WINNING HEARTS, BUILDING INFLUENCE:

CHINA'S EXPANDING SOFT POWER IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA



2026

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Introduction

The Concept of "Soft Power": China's Growing Influence

In contemporary global politics, "soft power" is one of the leading strategies used by major powers to exert influence over the foreign policy of smaller countries. In this context, the People's Republic of China is considered one of the growing actors. According to the 2026 "Global Soft Power Index" by the international consulting organization Brand Finance, China ranks second among UN member states. According to Brand Finance's assessment, China's "soft power" index (73.5/100) falls only slightly behind the corresponding figure for the US (74.9/100).



According to the concept of American political scientist Joseph Nye, "soft power" is "the second face of power," which is based not on coercion, but on winning the goodwill of another state and thereby achieving the desired outcome. Accordingly, the main objective of "soft power" is to foster a positive perception and image of the state within the target country's society. From this perspective, China's "soft power" comprises three main components: culture, political values, and foreign policy.

According to expert estimates, the Chinese Communist Party spends approximately $10 billion annually to develop its "soft power" instruments and strengthen its international influence. Recent trends indicate that China is emerging as a powerful hub of global "soft power." However, much like other areas of its foreign policy, China's "soft power" model differs fundamentally from the Western approach and is rooted in the ideological foundations of the Communist Party. One of the distinguishing features of China's "soft power" is its revisionist approach: Beijing seeks to foster positive perceptions of China in target countries while shaping an alternative vision to the Western development model.

"Soft Power" in China's Strategic Documents

In March 2026, China's National People's Congress approved the "15th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development." The document consists of 11 chapters, of which Chapter 10, titled "Promoting Cultural Innovation and Creativity of the Chinese Nation and Developing a Thriving Socialist Culture," defines priorities for the development of the cultural sector—one of the key dimensions of public diplomacy. Specifically:

- ➡ Promoting socialist values and putting them into practice;
- ➡ Developing and supporting cultural initiatives;
- ➡ Accelerating the development of the cultural industry;
- ➡ Enhancing international communication and the influence of Chinese civilization.

According to the plan, the Chinese Communist Party aims to foster a "socialist culture for a new era" characterized by distinct "Chinese characteristics," "strong ideological leadership," "spiritual unity," "attractiveness of values," and "international influence."

> "We will strengthen cultural confidence [...] the cohesion of the Chinese nation and the influence of Chinese culture will increase significantly, as a result of which China's cultural soft power will continue to grow."
>
> 15th Five-Year Plan, p. 14

The section titled "Improving the Communication and Influence of Chinese Civilization" notes that the Communist Party will accelerate the development of discourse and narrative systems about China, enhance the effectiveness of international communication, expand cultural exchanges and cooperation with other countries, and present China's "trustworthy, lovable, and respectable image" to the world (15th Five-Year Plan, p. 11).

To achieve these goals, the plan defines two main directions: establishing an effective international communication system, and deepening exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

1. To develop the international communication system, the Party plans to strengthen institutional mechanisms for international communication. These include introducing innovations in communication platforms and methods, as well as expanding communication networks abroad. According to the plan, relevant organizations will be supported in expanding their operations on the international stage to create and distribute television programs, literature, video games, films, animation, and art projects for global audiences.

2. Deepening people-to-people and cultural relations serves as an instrument to foster dialogue and cultural exchange between civilizations. The Party aims to grow international interest in Chinese culture. Accordingly, plans include organizing international events such as the Conference on Dialogue of Global Civilizations and the Liangzhu Forum. Furthermore, the plan outlines the implementation of "brand activities" such as "Understanding China" and the "Orchid Award," as well as support for Chinese cultural, tourism, and film festivals, exhibitions, and other cultural events.

To foster the development of socialist culture, the document additionally sets two primary tasks for the Communist Party:

1. Dissemination of "the Party's innovative theories": This component involves translating and distributing Party materials abroad, with particular emphasis placed on popularizing Xi Jinping's political vision and ideological concepts.

2. Creation of literary and artistic works: This component provides for the production of documentaries, animated works, television programs, and other cultural products that embody China's cultural and ideological narratives.

An analysis of the People's Republic of China's "15th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development" demonstrates that the Communist Party views its cultural development strategy as an integral part of the concept of "soft power." According to the plan, deepening cultural cooperation with other states and civilizations is intended to bolster China's international authority and influence. At the same time, the cultural industry is treated not merely as a vehicle for the country's cultural development, but as a crucial mechanism for promoting socialist values and the Communist Party's political vision both domestically and internationally. Consequently, the document indicates that China's "soft power" strategy is explicitly state-centric and primarily serves to execute the foreign-policy and ideological objectives of the Communist Party.

China's "Soft Power" Instruments

In practice, the strategic priorities of the Chinese Communist Party are executed through a diverse set of instruments, and the Party has significantly activated its "soft power" policy, particularly since the second half of the 2010s. Below is an overview of the main instruments China utilizes within the framework of its "soft power" strategy.

According to Joseph Nye's assessment, educational initiatives represent one of the most effective mechanisms of China's "soft power." In this regard, a special role is assigned to Confucius Institutes, which serve as one of the primary tools for promoting the Chinese language and culture globally. The first Confucius Institute opened in 2004 in Seoul, South Korea, and 20 years later, as of 2024, more than 500 Confucius Institutes are operating in over 150 countries worldwide. Functioning as non-profit organizations, the institutes are affiliated with China's Ministry of Education and carry out various educational programs, including in Chinese language, culture, cuisine, and calligraphy. Confucius Institutes receive at least $100,000 annually and actively cooperate with local universities, schools, and colleges in host countries.

2004

First Confucius Institute opened

Seoul, South Korea

2024

20 years later

Global expansion

500+

Confucius Institutes

Worldwide

150+

Countries

Worldwide

REPORTED ANNUAL FUNDING

$100,000+

At least $100,000 annually per institute, according to the cited assessment.

Confucius Institutes frequently face criticism due to a lack of transparency, financial reliance on Beijing, and censorship practices regarding issues sensitive to the Communist Party. For this reason, in recent years, several universities across America[1] and Europe have decided to close[2] or restructure their operations.[3]

A second effective mechanism of China's "soft power" strategy is considered to be "scientific diplomacy," which encompasses government scholarships for international students, inter-university cooperation, joint scientific initiatives, exchange programs, and other educational and research activities.

In recent years, China has become a preferred destination for international students. In 2024-25, approximately 380,000 students from 191 countries were educated in the country. Most studied in the People's Republic on a self-funded basis; however, the China Scholarship Council also provided state funding within quotas allocated for both Chinese and foreign students.

Although China is emerging as an important hub for international education, the majority of education experts remain skeptical toward the People's Republic's educational system. They assess that China's education model is oriented not toward developing critical thinking, but toward mechanical, rote memorization. Furthermore, educational spaces remain under strict Communist Party control and censorship, significantly constraining academic freedom and the opportunity to conduct independent research.

Beyond education, the spectrum of China's "soft power" instruments is quite broad, encompassing party diplomacy, media, healthcare, sports, arts, and other fields.

Party Diplomacy

The Chinese Communist Party actively cooperates with political parties in foreign states. The primary goal of party diplomacy is to cultivate goodwill among political elites in target countries and foster long-term cooperation. As of 2025, the CCP maintains official relations with over 600 political parties and organizations in more than 160 countries.

International Media

China pays special attention to expanding its influence in the international information space. To this end, Beijing actively develops a network of foreign-language media outlets, strengthening its capacity to shape and disseminate international narratives about China. The country's main news agency, Xinhua News Agency, has over 170 bureaus globally and publishes an average of more than 15,000 items daily in 11 languages. China Daily and The Global Times serve a similar function, offering English-language content to international audiences. Additionally, state broadcaster CCTV broadcasts in six languages.

1. During US President Donald Trump's first administration, control over Confucius Institutes was tightened due to close ties with China. In 2020, the State Department designated one Washington-based Confucius Institute as a PRC "foreign mission." Amid pressure from the Trump administration, more than 100 institutes closed after 2019. As of May 2026, only 17 Confucius Institutes operate in America.

2. Similar decisions were made in the following countries: in Sweden, at Stockholm University in 2025; in Germany, at various universities in 2020-23; in Australia - in 2025.

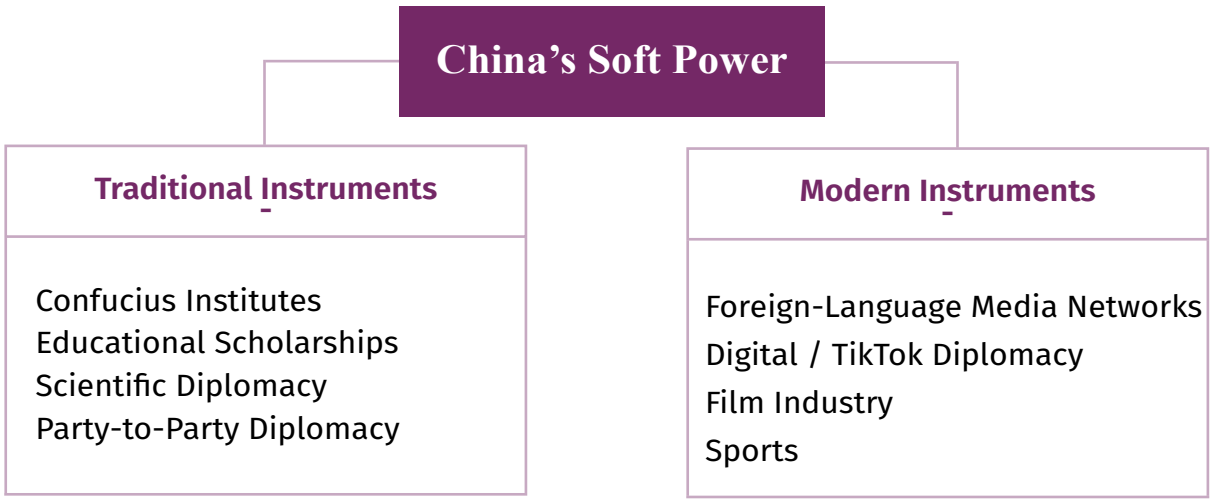
3. In 2025, six Australian universities decided to close Confucius Institutes. The decision followed criticism from the Australian government that Confucius Institutes were being used to spread Beijing's propaganda and monitor Chinese students.

China's "soft power" strategy also encompasses digital space. In this regard, the social platform TikTok is considered a critical instrument for the People's Republic. In recent years, TikTok has repeatedly drawn criticism for censoring politically sensitive content. Although much of the content on TikTok is entertainment-oriented, experts evaluate that the platform exerts significant influence on shaping perspectives and perceptions, particularly among youth.

Film Industry and Sports

The film industry and sports are relatively new yet rapidly developing avenues of China's "soft power." The Chinese film industry plays an important role in building a positive international image for the country, while sports are viewed as a tool to enhance national prestige and international influence. China's "soft power" strategy aims to achieve global leading state status in selected sports. Notable here is the "2015 Football Reform Plan," which aims to establish China as a global football "superpower" by 2050.

Thus, China's "soft power" strategy combines a diverse array of instruments. While its main pillars were initially educational, cultural, and scientific programs, today it has expanded significantly to encompass both traditional and modern technological instruments. The integrated use of party diplomacy, international media, digital platforms, film, and sports indicates that China is systematically adapting its "soft power" policy to the demands of the digital age to strengthen its international influence.



Research Structure and Methodology

China's growing global ambitions are particularly visible in its neighboring regions. While Beijing's foreign policy activity was initially concentrated mainly in Central Asia, its interest in the South Caucasus has grown significantly in recent years. This trend indicates that China is gradually expanding the geographic reach of its economic, political, and "soft power" instruments.

This report aims to

examine China's "soft power" instruments and their impact in the countries of Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

Methodology

Comparative Case Study

Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan.

Sources

primary and secondary

Publicly available materials from state agencies and Chinese diplomatic missions
desk research examined news reports, analytical articles, and other

materials published by Georgian, Azerbaijani, Tajik,
English, and Chinese media outlets.

The main body of the document consists of three chapters presenting research findings for individual countries. The research focused on the following aspects of China's "soft power" in the target countries:

- ➡ Forms and key directions of cultural, scientific, and educational cooperation in interstate relations;
- ➡ Dynamics and formats of cooperation between educational institutions;
- ➡ Mechanisms for promoting Chinese language and culture;
- ➡ Widespread key perceptions and narratives regarding China;
- ➡ The scope and directions of media cooperation.

In the concluding section of the report, the cases of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan are analyzed from a comparative perspective, allowing for the identification of general trends in China's "soft power" instruments and variations across countries.

China's Regional Influence

China in Central Asia



China's growing global and foreign policy ambitions are reflected primarily in geographically adjacent regions, including Central Asia. Due to its Soviet legacy, Central Asia was traditionally considered Russia's sphere of influence. However, following Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the regional balance of power shifted significantly, leading to a gradual weakening of the Kremlin's dominant position.

