



# Cooperation of China with the countries of Central Asia within the framework of Chinese global initiatives

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**ABSTRACT.** *This scientific article named "Cooperation of China with Central Asia: Analysis and Prospects" researches the interrelations of China with the countries of Central Asia in the framework of PRC global initiatives. The authors explore the importance of tourism development, cultural exchange, and economic cooperation between the regions. The article analyzes political strategies, diplomatic initiatives, and the results of cooperation in the sphere of security. Special attention was given to the impact of Chinese culture and soft power on the countries of Central Asia.*

*This paper is a research article based on the analysis of data, documents, and expert opinions. Its purpose is to provide an overview of the current state and prospects for cooperation between China and the countries of Central Asia.*

**KEYWORDS:** *China, Central Asia, global initiatives, development, security, civilization.*

## INTRODUCTION

Chinese diplomacy in Central Asia evolved from establishing relations to the level of comprehensive strategic partnership over the last 30 years. Different generations of Chinese leaders contributed to the development of such relations. However, the current leader Xi Jinping made a sharp spike and achieved high rates of political cooperation

and record trade and economic results, which also reflected in lively exchanges between the people.

The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party headed by Xi Jinping enhanced the diplomatic priority and promoted a new concept of “diplomatic neighborhood” after the 18th Chinese National Congress of Chinese Communist Party in 2012. This strategy aimed at maintaining the principles of fairness and benefit in relations with neighboring countries, as well as promoting friendly exchanges with them.

Over the years of cooperation, the parties achieved high historical, landmark, and breakthrough results divided into four blocks: politics, economics, safety, and cultural and humanitarian exchanges at the level of countries and peoples.

Bilateral contacts were stable mechanisms of foreign policy cooperation for the countries of Central Asia in the first independence decades. However, C5+1 formats, where the countries of the region act as a single unit, become of great interest in the last decade. This helped to resolve existing issues in a shorter period and in collaboration, which also resulted in the necessity to find compromises and possibilities of positioning as a single geopolitical player.

The most relevant principles shaping the features of Chinese relations with the countries of Central Asia at present are three global initiatives addressed by the Chairman of the People’s Republic of China in 2021-2023: the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI).

The countries of Central Asia expressed their “support and active assistance for GDI implementation” in January 2022. They declared “the support for GDI and GSI proposed by China” in June of the same year. Later, the countries of the region announced their readiness to “implement GDI, GSI, and GCI proposed by China” in the Xian Declaration of the China-Central Asia Summit in May 2023 (China-Central Asia Summit Xian Declaration, 2023).

The central idea of the article is the similarity in the approaches of China and the countries of Central Asia in their intention to develop a comprehensive strategic partnership within the framework of “neighborhood diplomacy” and three global initiatives in the fields of development, security, and civilization. This underlines China's commitment to promoting prosperity and connectivity in Central Asia through economic cooperation, industrial transformation, innovation cooperation, poverty alleviation, security, and cultural exchange.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The article by D.V. Gordiyenko named “The System of International Relations in the 21st Century: Views of Chinese Leaders” gives a detailed concept of “neighborhood

diplomacy” as the cornerstone of China’s foreign policy, focused on strengthening good neighborly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation with neighboring countries (Gordiyenko, 2021).

The outline of the XXIV International Conference named “China, Chinese Civilization and the World History, Modernity, and Prospects” by the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences describes the theoretical foundations and practical aspects of China’s “neighborhood diplomacy” concerning the countries of Central Asia (Abstracts of reports of the XXIV International Scientific Conference. “China, Chinese Civilization and the World. History, Modernity, Prospects”, 2021).

The report “Crave for Multi-Vector Nature by Way of Business Diplomacy: The Path for Central Asia” by “TALAP” Center of Applied Researches examines a new format of cooperation between China and the countries of Central Asia (C5+1) after the Xian Summit (Pursuing Multi-Vectorism through Business Diplomacy: The Path for Central Asia, 2024).

In the book “Soft Power in Central Asia. The Politics of Influence and Seduction” S. Peyrouse notes that the international politics of the region becomes increasingly complex in the era of globalization and the need for a new look at its participants becomes more acute. Therefore, the great powers rely on subtle forms of impact to increase their influence and to achieve their goals in Central Asia more often (Nourzhanov & Peyrouse, 2021).

