

# Integrated Development of the Yangtze River Delta Region: Status, Problems and Optimization

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## Abstract

The Yangtze River Delta region is a region with one of the highest degrees of regional integrations in China, and the prosperous growth of this area has a significant bearing on China's economic progress. In recent years, China's development has faced drastic changes in the global development environment in the general environment of reverse globalization and post-epidemic era, in this regard, China has put forward the development strategy of internal and external double circulation based on the domestic grand circulation, which further requires the rapid development of regional integration to reduce the barriers to factor flow within the existing domestic administrative regions and promote the formation of a large market; promote the contraction and restructuring of industrial chains and supply chains to enhance their security and adaptability in the face of environmental changes. This paper concludes the development and current problems of regional integration in the Yangtze River Delta, including the inadequate oversight and appraisal mechanisms and guarantees mechanisms for interregional cooperation, the lack of integration of dual chains, the urgent need to enhance the construction of ecofriendly ecological sustainability, and a proposal.

**Keywords:** regional integration, Yangtze River Delta, regional cooperation, high quality development

## 1. Introduction

After the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), the CPC Central Committee has introduced new regional development plans, like the integrative developed of the Yangtze River Delta, the collaborative development of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, the developing of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the complementation of the "One Belt, One Road", the establishment of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the growth of the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

The Yangtze River Delta's advancement of regional economic integration is summarized in this paper along with the problems that are currently present, including the inadequate oversight and appraisal mechanisms and guarantee mechanisms for interregional cooperation, the lack of coordination of dual chains, the urgent need to enhance the building projects of ecofriendly ecological sustainability, and a proposal (Zhang Aqiang, 2019). With the constant evolution of Chinese construction and the increase of economic level, the Yangtze River Delta region has grown from the Shanghai Economic Collaboration Zone in the 1980s to a region with a population of over 200 million people, creating nearly 1/4 of China's total economic output and 1/3 of its total import and export volume with less than 4% of the country's land area. As we can see, YRD region is as one of the most dynamic regions in terms of economy developments, the highest level of openness and the most innovative capacity in China and has a strategic position of pivotal importance in the overall picture of national modernization and full-scale opening. To lead the high-speed development of the Yangtze River Delta and build a modern economic system, we must push forward the integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta, increase the efficiency of economic agglomeration, regional linkage and policy coordination, and strengthen

regional independent innovation capacity and competitiveness (Xinhua News Agency, 2019).<sup>0</sup>

The three provinces and one city in the Yangtze River Delta have been insisting on comprehensive and close interregional cooperation and continuously improving the level of interregional cooperation in order to jointly promote the realization of more efficient integrated development in the region. However, the current regional cooperation mechanism in the Yangtze River Delta region is not yet sound enough to fully meet the requirements of the proposed high-quality integrated development, and there is still some optimization space. According to the Outline of the Comprehensive Development Plan for the Yangtze River Delta Region published by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, it has been explicitly stated several occasions that we should improve multi-level and multi-disciplinary cooperation mechanisms, speed up interconnection, emphasize the ecological culture in the process of development, and build an effective supervision and promotion system.

## **2. Current status and problems of regional integration development in the Yangtze River Delta**

The three provinces and one city give full play to their respective advantages, push forward integrated urban development and trans-border regional cooperation, improve the overall competence of the region, and establish a balanced development situation with proper division of labor and complementary strengths. We will insist on openness and win-win cooperation, cultivate new edges in global collaboration and rivalry, build a harmonized and open market as well as a development environment with free circulation of factors, and build a win-win system of mutual benefit, consensus finding and partnership for open development. To realize people's all-round development and people's freedom (Xinhua News Agency, 2019).