Prior to the war in Ukraine, Russia's and China's regional policies were largely complementary, operating on a division of roles. Russia was viewed as the main guarantor of Central Asian security and military-political influence, while China was emerging as the leading force for regional economic and infrastructural integration. The post-2022 geopolitical landscape accelerated this redistribution of power in Central Asia, creating new opportunities for China to expand its influence. A major indication of this was China becoming Central Asia's largest trading partner in 2023. That same year, China hosted the China-Central Asia Summit, marking a turning point in Beijing's regional strategy. Previously, China engaged with regional countries through multilateral platforms—primarily the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which included Russia. However, the 2023 China-Central Asia Summit represented a new benchmark, clearly reflecting a trend of diminishing Russian influence and growing Chinese prominence in the region.

The impact of China's growing influence has been particularly evident in Tajikistan, the region's poorest country. In 2025, amid declining Kremlin influence, China became Dushanbe's largest trading partner, investor, and creditor. Beijing's investments are heavily concentrated on infrastructure projects. Notably, new buildings for Tajikistan's Parliament and Ministry Cabinet were constructed through a $230 million Chinese project. A key "detail" of these projects is that they were a grant gift from the Chinese people to the Tajik state. Such large-scale projects demonstrate how China leverages financial power to cultivate long-term relationships with local political elites, sharply strengthening its standing in the region.

CHINA–TAJIKISTAN RELATIONS · 2025

$230 MILLION

A gift from the Chinese people to the Tajik state



Parliament building



Cabinet building

Two major government buildings constructed through a Chinese-funded project.

In parallel with growing economic interests in Tajikistan, China has also activated its "soft power" instruments. Official Beijing uses socio-cultural mechanisms to bolster its reputation and earn public goodwill in the country. "Soft power" is viewed as a key mechanism to mitigate potential public discontent or resistance triggered by its economic footprint and expanding presence. Consequently, alongside Tajikistan's growing economic dependency on China, Beijing's "soft power" instruments play an increasingly vital role in complementing its economic leverage.

China in the South Caucasus



Traditionally, the South Caucasus represented a peripheral region for China, with relatively low-intensity economic and political ties. However, as in Central Asia, the post-Ukraine war geopolitical landscape presented Beijing with new opportunities in the South Caucasus. Specifically, amid sanctions against Russia, traditional East-West trade routes were disrupted. Due to the war, the Northern Corridor lost its reliability and function. As a result, interest increased in the Middle Corridor—the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route—connecting China to Europe via Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

Since 2022, China's growing interest in the South Caucasus was immediately reflected in deepened diplomatic and political relations across the region. Within three years of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Beijing signed strategic partnership agreements with all three regional states and accelerated economic cooperation, initiating infrastructure, transport, and energy projects. Unsurprisingly, China's expanding interest was most pronounced in initiatives undertaken in Georgia and Azerbaijan.

China's increased focus on the region was also reflected in the frequency of "soft power" operations. Weekly monitoring reports by Civic IDEA on Chinese activities in the South Caucasus show a steady increase in scientific, educational, and cultural cooperation between China and regional states, particularly Azerbaijan and Georgia. This trend underscores that Beijing is deploying "soft power" tools with growing frequency alongside economic and political mechanisms to consolidate its regional influence.

China's "Soft Power" Operations in Georgia



Georgia-China Strategic Partnership: Cooperation in Culture, Education, and Science

On July 31, 2023, the declaration of the Georgia-China Strategic Partnership marked a new chapter in the history of diplomatic and political relations between the two nations. The document consists of four sections covering political, economic, people-to-people, and cultural relations, as well as areas of international cooperation. The third section places special emphasis on deepening cooperation in science, technology, culture, tourism, healthcare, sports, cinema, media, and public diplomacy.

Following the announcement of the strategic partnership, cooperation assumed a more institutionalized character, reflected in an increased frequency of official visits, high-level meetings, and signed agreements. In 2024–2025, official visits to China were conducted by representatives from Georgia's Ministry of Education, Science and Youth, the Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Tbilisi City Hall, the Culture Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, and the Ministry of Culture. Concurrently, Chinese Ambassador to Georgia Zhou Qian (2022–2026) held regular meetings with the Georgian Minister of Education, Science and Youth and representatives of the Georgian Parliament. The agenda of these meetings primarily focused on further deepening the strategic partnership, including expanding cooperation in education, science, and culture.

Party diplomacy plays an increasingly prominent role in Georgia-China relations. In 2024–2025, a Georgian Dream delegation paid two official visits to the People's Republic. Meetings were held with representatives of the International Department of the CCP Central Committee, the National People's Congress, various municipal governments, and ministries. Below is a brief chronology of meetings and visits between official figures from both countries in 2024-2025:

Chronology of Official Meetings (2024–2025)

2024

- **January 14–20:** A Georgian Dream delegation, led by party chairman Irakli Kobakhidze (2021–2024), visited the People's Republic of China.
- **January 16:** Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Garibashvili (2021–2024) met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).
- **February 22:** Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).
- **April 14–17:** Chen Zhou, Vice Minister of the International Department of the CCP Central Committee, visited Georgia.
- **April 11:** Minister of Education, Science and Youth Giorgi Amilakhvari (2023–2024) met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian.
- **July 19:** Minister of Foreign Affairs Maka Botchorishvili met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).

August 13: Chairman of the Parliamentary Sports Committee Irakli Medzmariashvili met with Acting Chinese Ambassador Xu Haicheng.

September 11–13: First Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development Levan Davitashvili (2022–2025) paid a working visit to China.

December 6: Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).

December 17: Minister of Foreign Affairs Maka Botchorishvili met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).

2025

January 10: Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).

February 7: Minister of Education, Science and Youth Aleksandre Tsuladze (2024–2025) met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).

March 22: Minister of Education, Science and Youth Aleksandre Tsuladze (2024–2025) met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian.

May 28: Minister of Education, Science and Youth Aleksandre Tsuladze (2024–2025) visited China.

June 4: Chairman of the State Agency for Religious Issues Zaza Vashakmadze met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).

July 27: A Georgian Dream parliamentary delegation visited the People's Republic of China.

August 6: Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).

September 26: Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).

October 13: Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).

November 4: Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang.

November 14–19: Minister of Education, Science and Youth Givi Mikanadze visited China.

November 25: Minister of Education, Science and Youth Givi Mikanadze met with Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian (2022–2026).

The position of the ruling party toward the People's Republic of China is particularly evident through the analysis of its official political discourse. Alongside the deepening of ties between "Georgian Dream" and the Chinese Communist Party, public statements by political elites have increasingly featured positive assessments and emotional language toward China. For example, on November 5, 2025, in an interview with Chinese state television channel CGTN, Irakli Kobakhidze made numerous praiseful statements regarding the People's Republic of China:

“

“Strengthening partnership with China is a main foreign policy priority for us [...] I would say that China is the only peaceful superpower in the modern world, as proven by recent decades of history, and everyone should appreciate this very important role [...]. China is a role model for modernization, progress, and economic development. China is also a fair player in global politics.”



During the interview, Kobakhidze expressed support for the four global initiatives proposed by China’s president. He also positively evaluated its development model and economic policy. Kobakhidze described China’s 15th Five-Year Development Plan as “exemplary” and voiced the desire for Georgia to “follow” China’s experience:

“It is very impressive how China is developing economically, and the numbers show everything... the growth and progress are simply dramatic.

China is also an exemplary model in terms of strategic planning... and it is thanks to strategic visions that you have achieved such high progress in recent years. Therefore, of course, we very much want to follow the experience that China has in strategic planning.”

Such views expressed in interviews with Chinese media are not an exception. Recently, presenting China as an “exemplary” and “model” actor has become an integral component of “Georgian Dream’s” discourse. Kobakhidze himself stands out for pro-Chinese messaging. Speaking in September 2025 at an event celebrating the 76th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China and the 80th anniversary of victory in World War II, Kobakhidze stated:

“Today, China is exemplary for all civilized nations as a state focused on advancement, modernization, and development, and as a force strengthening global peace.”

“Georgian Dream’s” interest in the Chinese Communist Party is not confined to supportive discourse. Ivanishvili’s party declares deepening cooperation with China across all sectors as a policy priority. Notable in this regard was a December 4, 2025 meeting between Chinese Ambassador to Georgia Zhou Qian and the Georgia-China Friendship Group of the Parliament of Georgia.[4] The Ambassador emphasized China’s readiness to share governance experience with Georgia. In turn, First Deputy Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia Giorgi Volski, who also serves as the Chairman of the Georgia-China Friendship Group, stated that the Georgia-China strategic partnership is developing on the basis of mutual respect and trust, with friendship between the two peoples deepening daily:

4. The Georgia-China Friendship Group of the Parliament of Georgia has been functioning in Georgia for years. The group was established under the joint statement on developing friendship and cooperation between the People’s Republic of China and Georgia signed in 2006.

“The Parliament of Georgia hopes to strengthen high-level and all-level cooperation with China.”

Giorgi Volski, First Deputy Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia,

04.12.2025.



Enthusiasm and a desire to strengthen partnership with China are also evident in the field of education. In November 2025, in an interview with China Daily, Minister Mikanadze noted that interest in the Chinese language is growing in Georgia and that the goal of the Georgian government is to make Chinese as popular as English:

“Learning the Chinese language is becoming increasingly popular among the younger generation. Therefore, we have decided to make the Chinese language a second language in schools [...] In my country, after native Georgian, the most popular language is English.

We aim and plan in the coming years, with the support of our Chinese partners and friends, for the Chinese language to reach the level of English in terms of popularity.”

Minister of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia Givi Mikanadze.

China Daily, 15.11.2025.



Thus, the analysis of the official discourse of “Georgian Dream” and state institution representatives demonstrates that public statements clearly prioritize the importance of cooperation with China and the necessity of its further deepening, characterized by pro-Chinese narratives. Ruling party representatives express readiness to expand bilateral cooperation and draw upon China’s experience across various sectors, including education, science, and culture. In turn, the existence of political will for intensive cooperation with the People’s Republic creates a favorable environment for China’s “soft power” operations within the country.

Promoting China in Georgian Society

Deepening the strategic partnership with China represents a declared foreign policy priority for "Georgian Dream." Parallel to strengthening bilateral ties, ruling party representatives contribute to cultivating positive perceptions of China within society. This trend is evident both in statements by "Georgian Dream" members and in individual projects aimed at raising awareness regarding China-Georgia relations. In this direction, the ruling party actively supports the creation of audiovisual materials about China.

During the study period (2024–2025), official figures presented three distinctly pro-Chinese propaganda documentary films to the Georgian audience. Below is a brief overview of these films:

"A Third of a Century - Georgia-China"

In October 2024, organized by the Parliament of Georgia and the Embassy of China, the film premiere directed by "Georgian Dream" MP Irakli Mezurnishvili took place. The event was attended by representatives of Georgia's executive and legislative branches. At the event, Irakli Kobakhidze spoke about the high level of development in Georgia-China relations.

"A Third of a Century - Georgia-China" reviews various facets of Georgian-Chinese relations, including political-diplomatic ties, economic, and cultural cooperation. The film's narrative indicates that its main objective is to portray China as a "reliable partner" and to strengthen pro-Chinese sentiments among the Georgian audience.

The film features Chinese Ambassador to Georgia Zhou Qian (2022–2026), "Georgian Dream" Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Georgia to China Paata Kalandadze, and First Deputy Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia Giorgi Volski. Against the backdrop of footage shot in China, they discuss the importance of cooperation with Beijing, as well as the growth of tourism, trade, and Chinese investment in Georgia.

"I Love Harbin, We Are All Harbiners"

In December 2025, the Embassy of China in Georgia released a documentary film jointly produced by the Foreign Affairs Office of the Harbin Municipal Government and the Harbin Broadcasting and Television Station: "I Love Harbin, We Are All Harbiners." The film focuses on Georgians living in Harbin during the 19th and 20th centuries.

In September 2025, Vakhtang Lomjaria, Head of the Municipal Department for Economic Development of Tbilisi City Hall, hosted the Harbin delegation that arrived in Tbilisi to shoot the film. During the meeting, the parties discussed historical ties between Harbin and Georgia. Information released by Tbilisi City Hall regarding the meeting notes that Chinese and Georgian documentarians participated in producing the film, examining materials preserved in Georgian sources on the Georgian diaspora living in Harbin as well as the personal family archives of Harbin Georgians.

When discussing bilateral relations, Chinese officials frequently emphasize historical connections. The aforementioned documentary reflects this approach. The film's narrative begins

with the history of the development of tea culture in Georgia by the Chinese specialist Liu, and concludes with a description of modern relations. Particular attention is paid to the chronicles of Georgians residing in Harbin during the 19th and 20th centuries. Harbin is portrayed as an advanced Chinese city possessing deep historical ties with Georgia.

"Culture Will Save the World"

In early 2026, another documentary film produced with the funding and support of the Ministry of Culture of Georgia was released: "Culture Will Save the World." According to public information, the film aims to showcase Georgia's role in promoting regional and global peace. The central figure of the film remains Chinese Ambassador to Georgia Zhou Qian (2022–2026); Professor Tamar Tsintsadze, President of the Georgia-China Friendship Association,[5] and MP Vladimer Bojadze also speak at length. However, this time the interviewees also include Izhak Moshe, President of the Georgia-Israel Chamber of Commerce.

