

Analysis of the Path towards High-Quality Economic Development in Xinjiang in the New Era

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Abstract: The high-quality economic development of the Xinjiang region holds paramount significance for China's comprehensive establishment of a modernized socialist nation. It serves as a crucial element in refining the policy framework for border development and openness, advancing the action plan for fostering stability, development, and prosperity in border regions, and driving the collective prosperity of all ethnic groups as part of the unique Chinese modernization process. To attain high-quality economic development in Xinjiang, it is imperative to take technological innovation as the guiding force, enhance the technological support capacity within economic development, and strategically plan for future industrial growth from a high vantage point. This entails the holistic coordination of production, livelihood, and ecological aspects to propel sustainable development, explore mechanisms for realizing the value of ecological products, respect the diversity of economic and cultural facets, vigorously cultivate industries with distinctive advantages and characteristics, adhere to a cooperative and sharing ethos that aligns with the new dual circulation development pattern, and formulate development strategies with an open-minded perspective. Furthermore, it necessitates the simultaneous consideration of development and security to elevate the region's economic resilience.

1. Introduction

The attainment of high-quality economic development in ethnic regions represents a crucial component of advancing the high-quality development of the Party's ethnic work in the new era. ^[1]Since the onset of reform and opening-up, both the Party and the nation have placed significant emphasis on the economic and social development of Xinjiang. In the course of China's modernization journey, it is imperative to establish a robust political development system, pioneer the development of border regions with the objective of strengthening inter-ethnic relations, and enhancing the collective well-being of all ethnic groups. This study, focusing on the Xinjiang region, which is home to a multitude of ethnic minorities, conducts an analysis of the current economic development landscape and offers strategic recommendations to propel high-quality economic development in the region.

2. Shaping future development dynamics under the guidance of technological innovation

2.1. In close adherence to the strategic demands of the "14th Five-Year Plan"

Amidst the new technological revolution, industrial transformation is experiencing robust growth, and future industries are emerging as new drivers of economic growth. Countries worldwide are prioritizing and nurturing future industries as key strategic emerging sectors. [2]These future industries possess two significant characteristics, combining technology and industrial elements, which bring about new application scenarios, new impetus, and new directions for technological innovation. In recent years, developed nations have increasingly emphasized the future development of industries, and China has proposed the vigorous development of future industries in the context of the "14th Five-Year Plan." Local governments across China are formulating a series of strategic plans for the development of future industries. Relevant statistics indicate that in alignment with the national "14th Five-Year Plan" development framework, 21 provinces in China have already defined the development positioning of their respective industries, adopting specific support strategies for the development of future industries. Some border ethnic minority regions have also highlighted the development of future industries in their corresponding plans. Currently, various regions have implemented a series of policies and measures to encourage the development of future industries, thereby facilitating their rapid growth. For instance, Yunnan aims to develop future industries such as artificial intelligence, quantum communication, satellite applications, biotechnology, and promote the integration of Yunnan's future pillar industries with beneficial industries. Guangxi, on the other hand, closely monitors global trends in future industries, with a focus on the development of biotechnology and biotechnology agriculture, third-generation semiconductors, hydrogen energy and energy storage, as well as deep-sea and frontier fields. These efforts are accelerating the construction of pioneering advantages, guiding the direction of future industries.

Xinjiang boasts abundant energy resources, and in the context of future industrial development in the region, there is a need to optimize the layout of industrial innovation and enhance industrial technological innovation capabilities. This entails promoting the construction of the National Key Laboratory for Carbon-Based Energy Resource Chemistry and Utilization, with a specific focus on nurturing key areas such as chemical and chemical engineering, specialty resource preservation and utilization, clean energy, and biopharmaceuticals. In fields such as biology and life sciences, ecological and environmental protection, materials science, and natural resources, it is imperative to establish new key laboratories. Additionally, a series of technology innovation bases should be established in sectors including new energy, new materials, biopharmaceuticals, chemical engineering, and manufacturing. Furthermore, proactive efforts should be made to create national-level innovation centers for new materials and chemical manufacturing.

