

## Why China Learns from Japan's Tokyo Capital Region: Background and Necessity

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### Abstract

In recent several years, learning from the Tokyo capital region seems popular both in China's academic and political circles. Metropolitan, especially the capital region as a particular area, has caught wide concern in pace with the high-speed urbanization all over the world. A capital has profound and complicated meanings of national development as a political center, so that giving strategic significance to the capital region is a kind of universal practice in most countries. Tokyo has been developing with the whole nation's social progress and become a globally mature exemplar of metropolitan as many kinds of reports indicate. Japan's Tokyo capital region experienced fast expanding and gradually became dominant in the process of urbanization. During this period, abundant experience in all previous development plans was accumulated. In China, there are four periods of regional strategy in its development of process of catching up as a developing country, and now Jingjinji coordinated development is one of the most important strategies. This regional strategy has demonstrated its target which aims at a world-class metropolitan. Tokyo Metropolitan is a model that worth the Jingjinji region learning from mainly because it has solved some similar problems which the Jingjinji region is confronted with now. On the basis of the similarities between Japan and China in the aspects of culture and institution, there is so much enlightenment that China can learn.

**Keywords:** Tokyo Capital Region; Jingjinji Coordinated Development, Metropolitan

### I. Introduction

A considerable tendency of learning from Japan's metropolitan has appeared in China in recent several years. Both China's academia and government show great interests in Japan's metropolitan especially the Tokyo capital region (首都圈 in Japanese), and also try to conclude some experience for the future development of Jingjinji<sup>2</sup> metropolitan. In the academic field of China, we could find a significant increase in the researches about Tokyo Metropolitan if we search on the website of CNKI<sup>3</sup> and acquire the numbers of the citation of Chinese articles about

“东京都市圈”(Tokyo metropolitan). As the Figure 1 shows, from 2000 to 2015, the academic attention on Tokyo metropolitan has risen a lot during the past 15 years of rapid urbanization process.

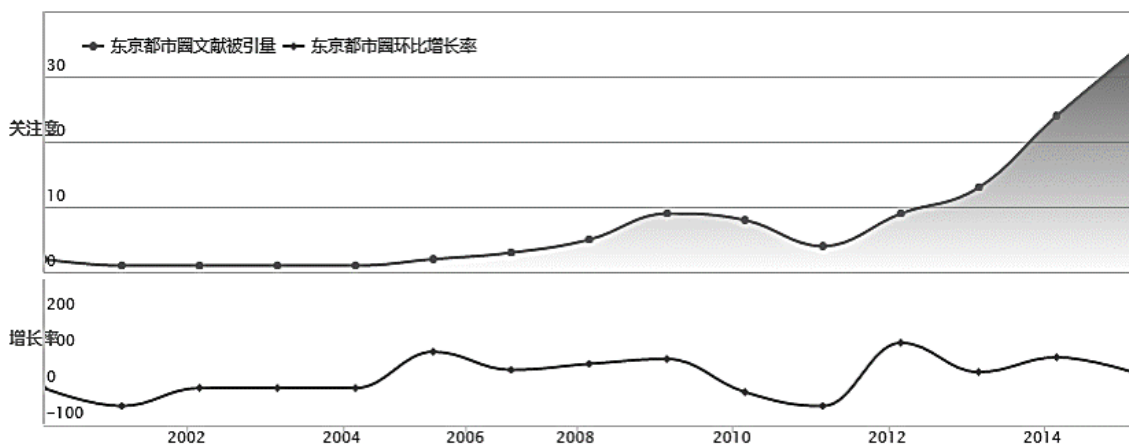
Meantime, the central and local governments of China are also propelling collaboration with Japan's institutions or enterprises focused on the topics of Tokyo capital region. For instance, China Center for Urban Development (CCUD), a public institution belong to the National Development and Reform Commission of China, has promoted a lot of joint work with Japan

since 2014. One team from CCUD visited Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy of Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), and so on. They investigated Panasonic intelligent city program, Kohoku New Town, Toranomon Hills (虎ノ門ヒルズ in Japanese), Tokyo sand table model, smart city in Kashiwanoha (柏の葉 in

world. A capital region always undertakes many kinds of national eventful developing strategies, plans, policies and programs.

**1. Capital has profound and complicated meanings in national development as a center of politics**

The capital is the location of one nation's central government and exists as the



Source: <http://www.cnki.net/>

Note: 1. “东京都市圈” is the Chinese word of Tokyo metropolitan.

