

Trade dynamics between China and Central Asia: implications for economic integration

Dinámicas comerciales entre China y Asia Central: implicaciones para la integración económica

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Abstract: This article examines how economic integration in Central Asian republics change as a result of the growth in trade volumes with China in the past ten years. China has become one of the major economic partners in the region thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative, contributing to cross-border cooperation and trade flows. These changes have strengthened economic cooperation, but also deepened interdependence and growth of imbalance in the trade structure of China and the five Central Asian republics. In this study we analyze these dynamics through comparison of trade relations between China and Central Asia during the period from 2013 to 2023. Study relies on quantitative analysis of international trading databases and graphs compiled by the author to examine long-term tendencies and perspectives, analysis of sectors and structure of export and import in the span of ten years. Three main aspects will be considered: increase and decrease in trade flows, sectoral structure of import and export, and the role of trade in fostering integration. Findings show that trade volumes and economic interdependency increased significantly in the period from 2013 to 2023.

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Key words: Trade, China, Central Asia, Belt and Road Initiative, Import and Export.

Resumen: *Este artículo examina cómo la integración económica de las repúblicas de Asia Central ha cambiado debido al crecimiento del volumen comercial con China en los últimos diez años. China se ha convertido en uno de los principales socios económicos de la región tras la puesta en marcha de la Iniciativa de la Franja y la Ruta, contribuyendo a la cooperación transfronteriza y a los flujos comerciales. Estos cambios han fortalecido la cooperación económica, pero también han profundizado la interdependencia y el desequilibrio en la estructura comercial entre China y las cinco repúblicas de Asia Central. En este estudio, se analizan estas dinámicas mediante la comparación de las relaciones comerciales entre China y Asia Central en el período comprendido entre 2013 y 2023. El estudio se basa en el análisis cuantitativo de bases de datos y gráficos relativos al comercio internacional recopilados por la autora a fin de examinar las tendencias y perspectivas a largo plazo, así como analizar los sectores y la estructura de las exportaciones e importaciones en el lapso de diez años. Se considerarán tres aspectos principales: el aumento y la disminución de los flujos comerciales, la estructura sectorial de las importaciones y exportaciones, y el papel del comercio en el fomento de la integración. Los resultados muestran que los volúmenes comerciales y la interdependencia económica aumentaron significativamente en el período de 2013 a 2023.*

Palabras clave: *Comercio, China, Asia Central, Iniciativa de la Franja y la Ruta, Importaciones y exportaciones.*

Introduction

Over the past decade, trade and economic ties between China and the countries of Central Asia have shown steady growth and deepening, making trade a key tool for regional economic integration. By 2013 China's total trade turnover with the five Central Asian countries had reached about \$50 billion, surpassing trade volume with the region's traditional partner, Russia (around \$30 billion) (Laruelle, 2018, p. 38). With the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, these ties gained new momentum: China invested in infrastructure (roads, railways, pipelines), increased trade volumes, and strengthened its position as a leading economic partner in Central Asia (Laruelle, 2018, p. 16). Trade turnover between China and Central Asia has become crucial for integration processes not only in quantitative terms but also qualitative terms: for the Central Asian republics, the Chinese market has become a source of demand for raw materials and an engine for infrastructure development. Also, the flow of cheap Chinese goods has stimulated the integration of regional trade networks.

Scholarly research offers valuable insights into strategic and regional implications of the Belt and Road Initiative, James McBride examined main goals of initiative, development stages and challenges, while Marlene Laruelle analyzes initiative's political, economical and security impacts on Central Asia. On country level, Philip Le Corre focused on public perceptions of Chinese investments in Kazakhstan. Linda Maduz and Kristi De Smith explore Eurasian dynamics of cooperation shaped by initiative. And finally, Pradumna B. Rana and Xiang Bai Ji give us macro-level assessment of initiative's economic and institutional effects across the region. This research contributes to new

empirical evidence, examining China and Central Asia's trade dynamics in the past ten years and, identifying the key sectors that drive bilateral cooperation.

1. Methodology

In this study we use mixed-methods research to analyze economic and geopolitical influence of Chinese Initiative on Central Asian countries. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches secures reliability of our findings. First, we use system analysis approach to examine BRI as a structure. This method helps us to identify main components of the initiative, allowing to deepen the understanding of the functions and dynamics. Second, we use comparative analysis method to assess differences and similarities in participation of Central Asian countries in the BRI. Third, statistical data analysis is carried out, based on data of indicators like trade volume. This data is used to identify long-term tendencies, which then is gathered into graphs for the 2013-2023 period. Finally, discourse analysis is used to examine official documents, media reports and academic literature. This method helps us identify dominant narratives and ideological frames, that surround the initiative. Usage of these methods provides a reliable analytical foundation, which allows us to make a comprehensive and objective assessment of relationships between China and Central Asia.