### *2.1 Efficient and Coordinated Development of Synergistic Innovative Development Concepts and Horizontal Integration*

During the process of integration in the YRD region, the priority is always given to the coordinated development of regional cooperation, and the new pattern of concerted regional growth is promoted through the improvement of the cooperation system; As the scope of coordination and interaction within the Yangtze River Delta region continues to expand, in the integration process of the YRD region, diverse fields, comprehensive subjects and rich types. At the same time, as the leading city in the development of Shanghai, bringing their combined functions into effect, the three provinces are giving full play to their respective advantages, strengthening joint regional development, accelerating the synergistic development of metropolitan areas and promoting urban-rural integration. and will gradually form a coordinated interaction between the region and the integrated rural and urban area development situation. It is also crucial to establish a proper and efficient cooperation mechanism between governments. Currently, the Yangtze River Delta Cooperation Zone has established an inter-governmental cooperation structure of "linkage between top and bottom, unification and division, three-level operation and division of labor", providing it with a solid stage for scientific policymaking, coordination and implementation of the YRD integrated development (Fang Haowei, 2022). Weakening administrative regional thinking and switching to regional cooperation thinking, gradually release the restrictions of administrative regions in the development process, building on the support of the national government, constantly enhancing and strengthening the power of localities and scholars, absorbing the professional power of alliances and markets, creating various professional alliances such as the Yangtze River Delta Entrepreneurs Alliance, Union of Science and Technical Reform Think Tanks, and the Digital Economy Industry Alliance, and constantly improving the collaboration mechanism of consultation and exchange to effectively promote the high-quality integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta region.

However, there are still shortcomings in the guarantee mechanism of interregional cooperation. The differences in the development process of different regions, due to their differences in development level, scientific and technological level, ideology, etc., will lead to different behavior preferences and development priorities. It is impossible to ensure the coordination of development policies and paths, and may even lead to negative reactions, dereliction of duty and other behaviors that undermine comprehensive development. It is thus necessary to have a monitoring system and to bring in a variety of. It is therefore necessary to establish a monitoring mechanism and to bring in various stakeholders for monitoring, clearly require the content, standards, indicators and other elements of the assessment, and establish a comprehensive performance evaluation system and reward mechanism. It is also necessary to improve legal and institutional safeguards, clarify powers and duties, the bottom line of behavior in the process of financial, land and ecological governance, the legal validity of documents, and considerations for policy formulation, to avoid duplication of planning and protectionism, and to provide bottom-line norms for communication and cooperation to ensure that regional cooperation can be implemented smoothly.

### *2.2 Promoting the Integration of Industry and Innovation Chains and Upgrading Infrastructure Connectivity*

We will deeply enforce the innovation-driven strategy of development, emphasize the in-depth integration of the industrial chain and innovation chain in the anti-globalization and post epidemic era, keep raising the capacity of

local creativity, strengthen the construction of scientific and technological capabilities and the breakthrough development of core technologies, build a large plateau for industrial innovation through resource sharing and transfer of scientific and technical results, so as to reinforce industrial division of labor and cooperation and enhance China's position in the GVC. We will promote the development of cooperative development zones between neighbouring regions, create functional cooperation zones with inter-city support, integrate the planning of the layout of manufacturing and living in order to realize the sharing of public service installations, commercial resources, ecological and cultural resources and other elements, and improve development, construction and management in the mutual evolution of the process.

To realize the integrated development among regions, the first step is to ensure the integrated construction of transportation system, digital information system and energy system. At present, the Yangtze River Delta has a high-density traffic trunk line, provincial highways, and high-speed railway connections between large cities. The shipping system has been initially formed, and the shipping system took initial shape, with the regional long-skirt system being basically established. In terms of land transport, other than the original transport mechanism at the junction of Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang, on the basis of the opening of inter-provincial buses in the Yangtze River Delta region, cross-provincial rail interconnection has been achieved through the planning and construction of rail transit line 1 in the demonstration area; the cities of Nanjing and Ma'anshan at the junction of Jiangsu and Zhejiang have signed the Framework Agreement on the Joint Construction of the Jiangning-Bowang Cross-border Integrated Development Demonstration Area. Nanjing Jiangbei New Area and Chuzhou Lai'an County jointly launched the preparation of the Study on the Development Strategy of Territorial Spatial Planning for the Top Mountain - Chahe Cross-border Integrated Development Demonstration Zone. As of June 2020, there are 21 high-speed railway lines in the Yangtze River Delta, with a length of 5,306 kilometers, and all provincial cities in the land area of Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui are connected to trains (PEOPLE'S DAILY ONLINE, 2020).<sup>0</sup> In water and land transportation, many ports have been opened and large bridges have been built to connect many places. In the service to simplify the border inspection process, permit "one place to do the permit, regional common"; the Yangtze River Delta region between the ports of foreign ships moving to the port without border inspection procedures, etc., to improve the efficiency of the online platform procedures to provide maximum convenience for ships entering and leaving the port, the establishment of the Yangtze River Delta region immigration border inspection authorities and port and shipping enterprises to collaborate mechanism. At the same time, a number of international airports have been put into operation one after another in Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui and other places, and have achieved air access.

