Promoting Coordinated Economic Development: From the 14th to the 15th Five-Year Plan

Li Xihui[1], Chen Jingzhao[*2], Wu Han[1]

[1] School of Economics, Ocean University of China
[2] School of Economics and Management, Shijiazhuang University

Abstract: *Amid the once-in-a-century transformations unfolding in the new era, China's economic trajectory calls for a further strategic re-exploration built upon its existing foundations. While the 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP) period marked the inaugural stage of China's new journey toward fully building a modern socialist country, the 15th FYP period represents a critical phase for consolidating foundations and comprehensively deepening progress toward basically achieving socialist modernization. By synthesizing the achievements of the 14th FYP period, this paper offers a forward-looking analysis of the 15th FYP period, underscoring its transitional significance in linking past achievements with future goals. Guided by the New Development Concept of innovation, coordination, green development, openness, and sharing, this study provides an in-depth interpretation of coordinated development. It establishes a four-dimensional analytical framework encompassing regional coordination, land-sea coordination, domestic-international coordination, and real-virtual coordination to systematically examine the internal logic and overall trends of China's economic development. This inquiry not only provides a systematic theoretical synthesis of China's development experience but also serves as a practical test of its developmental path within a real-world context, offering both a theoretical basis and practical guidance for the country's future economic direction.*

Keywords: *China's Economy; 14th Five-Year Plan; 15th Five-Year Plan; Coordinated Development*

JEL Classification Codes: R58; O10; P21; E00

DOI: 10.19602/j.chinaeconomist.2026.02.02

The 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP) period (2021-2025) marked the inaugural stage of China's new journey toward fully building a modern socialist country. In contrast, the 15th FYP period (2026-2030) represents a critical phase for laying a solid foundation for basically achieving socialist modernization by 2035 and advancing comprehensive, in-depth reforms. A systematic review of China's development outcomes during the 14th FYP period, combined with a forward-looking analysis of the 15th FYP period, underscores its transitional significance in linking past

[*] CONTACT: Chen Jingzhao, email: 1400093833@qq.com.

Funding: Beijing Social Science Fund Key Project "Research on Beijing's Counterpart Support and the Forging of a Strong Sense of Community for the Chinese Nation" (Grant No. 24GLA001); Shijiazhuang University Doctoral Research Startup Fund Project "Research on In-situ Urbanization Based on Human Capital from the Perspective of Regional Economics" (Grant No. 24BS038).

achievements with future goals. Under the strong leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, China will continue to adhere to the New Development Concept, foster a new pattern of development, and promote the balanced and coordinated development of the national economy during the 15th FYP period. Amid the once-in-a-century transformations unfolding in the new era, China's economic development presents new trends and opportunities alongside emerging contradictions and challenges. In response, General Secretary Xi Jinping first articulated the New Development Concept—comprising innovation, coordination, green development, openness, and sharing—at the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee (2015). This concept clarifies China's developmental trajectory, strategic direction, and key priorities, profoundly addressing the fundamental question of "what kind of development to achieve and how to achieve it" in the new era. Among its five interrelated yet distinct dimensions, coordinated development is specifically dedicated to resolving the problem of unbalanced development. As a pivotal element in China's economic strategy, coordinated development—though formally codified in recent years—is deeply rooted in the practical explorations and theoretical accumulations of successive generations of the central collective leadership since 1949. It represents the distillation and sublimation of General Secretary Xi Jinping's governance experience. The evolution of this concept, progressing from the early vision of "weaker regions striving to take the lead in development" to the "Mountain-Sea Cooperation Project" and finally to "regional coordination and integration", reflects a clear historical logic and practical continuity (Ling, 2025). Therefore, firmly grasping "coordination" as the key driver of socio-economic progress is essential to effectively guiding China's development and ensuring its long-term stability and prosperity.

1. Regional Coordination: Achievements during the 14th FYP Period and Prospects for the 15th FYP Period

Amidst profound and complex changes in the international and domestic landscape during the 14th FYP period, various regions and departments in China have made concerted efforts under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core. Consequently, the primary objectives and tasks of the 14th FYP are completion with high-quality outcomes, marking a successful start to the new journey of fully building a modern socialist country by 2049. The 15th FYP period constitutes a pivotal five-year juncture for China, linking past achievements with future goals in the process of basically achieving socialist modernization. It represents a critical stage in advancing the great cause of building a strong nation and achieving national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization. Therefore, the scientific formulation and solid implementation of the 15th FYP are of paramount importance to the overall progress of China's modernization in the new era. Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, particularly Xi Jinping Thought on Economy, points out the correct direction and provides the fundamental guideline for the scientific formulation of the 15th FYP (Institute of Economics, CASS, 2025). As General Secretary Xi Jinping has pointed out, coordinated development is a valuable concept formed through the Party's long-term practice of leading the people in building socialism. It is an inherent requirement for sustained and healthy economic and social development, and a crucial principle for responding to evolving developmental circumstances and managing economic and social work (Editorial Group for *An Introduction to Xi Jinping Economic Thought*, 2025). Thus, the full implementation and application of the coordinated development concept serve as an essential methodology for China's economic and social construction. This study explores the dimensions of coordination through four lenses: regional coordination, land-sea coordination, domestic-international coordination, and real-virtual coordination. Among these, regional coordination stands as the core foundational project for constructing the new pattern of development.

Under the framework of the Chinese path to modernization, regional coordination is not merely a practical necessity for balanced economic growth, but a pivotal link in modernizing the structure of social reproduction. From the theoretical perspective of Marxist political economy, regional disparities stem from the uneven distribution of productive forces, resource endowments, industrial structures, and demographic patterns. While these imbalances are historical in nature, they can be adjusted through institutional and policy interventions. China's coordinated regional development has been a process of dynamic evolution. From the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the pre-reform era before 1978, the Chinese government prioritized overcoming backward productive forces. Driven by the dual imperatives of national security and industrialization, China implemented a development strategy favoring the inland and emphasizing balanced distribution. Through the First FYP (1953-1957) and the Third Front Construction (1964-1980), industrialization was propelled into the central and western regions. Despite certain efficiency limitations, this approach fundamentally improved the previously extreme regional imbalances. Since the beginning of reform and opening-up in 1978, guided by the principle of "efficiency first" with economic construction as the core, China adopted a coastal-oriented strategy. Through the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and open cities/regions, the eastern region took the lead in development, driving rapid national growth but also widening regional gaps. Entering the new era, as China's principal social contradiction shifted to that between "the people's growing needs for a better life and unbalanced and inadequate development," coordinated regional development was elevated to a national strategy. By continuously advancing major regional initiatives—including the Western Development, Northeast Revitalization, Rise of Central China, and the pioneering development of the Eastern Region—alongside strategic clusters such as the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Coordinated Development, the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and the Chengdu-Chongqing Dual-City Economic Circle—a coordinated pattern of "four major plates and four major strategies" has gradually emerged. This framework supports more coordinated and balanced development, providing a solid foundation for building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and advancing Chinese modernization (Li & Huang, 2014). Overall, China's regional development has evolved from initial balanced development to unbalanced growth, and finally toward strategic coordination. In essence, regional coordination is a dimension formed upon the intrinsic unity of spatial structure and social reproduction, serving as a fundamental prerequisite for the smooth operation of social reproduction across China's vast territorial space.

1.1 Major Provisions on Regional Coordinated Development in the Early Stage of the 14th FYP

The Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development (2021–2025) and Long-Range Objectives through the Year 2035 (hereinafter referred to as the *Outline*) positions regional coordinated development at the strategic height of advancing China's socialist modernization in all respects. From the perspective of the overall modernization agenda, it identifies regional coordination as a "core foundational project" for building the new pattern of development. The *Outline* states that it is necessary to "deeply implement major regional strategies, the coordinated regional development strategy, and the functional zoning strategy; improve institutional mechanisms for coordinated regional development; and build a regional economic layout and a territorial spatial support system conducive to high-quality development". The main content concerning regional coordinated development as articulated in the 14th FYP is summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1. China's Regional Coordination Initiatives in the Early 14th FYP

Further implementing major regional strategies	Regional coordinated development strategy
Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region: Accelerate coordinated development	Western Region: Foster a new pattern in large-scale development
Yangtze River Delta: Elevate the level of integrated development	Central Region: Open up new prospects for the rise of the region
Yangtze River Economic Belt: Promote all-round development	Northeast China: Achieve new breakthroughs in full revitalization
Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area: Advance construction in a steady and prudent manner	Eastern Region: Accelerate modernization
Special-category Regions: Support targeted and differentiated development	
Yellow River Basin: Make solid progress in ecological conservation and high-quality development	

Sources: Organized by the author based on pertinent sources.

