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Attention Allocation of the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government in the Construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle: An Analysis Based on 238 Policy Documents in China

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Abstract

The construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle holds a pivotal strategic position in China's regional development landscape. Attention is a scarce resource, the optimization of government decision-making hinges critically on effective attention allocation. This study examines 238 policy documents issued by the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government pertaining to the 'Twin-City Economic Circle'. Leveraging grounded theory and content analysis, we utilize Nvivo12 to process and analyze these texts, aiming to delineate the overall distribution and specific characteristics of the governments' attention allocation. Our findings reveal disparities in attention allocation across different timeframes and domains, along with issues such as imbalances in policy tool structures, attention allocation structures, and the precision of attention allocation. Consequently, we recommend that the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government enhance the utilization of demand-oriented policy tools to refine their policy tool frameworks, prioritize non-urgent policy issues to optimize attention allocation, and refine the targets of attention allocation to enhance the precision of policy arrangements.

Keywords: Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, Allocation of Attention, Policy Documents



1 | Introduction

Situated at the convergence of "the Belt and Road" and the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle serves as the launchpad for a new land-sea corridor in the western region, boasting unique advantages in bridging the southwest and northwest China with East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. Endowed with exceptional ecological features, abundant energy and mineral resources, densely populated urban areas, and diverse landscapes, this region stands out as the most populous, industrially robust, innovative, and open area in western China, offering vast market potential and a high degree of openness. Consequently, it occupies a distinct and pivotal strategic position in the overall development landscape of the country[1].

Prior to the official announcement of the "Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle," the Chengdu-Chongqing region has always been a crucial player in China's regional development landscape. As early as 2011, the National Development and Reform Commission issued the "Regional Plan for the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Zone." In 2016, a joint effort by the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development culminated in the release of the "Development Plan for the Chengdu-Chongqing Urban Agglomeration." Furthermore, the "Key Tasks of New Urbanization Construction in 2019" explicitly recognized the Chengdu-Chongqing Urban Agglomeration as a peer to the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Urban Agglomeration, the Yangtze River Delta Urban Agglomeration, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Urban Agglomeration. On January 3, 2020, the sixth meeting of the Central Committee for Finance and Economics officially proposed the "promotion of the Chengdu-Chongqing Twin-City Economic Circle," marking the first time the concept was introduced, with the western region being positioned as a significant growth pole for high-quality development. In October 2020, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPC held a meeting to review the Outline of the Construction Plan of the Double City Economic Circle in Chengdu Chongqing Region. In October 2021, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Outline of the Construction Plan of the Double City Economic Circle in Chengdu Chongqing Region (referred to as the Outline of the Plan), making a top-level design for the development of the Double City Economic Circle in Chengdu Chongqing Region. In December of the same year, the Chongqing Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Sichuan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, the Chongqing Municipal People's Government, and the Sichuan Provincial People's Government jointly issued the "Joint Implementation Plan for Implementing the Outline of the Chengdu Chongqing Economic Circle Construction Plan" in Chongqing and Sichuan provinces. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China points out in the fourth part of "Accelerating the Construction of a New Development Pattern and Focusing on Promoting High quality Development" that "promoting the construction of the Chengdu Chongqing Economic Circle" means that the construction of the Chengdu Chongqing Economic Circle has been elevated to a higher strategic position and given higher development and construction requirements.

The "Outline of the Plan" issued by the central government has outlined systematic requirements for the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. To fulfill these requirements and achieve high-quality development, both Sichuan and Chongqing have issued a series of policy documents in response to the initiative. So, in what specific aspects and how do Sichuan and Chongqing promote the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle? What is the allocation of government attention in promoting the construction of the Chengdu Chongqing dual city economic circle? In which areas are there insufficient attention or shortcomings, and how can they be optimized?

2| Literature Review

“Attention” was originally a concept in psychological research, referring to an individual's selection of specific stimuli or aspects of stimuli in the external environment[2]. Given the limited capacity of biological individuals to process signals, when various signals enter their conscious awareness, their attention naturally gravitates towards certain signals, ultimately determining whether to take action. The concept of "attention" was subsequently introduced into the field of management research during the era of management theory jungles. Simon characterized it as "the process of managers selectively focusing on certain information while disregarding other elements"[3]. In the realm of policy science research, "attention" has emerged as a crucial component of government decision-making. Political scientist Brian Jones pioneered the integration of attention research into public policy, formulating the "Attention-Driven Policy Choice Model," which underscores the role of attention as a mechanism that brings the salience of features into the decision-making framework. During the process of formulating public policies and addressing citizens' concerns, the government's attention is inevitably dispersed. This attention, in turn, steers government decision-making[4]. Attention allocation serves as a mediating variable, significantly influencing government decision-making behaviors[5]. In today's world, the government faces a plethora of intricate issues that demand urgent attention. However, given the finite resources and the limitations of government rationality, decision-makers cannot devote equal attention to all public affairs. Consequently, the government must carefully weigh the significance of various policy issues and make informed decisions regarding the allocation of its attention accordingly.

