

Paths for Zhanjiang's Participation in the Construction of the New Western Land-Sea Corridor

Shuhua Liu¹, Yuanyi Liu^{2*}

¹Business School of Lingnan Normal University, Zhanjiang 524048, China

²Lingnan Normal University, Zhanjiang 524048, China

*corresponding author

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Abstract: Zhanjiang, with its own advantages in location, infrastructure, industry and natural resources, has played an important role in the formation of a new pattern of all-round opening-up in the southwest region. In order to better promote the development of Zhanjiang, the path of integration into the new western land-sea corridor construction is put forward in this paper from five aspects, which is of great significance for Zhanjiang to build a provincial sub-central city, build an important development pole of the modern coastal economic belt and realize high-quality development.

1. Introduction

In November 2018, China and Singapore formally signed a cooperation agreement on "New Western Land-sea Corridor in China-Singapore (Chongqing) Strategic Interconnection Demonstration Project", which included eight western provinces and cities in February 2019, including Chongqing, Guangxi, Guizhou, Gansu, Ningxia, Yunnan, Qinghai and Xinjiang. The new international land-sea trade corridor will be an important driving force to promote the development of the western region, because it is conducive to coordinating the international and domestic markets and resources, leading the high-quality development and opening up of the western inland, coastal, riverside and border areas with all-round opening, strengthening the ties between the northwest and southwest regions, and promoting the rational industrial layout, transformation and upgrading. Zhanjiang, one of the shortest-voyage continental cities from mainland China, especially the western region, to Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe and Oceania, has always been an important part of foreign trade in the southwest and northwest regions. As the fulcrum city of China's "the belt and road initiative", the central city of Beibu Gulf urban agglomeration and an important port city of China, its membership of the *Framework Agreement for Cooperation in Building the New Western Land-sea Corridor* as the only prefecture-level city can provide a broader space for the development of the western region and better realize the resource allocation and complementary advantages [1]. The initiative of new western land-sea corridor puts forward new goals, new mechanisms, new platforms, new vitality and new opportunities for deepening the regional coordinated development of all provinces and cities in the corridor [2]. Therefore, the construction of Zhanjiang as a hub city in the strategic planning of the new international land-sea trade corridor and the promotion of economic cooperation between Zhanjiang and the countries and regions along the corridor will not only speed up the optimization of

export product structure and promote the transformation and upgrading of Zhanjiang's strategic pillar industries, but also help Zhanjiang broaden its vision, promote reform through opening up from a higher starting point and a deeper level, and establish and improve the system and mechanism of opening up and development, so that Zhanjiang can play a more important role in the strategic planning of the new international land-sea trade corridor.

2. Opportunities for Zhanjiang to Enter into the Construction of a New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor

The initiative of building a new international land-sea trade corridor is a grand strategy at the national level, which is systematic and coordinated. It points out the direction for Zhanjiang's future development and will provide four outstanding opportunities for Zhanjiang.

2.1 Unique Location Conditions

Zhanjiang City, located at the southernmost tip of Chinese mainland, is the intersection of Guangdong, Guizhou and Hainan provinces, and the meeting point of four national strategies, namely, the new international land-sea trade corridor, Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Beibu Gulf Economic Zone and Hainan Free Trade Zone [3]. In addition, Zhanjiang, with its excellent deep-water ports, is an important seaport in the southwest of China. Therefore, Zhanjiang Port Group can be built into a major passageway to the sea in the southwest and a new passageway for international road and sea trade in the west. Taking the construction of a commodity trading center and an international cruise port as an opportunity, Zhanjiang will build a regional deep-water port that serves the country and the world.

2.2 Good Infrastructure Planning

In the document *General Plan of Zhanjiang Railway Hub (2016-2030)*, it is clearly stipulated to speed up the construction of Shenzhen-Zhanjiang, Guangzhou-Zhanjiang, Zhanjiang-Haikou, Zhanjiang-Hepu and Zhangjiajie-Haikou railways, so as to further connect Zhanjiang with the national high-speed railway network. The official incorporation of the five high-speed railways into the national "eight vertical and eight horizontal" high-speed railway network will further consolidate Zhanjiang's position as a national transportation hub city. Zhanjiang has become the "national regional circulation node city" in western Guangdong. All of the above will provide a strong support for Zhanjiang's leap-forward development of transportation [4].

