

A Brief Discussion on the Elements of Promoting High-Quality Development of Regional Integration Based on the Characteristics and Experience of Economic Development in the Yangtze River Delta Region

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Abstract: The Yangtze River Delta region is one of the most developed regions in China, and its mechanism of regional integration and cooperation has been promoted for a long time, and its development experience is worth summarizing and being learned from other regions. This paper will focus on the economic development of the Yangtze River Delta region and the implementation of the regional integration cooperation mechanism, and will analyze the GDP data, population data, and industrial distribution of the region to understand the advantages and loopholes of the development process. The paper will analyze the implementation of regional integration and some specific practices in the Yangtze River Delta region, and draw out the elements that need to be considered in order for each region to promote regional integration and sound economic development.

Keywords: Yangtze River Delta Region, Regional Integration, Economic, Development.

1. Introduction

On March 25, 2022, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the State Council published the "Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of a Unified National Market", in which it is mentioned that "priority is given to promoting regional collaboration. Combined with the implementation of major regional strategies, regional coordinated development strategy, encourage Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei, the Yangtze River Delta, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao Bay Area, as well as Chengdu-Chongqing area twin-city economic circle, the Yangtze River city group and other regions, under the premise of maintaining a unified national market, priority to carry out regional market integration construction, establish and improve regional cooperation mechanisms, and actively summarize and replicate the typical experience and practices. Regional integration, regional economic and social cooperation mechanisms and other concepts have been mentioned and analyzed by many people. As a relatively well-developed region in China with relatively sound integration and cooperation mechanisms and laws and regulations, the Yangtze River Delta region's development experience and regional integration practices are worthy of being referred to by other regions in the country. In this paper, we will analyze the development status of the Yangtze River Delta region and try to discover and summarize the ways to achieve benign regional integration and realize economic growth and benign social development, and find the elements to achieve quality regional integration.

2. Findings

2.1. Background

The Yangtze River Delta region (including Shanghai, parts of Jiangsu Province, parts of Zhejiang Province and Anhui Province, a total of 41 cities) is located in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River in China, an alluvial plain formed before

the Yangtze River enters the sea. The area is about 358,000 square kilometers, with a total population of about 230 million people. It is one of the most dynamic and innovative regions in China, and the Yangtze River Delta region has a significant role in China's development blueprint.

On December 1, 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China pointed out in the Outline of the Yangtze River Delta Regional Integrated Development Plan that "promoting the integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta, enhancing the innovation and competitiveness of the Yangtze River Delta region, improving economic agglomeration, regional connectivity and policy synergy efficiency are of great significance to leading the nation's high-quality development and building a modern economic system." The document also states that "accelerating the integrated development of metropolitan areas".

As you can see, the Yangtze River Delta region has been considered a more well-developed place with a better economic situation over the years. The central government of China attaches great importance to the development of this region, and the quality development of the Yangtze River Delta is not only a matter of the well-being of the local population living in the Yangtze River Delta, but also a help to other regions in China that are lagging behind the Yangtze River Delta in the context of the so-called "national unified market" promoted by the central government. The long-term regional integration strategy of the Yangtze River Delta is not only an example in China, but at the same time, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao-Great Bay Area, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei regional integration, and the Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle are all promoting their integration strategies.

2.2. The Current State of Economic Development in The Yangtze River Delta and The Differences Within the Region

Although the economic development of the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) region is superior to that of other regions in

China, there are differences in the economic situation of different cities and regions within the YRD region. In this section, a description of the general economic situation of the Yangtze River Delta region and the differences in the development of different cities within the Yangtze River Delta region will be presented.

2.2.1. Current Economic Development in the Yangtze River Delta Region

There is no doubt that the Yangtze River Delta region is one of the regions with the highest degree of economic freedom, one of the regions with the best economic development

dynamics and one of the best overall economic developments in China. Relying on Shanghai, the world's financial center, the environment suitable for economic activities at the confluence of rivers and seas, several excellent ports, and the support of national policies, etc., the rapid development of the Yangtze River Delta region in recent decades is justified.

GDP is an important indicator to measure the economic development of a region. In describing the economic situation of the Yangtze River Delta region, the indicator that must be used is the total GDP in recent years and the data related to it.