Despite the film's title, which suggests a focus on the role of culture as a phenomenon connecting nations, in reality, it primarily serves to highlight Georgia-China relations. While the issue of Georgia-Israel relations is allocated merely 3 minutes, the Chinese Ambassador speaks for 11 minutes and 40 seconds on China-Georgia relations, Xi Jinping's global initiatives, and China's role. Consequently, what emerged was another propaganda piece regarding China's global role, this time funded by Georgian taxpayers.

In the film, the Chinese Ambassador's interview transcends the scope of Georgia-China cultural ties to cover bilateral economic relations, tourism, and educational links. Toward the end of the interview, Zhou Qian focuses on China's visions of international relations and geopolitical confrontations. According to him, the solution for humanity in the modern world lies in Xi Jinping's global initiatives. Furthermore, Qian vaguely points to hegemonism and the inadmissibility of imposing civilizational values on others or driving ideological confrontations. Such narrative is part of the People's Republic's official discourse and is primarily directed against the West.

Notably, the film concludes with the following words from "Georgian Dream" MP Vladimer Bojadze:

> "Partnership with China, along with our other traditional friendly states, is important for us in order to further deepen political as well as economic relations."



The film's premiere, held on February 25, 2026, was attended by representatives of the Parliament of Georgia, the Ministry of Culture, the National Film Center, the Georgia-China Friendship Association, and the diplomatic corps. Speaking at the event, Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian stated that China stands ready to cooperate with Georgia within the framework of the "Global Civilization Initiative."

5. The Georgia-China Friendship Society is a non-entrepreneurial legal entity founded on March 12, 2010. The organization's director is Tamar Tsintsadze, and its co-founders are Giorgi Kuchava and Emilia Alaverdov.

Publications and Articles on China

In addition to documentary films, the quantity of publications and other written materials published about China has increased. A portion of such initiatives is executed with the direct support of the Embassy of China in Georgia. For instance, in 2025, the Chinese Embassy in Georgia organized an essay contest titled "Me and My Chinese Story." The winner of the contest was Natalia Makhviladze, a TV presenter for the government-aligned television channel Imedi. Interestingly, participants in the contest also included employees of various ministries and state entities, including the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Khashuri Municipality City Hall, the Ministry of Economy, and the National Tourism Agency. This circumstance indicates that participation in activities organized by the Chinese Embassy is not limited to media representatives, as public sector personnel are also actively engaged.

Second place in the contest was awarded to the book My Silk Road to China, authored by Tamar Tsintsadze, President of the Georgia-China Friendship Association. Notably, on July 9, 2025, organized by the Georgia-China Friendship Association, a presentation of the book took place. The event was attended by the Chinese Ambassador, Chairman of the Georgia-China "Silk Road" Cultural Center Liu Guangwen, and researcher Liana Jervalidze. Chinese Ambassador Zhou Qian delivered a speech at the event, noting that the book would strengthen knowledge about China within Georgian society as well as friendship between the two nations. In the book, the author conveys her impressions regarding trips to individual Chinese cities, the country's historical and cultural landmarks, and Chinese customs and traditions. According to the Ambassador, the book will leave a "brilliant mark" in the history of relations between the two countries.

During the research period, it also became evident that the Chinese Embassy is increasingly active in disseminating written materials within the Georgian media space. In 2024–2025 alone, six sponsored articles authored by the Chinese Ambassador to Georgia were published. These publications served to present China's perspectives on international politics, as well as the advantages of China's development model. The articles also contained critical messages directed toward the West, particularly the US.

Thus, the trend of an increasing volume of "sponsored" pro-Chinese audiovisual and written materials produced in the Georgian media space with the support of Chinese or Georgian official agencies demonstrates that Beijing's "soft **power**" instruments in Georgia are being deployed with growing frequency for active communication with the public. Such activities serve, on the one hand, to spread positive perceptions of China and, on the other hand, to reinforce China-related narratives within the public sphere.

Chinese Language Instruction in Georgia

Beijing's "soft power" operations in Georgia originated precisely with the promotion of Chinese language and culture. In the 2010s, the Confucius Institute served as the primary actor facilitating Chinese-Georgian educational and cultural links. Recently, however, Chinese language instruction has expanded into university and school settings.

On July 31, 2023, in Beijing, the Ministries of Education of Georgia and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding on "Joint Chinese Language Teaching in General Educational Institutions of Georgia." The document establishes key directions and concrete measures that the parties will implement to teach and promote Chinese in Georgia's general educational and higher education institutions.

Under the memorandum, the Chinese side commits to sending Chinese language teachers to Georgia, as well as providing their compensation, allowances, and international travel expenses. Additionally, the document provides for cooperation in developing Chinese language textbooks and instructional materials, along with student and academic exchange programs.

Although official agencies do not publish progress reports on the implementation phases or outcomes of this memorandum, publicly available information indicates that Chinese teachers are actively involved in Chinese language instruction in Georgia. For instance, on July 8, 2025, Tbilisi Public School No. 102 published a video in which school representatives bid farewell to Chinese language teacher Meng Kong.

Notably, in accordance with the National Curriculum, the first foreign language in Georgian schools is English, which is taught from grades 1 through 12. Instruction in a second foreign language begins in the 5th grade and encompasses languages such as French, German, Italian, Turkish, Russian, and others. The student/parent selects the second foreign language according to preference. Pursuant to the September 4, 2026 order of the Minister of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia, the standard for Chinese as a second foreign language has been approved. Accordingly, schools with the necessary resources offer Chinese language courses to students from Grade 5 onward. As of 2026, Chinese language classes are taught in nine public schools.

Confucius Institutes

Beyond the cooperation between the two countries' Ministries of Education, Confucius Institutes play a leading role in promoting the Chinese language and culture in Georgia. As of September 2026, two Confucius Institutes and one Confucius Classroom operate in Georgia on the basis of local universities. Based at Free University of Tbilisi and Alte University, the Confucius Institutes have over 20 branches across secondary schools, and the annual number of students enrolled in these institutes exceeds 1,000.

The Confucius Institute at Free University of Tbilisi has been functioning since 2010 in partnership with Zhengzhou University. According to the official website of Free University of Tbilisi, the institute's objective is to "promote a better understanding of China within Georgian society." The institute offers interested individuals the opportunity to learn the Chinese language and undertake internships in China. Furthermore, it organizes various programs and competitions for students as well as the general public.





The Confucius Institute at Free University of Tbilisi is distinguished by its close ties to China. In July 2024, a delegation from the Center for Language Education and Cooperation under China's Ministry of Education visited the institute. The purpose of the visit was to deepen educational and cultural cooperation between China and Georgia and to support Chinese language instruction in Georgia. An opening ceremony for the institute's official language testing center was also held as part of the visit.

Georgia's second Confucius Institute has been operating since 2017 on the basis of another private educational institution, Alte University. Its partner institution from China is Lanzhou University. The institute provides Chinese language courses, special cultural experience programs, and language certification exams. As of 2025, more than 1,200 students participated in the institute's courses.

In addition to language courses and certification exams, the institute offers students participation in summer camps in China as well as scholarship opportunities. In August 2025, five students of the institute were awarded the International Chinese Language Teachers Scholarship based on their top scores in HSK exams. The selected students were given the opportunity to participate in a one-year language study program at Lanzhou University. Under the program, their tuition, accommodation, and health insurance expenses were fully covered. Additionally, the students were granted a monthly stipend of 2,500 yuan.



The Confucius Institute at Alte University regularly hosts educational and cultural events. In April 2025, the institute organized tea culture and calligraphy culture events dedicated to International Chinese Language Day.

The activities of the Confucius Institutes operating in Georgia primarily cover the capital. However, in 2020, a Confucius Classroom was opened at Central University of Europe in Kutaisi, one of the country's major cities. Consequently, Confucius Institute activities expanded into peripheral zones as well. The official partner of the Confucius Classroom from China is Xinjiang Medical University.

The operations of the Confucius Classroom are conducted within the scope of cooperation between Central University of Europe and Xinjiang Medical University. During an online meeting held between the universities on November 25, 2025, an "increase in student numbers" in the Confucius Classroom was noted.



According to the website of Central University of Europe, the Confucius Classroom provides Chinese language courses, international educational exchange projects, certification testing, and the development of cultural relations between Georgia and China, among other services.

The Confucius Classroom actively collaborates with educational institutions in Kutaisi. Specifically, the classroom offers Chinese language courses to students and teachers of the Georgian-American School "Progress." A branch of the Confucius Classroom also operates at College "Iberia," where interested individuals are given the opportunity to study Chinese language and culture. The classroom is also actively engaged within the university space. In December 2025, on the initiative and with the support of the Confucius Classroom, textbooks were acquired for the university library.

In addition to officially operating Confucius Institutes, the Chinese language is taught in Confucius Classrooms at several universities in Georgia. For instance, since 2018, St. Andrew the First-Called Georgian University (SANGU), affiliated with the Georgian Orthodox Church, integrated Confucius Classrooms into its academic curriculum in cooperation with China's Lanzhou University. Annually, students of the International Relations program were offered the opportunity to study at Lanzhou University through Confucius Classroom scholarships. As of September 2026, Chinese is taught at the university's Language Center, while the university has not publicly released updates regarding Confucius Classroom activities since 2022.

Western experience demonstrates that the Confucius Institute is one of the primary tools for disseminating the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda messages. The research revealed that the activities of Confucius Institutes operating in Georgia are characterized by low standards of transparency. Specifically, limited information is publicly available regarding the events and meetings organized by these institutions. Almost nothing is known about the content of the programs or the educational standards maintained by the Confucius Institutes.

"Chinese Bridge" Competition

Another means of fostering interest in the Chinese language among youth in Georgia is international language competitions. Under one of the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Georgia and China in 2023, the parties agreed to encourage Georgian students to participate in the "Chinese Bridge" competition.





"Chinese Bridge" is an international competition organized by China's Center for Language Education and Cooperation, held since 2002. The contest involves demonstrating both proficiency in the Chinese language and creative skills related to knowledge of China, its culture, and arts. The competition consists of two stages: initially, winners are identified through national selection, after which successful candidates represent their country at the final stage held in China. Ultimately, the winners are awarded scholarships and granted the opportunity to continue their studies in China.

The "Chinese Bridge" competition has been held in Georgia since 2010. Initially, the preliminary selection stage was organized by the Confucius Institute at Free University of Tbilisi and the Chinese Embassy in Georgia. In recent years, selection stages for school students have also been hosted at the Confucius Institute at Alte University. Notably, the themes of the "Chinese Bridge" competitions frequently incorporate the international messaging of the People's Republic of China. For example, the main theme of the 2024 competition was "One World, One Family."

Cooperation in Educational and Scientific Fields

Scholarship Programs

Within the framework of existing cooperation between the Ministries of Education of Georgia and China, young Georgian citizens are annually offered the opportunity to participate in the Chinese Government Scholarship program. The program encompasses tuition funding for undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels of higher education, as well as research fellow programs and Chinese language courses. The scholarship typically covers tuition fees, accommodation, and other necessary expenses.

Co-financed by the Governments of Georgia and China, at least 20 young individuals continue their studies in China each year. According to a statement by Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze, more than 200 young people benefited from the government scholarship program between 2019 and 2024 alone.

In addition to governmental scholarship programs, Georgian students have access to Confucius Institute scholarships, provincial and municipal funding, university scholarships, and the "Belt and Road" scholarship, which is designated for students from countries participating in the "Belt and Road" initiative.

Inter-University Cooperation

A key component of China's scientific diplomacy in Georgia is higher education. During the research period, a clear trend emerged wherein representatives of Georgian and Chinese universities regularly conduct bilateral visits aimed at deepening institutional cooperation, expanding academic ties, and developing joint initiatives. A systematic analysis of information published on the official websites of Georgian universities revealed several key areas of collaboration with Chinese higher education institutions. Below are the main trends and formats of cooperation established between Georgian and Chinese universities from 2023 to 2025:

Exchange Programs

Georgian and Chinese universities actively develop student exchange programs within the scope of bilateral cooperation. This collaboration provides students from both countries with the opportunity to pursue their studies at partner universities for specific durations and participate in international academic programs. During the research period (2024–2025), numerous cooperation agreements were signed between universities to advance student exchange programs:

- **In April 2024**, under an agreement signed between the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) and Renmin University of China, the parties agreed to host four exchange students per academic year. The fields of exchange cooperation encompass international relations and political science.

On February 12, 2025, an agreement to develop exchange cooperation was reached between the Tbilisi Apolon Kutateladze State Academy of Arts and the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing.

In 2025, under a Memorandum of Understanding signed between Tbilisi State University (TSU) and Beijing Foreign Studies University, Chinese students were granted the opportunity to study the Georgian language at TSU.

Under an agreement reached in **June 2025**, funded by the Chinese side, 20 students from the Faculty of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Tbilisi State Medical University will complete an internship at Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine annually.

Starting in 2024, International Black Sea University offers Georgian students the opportunity to study at Tung Wah College in Hong Kong. Winning students are exempt from tuition fees and receive a monthly stipend.

In 2025, International Black Sea University, in collaboration with Sias International University in China, announced a mobility program for a one-year Chinese language study course.

