

# Criminal Policy and Crime Prevention Mechanism: The Role and Effectiveness Evaluation of Criminal Law in Public Security Management

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**Abstract:** China's public security faces increasingly complex challenges, especially the high incidence of minor crimes, ambiguous criminal behavior, and the emergence of a public opinion focus. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of criminal law in modern public security management, evaluate its effectiveness in preventing crime, and explore the synergy between criminal law and other social governance mechanisms. This article systematically sorts out the evolution, functional positioning, and modern transformation logic of criminal policy, focusing on the deterrent function and boundaries of legal application in public security management. Combined with the practical cases of Shenzhen's "criminal-governance-society" collaborative system, the successful experience of this model in improving the effectiveness of public security management and reducing the recidivism rate was analyzed. The study concluded that criminal law plays a key role in preventing crime, but it still faces challenges in the fields of the special prevention and resocialization of released prisoners. To improve the effectiveness of criminal law, we should focus on building a systematic mechanism for the governance of minor crimes, promote the development of alternative punishment and restorative justice, and strengthen the coordination between criminal law, administrative law enforcement, and social services. This will provide a more robust legal guarantee for achieving long-term social stability.

**Keywords:** Criminal law, Crime prevention, Public security management, Criminal policy, Collaborative governance.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, China's public security issues have gradually presented characteristics such as a high frequency of petty crimes, vague behavior," and "public opinion sensitivity" (Bai, 2024; Liu, 2024; Zhang & Zhou, 2024)[1-3]. As a crucial legal instrument for maintaining social order and safeguarding citizens' rights and interests, criminal law is not merely to punish crimes, but also to prevent them through effective legal mechanisms (Tianyang, 2024)[4]. Many scholars and practitioners have increasingly emphasized the evolving functions of criminal law in the domain of social governance, highlighting a transition from its traditional punitive orientation to a more comprehensive role as a multifunctional instrument of social control (Zhao, 2025; Kui, 2024; Zhang & Zhou, 2024)[5-7]. This transformation aligns with the urgent need to address the growing complexity of contemporary society and to enhance the effectiveness of public security management through the adoption of modern criminal policies and refined governance strategies.

From a governance-oriented perspective, the integration of legal norms with concrete social practices has become a key criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of criminal law in maintaining public order. Empirical case analysis, particularly within the Chinese context, offers valuable insight into the preventive role of criminal law.

Nevertheless, the evaluation of the effectiveness of criminal law should not only concentrate on successful cases, but also delve into the challenges and difficulties encountered in practice. This study intends to analyze the multiple functions of criminal law in modern public security management, assess its crime prevention effect, and explore the synergy between criminal law and other social governance mechanisms. Specifically, starting from the developmental

logic of criminal policy, this article focuses on the specific functions and boundaries of criminal law in the governance system and comprehensively discusses its effects of criminal law and institutional synergy mechanisms. On this basis, we further explore how to achieve effective synergy between criminal law and other governance mechanisms.

## 2. The Evolution of Criminal Policy and Modern Governance Logic

### 2.1. The concept and basic functions of criminal policy

Criminal policy constitutes a comprehensive governance framework systematically formulated and implemented by the state to address crime-related challenges, encompassing multiple institutional dimensions such as criminal legislation, law enforcement mechanisms, and judicial orientation systems (Zhao, 2025)[8]. This framework not only reflects the legal logic embedded in the exercise of state authority but also highlights its political function in mitigating social risks through institutionalized and structured responses (Yu, 2024)[9]. Rather than confining its role to post-incident punishment, modern criminal policy aims to establish a forward-looking, preventive crime control system based on scientific and institutional mechanisms to safeguard public security, maintain social order, and protect individual rights (Wen et al., 2024)[10].

Traditionally, criminal policy has been predominantly punitive in orientation, primarily relying on deterrence and retribution as key strategies for regulating criminal conduct (Tang, 2024)[11]. However, with the ongoing evolution of the public security landscape and the growing complexity of criminal behavior, the limitations of the retributive model have become increasingly apparent. In the context of modern

governance development, a gradual shift toward a more humanistic and preventive orientation has taken shape, focusing on behavioral risk control and early stage intervention (Ma & Zhang, 2024)[12]. This transformation reflects a strategic transition from isolated punitive measures to integrated and preventive crime governance frameworks (Tang, 2024)[13], emphasizing the need to construct coordinated governance mechanisms that effectively align legal, administrative, and societal resources to achieve long-term objectives in crime prevention and public safety governance.

## **2.2. The logic of modern transformation of criminal policy**

With the deepening implementation of the integrated construction objectives of a “rule of law country, rule of law government, and rule of law society,” the orientation of criminal policy is gradually shifting from an “end-of-line sanction model” toward a “systematic governance model.” This transformation is embodied at multiple levels and prominently reflected in the following three aspects.