1.2 Overall Development Outcomes in the Late Stage of the 14th FYP

Recommendations of the CPC Central Committee for Formulating the 15th FYP for National Economic and Social Development (hereinafter referred to as the *Recommendations*) state that regional coordinated development is an intrinsic requirement of Chinese modernization and fully affirms the implementation outcomes of the 14th FYP. The 14th FYP period marks the first FYP cycle after China completed the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, thus achieving the First Centenary Goal (the centenary of the Communist Party of China in 2021). It is a period in which China, building on this great momentum, has embarked on a new journey toward fully building a modern socialist country in pursuit of its Second Centenary Goal. During this period, the quality of China's economic and social development continued to improve, with remarkable achievements made in six major areas: a new level of total economic output; significantly accelerated innovation-driven development and industrial upgrading; continuously enhanced coordination and balance between urban-rural and regional development; important progress in comprehensively deepening reform; a steadily improved level of opening-up; and the sustained rise in the quality of people's lives (Institute of Economics, CASS, 2025). China has achieved major progress in the field of regional coordinated development, with details shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

TABLE 2. GDP Growth of the Four Major Regional Plates (2018-2024) (in 100 million yuan, %)

Year	Eastern region	Western region	Central region	Northeast	Nationwide
2018	480364.36	188786.71	200973.08	47970.01	936010.1
2019	514573.4	205322.4	217551.9	50544.6	1005872.4
2020	530667.3	213367.1	220636.7	51267.5	1034867.6
2021	602041.9	238080.6	249177.9	56026.1	1173823.0
2022	627080.4	254117.6	260325.1	58003.4	1234029.4
2023	657909.5	268618.7	270552.3	60211.3	1294271.7
2024	693328.6	285661.9	283896.4	63450.8	1349083.5
Average growth	6.36%	7.17%	5.99%	4.80%	6.34%

Sources: *China Statistical Yearbook*; provincial statistical yearbooks; and provincial statistical bulletins on national economic and social development.

Based on the data presented in Table 2, the state of regional coordination in China's economic development can be analyzed across three dimensions: trends, structure, and the degree of disparity.

First, regarding growth trends, all regions demonstrate a pattern of synchronized expansion. Between 2018 and 2024, China's eastern, western, central, and northeastern regions, along with the national economy, maintained sustained growth without significant contraction or prolonged stagnation. This indicates that the major regional plates collectively operated within an upward economic cycle during the observation period. China's national average growth rate stood at 6.34%(weighted average), with specific regional rates as follows: the eastern region at 6.36%, the western region at 7.17%, the central region at 5.99%, and the northeastern region at 4.80%. With overall growth rates concentrated ranging from 4% to 7%, no single region exhibited "imbalanced growth" or severe deviation from the national trajectory. This reflects the overall synchronicity and stability of regional economic development across the country.

Second, regarding growth differentials, China's regional performance exhibits a compensatory pattern characteristic of coordinated development. The western region's average growth rate (7.17%) exceeded both the eastern region (6.36%) and the national average (6.34%). This outperformance reflects the significant impetus provided by the Western Development Strategy, substantial infrastructure investments, and the strategic deployment of emerging sectors such as new energy. Consequently, relatively lagging regions have achieved a degree of "catch-up growth," narrowing the development gap through these higher growth rates. The central region's growth rate (5.99%) remained broadly in line with the national average, consistent with the objectives of the Rise of Central China strategy and underscoring the region's role as a vital hub for industrial relocation and a stabilizer for nationwide balanced development. Although the northeastern region recorded a lower growth rate (4.80%), it maintained steady expansion without a sharp decline. This suggests that Northeast Revitalization policies have successfully provided a strategic buffer, supporting regional economic stability even amidst structural transitions.

Third, from the perspective of regional patterns, China's economic gradient structure displays signs of progressive optimization. The distribution of total economic output continues to adhere to the long-standing spatial hierarchy: led by the eastern region, followed in descending order by the central, western, and northeastern regions. This configuration reflects China's entrenched economic-geographic reality. Nevertheless, the comparatively rapid growth in the western region, together with steady expansion in the central region, has substantially reduced the risk of widening disparities driven by uneven growth rates. On this basis, regional differences can be seen to be gradually shifting from divergence in growth rates toward convergence in overall economic performance.

The preceding analysis demonstrates that China's national strategies for coordinated regional development—encompassing Western Development, the Rise of Central China, Northeast Revitalization, and the Eastern Region's innovation-driven leadership—have generated significant synergistic effects. Regional development in China is not a zero-sum game of "one region's gain being another's loss"; rather, it reflects a virtuous cycle where aggregate growth and differentiated compensatory mechanisms coexist, manifesting a high-level paradigm of coordinated development. As shown in Table 2, the data does not imply "absolute equality" across regions. Instead, it illustrates a trajectory toward enhanced regional equilibrium achieved within the framework of sustained national growth. This transition is characterized by the Western region's relatively accelerated growth, the narrowing dispersion of growth rates nationwide, and a stable structural framework. Collectively, these factors signify China's shift toward a more sophisticated and balanced regional economic landscape.

TABLE 3. GDP of China's Major Regional Strategic Areas (2019-2024) (in 100 million yuan)

Year	Yangtze River Economic Belt	Yellow River Economic Belt	Beijing - Tianjin - Hebei	Yangtze River Delta	Greater Bay Area	Chengdu - Chongqing
2019	455941.5	213644.7	86801.1	204735.4	139373.4	62368.6
2020	470960.9	218277.5	88525.4	212912.7	129644.0	68128.3
2021	532107.9	245822.9	100432.9	241043.4	144872.9	73919.2
2022	555233.0	263427.0	103342.6	251491.2	146658.3	77588.0
2023	584928.8	274709.9	108035.1	264552.3	161762.0	81986.7
2024	621025.8	289365.2	113751.1	280496.4	165533.0	87193.0

Sources: Statistical yearbooks of provinces and municipalities; statistical bulletins on national economic and social development issued by provinces and municipalities; *Monitoring Report on Economic Development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle*.

TABLE 4. Share of National GDP by Major Regional Strategy Areas (2019-2024) (%)

Year	Yangtze River Economic Belt	Yellow River Economic Belt	Beijing - Tianjin - Hebei	Yangtze River Delta	Greater Bay Area	Chengdu - Chongqing
2019	45.33	21.24	8.63	20.35	13.86	6.20
2020	45.51	21.09	8.55	20.57	12.53	6.58
2021	45.33	20.94	8.56	20.53	12.34	6.30
2022	44.99	21.35	8.37	20.38	11.88	6.29
2023	45.19	21.23	8.35	20.44	12.50	6.33
2024	46.03	21.45	8.43	20.79	12.27	6.46

Sources: Statistical yearbooks of provinces and municipalities; statistical bulletins on national economic and social development issued by provinces and municipalities; *Monitoring Report on Economic Development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle*.

Based on the empirical evidence in Tables 3 and 4, China's regional economic coordination is examined across three dimensions: temporal trends, structural composition, and relative dynamics.

First, regarding overall trajectories, China's regional development is characterized by synchronized multi-regional growth, structural stability, and an incremental shift toward spatial equilibrium and optimization. Between 2019 and 2024, China's GDP continued to expand across all major regions, signaling an integrated national growth cycle rather than a fragmented state of localized expansion and peripheral decline. The regional shares of national output have remained remarkably consistent, with minimal volatility; this suggests the absence of a "zero-sum" resource drain, where a single region grows by disproportionately absorbing assets from its neighbors. By 2024, the spatial distribution of China's economic output maintained a stable configuration: the Yangtze River Economic Belt accounted for approximately 46%, the Yellow River Basin 21%, the Yangtze River Delta 21%, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region 8.5%, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (Greater Bay Area) 12.7%, and the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle 6.4%. Such persistence in relative shares underscores a balanced macroeconomic structure and indicates that China's regional economy is successfully resisting polarization, opting instead for a benign paradigm of stable, synergetic evolution.

Second, China's economic development continues to exhibit robust regional coordination across its key strategic sectors. The Yangtze River Economic Belt, acting as the nation's primary economic artery, has consistently fulfilled its regional radiation and spillover functions. Its share of national GDP has remained stable within the 45%-46% range, rebounding to 46.03% in 2024. This stability indicates that while the Yangtze River Economic Belt anchors the national economy, it has avoided excessive centralization, maintaining a dominant yet balanced role that catalyzes growth in adjacent regions. Similarly, the Yellow River Basin, a critical support zone for the central and western hinterlands, has seen its economic weight rise from 21.24% in 2019 to 21.45% in 2024. This upward trajectory suggests that the Yellow River National Strategy—which integrates energy security, ecological conservation, and industrial synergy—is yielding tangible results, effectively preventing the marginalization of central and western regions and strengthening its position within the national spatial layout. Regarding the major urban clusters, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region has maintained a stable share of approximately 8.5% of national output. Its consistent growth suggests a controlled expansion of its regional centrality rather than a localized over-concentration. The Yangtze River Delta, as a world-class urban agglomeration, has entered a mature high-quality development phase while maintaining a strong momentum, with its national share stabilizing between 20% and 21%. This transition reflects a shift from a "speed-first" model to one of structural optimization and nationwide spillover. The Greater Bay Area demonstrated significant resilience against external shocks; after an initial contraction in its share (from 13.86% to 11.88%, and then back up to 12.27%), it has stabilized, consolidating its competitive advantages in innovation and high-level openness without exhibiting excessive polarization. Finally, the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle serves as the most compelling evidence of coordinated development, with its national share rising steadily from 6.20% to 6.46%, effectively establishing itself as a new growth pole in China's west.