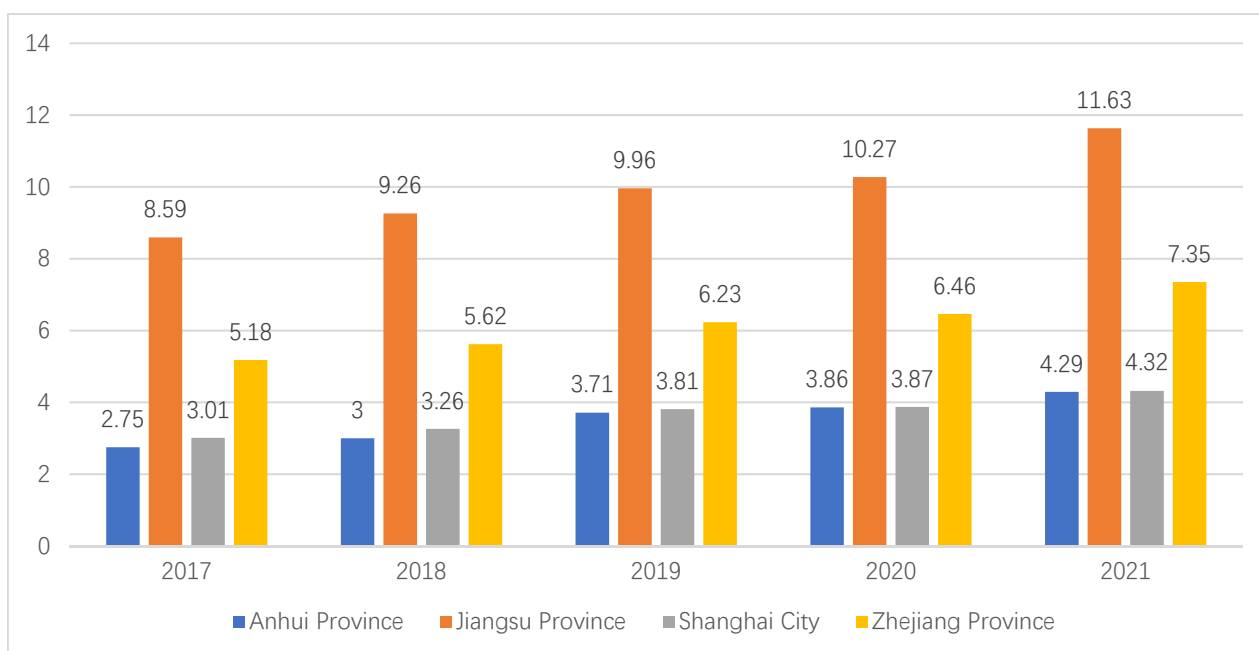


Figure 1. 2017-2021 GDP of the Yangtze River Delta provincial administrative regions

Source: Public reports of each regional government, etc.

It can be seen that the total economic volume of each region in the Yangtze River Delta has been growing steadily in recent years, with growth rates consistently maintained between 7-10%. Taking the economic situation in 2021 as an example, Shanghai achieved a GDP of more than 4 trillion yuan, coming to 432.145 billion yuan, an increase of 451.427 billion yuan over the same period last year, with a growth rate of 8.1%. Anhui Province also achieved a GDP of over 4 trillion-yuan mark, slightly behind Shanghai to 429.592 billion yuan, an increase of 427.86 billion yuan over 2020, with a growth rate of 8.3%, a good performance. Zhejiang Province achieved GDP of 735.16-billion-yuan last year, stepping over the threshold of 7 trillion yuan, an increment of 890.27 billion yuan, a growth rate of 8.5%. Jiangsu Province achieved a GDP of 11636.42 billion yuan, exceeding the 11 trillion-yuan mark, ranking second in the country after Guangdong Province, with an increment of 13645.2 billion yuan, up 8.6% compared with last year, leading the three provinces and one city in the growth rate of this item. According to the national statistics department and public government reports, the Yangtze River Delta region, especially Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai, is also ranked in the top of China in terms of GDP per capita.