### *Pre-emptive Intervention*

Modern criminal policy increasingly prioritizes the early identification and prevention of criminal risk, emphasizing proactive control over reactive punishment. Through the application of technologies such as big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and grid-based governance systems, government authorities are now equipped to identify high-risk individuals or groups and implement timely interventions. This risk-based pre-emptive strategy enhances the precision and effectiveness of crime prevention, thereby minimizing latent societal risks.

### *Layered and Classified Response*

In line with modern governance principles, criminal justice policy advocates differentiated responses based on the specific characteristics of the different population groups. Rather than relying solely on punitive measures, it adopts a dual-track approach that combines punishment with educational correction and psychological intervention (Huang, 2024)[14]. This layered governance model fully considers the heterogeneity of offenders, such as juveniles, first-time offenders, and individuals with mental health issues, aiming to build a more humanized and effective public security governance system.

### *Cross-system Collaborative Governance*

Modern criminal justice policies emphasize the integration of criminal justice mechanisms into broader social governance systems, thereby constructing a multi-agent collaborative governance network. This model embeds criminal law within intersecting domains such as community services, psychological support, education, and social welfare (Song & Jiang, 2025; Jiang, 2025)[15–16]. Through inter-system coordination, it breaks through the traditional limitations of relying solely on legal sanctions and provides more comprehensive and synergistic solutions to complex social problems. At the community level, the joint establishment of legal service stations and psychological counseling centers not only helps resolve conflicts but also enhances crime prevention by fostering a sense of community identity, public participation, and proactive support mechanisms (Wu & Li, 2024)[17].

In conclusion, the transformation logic of contemporary criminal justice policy reflects a shift from fragmented punitive responses to integrated and system-based

governance. This transformation underscores the need for policymakers to fully understand the evolving complexity of public security issues, while also recognizing the dynamic and interactive relationships between individuals and society in the governance process.

## **3. The Functional Positioning of Criminal Law in Public Security Management**

### **3.1. Deterrence function and behavior regulation**

Criminal law by clearly delineating the boundaries of acceptable conduct and imposing corresponding punitive measures (Zhu & Yin, 2025)[18]. The severe penalties prescribed under Article 263 of the Criminal Law for robbery offenses exemplify this punitive strictness, establishing substantial legal consequences that effectively curb violent crimes (von Senger, 2024)[19]. Data released by the Supreme People's Procuratorate (2025) substantiates the deterrent function of criminal law, indicating a significant nationwide decline in robbery cases. This pattern not only strengthens the public's legal awareness, but also promotes rational decision-making among potential offenders, highlighting the stabilizing effect of criminal law on social order.

Beyond its punitive dimension, criminal law serves as an “order integrator” by codifying societal norms through a binary classification of conduct into “tolerable” and “intolerable” categories. In the context of serious public disturbances such as mass incidents or gang-related violence, the intervention of criminal law performs a dual function: it promptly terminates illegal activities and simultaneously reassures the public by reaffirming the authority of legal norms (Gov, 2024)[20]. Case analyses involving violent conflicts illustrate that the timely enforcement of criminal law not only ends unlawful actions but also delivers a strong normative message to the broader community, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of the legal system and contributing to the consolidation of public security.

### **3.2. Boundaries and collaboration with administrative public security management**

In the context of governance, public security organs shoulder a wide range of responsibilities for maintaining social order. However, in cases where conduct surpasses the limits of administrative penalties, criminal law exerts a stronger coercive force, particularly through mechanisms such as the “recidivism” provision, which enforces harsher penalties on repeat offenders involved in recurring minor violence. This escalation mechanism effectively addresses administrative enforcement deficiencies by enhancing binding power and ensuring sustained deterrent effects.

Furthermore, criminal law operates as a “value response mechanism” within public security governance, particularly in its ability to respond to the public attention surrounding major social incidents. The highly publicized “Tangshan barbecue restaurant assault case” is a typical example: the prompt intervention of criminal law not only protected the legal rights of the victim, but also played a crucial role in stabilizing public opinion and restoring social order (Rahman et al., 2024)[21]. The incident fully reflects the responsiveness and adaptability of criminal law as an

effective governance tool in times of social crisis.

## **4. Effectiveness Evaluation of Criminal Law in Preventing Crime**

### **4.1. Strike rate and recidivism rate of criminal cases**

From a data perspective, the effectiveness of criminal law in crime prevention can be evaluated through indicators such as strike and recidivism rates of criminal cases. According to the White Paper on Criminal Procuratorial Work (2024) released by the Supreme People's Procuratorate, the number of accepted criminal cases has decreased. In 2024, procuratorial organs across the country accepted 781,919 cases for review and arrest, involving 1,117,281 individuals, marking year-on-year decreases of 5.7% and 7.6%, respectively. This, to a certain extent, reflects the fact that criminal law has achieved a degree of effectiveness in terms of general deterrence (Supreme People's Procuratorate, 2025)[22].