**Figure 1. Academia's Attention on Tokyo Metropolitan in China**

Japanese) in Chiba Prefecture.

The reason of why China learns from Japan's capital region is the main topic of this article. The next chapter focuses on the importance of capital region. Then it introduces the background of Japan's Tokyo capital region. The necessity of Jingjinji's learning practice is illustrated at last.

**II. Importance of capital region**

Metropolitan, especially the capital region as a particular area has caught wide concern in pace with the high-speed urbanization all over the

administrative center. Same as the national anthem and flag, the capital is thought to be a symbol of the nation's sovereignty. Like a container for national political pivot and regime organization, a capital connects populace, government, territory and jurisdiction, so that it has multi-functions such as the center for culture, the center for economy, and the center for international exchange and so on.

The capital's characteristic of being the highest and unique, is the main reason of its complicated meanings. Generally speaking, the capital is at the highest level in the rank of one nation's administrative regions and has the

highest administrative regime institute. From the overall perspective of economic and social development, the highest legislative power and administrative power are analogous to one's heart and brain, so that they are the pivots for nation's regular operation. Therefore, the names of the capitals are frequently used to represent the whole country, such as the name of "Beijing" always represents China and "Washington D.C." always represents the United States. Because of the highest position in the cities ranking, the capital is a center to absorb, allocate and manage all kinds of social resources. Thus, a capital has profound

interregional resources in a national macro-level, not only focusing on solving its own problems and optimizing its own functions, but also exerting the radiation effect to the surrounding cities to promote prosperity together. Consequently, the capital region realizes an integrated development and become the country's growth pole.

A capital region is not only the nation's economic center of gravity (as Table 1 shows), but also undertaking important national tasks in their own urban plans in recently years. In "The London Plan- Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London"<sup>4</sup>, it requests the Greater London to make contribution to all UK's sustainable development and revival the Thames Gateway region, aiming to drive the development of the southeastern part of this country. The "le Nouveau Grand Paris"<sup>5</sup> plan in France, tries to extend Paris's spatial range to Normandy's port and promote the north France's development through the connection of high-speed railways and shipping ability of the Seine River. South Korea's "2030 Seoul Master Plan"<sup>6</sup> is not limited to be only a domestic strategy but emphasizing Seoul's international demand. In the December of 2014, the Tokyo government implemented "Creating the Future: The Long Term Vision for Tokyo" (東京都長期ビジョン in Japanese)<sup>7</sup>, which proposes to support growth of the entire Japan.

**Table 1. Percentage of Typical Capital Region's GDP in the Whole Nation's GDP**

London capital region	Paris capital region	Seoul capital region	Tokyo capital region
22%	31%	47%	37.5%

Source: *summarizing the data from Liu & Wu* [1]

meanings in national development and is far more complicated than other cities because of its incomparable status.

**2. Giving strategic significance to the capital region is a kind of universal practice all over the world**

Since the Industrial Revolution occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the global urbanization stepped into maturity. To investigate the path of urbanization in a spatial way, we can find that the pattern of one single city's expanding has turned into multi-cities' combination, and a metropolitan form as a result. Among the various metropolitans all over the world, the one with capital, as the core part, is the nation's most particular and important strategic region. The capital region integrates

**III. Background of Tokyo capital region**

**1. Tokyo developed with the whole nation's social reform and progress**

In Japan's transition period from feudalism to the Meiji age, Tokyo developed as a sign of civilization and progress after the name of Edo

was replaced. Since the Emperor moved away from Kyoto, Tokyo became the formal capital in modern Japan. The move of capital gave Tokyo a kind of legal meaning of leading status in a national spiritual and secular way according to Hall [2]. The Kanto earthquake which happened in 1923 caused almost a knockdown strike to Tokyo, while the high-speed reconstruction steadied and enhanced its absolute position in Japan's cities as Allen [3] argues. After the World War II, the United States adopted the policy of Tokyo's prior development, which prompted a fast recovery.

