

China's New Northeast Revitalization Strategy: The policy background, content and future prospects

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In 2015, the GRP growth rates for the three provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang fell to 3.0%, 6.5% and 5.7%, respectively, and ranked last, third to last, and fourth to last among China's 31 provinces. It would be fair to say that the three Northeast provinces are a region where the economic conditions in China are the harshest. Against this background, the central government has decided to implement the new Northeast Revitalization Strategy.

On 24 April 2016, the "Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council on the Comprehensive Revitalization of the Old Industrial Bases Including Northeast China" was formally published. This is the guiding policy document showing the direction of the new Northeast Revitalization Strategy, and entering a new phase, it shows the basic philosophy of the Northeast's revitalization and the development goals. It made clear the key tasks from the four aspects of: improvement of systems and mechanisms; promotion of structural adjustment; support for innovation and entrepreneurship; and assurance and improvement of people's living standards.

On 16 August 2016, the "Promoting the Revitalization of Northeast China and Other Old Industrial Bases Three-Year Rolling Implementation Plan (2016–2018)" was published by the National Development and Reform Commission. This "Implementation Plan" made clear 137 key projects to be implemented in the period 2016–2018. Of these 85 were for 2016, 36 for 2017, and 16 for 2018. In addition, the "Implementation Plan" also made clear key projects for the revitalization of Northeast China in the period 2016–2018. The projects were 127 in total, and the total investment is expected to reach 1,281.55 billion yuan. Of these 62 commenced in 2016, with investment estimated at 616.15 billion yuan. There were 33 in 2017, with investment estimated at 273.15 billion yuan, and 32 in 2018, with investment estimated at 392.25 billion yuan. These projects are centered on improvement of infrastructure, and are included among high-speed railways, standard railways, expressways, airports, ports, underground railways, electricity transmission facilities, and water management projects. There are also a number of general industrial projects.

In November 2016, the "Opinions of the State Council on Important Measures to Further Promote the Implementation of the New Round of Revitalizing the Northeast and Speeding up the Economic Stabilization and Improvement of the Northeast Region" was published. The "Opinions on Important Measures", at the same time as paying attention to solving the problems in northeastern China from the viewpoint of long-term economic development, also takes into account the short-term urgent targets of various projects.

At present, northeastern China has still not completely escaped its relative economic decline, and the three provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang are still the lowest ranking for GRP growth rate in China. This shows that revitalization of the Northeast will not be a short-term task, but a long drawn-out process. Whether for systemic reform or cultivation of emerging industries, a long period of time will be necessary. But naturally northeastern China has many unique development advantages. If the tense situation in Northeast Asia can be fundamentally ameliorated, then cooperation in the region will be move forward greatly, and northeastern China's opening-up to the outside world and revitalization will also enter a new stage.

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