In her article “China's Policy in Central Asia” K.I. Baizakova examines the interaction of the parties from the perspective of the theory of neoclassical realism using a systematic method of analyzing the influence of China’s factors on Central Asia cooperation. At the same time, the article traces current trends, including the influence of geopolitical turbulence, and the decrease of investments in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan due to growing socio-economic problems and other issues (Baizakova, Orakbayeva, & Ussen, 2023).

The report "International Cooperation of China with the View of Development" by the Foundation named after Friedrich Ebert analyzes the potential of the Global Development Initiative, which reflects China's official position on development, considering it a fundamental human right and an essential prerequisite for progress (China’s international development cooperation, 2023).

In his article “The Global Security Initiative through the Eyes of Chinese Political Scientists” V.E. Petrovskiy analyzes Chinese academic discourse around this initiative, which is positioned as “an important international public product provided by China to the world” and becomes the basis for various Chinese initiatives in the sphere of safety in the UN and at the level of the global South, which seeks to challenge the Western-led

global system and positions itself as a leader in the architecture of global governance and safety (Petrovskiy, 2023).

The article “Humanitarian Exchange between the PRC and the Countries of Central Asia within the framework of “One Belt, One Road” Initiative (political analysis)”, which was published in “Russia and the Modern World” magazine, considers the Global Civilization Initiative as an incentive for the development of humanitarian cooperation between China and Central Asia, including education, culture, and science (Chu, 2023).

In their article “Three Initiatives and China's Diplomacy in Central Asia in a New Era,” the Chinese authors note that China's global initiatives do not only offer solutions to international problems but also provide support and strategic guidance for China's diplomatic efforts in Central Asia (Zeng & Wang, 2024).

In his article, Chinese author Deng Zhou attaches great importance to the trend of increasing competition in Central Asia and the expansion of the number of participants - China, Russia, the United States, Russia, Europe, India, and other powers - and points to the promotion and strengthening of China-Central Asia mechanism (“C5+1”) (Deng, 2024).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This scientific article uses the methods of content analysis applied to official documents, contracts, and agreements between China and the countries of Central Asia to identify the main provisions and areas of cooperation. A comparative analysis was carried out to identify similarities and differences in the approaches of China and the countries of Central Asia to the development of cooperation. A quantitative analysis of statistical data was used to identify trends in mutual trade to make conclusions and arguments. These methods allowed the authors of the article to conduct a comprehensive analysis of China's cooperation with Central Asia and highlight key aspects and prospects of this partnership.

## FINDINGS

### GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

According to the data of the Chinese General Customs Administration, the Chinese trade turnover with the countries of the region increased up to 89.4 billion US dollars at the end of 2023, which is 27% higher than the level of 2022 (70.2 billion) or 200 times bigger than in 1992.

The volume of trade turnover between Kazakhstan and China amounted to 41 billion dollars, with an increase of 32.2% including 16.3 billion dollars (export from Kazakhstan) and 24.7 billion dollars (import to the Republic of Kazakhstan).

The level of trade between Kyrgyzstan and China reached 19.8 billion dollars (an increase of 28.8%), mainly due to the import of goods from China (19.7 billion dollars).

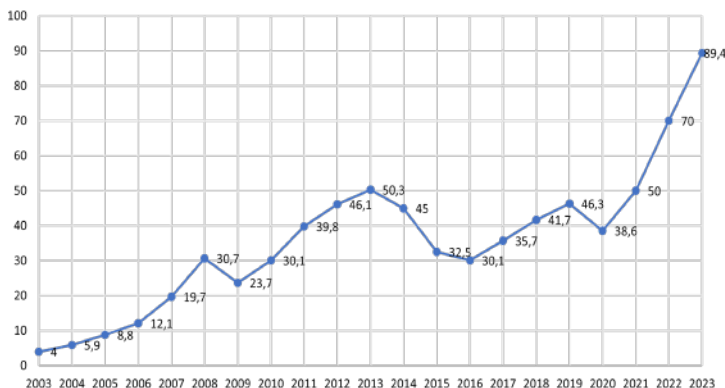
Tajikistan achieved the maximum increase in trade turnover with PRC among the countries in the region in percentage terms and increased the figure for 2022 by 53.5% up to 4 billion dollars, \$3.7 billion of which came from Chinese imports.

Only Turkmenistan rates in trade with China decreased by -5.2% to 10.6 billion dollars, mainly due to the decrease in exports to China (-6.6%). At the same time, Turkmen gas still plays a key role in the structure of exports (9.6 billion dollars).