2. Trade dynamics between China and Central Asia

Central Asia comprises Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. It occupies a strategic position between China, Russia, and Europe and possesses significant energy and mineral resources. Within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, announced by Xi Jinping in Kazakhstan in 2013, the region has become a key corridor for connectivity and economic cooperation. China's engagement is driven by interests in trade

expansion, energy security, and regional connectivity (Chen & Fazilov, 2018, p. 2-3).

According to the General Administration of Customs of China, in 2023 the total trade turnover between China and the five Central Asian countries has reached \$89.4 billion, an increase of 27% compared to the previous year (\$70.2 billion) (General Administration of Customs of China, 2023). This trade was really unbalanced: China's exports to Central Asia amounted to \$61.4 billion, while imports from the region amounted to \$28 billion (General Administration of Customs of China, 2023). Trade provides Central Asian countries with access to China's vast market and investment, and increases economic interdependence through oil, gas and raw material supplies.

Kazakhstan, the largest economy in Central Asia, plays a leading role in trade with China. Bilateral trade turnover between Kazakhstan and China increased significantly between 2013 and 2023, especially in recent years (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Dynamics of Kazakhstan's exports and imports with China, 2013–2023

Source: compiled by the author based on data from Trading Economics (2025)

The graph shows that Kazakhstan's exports to China decreased from \$14.4 billion in 2013 to about \$4-5 billion in 2015-2016, which was due to the decline in oil prices. Then, exports gradually recovered (Trading Economics, 2025a; Trading Economics, 2025b). By 2023, exports reached about \$14.8 billion, exceeding the figure at the beginning of the decade (for example, \$9.8 billion in 2014). This was due to the growth in raw material prices and export volumes (Trading Economics, 2025a; Trading Economics, 2025b). Imports of Chinese goods to Kazakhstan grew more evenly: from about \$12.5-12.7 billion in 2013-2014 to \$24.7 billion in 2023 (Trading Economics, 2025a). Imports increased sharply in 2022-2023 - from \$16.4 billion to \$24.7 billion. This situation is associated with the revival of demand after the pandemic and the reorientation of trade flows through Central Asia. As a result, China has retained its strong position as one of Kazakhstan's largest trading partners. For Kazakhstan, the negative balance in trade¹ with China is regular, even though export earnings from the supply of raw materials to China remain quite significant for the country's economy.

Three priority areas can be noted in trade between Kazakhstan and China: raw materials (energy resources and metals), infrastructure and equipment, and light industrial goods. Such a structure is explained by the complementary economies of both countries: Kazakhstan is rich in natural resources, and China has a powerful industry and the production of consumer goods.

Kazakhstan's trade relations with China reflect the classic "raw materials - finished products" model, in which Kazakhstan primarily exports raw materials and imports manufactured goods. In 2023, most Kazakhstani exports to China consisted of oil and gas (about 35%) and metal ores (about 44%),

¹ A negative trade balance refers to a situation in which imports exceed exports.

reflecting China's demand for energy and raw materials (Trading Economics, 2025b). The Atyrau-Alashankou oil pipeline and China's participation in the oil and gas sector are key examples of energy partnership (Laruelle, 2018, p. 28). The import structure is dominated by industrial equipment (13%), automobiles (12%), and electronics (10%) (Trading Economics, 2025a). Among light industry products, clothing and textiles account for 24%, and footwear for 7%. Initiatives such as the Khorgos hub have further strengthened this relationship (Trading Economics, 2025a).

Uzbekistan, the second largest economy in the region, has significantly increased its trade with China over the past decade, especially since 2016, when the country began economic reforms and actively opened its market (World Bank, 2019). Trade turnover between Uzbekistan and China has grown rapidly: China has become one of Uzbekistan's two largest foreign trade partners (along with Russia), accounting for about a quarter of the country's imports and 17% of its exports by 2015 (Koparkar, 2017).

This dynamic has its own characteristics. The graph in Figure 2 clearly shows the changes in exports and imports between Uzbekistan and China over the 2013-2023 period.

