local governance known as the grid-based model (Tang 2020). Grid-based governance requires cross-agency coordination. Various governmental, commercial, and social forces participate in enforcing quarantine measures, including the staff of neighbourhood resident committees, grid workers (网格员, front-line agents hired by the neighbourhood resident committees), private security personnel (保安, hired by the property management organizations), organized volunteers, and community police officers. While grids were first piloted in 2004 to improve local management, their value in social control and service provision only became fully evident during the pandemic when highly accurate tracking and information were required (Mittelstaedt 2022). Subsequently, the importance of grid-based community policing has been realized during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the grid-based governance model, Zhejiang public security agencies developed a "community unit" comprising a community police officer, a community official, and a preventive health officer, plus corresponding community members of the Communist Party of China, grid members, wardens, building leaders, security activists, and other group prevention and control forces. This community policing model consists of the smallest unit for pandemic prevention and control and plays a vital role in improving social control governance (Miao and Dong 2021). Relying on the grid-based mechanism of prevention and control of COVID-19, the Wulin Dama, Xizi Yijing and other voluntary groups jointly checked migratory population and rental housing units 2.34 million times in total (Interviewee Hz3, April 24, 2021).

The city of Ningbo gridded the city at five levels: intercity, county (district or city), township, village

(community), and building. They constructed the network for step-by-step pandemic prevention and control (Interviewee Nb2, April 25, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ningbo established 57 checkpoints at airports, high-speed railway stations, national and provincial highways, expressways, and arterial roads, 32 of which were under close-loop management. The inspection standard of "checking every vehicle and testing every person" was strictly implemented (Interviewee Nb2, April 25, 2021). Residents of buildings were visited to ensure that no one was missing. According to the statistics of Ningbo, 71,000 people, including the public, volunteers and grid workers, were mobilized to visit households in the first week of the COVID-19 outbreak. A total of 5,807 checkpoints were established at the entrances and exits of communities, and 408 people were found to be infected (Interviewee Nb2, April 25, 2021). Jiaxing mobilized the grid manager of the village (neighborhood) and the building corridor manager to carry out the registration of personnel returning to Jiaxing, inputting them in the "registration system for newcomers to Jiaxing" to confirm the real-time risk level (Interviewee Jx2, April 29, 2021). It allowed the municipal party committee and government to begin the "sweeping investigation": mobilizing villages (communities), front-line officials, volunteers and other forces (Interviewee Jx2, April 29, 2021).

Grid-based models are highly dependent on the construction of smart communities. Since 2018, the construction of smart communities in China has been accelerating in all aspects. Major cities have formulated and issued guiding documents, such as the "Guidelines for the Construction of Smart Communities" (智慧社区建设指南), actively mobilizing the forces of all sectors of society to improve smart construction.[11] The smart community management model improves community pandemic prediction, provides early warnings, accurately targets affected groups, and strengthens the dynamic management of key

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[11] To meet the needs of comprehensive social governance and to combat new crimes, local public security organs have used big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and other technologies to develop a modern community policing model of co-construction, co-governance and sharing, to realize the "full perception" of community data. For more, see Wang et al. (2020).

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groups (Meng and Du 2016). The security perception system helps the community form a closed management system and gathers a fresh data feed on community-level pandemic prevention. Pandemic heat maps depict trends within the community to produce an accurate research and judgment model and assist in preventing and controlling the pandemic. The new "house + human + car" connection mode implements an intelligent security system identification and artificial double-check pattern, enhances the management efficiency of the community, prevents unlicensed and irrelevant personnel from entering the community, and effectively reduces the risk of spreading the disease (Z. Lin 2020).

8 Joint Action and Response Mechanism

The police are not the sole or dominant force in implementing measures against the pandemic (Jiang and Xie 2020). To protect the community effectively, law enforcement agencies may partner with local hospitals, public health departments, and other local police agencies to share their knowledge and resources (Richards et al. 2006). China further improves the horizontal cooperation between departments, such as "public security + medical treatment + health," which enhances confidence about the policing work during COVID-19. Due to inter-department cooperation, the verification effect doubled the results with half the effort (H. Lin 2020).

The police and health joint action adopts the principle of "unified command, coordinated action, cooperation, and decentralized implementation" among departmental leaders, each of whom bears specific responsibilities. The Public Security Department of Zhejiang Province formulated the Guiding Opinions on Preventing and Handling COVID-19 Pandemic-Related Mass Agglomeration. The leading group is responsible for organizing, implementing, coordinating, and commanding the police-medical linkage work, guidance and inspection of daily operations, and supervision of the performance. Ningbo established a specific "public security + health department" office at the municipal and county levels to strengthen integration and interaction, encourage real-time research, and evaluate information (Interviewee Nb3, April 25, 2021). Furthermore, this working model reduces the

time cycle of investigation for tracking and isolating suspected patients and their close contacts (Interviewee Nb3, April 25, 2021).

The elite police force organizes a public security emergency response vanguard, which uses the same telecom system for shortening information reposting and promptly dispatching the police to citizens unwilling to cooperate with isolation measures. When there is a suspected case in the quarantine center, the emergency plan is activated immediately. Police officers are organized to maintain order and create green channels to allow designated medical institutions to dispatch ambulances quickly to escort and treat suspected patients and block the infection source. Quzhou integrated several departments including transportation and health departments, into a big data bureau to automatically alert key control personnel and to pressure the on-duty police to perform personnel and vehicle verification (Interviewee Qz1, May 5, 2021). Jiaxing allowed work to resume in public security organs and institutions and the health and information departments to guide companies or enterprises to follow pandemic prevention and control measures. It also encouraged enterprises to unify the management of staff dormitories, houses, and centralized accommodation, and implemented other measures such as temperature screening (Interviewee Jx2, April 29, 2021).