Third, from a dynamic perspective, China's regional economic landscape has moved beyond a binary "strong East, weak West" dichotomy, evolving into a sophisticated configuration characterized by gradient optimization and polycentric support. The three primary eastern growth engines—the Yangtze River Delta, the Greater Bay Area, and the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region—have maintained stable national output shares while deepening their internal integration. Crucially, this stability has not led to excessive concentration; rather, it reflects a maturation of regional development toward a more rational trajectory. Concurrently, strategic zones in the central and western regions—specifically the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the Yellow River Basin, and the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle—have seen their economic weight ascend steadily. This shift is fostering a new pattern of development defined by "East-West synergy and coastal-inland linkage." In summary, between 2019 and 2024, China's regional economy established a coordinated development framework defined by "core stability, multi-polar support, gradient optimization, and synergetic advancement." While the developed eastern regions maintain high-level, stable growth, the strategic importance of the central and western regions has expanded, and emerging growth poles have continued to solidify their influence. The absence of severe spatial polarization or structural imbalance underscores the profound efficacy of China's major regional strategies in fostering a more resilient and equitable national economic layout.

1.3 Regional Coordination Trends during the 15th FYP Period

The *Recommendations* outline several pivotal strategic orientations: strengthening regional coordination, promoting interregional linkages, optimizing territorial spatial configurations, and advancing a new type of people-centered urbanization. These directives establish the fundamental path for China's coordinated economic and social development throughout the 15th FYP. This era represents a decisive acceleration phase in China's pursuit of comprehensive socialist modernization. Consequently, economic development must prioritize quality enhancement and efficiency gains to further consolidate the nation's economic, technological, and comprehensive national strength. Such advancements are essential to forging a robust material foundation for long-term objectives, including attaining the level of moderately developed countries, achieving high-level self-reliance and strength in science and technology, and establishing a modernized economic system (Institute of Economics, CASS, 2025). This trajectory necessitates the continued implementation of the new development concept, ensuring that the principle of coordination remains the primary guiding force for socio-economic progress. In this context, regional coordination is poised to undertake increasingly strategic roles in optimizing the layout of productive forces, strengthening the domestic circulation, improving the national innovation system, and facilitating common prosperity. The salient development trends and prospective outlooks for this period are summarized in Table 5.

China's regional coordination during the 15th FYP transcends mere policy adjustment; it represents a fundamental structural logic governing the spatial operations of the economic system. Within the framework of Marxist political economy, regional coordination is conceptualized as a critical constituent of social reproduction that facilitates high-quality development, optimal resource allocation, and a balanced proportional structure. Consequently, any prospective analysis of China's economic trends during this period must move beyond traditional regional development paradigms. Instead, it necessitates a systematic, holistic, and comprehensive evaluation anchored in the spatial, industrial, innovation, and institutional dimensions of the Chinese path to modernization.

TABLE 5. Trends and Prospects for China's Regional Coordinated Development in the 15th FYP

Trends and prospects	Main features (key indicators)	Mechanisms (strategic logic)
Towards a More Efficient Modernized Spatial Configuration	• Tri-Polar Growth: Yellow River Delta, Greater Bay Area, and Chengdu-Chongqing as national-level growth engines • Strategic Hinterlands: Central and western regions as the "Second Tier" via industrial relocation and innovation capacity • Revitalization: Northeast China further stabilizing its industrial base through smart manufacturing and green energy	From "convergent coordination" to "structural reconfiguration": Shift from simple catch-up growth toward systematic restructuring of spatial patterns
Deep Synergy Across Industrial, Innovation, and Supply Chains	• Complementarity: Eastern head-end advantages in industrial chains + central/western supporting capabilities in industrial chains • Digital Integration: "Eastern Data, Western Computing" driving unified national computing power • Networked Ecosystems: Cross-regional "innovation corridors" and manufacturing collaboration circles	Systematic integration: Formation of a nationwide "industry - innovation - logistics - data" synergistic framework as the inevitable outcome of structural chain realignment
More Balanced Urbanization and County-Level Economic Development	• Relocation Hubs: Small and medium-sized cities and county areas as key destinations for industrial relocation • Factor Mobility: Enhanced two-way urban-rural resource flows • Service Equity: Greater equalization of public services across regions	Domestic demand driver: County-level economies as a core force in expanding the internal circulation strategy
Sustained Coupling of Regional Coordination and Green Transition	• Eastern Lead: Building green supply chains and green foreign trade systems • Central Focus: Developing green manufacturing and clean energy • Western Base: Establishing large-scale clean energy bases • Northeast Upgrading: Continuing transformation of old industrial bases	Scale shift: From localized green demonstrations to comprehensive nationwide structural greening
Spatial Restructuring Embedded in the Dual Circulation Framework	• Market Balance: More balanced domestic market structures • Institutional Diffusion: Deep expansion of free-trade zone/port innovations • Global Reach: Land-Sea New Corridors as new international opening channels	Diversified openness: Transition from coastal dominance to a multi-dimensional, multi-center framework—a necessary choice for building a secure, high-resilience open system

Sources: Organized by the author based on pertinent sources.

2. Land-Sea Coordination: Achievements of the 14th FYP and Outlook for the 15th FYP

As previously established, the rigorous implementation and application of the "coordinated development" philosophy serve as a vital guarantee for the steady progression of China's socio-economic development. The strategic framework of coordinated development rests on four primary axes: regional coordination, land-sea linkage, domestic-international synergy, and the alignment of the real and virtual economies. Among these, land-sea coordination functions as both a critical strategic conduit and a foundational pillar of the "new pattern of development."

The construction of a maritime power aligns with the objective laws of China's development and conforms to the prevailing global trends, representing an inevitable choice for realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. As a pivotal component of the New Development Concept, overall land-sea planning and coordination emphasizes the unified planning of two major systems—coastal terrestrial areas and the marine environment—encompassing resource utilization, economic development, environmental protection, ecological security, and regional policy. In practice, this coordination should adhere to the principle of tailoring measures to local conditions, adopting diverse forms to advance land-sea integration and promote high-quality, sustainable regional growth (Hao & Ni, 2020). The 18th CPC National Congress (2012) proposed to "enhance the capacity for marine resource development, developing the marine economy, protecting the marine ecological environment, resolutely safeguard national maritime rights and interests, and build China into a maritime power." This marked the national-level establishment of the strategic importance of marine development, fostering a firm conviction and awareness of utilizing marine resources to build a maritime power. *The Report to the 19th CPC National Congress* (2017) emphasized: "We will persist in overall land-sea planning and accelerate efforts to build China into a maritime power," signifying a continued deepening of the understanding of the ocean and the initiation of systematic efforts to promote land-sea complementarity and collaborative development, thereby driving the maritime power strategy from conceptual vision toward practical implementation. *The Report to the 20th CPC National Congress* (2022) further advocated for developing the marine economy and protecting the marine ecological environment to accelerate the building of a maritime power, underscoring that marine economic development must prioritize ecological protection under the philosophy of sustainable development. Most recently, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee (October 2025), stated in the *Recommendations*: "We should pursue coordinated land and marine development, increase the capacity for sea management, advance high-quality development of the marine economy, and step up efforts to build China into a strong maritime country." This provides a clear orientation for marine development during the 15th FYP and beyond, while identifying the key focal points for the advancement of the maritime power strategy.

From a theoretical perspective, land-sea coordination is essentially a concrete embodiment of the "modernization of circulation structures." Within the framework of Marxist political economy, circulation time constitutes an integral component of capital turnover time, while the velocity of capital turnover directly determines the capacity for valorization of the total social capital. Transport corridors and port systems serve as the physical support for the operation of production and trade networks. Whether land-sea conduits remain unobstructed and whether the allocation of land-sea factors is synergistic not only bears upon the level and scope of a nation's opening-up, but also profoundly influences the formation of the unified national market and the operational efficiency of the "dual circulation" new development pattern. Consequently, land-sea coordination carries profound spatial significance and embodies a deep-seated economic logic and developmental rationality.

2.1 Land-Sea Coordination Initiatives during the Early Stage of the 14th FYP

From the strategic perspective of accelerating China's development as a maritime power, the *Outline* identifies land-sea coordination as a pivotal initiative for constructing the "new pattern of development." The *Outline* specifically calls for "actively expanding the scope of marine economic development". The primary strategic arrangements and policy measures concerning land-sea coordinated development are summarized in Table 6.