The year 2020 was the first year of the COVID-19 outbreak, a public health event that took a heavy toll on all aspects of society, with huge expenditures in the public health sector and

a heavy impact on the logistics and tourism industries, among others, but the data show that the provinces and cities maintained their economic momentum during the year. Obviously, this is not an easy achievement.

In recent years, the industrial structure of the Yangtze River Delta region and the development of each industry is also an indicator of concern. According to the statistical yearbooks of provinces and cities, the Yangtze River Delta provinces have a concentration of technology-intensive and capital-intensive industries, labor-intensive industries have gradually moved outside the region, and tertiary industries account for an increasingly high proportion (especially in central cities such as Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Nanjing). This region is also increasing its investment in higher education year by year and is almost at the top of the country.

2.2.2. Differences within the Yangtze River Delta region

Although the development of the Yangtze River Delta is good compared to many regions in China, there are still many problems and many differences between different cities in the region.

These five categories of key development areas exist in the region's urban agglomerations in general. The first one is the core city with comprehensive service function in the region (Shanghai), the second one is the emerging central city in the region (e.g., Suzhou, Wuxi), the third one is the important functional city in the region, such as tourism and processing

industry center - Changzhou, etc., port distribution center - Ningbo, Zhoushan, Yangzhou, Wuhu, etc., resource-based city - Huainan, Maanshan, etc. The fourth type is the central city in the less developed area of the region, such as Suqian in northern Jiangsu, and the fifth type is the suburban town in the central city of the region, such as Songjiang in Shanghai. (Yuru, W&Wan, W, 2014).

Strengthening the functional positioning of cities and inter-city exchanges, as well as driving the development of suburban or backward areas, have been the main development directions over the years.

The Yangtze River Delta region, with the core industries of electronics, automobiles and modern finance, is committed to becoming a highland of science and innovation with global influence and a globally important center of modern service industry and advanced manufacturing. 2020, the added value of the three major industries in the Yangtze River Delta provinces and cities will be 1.02 trillion yuan, 11.20 trillion yuan and 15.24 trillion yuan respectively, with a combined ratio of 3.7%: 40.8%. 55.5%. Specifically in the Yangtze River Delta region, the three provinces and municipalities directly under the Central Government, their industrial distribution and positioning are different. Among them, the development of industrial clusters in Zhejiang Province is dominated by small and medium-sized private enterprises, and the industries are mainly concentrated in traditional industries with a certain history, such as textiles, hardware and garments, which are typical of the spontaneous growth industry cluster model. Among the industrial cluster development modes in Jiangsu Province, there is the southern Jiangsu mode represented by Suzhou, Wuxi and Changzhou, which is a spontaneous growth mode led by the government with collective enterprises and medium-sized enterprises; there is also a planning-led industrial cluster mode through the establishment of Suzhou-Singapore Industrial Park, Suzhou New District, Changzhou High-tech Development Zone and other national development zones and a series of provincial development zones, and the formation of leading enterprises driven The industrial pattern of leading enterprises, industrial clusters and industrial parks supports the development.

And Shanghai, its important role is as China's financial center to assume the role of the country, and even the whole of Asia, the world's capital circulation exchange. The perfection of its financial market is almost second only to Hong Kong in Asia. In terms of secondary industry, Shanghai is in the late stage of industrialization, the manufacturing industry as a whole has moved to other cities, and the industry mainly relies on six key industrial industries: electronic information product manufacturing, biomedical manufacturing, complete equipment manufacturing, high-quality steel manufacturing, petrochemical and fine chemical manufacturing and automobile manufacturing. Anhui Province is in the middle of industrialization, mainly to undertake a large number of labor-intensive industries and part of the capital-intensive industries (Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Shanghai industries are different, but also basically technology-intensive industries), individual technology-

intensive industries also began to layout in Anhui, such as computer and other electronic equipment manufacturing, pharmaceutical manufacturing, etc. At present, there is still a large space for the development of its technology-based industries.

