

Championing the China-Central Asia Spirit: Achievements, Opportunities and Prospects for Regional Cooperation

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Foreword

Located at the heart of the Eurasian continent, Central Asia shares mountains and rivers with China and is closely bound to it, like lips to teeth. This land, where diverse civilizations have long converged, is home to a mosaic of ethnic groups and customs. It has served as a vital crossroads of transcontinental exchange—and a crucible of human civilization.

Looking back at history, the peoples of China and Central Asia jointly contributed to the rise and flourishing of the Silk Road, together writing a storied chapter of enduring exchanges: “Couriers raced along the routes without pause, and merchants from faraway lands arrived daily at the frontier.”

In the new era, China and Central Asia have become good neighbors, friends, partners, and brothers who share a common destiny. Together, they have opened a new chapter of amity, stability, and prosperity across the Eurasian landmass. The six countries have forged the China-Central Asia Spirit, offering a model of regional cooperation to the world.

Since Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, China and the Central Asian countries have worked hand in hand to fully revive the Silk Road and build a future-oriented partnership of deep cooperation. Their relations have entered a new era of development and now stand at an unprecedented historical high. President Xi has made twelve visits to Central Asia, covering all five nations, forging close personal friendships with each country’s leadership. The virtual summit commemorating the 30th anniversary of diplomatic ties and the inaugural China-Central Asia Summit stand as two new milestones in the history of China-Central Asia relations. With a shared commitment to serving the interests of their peoples and building a brighter future, China and the Central Asian countries have made the historic choice to create an even closer China-Central Asia community of shared future—demonstrating their determination to elevate cooperation to a higher level, with higher standards and greater quality.

The recently concluded Second China-Central Asia Summit marks a new starting point for China-Central Asia cooperation. At this significant juncture, this report presents a comprehensive review of the essential achievements, emerging opportunities, and shared challenges in this new era while offering a forward-looking analysis of prospects.

According to the report, cooperation between China and Central Asia in the new era has yielded substantial results in seven key areas: trade and economic exchanges, infrastructure connectivity, energy collaboration, emerging sectors, development capacity building, mutual learning among civilizations, and peace and security. China’s high-quality development, high-standard opening-up, and the new wave of technological and industrial transformation are creating major opportunities for China-Central Asia cooperation. At the same time, the

partnership faces risks and challenges stemming from unilateralism, protectionism, geopolitical tensions, and non-traditional security threats.

Looking ahead, the report points out that future China-Central Asia cooperation should be guided by the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity and the three major global initiatives—the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative. It should uphold the principles of mutual support, common development, universal security, and everlasting friendship. Together, the two sides should work to strengthen the foundation of a regional community of a shared future, open a new chapter of regional prosperity, build a shared shield for security and stability, and compose a new symphony of people-to-people connectivity.

We firmly believe that China-Central Asia cooperation in the new era will bring greater development and well-being to the peoples of the region, inject more stability and positive energy into an increasingly volatile world, and serve as an essential model of regional cooperation in the broader cause of building a community with a shared future for humanity.

Chapter One: China-Central Asia Cooperation Has Yielded Fruitful Results

“Our cooperation is rooted in more than 2,000 years of friendly exchanges, cemented by solidarity and mutual trust cultivated through more than three decades of diplomatic ties, and taken forward via openness and win-win cooperation of the new era. Building on our collective efforts over the years, we have forged a China-Central Asia Spirit of ‘mutual respect, mutual trust, mutual benefit, and mutual assistance for the joint pursuit of modernization through high-quality development.’”

— PRC President Xi Jinping

I. Economic and Trade Relations Continue to Strengthen

In recent years, economic and trade cooperation between China and the Central Asian countries has grown in volume and quality. China has become Central Asia’s largest trading partner and a significant source of investment. Since the inaugural China-Central Asia Summit in 2023, China has introduced a series of trade facilitation measures to ensure smooth trade flows with Central Asian countries, expand the supply of their products, and diversify the bilateral trade structure. As cooperation potential continues to be unlocked, trade volumes have reached new heights. In 2024, the total trade volume between China and Central Asia reached USD 94.8 billion—an increase of USD 5.4 billion over the previous year, or 7.2 percent growth. This surge in trade volume represents a more than hundredfold increase from USD 460 million in the early days of diplomatic relations.

— *Strategic Alignment at the Top Level*

A defining feature of China-Central Asia cooperation is its strategic-level alignment of key national development plans. All sides have worked to deepen synergy between the BRI and national strategies such as Kazakhstan’s “Bright Path” New Economic Policy, Kyrgyzstan’s *National Development Program to 2026*, Tajikistan’s *National Development Strategy to 2030*, Turkmenistan’s “Revival of the Silk Road” initiative, and Uzbekistan’s *Development Strategy for a New Uzbekistan, 2022-2026*. By aligning these strategies, the two sides have expanded practical cooperation across sectors and created a new, deeply complementary, mutually beneficial partnership framework. During the second China-Central Asia Summit, the six countries signed together a treaty on eternal good-neighborliness, friendship and cooperation to enshrine the principle of everlasting friendship in the form of law. This is a new landmark in the history of the relations between the six countries.

— *Practical Cooperation Enters the “Fast Lane”*

As China-Central Asia cooperation continues to deepen, practical cooperation has accelerated significantly. Both sides are working to enhance the convenience of trade policies and improve investment policies' stability, fairness, transparency, and sustainability, making the economic, trade, and business environment increasingly attractive. As of December 2024, China's direct investment stock in Central Asian countries exceeded USD 17 billion, while the cumulative value of completed contracted projects surpassed USD 60 billion. These projects span a wide range of areas, including oil and gas extraction, connectivity infrastructure, manufacturing, and the digital economy.

In China's Xinjiang region, which shares mountains and rivers with Central Asia, customs clearance procedures at border ports with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have continued to improve, becoming faster and more efficient. The China-Kazakhstan Horgos International Border Cooperation Center—the first cross-border cooperation zone jointly built by the two countries—has served as a model of bilateral trade cooperation under the BRI since it began operations in 2012. Operated under the innovative “within the territory but outside the customs” model, the center exemplifies seamless cross-border collaboration.

Shaanxi Province, the historical starting point of the ancient Silk Road, is developing a bulk commodity trading hub focused on grains, fruits, and vegetables bound for Central Asia. It is also partnering with Central Asian countries to build international logistics hubs and parks jointly. To date, ten overseas warehouses have been established, and in 2024, trade between Shaanxi and Central Asia grew by 48.1%.

Xi'an International Port—the most significant international logistics hub in Northwest China—has adopted RFID (radio-frequency identification) technology to reduce the assembly time for new energy vehicles and improve the efficiency of outbound China-Europe freight trains. Five to eight dedicated trains carrying these vehicles are dispatched monthly to Central Asia.

From daily consumer goods and mechanical equipment to electronic devices, Chinese—made products are highly popular among Central Asian consumers. New export drivers known as the “three new items” (new energy vehicles, lithium batteries, and solar panels) have become the mainstay of China's exports to Central Asia. Meanwhile, Central Asian exports of energy products and agricultural goods to China are rapidly increasing, enriching Chinese consumer options. China has opened eight “green channels” to expedite customs clearance for farming and sideline products, fully covering highway ports and significantly boosting bilateral agricultural trade.

Premium green agricultural products from Central Asia, such as Tajik lemons and Uzbek cherries, are entering the Chinese market at a growing pace, while Chinese specialties such as Hebei peaches and Yan'an apples are appearing on Central Asian dining tables for the first time. Xi'an Aiju Grain and Oil Group has fully used the complementarity between China and Central Asian countries in agricultural cooperation by establishing and operating a one-million-ton grain and oil logistics and processing base in North Kazakhstan. The enterprise's equipment standards,

technological expertise, and management experience have directly benefited local populations, achieving mutual benefit and win-win outcomes while enhancing regional food security. Thanks to the concerted efforts of both sides, the stability and efficiency of regional industrial and supply chains have been effectively safeguarded.