TABLE 6. China's Key Land-Sea Coordination Initiatives during the Early 14th FYP

Strategic themes	Key policy objectives	Implementation measures and actions
Unimpeded domestic circulation	Strengthening the support function of the circulation system	• Develop railway express freight products, such as high-speed rail (HSR) express freight • Strengthen the construction of international air cargo capacity and improve the global competitiveness of international maritime shipping
Expanding the scope of the marine economy	Building a modern marine industrial system	• Establish high-quality marine economic development demonstration zones and specialized marine industrial clusters • Comprehensively improve the development levels of the Northern, Eastern, and Southern Marine Economic Circles • Utilize the coastal economic belt as a support to deepen maritime cooperation with neighboring countries
	Deepening participation in global ocean governance	• Proactively develop "Blue Partnerships" and engage deeply in the formulation and implementation of international maritime governance mechanisms and rules • Promote the construction of a just and reasonable international maritime order and foster a Maritime Community with a Shared Future • Participate in pragmatic Arctic cooperation and construct the "Polar Silk Road"; enhance capacities for the protection and utilization of the Antarctic • Strengthen situational analysis, risk prevention, and legal efforts; bolster maritime judicial construction to resolutely safeguard national maritime rights and interests • Orderly advance the legislation of the Basic Maritime Law
High-quality "Belt and Road" development	Advancing infrastructure interconnectivity	• Promote "Four-in-One" connectivity across land, sea, air, and cyberspace • Use the "Six Corridors, Six Routes, Multi-Country, and Multi-Port" as the basic framework to build economic corridors led by the New Eurasian Land Bridge • Construct the new international land-sea trade corridor

Sources: Organized by the author based on pertinent sources.

2.2 Performance Assessment of Key Indicators during the Late 14th FYP

The 14th FYP represents the inaugural planning phase following China's transition from achieving a moderately prosperous society (*Xiaokang*) and the First Centenary Goal—aimed at eradicating absolute poverty and completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects by the centenary of the CPC in 2021—to embarking on a new journey toward comprehensive socialist modernization and the Second Centenary Goal—focused on building a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful by the centenary of the People's Republic of China in 2049. Throughout this period, China has seen sustained enhancement in the quality of its socio-economic development. Crucially, the guiding philosophy of "land-sea coordination" has undergone a fundamental evolution, shifting from an project-based thinking centered on infrastructure projects—such as road and port construction—toward a structural logic anchored in the "modernization of circulation systems." This paradigm shift prioritizes the network properties of corridors, the agglomeration effects of transport hubs, and the synergistic integration of systems. Such an evolution underscores the important role of the "coordination" principle in the development of land-sea conduits. The specific developmental achievements during this period are detailed in Tables 7, 8, 9 and 10.

TABLE 7. China's Gross Ocean Product and Share (2020-2024)

Year	GDP (in 100 million yuan)	Marine industry (in 100 million yuan)	Share (%)
2020	1034867.6	80010	7.73
2021	1173823	90385	7.70
2022	1234029.4	94628	7.67
2023	1294271.7	99125	7.66
2024	1349083.5	105438	7.82

Source: *China Statistical Yearbook*; Marine Statistical Bulletin. Same to Table 8, 9 and 10.

TABLE 8. Output Value of China's Primary Marine Industry and Share (2020-2024)

Year	Domestic primary industry (in 100 million yuan)	Marine primary industry (in 100 million yuan)	Share of marine primary industry (%)
2020	78030.9	3920.49	5.02
2021	83216.5	4157.71	5.00
2022	88207.0	4352.888	4.93
2023	89169.1	4658.875	5.22
2024	91413.9	4850.148	5.31

TABLE 9. Output Value of the Secondary Marine Industry and Share (2020-2024)

Year	China's secondary industry (in 100 million yuan)	Marine secondary industry (in 100 million yuan)	Share of marine secondary industry (%)
2020	381985.8	26723.34	7.00
2021	447138.2	31273.21	6.99
2022	467629.6	34539.22	7.39
2023	475936.1	35784.125	7.52
2024	492087.1	37746.804	7.67

TABLE 10. Output Value of the Tertiary Marine Industry and Share (2020-2024)

Year	China's tertiary industry (in 100 million yuan)	Marine tertiary industry (in 100 million yuan)	Share of marine tertiary industry (%)
2020	574850.9	49366.17	8.59
2021	643468.4	54954.08	8.54
2022	678192.7	55735.892	8.22
2023	729166.5	58682	8.05
2024	765582.5	62841.048	8.21

Based on the empirical evidence presented in Tables 7 through 10, the land-sea coordination of China's economic development can be analyzed across three distinct dimensions: aggregate scale, structural composition, and relational synergy.

First, regarding aggregate growth, China's terrestrial and marine economies exhibit a clear trajectory of synchronized expansion. Data indicate that from 2020 to 2024, China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) experienced steady growth, rising from approximately 103 trillion yuan to 134 trillion yuan. Concurrently, the Gross Marine Product (GMP) followed a similar upward trend, increasing from approximately 8 trillion yuan to 10.5 trillion yuan. Furthermore, both the three major domestic industries and their maritime counterparts achieved year-on-year scale expansions. This trend suggests that China's economic momentum is not exclusively land-dependent; rather, the terrestrial and maritime economies are expanding in parallel and moving in the same strategic direction. This demonstrates a high degree of aggregate-level synergy between land and sea sectors in terms of their overall development scale.

Second, from the perspective of structural proportions, the strategic position of China's marine economy within the national economy has steadily improved. With the Gross Marine Product (GMP) consistently accounting for 7.6%-7.9% of GDP, the maritime sector has not been marginalized amidst overall economic expansion, instead maintaining strong structural stability. At the same time, the marine economy has maintained strong momentum, with continued structural upgrading and steady improvements in quality. The primary marine sector—including marine fisheries and modern marine ranching—has remained stable and, in coordination with terrestrial agriculture, contributes to safeguarding food security and resource supply. The secondary marine sector, encompassing marine equipment manufacturing, offshore engineering, and maritime energy, has regained dynamism, developing complementary and integrated industrial chains with land-based manufacturing and providing sustained support for industrial growth. The tertiary marine sector—covering port logistics, maritime transport, marine tourism, and marine information services—has continued to expand, working in tandem with land-based services to foster a modern service system and promote the integrated upgrading of land-sea service industries.

Third, regarding the coordination landscape, China's terrestrial and marine economies exhibit developmental characteristics defined by "synergistic advancement and enhanced resilience." Typically, an imbalance between land and sea development would manifest as a contraction of the marine economy or significant volatility in its relative share. However, the data indicate that China's terrestrial and marine economic scales have expanded in parallel, with the marine sector's proportion remaining relatively stable and demonstrating a clear recovery trend following periodic fluctuations. This evidence suggests that land-sea equilibrium has been consistently given priority in resource allocation, industrial layout, and policy orientation. The overall trajectory of the three major marine industries further reflects the sector's independent recovery capacity and robust strategic resilience, fostering functional complementarity and shared risk mitigation with the terrestrial economy. In summary, while China's terrestrial economy continues to strengthen, the marine economy has achieved synchronized expansion and a steady rise in its functional role. This reflects a development trajectory characterized by "overall land-sea planning and coordinated advancement," underscoring the positive outcomes of land-sea coordinated development during the 14th FYP.

2.3 Strategic Trends in Land-Sea Coordinated Development during the 15th FYP

The *Recommendations* states, "We should pursue coordinated land and marine development, increase the capacity for sea management, advance high-quality development of the marine economy, and step up efforts to build China into a strong maritime country." In this strategic context, the concept of a "region" encompasses both terrestrial and marine spaces, providing an important analytical foundation for grasping the overall trajectory of coordinated socio-economic development during the 15th FYP period (Institute of Economics, CASS, 2025). During this period, China's economic development will prioritize improvements in quality and efficiency, while continuously strengthening the nation's economic strength, technological capabilities, and overall national power. These efforts aim to consolidate the material foundation for achieving the broader objectives of reaching the level of moderately developed countries, attaining high-level technological self-reliance, and establishing a modern economic system. Achieving these goals requires continued adherence to the New Development Concept and giving full play to the pivotal role of "coordination" in socio-economic development. As the 15th FYP marks a critical acceleration stage in China's comprehensive drive toward socialist modernization, the functional role of land-sea coordination will be further elevated—from a "foundational project" to a "strategic platform" and a "global network node." This shift is expected to promote structural optimization and reconfiguration of the national land-sea development pattern. The specific development trends and future prospects can be broadly summarized in Table 11.

