Infrastructure Reports
WISDOM ACADEMIC https://doi.org/10.63808/ir.v2i1.453 Volume 2 , Issue 1

Conceptual Paper

A Study on the Development of Jiujiang as a Key City within the Context of Chinese-Style Modernisation

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Abstract

Chinese-style modernisation follows a path of modernisation with distinctive Chinese characteristics; the key to promoting high-quality development in the Yangtze River Economic Belt and implementing the strategy for coordinated regional development lies in developing key cities along the Yangtze River. Jiujiang is Jiangxi's sole gateway to the outside world with access to both the river and the sea; it serves as a key strategic node connecting the upstream and downstream regions of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, as well as a hub linking four provinces. Using the theory of Chinese-style modernisation as a framework, this paper examines Jiujiang's achievements as a node city in light of its geographical location, industrial base and ecological resources, whilst analysing its existing shortcomings. It offers recommendations for optimisation across five dimensions—industrial innovation, comprehensive hubs, green ecology, regional coordination and urban-rural governance—thereby providing practical guidance for the modernisation of cities situated at inter-provincial borders along the Yangtze River in central China.

Keywords

Chinese-style Modernisation, Yangtze River Economic Belt, Hub cities, Jiujiang, Integration of port, industry and city

1. Introduction

The Yangtze River Economic Belt is a core national strategy for the coordinated development of the river basin. Since the plan was implemented, ecological protection has consistently been prioritised, and the region has pursued a path of green and sustainable development. Leveraging the Yangtze

River's "golden waterway" as a natural link, localities along the river have broken down geographical barriers and gradually formed a development system characterised by complementary strengths and close interconnection between cities [1-2].

Turning our attention to Jiangxi, the province's entire 152-kilometre stretch of Yangtze River shoreline lies within Jiujiang. Situated at the junction of Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan and Anhui provinces, the city is where the main stem of the Yangtze River meets Poyang Lake, China's largest freshwater lake. This unique landscape and geographical location make it a vital pillar underpinning the development of the Middle Yangtze River Urban Agglomeration. [3-4]. Both the central government and Jiangxi Province have successively introduced targeted policies to support Jiujiang in establishing itself as a regional shipping hub, a centre for advanced manufacturing and a hub for cultural tourism and consumption, positioning the development of Jiujiang as a key node city as the core vehicle for the city's integration into the broader framework of Chinese-style modernisation[5-7]. Against the backdrop of the deepening of the domestic economic cycle and inland opening-up, exploring how Jiujiang can leverage its role as a key node to overcome development bottlenecks and realise its path towards modernisation holds significant practical research value.

Against the dual strategic backdrop of Chinese-style modernisation and the high-quality development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, this paper systematically examines the practical pathways for Jiujiang to develop into a key hub city within the Yangtze River Economic Belt; the findings hold both theoretical value and practical significance [8-9]. At the theoretical level, the study closely integrates the five key characteristics of Chinese-style modernisation with the development of hub city functions. It addresses the current academic shortfall in systematic research on small and medium-sized hub cities located along the Yangtze River at inter-provincial borders in central China, enriches the theoretical framework regarding the urban system of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, coordinated regional development, and the integration of ports, industries and cities, and provides a new analytical framework for research on the modernisation of similar inland hub cities[10-11]. At the practical level, as Jiangxi's sole port city with access to both the river and the sea, Jiujiang's development as a key node is directly linked to Jiangxi's inland opening-up, the coordinated development of the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, and the effective implementation of Yangtze River ecological conservation. By accurately assessing Jiujiang's actual foundations-including its location, industries, ecology and transport infrastructure as well as its developmental shortcomings, this study proposes actionable strategies aligned with the requirements of Chinese-style modernisation. These measures will not only assist Jiujiang in enhancing its functions as a hub with radiating influence, an industrial centre, a driver of openness and an ecological model, accelerating the realisation of its objectives to become a regional centre for shipping, manufacturing and cultural tourism, whilst also providing a practical model one that is both instructive and replicable-for similar

small and medium-sized hub cities along the Yangtze River to put Chinese-style modernisation into practice and drive high-quality, coordinated regional development.

2. Relevant Concepts and Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Definition of Core Concepts

(1) Chinese-style modernisation is the core criterion for assessing the effectiveness of the development of key cities; it is characterised by five key features: a vast population; common prosperity; the harmonious development of material and spiritual civilisation; a harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature; and peaceful development.

(2) Key node cities in the Yangtze River Economic Belt differ from regional central cities; their core functions encompass the distribution of economic factors, industrial transmission, inter-provincial cooperation, ecological demonstration and inland opening-up. They serve as pivotal bridges that link urban agglomerations and break down barriers to inter-provincial circulation.