II. Infrastructure Development Enhances Connectivity

Connectivity remains one of the primary focuses of cooperation between China and Central Asian countries. Both sides have leveraged Central Asia's unique geographical advantages to establish efficient "fast-track" channels for the movement of people and "green corridors" for the flow of goods. This transformation has helped turn Central Asia from a "landlocked region" into a "land-linked hub," reinforcing its pivotal role as a transportation bridge across the Eurasian continent. Such progress improves livelihoods and unlocks further potential for high-level connectivity between China and Central Asia, including the Internet of Things.

Through early-stage cooperation under the BRI, China and the Central Asian countries have accelerated the development of the China-Central Asia transportation corridor and worked to create a multidimensional, diversified regional connectivity network. A series of mutually beneficial infrastructure projects has taken root. One notable example is the completion of the Angren-Pap Railway Tunnel, the longest railway tunnel in Central Asia, constructed by China. This project has ended Uzbekistan's dependence on transport routes passing through neighboring countries and transformed the travel experience of tens of millions of people.

The China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Highway, which traverses the Tianshan Mountains, and the China-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan Highway, which crosses the Pamir Plateau, are continuously weaving a denser transport network for goods trade between China and Central Asia, bringing tangible benefits to people across the region.

On December 27, 2024, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan (CKU) Railway project was officially launched. The railway starts in Kashgar, Xinjiang, passes through Kyrgyzstan, and enters Uzbekistan, with potential future extensions to West and South Asia. Once completed, it will enhance the southern corridor of the New Eurasian Land Bridge, creating a convenient transportation route from East and Southeast Asia to Central Asia, West Asia, North Africa, and Southern Europe. The project will significantly lower international trade costs for participating Belt and Road countries and improve their integration into the global economy.

China has signed intergovernmental air transport agreements with all five Central Asian countries, steadily advancing the liberalization of the air transport market. Air connectivity between Xi'an and Central Asia has grown from zero routes to full coverage across five countries and seven cities. Eight passenger routes linking China to these Central Asian cities now

operate stably, integrating China and Central Asia's economic zones and enabling efficient industrial and social supply chain convergence.

China-Europe and China-Central Asia freight trains, running day and night, have played a vital role in maintaining smooth and stable international supply chains. On April 23, a China-Europe freight train comprising 55 containers carrying daily consumer goods and electronic components departed from Horgos Port in Xinjiang bound for Małaszewicze, Poland. This train marked the 3,000th China-Europe (Central Asia) freight train to pass through the Horgos rail port in 2024, reaching this milestone 27 days earlier than in 2023, with a year-on-year increase of 28.7%, setting a new record.

In total, China operated 19,000 China-Europe freight trains in 2024, transporting 2.07 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units), representing year-on-year increases of 10% and 9%, respectively. Meanwhile, 12,000 China-Central Asia freight trains were dispatched, carrying 880,000 TEUs—a year-on-year rise of 10% and 12%, respectively. Currently, China Railway has scheduled 44 fixed China-Central Asia freight routes, contributing to developing a new international transportation corridor across Eurasia.

The Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor originates in China and runs through Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, extending to Türkiye and European countries. In July 2024, President Xi Jinping and President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan jointly attended, via video link from the Astana Presidential Palace, the inauguration ceremony of the China-Europe Trans-Caspian Express. For the first time, Chinese vehicles reached Caspian ports via direct road transportation, marking the formal establishment of a diversified, multimodal connectivity framework integrating road, rail, air, and pipeline transport.

Several China-Europe freight train consolidation hubs are developing rapidly, creating a more efficient and convenient transportation network. In February 2024, the Xi'an Port Free Trade Company and Kazakhstan Temir Zholy Express jointly launched the Kazakhstan Xi'an Terminal. Over the year, it handled more than 150,000 tons of transshipped cargo, facilitating rapid distribution of Kazakh imports and exports via Xi'an and advancing Kazakhstan's vision of building a China-based trade and logistics hub. With the official operation of China-Kazakhstan logistics center in Almaty this June, the "hub-to-hub" corridor will soon enter a new development phase.

III. Accelerated Cooperation Across the Full Energy Industry Chain

Central Asia is an important oil and gas production region, and its natural resource endowments and industrial structures are highly complementary to China's needs. In recent years, China and Central Asian countries have adopted a mutually beneficial, win-win approach to build a diversified, secure, and efficient energy corridor, continuously expanding cooperation in energy, mineral resources, and other foundational sectors.

Chinese enterprises attach great importance to energy cooperation with Central Asian countries and have established long-term, stable partnerships with local government agencies and energy companies. As early as 1997, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) won the bid to develop the Aktobe Oilfield in Kazakhstan, marking the beginning of the China-Kakhstan oil and gas cooperation. Over the years, AktobeMunaiGas has grown from producing just over 2 million tons of crude oil annually into a large-scale oil and gas enterprise with an annual oil and gas output exceeding 10 million tons. The company has built a complete upstream-to-downstream industrial chain encompassing oil and gas exploration and development, pipeline construction and operation, refining and petroleum trade, engineering technology and construction, equipment, and transport services, IT systems, and logistics support, creating over 20,000 local jobs.

A Chinese energy equipment manufacturer in Tajikistan built and commissioned the Dushanbe-2 thermal power plant, ending the capital's long-standing winter electricity shortages. In Kyrgyzstan, with Chinese support, the modernization of the Bishkek thermal power plant significantly increased its annual electricity output from 262 million kilowatt-hours to 1.74 billion, nearly doubling its heating capacity. In Turkmenistan, CNPC's Amu Darya natural gas project has achieved an oil and gas equivalent output of over 10 million tons per year and an annual gas supply capacity of 10 billion cubic meters. These and other major cooperative projects have not only taken root but flourished, steadily expanding the China-Central Asia oil and gas trade and realizing full-spectrum cooperation across the energy industry chain.

Through years of practical cooperation, the regional pipeline network has gradually matured. Traversing vast deserts, the China-Central Asia natural gas pipelines (Lines A, B, and C) are currently operational and connect with China's West-East Gas Pipeline Lines II and III. Construction of Line D is progressing rapidly, set to benefit people along the route. The China-Kazakhstan crude oil pipeline, Kazakhstan's first international energy corridor directly linking it to the global market, has significantly advanced its efforts to diversify its energy exports.

As the BRI continues to advance, energy cooperation between China and Central Asian countries has deepened. These efforts have strengthened Central Asia's energy infrastructure, injected fresh momentum into both sides' economic and social development, and positively contributed to regional energy structure optimization and environmental sustainability.

IV. Innovation-Driven Green Cooperation

At present, fossil fuels still account for 95% of the total energy supply across the five Central Asian countries. Faced with intensifying climate change and the global trend toward energy transition, these countries are increasingly eager to pursue cooperation in renewable energy and green economy sectors. However, they face challenges due to limited financing, human resources, and technology, making their path toward green transformation difficult.

At the inaugural China-Central Asia Summit, China and the five Central Asian countries reached several consensus agreements, including launching a China-Central Asia Green and Low-Carbon Development Initiative and enhanced cooperation in green development and climate action. As a steadfast supporter of Central Asia's green transformation, China is leveraging its strengths in clean energy production and management to help unlock the region's immense potential for renewable energy development.

In early April 2025, the Bash and Zankeldi wind power projects in Uzbekistan, which were invested in, constructed, and operated with the participation of China Southern Power Grid, officially began operation. They now constitute Central Asia's largest completed wind power project, expected to supply approximately 3 billion kilowatt-hours of clean electricity annually while reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 1.6 million tons.

An increasing number of Chinese enterprises are investing in green energy manufacturing and infrastructure across Central Asia. Projects such as the 100-megawatt photovoltaic power station in Navoi, Uzbekistan; the Zhanatas wind farm, Turgusun hydropower station, and Almaty photovoltaic station in Kazakhstan; and China Huadian's Aktau gas turbine and Shelek solar projects—all demonstrate the deepening of China-Central Asia cooperation in new energy. These initiatives are not only delivering reliable and sustainable electricity but also driving industrial upgrades and creating substantial employment opportunities in host countries.

China is also actively engaged in international cooperation with Central Asian countries in desertification control. The practical experience and scientific models developed in the "Three-North" shelterbelt region—spanning Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, and the Taklimakan Desert—have provided valuable lessons for Central Asian countries facing similar environmental challenges and opened up broad prospects for building a Green Belt and Road.

