

## THE CONURBATION STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE IN THE CHANGJIANG RIVER DELTA AND THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY STUDY OF HANGZHOU AS AN INTERNATIONAL TOURIST CITY\*

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**Abstract:** Since the 1950s, modern international cities have sprung up around the world and have become centers of world political and economic affairs. In the 1990s, major objectives of establishing international cities were put forward by more than forty central cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. The main theme of the 21st century development of central cities in China will be urban modernization, internationalization, and topicalization. This study was conducted with the intention of researching the regional development strategy for the Changjiang River Delta (CRD) conurbation, with focus on the strategic development and positioning of Hangzhou, the central city of Zhejiang Province. Results from international urban studies in China and abroad were incorporated into this article from the theoretical viewpoints of urban science, regional economics and tourism economics. The findings of this study could provide some important implications for future research and practice.

**Key words:** Changjiang River Delta (CRD), international city, development strategy  
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### LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The earliest research on international cities dates back to 1915 when P. Gaidys, the forerunner of British urban and regional planning, initiated the idea of the international city. In 1966, Peter Hall, the British scholar redefined the concept of the international city. The term, International City, as suggested by Hall, was used to refer to a global center of politics, commerce, and culture with a huge population, such as London, Paris, Moscow, New York City, and Tokyo (Hall, 1979). In the mid-1980s, extensive research on the international city was conducted in Europe, America, Japan, and south-east Asia by Woiff and J. Friedmann, two outstanding American geographers. In 1982 and 1986 respectively, they formed a new hypothesis and synopsis of the terminological meaning of "international city". That is, an international city plays a pivotal role in global or regional economy. It is the product of not only industrialization and modernization, but also the globalization of economic activities. According to a sum-

mary of study findings on international cities in China and abroad, international cities are the ones that have high reputation and play pivotal roles in the world as a result of their high degree of modernization, internationalization and topicalization. Their far-reaching influence transcends regional and national boundaries due to their specific and comprehensive functions in international, political, economic, and cultural relations. According to this globally accepted classification, an international city can be categorized by geography as global (i.e. New York City or London) and regional (i.e. Chicago or Singapore), by functions as multipurposed (a comprehensive center of politics, economy, and culture) and specialized (politics, finance, commerce, tourism, and culture).

Since the 1990s, research on international cities and their development strategies has been made by the Chinese scholars of urban science, and agreement has been reached as to the concept, characteristics, and prerequisites of "international city" to be used as a basis for 21st century development strategies of Chinese central cities. As a result, development strategies for

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international cities were formulated within the framework of the 1995 - 2010 overall urban planning schemes for more than forty central cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou.

However, the development strategies formulated by many domestic cities by far have presented some problems. In terms of the regional positioning, many cities put too much emphasis on inner-city development and their plans were prepared separately. Furthermore, many cities in the same region contended with one another as being an international city of the same function. For example, each individual city such as Shenyang, Harbin, Dandong, and Huichun in northeast China aims and claims to be an international commercial city in northeast China.

From the history of international city development on a global level, it can be concluded that one country cannot have too many international cities. Establishing an international city, especially a modern international city, cannot be made possible by one city alone. A modern international city is in fact a conurbation which comprises a number of cities and towns with various functions that have spread out and joined together to form one network, often with a large city at its center. Take the example of New York City in the U.S.A., the top international city in the world. The huge conurbation of New York City covers 140 000 square kilometers. It joins over 200 cities and towns in the Great Lakes region with Boston and Washington in the East, Milwaukee and St. Louis in the West, and the State of Maine in the Northeast. There is a concentration of famous cities in this region including Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Baltimore. The conurbation here is a professional and cooperative economic mechanism headed by New York City and consisting of a number of other cities such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Boston. Each city has its own specific complementary task. Washington, the capital of the U.S., plays an important role for international politics and tourism. New York City, the principal city in the conurbation, has always been a great financial and business center and the headquarter of the United Nations. The conurbation, covering 1.5% of the nation's total area and making up 20% of the total population, generates 60% of the nation's total indus-

trial output. The structure of the economy is well-balanced, with the output from service industries commanding a 60% share of the (gross domestic product) of the conurbation, which contributes to the conurbation's exceptional inherent value and greatly improves its status in the U.S. and around the world. Conurbation in Britain is a coalescence of such international cities as London, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester. In Japan, such major cities as Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, and Nagoya join together to form a conurbation. Northwest European cities such as Amsterdam, Rome, and Paris join together to form a network.

In short, conurbation refers to an extensive urban area, which resulted from the expansion of several complementary, inter-dependent cities or towns to form a network with a centrally located large city. With this structure, towns may coalesce while retaining their separate identities. The urban area's development represents the degree of modernization and urbanization in a country. Conurbation is the product of a higher degree of development of international cities. Modern international cities, without any exception, all adopt the pattern of an atomic structure in the process of conurbation, taking the lead and joining surrounding cities in achieving modernization and internationalization so as to participate in the worldwide regional economic competitions.