At present, research on policies related to the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle mainly focuses on a specific field, such as financial and tax systems, public services, sports industry, higher education, big data, technological innovation, and so on. For example, Liu Rong et al. analyzed the constraints of the fiscal and taxation system on the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, and believed that the fiscal and taxation system should be further optimized to support the coordinated progress of the Chengdu Chongqing dual city economic circle from the aspects of tax sharing system, fiscal

transfer payment, local tax system construction, and tax incentives[6]; Dong Wenjie and others need to benchmark the goal of co building and sharing basic public services, and promote the equalization of basic public services in the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle through mechanisms such as improving fiscal grading guarantees, building differentiated fiscal guarantees, establishing policy linkage, and optimizing information docking[7]; Wang Xin et al. pointed out the shortcomings of the big data development policy in the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, and pointed out that efforts should be made to improve the execution of big data industry policies, deepen the focus and content of big data industry policies, and improve the mechanism for coordinated and integrated development, in order to lay a foundation for the high-quality development of the Chengdu Chongqing Economic Circle[8], and so on. However, the "Outline of the Plan for the Construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle" issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council has made plans for the construction of the Chengdu Chongqing Economic Circle from the aspects of building a new development pattern for the economic circle, jointly constructing a modern infrastructure network, jointly constructing a modern industrial system, and jointly building a science and technology innovation center with national influence. The specific implementation of the plan requires policy guidance. Through systematic analysis of the relevant policy texts issued by the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government in the construction of the Chengdu- Chongqing Economic Circle, we can gain insight into the current situation of the attention allocation of the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government in different fields of the economic circle construction, and provide decision-making references for optimizing the combination of policy tools and promoting the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle.

3| Data and Study Design

3.1| Data

This article takes the "Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle" first proposed by the central government at the sixth meeting of the Central Committee of Finance and Economics in January 2020 as a key node, and the relevant policy texts of the "Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle" issued by the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government as the main research object. The policy texts are mainly sourced from the portal websites of the provincial and municipal people's governments, and the policy expressions are regulations, methods, opinions, and notices. This article mainly selects the relevant policy texts issued by the People's Government of Sichuan Province and the People's Government of Chongqing Municipality as the main research objects, mainly because as the highest level government in the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, the policy texts issued by the People's Government of Sichuan Province and the People's Government of Chongqing Municipality are the basic policy

texts that directly guide the development and construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle in addition to the policy texts issued by the central government.

On the official websites of the Sichuan Provincial People's Government and the Chongqing Municipal People's Government respectively, using the keyword "Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle", the search scope includes the titles and texts of policy texts. The policy texts were published from January 3, 2020 (when the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle was first proposed) to August 31, 2023, and 212 and 250 policy texts were searched respectively. By reading and browsing each policy text retrieved, and filtering out some policy texts that are not directly related to the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, a total of 115 effective policy texts were obtained from the Sichuan Provincial Government and 123 effective policy texts were obtained from the Chongqing Municipal Government, totaling 238. It should be noted that the selected data samples mainly reflect the attention allocation performance of the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government during the policy formulation stage, and there may be deviations in the specific policy implementation process. Therefore, the current research and optimization of attention allocation in this article are mainly reflected in the stages of topic setting and policy formulation.

3.2 | Study Design

3.2.1 | Theoretical basis

Chen Zhenming divided policy tools into market-oriented policy tools, business management techniques, and socialized means[9]; Hoppmann et al. divided policy tools into strategic level, comprehensive level, and fundamental level tools [10]; Wurtus classified policy tools into informational, authoritative, organizational, and fiscal tools. Rothwell et al[11]. classified technology innovation policies into three types based on a systematic network analysis architecture: Supply type, demand type, and environmental type. This classification method has been applied in policy research across multiple fields [12].

Currently, the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle occupies a pivotal strategic position in the overall national development landscape. It serves as a crucial strategic pillar for fostering regional coordinated development, leveraging complementary strengths, and fostering high-quality regional economic layouts under the new circumstances. Additionally, it represents a significant initiative for promoting a new development paradigm, a vital link in shaping a fresh paradigm for opening up to the world, and a fundamental measure to enhance spatial governance and protection capabilities. Effective institutional supply forms the fundamental basis and vital support for achieving these ambitious goals, thereby facilitating the coordinated and complementary development of the Chengdu-Chongqing region towards integrated progress. In this context, the development requirements of strengthening resource guarantees, activating and addressing the needs of key stakeholders, and fostering a green development environment in the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle align closely with the inherent logic and practical functionalities of supply-oriented, demand-oriented,

and environmental-oriented policy tools. Consequently, this article adopts the policy classification criteria of "supply-oriented, demand-oriented, and environmental-oriented" as the primary framework for analyzing policy texts. Specifically, supply-oriented policies primarily facilitate economic circle development through the provision of facilities, funding, and services. Demand-oriented policies, on the other hand, primarily drive economic circle development via mechanisms such as government procurement, service outsourcing, pilot demonstration projects, and international exchanges. Lastly, environmental policies exert their influence by cultivating a robust economic development environment and fostering a green and sustainable living environment for the populace.