TABLE 11. Trends and Prospects for Land-Sea Coordinated Development in the 15th FYP

Strategic trends	Key manifestations	Underlying logic
From a "major transport country" to a "leading transport power": The corridor system will transition from quantitative expansion to a qualitative leap	• Improving the intelligence, green development, and resilience of the integrated transport network • Further development of smart ports, multimodal transport, integrated hubs, and fully automated terminals • Increasingly highlighting advantages such as time precision and low comprehensive costs	• Emphasis on the operational efficiency of the entire corridor network • Transitioning from "physical connectivity" to "digital connectivity" and "institutional connectivity"
The New Western Land-Sea Corridor (NWLSC) as a pivotal axis for national spatial restructuring	• Interconnecting the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, the Overland Silk Road, and the China-Europe Railway Express via the NWLSC • Central and western regions transforming from traditional "inland hinterlands" into new hubs of opening-up • Formation of ribbon-like national-level growth poles and open highlands along corridors	• Following the spatial evolution path: Corridor — Node — Network — Region • Following the progressive logic: "Corridor — Hub — Industry — New Economic Belt"
Deep coupling of land-sea coordination with "Dual Circulation," playing a vital role in stabilizing foreign trade, optimizing domestic demand, and structural adjustment	• Adjusting corridor systems to provide a larger spatial reach for domestic demand expansion • Developing diversified international corridors to mitigate geopolitical risks and external shocks while strengthening foreign trade resilience	• Positioning land-sea coordination as shared public infrastructure for both domestic and international circulation • Shifting the bearing capacity objective from being "outward-oriented" to "balancing internal and external needs"
Land-sea coordination as a strategic support for China's participation in global supply chain restructuring	• Corridor restructuring enabling a strategic positioning for China's deep participation in global value chains. • Diversified land-sea corridors making China the core link in globalized connectivity	• Evolution from a traditional "global factory" to a pivotal link in the global "supply chain — value chain"
The spatial upgrading and value chain embedding of land-sea coordination	• Upgrading land-sea linkage from "transport corridors" to a "value chain strategy" • All-around support for regional coordination, domestic-international coordination, and real-virtual coordination	• Land-sea linkage upgrading from "transport corridors" to a "value chain strategy," providing all-around support for multidimensional coordination

Sources: Organized by the author based on pertinent sources.

During the 15th FYP period, China's land-sea coordination relates not only to transport corridor construction but, more fundamentally, to the modernization process of the production-circulation-reproduction system. It manifests as a structural leap from a "coastal, outward-oriented growth model" toward a new developmental configuration characterized by "national integration, multi-channel openness, and high-resilience supply chains." Accordingly, the outlook for economic development trends during this period requires stepping outside the traditional land-sea binary analytical framework. It must be grounded in a profound consideration of the spatial, industrial, innovation, and institutional logics of the Chinese path to modernization.

3. Domestic-International Coordination: Achievements in the 14th FYP Period and Prospects for the 15th FYP Period

President Xi Jinping has pointed out that the domestic circulation serving as the mainstay and the mutual reinforcement of domestic and international circulations constitute a dialectical unity. Whether in coordinating development and security or in participating in international competition and cooperation, the domestic and international circulations promote one another and cannot be neglected or emphasized at the expense of the other (Shi, 2023). On the one hand, it is essential to be grounded in the domestic circulation and leverage comparative advantages, using the domestic circulation to attract global factors of production. This serves to not only satisfy domestic demand but also elevate the level of industrial-technological development, while strengthening China's discourse power in global industrial, supply, and innovation chains. On the other hand, we must more effectively utilize both domestic and international markets and resources to strengthen the influence and driving force of the domestic circulation on the international circulation. This involves expanding high-level opening-up and attracting and clustering high-quality global resources such as capital, technology, and talent. By leveraging the domestic cycle to catalyze international engagement, and utilizing open international cooperation to reinforce the domestic sphere, China can significantly enhance the efficiency and quality of its internal circulation. This reinforces the linkage effect between domestic and international markets and resources, enabling the domestic and international circulations to reinforce each other (Editorial Group for *An Introduction to Xi Jinping Economic Thought*, 2025). This requires promoting the coordinated development of domestic and international dimensions at a deeper level and across broader scales. From the perspective of social reproduction theory in Marxist political economy, the domestic and international markets constitute the two fundamental spaces for the realization of value, jointly determining the scale boundary of social reproduction and the sources of economic growth. Marx (1975) noted: "The world market is the foundation and the condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production." The realization of value in any economy depends on both the robustness of its internal market structure and the expansibility of its external market. In the context of China's economic development in the new era, "domestic-international coordination" represents the contemporary practice and innovative development of this classic theory. By coordinating the expansion of domestic demand and the optimization of external demand, and constructing a new development pattern of "dual circulation," China aims to enhance the coordination between domestic and international development, thereby achieving a higher level of social reproduction efficiency and a deeper level of security and resilience.

3.1 Domestic-International Coordination Initiatives in the Early Stage of the 14th FYP

Proceeding from the strategic heights of "building a robust domestic market and fostering a new pattern of development" and "promoting high-standard opening up and creating new horizons for mutually beneficial cooperation," the *Outline* accords a pivotal position to domestic-international coordination in promoting China's high-quality economic development. The primary content regarding domestic-international coordination as outlined in this framework is summarized in Table 12.

TABLE 12. Primary Content Regarding Domestic-International Coordination in the Early 14th FYP Period

Strategic pillar	Core initiative	Key policy measures and objectives
Forming a strong domestic market and constructing a new development pattern	Strengthening the supporting role of the circulation system	Accelerate the construction of a unified national market; optimize the market environment by aligning with international advanced rules and best practices; Promote the coordination and unification of standards, rules, and policies across different regions and industries; Effectively dismantle local protectionism, sectoral monopolies, and market fragmentation
Promoting the mutual reinforcement of domestic and international circulation	Promoting domestic and international dual circulation	Synergistically advance the development of a strong domestic market and a leading trading nation, grounded in domestic circulation; Build a powerful magnet for global production factors; Promote the coordinated development of domestic and external demand, imports and exports, and two-way investment; Accelerate the cultivation of new competitive advantages in international cooperation and competition
Developing a new system for a higher-level open economy	Enhancing the functions of opening-up platforms	Coordinate the development of various opening-up platforms to achieve new heights of openness, marked by higher standards, a world-class business climate, and stronger spillover effects
		Steadily advance the development of the Hainan Free Trade Port; leverage "zero-tariff" policies for trade in goods to facilitate the initial establishment of a policy and institutional framework for a free trade port with Chinese characteristics

Sources: Organized by the author based on pertinent sources.

3.2 Summary of Overall Achievements in Key Indicators Toward the Conclusion of the 14th FYP

The *Recommendations* emphasize "building a strong domestic market and fostering a new pattern of development" and "promoting high-standard opening up and creating new horizons for mutually beneficial cooperation," while fully affirming the implementation achievements of the 14th FYP. The 14th FYP represents the inaugural planning stage for China to embark on a new journey to comprehensively build a modern socialist country and marching toward the Second Centenary Goal, following the nation's accomplishment of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and the realization of the First Centenary Goal in 2021. During this period, "domestic-international coordination" effectively consolidated and enhanced the structural resilience of China's economic development by continuously expanding the scale of the domestic market and deeply optimizing the quality of participation in the international division of labor; specific details are presented in Tables 13 and 14 and Figure 1.

TABLE 13. Total Trade Volume and Proportion of Primary Products in China's Imports and Exports (2019-2024)

Year	Total exports (in 100 million yuan)	Total imports (in 100 million yuan)	Export share (%)	Import share (%)
2019	9232.95	50294.76	15.51	84.49
2020	8014.80	47560.57	14.42	85.58
2021	9057.64	63104.59	12.55	87.45
2022	11290.75	72583.34	13.46	86.54
2023	11538.11	76351.76	13.13	86.87
2024	11438.25	75513.10	13.15	86.85

Source: *China Statistical Yearbook*.

TABLE 14. Total Trade Volume and Proportion of Manufactured Goods in China's Imports and Exports (2019-2024)

Year	Total exports (in 100 million yuan)	Total imports (in 100 million yuan)	Export share (%)	Import share (%)
2019	163140.69	92958.93	63.70	36.30
2020	171264.06	95375.82	64.23	35.77
2021	208229.74	110529.71	65.33	34.67
2022	226120.78	108016.72	67.67	32.33
2023	226118.26	103510.99	68.60	31.40
2024	243004.88	108277.68	69.18	30.82

Source: *China Statistical Yearbook*.

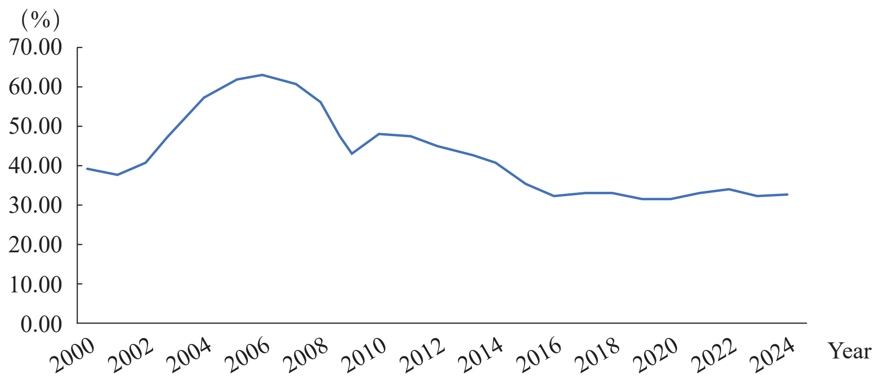

Fig. 1. Foreign Trade Dependence Ratio (2020-2024)

Sources: *China Statistical Yearbook*.