The investment in scientific research and innovation varies from region to region in the Yangtze River Delta. In Shanghai, R&D expenditure accounts for more than 80% of the expenditure on experimental development according to the type of activity, and from the source of funding, corporate funding accounts for more than 60%, with strong market R&D and innovation vitality. Jiangsu Province shows an overall north-south division in R&D in science and technology innovation, among which Suzhou, Nanjing, Changzhou and Wuxi in the southern Jiangsu region have R&D expenditure of more than 3% of GDP, while Lianyungang, Yancheng, Suqian, Xuzhou and Huaian in the northern Jiangsu Province have R&D expenditure of 2.4% of GDP below the national average. Zhejiang Province shows a north-south division in science and technology innovation and research and development, the overall situation is high in northern Zhejiang and low in southern Zhejiang, among which Hangzhou, Jiaxing and Huzhou R&D expenditure accounts for more than 3% of GDP, and the three cities are in the G60 science and innovation corridor, Lishui and Quzhou because the industry is mostly labor and resource-intensive industries, R&D expenditure is less. Anhui Province around Hefei and the Yangtze River water transport hub, science and technology innovation R&D investment is larger, the rest of the cities because in the middle of industrial development, mainly labor-intensive and resource-intensive industries, science and technology innovation R&D investment is less. Among them, Hefei, Wuhu, Tongling and Maanshan R&D expenditure accounted for more than 3% of GDP, and 10 cities such as Suizhou and Fuyang in 16 cities are less than 2%.

2.3. Features of the Yangtze River Delta Region in Promoting Regional Integration

After years of development, the Yangtze River Delta metropolitan area has gradually promoted in promoting regional high-quality development, optimizing the regional economic layout, especially boosting is in the financial industry cluster, industrial diversification, population and economic agglomeration, core city radiation, functional network systematization, synergy mechanism construction, etc., which has strongly promoted the Yangtze River Delta regional synergy and integrated development.

2.3.1. The Trend of Population and Tertiary Industry Resources Clustering in The Metropolitan Area Is Obvious

There are many reasons why China is promoting regional integration in the Yangtze River Delta region, as well as in many other regions, and in the process of promoting integration, some very distinct social features have emerged, such as the large number of people who are running to several metropolitan areas in the Yangtze River Delta.(According to Table 1)

Table 1. Resident population of major metropolitan areas in the Yangtze River

Metropolitan Area	Resident population in 2020		Resident population in 2010	
	Total (10000 persons)	Proportion in Yangtze River Delta	Total (10000 persons)	Proportion in Yangtze River Delta
Nanjing metropolitan area	3530.28	15.00%	3177.91	14.74%
Shanghai metropolitan area	7741.66	32.90%	6785.77	31.47%
Suzhou Wuxi Changzhou metropolitan area	2548.85	10.80%	2143.06	9.94%
Hangzhou Metropolitan Area	2958.22	12.60%	2448.95	11.36%
Hefei metropolitan area	3179.1	13.50%	2576.75	11.95%

Delta

Source: Public reports of each regional government, etc.

The resident population of these metropolitan areas covers almost eighty percent of the total resident population of the Yangtze River Delta, a phenomenon that cannot be separated from the vigorous promotion of regional integration. It can be said that the phenomenon of population gathering in several major metropolitan areas is the result derived from the implementation of regional integration. The phenomenon of industrial clustering is one of the reasons for the concentration of population in metropolitan areas, and it is also the result of the concentration of population in metropolitan areas.

Because of the need to promote regional integration, it is necessary to play the role of several central cities for the surrounding cities to drive, which is reflected in many areas. This will inevitably lead to the convergence of many public services and tertiary industry resources to the central cities and the metropolitan areas around them. In addition, to promote regional integration, the government has built and improved road and railroad systems, which facilitate the flow of people and logistics, and this has to some extent increased the flow of people from small towns (especially the young population) to the central cities. Part of the purpose of regional integration is to promote the development of small

towns, and the most important way for this policy to promote the development of small towns is to make them functional, for example, as a landing place for labor-intensive industries from the central cities, which can easily make those small towns functional and their public services will not continue to improve.

