

# The Basic Status, Features, and Shortcomings of Coordinated Development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Regions

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**Abstract:** Since 2014, when the concept of coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei (BTH) region was first proposed, BTH cooperative development and the co-construction of three regional city clusters as a major national development strategy have made great achievements in top-level design, industrial docking, and ecological environment. Using the literature review method, this paper summarizes and analyze the development concept, the direction of talent flow, the industrial situation, and its deficiencies in resource flow and education development in the coordinated development of the BTH region. The coordinated development of the BTH region in 2035, is believed to have improved in the sharing of regional resources, further narrowed the development gap among the three regions, and created a new pattern of BTH cooperative development, with a world-class city cluster in the BTH region.

**Keywords:** Coordinated development of Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region; Development stage; Basic status; Characteristics

**Online publication:** August 12, 2022

## 1. Introduction

The year 2022 marks the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and an important year for strengthening the coordinated development of The Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei (BTH) region as proposed in the 14th Five-Year Plan period. The coordinated development of the BTH region has made significant achievements in the past eight years, and the framework pattern of the BTH capital is “one core and two wings.” A significant progress has been made in promoting the coordinated development of the BTH region in the areas, such as regional transportation integration, ecological and environmental quality improvement, industrial transformation and upgrading, and equal access to public services. However, there are still some shortcomings, for example, the development gap between the BTH region remains wide, the allocation of higher education resources in the BTH region is still unbalanced, and the economic development, resource, and environmental constraints are still a serious problem in the BTH regions.

BTH is an important urban agglomeration in China, however the coordinated development of BTH is a difficult and involved a long process. In 2015, Sun Jiuwen and LiJianmo proposed that, the main reason that restricts the coordinated development of BTH is due to the immature development of the market economy, unequal political status in these three regions, the lack of relevant system design of the central government, and the lack of a unified development plan and cooperation system in BTH regions <sup>[1]</sup>. In addition, Wu Shourong et al., mentioned that one should continue to promote the development of BTH by reducing the regional development imbalance, firmly implement the regional coordinated development

strategy, and focus on solving the problem of unbalanced and insufficient development [2]. In recent years, many domestic scholars have started to investigate from the perspectives of regional innovation driving force, regionally coordinated development, regional green development, regional open development, and regional shared development. Further, in 2022 Wang Limin and Wang Dongbo analyzed the challenges and opportunities faced by the coordinated development of BTH from the perspective of the new development pattern and explore the achievements achieved by the development of BTH, and the prospects for the future coordinated development of the region. However, only few Chinese scholars have studied the impact of the coordinated development of BTH on the three regions, especially the specific impact on the small cities.

This paper, through studying the basic status of coordinated development of the BTH region, summarizes the characteristics of coordinated development of the BTH region, analyzes the deficiencies in the process of the practice, and showed the advantage resources of coordinated development of BTH region. Further, regional innovation resource sharing, and a new model of cooperation, to build the international first-class, Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei metropolis circle were discussed in this paper. The coordinated development of the BTH region as mentioned in the 14th Five-Year Plan period, from the initial stage to the mid-term stage in realizing the Two Centenary Goals and the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation were also included in this paper.

## **2. Basic status of development**

The development process of the BTH region can be divided into four stages as summarized below.

### **2.1. Pre-liminary exploration stage (1980-2004)**

The concept of the BTH regional economy was proposed for the first time in the year 1980, and the region was divided into two municipalities, Beijing and Tianjin, and Hebei province which was a natural province. BTH regions are located in the northeast, east, and North of the three regions, respectively of the superior junction [3]. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, Beijing was the first to be built as the political and cultural center of the country, further a rapid development in the political, cultural, and economic fields have been observed in Beijing since the initiation of BTH regional economy. Meanwhile, Tianjin is also developing rapidly due to its long historical and cultural background, high-quality transportation conditions, and the crony effect of the same municipality. Based on this, in 1986 Hebei Province formulated the "Beijing-Tianjin Circle" strategy in urban planning and construction, trying to learn the development model of Beijing and Tianjin, expand its development dividend, and drive the integrated construction of Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei, which is the beginning of Hebei's idea of leveraging development [4]. In 1996, based on the development trend of comprehensive urbanization in Beijing and the experience of cooperation between Beijing and Tianjin, the concept of "Capital Economic Circle" was promoted and the layout mode of 2+7 was formed. With the two major municipalities of Beijing and Tianjin as the center of the development, it radiates seven adjacent prefecture-level cities in Hebei Province, mainly covering important cities in Hebei such as Tangshan, Zhangjiakou, Qinhuangdao, and Baoding. In the process of promoting the economic development of the BTH metropolitan area, the economic development of the surrounding cities has played a positive role in promoting the economic development of these cities, also lay a solid material foundation for the improvement of the economic development level of the BTH region.