Integrating the data from Tables 13 and 14 with the foreign trade dependence ratio shown in Figure 1, the domestic-international coordination of China's economic development can be analyzed across three dimensions: trade structure, import-export relations, and functional division of labor:

First, in terms of trade structure, international circulation and domestic industrial upgrading exhibit a synergistic and mutually reinforcing trend. Data from Table 13 (primary products) and Table 14 (manufactured goods) indicate that the export share of primary products has shown an overall downward trend (from 15.51% to 13.15%), signaling China's gradual transition away from a reliance on resource-based and low-value-added export models. During the same period, the export share of manufactured goods remained at a consistently high level between 63% and 70%, eventually rising to 69.18%, which demonstrates the sustained enhancement of China's comparative advantages in the manufacturing sector. This structural shift indicates that China's mode of participation in the international division of labor has shifted from a reliance on primary products toward a trade model led by high-value-added manufactured goods, reflecting the dynamic coordination between domestic industrial upgrading and international trade structure optimization.

Second, from the perspective of import-export relations, China has focused on enhancing economic autonomy and security while opening wider to the outside world. The import share of primary products has remained stable between 84% and 88% (shifting from 84.49% to 86.85%), indicating that China maintains a rational level of openness regarding food, energy, and resource-based products, while gradually strengthening domestic supply and security safeguard capabilities. Meanwhile, the import share of manufactured goods has steadily declined from approximately 36% to around 30%. This trend reflects, on the one hand, the continuous enhancement of China's domestic manufacturing supply capabilities and the steady improvement of its industrial chain autonomy; on the other hand, the continued import of a significant volume of advanced technological equipment and key components demonstrates China's proactive stance in consistently absorbing global innovation factors through wider opening-up. Such adjustments in the import-export structure reflect the gradual formation of a coordinated domestic-international resource allocation mechanism characterized by "controllable dependence and dynamic balance" within the process of balancing openness and security. The domestic and international circulations have transitioned from "parallel operation" to deep "coupling" and mutual embedding. By leveraging platforms such as Pilot Free Trade Zones and Free Trade Ports, the in-depth linkages between domestic and international industrial chains have been continuously strengthened, resulting in a pattern of coordinated domestic-international development characterized by high-level connectivity and synergistic symbiosis.

Third, with respect to the functional division of labor, a benign interaction between domestic and external demand has been realized under the new development pattern of "dual circulation." As illustrated by the preceding figures and tables, China participates in global market competition by exporting internationally competitive manufactured goods. While benefiting from technology diffusion, economies of scale, and foreign exchange earnings, China also effectively compensates for stage-related shortcomings in its domestic resource endowments and industrial system through the moderate import of primary products and key manufactured goods. This has formed an interactive pattern where "domestic circulation is the mainstay, with international circulation reinforcing domestic circulation," thereby creating a coordinated development closed-loop comprising "domestic industrial upgrading - international trade structure optimization - enhanced domestic economic security." In summary, during the 14th FYP, China has not only maintained a pattern of mutually beneficial opening-up but has also achieved synergistic progress and structural coordination between domestic economic development and international economic engagement under the new development pattern of "dual circulation".

3.3 Trends in Domestic-International Coordinated Development During the 15th FYP

The *Recommendations* call for the diversification of markets and the integration of domestic and foreign trade, thereby further clarifying the strategic orientation and core tenets of a new model for domestic-international coordination. "China's inland regions, in advancing opening-up, have consistently pursued high-level opening-up and actively participated in global economic governance and regional cooperation, thereby enhancing their international competitiveness and influence" (Institute of Economics, CASS, 2025). Against this backdrop, President Xi Jinping pointed out that, standing at a new historical starting point, achieving the "Two Centenary Goals" and realizing the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation require adapting to new trends in economic globalization, accurately assessing changes in the international landscape, and deeply understanding new domestic requirements for reform and development. It is therefore necessary to take more proactive and effective actions to advance higher-level opening-up, accelerate the implementation of the free trade zone strategy, and expedite the establishment of a new open economic system. Through taking the initiative in opening-up, China seeks to gain the initiative in economic development and secure the initiative in international competition[1,2]. During the 15th FYP, China's economic development will focus on improving quality and efficiency, while further strengthening economic strength, scientific and technological strength, and overall national strength, thereby laying a solid material foundation for reaching the level of moderately developed countries, achieving high-level scientific and technological self-reliance and strength, and building a modern economic system (Institute of Economics, CASS, 2025). This requires continued adherence to the new development philosophy, with coordination playing an important role in economic and social development. As China enters a critical acceleration phase in comprehensively building a modern socialist country during the 15th FYP, domestic-international coordination will play an increasingly important and sustained role in promoting high-quality economic development. The main development trends and future prospects can be summarized in several aspects, as shown in Table 15.

During the 15th FYP period, coordinated development of domestic and international circulation will enhance the endogenous driving forces and reliability of domestic circulation, while international circulation will continue to expand in both breadth and depth. Through their deepened integration, the two circulations will jointly enhance systemic security and long-term resilience of China's economic development, ultimately advancing a spatially integrated dual-structure development pattern. Accordingly, any prospective analysis of China's economic development trends in the 15th FYP period must transcend the conventional domestic-international dichotomy. Instead, analysis must be situated within the broader framework of the Chinese path to modernization, and grounded in its interrelated spatial logic, industrial logic, innovation logic, and institutional logic.

---

[1] Chen Baosheng, "Accelerating the Transition from a Large Economy to a Strong Economy: An In-Depth Study of Xi Jinping's Economic Strategic Thought," October 15, 2014, http://finance.people.com.cn/n/2014/1015/c1004-25835167.html.

[2] Wang Wentao, "Expanding High-Level Opening-Up," December 8, 2025, https://www.ccps.gov.cn/xxwx/202512/t20251208_169437.shtml.

TABLE 15. Domestic-International Coordinated Development in the 15th FYP: Trends and Prospects

Development trends and prospects	Specific manifestations	Trends
Domestic circulation as the core of long-term stable economic growth	Advancement of a unified national market toward a world-class mega-market Further unleashing the effects of technological innovation and new quality productive forces (NQPF) A more scientifically structured and rationalized circulation system	Innovation effects of NQPF Patient capital supporting long-cycle growth Improved structural coordination
International circulation with greater emphasis on institutional opening-up and strategic supply chain security	Institutional opening-up becoming a central focus, e.g., rules, standards, and digital governance Enhanced autonomy and resilience of global supply chains The Belt and Road Initiative entering a deeper stage of high-quality development	Reproduction within the framework of security Transition from scale expansion to strategic opening-up
Dual circulation advancing toward higher-level coordinated integration	Integration of domestic and international markets, with value inter-embedding as an underlying logic Further coordinated optimization of domestic and international industrial chains, exhibiting a "chain-network integration" trend Domestic and international scientific and technological development progressively overcoming blockades and entering an interactive evolutionary stage	Evolution of cooperation modes driven by a mutual-benefit value concept Strengthened integration in response to global environmental changes Further deepening of a community with a shared future for mankind

Sources: Organized by the author based on pertinent sources.

4. The Achievements of Real-Virtual Coordination during the 14th FYP and Prospects for the 15th FYP

The coordinated development of the real economy and the virtual economy is not a peripheral issue in economic development; rather, it constitutes an overarching structural framework that permeates the forms of capital, technological systems, industrial structure, governance architecture, and the operational logic of the economy as a whole. From the perspective of Marxist political economy, the "real economy" and the "virtual economy" represent distinct external manifestations of capital at different stages and in different forms within the circuit of capital and the process of capital valorization. The expansion of virtual capital must ultimately rest upon the production of real surplus value in the real economy. Once detached from the value foundation created by the real economy, the self-expansion of virtual capital may generate distortions in capital accumulation and potentially give rise to systemic economic crises. Accordingly, the proportional relationship between real capital and virtual capital, together with their structural coordination and operational logic, constitutes a decisive condition for the stability of social reproduction in modern economies. Entering the new era, China's economy has transitioned from a phase of high-speed growth to one of high-quality development. Meanwhile, the digital economy has expanded rapidly, the financial system has undergone deepening transformation, and the forms of capital have become increasingly diversified and advanced. Within this broader structural transformation, achieving coordinated development between the real and virtual economies has emerged as a central proposition bearing directly on China's long-term economic stability and its increasing capacity for innovation. The relationship between the real and virtual economies thus reflects the intrinsic soundness and risk-resilience of an economic system and serves as an important indicator of whether a modern economic system can operate in a stable and sustainable manner.

4.1 Major Policy Arrangements Concerning Real-Virtual Coordination in the Early Stage of the 14th FYP

Grounded in the strategic imperative of "accelerating digital development and building a digital China," the *Outline* positions the coordination between the real economy and the virtual economy as a critical component in advancing high-quality economic development. The principal policy arrangements deployed in the early stage of the 14th FYP that relate to the coordinated development of the real and virtual economies are presented in Table 16.