2.3.2. The Implementation of Regional Integration Has Made Inter-Regional Communication Easier and The Economic Situation Has Improved

In terms of public services, the internal differences in education and health care in the Yangtze River Delta region gradually tend to converge, and the differences within the region slowly narrow. However, the internal gap of social security in the Yangtze River Delta region shows a trend of widening. The per capita ownership of public library collections is increasing, and the internal disparity in cultural infrastructure in the Yangtze River Delta region is still large, but the gap is narrowing. The Yangtze River Delta region carry out the sharing of education, medical and pension resources in different places, such as promoting a unified booking platform, withdrawal of pensions in different places, and settlement of medical treatment in different places. Metropolitan The integration of the functional network of the metropolitan area is advancing rapidly, and the coverage of high-quality resources is expanding. The coverage of the

metropolitan area is expanding.

In terms of ecological environment, cross-border ecological environment co-protection and governance, such as the Suzhou-Xi-Chang metropolitan area to jointly promote the integrated management of Taihu Lake Integrated management.

In terms of information, innovative industries and education, the internal differences in information infrastructure construction and information application in the Yangtze River Delta region continue to narrow, providing technical support and directional leadership for the improvement of the level of information integration. The universities located in the Yangtze River Delta region, known as the top five universities in East China, are some of the best universities in China, and they are valued by the Yangtze River Delta region and continue to provide talents for high-tech fields in the Yangtze River Delta region, and there are more and more exchanges between these universities and between these universities and other universities in the region.

2.3.3. There Are Some Problems in The Practice of Regional Integration in The Yangtze River Delta Region

The trend of polarization of large cities is difficult to reverse in the short term. Important resources are still concentrated in Shanghai, or in major cities such as Hangzhou and Nanjing.

The principle of government regulatory effectiveness and legalization is not fully implemented, because the process of regional integration implementation, some large enterprises in the Yangtze River Delta region are rapidly expanding, which leads to the increased possibility of abuse of monopoly position and collusion between government and business, so regulation must be strengthened.

The reform of regional integration mechanism has stepped into deeper water, and more interest groups will be touched by the continuous exchange and sharing of various industries and regions, and there is still a shortage of quality public service resources, and the degree of equalization and facilitation is not high enough. The cross-regional cooperation platform is not yet perfect.

2.4. Challenges and Proposals to Promote the Integrated and High-Quality Development of Each Region Nationwide

Based on the experience of the Yangtze River Delta regional integration and the Chinese government's vision of a "national unified market" in 2022, there are a number of elements that are necessary to build a high-quality region and bring about positive development in the region.

In response to the lack of coordination and appropriate mechanisms for cross-regional cooperation, a central or regional center of regional integration should be established as an independent authority for planning and regulation, providing the same legal environment for different groups in the region, for the optimal allocation of social resources, and for maximizing the well-being of the region's resident population. To allow appropriate communication between the integrated planning department and local governments and organizations, to coordinate the construction and sharing of public services and infrastructure among metropolitan areas, and to build an integrated system of high-quality public services and high-quality infrastructure.

Focusing on the improvement of public services in small

towns, these small towns take on the transfer of industries from the central city while the people in these areas need to be provided with appropriate welfare and treatment in order to avoid the loss of young labor in small towns as integration deepens, making them less dynamic while the central city becomes under-resourced.

Make full use of the region's unique location and policy advantages to give full play to its strengths, such as Shanghai, Ningbo and other cities can play a unique port advantage, focus on optimizing the local industrial configuration, so that the industry is more diversified. At the same time, invest more in R&D and education to promote scientific and technological progress and talent cultivation, which are the cornerstones of long-term stable and high-quality development in the region.

Establish a unified market system rules in the region or even in the country, improve the efficiency of market operation based on domestic demand, eliminate various closed small markets, and promote the smooth flow of commodity factor resources in a wider scope.

3. Conclusion

Each region has characteristics unique to each region, and specific programs and policies should be developed to address the characteristics of each region. The principle and ultimate goal of regional integration, inter-regional cooperation and exchange mechanism is to realize the complementary advantages and make up for the shortcomings among the regions. We should clarify the different positioning of each region, diversify the industries as much as possible, improve the popularization and development of public services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, and strive to develop high-end industries and technologies. We will integrate the well-developed local industries into the regional and national cycles, and make efforts to deepen cooperation between regions to make it effective. The establishment of independent planning departments and independent supervision departments can also be considered.

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