THE POSITION AND ROLE OF WUHAN CITY IN THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC MACRO-STRATEGIES OF CHINA

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ABSTRACT: Taking the development of export-oriented economy (the strength and temporal sequence) as a main line, this paper discusses and analyses the position and role of Wuhan, which is the biggest metropolis in the central China and the middle section of the Changjiang (Yangtze) River basin, in the regional economic macro-strategy of China from a new visual sight. On the basis of the background of a large economic triangle constructed by Hongkong, Wuhan and Shanghai, the paper discusses the relations between Wuhan and Hongkong, Wuhan and Shanghai. The aim of the paper is to provide some new evidences for the development of great regional economy of China under the co-propelling of the three great economic pivots.

KEY WORDS: regional economy, Wuhan City, Changjiang River Economic Zone, great economic triangle

Taking the opening and development of Pudong in Shanghai as a "head of dragon" and putting the operation of the Three Gorges Project, which is the biggest project in China in the present ages, as a historical opportunity, the overall opening and development in the Changjiang River basin and the formation and development of the Changjiang River Economic Zone will be one of the most significant influential factors affecting all-round economic development of China in the end of this century and the beginning of the next century. Following the four aggregated cities’ belts in the coastal areas of China, i.e. the cities’ belts of Nanjing-Shanghai (NS), Beijing-Tianjin-Tangshan (BTT), Shenyang-Dalian (SD) and Guangzhou-Shenzhen (GS), the formation and development of the aggregated cities’ belt of Wuhan-Huangshi-Jiujiang (WHJ) in the central section of the Changjiang River Economic Zone will be one of

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the most important marks of urbanization and regional economic development in the inland of China (Lu, 1995; Yao, 1992, 1995). The issues of position and role of Wuhan in the opening and development of the Changjiang River Economic Zone, and in the un-balanced development of the regional economy of China are the critical ones to which must be paid attention and made a thorough investigation and study continuously.

I. THE INTERMEDIARY ROLE OF WUHAN SERVING AS A LINKAGE BETWEEN THE EASTERN AND WESTERN PARTS IN THE PROCESS OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF CHINA

The most significant character of un-balanced regional economic development of China is that the primary pattern of regional economic development from the eastern (coastal areas) to the western (the inland) parts has maintained for a long time in the history (Liu et al., 1997a). As a conjunctive point linking the eastern and western parts of China, Wuhan has brought her intermediary role into full play. Since the policy of reform and opening has been carried out, the development of export-oriented economy, which takes the utilization of foreign capital, the import and export trade of ports, and the purchasing value of foreign trade as the major marks, the general driving posture beginning from Shanghai, passing through Wuhan and lasting to the hinterlands of China in the Changjiang River basin, have been exhibited even more clear than that in the past (Table 1, Fig. 1).

From Table 1, it is evident that as a pole of economic development in the Changjiang River basin, the items of agreement newly signed, the value of foreign capital of agreements, the value of foreign capital actually utilized and the import and export trade of port in Shanghai are 25%, 40%, 50% and 85% respectively as much as that in all of the basin. In Nanjing-Shanghai Cities’ Belt, which is a nearest area accepting the diffusive influence from Shanghai, the items of agreement newly signed in the past 8 years is almost twice as much as that in Shanghai Pole, it is about 46% of the total in the whole basin. But it is noticed that the size of agreements in Nanjing-Shanghai Cities’ Belt is relatively smaller. Although the value of agreements is almost equal to that in Shanghai Pole, the value actually utilized is just a half of that in the pole. Between some cities of Jiangsu Cities’ Belt and Shanghai, there are no direct connections by railways and airlines. But by the Changjiang River, the dense waterways and highways network, the condition in these cities for accepting the influences and diffusion from Shanghai Pole are more favorable than that in the other inland cities along the river. In Jiangsu Cities’ Belt, the items of agreement newly signed have exceeded that in the whole western cities’ belts, the value of foreign capital actually utilized has corresponded to that in Wuhan and cities in the eastern section of the upper reaches of the Changjiang River, and the import and export trade of the port has occupied the first place among the all sections except Shanghai Pole and Nanjing-Shanghai Cities’ Belt. Going upstream from Jiangsu Cities’ Belt and passing through Anhui Cities’ Belt and Wuhan-Jiujiang Cities’ Belt, which are two relatively tardy belts of