Open-source data confirms that approximately nine cooperation agreements were signed between Georgian and Chinese universities during the research period, and up to 12 official meetings were held to deepen bilateral ties and expand cooperation. In both signed agreements and during these official meetings, the development of student and academic exchange programs was consistently identified as a primary area of priority.

Summer Camps and Schools

Summer schools and camps represent a relatively new direction in collaboration between Chinese and Georgian universities. During the study period, educational institutions in both Georgia and China emerged as organizers of such programs. Below are several such instances:

In August 2025, organized by International Black Sea University, Georgian students participated in a summer school held at Beijing Language and Culture University. As part of the program, students completed language courses, participated in cultural and educational masterclasses, and visited Chinese landmarks.

In November 2025, organized by International Black Sea University, representatives and students from Guangzhou International Economics College participated in a cultural-educational program. The project included an English language masterclass, a workshop in the university's forensics laboratory, as well as visits to Tbilisi, Gori, Kazbegi, and Sighnaghi.

In 2024–2025, a number of Georgian universities, including Georgian American University and International Black Sea University, introduced students to the opportunity to participate in the youth camp at Sias University in China. According to information provided by the universities, the camp included leadership training, cultural activities, lectures on China, and other educational programs.

Organizing summer camps and short-term exchange programs for students serves as an indicator of strengthened inter-university cooperation. Such initiatives confirm that bilateral cooperation transcends traditional academic relations, fostering direct contacts and experience sharing among youth. Nevertheless, this direction of cooperation with Chinese universities remains in its initial stage of development.

Joint Research Centers and Laboratories

Establishing joint research centers and laboratories constitutes a significant direction of Georgian-Chinese academic cooperation. This process is facilitated both by memorandums of understanding signed between universities and by the shared interests of educational and scientific institutions in both countries toward deepening research and educational ties.

Numerous academic and non-commercial organizations operate in Georgia whose activities are tied to China research, the promotion of the Chinese language and culture, and the development of educational and scientific cooperation between the two countries. In recent years, establishing joint research centers and laboratories and expanding scientific collaboration have been among the most prominent topics in meetings and discussions held between Georgian and Chinese universities. Georgian Technical University (GTU) is actively working in this direction. Based at GTU's Faculty of Economics, Media Technologies, and Social Sciences, the Scientific Research Institute of China Studies has been functioning since 2019, with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences acting as its partner organization from the Chinese side. The institute's activities encompass research on Chinese political, economic, cultural, and international relations, implementing joint scientific projects, and facilitating academic cooperation.



In September 2025, within the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding signed between GTU and Lanzhou University of Technology, the "Research Center for Dialogue and Cooperation between Civilizations of China and Georgia" was established.

According to information from the university, the center will serve as an interdisciplinary platform to foster "science-based diplomacy" and the development of "educational dialogue."

Recently, among China-related centers, the Center for China and Southeast Asia Studies has exhibited notable activity. According to its official website, the organization serves as an independent platform operating across three directions: research, dialogue, and policy development. Information provided by the center indicates that its goal is to "deepen Georgia-China relations and analyze regional development models." The director of the center is Beka Natsvlishvili, who served as a member of the ninth convocation of the Parliament of Georgia and an MP for "Georgian Dream" from 2016 to 2020. Alongside Natsvlishvili, Badri Nachkebia—host of the show "Chinese Panorama" on the television network Obieqtivi[6]—is listed among the organization's founders. Thus, individuals affiliated with "Georgian Dream" who are distinguished in the public sphere by starkly anti-Western rhetoric are increasingly engaging in the campaign to promote China.

On September 26, 2025, jointly organized by the Embassy of China in Georgia, the Center for China and Southeast Asia Studies, and TSU, a screening of a documentary film dedicated to the 80th anniversary of victory in China's Anti-Fascist War took place. The event was attended by

6. For further details, see Civic IDEA's report: "The Dragon's Footprint in Georgian Media: China in the Georgian Information Environment."

representatives of Georgian higher education institutions. Speaking at the event, Beka Natsvlishvili, Director of the Center for China and Southeast Asia Studies, noted that such events foster a better understanding of China's historical experience and expressed hope that through the film, Georgian society would "acknowledge China's significant role in World War II."





In recent years, strengthening transparency standards and preventing the expansion of foreign influence were cited as the rationale behind the repressive policies conducted by "Georgian Dream" against non-governmental organizations. However, in the case of China-affiliated or

ganizations, including the Center for China and Southeast Asia Studies, nothing is known regarding the organization's sources of funding, its partners, or its mission. Despite this, the center continues to operate (see the center's website: CCSAS).

Cooperation with Chinese Companies

Chinese companies are also active participants in the development of Georgia-China educational relations. Collaboration between the two countries encompasses the execution of educational and professional development programs as well as the buildout of technological infrastructure and the provision of relevant resources to universities.



One of the most active companies in this direction is Huawei Technologies (Huawei), which is considered one of the primary actors in China's "digital diplomacy[7]." Within the framework of cooperation with Georgian universities, the company executes educational programs, conducts trainings, and offers certified courses. It supports the professional development of students and academic staff while participating in the strengthening of universities' technological infrastructure and learning resources by supplying appropriate technical equipment and digital solutions.

7. The objective of Beijing's "digital diplomacy" is to reinforce China's positive international image and build an alternative to Western digital infrastructure.

Since October 2024, Huawei has been collaborating with the Georgia Innovation and Technology Agency (GITA). Under this agreement, the company sponsors the university competition organized by the agency—UNI4VERSE. In 2025, Huawei presented solar panels as a prize to the competition winner, the University of Georgia.

In recent years, technologies manufactured by Huawei have been heavily integrated into Georgian educational spaces. In 2025, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the company and Kutaisi International University, providing for the opening of a Huawei ICT Academy. Notably, the signing ceremony of the memorandum between the company and the university was attended by the Minister of Education, Science, and Youth of Georgia, Aleksandre Tsuladze (2024–2025), pointing to the interest of state institutions in Huawei's activities. Furthermore, at a meeting held in China in December 2025 between the Minister of Education, Science, and Youth of Georgia and a Vice President of Huawei, the company representative announced that technical equipment required to set up a "Smart Classroom" would be provided to a school in Tbilisi free of charge.

The expansion of cooperation between Huawei and Georgian higher education institutions is further underscored by the fact that in 2025, Georgian students participated for the first time in the company's international educational program, "Seeds for the Future." Held in Dongguan and Shenzhen, China, the program included students from Ilia State University and Kutaisi International University.



Huawei is not the only Chinese company collaborating with Georgian higher education institutions. The research reveals that International Black Sea University actively partners with Chinese companies as well as NGOs and corporations affiliated with Beijing. The university has already signed cooperation agreements with the following organizations: Zhongge Cultural Development[8] (Yiwu), Guangzhou Dajiang E-Commerce Co. Ltd., the Belt and Road Georgian Business House, the Belt and Road Research Institute at Shenzhen University, and the Belt and Road Institute for International Cooperation and Development in Shenzhen.

8. According to Chinese sources, Zhongge Cultural Development (Yiwu) was founded by Yixiao Jun, a businessman based in China who is referred to as an "ambassador for the promotion of Georgian culture." The company's goal is to raise awareness of Chinese culture in Georgia and promote Georgian wine culture in China. The company collaborates with Georgia's Ministry of Agriculture, the National Wine Agency, the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and other organizations.

Cooperation between Georgian universities and Chinese companies offers Georgian students additional opportunities for internships and professional development. The example of Huawei demonstrates that collaboration with Chinese corporations provides Georgian educational institutions with access to various technologies and learning resources. At the same time, the expansion of Huawei's activities within Georgian university spaces is significantly aided not only by individual university initiatives, but also by the support and interest of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Youth of Georgia. As a result, corporate involvement in Georgia's higher education sector is progressively deepening.

The Georgian National Academy of Sciences' Ties with China

Due to its cooperation with China, the Georgian National Academy of Sciences has repeatedly featured in research by the organization "Civic IDEA." During the research period, the Academy actively continued its collaboration with Chinese institutions.

Particularly significant steps toward deepening ties with China were taken during a working visit to Zhejiang Province by the Academy's General Advisor, Giorgi Kvesitadze. On April 25, 2025, representatives of the Academy held meetings with Chinese research, educational, and entrepreneurial organizations.

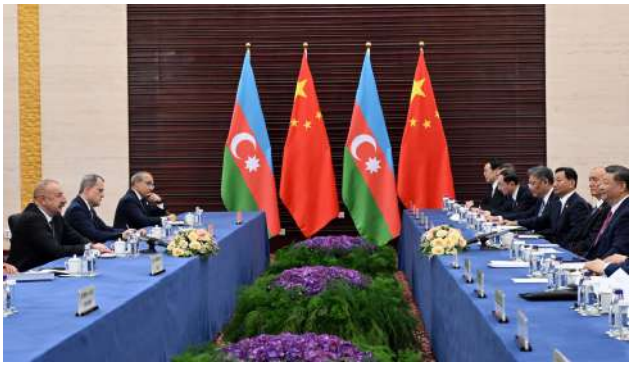
During the visit, the Academy reached cooperation agreements with the Administrative Committee of the Hangzhou Dingzhan Area, Hangzhou Future Sci-Tech City, Zhejiang Lufujiang Ecological and Agricultural Company, Hangzhou Institute of Medicine, Zhejiang Anji Agricultural Investment Group, and Huzhou University. The cooperation encompassed organizing joint eco-forums and symposia, allocating subsidies for establishing research centers, joint technology development, establishing laboratories, executing exchange programs, and other areas.

Consequently, the 2025 visit to China contributed to the expansion of cooperation between the Georgian National Academy of Sciences and various scientific, educational, and research institutions in Zhejiang Province. According to information posted on the Academy's official website, the National Academy of Sciences also continued its cooperation with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences during the study period. However, these relations were primarily limited to visits by the Chinese side to Georgia, and no information regarding major new collaborative initiatives was released.

China's "Soft Power" Operations in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: Cooperation in the Spheres of Culture, Science, and Education

In recent years, political relations between Azerbaijan and China have developed rapidly. On July 3, 2024, during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Astana Summit, a joint statement regarding a strategic partnership agreement between Azerbaijan and China was issued. A few months later, on April 23, 2025, within the framework of Ilham Aliyev's visit to China, a document on a comprehensive strategic partnership was signed between the two countries. Thus, Azerbaijan became the first country in the South Caucasus with which Beijing established a comprehensive strategic partnership.





The partnership agreements announced in 2024–2025 entail cooperation between the countries in four main directions: political, economic, cultural, and international relations. Furthermore, specific mechanisms of cooperation provided for in the documents create a favorable institutional environment for China's "soft power" operations. Particularly significant is Article 9 of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which provides for the strengthening of bilateral scientific, cultural, educational, people-to-people, and humanitarian ties, as well as the development of concrete cooperation mechanisms.

In addition to the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, eight different documents were signed between Azerbaijan and China in 2025 covering cooperation in humanitarian demining, science, technology, culture, media, and space. Bilateral visits and meetings served as active mechanisms for strengthening inter-state relations.

The development of China-Azerbaijan diplomatic and political relations is facilitated by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev's favorable stance toward Beijing. Statements made by Aliyev in 2024–2025 clearly reflected a desire to deepen bilateral relations. In a 2025 letter addressed to Xi Jinping, Aliyev cited the development of relations with China as one of Azerbaijan's foreign policy priorities.

In public appearances between 2023 and 2025, Aliyev also supported the development of educational and cultural relations between the two countries. For example, in an April 2025 interview with Chinese state media CGTN, Aliyev discussed the possibility of establishing a joint Chinese-Azerbaijani university, noting that alongside political convergence between the two countries, it is important to deepen people-to-people ties and "friendship."

The upward trajectory of relations between China and Azerbaijan is also linked to China's foreign policy strategy. The People's Republic is guided by the principle of "non-interference in internal affairs" at a time when Western countries frequently criticize Aliyev over human rights violations and severe political-social repression. Given this fact, China's neutral stance makes it a reliable and desirable partner for Azerbaijan.

The intensification of ties between the countries in 2023–2025 resulted in professional development programs in which Azerbaijani civil servants participated. During the study period, representatives of Azerbaijani state institutions regularly participated in programs hosted in China:

- In January 2025, Azerbaijani army officers completed the "Staff Officer Course" at the People's Liberation Army Army Academy of China.
- In April 2025, a delegation from the Prosecutor General's Office of Azerbaijan attended seminars in China on international legal cooperation, electronic evidence, cybercrime, the role of prosecutors in courts, and the digitalization of criminal proceedings.





The participation of Republic of Azerbaijan civil servants in training and educational programs held in China indicates that official Baku views Beijing as a reliable partner. In this context, China's educational system, subject to censorship and strict state control, creates acceptable formats of cooperation for Aliyev's authoritarian regime.