TABLE 16. Major Policy Arrangements Related to Real-Virtual Coordinated Development in the Early Stage of the 14th FYP

Policy domain	Key initiative	Core policy content
Enhancing digital government development	Strengthening public data openness and sharing	Establish a robust national public data resource system; ensure public data security; and promote the cross-departmental, cross-level, and cross-regional aggregation, integration, and in-depth utilization of data
Improving systems and mechanisms for scientific and technological innovation (STI)	Proactively promoting open cooperation in science and technology	Implement a more open, inclusive, and mutually beneficial international STI cooperation strategy, and integrate more proactively into global innovation networks
Fostering a sound digital ecosystem	Establishing and improving rules for the data factor market	Strengthen data security assessment mechanisms and promote the safe and orderly cross-border flow of data.
	Strengthening cybersecurity protection	Advance international exchanges and cooperation in cyberspace; promote the formulation of international rules for the digital domain and cyberspace through the United Nations as the primary channel, based on the principles of the UN Charter

Sources: Organized by the author based on pertinent sources.

4.2 Overall Development Outcomes Reflected in Key Indicators in the Late Stage of the 14th FYP

The *Recommendations* emphasize that "We should keep our focus on the real economy" and "advance the Digital China initiative," while fully affirming the implementation achievements of the 14th FYP. Throughout this period, the quality of China's economic and social development has steadily improved. The real economy faced an imperative for renewed innovation and redevelopment, aimed at unleashing NQPF through systemic innovation and transformation. This shift is designed to fully harness the creative effects of new production modes while mitigating their potential disruptive impacts, thereby breaking the "lock-in effect" of traditional modes and transitioning from path dependence to path creation. Consequently, this process facilitates the formation of a more inclusive institutional environment and growth model (Institute of Economics, CASS, 2025). During the 14th FYP, China achieved significant progress in "real-virtual coordination." Financial resources were increasingly channeled into the real economy, leading to a more rational capital structure. The Chinese economy exhibited a positive shift from "capital deviating from the real economy" to "capital returning to the real economy," effectively easing the structural tensions between the real and virtual sectors. Furthermore, a deeper structural integration between technological innovation and capital forms was realized. The relationship between the real and virtual economies evolved from "explicit friction" to "effective mitigation," characterized by increasingly distinct boundaries and more coordinated functional interactions. Specific outcomes are detailed in Table 17 and Figures 2, 3, and 4.

TABLE 17. Development Indicators of China's Real and Virtual Economies (2019-2024)

Year	Total investment in fixed assets (100 million yuan)	Stock of social financing (100 million yuan)	Number of patent applications
2019	435428	2514071	4195104
2020	446921	2847526	5016030
2021	468559	3141163	5060312
2022	491295	3442180	5186407
2023	505066	3780839	5383449
2024	520916	4083375	5653429

Source: *China Statistical Yearbook*.

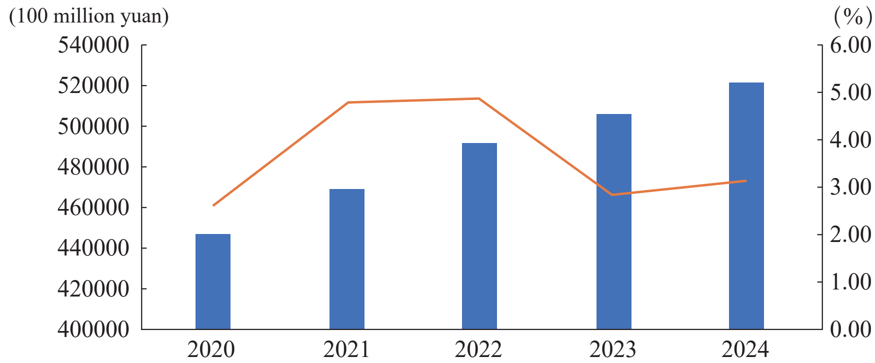

Fig. 2. Total Investment in Fixed Assets and Its Growth Rate (2020-2024)

Sources: *China Fixed Asset Investment Statistical Yearbook*. Same to Fig.3 and Fig.4.

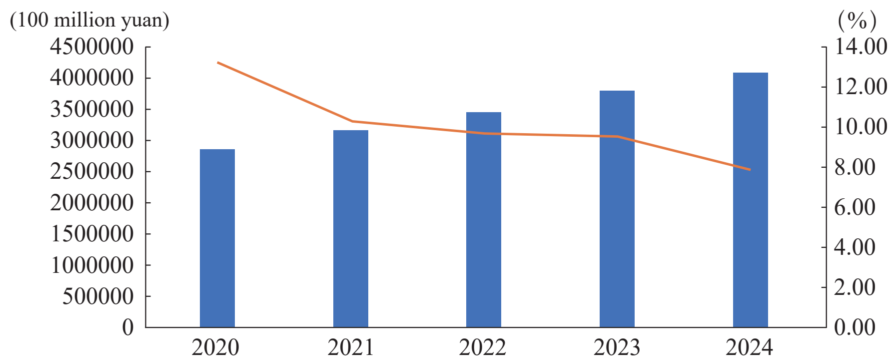

Fig. 3. Stock of Aggregate Financing and Its Growth Rate (2020-2024)

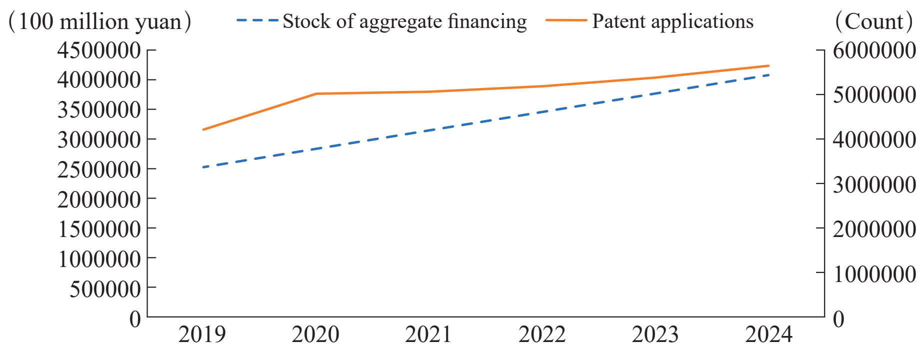

Fig. 4. Stock of Aggregate Financing and Number of Patent Applications (2020-2024)

Integrating the data presented in Table 17 and Figures 2, 3, and 4, the degree of coordination between China's real and virtual economies can be examined across three dimensions: investment support, the financing-innovation nexus, and macro-structural dynamics.

First, synchronized expansion of the real economy and aggregate financing to the real economy (AFRE). Total investment in fixed assets—the primary driver of physical capital formation in China's real economy—increased steadily from 2019 to 2024, rising from 43.54 trillion yuan to 52.09 trillion yuan and maintaining positive growth throughout the 14th FYP period. Over the same period, the stock of AFRE—representing the total capital support channeled from the financial system into productive sectors—rose from 251.41 trillion yuan to 408.34 trillion yuan, as its aggregate scale continued to broaden. This structural alignment reveals a pattern of "synchronized expansion and rhythmic coordination" between the two sectors. When the growth rate of fixed-asset investment rose, the scale of AFRE expanded correspondingly. This suggests that China's financial system has not "diverged from the real economy toward the virtual", but has instead maintained its fundamental role in serving the productive economy. Specifically, credit and financial resources have provided robust support for infrastructure development, manufacturing, and industrial upgrading. At the same time, while the growth rate of AFRE has gradually slowed, its absolute size has continued to increase. This indicates that China's financial development is transitioning from a phase of high-speed expansion toward one centered on "improving quality and efficiency", matching the real economy's path of stable growth and structural reinforcement.

Second, from the perspective of the linkage between financing and innovation, virtual capital has been effectively converted into technological innovation capacity. As shown in Figure 4, China's stock of AFRE continued to rise steadily, accompanied by consistent growth in patent applications from 4,195,104 to 5,653,429. This synchronized trend reveals two structural benefits: first, AFRE expansion has driven not only real-economy investment but also the broader momentum of technological innovation; second, financial capital has successfully avoided "virtual idling", or self-referential circulation detached from production. Instead, through bank credit, direct financing, and capital markets, resources have been strategically allocated to innovative sectors, transforming into R&D expenditures and tangible innovation outputs.

Third, macro-structural synergy and development configuration: From a macro-structural perspective, a coordinated development pattern has emerged, characterized by a "solid real economy, strengthened financial support, and reinforced innovation momentum." The data substantiate this synergy: at the real-economy level, steady expansion in fixed-asset investment has consolidated the material foundation of China's economic growth; at the virtual-economy level, the stock of AFRE has grown alongside a more rationalized structure, reflecting prudent financial support rather than "bubble-driven" accumulation. Furthermore, at the innovation level, the surge in patent applications indicates that China's growth model is successfully transitioning from "factor- and investment-driven" toward "innovation-driven."

In sum, the synchronized expansion of AFRE and fixed-asset investment from 2019 to 2024, alongside rising patent applications, indicates that financial capital is effectively flowing into China's real economy and converting into innovation capacity. This demonstrates that China has avoided the risks of "decoupling of the virtual economy from the real economy" and "financial idling". Instead, under the "dual circulation" and "high-quality development" frameworks, a benign interactive mechanism has emerged: finance supports the real economy, innovation enhances it, and a stable real economy reinforces financial stability. This dynamic reflects an increasingly coordinated and mutually reinforcing relationship between the real and virtual economies.

