

Analysis and Interpretation of the 2017 Government Work Report: A Human and Economic Geography Perspective (Postprint)

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Abstract

On the morning of March 5, 2017, the Fifth Session of the Twelfth National People's Congress convened in Beijing, where Premier Li Keqiang delivered the Government Work Report on behalf of the State Council. The Premier's report was comprehensive, objective, and pragmatic, neither evading the difficulties, problems, and challenges confronted nor failing to unite collective efforts and inspire progress. Employing methods such as word cloud analysis, the keywords, quantitative indicators, and key regions within the Government Work Report were systematically examined, revealing three principal characteristics: (1) The term "reform" received the most extensive emphasis, appearing 83 times in the 2017 Government Work Report; (2) It fully embodied the "people-centered" philosophy, with "people" and "masses" mentioned 40 and 28 times respectively; (3) Despite the heavy workload and immense pressure of key tasks in 2017, the government maintained firm confidence, seized opportunities, and forged ahead. From the perspective of human and economic geography, the Government Work Report presents several major scientific and policy consultation questions for the discipline, primarily including: the Belt and Road Initiative, resource and environmental carrying capacity and ecological civilization construction, new-type urbanization, spatial governance and regional development, industrial structure adjustment and upgrading, targeted poverty alleviation, and innovation-driven development, all requiring urgent and rigorous research to provide scientific foundations for strategic decision-making by relevant national departments. This constitutes both an urgent requirement for modernizing national governance and a glorious mission for the Chinese Academy of Sciences, as a high-level science and technology think tank, to serve national strategic needs and the primary economic battlefield, as well as a crucial impetus for sustaining the rapid development and vigorous vitality of human and economic geography.

Full Text

Analysis and Interpretation of the 2017 Government Work Report –From the Perspective of Human and Economic Geography

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Abstract

On the morning of March 5, 2017, the Fifth Session of the Twelfth National People' s Congress opened in Beijing, where Premier Li Keqiang delivered the Government Work Report on behalf of the State Council. The report was comprehensive, objective, and pragmatic, confronting difficulties and challenges without hesitation while inspiring national unity and progress. Using word cloud visualization and other methods, this paper systematically analyzes the report' s keywords, quantitative indicators, and key geographic regions, revealing three major characteristics: (1) “Reform” received the heaviest emphasis, appearing 83 times in the 2017 report; (2) The report fully embodied a “people-centered” philosophy, with “the people” and “the masses” mentioned 40 and 28 times respectively; (3) Despite heavy tasks and considerable pressure in 2017, the government maintained firm confidence, seized opportunities, and pressed forward with determination. From the perspective of human and economic geography, the report presents several major scientific and policy consulting questions for the discipline, including the Belt and Road Initiative, resource environmental carrying capacity and ecological civilization construction, new-type urbanization, spatial governance and regional development, industrial structure upgrading, targeted poverty alleviation, and innovation-driven development. These issues urgently require rigorous and in-depth research to provide scientific foundations for strategic decision-making by relevant national departments. This represents both an urgent need for modernizing national governance and a glorious mission for the Chinese Academy of Sciences as a high-level science and technology think tank serving national strategic needs and the main economic battlefield, while also serving as an important driving force for maintaining the rapid development and vitality of human and economic geography.

Keywords: 2017 Government Work Report; analysis; interpretation; new-type characteristic think tank; human and economic geography

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On March 5, 2017, Premier Li Keqiang delivered the Government Work Report

at the opening of the Fifth Session of the Twelfth National People's Congress in Beijing, reviewing achievements in 2016 and outlining key priorities for 2017 [1]. The report was comprehensive, objective, and pragmatic, confronting problems and challenges directly while inspiring national cohesion and progress. It noted that 2016 witnessed a strong start to the 13th Five-Year Plan period, with economic growth stabilizing and improving. The report also profoundly analyzed the situation facing China in 2017 and outlined nine major areas of work. The Government Work Report is both a matter for the government—its policy blueprint and commitment to the people—and a matter for each of us, intimately connected to our lives. Therefore, we in the scientific community have an obligation to carefully study and interpret the report, consider how to fully leverage the functions of a new-type think tank and policy consulting role, and reflect on what the scientific community can contribute to implementing and fulfilling the report's commitments.