With the overall revival of Japan's economy after the World War II, the industrialization process speeded up in Tokyo's coaster area and large quantities of lands were used for industrial production. At the same time, the Japanese Shinkansen train connected Tokyo and Osaka as the first commercially operated high-speed railway system in the world. Then the Games of Tokyo Olympic in 1964 accelerated Tokyo's pace to be a global city. In the age of oil crisis, Tokyo experienced industrial transition so that the information industry, financial sector and other higher-end services developed significantly. As a result, the lack of land supply led to higher land price, and both the families and firms had to bear more expenses. For instance, Sorensen [4] illustrated that in the aspect of house shortage,

from 1970 to 1995, about 10 million residents had to live in the periphery of Tokyo, which is the suburban area of Kanto Plain.

## **2. Tokyo capital region has become a globally mature sample of metropolitan**

Currently, the Tokyo capital region has been a metropolitan in great size with concentrated population, enormous economic volume, complete industrial system and integrated urban function. According to the 11th investigating report from "Demographia World Urban Area" in 2015<sup>8</sup>, the Tokyo capital region is most populous metropolitan in the world where 37.84 million people live. In another word, the population in Tokyo equals the population in New York metropolitan adding that in London metropolitan or Paris metropolitan. Another report, the Global Cities Index and Emerging Cities Outlook in 2014<sup>9</sup>, claims that Tokyo is the 4th in the ranking of "global cities" all over the world. Especially in the aspects of business activity<sup>10</sup>, human capital<sup>11</sup> and information exchange<sup>12</sup>, Tokyo shows obvious advantages.

## **IV. Jingjinji coordinated development strategy undertakes China's national task**

### **1. The Jingjinji coordinated development is a nation-level regional strategy**

There are four periods of regional strategy in China’s development process of catching up as a developing country (see Table 2), and now the Jingjinji coordinated development is one of the most important strategies. In China, there have been various kinds of measurements for the

Jingjinji coordinated development, and pointed out four strategic significances and seven detailed requests. In March, 2014, on the second meeting of the 12th National People’s Congress, the Premier Li Keqiang raised the content of “further coordinate development in the Bohai Rim region

**Table 2. Changes in China’s Regional Strategy: from 1949 to now**

Period	1949-1978	1979-1998	1999-2011	2012 to now
Feature	Balanced	Unbalanced	Harmonious	Coordinated
Policy	Third Front Construction	Opening along the east coast	Development of the western region	One Belt & One Road
			Devitalization of the northeastern region	Yangtze river economic belt
			Rising of central China	Jingjinji coordinated development

Beijing capital region in different periods. However, generally the capital region refers to the spatial dimension of Jingjinji, which contains 2 municipalities and 1 province. China puts forward three main strategies to support the optimization of regional economy’s spatial structure now. The three regional strategies are respectively the One Belt and One Road<sup>13</sup>, the Yangtze River economic zone and the so-called Jingjinji coordinated development. All of those plans can be regarded as nation-level strategies.

Although there has been proposals or tentative plans about coordinated development for Beijing City, Tianjin City and Hebei Province since a long time ago, the sufficient concentration and direct policy meaning on this capital region has been risen since the administration of the current central government. In May, 2013, Xi Jinping proposed the idea of Jingjinji coordinated development on the meeting in Beidaihe, Hebei province. In February, 2014, Xi Jinping called a conference in Beijing on the special topic of

and the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region” on his first “Report on the Work of the Government”<sup>14</sup>. In 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2015, the Political bureau of the CPC Central Committee called a conference to discuss the economic situation. On this conference, the outline of Jingjinji coordinated development plan was approved<sup>15</sup>.

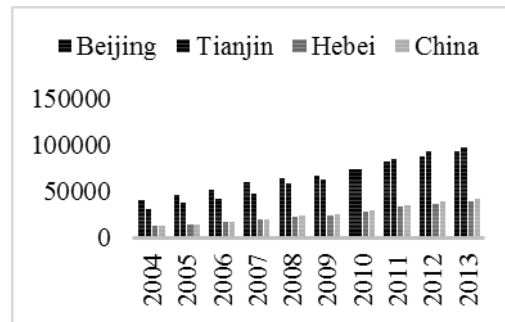
**2. The Jingjinji coordinated development strategy aims at a world-class metropolitan**

The official approval of the outline of the plan means that the Jingjinji coordinated development strategy has stepped into a practical period when there are definite rules can be relied on. The outline claims that the Jingjinji region’s entire position is “a world-class metropolitan with the core of capital, a leading area of reform in regional entirely coordinate development, a new national engine of economic growth driven by innovation, an exemplary region of ecological recovery and environmental improvement”. In this statement, “a world-class metropolitan” is the

**Table 3. GDP per capita in the Jingjinji Region from 2004 to 2013**

paramount item, which indicates that it is the most important and fundamental target in Jingjinji coordinated development.