Located on the border between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the Aral Sea was once the fourth-largest lake in the world. However, due to more than half a century of extensive land and water development, its surface area shrank from approximately 67,000 square kilometers in 1960 to just around 6,000 square kilometers by 2020. This drastic reduction has led to desertification, salinization, and biodiversity loss. In response to this ecological crisis, China and the Central Asian countries have joined hands in comprehensive restoration efforts.

In 2023, the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography under the Chinese Academy of Sciences signed an agreement on Aral Sea ecological management with the government of Uzbekistan and related institutions. A pilot demonstration project integrating water and fertilizer management through drip irrigation under plastic mulch was launched in Nukus, western Uzbekistan. That same year, the cotton yield achieved in the trial reached the highest level in the local area. Today, scientists from the Xinjiang Institute continue to screen salt- and drought-tolerant plant species in Muynak Town, located on the Aral Sea's desiccated shore, helping bring greenery back to the region.

V. Supporting Central Asia in Building Endogenous Development Capacity

“China’s journey out of poverty shows that developing countries can overcome poverty with perseverance, a consistent vision, and an unyielding spirit. Even the weakest bird can take flight and soar. If China can succeed, so can others.” —President Xi Jinping, speaking at the G20 Leaders’ Summit in Rio de Janeiro, November 2024.

Poverty is a persistent affliction of human society and a common global challenge. China’s success in poverty alleviation has drawn worldwide attention and offers valuable experience for Central Asian countries. By shifting from traditional, one-way “blood transfusion” aid to a model of mutually reinforcing development through technology transfer, industrial upgrading, and talent cultivation, China and Central Asia are now jointly building capacity for sustainable growth.

—*Technology-based Poverty Reduction: Tailoring Innovation to Local Needs*

China and Central Asia have engaged in broad scientific and technological cooperation for poverty reduction, adapted to regional characteristics and industrial bottlenecks. These efforts focus on agricultural modernization, energy transition, and infrastructure. During the China-Central Asia Summit, China and Uzbekistan agreed to establish a Sub-Committee on Poverty Reduction under their Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee, China’s first intergovernmental mechanism of its kind. Since its launch, the mechanism has significantly progressed in institutional development, personnel training, and experience-sharing. It has supported Uzbekistan’s socio-economic advancement and deepened the substance of bilateral cooperation. According to a joint assessment by Uzbekistan’s State Committee on Statistics and the World Bank, 719,000 people were lifted out of poverty in Uzbekistan in 2024, with the poverty rate dropping to 8.9%.

In recent years, Northwest A&F University has built eight overseas agricultural science and technology demonstration parks across Central Asia. These focus on crop breeding, pest and disease control, water-saving irrigation, veterinary medicine, saline-alkali land remediation, and food processing. In 2023, the China-Kyrgyzstan Demonstration Park for High-Quality Fruit Tree Breeding was established jointly by Northwest A&F University, Kyrgyz universities, and businesses. Addressing the region’s hot and arid summer conditions, Chinese experts developed improved rootstock-scion combinations with higher water-use efficiency, better survival rates, and significantly increased yields—helping local fruit farmers raise incomes and escape poverty.

—*Enhancing Technical Skills and Talent Development to Build Endogenous Growth Capacity*

The Luban Workshop, named after the legendary Chinese craftsman Lu Ban, has become a new platform for international vocational education cooperation. Tailored to local development

needs, Luban Workshops in Central Asia have created demand-driven training models to support regional poverty alleviation and industrialization.

Kazakhstan is the first country in Central Asia to import electric vehicles on a large scale, yet it faces a shortage of technicians trained in EV maintenance. In December 2023, Kazakhstan inaugurated its first Luban Workshop, offering courses in transportation equipment and technology and establishing four training zones dedicated to vehicle maintenance, fuel vehicle systems, new energy vehicles, and intelligent connected vehicles. In 2024, the workshop launched new curricula aligned with local labor market needs—such as “Automotive Transmission and Smart Control Technology” and “Advanced Driver-Assistance Systems (ADAS)” —and introduced an innovation-focused program on “Smart Transportation and Artificial Intelligence.” Graduates from the workshop are in high demand and have been recruited by leading Kazakh automotive, metallurgy, and mining enterprises. In July 2024, China announced plans to open a second Luban Workshop in Kazakhstan to cultivate talent for the country’s growing AI industry.

Luban Workshops also promote integrating education and industry through “Chinese language + vocational skills” dual-track training. Significant local job opportunities are emerging with the growth of Chinese-invested enterprises across Central Asia under the BRI. This dual-track education model—offered through short-term training, non-degree programs, and academic degree courses—effectively improves local workforce capabilities, eases employment bottlenecks for enterprises, and contributes to regional development by addressing livelihood needs through job creation.

VI. Mutual Learning Among Civilizations: Strengthening Spiritual Bonds

Over two thousand years ago, Chinese civilization from the Central Plains first engaged deeply with Central Asian civilizations through the ancient Silk Road. This encounter established a reciprocal and symbiotic cultural exchange paradigm, laying the foundation for mutual recognition and serving as a cultural bedrock for contemporary dialogue. Today, civilizational exchanges between China and Central Asian countries are deepening, carrying forward the legacy of the Silk Road while injecting new vitality into building a community with a shared future for humankind.

—Millennia of Friendship, Carried on Through the Fragrance of Traditional Medicine

Since the opening of the Silk Road, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has spread to Central Asia along trade routes, gradually integrating with local medical traditions. The *Xi’an Declaration of the China-Central Asia Summit* explicitly called for “establishing TCM centers, advancing cooperation in herbal cultivation and processing, and building a ‘Healthy Silk Road.’” In recent years, China and Central Asian countries have developed a comprehensive cooperation network in traditional medicine—encompassing healthcare, education, and scientific research—

through a series of practical projects. TCM has become an essential bridge of mutual understanding between the peoples of China and Central Asia.

In March 2023, the Fourth Affiliated Hospital of Xinjiang Medical University (Xinjiang Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital), in partnership with the Xinjiang Technical Institute of Physics and Chemistry under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, established the region's first "Traditional Chinese Medicine Treatment and Training Center" in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The center has promoted including 14 TCM practices—such as acupuncture and tui na—into the local healthcare system. In September of the same year, the hospital won the national-level bid to establish the China-Uzbekistan Traditional Chinese Medicine Center. The following month, TCM became a required course in the traditional medicine undergraduate program at Tashkent State Medical University—marking the first time TCM education has been fully integrated into Central Asia's higher education system, laying the foundation for training a local TCM workforce.

—Cultural Bridges Foster People-to-People Bonds

Tourism and culture years and art festivals of Central Asian countries are very popular in China. Chinese films and TV dramas, such as *Min-Ning Town* and *To the Wonder*, have become great hits in Central Asia. To implement the consensus the heads of state reached, China and Turkmenistan held reciprocal Culture Years in 2023 and 2024, underscoring their shared commitment to deepening cultural cooperation. Both countries are rich in cultural heritage and long-standing historical ties. Through dance, vocal music, opera, and other art performances, they showcased the charm of their respective traditions and promoted deep cultural integration.

Nowruz is a traditional festival celebrated across Central Asia. In March 2025, a performing arts troupe from Samarkand, Uzbekistan, presented a lively Nowruz celebration at the Silk Road Joy World in Xi'an, using music, dance, and cuisine to express friendship and cultural exchange. In April, the Consulate General of Kazakhstan in Xi'an hosted a Nowruz celebration featuring mini-football matches, traditional games, talent competitions, and Kazakh music and dance performances. The festivities promoted national heritage, strengthened people-to-people ties, and encouraged multilateral cultural dialogue.

—Silk Road Tourism: Efforts to Reach Out to Each Other

Tourism between China and Central Asian countries is thriving. With abundant cultural and natural resources, geographical proximity, and complementary market needs, the two sides are building a balanced and reciprocal tourism ecosystem that supports the broader vision of a regional community of shared future. Policy coordination, resource sharing, and market integration are driving sustained momentum.