Uzbekistan increased trade turnover with China by 44.9% to 14 billion dollars, 12.4 billion dollars of which were due to imports (China's General Administration of Customs, 2024).

In general, the dynamics of China's trade turnover with the countries of the region show a tendency for annual growth with 4 notable periods. The first decline was observed in 2009 and was associated with the consequences of the global economic crisis caused by the collapse of the mortgage loan system in the United States. The highest level of mutual trade for the first 30 years of cooperation was recorded in 2013 and was associated with the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative. In 2015-2016, the decrease in trade turnover with the countries of Central Asia was due to the slowdown in economic growth in China. The trade volumes declined due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Diagram 1. *Dynamics of changes in the volume of trade turnover between China and the countries of Central Asia (in billions of US dollars)*



Source: *Chinese National Statistical Office (Chinese National Statistics Bureau, 2024)*

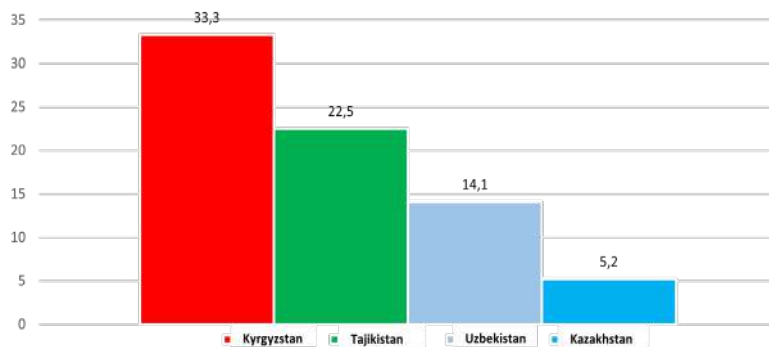
As to the countries in the region, China pays great attention to building a “stable, prosperous, harmonious and connected Central Asia,” which underlines general

development through economic and trade cooperation. The purpose of GDI in the context of Chinese policy in Central Asia is to promote overall development in the field of production capacity, to improve people's well-being and their quality of life (poverty alleviation), to solve the problem of unbalanced development, and to promote green economy (Xi Jinping: 4 Directions for Building a Community with a Common Future for China and Central Asia, 2023).

The area of production capacity is characterized by the differences in the structure of exports by the countries in the region, which mainly supply unprocessed products from mineral extraction and agriculture, while processed goods with added value usually flow in the opposite direction. This shows that the insufficient level of industrialization holds back the modernization of Central Asia economies, and it is required to force industrial transformation to overcome this barrier.

For this reason, in September 2021, the President of Kazakhstan addressed the country's population and outlined the goal to ensure the growth of processed product exports up to 24 billion dollars (by 150%) by 2025 and to increase labor efficiency by 1/3 (Message from the Head of State to the People of Kazakhstan, 2021). Other countries in the region also take measures to increase industrialization. Unfortunately, the current difficult geo-economic situation has a negative effect on this. This happened because of the consequences of COVID-19, the Ukrainian crisis, the change of power in Afghanistan, the January events of 2022 in Kazakhstan, the July events in Karakalpakstan in 2022, Kyrgyz-Tajik clashes on the border, and the escalation of tensions between the countries of the West and the East in general. This led to a decrease in the investment attractiveness of Central Asia and reduced the number of potential partner countries that could assist in economic development and industrialization. However, the region is an important hub in the Belt and Road Initiative, so China is interested in providing financial and technical support to optimize industrial structure and promote industrialization, including GDI.

Diagram 2. *The proportion of the Central Asia population living below the poverty line (in %)*



Source: World Bank (2024)

An important task in improving the population's well-being is to resolve the problem of poverty. At the end of 2022, the percentage of the population living below the poverty line in Kazakhstan amounted to 5.2%, i.e., about 1 million people, in Uzbekistan this figure reached 14.1% (or 4.93 million), 22.5% (equivalent to 2.6 million) in Tajikistan and 33.3% (i.e., 2.24 million) in Kyrgyzstan (Wang, 2021).

A solution to this problem will help to achieve sustainable development and will become the key to long-term stability in the region. In this context, it is advisable to study and, if necessary, to implement the experience of densely populated China, which managed to eradicate poverty and, thereby, improve the quality of life.