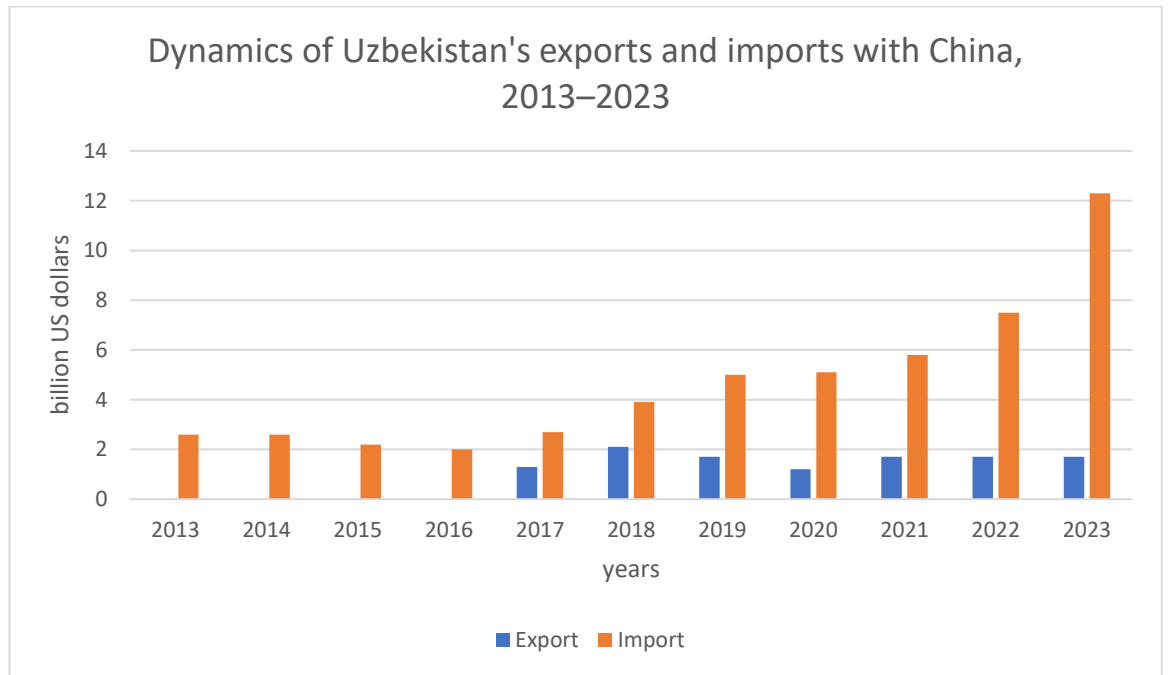


Figure 2. Dynamics of Uzbekistan's exports and imports with China, 2013–2023

Source: compiled by the author based on data from Trading Economics (2025)

As can be seen, imports from China to Uzbekistan have been growing steadily, from about \$2.6 billion in 2013 to \$12.4 billion in 2023, an increase of about 5 times (Trading Economics, 2025c; Trading Economics, 2025d). The rapid growth of imports corresponds to the period after 2016: while in 2013–2016 the annual import volume was about \$2–3 billion, in 2018–2022 this figure reached \$5–7.5 billion, reaching a record \$12.4 billion in 2023 (Trading Economics, 2025c). This growth is associated with the liberalization of the Uzbek economy, the elimination of trade barriers, and the implementation of infrastructure projects with Chinese participation. Uzbekistan's exports to China at the beginning of the period were mainly based on the supply of natural gas and cotton through the Central Asian gas pipeline, but until 2017 there is no data on the volume of exports. According to official data, in 2017, Uzbek exports to China amounted to about \$1.31 billion, then increased to \$2.12 billion in 2018 (mainly due to the supply of copper, gold and other raw materials), but in subsequent years have

stabilized in the range of \$1.2–1.76 billion (Trading Economics, 2025d). In 2023, the volume of exports was \$1.76 billion (Trading Economics, 2025d). Thus, compared to imports, Uzbekistan's exports to China do not show a significant increase in growth, and are even lower than at the beginning of the decade. Nevertheless, China remains the second most important export market for Uzbekistan after Russia (Statista, 2023).

Uzbekistan's trade relations with China in 2023 are characterized by complementary economic ties: Uzbekistan mainly exports raw materials and imports finished products and industrial equipment. In 2023, the main share of Uzbekistan's exports to China was copper products (43%) and cotton fiber (28%). In addition, agricultural products –dried fruits, vegetables and resins– accounted for about 13%. Natural gas exports have decreased significantly, which is explained by domestic demand and the need to repay debt. The main part of imports from China is vehicles (25%), industrial equipment (21%) and electronics (19%) (Trading Economics, 2025d). In addition, consumer goods such as clothing, footwear, toys and household appliances, are in high demand among the population. Imports of chemical fibers and textile raw materials contribute to the development of the manufacturing sector in Uzbekistan (Trading Economics, 2025d).