2.2. Speed up technological reforms to facilitate modernization development

From an external market perspective, the future industry represents a vast stage filled with both opportunities and challenges, necessitating forward-thinking strategic planning, technological innovation, and innovative business models for support. Understanding the internal business logic and contemplating strategies for shaping and advancing future sectors, especially in terms of integrating processes, industries, and policies, is a vital consideration for achieving high-quality economic development in Xinjiang. Currently, Xinjiang's industrial structure remains locked in a low-end state, lacking independent innovation capabilities and core competitiveness. To address these challenges: First, we should prioritize policy research and utilize scenario-based methodologies to envision holistic scenarios. This approach will emphasize Xinjiang's unique

resources and innovation requirements, accelerating the implementation of various demonstration applications for new technologies. Embracing open and diverse innovative thinking is crucial to nurturing industries that can leap over existing thresholds. Second, we need to recognize, at a higher level, the importance of unleashing the vitality of enterprises within the context of a socialist market economy, particularly by placing private enterprises at the forefront. Only by allowing enterprises to operate within a genuine market environment can we establish an effective competitive mechanism. Third, accelerating the pace of technological system reform is imperative. This involves deepening the rapid development of basic research, applied research, and industrialization while facilitating the swift transformation and absorption of achievements in technological innovation.

3. Balancing production, livelihood, and ecology to support sustainable development

3.1. Restructure development institutions

The pursuit of beauty in production, livelihood, and ecology signifies a transition from the affirmative to the negative regarding people's well-being. Human society has entered the digital age, leading to significant changes in traditional production methods. The new technological revolution, driven by information technology, is reshaping the world.^[3]In the context of this new technological revolution and industrial transformation, Xinjiang must pivot and adapt, relying on new economic models and formats like the digital economy. There are two key strategies to consider: First, by integrating the achievements of modern science and technology, Xinjiang should adopt a systematic, holistic approach to the development of its natural ecosystem. This involves vigorously developing a closed-loop economy, creating green productive forces, establishing a green industrial system, and achieving sustainable development. These efforts will continuously meet the aspirations of the people for a better life. Second, Xinjiang should ensure the smooth progress of ecological civilization construction through institutional and systemic reforms. This includes a clear commitment to both development and ecological preservation as fundamental principles. Given Xinjiang's vast territory and significant regional disparities, achieving high-quality development in the region necessitates a modern innovation system in the field of natural resources science and technology, built upon local natural resource interests. Simultaneously, Xinjiang should firmly establish the concept of green civilization as an enduring thread woven throughout production and life. This will promote green reconstruction and industrial integration, facilitating harmonious coexistence between human society and the natural environment, and guiding a path to modernization characterized by the harmonization of humans with nature.

3.2. Continuously enhancing ecological conservation and restoration

First, in the development of green industries in Xinjiang, there is a need for innovative key technologies such as carbon sequestration and green compensation. These technologies are crucial for the restoration and continuous improvement of various types of ecosystems. Xinjiang should actively promote the combination of biodiversity conservation and the utilization of renewable energy. This includes the establishment of a low-carbon agricultural industry chain and the facilitation of the transformation from traditional agriculture and animal husbandry to modern agriculture, all with the aim of achieving resource efficiency and creating an environmentally friendly society. Second, improving the quality and stability of ecosystems is essential. This transformation is aimed at shifting the ecological benefits in ethnic regions from ecological to production and livelihood benefits. It seeks to meet the people's demands for a beautiful ecological environment and high-quality organic products, ultimately enhancing the sense of interest,

happiness, and security among the people.

3.3. Continuously fostering the development of the ecological economy

Implementing the ecological economy is a fundamental guiding principle for the economic and social development of Xinjiang. At its core, this principle is rooted in the concept of sustainable development. Economically, it involves the application of modern technology to transform existing production methods, ultimately achieving modernization. In the course of economic development, it is essential to place a strong emphasis on leveraging Xinjiang's ecological advantages as a strategic resource, positioning it as the region's greatest asset. Therefore, the fundamental transformation of Xinjiang's underdeveloped ecological environment can only be achieved through the vigorous development of the ecological economy. To achieve this:

First, efforts should be directed towards unlocking Xinjiang's ecological potential and realizing the conversion of ecological product value. This means turning ecological considerations into tangible productive forces. Building upon this foundation, the integration of ecological considerations into the framework of sustainable development should be a top priority. Environmental challenges, at their core, are linked to the structure of carbon-rich energy sources and high energy consumption. Therefore, in the construction of a low-carbon society, Xinjiang must take the path of sustainable development primarily centered on energy conservation and emission reduction. This involves effectively balancing the relationship between production and the ecological aspects of daily life while simultaneously implementing and pioneering new benefits within the realm of green industrial development.