Human and economic geography is one of the most important applied basic sciences in the field of human socioeconomic development and its relationship with the natural environment [2], as well as one of geography's most important and rapidly evolving sub-disciplines. It studies the real world and grounded issues, playing a vital role in social practice [3], with its primary applied value lying in addressing urbanization, regional development, and sustainable development issues at different spatial scales on the earth's surface [4]. These issues are closely connected to real-life social concerns. Consequently, human and economic geography places greater emphasis on national strategic needs, and the Government Work Report undoubtedly presents a series of new national demands and requirements for the discipline. Carefully studying the key points in the report and 梳理 ing the main issues relevant to the discipline will help further enhance the capacity, level, and relevance of human and economic geography in serving national strategic decision-making.

1 Word Frequency Analysis and Visualization Cloud Map

Word cloud visualization, as a new technical approach, has been widely adopted. This technique was employed to conduct text mining and visualization of the 2017 Government Work Report. [FIGURE:1] and

present the key terms from the report and their frequency changes. The top 30 keywords are: “reform,” “economy,” “construction,” “policy,” “innovation,” “people,” “government,” “deepen,” “employment,” “market,” “system,” “masses,” “growth,” “industry,” “rural,” “protection,” “structure,” “education,” “safety,” “stability,” “investment,” “security,” “consumption,” “cooperation,” “finance,” “financial,” “environment,” “institution,” “field,” and “pilot.”

In the 2017 report, “reform” appeared 83 times, the most frequent term, indicating that China's reform has entered a critical phase, with comprehensive deepening of reforms in 2017 to adapt to the changing external environment.

intelligence.”

2 Development Quantitative Targets

In 2016, China’s economy stabilized and improved, with GDP reaching 74.4 trillion yuan, growing 6.7%—a remarkable achievement ranking among the world’s best, contributing over 30% to global economic growth. The 2017 GDP growth target was adjusted downward to 6.5%, indicating that against the backdrop of the new normal, the government is actively pursuing higher-quality economic growth. The 13th Five-Year Plan has gotten off to a good start, with various livelihood indicators showing clear improvement (see), truly demonstrating the government’s commitment to reflecting development achievements in enhanced people’s welfare. However, the quantitative targets for key tasks in 2017 show heavy development tasks and considerable pressure (see). Nevertheless, the government remains confident, seizes opportunities, and presses forward. Tasks for reducing steel and coal capacity remain arduous, with clear quantitative targets set for areas including destocking, cost reduction, potential tapping, new-type urbanization, agriculture and farmers, environmental protection, and livelihood improvement.

3 Mentioned Key Regions

Summarizing the 2017 Government Work Report, important regions mentioned include the following types (see

): (1) Specific locations named with assigned tasks, such as supporting Beijing and Shanghai in building globally influential science and technology innovation centers, promoting Shanghai and other pilot free trade zone reform innovations, formulating development plans for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area urban agglomeration, and organizing the 70th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. (2) Major national development strategic regions or policy geographic zones, such as the “Three Major Strategies” (Belt and Road, Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei coordinated development, Yangtze River Economic Belt) and the “Four Major Plateaus” (Western Development, new round of Northeast revitalization, promoting central region rise, and supporting eastern region’s pioneering development). (3) International organizations and key regions for foreign cooperation, such as APEC, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, Asia-Europe and East Asia cooperation, Lancang-Mekong River, China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, and Asia-Pacific Free Trade Area. (4) Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions, promoting deeper cooperation between the mainland and Hong Kong and Macao, leveraging their unique advantages, and enhancing their status and functions in national economic development and opening-up. The One-China principle and the “1992 Consensus” must be upheld, with no tolerance for any form of separation of Taiwan from the motherland, while continuously promoting cross-strait economic and social integration. (5) Key supported or developed zone types, such



Figure 2: Figure 4

as establishing grain production functional zones, important agricultural product protection zones, characteristic agricultural product advantage zones, and modern agricultural industrial parks, strengthening development of contiguous poverty-stricken areas and old revolutionary base areas, supporting development of impoverished counties, resource-depleted areas, ecologically degraded regions, small and medium-sized cities, characteristic towns, and ethnic areas, promoting the orderly establishment of cities in qualified counties and mega-towns, and leveraging the radiating role of urban agglomerations. (6) Various demonstration zones, pilot zones, and development zones, including advancing marine economy demonstration zone construction, establishing six new national independent innovation demonstration zones, constructing national ecological civilization pilot zones, establishing 12 new cross-border e-commerce comprehensive pilot zones, establishing seven new pilot free trade zones, advancing national intelligent manufacturing demonstration zones and manufacturing innovation center construction, establishing new “mass entrepreneurship and innovation” demonstration bases, and promoting innovative development of national-level new areas, development zones, and industrial parks.