Thus, trade between Uzbekistan and China is complementary: China is a supplier of technology and goods, and Uzbekistan is a source of raw materials. This strengthens the process of Uzbekistan's integration into global production chains.

Turkmenistan stands out among the Central Asian countries for its exports of natural gas to China, which has become the basis of bilateral trade. After the commissioning of the Central Asia–China gas pipeline in 2009,

Turkmenistan became the main supplier of gas to the Chinese market, which determined the dynamics of trade in the coming years (Central Asian Light, 2024). The volume of imports from China to Turkmenistan remains relatively small, reflecting the country's highly centralized governance model and cautious approach to foreign economic engagement, which has limited market openness compared to other Central Asian states.

Trade dynamics between Turkmenistan and China reflect a consistently high export revenue from gas. The graph below shows changes in exports and imports between 2013 and 2023 (see Figure 3).

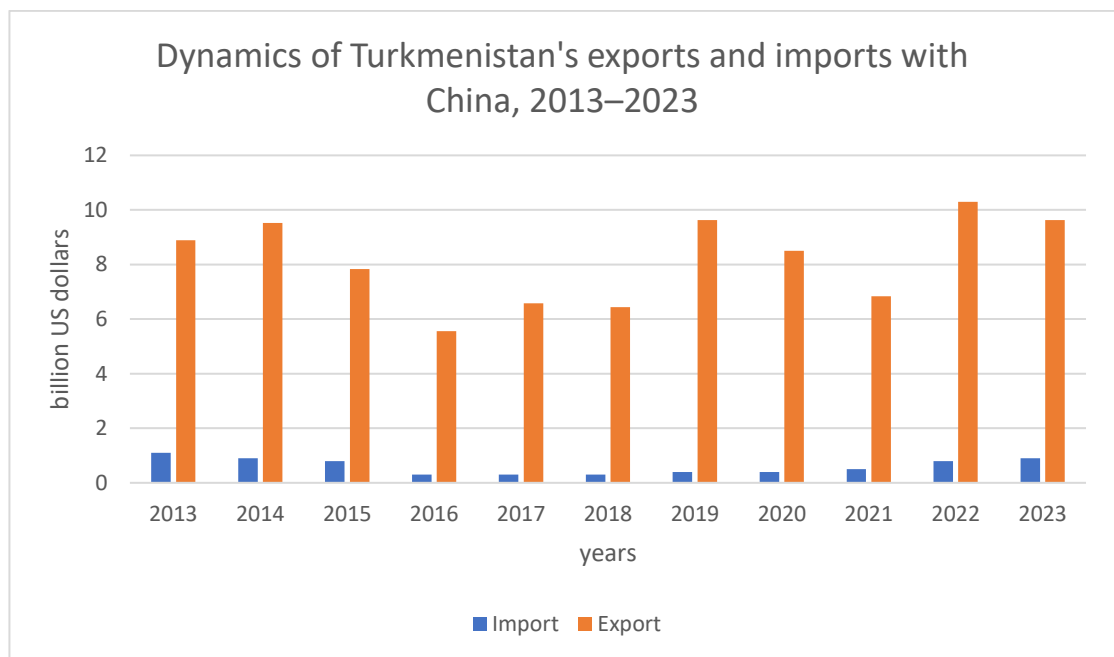


Figure 3. Dynamics of Turkmenistan's exports and imports with China, 2013–2023

Source: compiled by the author based on data from Trading Economics (2025)

Turkmenistan's exports to China have fluctuated annually between \$5.5 and \$9.6 billion, reflecting changes in gas supply volumes and energy prices. In 2013–2014, exports reached about \$9 billion (Trading Economics, 2025e; Trading Economics, 2025f). Later, due to price factors and technical reasons, exports decreased to \$5.5–6.5 billion in 2016–2017 (Trading Economics, 2025e; Trading