In the process of urbanization in China, five conurbations have been formed by geoeconomy, i.e., the conurbation of Beijing, Tianjin and Tangshan; conurbation the CRD, the Pearl River Delta, the Jiaodong Peninsula, and the Liaodong Peninsula. The overall economic power and development-related elements still vary among the above five conurbations. The first three conurbations are expected to represent China in competing with all international cities around the world. Among them, the CRD conurbation appears to be the most promising.

## DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE CRD CONURBATION

The CRD is located in a T-shaped intersection of the eastern seashore outlet belt with industrial zoning along the river. Its optimum location has enabled it to be China's national eco-

conomic and cultural center since the 6th century. In the early 1960s, J. Goldman, the famous French geographer, included Shanghai, Ningbo and Hangzhou in the CRD conurbation, one of the six conurbations he mentioned.

It is commonly accepted by the national academia that the most important cities in the CRD include 14 large and mid-size cities centered in Shanghai. They are listed as follows: Shanghai, Nanjing, Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou, Nantong, Yangzhou, and Zhenjiang in Jiangsu Province; Hangzhou, Jiaxing, Huzhou, Shaoxing, Ningbo, and Zhoushan in Zhejiang Province. A well-planned conurbation is established in this region of approximately 100 000 square kilometers with one mega-city Shanghai, three extra large cities Nanjing, Hangzhou and Ningbo, three big cities Wuxi, Suzhou and Changzhou, seven mid-size cities, and over twenty towns. Since the 1990s, the rate of economic growth in this region has been 1/3 above the national average. According to the 1996 national economy and social development statistics, 20% of the GDP and 23% of central government financial revenues are generated by this region though it accounts for only 1% of the land area and 6% of the population of China.

As the largest comprehensive industrial base in China, the CRD features a complete set of industries, such as machinery, auto, steel, petrochemical, light industry and textile, building materials, electric energy, telecommunications, medicine, etc. The output value of main products such as grains, oil, and cotton is 2 - 3% above the national average. The well-developed service industries account for 33% of the regional GDP, especially in such cities as Shanghai, Ningbo and Hangzhou with 45% of GDP. The development of leading industries like commerce, finance, information, real estate, and tourism are 2-3 times higher than the national average. Here, development of science, technology and educational levels are also higher than the national average. The region will experience dynamic economic growth and provide lots of opportunities with the implementation of Shanghai's 21st century strategic development objective to become the center of the national economy, and a center of international economy, finance, and commerce. In the process of modernization, internationalization and totalization, Shanghai will

have great impact on surrounding cities and accelerate the construction of the CRD. Therefore, the strategic selection of Shanghai as an international city provides a baseline for the strategic positioning of the CRD Conurbation.

This positioning of fourteen large and mid-size cities in the CRD will vary if individual resources and socioeconomic impacts are considered. Nanjing and Hangzhou, respectively the capital of Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces, are supposed to function as provincial centers of politics, economy and culture. Apart from this, they play important secondary roles in the CRD assisting in the modernization and internationalization of the Shanghai-centered conurbation. Also, Hangzhou has established a strategic objective to become a modern international tourist city evidenced by the ninth 5-year plan for social and economic development and its year 2010 goal.

#### THE HANGZHOU'S DEVELOPMENT AS A MODERN INTERNATIONAL TOURIST CITY

Hangzhou is a renowned tourist city and historical site in China. Tourism in Hangzhou has made great achievements since the Open Policy. In 1996 Hangzhou hosted about 462 300 international tourists, up 4.7% over the 1995 figure, placing the city fifth in the national ranking of major tourist cities. Its tourism-related foreign exchange earnings stood at US \$ 1.67 billion in 1996, an increase of 15.17%, making Hangzhou eighth in the national ranking of major tourist cities (National Tourism Administration of China, 1990 - 1997). Hangzhou hosted nearly 20.09 million domestic tourists and earned RMB 12.26 billion. Hangzhou's noted increase of RMB 5.329 billion in international and national tourism-related earnings was 5.9% of the municipal GDP. Tourism has become one of the supporting sectors for Hangzhou's contribution to the national economy.

1997 was another good year for tourism in Hangzhou. It hosted more than 500 thousand international visitors, up 8.2% from 1996. Also since 1996, foreign exchange earnings reached to more than US \$ 0.2 billion, a 19.8% increase. It hosted 21 million domestic visitors, up 4.5%. Domestic tourism-related earnings rose to RMB 14.2 billion, a 15.8% increase from

1996 (National Tourism Administration of China, 1990 – 1997).

The development of international and domestic tourism is faster than that of the national economy. An important economic benefit of tourism is that it serves as a catalyst for the development or expansion of other economic sectors, such as agriculture, fisheries, construction, handicrafts, and certain type of manufacturing through their supplying of goods and services consumed in tourism. The strategic objective of Hangzhou for the year 2010, in terms of its tourism and urban development, is clarified by the China National Tourism Administration. By the year 2010 Hangzhou is supposed to basically accomplish modernization. Its socioeconomic development is expected to reach the current level of secondarily developed regions and countries, which will make Hangzhou an international tourist city with recognition and prosperity. This indicates that in the future Hangzhou will move up to a higher level of modernization, internationalization and topicalization.