The fight against poverty in China is based on the principle that “every citizen should have access to the fruits of social development.” This principle aims to eradicate poverty and achieve shared prosperity, and it is driven by the implementation of innovations, green development, openness, and inclusive development. All these issues serve to form a multi-subject model of poverty alleviation with the active participation of government, business, and society. The poverty alleviation pays attention to the ability of self-development, promotes active participation in social construction through the extending of rights and opportunities, education, training, and employment, and stimulates intrinsic motivation and self-reliance. The mechanisms are the modernization of traditional agriculture, the cultivation of new industries, the development of the service sector, the application of human and technological advantages of the regions to help lagging regions, the introduction of ecological lifestyle, the reduction of income gaps between urban and rural populations, the improvement of social provision system, the provision of equal access to basic government services (International Currency Fund, 2024).

There are also some prospects for using Chinese experience in solving unbalanced development problems. This is relevant for the countries of Central Asia, where there is a large gap in economic development. According to the statistics of the International Monetary Fund, GDP per capita in five countries – Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan amounted to 14.8 thousand, 12.4 thousand, 2.7 thousand, 2.0 thousand, and 1.3 thousand US dollars respectively or 6.6 thousand dollars on average in 2023.

Moreover, the high levels of unemployment remain a problem in the countries of the region. In 2023, the unemployment rate in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan was 5%, in Uzbekistan, it amounted to 7.4%, and 9% in Kyrgyzstan. This indicates that countries continue to face numerous development challenges. GDI and its approach to solving the interests of the population will help the Central Asia region to achieve the goal of “leaving no one behind” and will contribute to the further sustainable development of the region (International Energetics Statistics Yearbook, 2023).

Table 1. *GDP per capita in the countries of Central Asia (in thousands of US dollars)*

No.	Country of Central Asia	GDP
1	Kazakhstan	14.8
2	Kyrgyzstan	2.0
3	Tajikistan	1.3
4	Turkmenistan	12.4
5	Uzbekistan	2.7
	<b>Region's average</b>	<b>6.6</b>

*Source: World Bank (2024)*

As to the issues of green economy promotion, China and the countries of the region have common interests, expressed in the intention to move to carbon-neutrality: by 2050 in Kyrgyzstan and by 2060 in Kazakhstan and China. Other countries of the region have not yet made national commitments to achieve carbon-neutral emissions, but the deadline according to the UN plan is by 2060. Five countries in Central Asia became emitters of 1.7% of global carbon dioxide at the end of 2022 according to KPMG International Consulting Corporation.

A great deal of emissions came from the extraction and use of mineral resources. The largest portion of emissions comes from Kazakhstan with its 287 million tons of carbon dioxide, Turkmenistan annually emits 184 million tons, and 151 million tons come from Uzbekistan (Kazakhstan has a decade to prepare for green transition, 2018). In recent years, the massive release of greenhouse gases led to an increase in the number of extreme weather conditions and natural disasters that have become more frequent in this region (drought, floods, soil erosion, etc.). Moreover, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) reports that “the impact of the green transition of the global economy to the fiscal position of Kazakhstan” and the global transition to a green economy will result in a 40 percent reduction in Kazakhstan’s fiscal revenues by 2040 (Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 520 (February 26, 2021) about the National Priorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025, n.d.).

It is worth noting, that the governments of five countries of Central Asia designed their strategies for the development of such “green” economy, including the Concept of Kazakhstan transition to “green economy” dated 2013, the Program of Green Economy Development in Kyrgyzstan for 2019-2023 (the Program of Green Economy Development for 2024-2028 is being developed for the moment), the Strategy for Green Economy Development in Tajikistan for 2023-2037, the National Strategy for the Development of Renewable Energy in Turkmenistan until 2030 and the Strategy for the Transition of Uzbekistan to the Green Economy for 2019-2030.

In this regard, the availability of a legal framework should facilitate the integration with GDI, which will speed up the achievement of certain goals.



In the context of GDI compatibility, it can be noted that China and the countries of Central Asia do have similar approaches within the framework of national development concepts. Thus, China adheres to a new development concept of innovation, coordination, greenness, openness, and sharing, and strives to promote high-quality development of the Chinese economy. In March 2021, Kazakhstan adopted the National Development Plan and National Priorities until 2025, which include “The well-being of citizens, the quality of institutions and a strong economy” as the main priorities of national development (Wang & Zhang, 2024).