(3) Jiujiang, as a node city, fulfils three strategic roles: a logistics and industrial transhipment hub for the upper and lower reaches of the Yangtze River; a coordination node at the junction of four provinces; and a gateway for Jiangxi Province's inland opening-up.

2.2. Fundamental Theories

(1) The theory of coordinated regional development: Hub cities are able to transcend administrative boundaries, facilitate the cross-regional flow of labour, capital and industry, and narrow development gaps between urban and rural areas and between provinces; they are key pivots in the regional network.

(2) Theory of Port-Industry-City Integration: The competitiveness of port cities along the Yangtze River relies on the coordinated development of port logistics, port-related industries and urban infrastructure; this represents the core pathway for inland cities to achieve modernisation through opening up to the outside world.

(3) Theory of Green Development: Ecological protection of the Yangtze River is a mandatory constraint; the modernisation requirement of harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature necessitates that Jiujiang coordinate the ecological protection of the Yangtze River and Poyang Lake with industrial and economic development, thereby establishing a green, low-carbon development model.

3. The Foundations and Achievements of Jiujiang's Development as a Hub City from the Perspective of Chinese-Style Modernisation

3.1. Jiujiang's Unique Advantages in Developing as a Hub City

(1) Jiujiang enjoys a superior geographical location with transport links to both the river and the sea, connecting four provinces. The city has now established the foundations for a comprehensive multimodal transport system encompassing waterways, railways, roads and air transport. Leveraging its status as a major inland port in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River, and supported by infrastructure such as the Changjiu High-Speed Railway and cross-river links, Jiujiang has formed a well-developed, multi-dimensional transport network, giving it the natural advantage of serving as a hub for the aggregation and transhipment of various factors of development.

(2) Jiujiang has established a dual-pillar industrial system based on its port adjacent manufacturing and cultural tourism sectors, bringing together five major industrial clusters. With the establishment of a trillion-yuan port-adjacent industrial belt, the city boasts a robust industrial base.

(3) Jiujiang enjoys ecological policy advantages derived from the convergence of multiple national and provincial strategies. Three national-level strategies the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the Middle Yangtze River Urban Agglomeration and the Yangtze River National Cultural Park are being implemented here, providing top-level strategic support for the city's development.

3.2. Current Achievements in the Development of Jiujiang as a Hub City

(1) Steady growth in economic output, laying a solid material foundation for common prosperity.During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, Jiujiang's GDP has continued to grow, per capita GDP has risen steadily, the number of industrial enterprises above designated size has continued to expand, and production capacity in emerging industries such as lithium batteries and organosilicon has expanded rapidly. Income levels for both urban and rural residents have risen in tandem; investment in people's livelihoods including education, healthcare and elderly care has continued to increase; the level of equity in public services across urban and rural areas has steadily improved; and the modernisation of common prosperity has been steadily advanced.

(2) The comprehensive hub capacity of Jiujiang Port has risen steadily, and its role as a gateway for opening up to the outside world has continued to strengthen; it serves as a key hub and port for Jiangxi Province in connecting the domestic and international dual circulation. A development model comprising 'one port and five zones' has been established, and the scale of its freight transport has long placed it among the leading inland river ports in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River.

(3) Comprehensive ecological management across the entire region is being advanced, adhering to the modern development philosophy of harmonious coexistence between humankind and nature. Ecological restoration projects along the Yangtze River shoreline are being carried out to create high-quality demonstration landscapes, whilst outdated chemical production capacity is being phased out and industrial parks are being upgraded to promote green and circular development.

(4) Urban-rural and regional coordination has been continuously advanced, optimising the urban

network system.Integrated development has been achieved among the Bailihu, Xunyang and Lianxi clusters in the central urban area, whilst port-adjacent industries in the riverside counties of Hukou, Ruichang and Pengze have been collaboratively planned; the city has deeply integrated into the Changjiu integration initiative and actively aligned with the Wuhan metropolitan area; inter-provincial transport corridors are being accelerated, and the multi-tiered urban network is gradually being refined.

(5) Spiritual civilisation has developed in tandem with material progress, with both advancing in harmony.We have deepened our exploration of the Xunyang culture of the Yangtze River and the landscape culture of Mount Lu, creating distinctive cultural and tourism IP for the Yangtze River National Cultural Park; we have successfully been designated a National Civilised City, achieved full coverage of public cultural venues in both urban and rural areas, and seen the scale of cultural and tourism consumption continue to expand, thereby realising the simultaneous advancement of economic development and the building of spiritual civilisation.