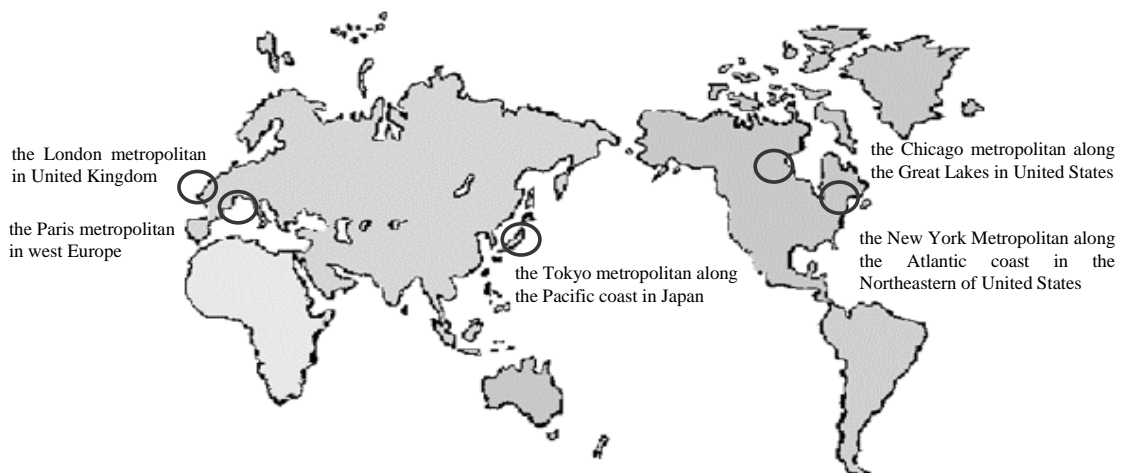
Then what is a world-class metropolitan? There is no strict standard in quantity, but generally there are five world-class metropolises worldwide publicly known: the New York Metropolitan along the Atlantic coast in the Northeastern of United States, the Chicago metropolitan along the Great Lakes in United States, the Tokyo metropolitan along the Pacific coast in Japan, the London metropolitan in United Kingdom, the Paris metropolitan in west Europe. To conclude the common features of the five metropolises above, we can find that they all have a vast scale of population, with at least one international large city in a certain area. The cities in a world-class metropolitan are scattered in high density and are linked in a spatial shape of circle or belt. The metropolises always have an international port as an important node in the global transportation, so that the developed internal and external transportation network can support the great size of economy to be a core area in those countries or even continents. Thus, the target of being a world-class metropolitan should possess all the characteristics above.



Source: *Statistics Bulletin of the National Economic and Social Development of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei* respectively from 2004-2013

### 3. The rationale of Jingjinji development model in the past and future

For metropolises, there are many kinds of development models all over the world. When it comes to the Jingjinji region, some significant features can be observed during the past 30 years since China's reform and open. The most distinct characteristic is the huge gap between the two municipalities and Hebei province in all aspects of social development. In 2013, Hebei's GDP in capita, 38651 RMB, was even less than half of that in Beijing or Tianjin as Table 3 indicates. The GDP in the entire Jingjinji region accounted for 66% of that in the north China and 11% in the



**Figure 2. The Five World-class Metropolises as Public Known**

nation, and Beijing and Tianjin had reached the standard of high-income. However, Hebei always seemed to be an indifferent province in poverty. The central government preferred to make beneficial policies for Beijing and Tianjin so that Hebei lost many developing opportunities and sacrificed its resources. The discriminated phenomenon was evident especially in the edge Beijing. People who lived in Beijing could receive higher wages and enjoy much better social public services like education, medical treatment and transportation, while people who lived in Hebei, where perhaps was just the other side of one river, still bearing severe poverty.