Central Asia is one of the fastest-growing and most promising regions for inbound tourism to China, while China is a significant source of outbound tourists for Central Asia. All five Central Asian countries have been incorporated into China's outbound tourism destinations

list. To boost cross-border travel, they have adopted visa facilitation measures: Uzbekistan has offered Chinese tourists a ten-day visa-free stay since 2021; in November 2023, China and Kazakhstan implemented mutual visa exemptions allowing 30-day stays; Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have introduced e-visa systems to streamline entry. On June 1, 2025, the *Agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Mutual Visa Exemption* officially entered into force, making travel even more convenient for citizens of both countries.

With the support of promotional events like tourism fairs and themed exhibitions, both sides have continued to raise the visibility of their tourism brands and boost cross-border appeal. 2024 was designated the “Kazakhstan Tourism Year in China.” Thanks to the mutual visa exemption, two-way travel saw a significant leap—Chinese tourism to Kazakhstan increased by over 50%, and Kazakh tourism to China grew by 31%. On May 29, 2025, the China-Central Asia People-to-People Tourism Express Train was launched, creating a new cultural corridor across Eurasia and further enriching the depth of connectivity and people-to-people exchange.

VII. Peace and Security: Laying the Foundation for Development

At the inaugural China-Central Asia Summit on May 19, 2023, President Xi Jinping emphasized safeguarding the sovereignty, security, independence, and territorial integrity of Central Asian countries, respecting the development paths independently chosen by the people of Central Asia, and supporting the region’s pursuit of peace, harmony, and stability.

The *Xi’an Declaration* adopted at the summit reaffirmed the importance of maintaining national security, political stability, and constitutional order. All parties resolutely opposed the subversion of legitimate governments and the instigation of “color revolutions” and rejected all forms and pretexts of interference in other countries’ internal affairs. The parties strongly condemned terrorism, separatism, and extremism in all forms, expressed willingness to jointly combat the “three forces,” drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, and cybercrime, and agreed to strengthen exchanges on security for major projects and events to ensure the safe and stable operation of strategic cooperation initiatives.

In recent years, aiming to build a shared security community, China and the Central Asian countries have pursued all-round, multi-tiered cooperation in maintaining regional peace and stability. Through practical steps such as joint counterterrorism operations, strengthening multilateral mechanisms, and promoting innovative security governance, the two sides have deepened cooperation in border control, cyber counterterrorism, and joint law enforcement, fortifying the regional security shield and injecting strong momentum into long-term peace.

In September 2024, the first China-Central Asia Ministers of Public Security and Internal Affairs Meeting Mechanism was launched in Lianyungang. The parties reached multiple agreements on combating transnational crime, extremism, and cybercrime and established

regular information-sharing and joint operation mechanisms. That same month, the Conference of Presidents of the Supreme Courts of China and Central Asian Countries was held in Urumqi, Xinjiang. The parties reached a consensus on cross-border judicial cooperation and counterterrorism, with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan sharing experiences in legislation and law enforcement, paving the way for a new pattern of regional counterterrorism collaboration.

In April 2025, the Sixth Meeting of China-Central Asia Foreign Ministers voiced support for the establishment of a Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Anti-Drug Center in Dushanbe and its coordination with the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center for combating drugs, thus strengthening joint drug interdiction efforts and the fight against transnational crime.

At the same time, China and Central Asian countries have been institutionalizing their law enforcement and security cooperation, conducting regular bilateral and multilateral joint drills and border patrols to minimize the operating space of the “three forces” and safeguarding shared security interests and regional peace.

Xinjiang, China’s northwestern region, shares natural borders with Central Asia. Since the China-Central Asia Summit, Xinjiang has actively strengthened cross-border law enforcement cooperation with neighboring countries, reinforcing the border security line and jointly maintaining regional peace and stability. Given the complex geography and management challenges of China’s borders with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, local governments and relevant departments on both sides have explored new cooperative models.

In November 2024, the first meeting of the China-Kazakhstan Horgos International Border Cooperation Center Local Coordination Mechanism was held in Horgos, Xinjiang. The two sides discussed the center’s high-quality development, enhanced local cooperation, and issues such as infrastructure development, cross-border tourism, market regulation, plant and animal quarantine collaboration, and joint crime prevention. The meeting concluded with the signing of the *Meeting Minutes of the First China-Kazakhstan Horgos Border Cooperation Center Local Coordination Mechanism* and a memorandum on establishing a cross-border tourism cooperation zone.

In January 2025, the inaugural meeting of the China-Kazakhstan Joint Border Committee was held in Beijing. The two sides formally launched the committee, adopted its charter, and praised the progress of the *Agreement on Border Management Systems*. Both sides affirmed the stable and clearly defined China-Kazakhstan border and the friendly, peaceful state of affairs in adjacent regions. They agreed to use the committee as a platform to enhance border governance and cooperation further and contribute to developing a permanent, comprehensive strategic partnership.

Today, a stable, unified, and peaceful Central Asia is rapidly taking shape, making a substantial contribution to regional security and laying a more solid foundation for building a

closer China-Central Asia community of shared future. In March 2025, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan signed a treaty on the demarcation of their tripoint border, fully resolving lingering territorial issues and setting an example for promoting regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

Chapter Two: Opportunities and Challenges in China-Central Asia Cooperation

“China is building a great modern socialist country in all respects and advancing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through Chinese modernization. No matter how the international situation changes, China will remain unwavering in opening up to the outside world, and embrace higher-quality cooperation with Central Asian countries to deepen the integration of interests and achieve common development.”

—PRC President Xi Jinping

I. New Opportunities and New Horizons Brought by China’s High-Level Opening-Up

At present, the momentum for global economic growth is waning. In particular, since the beginning of this year, the international environment has become increasingly volatile, marked by rising unilateralism and trade protectionism and a disrupted global industrial and supply chain layout—all of which have cast a shadow over the prospects for international trade.

In the face of this complex and challenging external environment, China has remained steadfast in managing its own affairs and in advancing high-level opening-up. Throughout this process, China has consistently regarded Central Asia as a key direction in its neighborhood diplomacy. It has worked with Central Asian countries to expand the pie of mutual benefit, injecting stability into the regional economy and setting an example for peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation among nations worldwide.

China is the world’s largest developing country and has consistently contributed the most to global economic growth annually. In 2024, China’s GDP surpassed 130 trillion yuan, with its contribution to global economic growth remaining around 30 percent—ranking first among major economies. China boasts a vast market as the world’s second-largest economy and one of the most important sources of international investment. In steadily advancing Chinese modernization, it has not only delivered development dividends to countries in the region and beyond, boosting the global economy but also offered new theories and models for modernization to emerging economies and developing countries at large.

Chinese modernization places a strong emphasis on high-quality development, with a focus on innovation-driven growth, green transformation, and coordinated progress. China has made sustained investments in areas such as scientific and technological innovation, yielding remarkable results and supporting the development of telecommunications industries in Central Asian countries. For example, China’s Huawei has established a digital center in Kazakhstan, introducing ICT infrastructure that lays the groundwork for the growth of new business models

such as e-commerce and mobile payment systems. China's experience in new energy development, desertification and saline-alkali land management, sand control, and water-saving irrigation offers valuable insights for Central Asia. By "teaching people how to fish," China can continue assisting Central Asian countries in building large-scale solar and wind power plants, helping optimize their energy structures, and promoting ecological governance and green, sustainable development across the region.

In a global climate of rising protectionism, China remains committed to advancing high-level opening-up, serving as both a "stabilizing anchor" and a "driving force" for the world economy. The number of items on China's national negative list for foreign investment has been reduced from 190 to merely 29 nationwide and 27 in pilot free trade zones, with all restrictions in the manufacturing sector lifted. These opening-up measures have created favorable conditions for multinational companies to invest in China. Central Asian enterprises leverage this opportunity by investing in factories or engaging in trade cooperation, tapping into China's vast market and promoting economies of scale. Platforms such as the China International Import Expo, the China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair), and the Silk Road International Expo have provided Central Asian companies with excellent opportunities to showcase their products and expand their market reach. Signature products such as Uzbekistan's handmade carpets and Kyrgyzstan's specialty dried fruits can now reach global buyers directly, enhancing international brand recognition and market share and strengthening ties with global industrial and supply chains.