3.2.2 | Research Methods

Grounded theory is a research approach that generates theories through the analysis of empirical data. This involves systematically collecting and analyzing data on specific phenomena, discovering, developing, and validating theories from the collected data, ultimately presenting the research findings as theoretical representations of reality[13]. Content analysis, on the other hand, is a quantitative analysis technique rooted in qualitative research. It begins with qualitative problem hypotheses and utilizes quantitative statistical analysis methods and tools to process the research subject matter, ultimately arriving at qualitative conclusions drawn from statistical data[14]. In this study, NVivo12 software is employed to extract, integrate, and categorize the content of 238 selected policy texts, forming a series of conceptual categories that facilitate a quantitative examination of the attention allocation status of the governments of Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality in the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle.

3.2.3 | Research Process

This article extracts content and categorizes a total of 238 effective policy texts issued by the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government, ultimately formulating the primary categories for the study of attention allocation and development logic. The specific operational approach is outlined as follows: Initially, open coding is conducted to sequentially number the 238 policy texts, and core concepts are extracted from their central tenets for secondary coding, yielding 300 core concepts including "one-stop online government services," collaborative fire safety governance systems, judicial appraisal cooperation, integrated legal construction, and collaborative development of modern industrial systems. Subsequently, these core concepts are encoded into 11 conceptual categories, such as infrastructure development, public services, innovative resources, and talent cultivation (Table 1). Finally, the 11 conceptual categories are summarized and categorized into three primary groups: supply-oriented, environmental-oriented, and demand-oriented. However, it is noteworthy that policy documents pertaining to industrial cooperation and regional development may encompass two or three types of policy tools from the supply, environmental, and demand sides, rendering their separate coding inconvenient. Therefore, such categories are designated as comprehensive. Consequently,

four primary categories emerge through the encoding process: supply type, environmental type, demand type, and comprehensive type.

Table 1 Concept Categories Formed by Encoding

number	main category	category	concept
1	supply type	infrastructure construction	highway network, shipping hub, market infrastructure, high-quality development of water conservancy, power supply, etc
2		public service	health and hygiene, medical security, meteorological security, "one-stop service", convenient living, etc
3		Innovation Resources	energy integration, agricultural technology, popular science resources, etc
4		training	human resources market, talent attraction and development, etc
5	environmental type	environmental protection	waste free cities, hydrogen corridors, energy conservation and carbon reduction, heavy pollution weather warnings, etc
6		business environment	financial center, cross regional collaborative supervision, intellectual property protection, "streamlining administration and delegating power", etc
7		legal environment	rule of law collaboration, rule of law government, legal services, rule of law culture, collaborative legislation, collaborative law enforcement, etc
8	demand type	platform demonstration	internet integrated development demonstration area, agricultural industry science and technology innovation center, science and technology innovation and collaborative innovation demonstration area, e-commerce innovation development demonstration area, etc
9		international exchange	international aviation gateway hub, international consumption center city, international consumption destination, etc

			international bio city, international talent, etc
10	comprehensive type	industrial cooperation	sports Industry alliance, exhibition industry collaboration, industrial cooperation parks, etc
11		regional development	Suining-Tongnan-Sichuan-Chongqing Adjacent Areas, etc

Note: self-made by the author

4| Current Allocation of Attention by the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government

The encoding process categorizes data into main categories and subcategories, represented as “parent” nodes and “child” nodes in the encoding results. The number of corresponding core concepts serves as the reference point for each category. By analyzing and comparing the number of reference points or their proportion to the total, we can vertically assess changes in the utilization of policy tools of the same type over time. Additionally, a horizontal comparison reveals the usage patterns of different types of policy tools. This analysis also highlights the application of policy tools across various policy issue areas. Consequently, we can deduce the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government' preferences for specific policy tools and their allocation of attention towards different policy issues in the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. Furthermore, this analysis identifies shortcomings in their policy tool structure (i.e., the rationale behind policy tool utilization) and attention allocation, enabling us to propose targeted optimization strategies.

4.1| Analysis of the Policy Tool Structure

Drawing upon the policy tool classification framework proposed by Roy Rothwell and others, this article categorizes policy tools into three types: supply-oriented, demand-oriented, and environmental-oriented. Given the systematic nature of comprehensive policy agendas, it is challenging for a single type of policy tool to address all facets of the issue. Consequently, a rational structure of policy tools holds significant importance for the successful implementation of such agendas. In the coding results, the policy tools pertaining to supply, environment, and demand serve as parent nodes. By analyzing the participation points of these parent nodes, we can gain insights into the policy tool usage structure and preferences of the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government in the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. This analysis further serves as a reference for optimizing the structure of policy tools.

4.1.1| Structure of Policy Instruments

From the initial proposal of the "Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle" on January 3, 2020, to September 3, 2023, Sichuan Provincial Government has issued a total of 115 effective policy

documents pertaining to the development of this economic circle. In the process of meticulously coding these policy texts, ambiguous and challenging-to-categorize peripheral concepts were excluded, ultimately yielding 111 reference points. Among these, 39 pertain to supply-oriented policies, 32 to environmental policies, 13 to demand-driven policies, and 27 to comprehensive policies. These categories account for 0.35, 0.29, 0.12, and 0.24 of the total reference points respectively. Similarly, Chongqing Municipal Government has released a total of 123 effective policy documents related to the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. Following a rigorous coding process that excluded unclear and difficult-to-classify concepts, a total of 189 reference points were identified. These include 69 supply-oriented policy reference points, 63 environmental policy reference points, 21 demand-driven policy reference points, and 36 comprehensive policy reference points. These categories constitute 0.37, 0.33, 0.11, and 0.19 of the total reference points respectively.