Second, border regions inhabited by ethnic minorities place a strong emphasis on ecological considerations, and the strategy of ecological prioritization has become one of the fundamental principles and guiding concepts for economic and social development. For instance, Guizhou has adopted the realization of ecological value within industrial products as a core aspect of its initiatives, such as the construction of a national green development demonstration zone and an innovative zone for ecological civilization system reform. These endeavors are aligned with the overarching goal of becoming an international model of civilized demonstration. Xinjiang should encourage residents to actively participate in forest management activities through the implementation of relevant policies. This, in turn, will increase forestry income within local communities, reduce carbon emissions, and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Third, the border regions inhabited by ethnic minorities have benefited significantly from the establishment of a natural protection system, primarily centered on national parks, which comprehensively addresses issues related to people's livelihoods and productive employment. Xinjiang should proactively engage in the national carbon market, positioning itself as a key supplier of organic products on a national scale. This initiative will promote the green transformation of production methods and lifestyles, with the ultimate aim of achieving peak carbon emissions and carbon neutrality.

Fourth, different regions within Xinjiang should collectively strengthen their awareness of the need to protect and manage ecological spaces. This collaborative effort is essential for balancing the relationship between sustainable ecological development and productivity. Progress can be made through initiatives such as the advancement of green urban and industrial zones, the expedited construction of transportation infrastructure in tourism and cultural regions across various locales, the acceleration of the supply of high-quality organic products in different regions, the transition from ecological compensation to the organic product sales market, and the expansion of ecological value into economic value.

4. Develop distinctive advantage industries based on regional economic and cultural diversity

First, the conditions for resource acquisition and development strategies determine the choice of regional leading industries, with tourism playing a pivotal role in the "prosper one industry, benefit all industries" concept. To achieve rapid development in Xinjiang, it is essential to tread a path of sustainable development with ethnic characteristics, and the vigorous development of the cultural tourism industry has become one of the key means for economic growth in the region. Xinjiang is committed to the concept that "green mountains and clear waters are invaluable assets," and it places great emphasis on fostering the cultural tourism industry. With its abundant natural and cultural resources, Xinjiang possesses unique advantages. Therefore, the substantial development of tourism can modernize transportation infrastructure and network communication equipment, alter the region's geographically isolated status, and stimulate dynamic growth in production and daily life. Furthermore, it can effectively promote the diffusion of technology during the dissemination of modern information technology, such as the expansion of the metaverse within the tourism industry, and enhance the capacity for internet-based dissemination of regional culture.

Second, during China's period of rapid economic and social transformation and upgrading, the cultural tourism industry holds significant importance in promoting the shared prosperity and development of all ethnic groups. In Xinjiang, efforts should be made to strengthen the construction of cultural tourism as a pillar industry and enhance its spillover and driving role in economic development and technological progress. Due to unfavorable geographical conditions and a weak economic foundation, Xinjiang has experienced slow development in the cultural tourism industry. In this context, there should be a focus on technology-driven tourism and the integration of culture and tourism. This includes increased support for infrastructure construction in various scenic areas, intensified efforts in industrial structure adjustment, and the deep implementation of policies related to "Internet + tourism." These measures will promote the deep integration of the internet and the development of artificial intelligence within the tourism sector, accelerate the promotion and expansion of regional cultural and tourism products, and continuously meet the increasing demands of the local population for a better quality of life.

5. Adhere to a new development model of dual circulation through cooperation and sharing

5.1. Make the "Belt and Road" strategy a central imperative

The "Belt and Road" initiative has led to a significant shift in open economic development, characterized by an expansion of openness, accelerated development of a new economic model, and integration into both national and international economic cycles. Achieving high-quality development through a high level of openness requires Xinjiang to actively foster industrial cooperation with countries along the route. Within this process, a pivotal focus lies in port development and industrial upgrading. With the increasing growth in international trade, cross-border logistics has emerged as a critical driving force behind the circulation and trade of goods among nations. As a border region, Xinjiang plays a crucial role in expanding both domestic and international logistics networks, facilitating the harmonious development of various industries within the region. Xinjiang places a strong emphasis on enhancing its role in foreign trade and trade exchanges to enhance the quality of its economic development. Moreover, it actively participates in the development of international logistics channels, such as the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, the Himalayan Economic Cooperation Belt, the primary Silk Road Economic Belt region, the Golmud International Gateway Port in the north, and a vital international passage leading to the ASEAN region, thus establishing a new westward land-sea route.