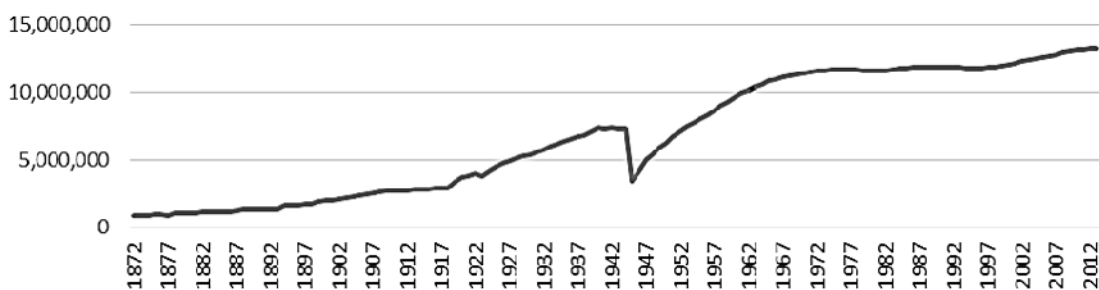
In this case, the Jingjinji coordinated development strategy was put forward and the future model was defined. There are 5 principles to interpret the rationale according to the plan made by the central government. First, the coordinated development should be driven by reform and innovation. The regional innovation system (RIS) in Jingjinji should be optimized to stimulate knowledge flows and technology transformation between Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei, so that the industrial structure can upgrade. Second, the advantages in the three places should be complemented from each other in order for the integration. In the process of adjustment for urban

functional orientation, Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei should share the collaborative benefit. Third, the market should play the main role in the coordinated development, and the central and local government should improve the administrative function. Fourth, the plan should be made from an integrated perspective and be conducted step by step to avoid confusion. Fifth, some experimental units should be forerunners, and the fields of environment, transportation and industry are the most important in coordinated development.

**V. Tokyo Metropolitan is a model worth the Jingjinji region learning from**

**1. Tokyo metropolitan has successfully solved some problems which the Jingjinji region is confronted with**

Considering the immense population base, the land in the two countries is in a great shortage (see the population density in Table 4). In the background of large population and land scarcity, cities, especially the capital, attract enormous people because of the ability in accumulating resources. Consequently, environmental pollution, difficulties in living and traffic jam are all obvious features in the capital regions in Japan and China.



Source: *Tokyo Statistic Yearbook, 2013*

**Figure 3. Trend of Tokyo's population: 1872-2012**

The most important practice of the development of Tokyo metropolitan was the capital's function dissemination. In fact, the principal reason of why China's central government made decision to propose the Jingjinji coordinated development strategy is that the capacity of Beijing is not enough for sustainable development. Beijing has undertaken too many kinds of functions beyond the political center as a capital. Japan was confronted the similar problem since 1970s and many efforts had been made.

Since 1970s, Tokyo began to find new regions beyond the core part of the city for expansion, trying to remove the pressure from the core's population agglomeration (see Figure 3). Consequently, many emerging sub-centers appeared, and many landmarks like Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building became symbols of prosperity according to Seidensticker [5]. After the concept of Multipolar City (多極都市) arose, many laws were put into practice such as Capital Region Act (首都圏整備法). Then, the Tokyo capital region stepped into maturity.

**Table 4. Population Density of Jingjinji and China in 2013**

Region	Population (10,000)	Land (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population density (per km <sup>2</sup> )
Beijing	2114.80	16410.54	1288.20
Tianjin	1472.21	11916.85	1235.40
Hebei	7332.61	187693.00	390.80
Jingjinji Total	10919.62	216020.39	505.49
China	136072.00	9571300.00	142.16

Source: *Statistics Bulletin of the National Economic and Social Development of Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei* respectively

For China, there is still no practical experience in promoting capital's function dissemination. Like many other fields, such as industrial development and social public service, Japan has developed in advance. Therefore, the Tokyo capital area is a model in some extent as a mature metropolitan while the Jingjinji capital region is still in a preliminary period.

**2. The similarities between Japan and China's urbanization explain the possibility and necessity for learning**

First, as nations in the East Asia, Japan and China's urbanization has the similar development background and growth rate. Europe and the United States realized urbanization through the development of industrialization and capitalism, while Japan and China enlarged their urbanization in an age of globalization, information and modernization. The rate of urbanization in UK had reached 54% in 1851 and the number is 51.4% in the US in 1920. However, the largest scale of urbanization in Japan and China occurred after the World War II. In addition, urbanization in Japan and China showed a relative high speed. Europe and the US took longer time to reach a high rate of urbanization, while countries in the East Asia were not like that. The report "Green Urbanization in Asia- Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2012" from Asia Development Bank indicates that it needs 95 years for the percentage of population to increase from 10% to 50% in Asian cities, yet the time in Europe and North America is respectively 150 years and 105 years<sup>16</sup>. Especially in the East Asia, according to the report from World Bank and Deuskar [6], there were nearly 200 million people migrating from rural to urban places, and the number of cities with more than 1 million people had increased to



869.