By analyzing the structure of policy tools employed by the governments of Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality through the proportion of policy types (Figure 1), it becomes evident that there is a considerable similarity in the ratios of different types of policy tools utilized by both administrations. The trends depicted by the two lines in Figure 1 remain largely consistent, indicating that the frequency of using various policy tools, from highest to lowest, follows the order of supply-oriented, environmental-oriented, comprehensive-oriented, and demand-oriented. Notably, the supply-oriented policy tools, which are the most frequently utilized, are nearly twice as common as the demand-oriented ones, which are the least frequently used.

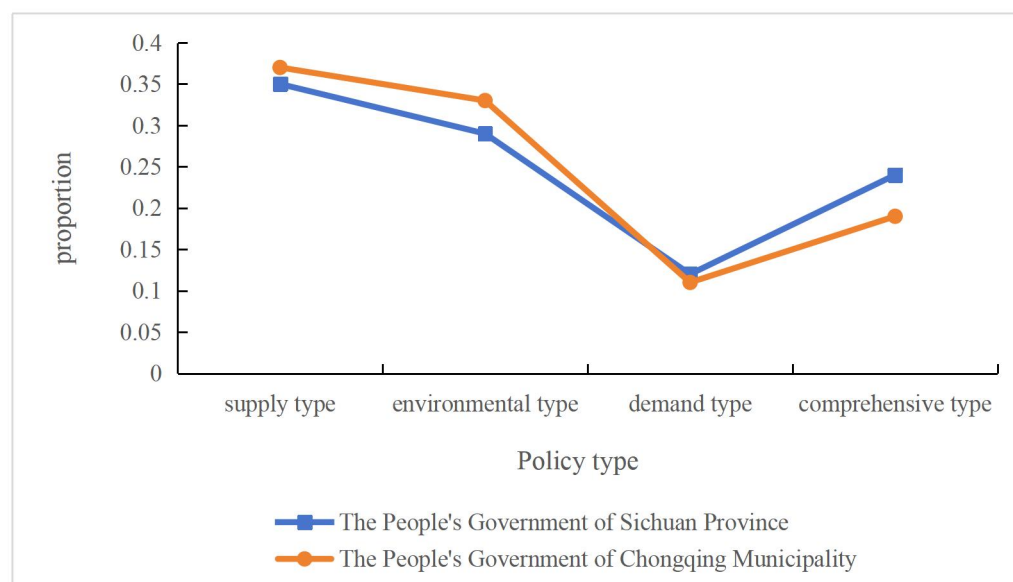


Figure 1 Structure of Policy Tools of the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government

Note: self-made by the author

4.1.2| Structural Characteristics of Policy Tools

The policy objectives pertaining to the development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic

Circle are typically multifaceted and involve diverse stakeholders. Consequently, policymakers must carefully orchestrate a mix of policy tools to fulfill various objectives, cater to different constituencies, and overcome diverse obstacles. The governments of Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality tend to favor supply-side and environmental policies, primarily focusing on resource and service provision as well as environmental enhancement to drive and influence the Economic Circle's development. However, demand-driven policies, which aim to stimulate the needs of various stakeholders to garner support and pursue diversified growth, are less prevalent. This scarcity of demand-oriented policies is not solely evident in policies related to the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle but also extends to areas like industrial policies and innovation and entrepreneurship policies, indicating a significant imbalance in policy structure. If supply-side and environmental policies are viewed as the government's "solo efforts" based on subjective will to achieve policy goals, demand-driven policies represent a collaborative approach that leverages diverse support based on stakeholder needs. Evidently, the policy landscape surrounding the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle remains immature, reflecting a focus on the more fundamental stages of resource and service provision as well as environmental enhancement. If this trend persists, it may lead to a one-sided and excessive supply, limiting the Twin-City Economic Circle's development to superficial levels and preventing deeper integration and comprehensive development.

4.2 | Analysis of Attention Allocation

Given the finiteness of resources and the rational constraints of the government, the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing Municipal Government exhibits varying degrees of attention towards different sectors in the development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. Consequently, there exist disparities in resource allocation, reflecting differences in attention allocation. Through the process of coding, this study establishes categories, or sub-nodes, and the number of references associated with each sub-node, or the proportion of these references to the total, serves as an indicator of the government's attention allocation towards that particular field.

4.2.1 | Attention Allocation of the Sichuan Provincial Government

The overall attention allocation of the Sichuan Provincial Government towards the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, spanning from January 3, 2020, to September 3, 2023, is depicted in Figure 2. Overall, the year 2021 witnessed a higher degree of emphasis by the Sichuan Provincial Government on various domains, particularly the development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. Prior to the review of the Planning Outline, the provincial government actively explored various aspects of economic circle construction, including regional development, platform demonstration, and industrial cooperation, since the initial proposal of the "Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle" in January 2020. The significance of the Sichuan Provincial Government's focus on the twin-city economic circle reached a peak in October 2020, following the Political Bureau of the Central Committee's meeting, which reviewed the Planning Outline. The meeting emphasized the need for a unified approach and integrated development in the Chengdu-Chongqing region, strengthening cooperation

mechanisms, and establishing high-level models for regional collaboration. This underscores the significant impact of high-level meetings on shaping local government actions.