Due to the high demand for figures and information in our time, the integration of the Yangtze River Delta has also increased the importance of building a digital Yangtze River Delta. As the construction of Shanghai Zhanjiang National Comprehensive Science Center and Anhui Hefei National Comprehensive Scientific Research Center, the R&D strength has reached Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou and Hefei are more than 3%, focusing on Big Data, Cloud Computing, Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence. In the midst of development, new technologies and traditional industries are integrated to facilitate industrial development, form innovative communities and industrial clusters in many fields, and actively respond to the rapidly changing development environment. However, there is also a need to focus on the construction of facilities and institutional improvement of public services such as medical and health care, pension and recreation, and explore reasonable financial support mechanisms as well as ways of information interoperability to make up for existing shortcomings and enhance the sharing of high-quality medical and educational resources. Attention is also paid to the construction of infrastructure for energy and water resources, and to speeding up the construction of transport channels to achieve interconnection.

### *2.3 Strengthen the Development of Ecological Civilization and Cultural Tourism Cooperation*

In the course of growth, the Yangtze River Delta region always insists on giving top priority to ecosystem protection, puts major emphasis on ecological environmental protection and restoration, implements zoning control of the ecological environment, strengthens protection and restoration of red line areas, continuously expands ecological space, and invests in the construction of the Yangtze River Ecological Corridor and the Huai River Hongze Lake Ecological Corridor. To protect ecosystems such as wetlands, we should implement policies for the restoration of ecological functions such as original ecological protection, grassland vegetation restoration and wetland restoration.

A similar degree of attention has been paid to pollution discharge and disposal, with the introduction of policies such as waste emission standards and the elimination of backward production capacity, and the strict investigation and punishment of illegal cross-border movements, abandonment and discharge of hazardous waste and other violations.

However, during the implementation process there are still regulatory gaps, which require strengthening joint control and prevention of pollution, improving regional ecological compensation mechanisms and linkage

mechanisms, unifying assessment standards, emission standards, product standards, etc., building a unified digital management platform for filing, declaration and risk emergency, innovating regional linkage supervision and prevention models, Effectively safeguard against ecological and environmental risks and achieve sustainable development. There is a rich regional culture and distinctive regional color in the Yangtze River Delta region, both inherited and integrated with each other, among which the better developed cultures are the Hai School culture, Wu Yue culture, Hui culture, etc., which has produced many writers and scholars such as Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Wang Guowei and Yu Hua. And should focus on industrial development while focusing on cultural protection and development, using good cultural deposits to develop tourism resources, which as of 2018, the total of 5A scenic spots in the Yangtze River Delta alone reached 54, and also formed a wide range of cooperative alliances, For such as the Yangtze River Delta Regional Tourism Cooperation Joint Conference established in 2011 (Shanghai Science and Technology Commission, 2011).<sup>错误:未找到引用源。</sup> In May 2019, the culture and tourism departments of Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui cooperated to establish the Yangtze River Delta Region Culture and Tourism Alliance. On September 12, 2020, the culture and tourism administrative departments of three provinces and one city jointly established the Yangtze River Delta Tourism Promotion Alliance in Shanghai (China News, 2020). The alliance aims to develop cultural highlands, Facilitate the sharing and integration of humanistic resources to boost regional cultural creativity further, competitiveness and influence, advocate spiritual heritage, build cultural brands, construct cultural industry systems and meet people's needs for the development of spiritual civilization.

### **3. Optimization Approach to Regional Integrated Development in the Yangtze River Delta Region**

#### *3.1 Improved Management and Oversight Mechanisms in the Region*

Establishing an overall planning and management mechanism in the region. Ensure joint insurance and governance in the layout of industrial structures, the layout of infrastructure construction, ecological and environmental protection and other development planning in the region of the three provinces and one city, to achieve truly integrated planning and supervision.