Given the principle of coordination between municipals, towns and villages, the Public Security Bureau of Zhuji explored a new model of border joint prevention and control by setting up a specific personnel information group (Interview Sx1, April 30, 2021). It implemented the three-party control mechanism of "employee self-discipline, enterprise responsibility, and public security supervision" to improve the efficiency of the checkpoints (Interview Sx1, April 30, 2021).

In the activity of "a hundred police united with a thousand enterprises," (百警联千企) a five-party management group composed of police, business owners, landlords, employees, and grid workers was established for enterprises to discuss methods to facilitate employees' return to work, such as an online joint inspection, joint examination, and contact mechanism (Interview Tz2, April 26, 2021). Introducing collaborative governance into policing can overcome the frag-

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mentation of public security service supply and realize "1+1>2," thus achieving the overall goal of public security.

9   Conclusion

The Fengqiao Experience aligns with the spirit of the Nine Principles of Policing proposed about two hundred years ago by Robert Peel, the father of modern policing in the United Kingdom. Peel believed "the police are the public and the public are the police" (Williams 2003). Fighting the COVID-19 pandemic is not only a test for the national governance system and capabilities (Zhang 2020; Fang 2020), but also an opportunity to promote the modernization of the national policing governance system and capabilities.[12]

Our questionnaire not only provides empirical information on pressures and challenges faced by Chinese police officers but also reveals their stress-relieving strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic. The second part of the interview was developed on the basis of the results of the questionnaire research. The subjective responses to the questionnaire and the content of the in-depth interviews together formed the core framework of this study, namely the *Fengqiao* Experience response.

In these response strategies, intelligent technology has dramatically alleviated the pressure on police officers. The police have tended to focus more on intelligent application and grid governance in maintaining social control over the pandemic. Public security organs realized the importance of intelligent technology and grassroots social governance. The police have further promoted intelligent construction and application; actively supported data gathering, sharing, and fusion; provided better control; and maximized the effectiveness of police force at the grassroots level. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of creating a grid-based community policing model has become more prominent (Ge 2020). By focusing on the community, public security organs actively and steadily promote their own reforms at the municipal and county levels. They promote a downward shift to strengthen and stimulate vitality and enhance policing effectiveness at the community level. As a repre-

sentative part of the modern police mechanism, the *Fengqiao* Experience has been extended nationwide. However, it is not the whole story of Chinese policing. In fact, China's response to the pandemic has revealed obvious weaknesses in its prevention and control systems and public health emergency management systems (Zhang, Zhou, and Li 2020).

This study has some limitations. First, the sample size of the in-depth interviews was limited, which was especially true of the interviews with experts. Second, the effectiveness of the *Fengqiao* Experience could not remedy the shortfalls of policing in China, such as the lack of personal data protection and the greater emphasis placed on maintaining order than protecting individual freedoms. Future research could focus on how these shortfalls affect the performance of policing during the COVID-19 pandemic in China.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Survey of the Stress Situation of Police during the Fight against the COVID-19

Dear Sir,

This survey aims to conduct basic research on the stress situation of the police officer during the pandemic. Since you have made outstanding contributions during the fight against COVID-19 in China and faced significant work pressure and psychological stress, we sincerely thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in this survey. This study promises to anonymize the data and use it only for this study. Please answer the following questions in relation to your work during the pandemic last year (the "pandemic period" in this study is mainly from 20 January to 28 April 2020).

1. Gender._____
2. Age._____
3. Rank/type of police._____
4. Compared to your psychological situation before the outbreak, the stress you felt during the fight against the COVID-19 outbreak is _____
   A. More B. No change C. Less
5. Compared to the psychological situation during the pandemic, the pressure you feel after returning to regular work is _____
   A. More B. No change C. Less
6. During the fight against the pandemic, you were mainly stressed by [multiple response]
   A. Health-related stress due to COVID-19
   B. Work-related stress from a busy shift
   C. Relationship stress in the police-community interactions
   D. Efficiency stress in law enforcement cases
   E. Other _____
7. You think the main source of these stresses is _____ [multiple response]
   A. Risk of virus infection
   B. Isolation work for high-risk groups (community lockdown work)
   C. Overload
   D. Combating (new) crime
   E. Other _____
8. What do you think are the (new) challenges encountered in public security during the fight against the pandemic? _____
   _____
9. How do you think the crime situation has changed during the pandemic? _____
   _____
10. Is the changing crime situation creating new pressure? _____
    _____
11. Did the fight against COVID-19 reveal certain shortcomings in policing mechanisms? What are the main areas of concern? _____
    _____
12. Were there certain innovations in the public security work during the pandemic to better respond to the pandemic and relieve the psychological pressure on the civilian police? What are the main aspects? _____
    _____

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13. In the future, how do you think policing mechanisms can be innovated to relieve the pressure faced by the police in responding to public health emergencies as well as to fill the gaps in policing?

    _____

    _____

14. Does the accumulated practice of the *Fengqiao Experience* in the new era provide support to alleviate the pressure in police work? In what ways? _____

    _____

15. Can the continued development of the *Fengqiao Experience* in the new era contribute to further alleviating the pressure on the police and addressing the shortcomings in policing? What do you think should or will be its feasible directions or points? _____

    _____