2.3 Sound Industrial Base

In recent years, with the development of iron and steel, petrochemical and paper industry, Zhanjiang's social and economic level has also been continuously improved. By the end of 2021, Zhanjiang had achieved a GDP of 350 billion yuan, with an average annual growth rate of 14.8%, indicating that Zhanjiang has now become the new economic growth pole of Guangdong province. Moreover, in the face of severe environment such as COVID-19 outbreak, Sino-US trade war and rise in international raw material prices, Zhanjiang's economy has maintained steady growth, which shows that Zhanjiang has made good achievements in industrial reform and industrial coordination. Zhanjiang is now accelerating the transformation and upgrading of traditional manufacturing industries, focusing on the new generation of information technology, high-end equipment manufacturing, biomedicine and other industrial layout to comprehensively match with the new international land-sea trade corridor and optimize the business environment, so as to accelerate the construction of a new open economic system.

2.4 Abundant Natural Resources

Zhanjiang possesses abundant marine living resources and is famous for its seafood such as prawn and fish, which creates favorable conditions for Zhanjiang to develop deep processing industry of marine products and export of marine products. At the same time, Zhanjiang's coast is also rich in marine energy, mineral resources, salt field resources and sea wind energy, as well as the proven reserves of marine oil and gas in South China Sea, which will not only provide energy guarantee for Zhanjiang's development but also support the development of western Guangdong. In addition, the "tropical climate" makes Zhanjiang produce a large number of subtropical fruits and cash crops.

3. Paths for Zhanjiang's Participation in the Construction of the New Western Land-Sea Corridor

In order to better promote Zhanjiang's active participation in the construction of the new international land-sea trade corridor, the development background, realistic foundation and cooperation effect should be considered comprehensively, focusing on five areas, namely, transportation infrastructure, the construction of a new modern industrial system, scientific and technological innovation and development, green ecological development and opening to the outside world, so as to provide a path choice for Zhanjiang to enter into the construction.

3.1 Creating a Link to Serve the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor

First of all, to promote the construction of high-speed railways. Investment in infrastructure is an important driver of economic growth, as it is only through infrastructure development that economic growth can be ensured, while transport infrastructure is recognized as an important factor affecting the process of regional integration. Therefore, Zhanjiang should first actively improve the transportation hub system by connecting with several major domestic cities along the corridor [5]. Transportation infrastructure is the core issue in the process of integrating into the development pattern of new international land-sea trade corridor. Five high-speed railways, including Shenzhen-Zhanjiang, Guangzhou-Zhanjiang, Zhanjiang-Haikou, Zhanjiang-Hepu and Zhangjiajie-Haikou high-speed railways, will converge in Zhanjiang, which will greatly supplement the short-board traffic problem there and lay a solid foundation for further active integration into the corridor. Secondly, to speed up the construction of deep-water ports. Zhanjiang, as a coastal city, has many unique development advantages. For example, Zhanjiang Port, as the largest deep-water port in western Guangdong, has gradually become an international shipping and logistics center in South China. In order to meet the needs of deep cooperation between Zhanjiang and the corridor and better adapt to the trend of large-scale ships at home and abroad, Zhanjiang Port has upgraded the 300,000-ton route to 400,000-ton route. In addition, Zhanjiang Port is making every effort to build a strong regional port, promote the high-quality leap-forward development of Zhanjiang, and lay the foundation of water transportation for integrating into the new international land and sea trade corridor [6]. At last, to build an air economic belt. Although the former Zhanjiang Airport was the only civil airport in western Guangdong Province, there were still some major problems, such as limited flights and high fares, which hindered the air communication between Zhanjiang and major domestic cities. In order to solve the problem of Zhanjiang airport, Wuchuan Airport has been built, which is positioned as the domestic trunk airport and the largest civil airport in western Guangdong. It has created a brand-new airport economic circle for Zhanjiang, which helps Zhanjiang become the aviation pole of the new international land-sea trade corridor and better connect with the air transportation between western cities.