In October 2019, Uzbekistan adopted a Green Economy Development Strategy aimed at greening the economy by way of introducing the principles of green economy into the structural economic reforms. In July 2022, Uzbekistan adopted the Innovative Development Strategy for 2022-2026, and this strategy assigned a key role to innovation in economic development, which will allow the country to enter the top 50 of the Global Innovation Index ranking by 2030. In recent years, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan also adopted national development strategies, incorporating such development concepts as innovation, environmental friendliness, and sharing.

## GLOBAL SAFETY INITIATIVE

China established diplomatic relations with five countries in Central Asia in 1992 after gaining independence, and their relations improved steadily since then.

For the moment, China established strategic partnerships with all countries in the region: the Everlasting Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Kazakhstan, the All-Weather Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Uzbekistan, the New Era Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Kyrgyzstan, and the Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Since November 2012 and to the present, Xi Jinping has visited the countries of Central Asia 12 times: he has paid 4 visits to Kazakhstan, 3 visits to Uzbekistan, 2 visits to Kyrgyzstan, 2 visits to Tajikistan, and 1 visit to Turkmenistan. At the same time, the President of Kazakhstan Mr. Tokayev has paid 4 official visits to China since he came to power in June 2019. Mr. Mirziyoyev has visited China 7 times since taking office as Uzbekistan's President in December 2016. The heads of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have paid 1 visit each (Zeng & Wang, 2024).

China needs to restrain the risks associated with maintaining a stable socio-political situation in Xinjiang, taking into account their tragic experience related to the negative influence of radical extremist groups from Central Asia, which carried out terrorist attacks in this region repeatedly.

In addition, the Chinese party anticipates that the disorders and conflicts in Central Asia might affect the border areas of China and even threaten its internal safety due

to the presence of similar mental, cultural, religious, and linguistic characteristics between the residents of XUAR and Central Asia.

Currently, some safety challenges threaten both China and the countries of Central Asia and include traditional safety concerns (Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the threat of force by Western countries, the Afghani problem, the Iranian nuclear problem, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, the situation in the Middle East, etc.) and non-traditional safety concerns (terrorism, illegal migration, drug trafficking, climate change and biosecurity, etc.) (Concept Paper of Global Safety Initiative, 2023).

GSI considers the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries as a key principle and underlines the noninterference with the internal affairs of other countries while respecting their ways of development. This is the main difference of the Chinese approach from other world powers, which is also in full compliance with the expectations of Central Asian countries (Implementation of Global Safety Initiative to Protect World Peace and Tranquility, 2022).

China signed several cooperation agreements on the fight against terrorism, separatism, and extremism with the countries of the region, and it keeps in touch with the departments of internal affairs, safety, border control, and defense of the relevant countries. It conducted several joint operations in the fight against the “three forces of evil”, as well as joint operations and military exercises.

As part of the new “Interaction” format, China has been regularly conducting military exercises together with its colleagues from the armed forces of the countries in the region since 2019. These exercises are primarily focused on counter-terrorism operations and practicing the interaction between the security forces of the parties.