China's economy is built on solid foundations, boasts numerous advantages, demonstrates strong resilience, and holds vast potential. The underlying conditions and long-term trend of steady growth remain unchanged. China possesses the full range of industries listed in the United Nations' industrial classification, with a comprehensive and flexible industrial chain capable of supporting various products' production and auxiliary needs. Moreover, China and the Central Asian countries have highly complementary industrial structures, offering ample room for coordinated development of industrial and supply chains.

In the energy sector, Central Asian countries are essential suppliers, while China excels in energy exploration and development technologies, equipment manufacturing, and energy-related chemical industries. There is broad scope for deepening cooperation—from upstream oil and gas exploration and development to midstream energy pipeline construction and operation and downstream petrochemical production—toward building a complete and efficient energy industry chain together.

II. Enormous Potential in New Areas of Cooperation, such as Green and Digital Development

As a new round of scientific and technological revolutions and industrial transformations gather pace and regional cooperation mechanisms deepen, China and Central Asian countries are

accelerating cooperation in diverse and emerging fields to achieve collaborative innovation and development.

—Green Cooperation for Sustainable Development.

China and the five Central Asian countries share similar needs and aligned visions for green development. In recent years, stable political relations, smooth economic and trade cooperation, and a solid foundation in traditional energy collaboration have laid the groundwork for deeper cooperation in green transition. Central Asia is rich in water resources, primarily Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Notably, Tajikistan's technically exploitable hydropower potential is about 55 GW—more than half of the region's total. Wind energy resources are concentrated in Kazakhstan, where current development is still limited, with installed wind power capacity only around 1.2 GW, suggesting vast potential for future growth. Additionally, Central Asian countries have abundant deposits of strategic minerals like cobalt, lithium, silicon, and tungsten, which are critical for clean energy technologies and hold tremendous development prospects.

With Central Asian countries increasing support for green transition, rising electricity demand, and growing needs for transition minerals, China can offer essential investment and technological support. As the world's largest country in terms of installed renewable energy capacity—ranking first for years in hydro, solar, and wind power—China is advancing modernization under high environmental standards. In 2024, China Energy Engineering Group's overseas subsidiary completed the grid connection of a 1 GW solar power project in Uzbekistan. China's hydropower and wind power projects in Kazakhstan now exceed 1,000 MW in installed capacity. With its extensive experience, cutting-edge technologies and equipment, and a complete renewable energy industry chain, China is well-positioned to provide equipment and technical services for renewable energy development in Central Asia. The two sides can deepen cooperation across the entire clean energy industry chain, explore new models that integrate industrial and investment cooperation in clean energy, and support the modernization and intelligent upgrading of green infrastructure in Central Asia—taking China-Central Asia green cooperation to new depths.

In the cultural domain, visa facilitation measures and a steady rise in flight frequency have created more opportunities for people-to-people exchanges between China and Central Asian countries. With long histories and distinct cultural traditions on both sides, China and Central Asia possess highly complementary tourism resources, and tourism demand is expected to keep growing. As cooperation in education deepens, Central Asian students will have more opportunities to study in China. In line with the progress of bilateral cooperation and the development needs of Central Asian countries, more Luban Workshops will be established across the region to support the training of skilled professionals. Establishing these workshops will deepen vocational education collaboration and further promote cultural exchange and mutual understanding between people. The number of sister cities between China and Central Asia reach the milestone of 100 pairs.

—Digital Cooperation to Empower Economic Growth.

In recent years, Central Asian countries have launched digital development strategies to expand mobile payment coverage, boost e-commerce and data finance, and foster diversified economic growth. Per capita GDP in the region has seen significant increases. With over 60 percent of the population under 30, the area is shifting from basic to quality-oriented consumption. Central Asia's e-commerce market is expanding rapidly: in Kazakhstan, the domestic e-commerce platform Kaspi has 13.5 million monthly active users, covering 70 percent of the population; in Uzbekistan, mobile payment penetration rose from 12 percent to 58 percent in just three years. It is estimated that the Central Asian e-commerce market will exceed \$30 billion over the next five years, with a compound annual growth rate of 28 percent—underscoring its dynamic growth potential.

With the digital upgrading of the China-Europe Railway Express and the continuous expansion of overseas warehousing and logistics networks, China and Central Asian countries are engaging in cross-border e-commerce and digital economy cooperation under the frameworks of the joint development of the 21st-Century Digital Silk Road, China-Central Asia cooperation mechanisms, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Nearly 300 Central Asian enterprises have joined Chinese e-commerce platforms, while Chinese companies are also accelerating their entry into Central Asian platforms such as Kaspi. New business models such as “e-commerce + cross-border livestreaming” are booming, with annual cross-border livestreaming transactions reaching hundreds of millions of yuan. In 2022, China-Central Asia cross-border e-commerce trade grew by 95 percent year-on-year, and high-quality products from both sides are entering each other's markets at an accelerated pace. Despite the rising consumer demand for digital economy services in Central Asia, the region still faces challenges such as uneven levels of digital development, underdeveloped digital infrastructure and supporting logistics networks, and lagging regulatory capacity in digital technology and finance. China and the Central Asian countries enjoy broad prospects for cooperation in aligning cross-border data flow standards, improving the digital business environment, jointly building regional clearing networks, streamlining payment processes, and advancing new digital infrastructure and cross-border logistics projects to promote the robust development of cross-border e-commerce and the digital economy.

—Agricultural Cooperation for Mutual Benefit.

Agriculture is a vital sector for both China and Central Asian countries and a key component of China-Central Asia cooperation. At the virtual summit marking the 30th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and the five Central Asian countries, Chinese President Xi Jinping stated, “China is willing to open its vast market to Central Asian countries, import more high-quality goods and agricultural products, continue to hold the China-Central Asia Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum, and work to raise trade volume between China and Central Asian countries to \$70 billion by 2030.” The two sides have highly complementary

agricultural production structures and broad market space. Bilateral agrarian trade between China and the five Central Asian countries grew from \$69 million in 2001 to \$2.875 billion in 2023—a more than fortyfold increase.

Currently, amid economic transformation and a new wave of scientific and technological advancement, China and the Central Asian countries are exploring new models for agricultural cooperation, building on a solid foundation to unlock new growth potential. There is vast room for green agricultural production driven by technological collaboration. Platforms such as the SCO Agricultural Base and the Central Asia Agricultural Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences have been jointly established to deepen bilateral collaboration. China holds substantial advantages in agricultural science and technology cooperation, particularly in dryland farming, cultivation techniques, water-saving irrigation, saline-alkali land improvement, and pest control, which can help Central Asian countries enhance grain productivity and advance agricultural energy transition. In addition, digitalization is rapidly taking hold in Central Asia, creating enormous potential for smart agriculture. By 2025, the number of agricultural IoT devices in the region is expected to exceed 2 million, with the smart agriculture market projected to reach \$3 billion. Developing cross-border e-commerce for farm products and using big data and cloud computing to build digital platforms and applications for agricultural trade will create new opportunities for regional agricultural value chains and product flows. These efforts will not only safeguard regional food supply chains but also significantly boost agrarian incomes. From now on, strengthening agricultural cooperation between China and Central Asia will effectively improve agricultural science and technology, promote the transformation from traditional to modern agriculture, and ensure national food security. It will also facilitate the flow of scientific and technological resources and play a vital role in achieving sustainable regional development.

—Unlocking the Untapped Potential of the Cultural and Tourism Industries.

People-to-people exchanges have always been vital to China-Central Asia cooperation and form the public foundation for advancing bilateral relations. Cooperation in the tourism sector between China and Central Asian countries is entering a new phase, driven by a range of favorable factors opening up new cultural and tourism development opportunities. Policy incentives are gradually taking effect as China and the five Central Asian countries steadily move toward mutual visa exemption, further lowering barriers to travel. Countries such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are also increasing investment in tourism infrastructure and improving travel convenience to enhance their appeal to international tourists. Cross-border cooperation mechanisms are maturing. The inaugural China-Central Asia Summit called for strengthened tourism cooperation frameworks, joint development of cross-border tourism routes, and the establishment of the “China Xinjiang-Central Asia Tourism Cooperation Alliance” to promote resource integration. Both “soft connectivity” and “hard connectivity” are steadily improving. Chinese airlines are expanding routes to Central Asian countries, with cities such as Urumqi, Beijing, Xi’an, and Chengdu now operating flights to Central Asian capitals.