There are seven specific standards that a modern international tourist city is supposed to meet based on past experience and related research. These standards typically include the following:

(1) The tourist city should establish high international recognition with distinctive features and world-class tourist resources. It is renowned for its unique landscaping, unique around the world, or an integrated well-designed complex of views.

(2) The city should have well-structured economic sectors with prosperous business and service industries, of which tourism becomes the mainstay of the city's contribution to the national economy.

(3) The city should have beautiful scenery and modern facilities. It should be equipped with a global network of information communications and efficient transportation systems.

(4) Complete tourist service facilities with regard to food, lodging, travel, tour, shopping, and entertainment should be offered to satisfy various hobbies, customs, and spending habits of tourists from different parts of their countries.

(5) The city should provide quality services by well-trained workers in business and service industries.

(6) The city should have a large number of domestic and international visitors, which is the top priority of international cities of the same type. Furthermore, the number of international tourists, especially the foreign independent traveler (FIT), should preferably comprise a high percentage.

(7) As good assurance for international visitors, there should be good social settings, such as, foreign languages capabilities, internationally recognized sign system, courteous and efficient banking services, security, clean and peaceful environment, simplified procedures for both inbound and outbound travel, friendly residents, good government image, high level of urban management, and good host and guest relationships (Zhou, 1999).

Hangzhou is still lagging far behind the average level of development of international tourist cities (Table 1). Given the overall image and comprehensive environment of the city, the present development level of Hangzhou is only that of other foreign international tourist cities in the early 1960s. It is very tough for Hangzhou to achieve the objective as an international tourist city in a period of just 10 years while foreign cities of the same type took about 30 years.

To accomplish the strategic objective as an international tourist city, Hangzhou must first of all modernize its urban facilities, then internationalize its social services and finally topicalize its tourism so as to meet global competition. Therefore, development is to take place in two phases.

### 1. First phase (Now to the year 2010)

Hangzhou is supposed to reach the development level of developed countries in the late 1980s and early 1990s. With an expansion of service industries and enhancement of internationalization of the city, a framework to make the modern international tourist city is basically set up by the end of this phase. Hangzhou will serve as an important tourist destination in the process of internationalization of conurbation in the CRD.

The development plan is formulated as follows:

1) To further develop modernization of the city, speeding up the construction of modern infrastructures including an international airport,

high-speed trains, highways, water transport, and main express roads within the city. A good ecological environment is to be constructed with clean water, clean air, forests, and aesthetic landscaping. What Hangzhou can offer, and is known for, are rapid and efficient international communications, comprehensive services, and interesting tourist destinations.

2) To perfect the system of tourist resources development, utilization, and protection by constructing an ideal overall city environment, exploring cultural patterns and renovating products fit tourist tastes. Based on the incorporation of natural scenery into historic sites, proper and realistic balance of urban and rural development

and of different economic sectors, a well-designed social service system for all nationalities and tourists with varied spending habits is to be formed.

3) To enhance the international awareness of Hangzhou through strong advertisement and promotion of the name and overall image of beautiful Hangzhou as a very interesting tourist destination. To further strengthen the leading position of tourism in the national economy. Hangzhou's growth rate of tourism in the year 2010 is projected to rise to be 7.5% of its GDP.

4) An increase greater than that in the first phase on tourism-related economic indices at the end of this phase (Table 1).

**Table 1 Measurement criteria of Hangzhou as an international tourist city**

	Index	Criteria	Achievements in 1996	Year 2010 plan
Industry status	Average per capita GDP (USD)	> 10000	3300	11680
	Proportion of service industries to GDP	> 60%	48.3%	63.6%
	Proportion of tourism to GDP	8 - 10%	5.9% *	approx. 7% *
	Proportion of tourism employment to urban overall employment	> 10%	2.6%	8.3%
International tourism	Annual host of international tourists (man-hours)	> 2,000,000	462 000 *	1 000 000
	Annual tourism foreign exchange (billion USD)	> 1	0.167 *	0.98 *
	Average per capita expenses of overseas tourists (USD/man-ours)	> 500	361 *	980 *
	Annual carrying capacity of airport (man-hours)	> 10 000 000	2 020 000	8 000 000
Modernization and internationalization of basic facilities	International airlines	> 20	2	15
	Average per capita areas of road (sqeters)	> 12	5.4	12
	Proportion of high-quality roads to overall main roads	80%	18%	64%
	Phone lines of every one hundred people	> 50	39	80
	Average per capita public landscaping (sq. meters)	> 15	4.04 *	14.9 *

Note: All the data above with no asterisk only applies to the urban area of Hangzhou. \* Asterisk refers to the criteria of the whole city.

## 2. Second phase (the year 2010 - 2050)

Further develop modernization, internationalization and topicalization to reach the development level of developed countries by the same period. Hangzhou will be a world-famous international tourist city by that time and serve as an important international tourist city in the CRD Conurbation.

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