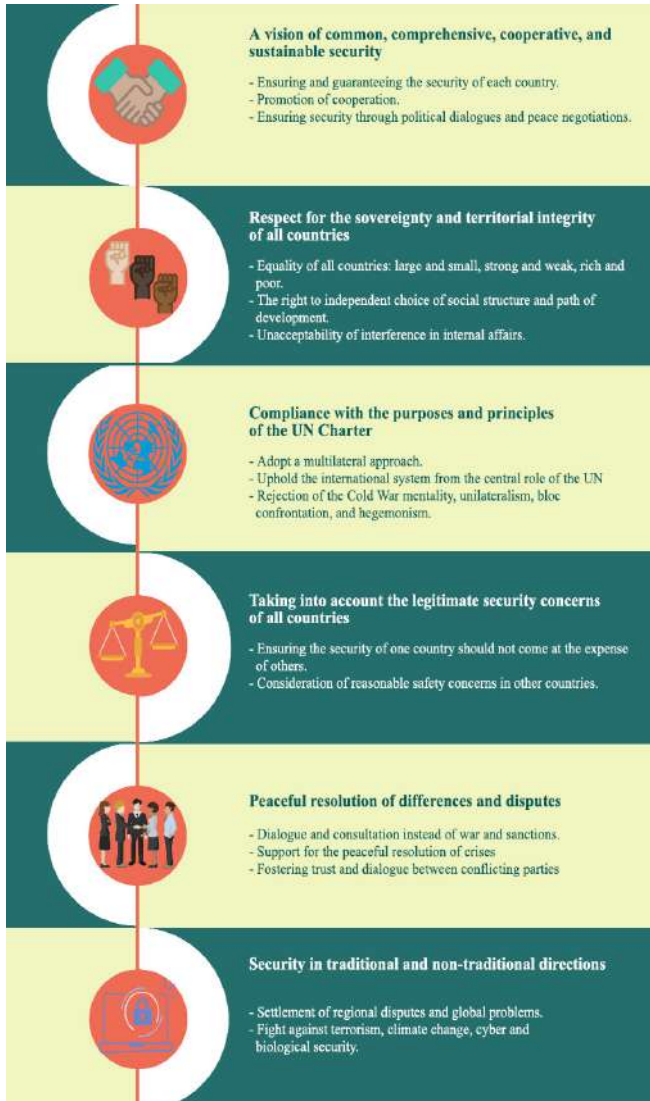
Being a major exporter of military equipment, China supplies its products to the countries of Central Asia, thanks to which Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan received unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), and Turkmenistan became the owner of advanced Chinese air defense systems.

In its foreign policy, China also focuses on building a “stable Central Asia”, to which the mechanisms of bilateral and multilateral cooperation are applied. In this context, such institutions as the Asian Interaction and Confidence Building Conference promoted by Kazakhstan, the Tashkent Forum on Safety and Cooperation in Central Asia and the Central Asian Dialogue on Nuclear Weapon Free Zone organized by Uzbekistan, as well as Issyk-Kul Forum initiated by Kyrgyzstan play an important role.

SCO represents an important platform for cooperation between China and the countries of Central Asia in the field of safety. Chinese experts believe, that provided the current realities and advantages of cooperation, China and the countries of the region can join forces in some areas of practical interaction such as assistance in resolving conflicts

between the countries of the region, assuming measures to neutralize the Afghani problem and to keeping their eyes open in regard of the games of extraterritorial powers in Central Asia (Zeng & Wang, 2024).

### Infographics 1. *Principles of Global Safety Initiative*



*Source: Chinese Embassy in Kazakhstan (2023)*

Moreover, a characteristic feature of Chinese cooperation with the countries of Central Asia in the field of safety is the widespread introduction of Chinese high-tech products to ensure urban safety in the countries of the region. Video surveillance technologies from such companies as Huawei, Dahua, and Hikvision have gained popularity as

the components of smart city projects. This trend has both positive aspects due to the increased public safety and negative aspects connected with the concerns about data privacy and respect for civil liberties.

## GLOBAL CIVILIZATION INITIATIVE

China and the countries of Central Asia have a great history of interaction to strengthen and it is advisable to focus on developing cooperation in the field of education, tourism, and other areas. China provided about 50 million doses of vaccine to the countries of Central Asia as humanitarian assistance during the difficult years of the coronavirus pandemic in 2022. China and the countries of Central Asia expressed their intention to build a “Cultural Silk Road” to strengthen cultural exchanges and cooperation between the parties as a part of promoting their joint construction of the “Belt and Road”. These efforts are in line with GCI's call to “strengthen international humanitarian exchanges and cooperation.” To date, China and the countries of the region have formed 62 pairs of twin provincial and civil cities, the number of which will increase up to 100 pairs in future (Strategic Thinking to Deepen Comprehensive Cooperation between China and Central Asia, 2023).

Map 1. Twined relations between the countries of Central Asia and China



Source: Xinhua News Agency (2023)

GCI is strongly against any form of “civilizational superiority doctrine”, “clash of civilizations concept” and so-called "universal values" of the West. In its turn, GCI promotes such common values of all humanity as peace, development, honesty, justice, democracy, and freedom. It advocates mutually beneficial tolerant, equal, and open civilizational exchanges (Speech by Xi Jinping in the High-Level Dialogue between the CPC and the World's Political Parties, 2023).