4.3 Trends in Real-Virtual Coordinated Development During the 15th FYP

The *Recommendations* state that "We should promote full integration between the real economy and the digital economy" and "advance the project for the innovative development of the Industrial Internet", among other key strategic deployments. These provide clear guidance for the future coordinated development of the real and virtual economies. Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has steadfastly anchored itself to the real economy as the fundamental foundation, unswervingly consolidating and enhancing its strengths. This has guided China's transition from an economic giant to an economic powerhouse, furnishing solid support for effectively addressing various risks and challenges (Editorial Group for *An Introduction to Xi Jinping Thought on Economy*, 2025). At the same time, President Xi Jinping has emphasized: "We must develop the digital economy, accelerate the promotion of digital industrialization, rely on innovation-driven information technology to continuously spawn new industries, new business forms, and new models, and use new momentum to drive new development" (Xi, 2020: 307). This series of important statements provides the fundamental guidance for the integrated development of the real and virtual economies. During the 15th FYP, China's economic development will focus on enhancing quality and efficiency to further strengthen its economic strength, scientific and technological capabilities, and comprehensive national power. This will lay a solid material foundation for China to reach the level of moderately developed countries, attain high-level technological self-reliance and self-strengthening, and build a modernized economic system (Institute of Economics, CASS, 2025). This requires continued adherence to the new development philosophy, fully leveraging the important role of the coordination principle in economic and social progress. As China enters the critical acceleration phase of comprehensively building a modern socialist country, the coordinated development of the real and virtual economies will play an even more stable supporting and innovative role in advancing high-quality economic development. The principal trends and prospects for this period are synthesized in Table 18.

During the 15th FYP, China's real and virtual economies will build upon their respective traditional strengths to achieve deeper integration, jointly constructing a new production system centered on NQPF. This process will systematically articulate a distinctly Chinese path to real-virtual integration, unfolding within an overarching framework that encompasses capital forms, technological systems, industrial structures, governance mechanisms, and the underlying operational logic of the economy. Consequently, forecasting economic trends for this period requires transcending the conventional binary perspective of "real versus virtual" development. Instead, it demands a comprehensive analysis grounded on the spatial, industrial, innovation, and institutional logics unique to Chinese modernization.

TABLE 18. Coordination of China's Real-Virtual Economies in the 15th FYP: Trends and Prospects

Development trends and prospects	Specific manifestations	Analytical dimensions
China's digital economy will transition from an "empowerment-oriented" to an "embedded" model, achieving value integration between the real and virtual economies	The virtual economy moves beyond its traditional auxiliary service role to become deeply intertwined with the real economy, fostering a co-evolutionary pattern	Digital-real twin: The reshaping of traditional development models through new digital-enabled production structures Structural integration: Advancing from the "application phase" to a stage of deep-seated industrial embedding
China's financial system will deepen its support to technological innovation and real-sector upgrading, achieving a more efficient capital allocation structure	Maturity of financial pillars: Greater maturity of technology, green, and inclusive finance Enhanced Capital Efficiency: Further optimization of the directionality and efficiency of financial capital investment	Evolution of capital roles: The evolution from capital "returning to" the real economy toward capital "driving" real-sector transformation
China's economic growth will be increasingly propelled by NQPF generated through real-virtual integration.	Factor-led innovation: Virtual factors such as algorithms and data, grounded in the real economy, further catalyze NQPF development Manifesting the effects of NQPF through the optimization of capital forms and the upgrading of industrial structures	Technological innovation within the framework of NQPF Transitioning from a dual-driven (real and virtual) model toward an integrated real-virtual paradigm

Sources: Organized by the author based on pertinent sources.

5. Future Prospects and Outlook

President Xi Jinping has pointed out: "In conducting top-level design, it is essential to gain a profound insight into global development trends, accurately grasp the shared aspirations of the people, and deeply explore the laws governing socioeconomic development. This ensures that formulated plans and policy systems embody the spirit of the times, align with objective regularities, and are rich in creativity, while achieving integration of short- and long-term horizons, vertical coherence from central to local levels, and internal coordination across domains" (Xi, 2023). The successful implementation of the 13th FYP (2016-2020) exemplifies a proactive response to these imperatives. As a strategic arrangement situated within the historical context of the new era, the 14th FYP has taken Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as its fundamental guide. It has rooted itself in the value orientation of advancing Chinese modernization and promoting the well-being of all humanity, while steadfastly respecting and applying objective laws. In this way, it has accumulated invaluable experience in uniting conformity to historical regularities with purposeful pursuit of developmental goals (Institute of Economics, CASS, 2025). Examining the governance efficacy of the 14th FYP from the perspective of historical evolution requires recognizing that it is not an arbitrary construct but rather builds upon accumulated prior experience, serving as a continuation of explorations in successive plans and a profound interpretation of development strategies adapted to the new historical juncture. Historical practice demonstrates that maintaining an appropriate balance between continuity and adaptive transformation across consecutive FYPs is essential for the effective implementation of national strategies and for ensuring stable socioeconomic development (Zhao, 2020). The 15th FYP, extending from the foundation established by the 14th FYP, represents a renewed exploration of China's economic development trajectory. Operating within an integrated framework that encompasses four critical dimensions—regional coordination, land-maritime coordination, domestic-international coordination, and real-virtual coordination—it charts strategic directions, identifies key priority tasks, and delineates practical pathways for the future development of the Chinese economy.

In exploring these four major dimensions of coordination, it is imperative to adhere to the Marxist concept of coordination as the theoretical foundation. This inquiry must proceed from the classical principles of the coordination between the productive forces and the relations of production, as well as the proportional balance between and within the two departments of social reproduction. These principles form the systematic framework for interpreting the four dimensions of coordination vital to China's economic development. The great practice of the Chinese economy provides a rich empirical arena for these principles and serves as the ultimate criterion for testing their validity. In this context, President Xi Jinping's important expositions on development planning hold profound guiding significance. They embody the Communist Party of China's deep summation of the laws of governance, represent a systematic refinement of the laws of socialist development, and serve as the fundamental guideline for the formulation and implementation of FYPs. They fully exemplify the distinctive feature of the Xi Jinping Thought on Economy—namely, the close integration of theory and practice—and will surely propel socialist political economy with Chinese characteristics to continuously open up new frontiers (Institute of Economics, CASS, 2025).

The effective formulation and implementation of the 15th FYP are of paramount significance for the comprehensive implementation of the strategic arrangements of the 20th CPC National Congress and the advancement of Chinese modernization. This objective requires us to transcend conventional development perspectives and consciously adopt a comprehensive analytical framework grounded in the spatial, industrial, innovation, and institutional logics intrinsic to Chinese modernization. By fully, accurately, and comprehensively applying the New Development Concept, we can delineate a blueprint for the 15th FYP that vividly demonstrates the distinctive institutional advantages of socialism with Chinese characteristics under the leadership of the Party, thereby providing solid support for the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation. This process will inevitably drive the construction of a self-reliant Chinese system of knowledge and practical paradigms, ultimately reaching new heights in theoretical understanding and delivering exceptional results in practical development. CE

References:

Editorial Group of An Introduction to Xi Jinping Thought on the Economy, et al. An Introduction to Xi Jinping Thought on the Economy[M]. Beijing: Higher Education Press and People's Publishing House, 2025.

Hao S. Y., Ni P. F. Strategies for Regional Coordinated Development[M]. Guangzhou: Guangdong Economic Publishing House, 2020.

Institute of Economics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. China's Economy toward the 15th Five-Year Plan (Volume I)[M]. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2025.

Li X. H., Huang J. X. Differentiated Regional Development: A New Driving Force of China's Economic Growth[J]. Regional Economic Review, 2014(5): 12-17.

Ling Y. H.The Concept of 'Regional Synergistic Integration' in Xi Jinping Thought on the Economy: Intellectual Origins, Conceptual Construction, and Policy Implications[J]. Bulletin of the History of Economic Thought, 2025(3): 3-38.

Marx K. Capital (Volume I)[M]. Translated by Central Compilation and Translation Bureau(CCTB). Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1975.

Recommendations of the CPC Central Committee for Formulating the 14th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development and Long-Rang Objectives Through the Year 2035[M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2020.

Shi Y. L. Coordinating the Leading Role of Domestic Circulation and the Mutual Reinforcement of Dual Circulation[N]. Guangming Daily, 2023-03-21.

The 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035[M]. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2021.

Xi J. P. Advancing Chinese Modernization Requires Properly Handling Several Major Relationships[J]. Qiuzhi, 2023(10): 4-6.

Xi J. P. Xi Jinping: The Governance of China (Volume III)[M]. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2020.

Zhao X. J. Key Relationships in the Formulation and Implementation of Five-Year Plans: Historical Experience from the 13th Five-Year Plan[J]. Research on the History of the Communist Party of China, 2020(5): 125-133.