However, during this stage, the development advantages of these three places in the economic circle are not clearly defined where; The mass base of the concept is still poor in terms of identification with the common development of BTH; and The impact of the environmental factors in the development is still low. All these aspects are not conducive in promoting the development model of BTH cooperation in a faster pace. Therefore, in the construction of the BTH integration cooperation, it is important to form a unified

guiding document, summarize the cooperation road, overcome problems and difficulties, and clearly indicates the policy system and identify the obstacles to the integration construction.

## **2.2. Continuous promotion stage (2004 -2013)**

On February 2004, the BTH Regional Economic Development Strategy Seminar was held, and many feasible policies for synergistic cooperation were formulated based on the developmental realities of these three regions and reached a consensus on the long-term synergistic development of the three regions to promote the level of integrated construction, marking the coordinated development of the BTH regions from theoretical exploration in the theoretical community to practice at the governmental level. In 2008, the Convening of the Beijing Olympic Games further promoted the rapid infrastructure construction and cooperation in the BTH regions, which greatly shortened the economic integration process in these regions. Further, in March 2011, the concept of “Integration of Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei and “Capital Economic Circle” was formally written in the national 12th Five-Year Plan.

The further development of Beijing requires the integration of Beijing into the strategic space of BTH, the Bohai Sea economic zone, and the integration of BTH construction. The integration of Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei was conducive to the development of Beijing’s capital city while providing impetus to the development of Tianjin and Hebei, and the dividends of integration will promote Beijing succession, such as the vitality of the entire BTH regions, and form a closed loop of regional development. At this stage, the integration of Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei was strongly promoted at the national level, further unified guidance documents were launched one after another, thereafter the construction of integrated transportation facilities was gradually implemented, and the common development level of Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei was significantly promoted at this stage. However, there was a lack of a clear common document of legality and a broad area of cooperation, and many policy ideas remain at the theoretical and conceptual level and need to be further implemented and tested.

## **2.3. Steady implementation stage (2014 -2018)**

In 2014, the BTH Synergistic Development was formulated as a major national strategy. In the same year, the Beijing Municipal Government Work Report implemented an important plan of BTH Synergistic Development to reconfigure the functional places and resources of Beijing to further integrate into the BTH city cluster synergistic development model, based on the “Outline of BTH Synergistic Development Plan,” which was adopted in 2015, and since then, all the 12 special plans for transportation, ecology, industry, and others have been issued and implemented. In June 2015, the BTH Synergistic Development Planning Outline was officially issued, followed by on May 2016, the “Xiong’an New Area” plan was proposed for the first time, and a series of policy experiments to relieve non-capital functions, to promote the integration process, and to enhance the sense of people’s livelihood was introduced. Further together with the preparation for the Winter Olympics and the implementation of the construction of Xiong’an New Area, the practical construction of BTH integration entered a new height.

In this stage, the rise in national strategy and the development of collaborative implementation are accelerated step by step in BTH region’s industry docking with the transformation and upgrading, with the Male Ann district as a concentrated load in Beijing as the capital function organization was officially established, however the coordinated development of BTH in resource distribution still needs to be taken seriously, and solutions should be constantly explored.

## **2.4. Efficient development stage (2018-present)**

In 2018, with the introduction of the “Hebei Xiong’an New Area Planning Outline,” the Xiong’an New Area is further developed and constructed to become a centralized bearer for the decommissioning of

Beijing's non-capital functions, and further to expand the scale of cooperation between Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei, including systematic and comprehensive cooperation at the levels of production, transportation, trading, and trade.