To reduce cultural barriers, the parties increase their cooperation in the sphere of education and science. Since 2004, China has opened 13 Confucius Institutes in the countries of Central Asia: 5 in Kazakhstan, 4 in Kyrgyzstan, 2 in Tajikistan, and 2 in Uzbekistan, and also 24 Confucius classrooms with more than 18,000 students. 51 colleges and universities in China and Central Asia published a declaration to strengthen educational cooperation between the parties (Confucius Institutes Help to Promote China Fever in Central Asia, 2023).

Moreover, China opened the first regional Lu Ban Workshop in Dushanbe to train professional technical staff required for economic and social development in November 2022. After this, similar workshops opened in four other countries of Central Asia. At the same time, the number of regional students who study in China grows every year. Thus, 11 930 students from Central Asia studied in China in 2010, while their number reached 29 885 students in 2018. These rates decreased significantly due to the restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic. However, we can see an increasing tendency lately.

In recent years, Chinese universities have opened their branches in the countries of the region, and the attractiveness of Chinese education is growing in general. This increased the number of foreign students from Central Asia in China, and their number increased to 28,532 people (The number of young Central Asians coming to China to study increases, 2023).

Tourism is another area of cooperation designed to improve mutual understanding between the parties. It is not only an effective mechanism for promoting economic development, but it is one of the most important industries for improving people's living standards, and an important bridge for exchanges and reducing cultural barriers between countries and civilizations.

Currently, the UNESCO World Heritage List includes 57 objects in China and 25 objects in the countries of Central Asia, including 6 in Kazakhstan, 7 in Uzbekistan, 3 in Kyrgyzstan, 4 in Tajikistan, and 5 in Turkmenistan (World Heritage List, 2024).

In January 2022, President Xi Jinping announced that he would strengthen tourism cooperation between China and the countries of Central Asia. To this end, China will create a platform for promoting tourism resources of Central Asia and it is ready to include all five countries in the list of international tourism destinations for Chinese

citizens (Joint statement by the leaders of China and five countries of Central Asia on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, 2022).

These days China and the countries of Central Asia open more and more direct air routes. In 2023, China and Kazakhstan officially introduced mutual visa concessions and declared 2024 as the year of Kazakhstan tourism in China. Data from Ctrip and Flying Pig platforms show that the number of bookings for traveling from China to the countries in the region increased by 470 percent in 1 month after the China-Central Asia Summit in Xian in May 2023, and the number of booked flights increased more than 6 times as compared to the previous year.

All these measures have a positive impact on the further development of humanitarian exchanges between China and the countries of Central Asia, which will give a new impetus to the development of all other areas of interaction between the parties.

Nevertheless, we should take into account the language barriers, which can harm the interaction of cultures, since the languages and the writing of the countries of Central Asia are significantly different from the Chinese language.

The residents of the countries of the region mainly speak Russian besides their languages, while the main foreign language spoken by the Chinese is usually English. It is obvious that differences in language and writing hinder the spread of Chinese culture in these five countries of Central Asia. The Chinese party understands that more than 140 ethnic groups and the complex ethnic composition of the countries of Central Asia led to the formation of a unique and diverse culture in the region. The difference in historical development and the diversity of nationalities resulted in great differences in the cultural background between China and Central Asia, which has a certain impact on the spread of Chinese culture in the region.

In this regard, China implements its policy, incl. the elements of promoting “soft power”.

Thus, the Chairman of PRC Xi Jinping addressed the international students of China Petroleum University (Beijing) in May 2023 and emphasized that “friendly relations between China and the countries of Central Asia should be inherited and continued generation by generation of aspiring and enterprising young people” and that they should “actively participate in the point of friendship between China and the countries of Central Asia, carry the spirit of the Silk Road, tell the history of China and Central Asia, act as good ambassadors of friendship, be a bridge of cooperation and contribute to the construction of a closer China -Central Asian community of destiny.” It is noted that young people are both witnesses and disseminators of information, they are constructors and beneficiaries in the process of creating good relations between China and Central Asia (Zhuang, 2024).

To spread its culture, China adheres to the principle of "inviting inside" and "going outside" and continues to host such events as "International Silk Road Exhibition", "National Concert Exhibition", "Global Silk Road Tour", "China-Central Asia Year of Culture and Arts", "Gourmet Festival" and others. In addition, Chinese films, television programs, pop songs, and other artistic works become increasingly popular in the countries of the region, which also helps to enrich a new form of cultural diversified exchanges.

