THE PROCESS AND STRATEGY OF URBANIZATION DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHWEST CHINA

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ABSTRACT: It is pointed out that the proportion of urban population is high but synthetical urbanization level is low in northwest China. The urban spacial distribution is influenced by usage of water resource, exploitation of mineral resource and constrained by transportation lines. The urban distribution is equipped with beaded characteristic.

It reveals that the main obstruction for urbanization are fragile economic basement, weak transportation facilities, low synthetical transportation capacity. It provides strategies of developing modern transportation, strengthening resource exploitation concentratively developing leading industries, establishing self-growth mechanism to improve urbanization level as a whole.

KEY WORDS: northwest China, urbanization, urban development

I. CURRENT URBANIZATION SITUATION IN NORTHWEST CHINA

Japanese economic development and urbanization level were closely related to its highway system around the Pacific Ocean. Similarly, Longhai (Lianyung—Lanzhou)—Lanxin (Lanzhou—Urumqi) railway and cross railway of Lanqing Lanzhou—Xinjiang)—Baolan (Baotou—Lanzhou) are the pre-conditions of industrialization and urbanization development of northwest China. With the railway of North Xinjiang connecting with Alma—Ata railway, the second Eurasian Continental Bridge has threaded together. They are important to stimulate exploiting resources, developing economy and spurring urbanization in northwest China.

At the beginning of the founding of the People’s Republic of China urbanization level in northwest region was low, only about 10.6%, less than the av-
verage level—12.4%. The Tianshui—Lanzhou section of Longhai railway was extended in 1952, Lanxin railway entered Xinjiang in 1958, and Lanxin railway began to operate in 1963. With this transportation artery opened un-blocked, urbanization process of northwest China speed up. Urbanization level reached 17.24% in 1975. After reforming and opening to the outside world in 1987, it has made great progress gradually (Table 1).

From Table 1, it can be seen that the proportion of urban population in northwest China is higher than the average level of the whole country, and lower than that along coastal areas. But the proportion basement of urban population in Xinjiang, Qinghai and Ningxia is even higher than that in coastal areas. This is because many towns are formed due to resource exploitation and population assembly. Population in Qinghai is sparse and concentrate around towns with good natural conditions. In the Ningxia Plain of northern Ningxia economy is advanced relatively, and towns aggregate, and population concen-trate in these towns. There are a lot of state farms in the towns, most of their population belong to urban population, in face they are engaged in agricultural production. All of these reveal that urbanization quality is low, especially in Xinjiang, Qinghai and Ningxia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Proportion of urban population (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole country</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coastal areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwest region</td>
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<td>Shannxi</td>
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<td>Gansu</td>
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<td>Qinghai</td>
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<td>Ningxia</td>
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<td>Xinjiang</td>
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1. Synthetical Level of Urbanization in Northwest China

In order to evaluate urbanization level synthetically we select six evaluation indexes: \( Y_1 \)—town population proportion; \( Y_2 \)—the rate of nonagricultural labor force to urban population to reflect employment structure; \( Y_3 \)—the number of stores, service trades and catering trades for every 100 persons to reflect the well-being level in urban living; \( Y_4 \)—the number of telephones for every