### **3. Features of BTH**

#### **3.1. A new development philosophy**

The coordinated development of the BTH regions is guided by innovative, coordinated, and green concepts. Guided by the concept of innovative development, the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the Innovation Development Index of the BTH regions had a strong momentum of growth, reaching round 131.87% by the year 2020, with an average increase of 5.31% compared to the year 2014. Additionally, driven by the innovation-driven strategy, the BTH region's innovation and quality has steadily improved.

Guided by the concept of coordinated development, the target development in the BTH regions has steadily increased, reaching 114.52% by the year w2020, with an average increase of 2.42% over the year 2014, showing a positive change in the regional and urban-rural coordination. In addition, in 2019, Wu Shourong, Jing Hui, and Chen Yan mentioned that, to solve the problem of unbalanced regional development, one should adhere to development as the foundation, resolutely implement the strategy of coordinated regional development, subsequently focus on solving unbalanced and inadequate development. Guided by the concept of green development, the BTH regions have made significant improvements in terms of air pollution control, green environment, industrial transformation and transfer, and residents' acceptance of the concept of green consumption.

#### **3.2. A double-way talent mutual flowing**

The BTH regions are one of the main floating areas of population in China, and Beijing and Tianjin have been the most concentrated floating areas for a long duration. However, with the promotion of the coordinated development of the BTH region, the population from Beijing and Tianjin has been continuously transferred to the Hebei region, meanwhile the population in the BTH regions represents a development trend of two-way flow. With the relocation of the non-capital functions, the increment of non-capital functions in Beijing was strictly controlled, and guides the ordinary manufacturing industry with no comparative advantages to adjust and withdraw, providing policy support for the flow of talents to the Hebei region. In 2015, Lu Dadao mentioned that, Hebei should carry out substantial structural adjustment, scale adjustment, and technological update of the existing energy and raw material industry, and develop producer services and tourism in coastal, mountainous, and foothill areas, aiming at the requirements of urban agglomeration development <sup>[5]</sup>. The fact that Hebei is in the process of the coordinated development of the BTH regions also acts according to the industrial function planning of BTH, and its positioning, vigorously developing several lands, sea, and air transport hubs, based on the central cities, industrial bases, industrial clusters, and others to accelerate the development of modern logistics industry clusters, to provide the infrastructure protection for the flow of talent to Hebei region.

#### **3.3. A complementing industrial system**

Marx's division of labour and cooperation is an important part of his theoretical system. Marx systematically discusses the necessity of the division of labour and cooperation in the production and development of human society and its influence on the development of productive forces, where many of them still have profound guiding significance for the current economic and social development. In this context, it is an inevitable requirement of the development of The Times to grasp Marx's classic thought of division of labour and cooperation and promote the coordinated development of the BTH industry <sup>[6]</sup>.

At the beginning of the 21st century, Beijing's industrial structure developed into a "three-two-one" structure, and the tertiary industry gradually became the leading industry in the city's economy [7].

The pace of development of primary and secondary industries has slowed down, while the proportion of secondary industries is only one-fourth, which is transferred to Tianjin and Hebei in an orderly manner. As far as industrial characteristics are concerned, Tianjin is dominated by the secondary industry, and Tianjin is striving to build an advanced manufacturing industry system with optimized structure, reasonable layout, and distinctive features, and many industries such as aviation, equipment manufacturing, and automobile manufacturing has formed important supporting links for related industries in the BTH regions. In addition, Hebei Province is an important supply of mineral resources, industrial raw materials, water resources, electricity, and agricultural products in Beijing and Tianjin. Compared with Beijing and Tianjin, Hebei's development is mainly based on the development of primary and secondary industries, and modern agriculture and processing capacity of agricultural and livestock products, while actively completing the transfer and undertaking of Beijing and Tianjin aerospace, electronic information, automotive, high-end equipment and other industries, accelerate the development of advanced manufacturing, industrial restructuring, and upgrading.