4 Main Issues of Concern for Human and Economic Geography

4.1 The Belt and Road Initiative, Economic Globalization, and Geopolitical Research

Since its proposal, the Belt and Road Initiative has rapidly become a focus of international and domestic attention. Scholars have profoundly interpreted its scientific connotation as a national strategy for China's comprehensive opening-up [5] and analyzed its impact on China's territorial development spatial pattern [6] and potential influence on China's urbanization development pattern [7]. Related research topics for advancing Belt and Road construction include geopolitics and relations with neighboring countries, economic globalization and international trade, world cities and urban network systems, foreign direct investment theory, etc. Economic globalization and the Belt and Road Initiative place the research objects of China's human-economic geography in broader space and more complex connections. Research should strengthen effective linkages between the Belt and Road Initiative and other major strategies (new-type urbanization, Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei coordinated development, Yangtze River Economic Belt), as well as the selection and layout of important node cities along land economic corridors and maritime cooperation pivot points.

4.2 Resource Environmental Carrying Capacity Monitoring and Early Warning and Ecological Civilization Construction

The report states the need to improve the functional zoning system and ecological compensation mechanisms, establish a resource and environmental monitoring and early warning mechanism, and provide strong institutional guarantees for ecological civilization construction, with special emphasis on resolutely fighting the "Blue Sky Defense War." Establishing a resource environmental carrying capacity monitoring and early warning mechanism is an innovative task in comprehensively deepening reform [8]. Ecological civilization construction must be integrated into all aspects and the entire process of economic, political, cultural, and social development. Starting from the connotation of resource environmental carrying capacity and oriented toward regional sustainable development, research should explore the relationship and processes between the carrying capacity composed of resources and environment and human production and living activities, conducting overload early warnings based on thresholds such as the reasonable scale of population and economy constrained by resources and environment. The comprehensive and integrated methodology of human and economic geography, along with its close connection to practical needs, strongly supports the rationality and effectiveness of carrying capacity evaluation [9].

4.3 New-Type Urbanization, Migrant Worker Citizenization, and Basic Public Service Equalization

In 2014, China issued the “National New-Type Urbanization Plan (2014–2020),” marking a major transformation in China’s urbanization development [10]. Governments at all levels have actively explored practices and achieved notable results. However, overall, new-type urbanization remains in its initial research and exploration stage. Urbanization is the most important comprehensive geographical process on the land surface, with complex human-natural interaction mechanisms. Scientifically understanding new-type urbanization paths and models with Chinese characteristics is of great significance, with human-centered urbanization as the core. Research should analyze China’s urbanization pattern along the “Hu Huanyong Line” and differentiated new-type urbanization models for different region types, including near-home urbanization models in central and western regions and calculations of citizenization potential and pathway design. The distribution and migration patterns and mechanisms of floating populations, scientific planning of urban agglomerations and their radiating roles (including Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area urban agglomeration planning and Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei urban agglomeration coordinated development), as well as new-type urbanization of small and medium-sized cities and characteristic towns, and institutional reforms for administrative divisions and orderly city establishment in qualified counties and mega-towns all require in-depth research.

4.4 Organic Integration of Spatial Governance and Regional Development Strategy

The state has elevated the modernization of governance systems and capabilities to new heights. The report states the need to “coordinate the Three Major Strategies and Four Major Plateaus, implement relevant plans, study and formulate new measures, and optimize regional development patterns.” The “Three Major Strategies” refer to the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei coordinated development, and the Yangtze River Economic Belt, while the “Four Major Plateaus” are Western Development, Northeast revitalization, central region rise, and eastern region pioneering development. Clearly, the Three Major Strategies and Four Major Plateaus have overlapping spatial relationships and interactive functional relationships. Therefore, research should strengthen regional policy and spatial planning studies, investigate the causes of regional functions and spatial structure evolution laws, conduct human and economic geography research oriented toward spatial governance [11], and achieve coordination and integrated development of the Three Major Strategies and Four Major Plateaus under the new era and new normal. Additionally, the layout of various pilot zones urgently needs scientific support and rational arrangement.