However, from the perspective of correction, the recidivism rate among released prisoners in China remains between 20% and 25%, particularly among those who have served short sentences, indicating that criminal law is still lacking in terms of "special prevention" (He, 2024)[23]. Several factors have contributed to this issue. First, criminal law often fails to provide a systematic framework for rehabilitation and correction of short-term inmates. Second, the post-release social support system remains underdeveloped, exposing released individuals to considerable reintegration pressure, which significantly increases their likelihood of re-offence.

### **4.2. Shenzhen's "criminal-governance-community" collaborative system**

Nanshan District of Shenzhen City implemented a synergistic mechanism of "community governance and judicial intervention" in 2021, establishing a public security management system that integrates criminal law, administrative penalties, and community services. This governance model aims to achieve efficient response to public security concerns through early intervention and comprehensive coordination. According to statistics, the number of criminal security police reports has declined for eight consecutive years, reflecting the positive impact of this model on maintaining social stability (Shenzhen Nanshan District People's Government, 2024)[24].

Specifically, this model uses the collaboration between community workers and judicial institutions to utilize local community resources to respond promptly to minor violations. In response to legal consultation needs and minor crimes in the community, residents can directly seek help from community service centers. Judicial institutions will participate when necessary to provide legal aid and punishment and adjust the handling methods in a timely manner according to the situation. By effectively combining law, administration, and community services, a "preemptive function" and "synergistic mechanism" are formed, enabling community governance to intervene in a timely manner to prevent minor crimes from escalating further.

Shenzhen's model not only provides new ideas for the city's public security management but also provides a practical case for reference for public security management in other cities across the country, further demonstrating that comprehensive

multi-departmental cooperation is an effective strategy for modern public security management.

### **4.3. Structural problems and boundary dilemmas**

Although criminal law has institutional advantages in public security management, it also has many limitations and structural problems. An obvious problem is the fuzzy boundary of the crime. For example, the "crime of provoking trouble" has the problem of generalization in actual judicial application, which makes some relatively minor behaviors also be judged as crimes. This ambiguity may lead to the unfair application of the law and sometimes even affect the legitimate rights and interests of citizens.

China's penal enforcement mechanism has long been dominated by custodial sentencing, particularly by imprisonment. However, this predominant reliance on incarceration exhibits limited efficacy in offender rehabilitation. Imprisonment often fails to promote successful social reintegration of offenders, especially those serving short-term sentences. Upon release, many individuals face pronounced difficulties, including employment discrimination, social exclusion, and psychological challenges, all of which increase their risk of recidivism (Ramakers et al., 2024)[25]. Additionally, current prison systems frequently lack adequate vocational training and psychological support, depriving inmates of the necessary tools for adapting to their post-release life.

## **5. The Integration Direction of Criminal Law and Multi-governance Mechanism**

To effectively address social security challenges, promoting the "systematization of minor offense governance" has become a key approach to realizing the organic integration of criminal law with broader social governance systems. By revising existing criminal statutes and enacting specialized legislation focused on minor offenses, a diversified response mechanism consisting of warnings, admonitions, behavioral restrictions, and community-based correctional measures can be institutionalized (Li et al., 2024)[26]. This composite governance model not only reduces excessive dependence on custodial sentencing but also improves the reintegration prospects for minor offenders.

The criminal crackdown mechanism needs to be closely linked with administrative law enforcement and social governance, and a collaborative governance model of "criminal-executive-social" should be established to form a comprehensive public security management system. This model emphasizes information-sharing, joint risk control, and case classification (Chan et al., 2022)[27]. By establishing an integrated platform, relevant departments can exchange information in a timely manner to ensure a rapid and effective response to illegal and criminal acts. For example, the "public security + procuratorial + community" trinity governance model that has been implemented in Shanghai, Guangzhou and other places has achieved information sharing and joint risk control through dynamic control of "high-risk individuals," significantly improving the effectiveness of public security management.

Promoting alternative sentencing and restorative justice is important for the development of modern criminal law. The use of alternative sentencing mechanisms such as community

corrections, community service orders, and probation supervision should be encouraged, especially for first-time, occasional, and juvenile offenders (Sirait et al., 2024)[28]. These measures can help criminals find a sense of belonging in society and reduce the possibility of reoffence. At the same time, the promotion of restorative justice mechanisms can help deepen the public's understanding of the relationship between crime and victims. In this mechanism, the perpetrator and the victim can help each other rebuild their social relationships through dialogue, compensation, and apology, which is not only beneficial for the victim to achieve psychological recovery, but also helps the perpetrator realize the harm caused by his behavior to others, thereby enhancing his motivation to reform.

## 6. Conclusion

This article comprehensively discusses the role and effect of criminal law in modern public security management, emphasizing that criminal law is no longer just a punishment tool but an important part of social governance. With the changes in the social security situation, especially the increase in new crimes and the deepening of the public's understanding of the law, the multiple functions of criminal law and its ability to prevent crime have received increasing attention. In the future, the optimization of criminal policies should focus on the systematization of minor crime governance, with non-custodial measures as the main body, and avoid simply criminalizing minor violations. Simultaneously, it should promote the development of alternative punishment and restorative justice to promote individual social adaptation and behavior correction.

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