Economics, 2025f). However, by 2019, Turkmenistan had resumed gas shipments, with exports reaching \$9.63 billion (Trading Economics, 2025f). In 2020–2021, exports declined due to the pandemic and reduced demand, falling to \$6.84 billion in 2021 (Trading Economics, 2025e). In 2022, exports reached a record high of \$10.3 billion, as natural gas remained the dominant export commodity in bilateral trade (Trading Economics, 2025f). In 2023, exports were estimated at \$9.63 billion, slightly below the peak (Trading Economics, 2025f). Overall, Turkmenistan's exports to China grew by an average of 8.4% per year between 2018 and 2023, from \$6.44 billion to \$9.63 billion (Trading Economics, 2025f). Turkmenistan's imports from China, on the other hand, were very low. In 2013–2014, imports were estimated at \$0.95–1.14 billion, but then fell sharply, reaching a minimum of \$0.32 billion in 2018 (Trading Economics, 2025e). The currency crisis and Turkmenistan's import restrictions contributed to this decline. However, since 2019, imports have gradually recovered, reaching \$0.87–0.96 billion in 2022–2023 (Trading Economics, 2025e). Over the past 5 years, imports from China have grown by an average of ~24.7% per year (from \$317 million in 2018 to \$957 million in 2023) (Trading Economics, 2025e).

Turkmenistan's trade relations with China in 2023 are mainly focused on natural gas exports and industrial equipment and infrastructure imports. Natural gas dominates Turkmenistan's exports to China, accounting for approximately 99.9% of total exports (Trading Economics, 2025f). According to Chinese customs statistics, gas imports from Turkmenistan in 2023 amounted to \$9.61 billion, which corresponds to a volume of about 30–40 billion m³ and more than half of China's total gas imports (Trading Economics, 2025f). Other goods exported to China play a minor role: for example, exports of halides (iodine) amounted to about \$10 million, while natural resins amounted to only \$8 million (Trading Economics, 2025f). The reason for this concentration is that

Turkmenistan sends other important goods, such as cotton and petroleum products, to other international markets. The structure of Turkmenistan's imports from China is much more diverse and mainly includes machinery, equipment and infrastructure products. The largest category of imports in 2023 was machinery and equipment, accounting for about 26%. This includes specialized equipment for the gas industry: drilling rigs, compressors, pumps and other production facilities (Trading Economics, 2025e). Electrical equipment, including turbines for power plants, generators, and telecommunications infrastructure, accounts for about 12% (Trading Economics, 2025e). Ferrous metal products, mainly large-diameter pipes used for gas pipeline construction, account for about 11% of imports (Trading Economics, 2025e). Automobiles and special equipment, including trucks and excavators, account for about 8%, rubber products (primarily tires) for about 6%, and plastics for about 3% (Trading Economics, 2025e). Due to the closed domestic market of Turkmenistan, consumer goods and light industrial products account for a small share.

Trade relations with China are very important for Kyrgyzstan, given its strategic role as a transit spot for Chinese products and its significant dependence on Chinese imports. Although Kyrgyzstan's economy is relatively small and does not export significant volumes to China, imported Chinese goods significantly dominate the domestic market.

Trade dynamics show that exports have remained relatively stagnant, while imports have grown rapidly. The graph below illustrates this asymmetry (see Figure 4).