Media Cooperation: Creating a Positive Image of China

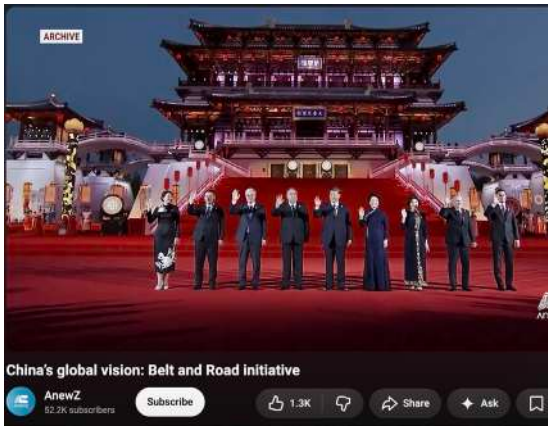
Hand in hand with the deepening of bilateral diplomatic and political ties, positive perceptions of China are becoming increasingly evident in Azerbaijan's information landscape. The country's leading media outlets, which are largely state-controlled, closely cooperate with Chinese news corporations. The relationships established in the media sphere facilitate the dissemination of narratives and discourses favorable to China within Azerbaijani society.

One of the country's main news outlets, the State News Agency of Azerbaijan, collaborates with Chinese media organizations such as China Daily Group, Xinhua News Agency, Zhenmin Zhibao, Shanghai Media Group and China Media Group. Media cooperation is multifaceted, encompassing the exchange of information, footage, and professional expertise, participation in joint projects, mutual support on international platforms, internship opportunities for students, conducting bilateral visits, and organizing joint events.

In August 2025, Azerbaijani journalists participated in a media tour organized by the news agency China News Service. As part of the program, Azerbaijani journalists met with the agency's Xinjiang leadership. Such media tours organized by the Chinese side contribute to portraying a positive image of the People's Republic and shaping an information environment loyal to Beijing. Notably, similar programs intended for journalists include visits to the Xinjiang region. This practice is particularly significant against the backdrop of China facing international criticism over allegations of human rights violations against Xinjiang's Uyghur Muslims. Within the framework of media tours, official Beijing attempts to present its perspective to foreign journalists and convince them that the critical assessments circulating in Western media regarding Xinjiang are unfounded and that Uyghurs in the region live under normal conditions.

Unlike in Georgia, audio-visual material regarding China is less accessible in Azerbaijan's information space. However, certain media outlets produce exclusive features on China-related topics. For instance, Azerbaijan's new English-language media outlet, AnewZ, published a documentary in 2025 entitled "China's Global Vision: The Belt and Road Initiative." The film covers the Middle Corridor, China's growing role in global politics, Azerbaijan-China trade relations, cooperation between the two countries in green energy and digital transformation, potential avenues for Chinese investment in Azerbaijan, and other topics.





The film is constructed around positive narratives regarding the activities of the Chinese Communist Party. Specifically, it highlights the significance of the People's Republic's development model to the country's economic success:

"From the moment of its founding to the present, the Party has played a central role in China's transformation, uniting the people, leading economic reforms, advancing technology, and engaging in global processes."

Similar to Georgia, China's diplomatic mission in Azerbaijan is becoming increasingly active in disseminating official Beijing messaging. In 2024–2025 alone, Azerbaijani state media channels published five articles prepared by the Chinese Embassy.

Chinese Language Instruction in Azerbaijan

According to information from official Chinese and Azerbaijani sources, interest in the Chinese language is growing in Azerbaijan. In December 2024, China's Chargé d'Affaires to Azerbaijan, Ding Tao, stated that more than 8,000 people in the country are studying Chinese.

The growing interest of Azerbaijani citizens in the Chinese language is largely driven by the intensification of relations between the two countries. Further confirming this trend is the direct involvement of the President of Azerbaijan and members of his family in promoting the Chinese language. On March 17, 2025, in a public address, Leyla Aliyeva, Vice President of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation[9] and eldest daughter of Ilham Aliyev, noted that members of her family are interested in Chinese culture, adding that her daughter is also studying Chinese.

Since 2019, on the initiative of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and jointly organized by the Azerbaijan State University of Economics, the Confucius Institute at the Azerbaijan University of Languages, and Beijing Foreign Studies University, online Chinese language courses have been conducted. These online courses are available to individuals of any age group. Classes are held three times a week over a three-month period. The monthly program fee is 60 Azerbaijani manats (≈$35 USD). Tuition fees for socially vulnerable individuals as well as families of veterans and those killed in war are covered by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation.





It should also be noted that the Heydar Aliyev Foundation actively collaborates with the Embassy of China not only in language instruction, but also within the scope of various social initiatives. On October 26, 2024, the Chinese Embassy in Azerbaijan, together with the Foundation, hosted an autumn event for children from low-income families and families of those killed in the Karabakh War. The children were presented with electronic equipment as gifts. Speaking at the event, China's Chargé d'Affaires noted that the embassy, together with the Foundation, had executed several social and charitable projects.

Thus, in the case of Azerbaijan, a trend emerges wherein representatives of the country's ruling elite are directly involved in promoting the Chinese language and culture. On the one hand, this circumstance points to the positive attitude of the local political elite toward China, while on the other, it creates a favorable environment for the expansion of China's "soft power" instruments, including linguistic and cultural diplomacy

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9. Named after the third President of Azerbaijan, the Heydar Aliyev Foundation was established in 2004. According to its official website, the Foundation was created in honor of Heydar Aliyev and aims to promote Aliyev's contribution to the history of independent Azerbaijan, his intangible legacy, and the ideas of national statehood. The President of the Foundation is Ilham Aliyev's wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, while the position of Vice President is held by Aliyev's daughter, Leyla Aliyeva.

Confucius Institutes in Azerbaijan

Beyond the initiatives of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and private educational institutions, the primary actor in the promotion of Chinese language and culture in Azerbaijan is the Confucius Institute. Currently, two Confucius Institutes operate in the country, both of which have established branches across other universities and schools.

The first Confucius Institute in Azerbaijan opened on April 22, 2011, at Baku State University, with Anhui University serving as its Chinese partner institution. As of 2022, the institute had enrolled 6,000 registered students.





The activities of the Baku State University Confucius Institute align with those traditionally associated with the institution: it periodically conducts Chinese proficiency tests, provides interested students with information regarding Chinese scholarship programs, delivers language courses for students in the university's "Chinese Language and Literature" philology program, and helps organize summer schools for students at Anhui University.

Azerbaijan's second Confucius Institute was established on June 24, 2016, at the Azerbaijan University of Languages, in partnership with China's Huzhou University. On the Azerbaijani side, Rafiq Abbasov officially serves as the institute's director, while Li Jihua serves as the Chinese director as of 2025. The institute offers standard core services—language and culture courses, training programs, proficiency examinations, and cultural events—and operates branches at the Baku Academy of Music, Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction, and the Baku Youth Center.

Notably, compared to the Baku State University location, the Confucius Institute at the Azerbaijan University of Languages maintains significantly higher public visibility. The university actively publishes details regarding every meeting, initiative, and event hosted by the institute. An analysis of the materials published on the Azerbaijan University of Languages website indicates that the institute actively engages in propaganda on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Particularly noteworthy in this context are the activities of the institute's director, Rafiq Abbasov, and his ties to Chinese political institutions. In 2022, Abbasov won an article contest organized by the International Department of the Central Committee of the CCP titled "The Communist Party of China in the New Era." In his submission, Abbasov highlighted the positive dynamics of dialogue and relations between the New Azerbaijan Party and the CCP.

Under Abbasov's supervision, the Confucius Institute at the Azerbaijan University of Languages regularly holds educational events covering Chinese language, culture, history, politics,

and national holidays. The institute's activities frequently extend beyond its educational mandate to incorporate propaganda regarding the CCP and bilateral Azerbaijan-China relations. For instance, in February 2025, the institute hosted a scientific seminar entitled "Interstate and Inter-party Relations Between China and Azerbaijan," organized jointly by the Chinese Embassy in Azerbaijan and the youth organization of the New Azerbaijan Party. The event was attended by representatives from the Chinese Embassy, the Milli Majlis of Azerbaijan, and the ruling party's youth wing. At the conclusion of the meeting, Abbasov presented guests with copies of a book published by the institute titled "Heydar Aliyev - 101: Azerbaijan-China (1993-2003)."

The Confucius Institutes operating in Azerbaijan serve as key instruments for projecting China's "soft power." Furthermore, the case of the Azerbaijan University of Languages demonstrates that the institute's role is not limited to promoting language and culture, but also includes spreading positive narratives regarding China's political system, the CCP, and bilateral political relations. This practice is particularly consequential given that the promotion of Chinese language and culture is openly endorsed by representatives of Azerbaijan's ruling elite, thereby intersecting linguistic and cultural diplomacy with broader processes of political and foreign policy influence.

"Chinese Language Bridge" Competition

The "Chinese Language Bridge" competition in Azerbaijan was first held in 2015, organized by the Confucius Institute at Baku State University. The purpose of the competition was to increase interest in Chinese language and culture among Azerbaijani youth. Both Confucius Institutes and the Chinese Embassy in Azerbaijan were involved in organizing the event. Organized specifically by the Chinese Embassy and the Baku State University Confucius Institute, the 24th Chinese Language International Competition in May 2025 featured an address by Lu Mei, China's Ambassador to Azerbaijan, who called on young people to actively participate in driving the progress of bilateral relations.

In addition to university students, school pupils also participated in various Chinese language competitions. In June 2025, the "Chinese Language Bridge" competition for school students was held at the Confucius Institute of the Azerbaijan University of Languages. The Chinese Ambassador responded to the event with the motto:



"Pursuing dreams through the Chinese language, living a life worthy of youth."

Educational and Scientific Cooperation

One of China's primary influence mechanisms in the educational and scientific spheres in Azerbaijan is "university diplomacy." A study of the dynamics of cooperation between Chinese and Azerbaijani universities in 2024–2025 reveals a diverse and intensive pattern of bilateral ties. During this period, more than 10 agreements and contracts were signed between universities in Azerbaijan and China. These signed documents covered various areas of collaboration, including joint research projects, academic exchange programs, the sharing of educational materials, joint event organization, double-degree programs, and the establishment of joint research centers.

Exchange Programs

Under educational agreements between Azerbaijan and China, citizens of both countries are granted opportunities to pursue studies and participate in academic exchange programs in the partner nation. Enhanced educational collaboration led to an increase in the number of scholarship recipients in both directions during 2024–2025, along with expanded opportunities for study visits and short-term programs:

2024: Under government scholarship programs, 11 Chinese citizens secured funded study opportunities in Azerbaijan, while 28 Azerbaijani citizens pursued studies in China via government scholarships.

- **2025:** 23 Chinese citizens received Azerbaijani government scholarships, while 43 students from Azerbaijan went to China to continue their education.
- **2024:** Master's students from the University of Hong Kong participated in an academic exchange program at the Azerbaijan State University of Economics.
- **2024:** Students from the Baku Higher Oil School pursued studies in petroleum and gas engineering at the China University of Petroleum.
- **April 2025:** Students from Baku Engineering University participated in a training program on data analytics at China's Ningxia Polytechnic University.

Within the scope of exchange cooperation, universities from both nations also host summer schools and camps:

- **2024:** 20 students from the Baku Higher Oil School participated in a summer school program at the China University of Petroleum.
- **July 2024:** Chinese students participated in a summer school hosted by the Azerbaijan State University of Economics, which featured interactive training sessions, corporate site visits, and regional field trips.

Joint and Double Degree Programs

In recent years, several undergraduate and graduate double-degree programs have been established through cooperation between Chinese and Azerbaijani universities.

On December 8, 2023, Baku State University, the Center for Language Education and Cooperation of the Ministry of Education of China, and Anhui University signed an agreement to establish a joint undergraduate program in "International Chinese Language Education." Under

the agreement, enrollment in the joint undergraduate program between Baku State and Anhui University will be open exclusively to Azerbaijani citizens. Students will complete their 3rd and 4th academic years at Anhui University and ultimately earn diplomas from both institutions.

In September 2025, Baku Engineering University and Beijing University of Chemical Technology launched a dual-degree program covering specializations in chemical, computer, and mechanical engineering. Under this program, students from Baku Engineering University will pursue their 3rd and 4th years of study at Beijing University of Chemical Technology. The program is taught in English and incorporates joint scientific projects and technological startup initiatives alongside its educational curriculum.

The creation of joint double-degree programs remains a prominent topic in bilateral meetings between Azerbaijani and Chinese universities, and the number of such shared educational offerings is expected to increase in the future.

Joint Scientific Events

Cooperation agreements between Azerbaijani and Chinese universities frequently include provisions for organizing joint scientific events. During 2024–2025, several international conferences and seminars were held within the framework of educational institution partnerships:

- **September 18, 2024:** The Azerbaijan State University of Economics and China's Hebei University of Economics and Business organized an international seminar titled "China-Azerbaijan Green and Low-Carbon Sustainable Development Cooperation."
- **May 17, 2025:** The Faculty of Linguistics at Shanghai International Studies University and Khazar University jointly organized an international conference titled "Philosophy of Language, Literature, and Linguistics."

These instances represent a partial list of joint scientific events. Research indicates that university-level cooperation encompasses not only opportunities for students, but also the sharing of scientific expertise and knowledge among members of the academic community.