3.2 Building a New Modern Industrial System

First of all, to promote emerging industries, and build industrial parks. Based on the industrial development foundation in Zhanjiang and keeping up with the new trend of industrial development, focus should be laid on cultivating strategic emerging industries mainly including steel, petrochemicals, special paper, biomedicine, machinery and electrical appliances, and marine high-tech, actively develop characteristic and advantageous industries, promote deep integration of industries, and building a new and modern industrial system, so as to make industrial modernization and standardized development of service industry, and help the rapid economic development^[7]. At the same time, it is necessary to cultivate a number of industrial parks with reasonable layout, strong specialization, high efficiency and energy conservation, and wide consumption market. In the process of connecting to the new international land-sea trade corridor, it is necessary to continuously innovate investment promotion methods to broaden investment promotion channels, and to fully attract the "leading" and "brand" advantageous industries of the corridor to participate in the construction of major industrial projects in Zhanjiang. The construction of major projects such as Sinopec and BASF and the promotion of joint construction of industrial parks should continue to be deepened, because joint construction of industrial parks is an important way for Zhanjiang to make full use of its own advantages to attract various development elements of the new international land-sea trade corridor at this stage, in order to deepen the coordinated industrial construction, accelerate the flow of elements, form an industrial cooperation system with complementary advantages, and better provide industrial supporting and scale support for the corridor. Secondly, to vigorously develop modern agriculture. As Zhanjiang is also a big city of agricultural products, it should rely on the industrial basis of agricultural products in the region to vigorously develop characteristic advantage industries by means of establishing market awareness, focusing on improving the efficiency of agricultural products and industries, improving and upgrading the agricultural industry chain, changing the mode of agricultural development, expanding domestic and international sales channels, and exporting advantage products to ASEAN, Europe, central Asia, south Asia and southeast Asia countries, and strengthening exchanges and cooperation with local agriculture to increase farmers' income. It is necessary to cultivate a brand awareness, actively build a joint marketing platform to sell geographical indication products such as Xuwen dragon fruit, Lianjiang red orange, Lianjiang *Penaeus vannamei*, Xuwen pineapple, Leizhou jujube, etc. abroad, increase the market share of agricultural products, increase the publicity of Zhanjiang agricultural products brands, continuously improve the brand building of Zhanjiang agricultural products, form the cluster effect of Zhanjiang famous agricultural products brands and promote regional economic growth. Thirdly, to develop modern service industry rapidly. To develop the service industry, we should first make clear the development direction of Zhanjiang's service industry. Guided by market demand, the government's public service guarantee measures will be promoted to stimulate the service potential of service-oriented enterprises. In light of Zhanjiang's own development needs, modern service industries such as business circulation, cultural tourism and cultural creativity, information service industry, financial and business services, science and technology service industry, and e-commerce should be vigorously developed to form a new service industry agglomeration area, continuously improve the service level and capabilities of modern enterprises, and strive for a number of national and provincial modern service industry agglomeration areas to form a growth pole for Zhanjiang's service industry development and build Zhanjiang into a regional service industry center city.

3.3 A Collaborative Path to Improve the Ability of Scientific and Technological Innovation

To truly undertake and serve the new international land-sea trade corridor, it is necessary to continuously enhance the city's innovation capability, i.e. to follow the policy direction of enhancing technological innovation capability and do a good job in talent introduction, technological investment,

platform building and innovation environment optimization. First of all, for the introduction and retention of high-end talents, the innovative development strategy should be implemented with a key to the introduction, and government departments should create conditions for the introduction and retention of high-end talents by investing funds, formulating talent evaluation system, building a scientific and technological innovation talent training and talent exchange base in Zhanjiang, perfecting talent reward mechanism, introducing talent service system and strengthening talent service. Secondly, Zhanjiang should increase its investment in scientific and technological innovation resources to provide material support for the implementation of the scientific and technological innovation strategy. In order to promote the construction of scientific and technological infrastructure and experimental platform, the focus should be placed on the development of marine engineering equipment, marine energy and marine organisms. Efforts should continue to be made to build the Southern Marine Science and Engineering Guangdong Laboratory to lead the development of marine science and technology in Zhanjiang in light of the actual situation in Zhanjiang. Thirdly, an innovation gathering platform should be built to boost the transformation of scientific and technological achievements. Relying on the resources of universities, scientific research institutions and enterprises in Zhanjiang and along the international land-sea trade corridor, policies of cooperation such as "integration of production and learning" should be issued. With universities such as Zhanjiang Bay Laboratory and Guangdong Ocean University in Zhanjiang as the support, a one-stop service platform for scientific and technological innovation should be constructed. The local R&D talents, technological R&D and innovation environment advantages should be utilized to enhance the scientific and technological innovation capacity. Based on Zhanjiang's industrial chains in modern agriculture, marine scientific and technological innovation, home appliance manufacturing and other aspects, Industry-University-Research should ultimately drive the industrial development and push the transformation of scientific and technological achievements. Finally, a good innovation environment should be created. The government should give policy support to attract the "scientific research bases" of the new international land-sea trade corridor to settle in Zhanjiang, carry out innovation and entrepreneurship, personnel training, and strengthen the protection of intellectual property rights, so as to create a good environment for the transformation of scientific and technological achievements and optimize the working environment for personnel innovation. By strengthening cooperation with provinces and cities along the corridor, and expanding the breadth and depth of exchanges with them, the goal of actively participation in the innovation circle of the new international land-sea trade corridor will be realized.

