

*The Current Situation and Challenges for Regional
Development Strategies in China:
The case of the Cooperation and Development Planning
Outline of the Tumen River Area of China*

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Summary

Regarding the research within Japan into China's regional development strategies, there were many studies from immediately after the founding of the People's Republic of China (1949) up to the first half of the 2000s, but there has been little analysis from the second half of the 2000s to the present. The analytic view also concentrates on the correction of regional disparities between the coastal and inland areas. However, the Chinese government has created a large number of regional development strategies from the second half of the 2000s, and from 2008 to 2011 the central government approved a total of 19 development strategies at the provincial, autonomous region and municipality levels (equivalent to the prefectures in Japan, hereinafter: provinces), and China's regional development strategies are taking a new turn. The aims, too, for the formulation of the regional development strategies differ greatly from the pre-existing ones. Regarding the new developments for these regional development strategies, as research within Japan has not yet been pursued fully, this paper will raise a specific case example and analyze the background, current situation and challenges thereof.

In order to identify the new developments in the regional development strategies, it is necessary to examine in detail the roles of central government and local governments. In the existing development strategies such as the Great Western Development Strategy and the Northeast China Revitalization Plan the central government took the lead and implemented them as national strategies for the purpose of correcting the regional disparities with the coastal areas. In order for the central government to similarly approve regional development strategies from the latter half of the 2000s, there were many instances which were taken up as national strategies in similar fashion to the pre-existing ones. However, as the author makes clear via the investigations in this paper, the implementation of regional development strategies has been entrusted to local governments, and the roles of central government and local governments in regional development strategies have been changing.

This paper, based on existing research, first presents the background to the formulation of the regional development strategies, and points out the changes in the aims thereof. Next it brings together in one table an overview of the provincial-level regional development strategies which the central government has approved, and, whilst giving a bird's eye view of the total picture, examines their characteristic features. Lastly it examines the case example of a regional development strategy in Jilin Province, and analyzes the current situation and challenges centered on an analysis of the role of local governments. As a result, the regional development strategies approved by the central government are recognized as having significance for the development of China as a whole; as regards their implementation, they have been entrusted to local governments and the outcomes of development strategies have been greatly dependent on local measures. Here, while novel approaches can be seen which may be called the germs of development models that make best use of the distinctive characteristics of each region by way of local initiatives, there is the potential for great divergence, depending on the area, regarding the direction of the implementation of development strategies and their outcomes.

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