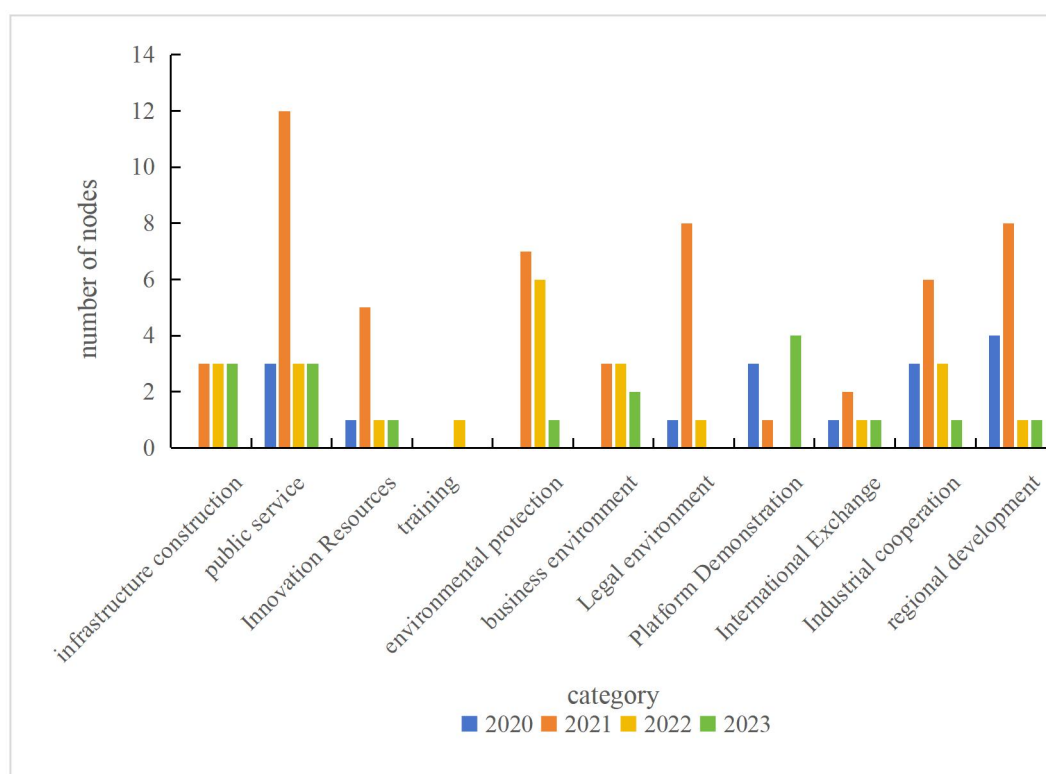


Figure 2 Attention Allocation of Sichuan Provincial Government from 2020 to 2023

Note: self-made by the author

(1) Public Services

The public service sector is frequently mentioned in the relevant policies issued by the Sichuan Provincial Government, topping the list (Figure 3). This sector primarily encompasses the integrated development of healthcare, medical security, meteorological support, and other service guarantees in the Chengdu-Chongqing region. It also involves the seamless integration of government services, such as the "one-stop service" initiative, and the coordinated development of convenient living circles and other lifestyle amenities. Public services serve as a crucial pillar for safeguarding people's livelihoods, fulfilling their basic needs for survival and development, and enhancing their sense of happiness and fulfillment. Therefore, strengthening the collaborative construction and sharing of public services holds significant practical importance[15]. Chapter 11 of the "Outline of the Plan" underscores the necessity of "strengthening the collaborative construction and sharing of public services." It further outlines specific requirements for achieving this objective in the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, including promoting the standardization and facilitation of basic public services, sharing educational, cultural, and sports resources, fostering cooperation in public health, medical care, and elderly care, and enhancing emergency response coordination mechanisms. The Sichuan Provincial Government has accorded priority to the collaborative construction and sharing of

public services in its construction endeavors and has incorporated relevant requirements in numerous policy documents.

(2) Environmental Protection

The field of environmental protection has been frequently mentioned in relevant policies issued by the Sichuan Provincial Government, ranking second only to the public service sector (Figure 3). Ecological environment protection serves as a prerequisite for sustainable development. Mountains, rivers, forests, fields, lakes, and grasslands constitute a living community, where verdant landscapes are as precious as gold and silver. Harmonious coexistence between humans and nature is a fundamental aspect of economic circle construction. According to the Outline of the Plan, the Chengdu-Chongqing region is tasked with jointly establishing an ecological barrier in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, fostering ecological co-construction and protection, enhancing cross-border collaborative pollution control efforts, and exploring green transformation and development pathways. To this end, the Sichuan Provincial Government has intensified its efforts in safeguarding the ecological environment through various measures, including collaborative ecological network development, joint water environment management, collaborative air pollution prevention, collaborative green industry development, shared clean energy utilization, and joint promotion of green living practices.