Meanwhile, special cultural and tourism trains targeting Central Asian markets are also being launched. Tourism cooperation between China and Central Asia is distinctive and highly complementary. Both sides share deep historical ties through the revival and prosperity of the Silk Road. They are rich in natural landscapes and unique cultural traditions, making them mutually attractive travel destinations. Innovation in cultural and tourism offerings and upgrading market demand further accelerate this trend. E-commerce and social media platforms are becoming key arenas for tourism promotion, increasingly drawing younger generations to participate in such events as international music festivals, food festivals, and cross-border shopping centers, fostering deeper people-to-people interactions.

III. Regional Cooperation Unlocks Broader Geoeconomic Advantages

Central Asia occupies a strategic core position on the Eurasian continent. Historically, it served as a hub along the ancient Silk Road, facilitating trade and cultural exchange between East and West. In the new era, regional cooperation between China and the Central Asian countries has continued to deepen through mechanisms such as the China-Central Asia cooperation framework, the BRI, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. These efforts have significantly enhanced Central Asia's geoeconomic advantages and extended their influence to surrounding regions—including the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, the Middle East, South Asia, and the Balkans—through improved connectivity, industrial coordination, and multilateral collaboration. This expanding influence is reshaping the regional economic geography and providing Central Asian countries with strategic opportunities to integrate into the global economy, injecting fresh momentum into Eurasian prosperity.

—Wider Expansion of Connectivity.

Through infrastructure development and logistics network upgrades, China-Central Asia cooperation has dramatically elevated the region's role as a transportation hub across Eurasia, extending its connectivity advantages to a broader geographic area. The launch of the China-Europe Caspian Sea Express marks an upgrade from traditional bilateral trade corridors to a multimodal transport network covering the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, and the Balkans. This transformation has positioned Central Asia as a transit hub for Chinese goods entering European and Middle Eastern markets. The commencement of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, linking Kashgar in Xinjiang to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, will not only help reduce logistics costs for Central Asian countries but also connect to logistics networks in the Middle East and South Asia—forming a corridor that links West Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia.

—Cross-Regional Coordination of Industrial Networks.

Through industrial collaboration, China-Central Asia cooperation is gradually forming an economic network that spans the Eurasian continent, delivering substantial geoeconomic dividends to Central Asian countries. In the energy sector, the construction of the China-Central

Asia natural gas pipeline and the China-Kazakhstan crude oil pipeline has not only diversified energy export channels for Central Asian countries but also facilitated technology transfer and industrial chain expansion, benefiting the Caspian and Middle Eastern regions. For example, the modernization of the Shymkent refinery in Kazakhstan has enabled the production of high-grade fuel, meeting domestic demand while also making exports to the Black Sea and Balkan countries possible via the Trans-Caspian Corridor. This extension of the energy industry chain has enhanced Central Asia's export capacity and strengthened its position in the global energy market. The rise of the digital economy and cross-border e-commerce will further expand the geographic scope of industrial coordination. For instance, high-quality agricultural products from Central Asia can now reach South Asian and Middle Eastern markets through Chinese e-commerce platforms, deepening regional integration and broadening economic opportunities.

—*The Global Significance of Geoeconomic Transformation and Upgrading*

China-Central Asia cooperation, with its expanding influence across the Eurasian continent, has elevated the global geoeconomic significance of Central Asian countries. First, this cooperation is reshaping the economic geography of Eurasia's core. Through enhanced connectivity and collaboration, Central Asian countries are transforming from traditional geopolitical "buffer zones" into strategic hubs within the global supply chain. They are poised to become logistics centers linking China, Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia, unlocking vast industrial upgrading and economic development potential.

Second, this cooperation will markedly strengthen the economic resilience and international influence of Central Asian countries. By diversifying development across sectors such as energy, agriculture, and the digital economy, Central Asian countries will not only expand their presence in global trade and investment but also reduce their dependence on single markets or resource exports. This sectoral diversification and broader global engagement, in turn, will enhance their capacity to withstand external market shocks and foster more robust and sustainable economic growth.

Finally, this cooperation will create new opportunities for more Global South countries to participate in geoeconomic collaboration. For example, developing the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor will offer countries like Turkey and Azerbaijan greater access to deepen their ties with the China-Central Asia economic zone. Pakistan and Afghanistan, in turn, stand to benefit from the expanded logistics network enabled by the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, gaining new entry points into the Central Asian market. This spillover effect will not only enhance the geoeconomic advantages of Central Asian countries but also inject fresh momentum into Eurasian connectivity and shared prosperity. It highlights the global significance of building a China-Central Asia community with a shared future.

IV. Risks and Challenges Facing Development and Security

While China-Central Asia cooperation has yielded fruitful results, it also faces multiple risks and challenges. On the development front, the region is subject to external shocks stemming from rising unilateralism and trade protectionism. In terms of security, it encounters a range of non-traditional security threats.

I. The Rise of Unilateralism and Trade Protectionism Amid a Sluggish Global Recovery Brings Further Risks

The resurgence of unilateralism and trade protectionism presents serious challenges to the economic stability of Central Asian countries and China-Central Asia cooperation. Some countries have resorted to imposing tariffs, erecting trade barriers, and enforcing technological sanctions—measures that undermine global economic stability and disrupt the normal functioning of international industrial and supply chains. Although direct trade between the five Central Asian countries and major Western economies remains limited, the spillover effects of global economic volatility should not be underestimated. Thanos Arvanitis, Deputy Director of the IMF’s Middle East and Central Asia Department, has pointed out that rising global trade tensions may slow GDP growth in Central Asia.

—Global Market Volatility May Directly Impact Central Asia’s Export-Oriented Economies, Particularly in the Energy, Mineral, and Agricultural Sectors.

If a global economic downturn leads to weakened demand for commodities, it could adversely affect Central Asian countries’ revenues from oil and cotton exports, reducing the scope for reinvestment in domestic production.

—Tariff Wars and Unilateral Sanctions Threaten the Investment Climate in Central Asia.

Some countries attempt to restrict normal trade relations through secondary sanctions and other measures. Volatility in global financial markets may pressure Central Asian currencies, and exchange rate depreciation could increase import costs and affect debt repayment capabilities—thereby indirectly weakening the region’s potential to engage in infrastructure and energy cooperation with external partners.

—Global Supply Chain Restructuring Triggered by Unilateralism Is Disrupting Central Asia’s Logistics and Trade Networks.

Connectivity projects such as the China-Europe Railway Express and the Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor have rapidly transformed Central Asia into a logistics hub across Eurasia. However, some countries are attempting to undermine this advantage by imposing technical barriers and logistical restrictions, thereby increasing the cost of logistics within China-Central Asia cooperation. These economic risks not only jeopardize Central Asia’s export and investment environment but also pose challenges to the stable operation of joint projects between China and Central Asia.

II. Persistent Non-Traditional Security Risks Must Not Be Overlooked

Central Asia continues to face multiple non-traditional security threats—including terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking and transnational crime, cybersecurity, and climate change. China and Central Asian countries must work together to address these challenges and safeguard regional security.

—Addressing Terrorism and Extremism.

Central Asia shares a border with Afghanistan, where terrorist organizations such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement remain active and interconnected. A small number of extremists have infiltrated or returned to Central Asian countries, posing serious threats to regional peace and stability. At the Sixth China-Central Asia Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in April 2025, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to regional and international security and their determination to jointly combat the “three forces” of terrorism, extremism, and separatism. China supports Central Asian countries in deepening cooperation with Afghanistan to jointly address terrorism-related security challenges and help integrate Afghanistan into regional economic cooperation—eliminating the breeding grounds of extremism.

—Combating Drug Trafficking and Safeguarding Cybersecurity.