Cooperation Within the "Belt and Road" Initiative

Azerbaijani and Chinese universities regularly participate in educational and scientific projects organized within the framework of the "Belt and Road" Initiative (BRI). Research identifies several instances of participation in events and international competitions hosted in China:

- **October 26 – November 3, 2024:** Students from Baku State University participated in the "Belt and Road" International Inter-University Startup Competition held in Xi'an, China.
- **October 2025**: The Azerbaijan University of Architecture and Construction was admitted as a member of the "Belt and Road Architectural University International Consortium" (BRAUIC).[10]

These cases demonstrate that cooperation between Azerbaijani and Chinese universities spans both bilateral and multilateral formats. The active involvement of Azerbaijani educational institutions in events and programs planned under the Belt and Road Initiative points to a growing receptivity within Azerbaijan's educational sector toward "soft power" initiatives offered by China.

10. The consortium was established in 2017 on the initiative of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture, aiming to strengthen international educational and scientific cooperation in the fields of construction and architecture.

Cooperation with Chinese Companies

Representatives of China's private sector are also showing significant interest in Azerbaijani universities. During 2024–2025, several meetings were held between Azerbaijani universities and various Chinese companies to discuss prospects for bilateral cooperation. Student exchange projects and internship programs emerged as key potential areas of collaboration.

Among Chinese companies, Huawei stood out for its high level of activity in Azerbaijan's educational space. Huawei maintains close partnerships with leading Azerbaijani state universities. In 2025 alone, the company signed memorandums of understanding with three educational institutions:

- Azerbaijan State University of Economics: The memorandum provides for the establishment of a Huawei ICT Academy, implementation of the HCIA certification program, organization of a summer camp for students, and holding an ICT competition.
- Azerbaijan Technical University: The memorandum outlines the implementation of joint ICT educational programs.
- Baku State University: The memorandum focuses on conducting training sessions, joint research, and internship programs, enhancing educational and laboratory capabilities, supporting the startup ecosystem, and establishing joint innovation centers.



Azerbaijani students participate annually in Huawei's international educational program "Seeds for the Future 2025." Additionally, university partnerships with the company offer Azerbaijani students opportunities to take part in other educational initiatives. For example, in 2025, students from Baku Engineering University participated in the "Generation Connect Young Leadership Programme," a joint initiative by Huawei and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Relations of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences with China

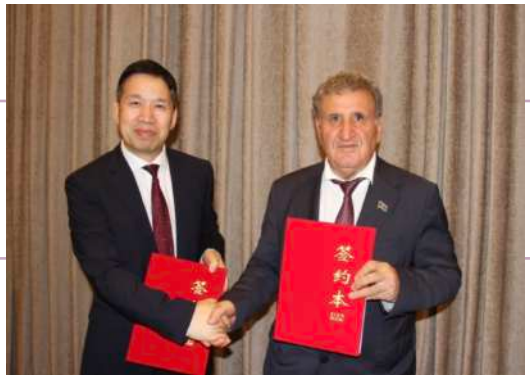
The Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS) collaborates with Chinese think tanks, scientific centers, and individual educational and research institutions. During 2024–2025, numerous meetings were held between the Academy and relevant Chinese institutions to deepen cooperation, leading to the signing of several agreements with Chinese partners.

Productive meetings aimed at enhancing international ties with China took place in June 2024 during a delegation visit from the Academy to China. A memorandum of understanding was signed with the Hebei Academy of Social Sciences to strengthen scientific cooperation, advance priority research areas, and exchange academic publications. Additionally, a memorandum of understanding was concluded with the China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation.

Similar to the Georgian National Academy of Sciences, ANAS also collaborates with the CORE Academy in Hong Kong, though this partnership remains relatively formal. Specifically, under a memorandum of understanding signed in 2024, cooperation between the two academies encompasses the implementation of joint scientific projects, events, and academic programs.

Key partners of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences include the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). In September–October 2025, meetings were held with a delegation from the Institute of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia at CASS, as well as representatives from the Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth at CAS. Both meetings focused on identifying prospective areas for scientific collaboration.





Thus, scientific cooperation between Azerbaijan and China during the analyzed period was characterized by regular institutional engagements. In 2024–2025, while maintaining established connections, the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences actively pursued new partnerships, underscoring a growing trend toward broader scientific cooperation between the two nations.

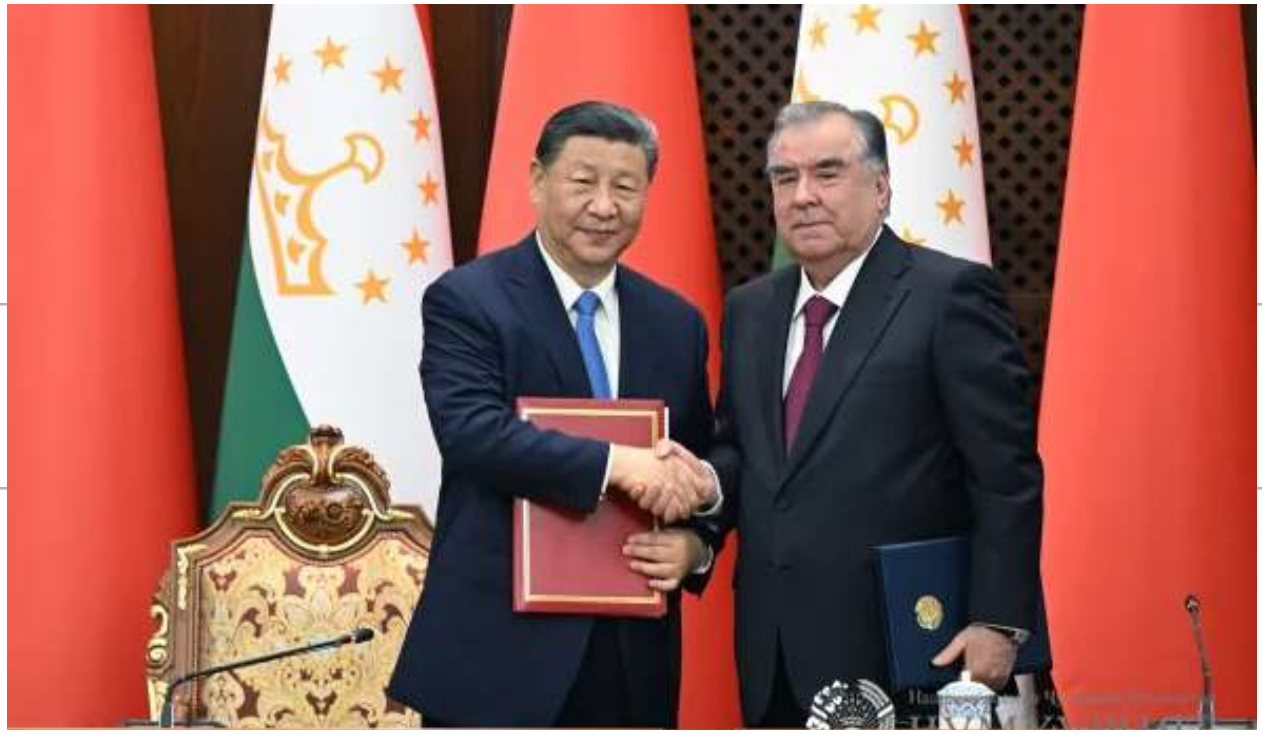
Chinese Soft Power Operations in Tajikistan

Tajikistan-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: Cooperation in Culture, Science, and Education

Tajik-Chinese bilateral relations are characterized by a high degree of institutionalization. From the 1990s to the present, more than 200 documents on cooperation across various fields have been signed between the two countries. Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has made 22 official visits to the People's Republic of China. Furthermore, since 2013, four joint declarations on strategic partnership have been issued between the two nations.

In July 2024, during Xi Jinping's state visit to Tajikistan, the parties updated the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement signed in 2023 and issued a joint declaration on "Developing a Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership for a New Era." Consisting of seven sections, this document is characterized by clearer political messaging and pro-Chinese narratives compared to previous agreements. To strengthen people-to-people ties, the agreement provides for deepening scientific and technological exchanges, conducting joint research, exchanging young scientists, and establishing research platforms; it also calls for developing cooperation in public health, food security, and traditional medicine. Additionally, the document envisions establishing connections at the subnational level and strengthening collaboration between social organizations of both countries.

On June 17, 2025, within the framework of the second "Central Asia–China" Summit held in Astana, another meeting took place between Xi Jinping and Emomali Rahmon. During the meeting, the leaders discussed the further development of their comprehensive strategic partnership. Particular attention was devoted to educational cooperation, the allocation of scholarships for Tajik students, and the expansion of cultural-humanitarian ties. Notably, several agreements were signed during the meeting, including those on intellectual property, artificial intelligence, media, and provincial-level cooperation.



The facts presented regarding political-diplomatic relations represent only a small fraction of bilateral ties. However, these examples confirm that the Tajik-Chinese partnership stands out for its high level of institutionalization. Bilateral relations are characterized by frequent visits, high-level meetings, and a abundance of strategic agreements. The intensive nature of political cooperation positively impacts other areas of interstate relations as well: in 2024–2025 alone, approximately 15 agreements were signed on cooperation in education, science, technology, culture, and media.

The intensive development of bilateral relations is explained in part by the pro-Chinese foreign policy line of Tajikistan's ruling elite. The country has been governed since 1994 by Emomali Rahmon, who has established a consolidated authoritarian regime. As a result, Rahmon is the key decision-maker regarding Tajikistan's domestic and foreign policy. An analysis of the president's speeches and statements shows that he considers expanding relations with China to be a top foreign policy priority. In Rahmon's discourse, the People's Republic is framed as a friend led by a leader with "vast experience," "broad vision," and "global influence."

China's Image in Tajik Media

In Tajikistan, the creation of a positive image of China actively involves not only representatives of the ruling elite, but also the country's leading media outlets. In turn, establishing influence over the information sphere facilitates the dissemination of narratives aligned with Beijing's interests.

Leading Tajik media outlets operating under government control frame China in accordance with narratives favored by the ruling regime. In the Tajik information space, the People's Republic is characterized as one of the world's "great powers," a "friend," and a "neighbor" that "shows interest in developing relations with Tajikistan." When describing bilateral relations, media outlets primarily utilize emotional vocabulary and refer to China within positive frameworks such as "strong bilateral friendship," "strategic partnership," "brotherhood," "mutual understanding," and "good neighborliness."



The dissemination of positive narratives regarding bilateral relations in Tajik media is driven not only by close political cooperation between the states, but also by strong ties between the media outlets of both countries. As part of this cooperation, representatives of Tajik media take advantage of training programs offered by China.

A relatively new and growing instrument for shaping positive perceptions of China in Tajikistan is the distribution of audiovisual content and publications, supported by several cooperation agreements signed between relevant state agencies in 2024–2025. These agreements aim to facilitate the exchange of media and cultural products, execute joint projects, and deepen information-sharing cooperation.

In October 2025, the Ayni Literary Foundation of Tajikistan published a book titled "Friends: Emomali Rahmon and Xi Jinping." According to public sources, the book was co-authored by Tajik diplomat Muhammad Egamzod and Chinese publicist Ge Jili. Eraj Ayni, Chairman of the Ayni Literary Foundation, stated that the book covers "the unbreakable friendship between two prominent leaders, which serves as a reliable foundation for the strategic partnership between Tajikistan and China."

Co-author and Tajik diplomat Muhammad Egamzod, who serves as a counselor at the Embassy of Tajikistan in Ukraine, noted that "the book is the result of eight years of work. The authors aimed to describe the lives, work, political courses, and development of two outstanding figures of the 21st century—President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon and President of China Xi Jinping." Egamzod described Xi Jinping and Rahmon as leaders who foster progress, development, and prosperity.

Thus, Tajikistan's authoritarian political system, combined with effective censorship mechanisms, creates extensive opportunities for shaping and filtering discourse regarding China. Under strict information control and strong state influence over public opinion, the fields of culture and the arts frequently serve to legitimate the political elite, its decisions, and state policy. Within this context, official narratives depict the People's Republic of China as a reliable and strategic partner for Emomali Rahmon's government.

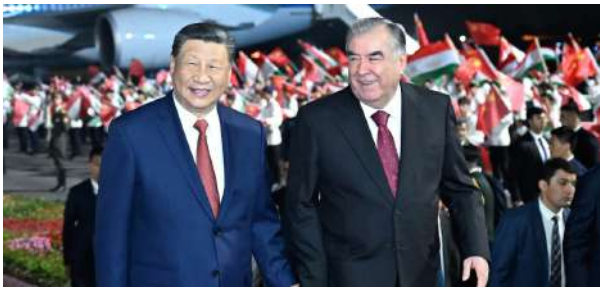
Chinese Language Teaching in Tajikistan

Given Tajikistan's growing economic dependence on China and the increasing number of Chinese companies operating in the country, there is a high demand for a workforce fluent in the Chinese language. Consequently, Chinese language instruction in Tajikistan often extends beyond educational and academic spaces to take on significant professional importance.

A primary example of addressing market demands alongside Chinese language teaching in Tajikistan is the Luban Workshop (Luban Center). The first Luban Workshop in Central Asia was opened in Tajikistan in 2022 as a collaborative initiative between China's Tianjin College of Urban Construction Management and Vocational Technology and the Technical University of Tajikistan.