(3) Regional Development

The field of regional development is extensively covered in the relevant policy documents issued by the Sichuan Provincial Government (Figure 3). As a systematic and comprehensive endeavor, regional development encompasses a wide range of geographical spaces, task categories, and scopes of work, necessitating a holistic perspective and systematic arrangements. Typically, it involves the provision of resource elements, the formulation of regional development plans, the optimization of development structures, and other pertinent aspects, all aimed at achieving specific regional development goals. Consequently, policy texts pertaining to regional development are singled out and categorized as comprehensive policy tools. The policy documents released by the Sichuan Provincial Government often focus on grand and general regional development initiatives, such as establishing an international consumption destination that embodies Bashu characteristics, jointly building inland reform and opening-up hubs, and collectively promoting urban-rural integration. Additionally, they also cover more specific new area development projects, including the establishment of the Chengdu-Chongqing National High-tech Zone Development Alliance, as well as regional development efforts that are more narrowly focused on specific industrial sectors, like the promotion of the Chengdu-Chongqing modern and efficient characteristic agricultural belt.

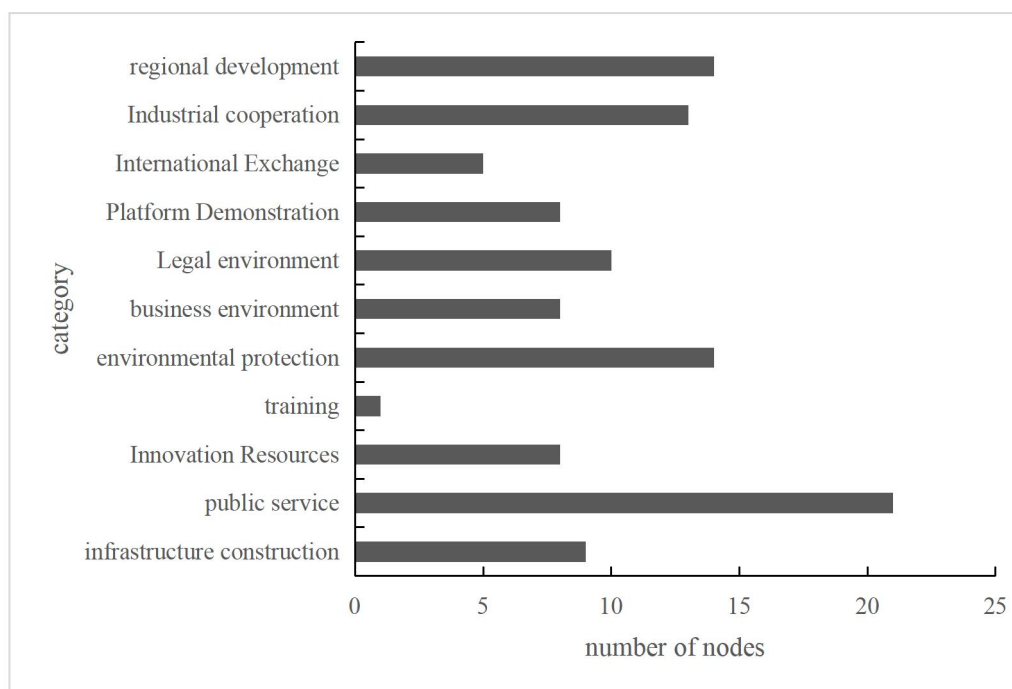


Figure 3 Sichuan Provincial Government's Attention Allocation in Various Fields

Note: self-made by the author

4.2.2| Attention Allocation of Chongqing Municipal Government

The overall attention allocation of the Chongqing Municipal Government towards the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, spanning from January 3, 2020, to September 3, 2023, is outlined in Figure 4. Overall, out of the 11 fields, the Chongqing Municipal Government allocated a higher level of attention to seven of them in 2021 compared to other years, indicating a stronger emphasis on the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. This trend mirrors the attention allocation pattern of the Sichuan Provincial Government, which was similarly influenced and driven by the meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee to deliberate on the "Outline of the Plan". Specifically, the top three areas of attention allocation by the Chongqing Municipal Government are business environment, public services, and infrastructure construction, as depicted in Figure 5.