5.2. Develop proactive incentive policies to promote the shared development of all ethnic groups

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China introduced policies aimed at encouraging and supporting ethnic regions to participate in international trade, cross-border e-commerce, and logistics activities. These measures, which focus on accelerating the development of ports and canals, align with national development strategies. Xinjiang, in its quest for self-development and integration into the national context, demonstrates a high degree of awareness. Given the substantial regional disparities within Xinjiang, various types of infrastructure projects have differential impacts across regions, with transportation conditions being the most prominent. First, in expediting Xinjiang's transition from an inland region to an open one, it is crucial to actively cultivate a conducive environment and establish an efficient open economic system that promotes international cooperation. Additionally, since there is a significant gap between Xinjiang and coastal and canal cities, there is a need to further enhance infrastructure levels to provide more convenient services to member countries. Second, Xinjiang should strengthen government collaboration, accelerate the establishment of digital trade channels, and create modern operational systems encompassing channels, hubs, and network logistics. While leveraging geographical advantages, innovative remote networking within industries should be developed to support the growth of virtual industrial parks and facilitate non-transfer settlements for both domestic and foreign companies. Through these measures, Xinjiang can achieve positive interactions with neighboring countries, expedite the distribution of beneficial industries and technologies to the region on a global scale, enhance international bilateral investments, accelerate the introduction of Xinjiang's products and technologies to the international market, and propel the economic and social development of Xinjiang into a new era.

5.3. Strengthen support for the development of the exhibition and convention industry in Xinjiang

First, the exhibition and convention industry plays a pivotal role in the national economy, offering an opportunity for outsiders to gain insight into Xinjiang's development. It serves as a crucial pillar and platform for advancing high-level economic growth, promoting high-quality development, and facilitating international integration in Xinjiang. As China's openness to the world deepens, the domestic market increasingly demands high-quality exhibition services. Xinjiang should capitalize on this opportunity to expedite the establishment of an open economic system, enhance its industrial competitiveness, and more effectively engage in global competition. The 14th Five-Year Development Plans for the eight ethnic provinces and autonomous regions underscore the development of the exhibition and convention sector. Concepts such as hosting the Tibet Tourism Culture International Expo and building distinctive exhibition platforms like the China-Eurasia Expo, China-ASEAN Expo, China-Asia-Europe Expo, and China-Arab States Expo have been put forward. Large-scale events such as the China-South Asia Expo and international ecological expos, along with forums like the Belt and Road Clean Energy Forum, play significant roles in deepening economic, trade, and cultural cooperation while creating high-level international exchange platforms.

Second, furthermore, Xinjiang should host various international conferences, exhibitions, seminars, and training sessions to continually enhance its soft power. As a vital component of western China's socio-economic development, Xinjiang should raise its innovation awareness, foster new models of "Internet + exhibitions," and facilitate the digital transformation and professionalization of exhibition marketing. Guided by the principles of co-construction and sharing, Xinjiang should continue to establish numerous large institutional multilateral and bilateral trade

and economic exhibition platforms. By optimizing and strengthening existing exhibitions and actively participating in exhibitions organized by various ministries, national committees, and economically developed provinces in eastern China, Xinjiang can facilitate greater integration of domestic and foreign capital, trade, and technology on a larger scale. This approach will help Xinjiang become a frontier region that connects with the world economy.

6. Balancing development and security to enhance economic resilience in border regions

First, prioritize the development of new economic paradigms to address security challenges arising from traditional energy and resource dependencies. In the course of future economic and social development, it is essential to give significant attention to digital ecosystem construction, fostering coordination and equilibrium among various sectors. Pay utmost regard to data security issues in the context of digital transformation and modernization, fostering an open, robust, and secure digital ecosystem. Within this framework, Xinjiang should fully leverage its natural resource advantages, vigorously promoting emerging scientific and technological fields, notably biotechnology, and expedite the establishment of a novel ecological civilization construction system. We must place special emphasis on harnessing its unique resource strengths for digital economic growth, with a focus on data-driven approaches to enhance regional governance capabilities.

Second, we need to facilitate the development and utilization of data resources, construct data circulation markets, and unlock the economic and social value inherent in diverse data assets, encouraging all market participants to actively develop and employ various data resources, and fostering an integrated model of data production and consumption. It is essential to establish and refine regulations for data element markets, bolster standardization in data element collection and utilization, ensuring data security, and effectively safeguarding the interests of the nation, enterprises, and individuals.

7. Conclusion

Fostering high-quality economic development in the Xinjiang region relies fundamentally on the impetus of innovation. Only through cohesive planning, coordinated advancement, the optimization of industrial structures, and addressing the developmental shortcomings in Xinjiang can we enhance its economic capacity. Achieving high-quality economic growth in Xinjiang requires us to leverage its advantageous geographical position and abundant resources while promoting ecological economic endeavors. This will elevate the region's openness and improve the overall standard of living for its residents.

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