4.5 Industrial Structure Adjustment and Upgrading and Development of New Industries and Business Forms

China's medium-to-long-term economic growth trend will gradually shift from the previous ultra-high speed to medium speed, remaining within a reasonable growth range under the new normal [12,13]. Centered on the "three cuts, one reduction, and one supplement" policy (cutting overcapacity, reducing inventory, deleveraging, reducing costs, and strengthening weak links), research should examine how to effectively reduce steel, coal, and coal power capacity, deeply analyze the spatial distribution and industrial transfer trends of traditional industries [14], assess the reduction potential and spatial distribution of capacity to be cut, and explore traditional industry transformation and upgrading. Research should also address housing's residential property attribute, conduct dynamic monitoring of China's total housing stock, residential structure, job-housing balance, and vacancy scale and distribution (across different regions and city tiers), and examine the relationship between housing destocking and accelerating new-type urbanization and migrant worker citizenization. Additionally, research should actively study new industry development forms, such as modern service industry development, all-for-one tourism, "tourism plus," strategic emerging industries, intelligent manufacturing, rural primary, secondary, and tertiary industry integration, and informatization and e-commerce. Furthermore, employment and labor issues, as important research objects in modern Western economic geography [15], are also future research directions worth attention.

4.6 Targeted Poverty Alleviation and Agricultural and Rural Development

Achieving a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020 is the first centenary goal established by the Party, with impoverished regions and populations representing the biggest 短板 (shortcoming) in achieving this goal. Research should deeply analyze the basic characteristics of rural poverty in the new era, reveal regional differentiation patterns of rural poverty, identify dominant factors of rural poverty, and propose strategies and countermeasures for scientifically advancing targeted poverty alleviation [16]. Achieving the goal of completely eliminating poverty by 2020 urgently requires scientifically advancing the targeted poverty alleviation strategy. Additionally, research should deeply advance agricultural supply-side structural reform, ensure national food security, promote mutual advancement between agricultural modernization and new-type urbanization, and accelerate the cultivation of new drivers for agricultural and rural development.

4.7 Innovation-Driven Development and Innovation Geography

The 13th Five-Year Plan period represents an important stage for accelerating the transformation from investment and export-driven growth to innovation-driven and domestic demand-driven development. "Mass entrepreneurship and

innovation” is an effective way to drive employment through entrepreneurship and innovation, and an important force for promoting the transformation of old and new drivers and upgrading economic structure. Research should reveal the current regional disparities in China’ s scientific and technological innovation capacity, the impact of innovation-driven development on regional economic development disparities, and propose policy recommendations for advancing innovation-driven development. Moreover, innovation-driven development is not only a matter for eastern coastal regions but also crucial for central and western underdeveloped regions, which can promote coordinated, inclusive, and shared regional development in China. For example, the Xinjiang Silk Road Economic Belt Core Area Innovation-Driven Development Pilot Zone, jointly established by Xinjiang, CAS, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and Shenzhen, Guangdong, is exploring an innovation-driven development path featuring factor agglomeration, open cooperation, and vibrant dynamics [17].

5 Conclusion

Strengthening disciplinary integration and decision orientation represents an important direction for the new round of domestic and international science and technology reforms. Major international frontier science programs such as “Future Earth” advocate strengthening the integration of natural and human sciences. The new CAS mission of “three orientations” and “four leads” clearly states the need to face national strategic needs and the main economic battlefield, emphasizing the construction of a high-level national science and technology think tank [20]. CAS has been designated as one of the first 25 pilot units for national high-end think tank construction, and serving national science and technology macro decision-making is the glorious mission of CAS as a high-level science and technology think tank [21,22]. In recent years, China’ s international status has undergone earth-shaking changes, requiring China to establish a new global perspective and deeply participate in global governance processes. Meanwhile, China’ s rapid socioeconomic development has led to major changes in our natural structure, resource-environment foundation, socioeconomic issues, and governance systems, increasingly demanding scientific government decision-making [23]. The 2017 Government Work Report has presented a series of major scientific questions and policy consulting propositions to the scientific community. For a long time, human and economic geography has been a distinctive interdisciplinary field within the CAS system, following the path of “promoting discipline development through tasks” and closely integrating with national needs. The discipline has invested its main efforts into the “main economic battlefield,” achieving a series of important results in urbanization and regional development [24]. Facing current national demands for regional development, we have an unshirkable responsibility to conduct policy consulting research in areas such as the Belt and Road Initiative, resource environmental carrying capacity and ecological civilization, new-type urbanization, spatial governance and regional development, industrial structure upgrading, targeted poverty alleviation, and innovation-driven development, providing scientific support for

strategic decision-making by relevant national departments.

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