4. Shortcomings in the Development of Jiujiang as a Hub City and Pathways for Optimisation

4.1. Existing Shortcomings

There remain numerous constraints to the development of Jiujiang as a key hub city in accordance with the standards for building modernisation with Chinese characteristics.

(1) The industrial structure is heavily weighted towards the chemical industry, and there is a shortage of innovation resources.

(2) Integration between the port, industry and the city is insufficient, and supporting facilities for the comprehensive transport hub are inadequate.

(3) Coordination among the four provinces is hampered by administrative barriers, and the port's hinterland coverage is limited.

(4) The ecological transformation mechanism for the Yangtze River and Poyang Lake is not sufficiently robust, and the cost of greening traditional industries is high.

(5) Resources are unevenly distributed between urban and rural areas, and there are significant disparities in public services.

(6) Local cultural characteristics have not been fully explored, and the cultural and tourism industry lacks the capacity to drive economic growth.

4.2. Pathways to Optimisation

In line with the five major development priorities for modernisation, and taking into account Jiujiang's current development shortcomings, we will implement targeted measures to

comprehensively strengthen the city's overall competitiveness as a key hub along the Yangtze River.

In the field of industrial innovation, we will accelerate the transition of traditional industries along the river towards green and smart development, strengthen distinctive industrial chains in lithium batteries and organosilicon, attract scientific and technological innovation talent and relevant platforms, and provide supporting port-adjacent commercial, logistics and financial services to form a diversified and synergistic industrial system.

In terms of integrated transport and regional coordination, the city is continuing to address infrastructure shortcomings such as port access roads and cross-river links. It is establishing a regular communication and collaboration mechanism among the four provinces of Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan and Anhui to remove barriers to the flow of factors of production caused by regional fragmentation. Furthermore, it is planning multiple inland dry ports to expand the port's hinterland, thereby fully realising the value of the city as a shipping hub connecting the Yangtze River to the sea.

In terms of ecological governance, a tiered and categorised management system will be implemented for the Yangtze River shoreline to strictly control unregulated development; ecological and cultural tourism will be developed by leveraging river and lake wetland resources, whilst carbon sink industries and ecological agriculture will be fostered to transform ecological advantages into developmental advantages.

Urban and rural development must involve the coordinated planning of infrastructure across the entire region to promote the decentralisation of public resources—such as culture, education, healthcare and elderly care—to counties and townships, facilitate the flow of resources between urban and rural areas, narrow development gaps, and achieve the goal of balanced integration.

In terms of cultural and tourism development, we will thoroughly explore local resources such as the history of Xunyang's riverside area, wharf culture and landscape poetry, link distinctive cultural and tourism attractions along the river to create a unique urban cultural and tourism brand, and enrich consumer experiences such as riverside night tours, folk cultural experiences and distinctive dining. This will serve to strengthen Jiujiang's role as a multi-functional hub for industry, transport, ecology and inter-provincial cooperation across multiple dimensions.

5. Conclusions and Outlook

Chinese-style modernisation is driving the high-quality development of cities along the Yangtze River; Jiujiang, with its strategic location at the confluence of river and lake and its ecological advantages, possesses the fundamental conditions to become a core city in the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

Following years of development, Jiujiang has achieved certain results in areas such as port-based economy, port-adjacent industries, ecological management of the Yangtze River, and urban and rural

development. However, it still faces developmental shortcomings, including insufficient innovation capacity, lagging inter-provincial coordination, slow realisation of ecological value, and a marked urban-rural divide.

In line with the requirements for building modernisation with Chinese characteristics, Jiujiang must make concerted efforts across multiple fronts including industrial innovation, transport hubs, green development, cross-regional cooperation and the promotion of distinctive cultural heritage to strengthen the four core capabilities of a key node city: industrial outreach, inter-provincial coordination, and openness to the outside world.

In the future, Jiujiang will emerge as a model riverside city in Central China, where shipping, manufacturing, cultural tourism and ecological conservation are integrated, providing practical experience that can serve as a reference for the modernisation of inland riverside cities across the country.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Jiujiang City Social Science Fund for its support of this research.

Author contributions

Not applicable.

Funding

This study has been supported by the Jiujiang City Social Science Fund Projects for 2026 (Grant No. 26YB374).

Data availability

No data availability statement is required.

Declarations

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest to this work. We declare that we do not have any commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in connection with the work submitted.

Ethics approval

Not applicable.

Consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Additional information

Received: 30 June 2026

Accepted: 9 July 2026

Published online: 5 November 2026

Publisher's Note

Wisdom Academic Press Ltd. remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

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