Secondly, the similarities in culture and institution leads to some similar developing characteristics. The mutual influence to each other between Japan and China has lasted for thousands years, which shows many analogies in culture. The familism in these two countries, different from the individualism in the west, is a very significant exemplification as Wang [7] argues. The intensity of linkages between sons or daughters and parents is an essential factor when the decisions of locations for working and living are made. It is more frequent that sons or daughters getting touch with their parents in Japan and China, and the tradition is also challenged greatly in the process of urbanization. In the aspect of institution, differently from the federal nations like the US, China has its own powerful central government, which is similar to Japan. Though it seems to be the fiscal federalism in China, the precondition is the centralization of central government's administrative power in the form of "political promotion tournament" according to Zhou [8]. Besides, at the beginning of Japan's industrialization, the bureaucrat-capitalism led to a close connection between the central government and financial magnate in the development of heavy industry, so that the local government's authority is limited to a certain degree. Therefore, Tokyo and Beijing, with more complicated function as the locations of the central governments, are not the same as the other capital in a federal nation like Washington D.C.

Therefore, the similarities between Japan and China's capital region are unique in the world which cannot be found in other nations. The experience of Tokyo capital region's development is the most appropriate and practical exemplar

that worth Jingjinji learning from.

#### Footnote\*

- <sup>1</sup> School of Economics, Nankai University, China; Graduate Department of Chinese Studies, Aichi University, Japan. It is financed by the Research Grant for Young Researchers of ICCS of Aichi University.
- <sup>2</sup> Jingjinji, also known as Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, is a combination term of the separately abbreviation of those three regions above. Jingjinji is regarded as China's capital region.
- <sup>3</sup> CNKI is "China's National Knowledge Infrastructure" and the website is an academic database, from which the citation of articles about one term can be searched.
- <sup>4</sup> "The London Plan- Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London" can be found at <http://www.nlwa.gov.uk/docs/20091209/agenda-item-10---the-london-plan-spatial-development-strategy-for-greater-london.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> The "le Nouveau Grand Paris" plan can be found at <http://www.stif.info/IMG/pdf/nouveau-grand-paris-carte.pdf>
- <sup>6</sup> The "2030 Seoul Master Plan" can be found at <http://english.seoul.go.kr/policy-information/urban-planning/urban-planning/1-2030-seoul-basic-urban-plan/>
- <sup>7</sup> The original text of "Creating the Future: The Long Term Vision for Tokyo" is at the website: [http://www.seisakukikaku.metro.tokyo.jp/tokyo\\_vision/vision\\_index/visiongaiyou.pdf](http://www.seisakukikaku.metro.tokyo.jp/tokyo_vision/vision_index/visiongaiyou.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> See <http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.pdf>
- <sup>9</sup> See the report from A.T. Kearney: <https://www.atkearney.com/documents/10192/4461492/Global+Cities+Present+and+Future->

GCI+2014.pdf/3628fd7d-70be-41bf-99d6-4c8eaf984cd5

<http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29940/ki2012-special-chapter.pdf>

- <sup>10</sup> Business activity is measured by headquarters of major global corporations, locations of top business services firms, the value of a city's capital markets, the number of international conferences, and the flow of goods through ports and airports, according to the report from Demographia World Urban Area.
- <sup>11</sup> Human capital evaluates a city's ability to attract talent based on the following measures: size of foreign-born population, quality of universities, and number of international schools, international student population, and number of residents with university degrees, according to the report from Demographia World Urban Area.
- <sup>12</sup> Information exchange examines how well news and information circulate within and outside the city, based on: accessibility to major television news channels, Internet presence, number of international news bureaus, freedom of expression, and broadband subscriber rate, according to the report from Demographia World Urban Area.
- <sup>13</sup> This proposal is the abbreviation of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road
- <sup>14</sup> The original report can be found at the website of the People's Daily Online: <http://lianghui.people.com.cn/2014npc/n/2014/0305/c376646-24535026.html>
- <sup>15</sup> The original text of the outline of the plan has not been completely made known to the public while China's media reported the main ideas widely.
- <sup>16</sup> The report can be found at the website of ADB:

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