The Luban Workshop is a Chinese educational program aimed at sharing Chinese technology and educational standards while retraining engineering professionals. As of 2025, over 1,500 Tajik students have participated in the program. The center conducts courses on modern methods of engineering computation, cartography, and energy-efficient technologies. Successful participants are provided opportunities to complete internships in Tianjin, China.

In Tajik media, the Luban Workshop is presented as a major success story of Tajik-Chinese educational and professional cooperation. In an article published on July 5, 2024, Chinese President Xi Jinping highlighted the center alongside the Confucius Institutes:



"Confucius Institutes and Luban Workshops have trained a large number of Chinese language speakers and technical personnel, who now represent a vital force in the development and cooperation of the two nations."

The Luban Workshops in Tajikistan serve as a clear example of the intersection between China's soft power operations and its economic interests. Numerous Chinese enterprises operate in Tajikistan's mining, construction, and other economic sectors, driving a growing demand for Chinese-speaking skilled personnel. In this context, the Luban Workshops function as an initiative tailored to meet local labor market demands while reinforcing the alignment between vocational education and China's strategic economic goals.

Confucius Institutes in Tajikistan

As in Georgia and Azerbaijan, Confucius Institutes serve as a primary vehicle for China's soft power operations in Tajikistan. Their activities encompass educational and cultural projects, organizing "Chinese Language Bridge" competitions and summer camps, providing training for local teachers, university students, and school pupils, and delivering customized courses for employees of Chinese corporations.





The country's first Confucius Institute was established in August 2008 at the Tajik National University, partnered officially with China's Xinjiang University. The institute is led by five Tajik and three Chinese directors, with a faculty composed of 18 Tajik and 19 Chinese teachers. Beyond the 18 classrooms operating within the Tajik National University main framework, the institute runs ten additional learning centers, serving over 1,300 Chinese language students across these branches.

Prior to 2025, over 42,000 students completed Chinese language courses at the institute. The educational programs cater not only to university students but also to secondary school pupils. According to Confucius Institute instructor Li Jianjun, high school students make up the majority of course registrants, driven by the ambition to pursue higher education in China.

Chinese language instruction at the institute follows a "Chinese Language + Profession" model. Tailored directly to labor market demands, the institute offers specialized curricula such as "Chinese + Diplomacy," "Chinese + Management," "Chinese + Mining Industry," and "Chinese + Culinary Arts". Outside higher education facilities, the institute delivers targeted professional training; for example, it organized a "Chinese Language + Agricultural Technology" course in the Khatlon region, benefiting over 300 Tajik farmers.

The Confucius Institute at Tajik National University hosts over 100 cultural and educational events annually, alongside regular professional development programs. In May 2025, the institute conducted a specialized training program for Chinese language instructors aimed at advancing pedagogical skills and educational standards.

Tajikistan's second Confucius Institute opened on September 13, 2014, at the Mining-Metallurgical Institute of Tajikistan, under an agreement signed between President Emomali Rahmon and Xu Lin, Executive Director of Confucius Institute Headquarters. Its official Chinese partner is the China University of Petroleum (East China). The institute offers courses in Chinese language, culture, and music.



Similar to its counterpart at TNU, the Mining-Metallurgical Institute's Confucius Institute regularly hosts cultural and educational events. On December 7, 2024, the institute held an end-of-fall-semester event attended by university officials, representatives of Chinese and Tajik enterprises, and members of Tajik-Chinese friendship societies.

"Chinese Bridge" Language Competition

Since 2002, the annual "Chinese Bridge" competition has been held in Tajikistan for both school pupils and university students, with Confucius Institutes acting as the primary organizers.

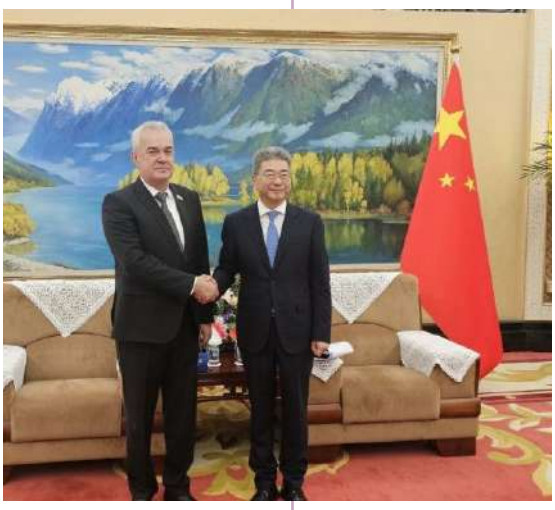
In 2025, the national final stage—themed "Chinese Language – Bridge of Friendship, One World, One Family"—was hosted at the Tajik State Pedagogical University named after Sadriddin Ayni. The event was organized jointly by the Tajik National University and the Tajik State Pedagogical University, with support from the Chinese Embassy.

Interest in the 2025 competition extended well beyond academic circles. Attendees included representatives from the Tajik-Chinese Friendship Society, the Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations of Tajikistan with Foreign Countries, the Ministries of Education and Science, Foreign Affairs, and Culture, as well as delegates from Chinese corporations operating in the country.

Scholarship Programs

Given Tajikistan's limited domestic educational resources, China presents an attractive destination for Tajik students seeking higher education. Consequently, scholarship offerings constitute one of the People's Republic's most effective soft power mechanisms. Tajik students participate annually in the Chinese Government Scholarship program, with 103 students securing awards in 2023. According to the Khovar news agency, recipients are selected based on Chinese language proficiency and performance in language Olympiads. During a May 2025 meeting between Tajikistan's Minister of Education and Science and China's Vice Minister of Education Wu Yan, it was highlighted that 5,000 Tajik students were currently studying in China.





In addition to state-level grants, Tajik students access educational funding provided by Chinese provincial governments, individual universities, and the Chinese Embassy.

Chinese Ambassador's Scholarship

Since 2018, the Chinese Embassy in Tajikistan has awarded scholarships to top-performing Chinese language students. The program has consistently expanded: 20 students received awards in 2023, 30 in 2024, and 40 in 2025, benefiting over 100 Tajik students in total prior to 2025.

On November 10, 2025, the award ceremony for the Chinese Ambassador's Scholarship was held in the "Cultural Hall" of the Confucius Institute at Tajik National University. The ceremony brought together representatives from the Chinese Embassy, local universities, and the diplomatic corps. The event opened with a screening of the documentary film "20 Years with the Confucius Institute: Wang Huiquan's History of Teaching Chinese at the Confucius Institute and Strengthening Sino-Tajik Relations".

Chinese Language Teachers' Competition

In 2024, the Center for Language Education and Cooperation under China's Ministry of Education launched an annual Central Asian Chinese Language Teachers' Competition involving Confucius Institutes across Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (where 13 Confucius Institutes operate in total).





On October 24–25, 2025, the competition was co-organized by Tajik National University, its Confucius Institute, and Xinjiang University. Addressing the event, the Chinese Ambassador to Tajikistan stated that Chinese, as an international language, serves as a vital bridge connecting cultures. He called on instructors to act not merely as language teachers but as a "bridge between civilizations" to foster deeper people-to-people ties.

Five selected teachers received awards across distinct categories: "Best Teaching Methodology," "Best Lesson Design," "Best Creative Teaching," "Best Instructional Materials," and "Best Teaching Skills".

Educational Cooperation in a Regional Format

Along with China's growing influence in Central Asia, a trend toward regionalization across various areas of cooperation has emerged. A key milestone in this context was the joint meeting of Ministers of Education from China and Central Asian countries held on May 12, 2025, in Urumqi. The event focused on coordinating educational systems, expanding joint projects, developing academic programs, increasing academic exchanges, and strengthening scientific and practical cooperation.

Ma Xingrui, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Party Secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, delivered a speech at the ministerial meeting. He highlighted the "unique geographical advantage" of the Xinjiang region and its potential to become a hub for educational cooperation between China and Belt and Road countries. According to Mr. Xingrui, Xinjiang supports China–Central Asia scientific cooperation and aims to facilitate regular exchanges between regional universities, foster the development of Confucius Institutes and "Silk Road Workshops," and expand international student programs.

Xingrui outlined five initiatives aimed at building a China–Central Asia "educational community" and enhancing educational collaboration:

1. Platform Creation: Establishing a new multidimensional platform for comprehensive cooperation and exchange.
2. Higher Education Framework: Building a new higher education cooperation system for joint talent development.
3. Vocational Focus: Harnessing the potential of contextualized cooperation in vocational education.
4. Digital Expansion: Expanding digital education cooperation through shared resources and infrastructure.
5. Intercultural Exchange: Exploring new models of cultural exchange and mutual learning between civilizations.

The meeting resulted in several practical outcomes, including the establishment of the China–Central Asia Industry-Education Integration Alliance and the Global College for Central Asian Teacher Development, which offers in-person and distance training programs for Confucius Institute instructors. In 2025, two cohorts of Tajik teachers completed training courses at this facility.

Representatives from Tajik universities regularly participate in other regional educational events as well. These formats provide Tajikistan with additional opportunities to establish partnerships and deepen cooperation with Chinese educational institutions.

Inter-University Cooperation

As one of the poorest countries in Central Asia, Tajikistan faces severe challenges in developing its educational system. Against the backdrop of a difficult socioeconomic environment, educational quality has gradually declined. Low pay, insufficient teacher qualifications, scarce funding for scientific research, and constraints on academic freedom create significant barriers to the education sector's development.

Due to low standards within the domestic educational system, interest in studying abroad is growing among the Tajik population. Consequently, external actors operate various educational programs to strengthen their influence in the country. However, under an authoritarian political system, higher education remains under the sway of the ruling political elite, serving to cultivate citizens loyal to the Rahmon administration. As a result, participation in such educational programs is largely restricted to nations trusted by the regime. These dynamics leave Russia and China as the primary destinations for Tajik youth seeking higher education abroad.

Bilateral cooperation between Tajik and Chinese universities develops through official memorandums and agreements. In 2024–2025 alone, more than seven agreements were signed between universities in the two countries. Collaborative efforts under these agreements encompass student and faculty exchanges, internship opportunities, joint academic publications, joint educational and scientific initiatives, and the establishment of shared centers. Official visits between educational institutions are regular, and cooperation continues to expand.

An analysis of inter-university relations between China and Tajikistan during 2024–2025 reveals several key trends and areas of collaboration:

Exchange Programs:

A number of Tajik universities host Chinese students through exchange initiatives. As of 2024, the Tajik State University of Languages enrolled the highest number of Chinese instructors and Chinese language learners nationwide—a figure reflecting the university's academic specialization, where Chinese is taught within a comprehensive curriculum covering translation, the history of Chinese linguistics, Chinese literature, and phonetics.

Additionally, the Tajik State Pedagogical University named after Sadriddin Ayni offers master's degree programs to Chinese students, with exchange approvals managed by Tajikistan's Education Supervision Agency, underscoring tight state control over the educational domain.



Conversely, inter-university agreements enable Tajik students to study in China; candidates from the Technological University of Tajikistan, the Russian-Tajik Slavonic University, and the Mining-Metallurgical Institute of Tajikistan participated in exchange selection processes during 2024–2025.

Establishment of Joint Laboratories and Centers:

Chinese universities frequently propose joint research center initiatives during engagements with Tajik counterparts. The Mining-Metallurgical Institute of Tajikistan leads in this domain, having held discussions in 2024–2025 with delegations from China's Qingdao Industrial and Trade Zone, the Zaozhuang Vocational Institute, and Shandong University. Consequently, on July 26, 2025, the institute established a "Precious Metals and Jewelry Testing Laboratory" and a "Non-Ferrous Metals and Gemstones Testing Laboratory" with Chinese support.

The institute also maintains close ties with the Chinese Embassy in Tajikistan, which donated technical hardware—including next-generation computers and electronic devices—to the Faculty of Artificial Intelligence and New Technologies in December 2025.

Scientific Events and Educational Programs:

Tajik universities regularly attend events hosted by Chinese institutions. Tajik professors frequently present research at academic conferences in China, establishing new partnerships and discussing future collaboration frameworks.

Beyond scientific conferences, Tajik representatives participated in professional development initiatives in China during 2024–2025:

➡ **In September 2024,** professors from Tajik National University participated in Xinjiang University's international conference, "Bilateral Exchange Between China and Tajikistan in the Context of Higher Education Reform and Development," accompanied by bilateral strategy sessions.

➡ **In May 2025**, a dean from the State Pedagogical University named after Sadriddin Ayni completed a professional development program organized by Xinjiang University.

➡ **In November 2025**, a professor from the Mining-Metallurgical Institute delivered a report at an international conference in China titled "Integration and Cooperation in Industry, Education, and Research on Metallurgy and Advanced Materials."

Collaboration with Chinese Corporations:

Tajik universities actively engage with Chinese corporate entities across diverse initiatives, including industrial collaboration, student training, seminars, training centers, and joint laboratory developments. Between 2024 and 2025, representatives from three Tajik universities established formal partnerships with various Chinese corporations.