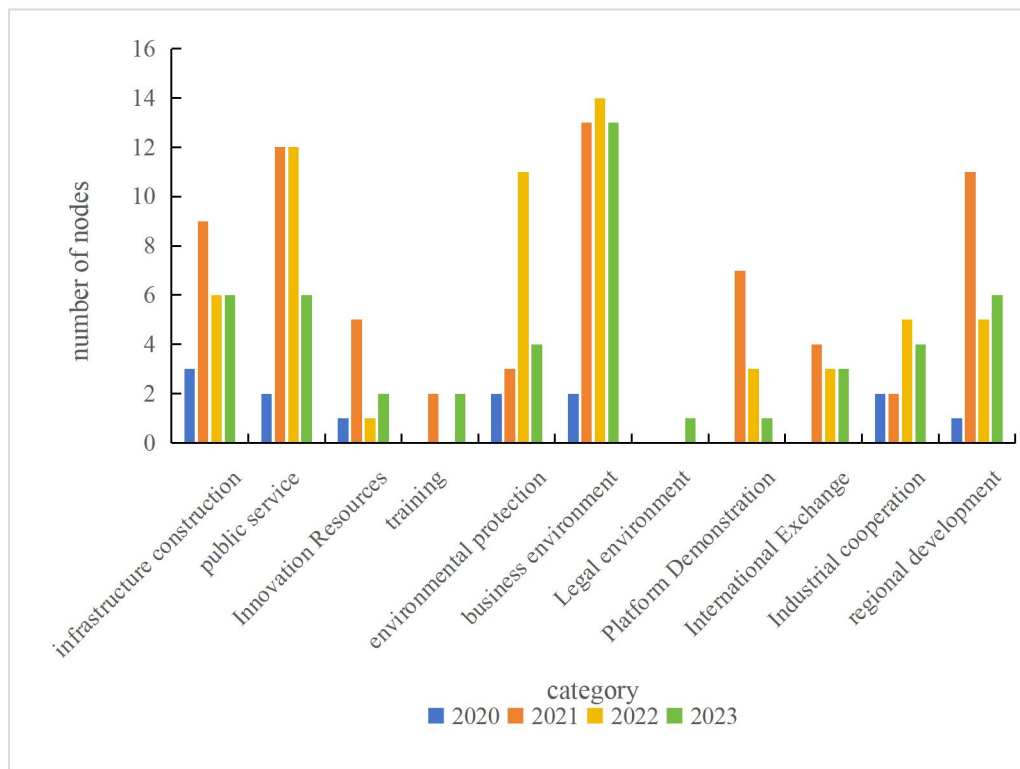


Figure 4 Attention Allocation of Chongqing Municipal Government from 2020 to 2023

Note: self-made by the author

(1) Business Environment

The Outline of the Plan underscores the necessity of cultivating a world-class business environment, establishing a high-standard market system, and continuously reforming government functions for the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. A market-oriented, law-based, and internationally competitive business environment is crucial for promoting high-quality development in the economic circle and fostering a new growth pole for China's economy. Key indicators of a top-tier business environment include facilitating trade and investment, standardizing government services, and enhancing legal protection. To optimize the business environment, the Chongqing Municipal Government has implemented various measures, including coordinating tax and fee policies, fostering the healthy development of market entities, facilitating the transfer and trading of rural property rights, linking agricultural product markets, jointly building the Western Financial Center, strengthening regional market supervision, reforming the "streamlining administration, delegating powers, and improving services" framework, and piloting innovative business environment initiatives. The legal environment, as a vital component of the business environment, plays a pivotal role in attracting investments and fostering long-term development for business entities. The Chongqing Municipal Government's policy documents contain provisions directly related to enhancing the rule of law in the business environment, such as strengthening regional market supervision. In this study, the legal

environment is treated separately from the business environment due to the policy text's emphasis on overall legal construction in the region.

(2) Public Services

The Chongqing Municipal Government, similarly to the Sichuan Provincial Government, has accorded significant attention to public services in the development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. This focus has materialized in the joint establishment and sharing of public services, including the collaborative development of healthcare systems, the mutual utilization of top-tier educational and cultural resources, the enhancement of social security service convenience, the strengthening of urban safety and prevention systems, the synchronized development of elderly care services, and the facilitation of seamless economic circle operations. On the one hand, the enhancement of public services will undoubtedly elevate the quality of life, happiness, and satisfaction levels of residents. On the other hand, the collaborative establishment and sharing of public services will foster complementary strengths in public service provision within the Chengdu-Chongqing region, thereby facilitating and promoting the free flow of talents and other critical resource elements between the two regions.

(3) Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development serves as the cornerstone of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. The establishment of an infrastructure network should be steered by enhancing internal and external connectivity, bolstering hub functionalities, and accelerating the optimization of both traditional and emerging infrastructure, with the ultimate goal of fostering an interconnected, collaborative, secure, and efficient infrastructure network. More specifically, infrastructure development encompasses the establishment of an integrated and comprehensive transportation system, the reinforcement of energy security, and the enhancement of water conservancy infrastructure. To this end, the Chongqing Municipal Government has been committed to strengthening the infrastructure development of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle by fostering an international aviation hub, jointly developing a dual-city economic circle along railway lines (including the Chengdu-Chongqing Central Line and the China-Europe Railway Express), promoting the development of a shipping hub in the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, establishing a three-dimensional transportation system within the urban area, facilitating external transportation networks, and strengthening energy and water security guarantees.