Since the launch of the coordinated development of the BTH regions, a significant progress has been made in the development of industrial docking and collaboration [8], and the industrial positioning and industrial division of labor in Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei are becoming clearer and clearer.

## **4. Shortcomings of BTH**

### **4.1. The Siphon phenomenon**

The urban "siphon phenomenon" refers to the high concentration of population and factors in the central of cities. Due to the big gap between Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei in the development process, resources, talents, and other elements, therefore it is easy to converge from Hebei to Beijing and Tianjin in the process of coordinated development. However, this phenomenon tends to lead to the problem of "big city disease" in Beijing and Tianjin, and is not conducive to the further professional transformation, upgrading, and the sustainable and healthy development of the economy, therefore it is also an obstacle to the coordinated development of the BTH regions.

### **4.2. The uneven educational structure**

Since the coordinated development of the BTH regions, the coordinated development of education in Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei has made positive progress, and gradually formed a pattern of coordinated development of goals, and policy coordination, complementary advantages, and win-win cooperation [9]. However, the provincial distribution of resources of colleges and universities in Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei is still unbalanced, meanwhile the colleges and universities in Hebei are facing great challenges. Due to the adjustment of national administrative divisions, the iteration of the national higher education strategic project, and the "siphon effect" in Beijing and Tianjin, the construction of provincial "double first-class" is not satisfactory during the transition period from popularization, which seriously restricts the process of "lane changing and overtaking" of colleges and universities in Hebei Province.

### **4.3. The entire weak system**

The construction of the Xiongnungan New Area is mainly as follows; Firstly, to help Beijing to alleviate the "Big-city diseases," such as population expansion and resource shortage; and Secondly, is the construction of new urban areas, to avoid the depletion of resources during the process of development, environmental quality decline, and other problems. The construction of the Xiongan New Area, as the country's millennium project, will not only be a centralized carrier of Beijing's non-capital functions, but

also become a new growth pole in the BTH regions. However, for such a high position, the existing weak infrastructure in the Xiongan New Area needs to be strengthened and improved. To solve the contradiction between high positioning and low foundation, some policies should be introduced to solve this contradiction issues <sup>[10]</sup>.

## 5. Forward-looking BTH

In the coordinated development of the BTH regions, judicial administration, environmental protection, and infrastructure have maintained a good development across the regions. In October 2019, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee adopted the decision of the CPC Central Committee on Several Major Issues on Adhering and Perfecting the Socialist System with Chinese Characteristics and promoting the Modernization of the State Governance System and Governance Capability, which provides a guarantee for the coordinated development on the rule of law in Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei, which is specific to the BTH regions and has an efficient deployment of resources, and a unified and linked administrative law enforcement mechanism <sup>[11]</sup>.

At the same time, green transformation is the primary task of ecological civilization construction in the BTH regions. In the process of coordinated development, the concept of green development is constantly reflected in the construction practice. In the past eight years, BTH transportation integration has taken the lead in breaking through and promoting comprehensively, and the “four vertical, four horizontal, and one ring” comprehensive transportation corridor has taken shape, which has greatly improved the people’s lives, making the suburban railroads seamlessly connected with the inner-city railways to achieve a new way of interconnection.

## 6. Conclusion

In the new stage of the coordinated development of the BTH regions, the relocation of Beijing’s non-capital functions is a critical period of coordination between the central departments and the related regions, and Xiongan New Area has entered an important stage of synchronized development with Beijing’s as the non-capital functions.

In this paper, by analyzing the formation process of the development of the BTH regions, and development in the present situation, to realize the coordinated development of BTH one should always carry out a new development concept, in terms of talent flow direction change, industry coordinated development, and others. However, there are still resource of the uneven flow, unbalanced education development, unperfected infrastructure, and other issues which still need to search for solutions.

At present, due to a variety of resources reasonable allocation and distribution, the thinking of the new city infrastructure construction has to be continuously digging. For example, try to explore the future direction of the BTH regions coordinated development, and try to promote the economic development of the northern area of the BTH regions, and forming a world-class city cluster centered on BTH regions.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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