Central Asia serves as a transit zone for cross-border drug trafficking, with numerous large-scale smuggling cases uncovered in recent years. Within existing mechanisms, such as meetings among foreign ministers and ministers of public security and internal affairs, China and Central Asian countries have repeatedly affirmed their determination to cooperate on drug control. Establishing the SCO Anti-Drug Center in Dushanbe marks a significant step forward in addressing the drug threat and strengthening intergovernmental cooperation. In terms of cybersecurity, as the digital economy grows rapidly, cybercrime in the region is on the rise. Countries such as Kazakhstan have reported incidents of data breaches and phishing attacks on e-commerce platforms, indicating that both cybersecurity infrastructure and regulatory capacities remain underdeveloped and require urgent strengthening.

—Responding to Climate Change and Environmental Threats.

Central Asian countries face long-term ecological challenges. The Aral Sea crisis has severely affected agriculture in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan due to increased desertification and soil salinization. Climate change has also intensified extreme weather events—mudslides and floods are becoming more frequent in the mountainous regions of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. At the same time, the transboundary Ili River has experienced repeated droughts in its basin. These problems call for increased investment in climate governance, ecological protection, and technology transfer, as well as joint efforts to develop the necessary infrastructure and

coordination mechanisms for cross-border water resource management, thereby enhancing the region's resilience to environmental risks.

Chapter Three: Looking Ahead—Building a Regional Community with a Shared Future

“Three years ago, we announced together that we would build a China-Central Asia community with a shared future, setting out the goal and direction of our six nations in building consensus, overcoming challenges and pursuing development. We should act on the China-Central Asia Spirit, enhance cooperation with renewed vigor and more practical measures, promote high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative, and forge ahead toward our goal of a community with a shared future for the region.”

— PRC President Xi Jinping

Building on the collective efforts over the years, China and Central Asian countries have forged a China-Central Asia Spirit of “mutual respect, mutual trust, mutual benefit, and mutual assistance for the joint pursuit of modernization through high-quality development.”

-- China and Central Asian countries practice mutual respect and treat each other as equals. All countries, big or small, are equal. We handle issues through consultation and make decisions by consensus.

-- China and Central Asian countries seek to deepen mutual trust and enhance mutual support. We firmly support each other in safeguarding independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national dignity. We do not do anything harmful to the core interests of any party.

-- China and Central Asian countries pursue mutual benefit and win-win cooperation and strive for common development. We view each other as priority partners, and share development opportunities together. We accommodate each other’s interests, and work to build a win-win and symbiotic relationship.

-- China and Central Asian countries help each other in time of need and stand together through thick and thin. We support each other in choosing development paths suitable to our respective national conditions and in taking domestic matters into our own hands. We work together to address various risks and challenges, and uphold regional security and stability.

This China-Central Asia Spirit is an important guideline for the six countries’ endeavor to carry forward friendship and cooperation from generation to generation. China and Central Asian countries should always uphold it and let it shine forever.

In May 2023, during the inaugural China-Central Asia Summit, President Xi Jinping

outlined four guiding principles for building a China-Central Asia community with a shared future: “mutual assistance, common development, universal security, and everlasting friendship.” This vision provides a clear roadmap for advancing relations between China and the Central Asian countries.

Looking forward, efforts should continue to align with the Global Development Initiative to establish a deeply complementary and mutually beneficial cooperation model, promoting shared development between China and the Central Asian countries. Guided by the Global Security Initiative, the two sides should jointly respond to both traditional and non-traditional threats to ensure common security. Under the Global Civilization Initiative, China and the Central Asian countries should actively foster a dynamic, inclusive framework for cultural exchange, enhancing mutual understanding and cultural dialogue. These efforts will collectively advance the construction of a China-Central Asia community with a shared future.

I. Mutual Assistance: Jointly Building a Regional Community with a Shared Future

The China-Central Asia community with a shared future is a regional extension of the broader vision of a community with a shared future for humanity. It marks a leap from bilateral cooperation to a regional framework for shared destiny. In response to the complex and changing international and regional landscape, China and the Central Asian countries should further deepen mutual support, enhance solidarity, strengthen political trust, and continue to elevate the quality of their relationship—setting a model for broader Eurasian and Global South cooperation.

—Deepening Political Mutual Trust.

China and the Central Asian countries should continue to rely on head-of-state diplomacy as strategic guidance, further consolidating strong working and personal ties between leaders and maintaining high-frequency, high-level exchanges to underscore the uniqueness and high level of political relations. Exchanges between the Communist Party of China and the major political parties of Central Asia should also be enhanced, from top-level political design to grassroots governance, fostering broad-based dialogue on statecraft and public administration. In parallel, multilevel cooperation platforms should be further improved. Forums, expos, and trade fairs can bridge interactions between Chinese provincial and regional governments and local governments in Central Asia.

—Mutual Support on Core Issues.

Regardless of changes in the global landscape, China and the Central Asian countries should continue providing each other with firm and unequivocal support on sovereignty, security, and development interests. In keeping with the principles of “building good-neighborly, secure, and prosperous relations,” China will steadfastly support Central Asian countries in pursuing development paths suited to their national conditions and will not seek spheres of influence in the region. In return, Central Asian countries should continue to firmly support China’s core concerns related to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet. As members of the Global South,

both sides should remain committed to upholding the authority of the United Nations and the universally recognized principles of international law and international relations and support one another's initiatives to promote regional and global peace and development.

—Improving Institutional Mechanisms.

Efforts should be made to accelerate the alignment of the BRI with the national development strategies of Central Asian countries, improving relevant systems and policies, strengthening the rule of law, and advancing comprehensive and in-depth strategic cooperation to form a diverse and complementary cooperation framework. Full use should be made of multilateral organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) to establish bilateral or multilateral mechanisms for cooperation in areas such as agriculture, poverty alleviation, counterterrorism, and energy. The smooth and orderly operation of the China-Central Asia Mechanism Secretariat should be ensured to facilitate the implementation of summit outcomes and promote the mechanism's development toward greater institutionalization.

II. Shared Development: Opening a New Chapter in Regional Prosperity

China and the Central Asian countries are all developing nations, with economic growth, livelihood improvement, and national revitalization as their shared policy priorities—and as focal points of bilateral cooperation. In the face of an increasingly complex international environment and a new “Great Game” unfolding in Central Asia, both sides should be guided by the Global Development Initiative to continue promoting high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, fostering new drivers of productivity, and upgrading traditional collaboration in trade, energy, and transportation. They should also expand into new sectors such as the digital economy, green energy, digital innovation, and public health—jointly driving regional economic transformation and upgrading and building a powerful engine of shared prosperity through new ideas and new models.

—Deepening Practical Cooperation in Agriculture and Exploring Innovative Paths.

China and Central Asian countries should continue to promote agricultural trade development, leveraging their complementary strengths to improve product matching and increase exports of high-quality farm goods to China. Modern agricultural technology demonstration zones should be promoted, and joint efforts should be encouraged to establish R&D centers, joint laboratories, and agricultural innovation parks. Cooperation should be strengthened in areas such as crop cultivation, storage, transportation, and processing, with enhanced technical exchanges and large-scale agricultural operations. Investment and cooperation in smart agriculture should be increased to raise the level of agricultural science and technology. Innovative models such as “Internet Plus Modern Agriculture” should be developed to support the international deployment of Chinese agricultural robotics, remote sensing, and big

data technologies.

—Accelerating the Green Economic Transition.

Protecting the ecological environment and advancing green, low-carbon development have become intrinsic needs of Central Asian countries. Cooperation on climate governance should be strengthened, including support for establishing regional climate monitoring networks and climate information platforms to enable timely, accurate, and comprehensive tracking of climate trends. Joint research on adaptation and mitigation strategies should be promoted. Priority should be given to the development of green energy, with enhanced technical cooperation in renewable energy sectors such as hydropower, solar, and wind. Hybrid models combining oil and gas with photovoltaics, wind, or geothermal energy should be adopted, alongside the advancement of hydrogen and energy storage technologies, to expand the scale of new energy cooperation continuously. An ecological and environmental big data platform should be built to facilitate sharing environmental information between China and Central Asian countries, supporting green trade, investment, and finance with comprehensive data services.

