

# **Third Party Evaluators' Opinions on Urumuqi International Airport Expansion Project**

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## **Relevance**

. As one of five autonomous regions in China, Xinjiang is rich in natural resources but, over a long period, backward transportation infrastructure seriously restrains the further economic development. Xinjiang was relatively underdeveloped compared with eastern coastal provinces of China.

Besides, for the changing geo-strategic and geo-economic environment in Central Asia , as the largest administrative unit in China, Xinjiang has the advantage of a flourishing international trade with eight neighbouring countries as well as with other CIS countries and West Asia. I think that Xinjiang .will make it a major player in generating rapid economic growth in the western part of China in the coming decades. So the improvement of transportation infrastructure is crucial for the Xinjiang economy.

According to the ex-post evaluation report, Urumuqi International Airport Expansion Project aims to enhance flight safety and meet rising demand for air travel in the future in the northwestern region of the country, thereby promoting sightseeing and stimulating economic activity. Logically convincing, the Urumqi International Airport, as China's westernmost gateway to foreign air travel and the base airport for the autonomous region, can be expected to play a more important role in future. In fact, Xinjiang's economic environment has been obviously improved along with the Chinese westward inclination of key construction projects in recent years.

## **Efficiency**

The planned output of the expansion project was mostly achieved according to the ex-post evaluation report. However, except for the domestically funded runway, extensive changes were made from the initially planned. For example, passenger terminal was expanded from the initially planned 40,000m<sup>2</sup> to 47,800m<sup>2</sup>. Besides, The work period of the expansion project ran a total of 61 months (244% of the scheduled duration) from December 1996 to December 2001. In a large extent, the reasons are mainly due to air travel demand rose and the project scale was expanded to realize multilateral customer service.

Of course, some other factors have also led to these changes, such as the total investment amount increased on account of exchange rate fluctuations and an expansion of output targets. Just as I investigated recently, however, the airport facilities were greatly expanded, and its capacity, convenience, and safety was improved after the project.

In sum, this project enabled the airport to deal with a more-than-expected increase in the number of passengers, freight volume and number of departures and arrivals. I agree that the outcome of the project is satisfactory. It has been designed accordingly to the development plans and priority areas of central government and regional government, and has brought benefit to many people all over the country.