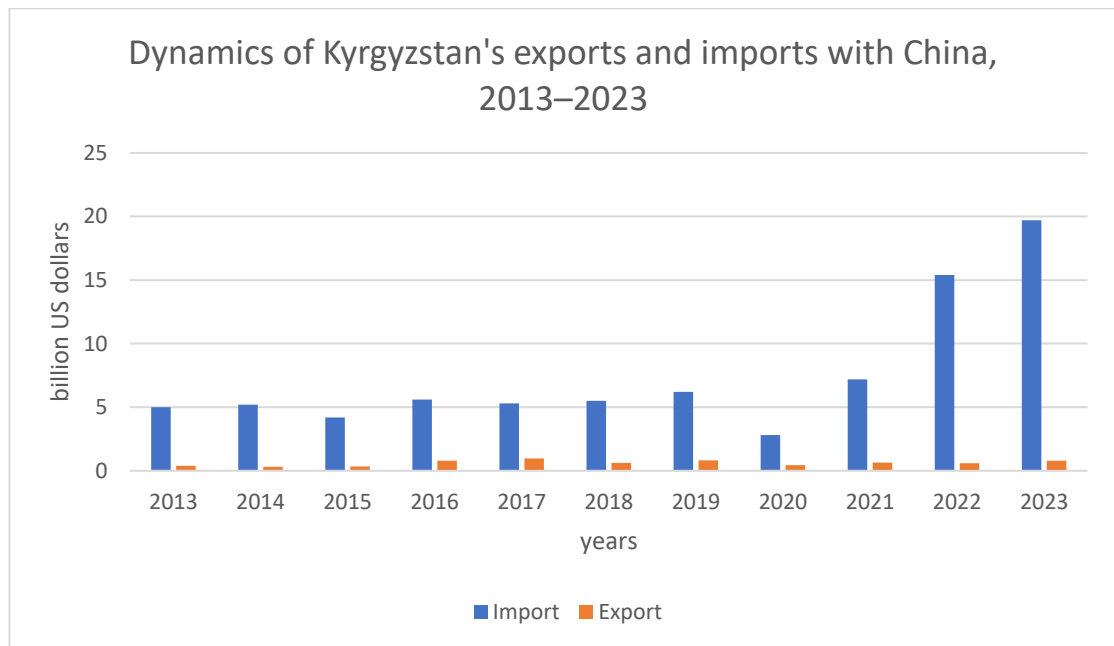


Figure 4. Dynamics of Kyrgyzstan's exports and imports with China, 2013–2023

Source: compiled by the author based on data from Trading Economics (2025)

Despite some growth, Kyrgyzstan's exports to China have remained limited over the past decade. According to customs data, exports in 2013–2014 ranged from \$32–38 million to \$80 million in 2023 (Trading Economics, 2025h). The peak was in 2017 (~\$97 million) reflecting a one-off shipment of ore concentrates. Exports then declined, reaching \$80 million again in 2023 (Trading Economics, 2025h). The bulk of exports are primary commodities: gold-bearing ores and concentrates (approximately \$52.5 million in 2023, or 65% of exports), smaller amounts of cotton (\$9.3 million) and mineral fuels (\$10.3 million) (Trading Economics, 2025h). Kyrgyzstan's export potential is limited, as its main export commodity, gold, is exported to other countries (e.g. Switzerland) rather than to China. Imports, which were around \$5 billion in 2013, more than quadrupled to \$19.7 billion in 2023 (Trading Economics, 2025g). The sharp increase in imports is particularly noticeable in 2022 (\$15.4 billion) and 2023 (\$19.72 billion), which led to a doubling of imports in two years. This is because of a significant increase in the volume of cargo from China through Kyrgyzstan

after the introduction of sanctions against Russia: many Chinese manufacturers have switched to transiting their products to the Russian market via Kyrgyzstan (Trading Economics, 2025g). Earlier, in 2020, imports fell to \$2.86 billion as a result of quarantine restrictions at the border, but by 2021 imports had fully recovered and exceeded pre-crisis levels (Trading Economics, 2025g). In general, Kyrgyzstan is a clear example of a country whose imports from China exceed exports several times and whose economy is deeply integrated into re-export² trade chains.

Kyrgyzstan's trade with China in 2023 is characterized mainly by exports of raw materials from Kyrgyzstan and imports of consumer goods and infrastructure equipment from China. Kyrgyzstan's exports to China, although limited in volume, are mainly represented by raw materials. The main share of exports is made up of ores and concentrates (mainly gold), which account for about 65% of the total volume (Trading Economics, 2025h). Mineral fuels, primarily coal, account for about 13%, cotton for about 12%, and other goods (leather, cattle) for about 10% (Trading Economics, 2025h). This export structure is shaped by China's interest and investment in the extraction of minerals, such as antimony and gold deposits in the Kadamzhai region. However, resource constraints and high competition in international markets are holding back the growth of exports. Imports from China significantly exceed exports and have a significant impact on Kyrgyzstan's domestic market and re-export trade. The main import category is clothing and textiles, accounting for about 32% of total imports. Motor vehicles (cars, motorcycles, spare parts) account for about 16%, and footwear and electronic products account for 7-8% each (Trading Economics, 2025g). Machinery and equipment account for about 6%, while

² Re-export refers to the practice of importing goods into a country and subsequently exporting them to third countries with little or no processing.

various industrial and consumer goods (furniture, plastics, toys, textile raw materials, etc.) account for the remaining 32% (Trading Economics, 2025g). Imports of consumer goods predominate, especially light industrial products (clothing, footwear, and fabrics).