Formulating a reasonable mechanism for matching the flow of factors. To break down geographical and administrative barriers, avoid fragmentation and “ownership” mentality, and ensure healthy competition among scientific and innovative talents, and to discuss and work together on effective policy design and institutional arrangements.

Standardize the performance evaluation system and benefit-sharing monitoring mechanism in the region. By reforming the performance appraisal system of parties and governments at all levels, it will help achieve the ultimate goal of high-quality development in the integrated area of Yangtze River Delta. Identify where the interests of all parties fit together, based on the general interest of the delta region of Yangtze River, form an orderly competition pattern between regions and industries based on the different geographical functional characteristics of provinces and municipalities, achieve coordinated allocation of industrial and fiscal policies across regions, and promote the realization of profit sharing in the context of regional innovation in the Yangtze River Delta.

#### *3.2 Strengthening Inter-Regional Environmental Pollution Prevention and Control*

At the institutional level, we should continue to improve the ecosystem offset regime, obtain certain compensation through transfer payments, avoid “gaming” in areas where development is restricted and prohibited, and ensure that “restrictions and prohibitions” are effective; at the same time, we should restrain excessive consumption of ecological environment and stimulate ecological protection. Simultaneously, it is necessary to curb overconsumption of the ecosystem, promote ecological protection, form a long-term mechanism for sustained growth, improve the production and supply capacity of ecological products, and implement integrated environmental protection and management (Han Deliang, Liu Rongxia, Zhou Hailin & Han Liebao, 2009).<sup>0</sup> In terms of technology, a digital network platform for environmental monitoring in the Yangtze River Delta region should be established and interoperable, so as to unify the criteria for activating emergency measures for heavy pollution and achieve effective monitoring and rapid prevention.

In terms of supervision, the establishment of sound laws and policies, unify the indicators within the scope of testing, penalties, etc., and establish a special inspectorate with dedicated personnel to implement dynamic monitoring, exclusion and feedback.

In terms of humanities, every citizen is called upon to adopt a green and low-carbon lifestyle, establish correct values, the concept of spending and lifestyle, resolutely oppose the style of living of comparison, showing off and extravagance, resist waste and spending, be thrifty, low-carbon and green, everyone is to blame. For example, waste is separated and recycled in multiple layers; the public is encouraged to prefer public transport when going out, and the use of bicycles and walking is advocated. To create an atmosphere of low-carbon participation and low-carbon consumption in the society, so that everyone can take low-carbon recycling as a

fashion and green environmental protection as a responsibility.

### 3.3 Mechanisms for Building a Sound Regional Development Chain

In the delta region of the Yangtze River, it is important to explore effective mechanism innovations that can effectively compress “institutional distance”. With the rapid development of transportation and information networks in the last two to three decades, the spatial and temporal distances for the movement of factors in the Yangtze River Delta region have been greatly compressed. This has become the biggest obstacle to the free flow and rational allocation of people and development factors in the YRD (Chen Wen & Sun Wei, 2020).<sup>0</sup> The market and the government should be coordinated, and the leading role of the market should be mobilized in the development of industries, enterprises and the flow of funds and know-how, while the government should act in the overall interest and public interest of the region.

Within the regional integration of YRD, there is also a need to follow up on the integration and restructuring of industrial chains and supply chains to meet the challenges of today’s reverse globalization and the surging waves of the post-epidemic era. Some research studies have found that in recent years many enterprises in the Yangtze River Delta region tend to organize industrial collaboration and supporting relationships within a radius of about 100-150 km (1 to 2 hours transportation distance), which is basically the coverage of a metropolitan area (Cao Weidong, Zeng Gang, Zhu Shengjun, Cao Youxuan, Sun Bindong, Cao Binru, Cui Can, Duan Xuejun, Zhang Jingxiang, Sun Wei, Yang Shan & Chen Xingxing, 2022).<sup>0</sup> This also shows that if some key industrial chains and supply chains are reorganized in metropolitan areas such as Shanghai and Ninghe, so that the metropolitan areas also become “industrial circles”, not only can industrial security be guaranteed, but it can also lead to better levels of productivity, which has a crucial impact on the formation of large markets and should be kept in high regard.

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