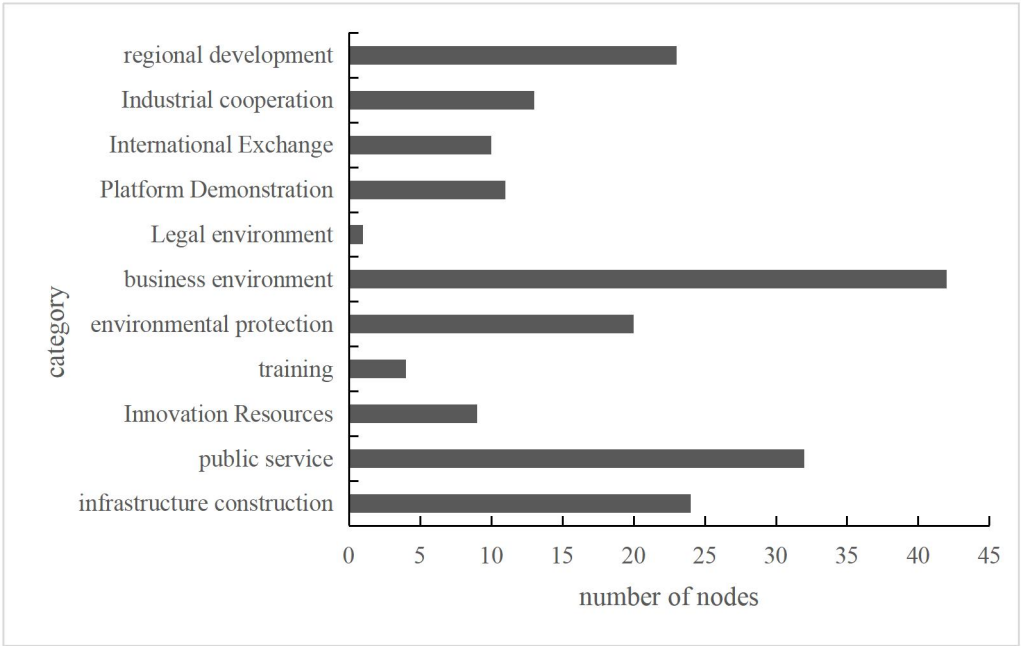


Figure 5 Attention allocation of Chongqing Municipal Government in various fields

Note: self-made by the author

4.2.3| Shortcomings in the Allocation of Attention

Firstly, there exists a certain structural imbalance in the allocation of attention by the governments of Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality. Although their policies are aligned with the "Outline of the Construction Plan for the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle", there are still some areas that remain relatively unattended. For instance, the governments have basically failed to respond to the requirements outlined in the "Plan" regarding the classified promotion of the development of large, medium, and small cities and counties, as well as the high-quality development of the manufacturing industry. Such issues are generally considered "not urgent enough" and their policy impacts tend to manifest slowly. Secondly, the allocation of attention by the governments lacks precision and granularity. There is a suspicion of mere parroting without a deep understanding of the logical implications of the "Outline of the Plan". There is a lack of innovation and few attempts to directly interpret and refine the targeted policy texts. Instead, their approach often involves dividing the topic areas within a given policy text into a handful of general requirements or measures for the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle.

5| Suggestions on Allocating the Attention

5.1| Optimize the Structure of Policy Instruments

In the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle, the proportion of various types of policy documents issued by the Sichuan Provincial Government and Chongqing

Municipal Government exhibits significant similarities (Figure 1). Specifically, the intensity of policy types, from highest to lowest, is supply-oriented, environmental-oriented, comprehensive-oriented, and demand-oriented. The scarcity of demand-oriented policy instruments implies that, in addition to steering the construction of the economic circle, the governments of Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality also take charge of numerous tasks, failing to effectively engage diverse entities to increase supply and address demand. The construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle is a systematic and extensive project involving numerous elements such as resources and stakeholders. It necessitates the concerted efforts of various policy instruments and the interactive support of multiple entities to achieve its planning objectives. Therefore, it is imperative to appropriately increase the proportion of demand-oriented policies, given the interdependent relationship among the three types of policy instruments. Given the current dominance of supply-oriented and environmental-oriented policies, enhancing demand-oriented policies can, to some extent, address the issue of who will supply. Furthermore, with the support of environmental policies, the stability of the environment across all dimensions enables the implementation of demand-oriented policies.

5.2 | Optimize the Allocation Structure of Attention

It has been over three years since the proposal of the construction of the Chengdu-Chongqing Economic Circle. Despite a brief surge in development, the construction remains shallow, with policies primarily focusing on "major issues" such as public service provision and business environment optimization, while neglecting pressing yet crucial issues that are not immediately apparent. To address this, it is imperative to further comprehend and adhere to the guiding principles outlined in the "Outline of the Plan". Once fundamental "major problems" have been alleviated to a certain extent, it is necessary to refer to the "Outline of the Plan" and simultaneously tackle more intricate, challenging, and gradual-impact issues, including categorized promotion of the development of cities and counties of various sizes, enhancing the interaction and coordination between the two economic circles, elevating the development level of the twin cities, optimizing the spatial layout for innovation, advancing the construction of high-level open platforms, accelerating the establishment of major channels for external openness, strengthening domestic regional cooperation, facilitating efficient allocation of urban and rural resources, and promoting coordinated urban-rural industrial development.

5.3 | Specify the Targets of Attention Allocation

In addressing the issue of merely parroting the "Outline of the Plan" in the relevant policy documents issued by the governments of Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality, it is imperative to recognize that as local authorities, our focus should be on "reading and comprehension", "reform and innovation", "seeking truth from facts", and implementation, rather than mere endorsement. Based on a thorough understanding of the "Outline of the Plan", we must further align our policies with the actual achievements, obstacles, and needs of regional development, formulating enforceable policy documents that are tailored to the specific realities of the region. In essence, the governments of Sichuan Province and Chongqing Municipality need to further specify the targets of attention allocation and conduct a detailed analysis of policy objectives across different sectors and stages. By doing so, the allocation of government

attention will become more nuanced, policy implementation will be more targeted and operational, and policy objectives will be more attainable.

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