Despite its low economic potential, Tajikistan is actively developing its relations with China. For Dushanbe, Beijing is a major source of investment and credit, and in recent years Beijing has become one of the leading trading partners. In 2013, the volume of trade with China (about \$1.9 billion) exceeded the volume of Tajikistan's trade with any other single country (Laruelle, 2018, p. 10-11). Trade dynamics clearly reflect these changes. The graph below shows the volume of exports and imports in Tajikistan's trade with China (see Figure 5):

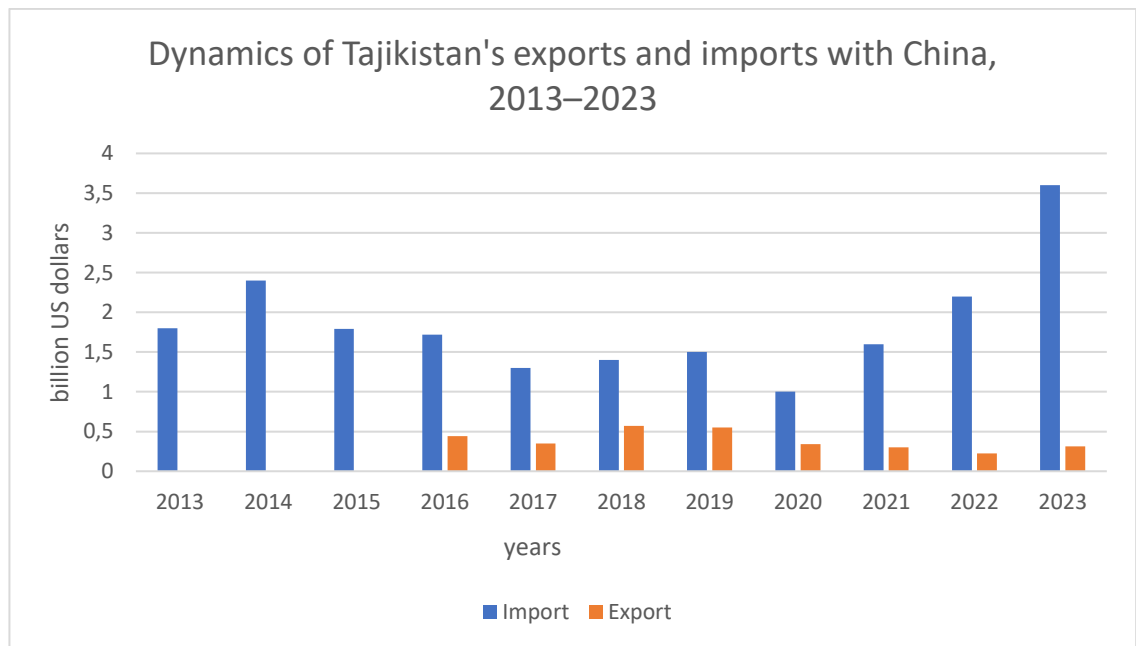


Figure 5. Dynamics of Tajikistan's exports and imports with China, 2013–2023

Source: compiled by the author based on data from Trading Economics (2025)

China's exports to Tajikistan increased from \$1.87 billion in 2013 to \$3.68 billion in 2023 (Trading Economics, 2025i; United Nations, 2024). In the 2015–2017 period, economic difficulties contributed to a decline in imports, reaching about

\$1.3 billion in 2017. However, imports started to grow again, reaching \$2.2 billion in 2022 and a record \$3.68 billion in 2023 (Trading Economics, 2025i). The growth in recent years is explained by diverse factors: as happens in Kyrgyzstan, trade flows to Russia via Tajikistan have increased, as well as demand for equipment in the context of new Chinese projects (e.g., construction of factories).

Tajikistan's exports to China have been very low for a long time, for example, in 2016, it was only \$44 million (United Nations, 2024). However, in the 2022-2023 term, there was a sharp increase: from \$30.6 million in 2021, it reached \$226.2 million in 2022, and \$312.8 million in 2023 (United Nations, 2024). This tenfold increase is associated with the launch of joint mining and metallurgical projects with China. Chinese companies invested in the development of lead-zinc deposits and aluminum production. As a result, large supplies appeared in the export structure: in 2023, Tajikistan exported gold-containing ores and concentrates to China for \$155 million (49.5% of exports), "other metals" (aluminum raw materials) for \$104.5 million (33.4%), and cotton for \$42.8 million (13.7%) (United Nations, 2024). Thus, Tajikistan's raw material exports, while increasing, remain concentrated in a few key commodities: ores, metals and cotton. However, this new momentum reflects Tajikistan's more active integration into China-centric raw material supply chains.