3.4 Building a Green Ecological Demonstration City

Excellent natural environment, good harbor and abundant marine resources are the greatest advantages and the best natural wealth of Zhanjiang. Zhanjiang, as a pilot city for the construction of national ecological demonstration zone, should first practice the concept of "Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" and abandon the development idea of "developing economy+ polluting environment+ environmental control". To implement the concept of green sustainable development in all aspects of economic and social development, Zhanjiang should realize the layout of green industries, build a green industrial system, plan and design green industrial development, green industrial parks and green demonstration projects in advance, formulate and introduce strict eco-environmental protection system, explore the performance evaluation of giving priority to ecological protection, learn the latest energy-saving and environmental protection technologies, implement the system of main functional zones, and limit the over-exploitation of ecologically fragile areas, vigorously develop energy conservation, environmental protection and clean energy industries, and highlight the creation of a "green park city", so that green ecological development will become the main force of Zhanjiang's leap-forward development and green will become Zhanjiang's business

card. At the same time, Zhanjiang should give full play to the advantages of coastal resources and environment, and strive to create a green livable place with mountains and green waters. By promoting the deep integration of "tourism and old-age care", social resources should be fully mobilized, and modern information technology should be used to realize the intelligent management of urban agglomerations, provide high-quality public services, continuously improve the level of people's livelihood security, provide convenience for people living in Zhanjiang, and make Zhanjiang a "tourism and old-age capital" on the new international land-sea trade corridor.

3.5 Building a New System of Open Economy and Cultivating New Advantages of Opening to the Outside World

In order to improve the level of opening up to the outside world, Zhanjiang should deepen its practical cooperation in various fields with countries and regions along the new international land-sea trade corridor, strengthen its function as a strategic fulcrum, make overall use of both domestic and international markets, intensify its opening up to the outside world, give full play to its unique coastal location advantages, and speed up the completion of the opening-up hub gateway to the south. In addition, it is necessary to innovate the mode of foreign cooperation, find out the joint points of mutually beneficial cooperation with ASEAN countries, expand the port functions relying on Zhanjiang Port, improve the supporting facilities, deepen the cooperation in marine economic industries, further connect the cooperation mechanism between China and ASEAN, create a demonstration zone of cooperation between China and ASEAN Free Trade Area, and enhance the depth and breadth of mutual opening between Zhanjiang and ASEAN countries. Thirdly, we should also jointly explore the construction of higher-level open platforms such as free trade ports and free trade zones featuring commodity transactions, so as to realize the overall upgrading of Zhanjiang's open platform and promote high-quality development through high-level opening [8]. Finally, efforts should be made to attract foreign investment, build a number of industrial clusters with strong international competitiveness and strong radiation driving force, strengthen cooperation and foreign cooperation with the new international land-sea trade corridor, open up the international market of the new international land-sea trade corridor, and create an open new highland for the development of export-oriented economy in the southwest region and even the whole country.

Faced with the great opportunities brought by the development of the new international land-sea trade corridor, the development goal of Zhanjiang in its construction was clarified, and the advantages of Zhanjiang's entry into the corridor were analyzed. The path and countermeasures for Zhanjiang to participate in the new international land-sea trade corridor in an all-round and comprehensive way were put forward, which can provide decision-making reference for Zhanjiang's entry into the new international land-sea trade corridor initiative in a faster and more accurate way.

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