Similar to its operations in Azerbaijan and Georgia, Huawei remains highly active in Tajikistan's education sector. Since 2016, the company has operated its signature educational initiative, "Seeds for the Future," providing two-week training programs in information and communication technology (ICT) and Chinese cultural activities to ten young Tajik public servants and students annually. According to the Tajik National Information Agency Khovar, the program advances telecommunications and digital skills training while reinforcing structural cooperation between Tajik educational institutions and Huawei.

Links of the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan with China

The approach of the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan (NAST) toward China aligns with the country's governmental policy. The Academy not only develops scientific-research cooperation with the People's Republic, but also emerges as one of the supporting institutions of bilateral diplomatic and political relations.

Relations between NAST and the research institutes of the People's Republic are intensive in nature. In 2024–2025, representatives of various Chinese scientific institutions carried out more than six visits to the Academy. During the period under review, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Geological Society of China actively cooperated with NAST. The partnership between NAST and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences includes organizing and conducting scientific events, publishing joint publications, implementing shared research, and other activities.

On their part, NAST employees also periodically visit China to deepen bilateral ties. For instance, on October 11–25, 2024, Academy member G.I. Kokhirova visited China. Within the framework of the visit, a round table was held, where issues regarding the implementation of joint scientific projects between China and Tajikistan were discussed.





Beyond bilateral visits and joint events, cooperation between scientific institutions also entails the establishment of shared laboratories and research centers. The "Sino-Tajik Innovation Center for Natural Products" functions within the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan. The partner of the center is the Xinjiang Technical Institute of Physics and Chemistry of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. On September 22, 2025, new pharmaceutical equipment was installed at the center, for the purchase of which the Chinese Academy of Sciences allocated 1.5 million Tajikistani somoni (approximately USD 161,762).

In addition to the Sino-Tajik Innovation Center for Natural Products, the Research Center for Ecology and Environment of Central Asia has been functioning in Tajikistan since 2017. The founders of the center are the Xinjiang Technical Institute of Physics and Chemistry of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan. Within the framework of cooperation between the Academies of Sciences of Tajikistan and China, the center conducts scientific-research activities.

On July 21, 2025, a joint Tajik-Chinese laboratory was opened at the Research Center for Ecology and Environment of Central Asia, with the participation of the President of the Academy of Sciences and the Deputy Minister of Science and Technology of China. The laboratory's activities include conducting research, developing relevant technologies, promoting green and sustainable development in the region, and supporting scientific and technological development

within the framework of the "Belt and Road" initiative as well as the initiative to "build a China-Tajikistan community with a shared future in the new era." Scientists and experts from Central Asian countries are given the opportunity to participate in the laboratory's work.

The National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan also actively cooperates with the Ministry of Science and Technology of China. Relations between the parties are based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed in August 2017. The said memorandum provides for the encouragement and funding of joint scientific and research projects.

On April 27, 2024, NAST and the Ministry of Science and Technology of China announced a competition in science and technology. Scientific and higher education institutions of China and Tajikistan were eligible to participate in the competition. Within the framework of the program, the People's Republic of China allocated 1 million yuan (approximately USD 160,000). The program envisaged the implementation of joint Sino-Tajik projects in sustainable development, renewable energy, as well as technology.

In addition to joint projects, Tajik scientists also have the opportunity to participate in grant competitions announced by Chinese scientific institutions. In February 2025, at the initiative of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, NAST announced a competition for Tajik scientists. The program envisaged cooperation and project implementation between individual scientists and Chinese enterprises. Grants of up to 2 million yuan were allocated for the winning researchers and experts.

Thus, relations between the scientific academies and research institutes of Tajikistan and China are multidimensional and encompass regular bilateral visits, cooperation agreements, exchange programs, joint projects, and the establishment of research centers and laboratories. High-level educational-scientific relations between the two countries directly reflect on the dynamics of cooperation between the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan and Chinese scientific institutions.

Comparative Analysis

The Communist Party of China's "soft power" strategy in target countries primarily serves to construct positive perceptions of the People's Republic and win public goodwill. To this end, Beijing mobilizes cultural, educational, scientific, information, and social resources, through which China is depicted as a "peace-loving" superpower and a role model for development. In this regard, similar narratives regarding the People's Republic of China emerged across all three target countries: local political elites and representatives of media associated with them portray Beijing as a "reliable" partner and a "peace-seeking" international actor.

A comparative analysis of the cases of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan revealed that the scale and effectiveness of China's "soft power" largely depend on two interconnected factors:

1. The importance of the country in China's foreign policy strategy;

2. The attitude of the local political establishment toward the People's Republic of China.

The combination of these two factors determines both the choice of specific "soft power" instruments and the scale and intensity of their application. Furthermore, the geographical proximity of the country, high economic integration, and the non-democratic nature of the local political regime create additional favorable conditions for the dissemination and strengthening of China's soft power instruments.

Key Findings of the Research:

➡ **At the level of official discourse, Beijing lists relations with all three states as a foreign policy priority. However, based on diplomatic relations and other vectors of bilateral cooperation, these countries occupy different positions on China's foreign policy agenda.**

Taking into account geographical proximity, the importance of strategic resources, and the degree of economic vulnerability, Tajikistan is a higher-priority partner for Beijing compared to Azerbaijan and Georgia. Documents signed between the two countries also confirm that in terms of the intensity of political and diplomatic relations with China, Tajikistan surpasses the countries of the South Caucasus. The "Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership for a New Era" agreement signed between official Dushanbe and Beijing reflects the aligned and convergent visions of the parties on international relations and regional issues.

After Tajikistan, among the countries of the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan can be considered the second priority vector for Beijing. Official Baku's foreign policy, the nature of the country's political system, as well as its strategic geographical location and resource potential make Azerbaijan an important partner for China. Special attention is paid to the importance of the Middle Corridor during meetings between official figures, pointing to Beijing's economic and geostrategic interests in the country. The establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries in 2025 once again confirmed that Azerbaijan is one of the priorities of China's strategy in the South Caucasus.

Georgia can be considered in the third position among the study countries. Official Tbilisi's recent non-democratic governance practices and anti-Western foreign policy course, the country's strategic geography, and a favorable business environment for the operations of Chinese

companies make Georgia an attractive partner. However, in terms of potential for connecting with Europe, transit function, and economic resources, Azerbaijan occupies a superior position compared to Georgia in China's regional strategy.

➡ China's "soft power" is closely linked to its economic interests.

In countries where China's economic engagement is high or growing, "soft power" operations expand in parallel. Thus, the cultural and educational activities of the People's Republic in target countries do not function merely as public diplomacy; they also emerge as mechanisms to promote and protect China's economic and political interests.

Tajikistan, in terms of economic, social, and educational resources, is significantly dependent on foreign actors. Against the backdrop of declining Russian influence, China has consolidated a dominant position in Tajikistan and in recent years has established itself as one of the country's largest trading partners and investors. Alongside the intensification of China's economic involvement, reducing potential public resistance toward China and forming positive perceptions of the People's Republic became important for Beijing. Consequently, China's influence operations in Tajikistan are closely linked to its economic interests, as a result of which Beijing's "soft power" strategy in the country is relatively intensive in nature.

In terms of vulnerability to Chinese influence, the second important country is Georgia. Since the 2010s, the People's Republic has demonstrated growing interest in Georgia's infrastructural and other strategic projects. From the same period, the number of Chinese companies operating in Georgia has increased significantly. In parallel with protecting and expanding economic interests, strengthening its positions in the country and shaping a supportive public environment became increasingly important for Beijing. Thus, alongside the expansion of Chinese business interests, Georgia became one of the target countries of Beijing's "soft power."

Compared to Tajikistan and Georgia, Azerbaijan is distinguished by higher economic independence and a cautious policy regarding relations with external actors. Consequently, relations between Beijing and Baku carry less of an asymmetrical, senior-and-junior partner character. However, in recent years, the activity of Chinese companies and investors in Azerbaijan has increased. Against the backdrop of growing bilateral economic benefits, the Azerbaijani government is becoming increasingly well-disposed toward China's economic and political involvement, which creates additional opportunities for Beijing to expand its influence in the country.

➡ The type of political regime of the influence-recipient state affects the effectiveness of China's "soft power."

In authoritarian and semi-authoritarian systems, where foreign policy decisions are primarily determined by a narrow circle of the political elite, the opportunities for disseminating Chinese narratives and popularizing relations with China are significantly higher. In such conditions, "soft power" instruments contribute not only to shaping a positive image of China, but also to legitimizing the foreign policy choices of the local ruling elite.

In Tajik-Chinese inter-state relations, the convergence of interests between ruling parties and political elites is clearly evident. Strategic agreements signed between the two countries pay special attention to cooperation between party and ruling elites. Accordingly, a significant portion of bilateral relations is linked to the interests of Emomali Rahmon and his political circle. Beijing effectively utilizes this circumstance: China's "soft power" strategy in Tajikistan is not

limited to shaping a positive image of the People's Republic, but also includes elements of supporting the stability and governance model legitimacy of the local political regime.

In Azerbaijan, as in Tajikistan, power is sharply centralized, and the country is ruled by the oligarchic regime of the Aliyev family. Accordingly, the foreign policy course toward China is stable and consolidated. Elements of inter-party diplomacy are broadly represented in Azerbaijan-China relations. Furthermore, China's "soft power" operations are, to an extent, oriented toward strengthening cooperation between the ruling parties of the two countries.

Georgia, unlike Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, does not represent a consolidated authoritarian regime. However, in recent years, against the backdrop of the consolidation of "Georgian Dream's" political power, the strengthening of Bidzina Ivanishvili's influence, and the country's growing distancing from the West, political-party cooperation between "Georgian Dream" and the Communist Party of China has intensified. The Georgian government turned the deepening of relations with China into one of the instruments for legitimizing its foreign policy course. Accordingly, in official Tbilisi's discourse, China increasingly appears as an alternative to the West and a "reliable partner." However, unlike Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, the high level of pro-Western sentiments in Georgian society significantly limits the effectiveness of China's "soft power" operations.

➡ **China's "soft power" strategy is based on a complex, multidimensional system of instruments encompassing means of information, educational, cultural, political, and academic influence**.

A comparative analysis of Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia showed that China's "soft power" instruments are represented with varying intensity and scale in each country.

In Azerbaijan, China's "soft power" strategy includes forms of party diplomacy, educational programs, university diplomacy, media partnerships, and scientific cooperation. However, among these instruments, university diplomacy is notable for its particularly broad scale and intensity.

In Tajikistan, China's "soft power" instruments include elements of party diplomacy as well as media, educational, and scientific institution cooperation. However, unlike other target countries, Tajikistan's universities and scientific centers benefit from Chinese financial support and grants. Furthermore, both bilateral and multilateral formats of cooperation with China are available to Tajikistan.

In Georgia, China's soft power strategy includes formats of party diplomacy, cultural cooperation, information influences, and educational and scientific partnerships. However, unlike Azerbaijan and Tajikistan, the aforementioned instruments in Georgia are characterized by a lower degree of institutionalization. Despite this, cultural and educational cooperation with China is developing intensively.

Conclusion

The research showed that in all three countries, China's "soft power" operations are characterized by growing dynamics. In this regard, a trend toward the intensification of Chinese educational, academic, and media activities was identified in Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The "soft power" instruments utilized by official Beijing allow China to expand its influence across various sectors. However, China's "soft power" strategy in the South Caucasus and Central Asia is implemented with varying scale and intensity.

The research established that the Communist Party of China's "soft power" strategy does not constitute a universal model designed identically for all countries. Its scale, intensity, and utilized instruments depend both on Beijing's foreign policy priorities and on the political, economic, and societal context of the influence-recipient state. Accordingly, China's "soft power" is a flexible and adaptable strategy through which Beijing, taking into account the specifics of a given country, seeks to form a political and societal environment favorable to it.

The comparative analysis of Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia also revealed that the effectiveness of China's "soft power" operations is closely linked to the political system of the recipient country. In the case of Tajikistan and Azerbaijan, the authoritarian political environment and the government's favorable disposition toward China facilitate the dissemination of positive narratives about Beijing and the institutionalization of its influence. In the case of Georgia, despite the government's deepening of relations with China, a more pluralistic political and media environment, as well as prevailing pro-Western sentiments in society, significantly limit the effectiveness of China's "soft power" operations.

The examples of the Central Asian and South Caucasian countries also demonstrated that for official Beijing, "soft power" represents an active foreign policy instrument. Moreover, the People's Republic of China's "soft power" strategy must be viewed in the context of US-China strategic rivalry. In all three study countries, China presents itself as a rising superpower and an alternative, reliable force to the West. In this respect, a broader geopolitical ambition lies behind Beijing's "soft power."

The narratives supported or disseminated by Beijing in Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia encompassed two directions: popularizing the Communist Party's development model and "exposing" the West (primarily the US). As the research demonstrated, China's "soft power" strategy overtly opposes the liberal democratic agenda. Therefore, its unconditional acceptance is characteristic of authoritarian regimes like Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. In Georgia, where the last bastions of democracy still exist, China's "soft power" cannot be fully realized. However, according to the research findings, the current policies of "Georgian Dream" create favorable preconditions for the intensification of Beijing's "soft power" operations.