Moreover, China continues to open Chinese cultural centers in the countries of Central Asia with their Chinese traditional holidays (Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, and others), festivals of Chinese culture and art, demonstrations of Chinese cultural products and creation of brand projects to attract attention to Chinese culture.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of China's current approaches to the implementation of foreign policy towards the countries of Central Asia shows the further deepening of the comprehensive foreign policy partnership within the framework of the concept of "diplomatic neighborhood" and three initiatives in the field of safety and civilization development. Following the results of the "China-Central Asia" Summit that took place in May 2023 in Xian, the countries of the region expressed their support and readiness to implement these Chinese projects vigorously.

Given Chinese strategic interest in Central Asia, we can make several key conclusions regarding the Global Development Initiative (GDI).

Firstly, China's desire to create a "prosperous and connected Central Asia" allows it to focus on common development through economic and trade cooperation. This reflects the importance of the region's integration into the global economy and the support from China in its modernization.

Secondly, the level of industrialization remains insufficient for the effective development of the economic structure in the countries of Central Asia. This requires significant efforts to accelerate national industrialization and industrial transformation, which might become the key to reducing dependence on energy carriers and raw material export.

Thirdly, the problems of poverty remain relevant for the countries of the region. The approach based on Chinese experience can provide useful insights for poverty alleviation. It is important to focus not only on economic growth but also on social development, including education, employment, and social welfare.

Fourthly, the need to overcome the negative impacts of external and internal factors on the economic development of Central Asia highlights the importance of support from international partners, including China. The Belt and Road Initiative can become a platform for such support and cooperation.

Fifthly, Central Asia faces several serious challenges, including unbalanced economic development and the threat of climate change. However, there are some prospects for improving the situation, especially in the context of enjoying the experience and support from China.

Sixthly, the Chinese approach to development, with its focus on innovation, coordination, greenness, and sharing, can provide important inspiration and guidance to the countries of Central Asia. Promoting such ideas as a green economy, innovations, and social justice can help the region to solve its current problems.

Seventhly, the strategies, and national development priorities adopted in the countries of Central Asia reflect common interests in the areas of ecology, innovations, and economic efficiency. This allows us to address the Chinese Global Development Initiative as an opportunity to accelerate the achievement of goals, including poverty alleviation, the creation of equal opportunities, and environmental sustainability.

In the context of the Global Safety Initiative (GSI), we can assert that it became an important mechanism to strengthen cooperation between China and the countries of Central Asia in ensuring safety and stability in the region.

China actively supports measures to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism in the region by way of signing relevant agreements and organizing joint operations and exercises with the countries of Central Asia. Moreover, China strives to enhance the stability, as it understands, that the safety of the region is inextricably linked to its safety. At the same time, such mechanisms of multilateral cooperation as CICA and SCO play an important role in strengthening relations and increasing the level of trust between the participants.

Thanks to GSI, China and the countries of Central Asia find common approaches to addressing safety challenges facing the region. This allows them to jointly confront traditional and non-traditional security threats, such as terrorism, migration, drug trafficking, and climate change.

In the context of cooperation under the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), we can conclude that it calls for strengthening interaction between China and the countries of Central Asia in such areas as education, tourism, and cultural exchanges.

The formation of the “cultural silk road” and the establishment of twinning relations between the cities demonstrate the desire of the parties to strengthen cultural



partnerships. These efforts are consistent with GCI principles aimed at supporting international humanitarian exchanges and cooperation.

An important aspect of this interaction is the development of such educational programs and institutions as Confucius Institutes and Lu Ban Workshops. These institutions contribute to the formation of human resources required for the social and economic development of the region.

In addition, the development of tourism plays an important role in raising living standards and reducing cultural barriers. The inclusion of lots of objects from China and Central Asia in the UNESCO World Heritage List underlines their cultural value and attractiveness to the world community. The rapid development of direct air routes, visa simplifications, and the announcement of 2024 as the year of Kazakhstan tourism in China indicate the growth of interest and mutual support in this area. The progress in the development of tourism contributes to the further development of humanitarian exchanges and provides new opportunities for mutual understanding and cooperation in various fields.

China actively implements its soft power policy and calls the youth of Central Asia to take part in strengthening friendly relations and expanding cultural exchanges between the countries. China strives to expand the attractiveness of its culture and to deepen the mutual understanding between the peoples by way of holding various events and creating cultural centers.

Therefore, the above-mentioned Chinese global initiatives should have a positive impact on the development of relations between China and the countries of Central Asia.

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