The main areas of trade between Tajikistan and China are raw materials (ores, metals, cotton), infrastructure (equipment, transport), and light industry. In 2023, Tajikistan's trade with China was characterized primarily by exports of raw materials and imports of industrial and consumer goods, reflecting strong economic integration through targeted investments. Tajikistan's exports to China are largely dependent on raw materials. In 2023, ores and concentrates accounted for the largest share of export revenues, representing for about 50%

of total exports (United Nations, 2024). Excluding other specific categories, metals will account for about 33%, while cotton, a historically important export product from southern Tajikistan, will account for about 14%. The remaining 3% consists of various small goods (United Nations, 2024). This export structure is largely the result of Chinese investments in Tajikistan's industrial and mining sectors. Machinery and equipment for the industrial and energy sectors accounted for approximately 14% of total imports, while motor vehicles and specialized equipment for the construction and mining industries represented around 12%. Clothing constituted a further 12% of imports, and telecommunications and electronic goods, including telecommunications equipment and household appliances, accounted for approximately 9% (Trading Economics, 2025i). The remaining 44% include various products such as construction materials, plastics, chemicals, and food. The growth of imports related to infrastructure, such as machinery and vehicles, is directly related to Chinese loans and investment in projects in Tajikistan (Laruelle, 2018, p. 120). Tajikistan's trade relations with China are an example of how strategic investments can significantly enhance bilateral economic integration, stimulate export growth, and promote the comprehensive development of infrastructure and consumer markets.

3. Geopolitical implications and future challenges of China-Central Asia trade relations

As it was mentioned above, during the last decade, Central Asia has started playing an increasingly important role in foreign and economic strategy of China. The Belt and Road Initiative, launched in 2013, identifies Central Asia as a key corridor connecting China with Europe, the Middle East, and other regions through infrastructure, trade, and investment networks (McBride et al.,

2023; Rana & Ji, 2020). According to Chen and Fazilov (2018), the region has been re-centered within the Eurasian geopolitical landscape, transforming from a peripheral area into a strategic hub for China's westward economic expansion. In accordance with the results of analysis, there was a significant increase of trade turnover between China and Central Asia during 2013–2023 time period, strengthening economic interdependence throughout the region.

Such expansion of trade relations resulted in serious geopolitical consequences. China has become an important economic partner for all Central Asian republics, expanding its influence through investments, infrastructure development, and growing trade volumes (Laruelle, 2018). In Uzbekistan economic reforms initiated after 2016 facilitated deeper economic cooperation with China, leading to increased Chinese investment and trade flows (World Bank, 2019; Koparkar, 2017). Kazakhstan has also deepened its economic ties with China through energy cooperation, transport corridors, and logistics projects linked to the BRI (Le Corre, 2019). In this regard, China has become an important economic player in a region which used to be dominated by Russia.

However, the patterns of trade examined in this study demonstrate a persistent asymmetry. Most Central Asian countries primarily export raw materials, hydrocarbons, and mineral resources to China, whereas importing manufactured goods, industrial equipment, machinery and consumer products. This kind of structure creates a dependence on commodity exports and limits opportunities for industrial diversification. Turkmenistan is one of the most evident examples, as this state mainly exports its natural gas to China, becoming vulnerable to any changes in demand and pricing policy of China (Central Asian Light, 2024).

Such developments raise many concerns regarding the sustainability of economic development in the region. Excessive dependence on a single trading partner may reduce economic resilience and increase vulnerability to external shocks. In addition to that, public concerns regarding Chinese investments and infrastructure projects have appeared in several Central Asian states, particularly in Kazakhstan, where debates over land ownership and foreign economic influence have intensified (Le Corre, 2019). While China acts as a partner, offering mutual development within the framework of BRI, others believe that growing economic dependence can become a source of political influence in the future (Laruelle, 2018).

The main challenge for Central Asian countries will be to diversify both their export and external economic partnerships. In particular, manufacturing sectors can be developed and other routes of transportation and trade can be utilized in order to reduce the dependence on commodity export and single market. At the same time, China is expected to remain a key economic partner because of geographical proximity, financial capacities, and active participation in the BRI. The future of China-Central Asia trade relations will mainly depend on the ability of regional governments to balance economic cooperation with diversification strategies to promote sustainable and independent development.

Conclusion

Over the past ten years, trade relations of China and Central Asia proved to be strategically significant and full of potential. They managed to create a balanced relationship and developed economically and in terms of internal integration. Nevertheless, according to the figures, trade relations are becoming increasingly one-sided, as Central Asian countries export raw materials and import manufactured products and technologies. These patterns indicate the

low level of capacity for industry in the region and the high level of dependency on foreign manufacturing imports. Since the Central Asian countries have low levels of capacity for manufacturing and converting the natural resources into finished products, they remain dependent on imports. Addressing this challenge requires further industrial development and the modernization of domestic manufacturing sectors. In the long term, such changes can turn Central Asian region into a leading force for sustainable development, economic independence and regional integration in the global system of the 21st century.

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