—Promoting Cross-Border Infrastructure Development.

The capacity of cross-border infrastructure should be enhanced by improving railway and highway connectivity within the region and upgrading integration across air, rail, and road transport systems. Logistics construction should focus on strengthening the transport network centered on the China-Europe Railway Express and improving the efficiency of multimodal transport. A comprehensive information-sharing network covering customs, logistics, and finance should be established to streamline operations between China and Central Asia. The efficiency of customs clearance at border ports should be improved through modernization, digitalization, and the adoption of intelligent systems.

—Empowering Technological Innovation.

China and Central Asian countries should focus on key innovation areas by encouraging joint research projects among universities, research institutions, and enterprises. These projects should address bottlenecks and challenges in practical implementation and improve the conversion of scientific achievements into applied technologies. Leveraging China's capital, technology, and management strengths, the two sides should establish joint science and technology investment funds to support innovation-driven small and medium-sized enterprises, reducing financing costs. Further collaboration in smart manufacturing and new infrastructure should be pursued, integrating advanced technologies such as AI, IoT, and big data analytics into infrastructure projects. This endeavor would foster a regional digital partnership, enabling the digital and intelligent transformation of traditional cooperation projects, spurring the development of emerging industries in Central Asia, and unlocking new potential for science and technology cooperation between both sides.

III. Universal Security: Building a New Security Shield for Shared Safety

Today's world is marked by frequent local conflicts and unrest, rampant hegemonism and power politics, and a complex overlay of traditional and non-traditional security threats. The international and regional security landscape is undergoing profound and complicated changes. Under these new circumstances, China and the Central Asian countries should be guided by the Global Security Initiative and uphold a security vision that is common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable. The focus should be on advancing regional security governance and building a community of shared security.

—Strengthening the Awareness of a Shared Security Community.

Due to geopolitical proximity, China and the Central Asian countries share a wide range of common security concerns and interests. Common challenges such as terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, transnational crime, and regional armed conflict necessitate deeper cooperation to ensure collective security. Promoting a “security community” helps foster a proper understanding of regional security issues and lays the foundation for further security collaboration.

—Integrating Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Cooperation.

China and Central Asian countries must maintain zero tolerance for the “three forces” of terrorism, extremism, and separatism, intensify joint efforts to counter radicalization and prevent the spread of extremist ideologies by building a strong firewall against international extremist forces. They should support one another in safeguarding political security and social stability and resolutely oppose any external interference in domestic affairs or attempts to incite “color revolutions” under any pretext—striving to escape the region's security dilemmas. Closer coordination and communication are essential for sharing intelligence and jointly combating transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, illegal immigration, money laundering, arms and explosives smuggling, cybercrime, and financial and economic crimes. At the same time, cooperation should be expanded to address non-traditional security issues in areas including climate change, cybersecurity, biosecurity, finance, food security, energy, digital governance, and emerging technologies.

—Advancing Afghanistan's Security and Reconstruction Process.

Afghanistan shares close ties with the Central Asian region, and developments there can significantly affect the security and stability of its neighbors. Since the Taliban's return to power, how to manage Afghanistan's reconstruction and reintegration into the international community has become a pressing concern. To mitigate security risks originating from Afghanistan, China and the Central Asian countries can leverage the “Shanghai Cooperation Organization-Afghanistan Contact Group” as a platform to actively participate in Afghanistan's security rebuilding. By flexibly applying the principles of “consensus-based consultation” and “non-interference in internal affairs,” they can consider adopting a policy of constructive engagement.

This approach would establish a multilateral cooperation mechanism to coordinate interests, manage differences, and collectively reinforce a regional security shield around Afghanistan. The focus should be on preventing external forces from disrupting Afghanistan's peace process, thereby contributing to establishing a fair and rational new regional security order.

IV. Everlasting Friendship: Composing a New Chapter of Heart-to-Heart Connectivity

For centuries, China and the diverse peoples of Central Asia have jointly contributed to the rise and flourishing of the Silk Road, making historic contributions to the exchange and integration of world civilizations. Looking to the future, the two sides should uphold the values advocated in the Global Civilization Initiative, embracing a view of civilization that emphasizes equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness. By fostering intercultural understanding and mutual respect, China and Central Asian countries can serve as a model of international cooperation among civilizations, races, and faiths and build a strong foundation of people-to-people friendship across generations as good neighbors, good friends, good partners, and good brothers.

—Promoting Cooperation in Education.

Efforts should be made to innovate joint training models in higher education, deepen mutual recognition of academic degrees and qualifications, and build a rich and diversified framework for academic cooperation through faculty exchanges, joint research, and scholarly dialogue. Both sides should expand student exchange programs, continue offering government scholarships, and support more young people from Central Asia pursuing advanced studies in China. Institutions such as Confucius Institutes and initiatives like International Chinese Language Day and the Chinese Bridge competition should be leveraged to promote Chinese language learning and sustain interest in Chinese culture throughout Central Asia. Vocational education brands such as the Luban Workshops should be further developed and tailored to the industrial needs of each Central Asian country. This approach—integrating education with production and linking industry with teaching—will help cultivate skilled professionals to serve the real economy of Central Asia.

—Enhancing Cultural and Artistic Exchanges.

The two sides should fully use networks such as the Silk Road International Theater Alliance, Museum Alliance, Art Festival Alliance, Library Alliance, and Art Museum Alliance to support cultural festivals, film screenings, art exhibitions, and other events. By exploring shared values, traditions, and customs, they can foster a culturally inclusive and harmonious environment and tell compelling stories about China and Central Asia. Given its unique advantages, the film and television sector should deepen its understanding of Central Asian audience preferences, cultural characteristics, and media habits to ensure effective localization and broadcasting of content. Publishing exchanges should also be strengthened, with the

translation and publication of influential works from both sides in history, literature, language, politics, and law to increase mutual interest and understanding among the people.

—Advancing In-Depth Tourism Cooperation.

Tourism serves as an essential channel for cultural exchange and mutual understanding. China and Central Asia should further explore and develop their rich cultural tourism resources, innovating tourism products with distinctive ethnic, cultural, and regional characteristics and enriching tourism routes. Bilateral and multilateral initiatives such as cross-border tourism cooperation zones and border tourism demonstration areas should be promoted, along with the creation of themed train routes along the Belt and Road and boutique self-driving tours. Smart tourism should be developed to improve customs clearance and payment systems, and negotiations on tourism visa facilitation—especially for group visas—should be accelerated. These measures will enhance travel convenience and strengthen cross-border payment systems, fostering more profound and practical tourism cooperation.

Conclusion

At a time when unprecedented global changes are accelerating, cooperation between China and the Central Asian countries has become a key pillar of peace, stability, and prosperity across the Eurasian continent. Looking back, the thousand-year interconnection fostered by the Silk Road laid a solid foundation of cultural and economic ties between the two sides. Today, in the new era, achievements in trade, infrastructure, energy, green development, capacity building, cultural exchange, and security cooperation reflect the firm resolve of China and Central Asian countries to support each other and pursue shared development. Looking ahead, China-Central Asia cooperation stands at a new historical starting point, with the goal of building a closer community with a shared future, carrying the broader vision of regional prosperity and global development.

The success of China-Central Asia cooperation stems from deep synergy based on strategic mutual trust, shared interests, and resonant values. This partnership has yielded not only mutual economic benefits but also multidimensional coordination in regional security and socio-cultural spheres. Whether it is the railways crossing the Tianshan Mountains, the green energy projects lighting up Central Asia, or the cultural bonds flowing between peoples, all are vivid expressions of the shared future envisioned by both sides. This regional cooperation model breaks away from the zero-sum logic of traditional geopolitics and offers the world a “China-Central Asia approach” to global governance.

Standing at this new historical high point, China and the Central Asian countries will work together with greater openness and firmer steps, carry forward the China-Central Asia Spirit, pursue the goal of a community with a shared future to write a new chapter of regional prosperity. Their collaboration will inject greater certainty and positive energy into a turbulent world, light a beacon of hope on humanity’s path to a better future, and make greater contributions to building a community with a shared future for humanity.

Editorial Note and Acknowledgments

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