

# **Beyond the Silk Road:** Navigating the Complexities of Central Asia's Public Opinion of China

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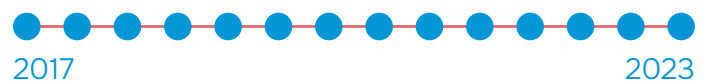
## Introduction

China has emerged as a major global partner of Central Asia, increasing volumes of trade, investment, and aid in the region. In the 1990s, China began extending its influence in Central Asia when countries there gained independence from the Soviet Union. Since then, China has engaged in regional integration through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the China-Central Asia Summit, and it has sought to expand economic integration as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). State leaders in Central Asia have embraced China as a partner that brings economic opportunities and investment with few to no conditions or demands. Yet, as China's involvement in Central Asia has increased, citizens of these states have become aware of China's presence, and thus concern over public perceptions became central to China's foreign policy strategies to counter resentment, Sinophobia, and/or protests. Covering various aspects of public perceptions of China in Central Asia,<sup>1</sup> this multi-year study within and among the countries offers a comprehensive and systematic overview of how Central Asian citizens perceive China, how perceptions have changed over time, and what might be causing any such change.

**This report fills a gap in the existing literature by exploring questions related to public opinions of China gleaned from the 14 waves of the Central Asia Barometer Survey (CABS) performed between 2017 and 2023 across four Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.**



**14 waves of surveys**



<sup>1</sup> Pannier, B. (2024, June 25). Two years on from Karakalpakstan violence, activists struggle to make voice heard. *BNE Intellinews*. <https://www.intellinews.com/pannier-two-years-on-from-karakalpakstan-violence-activists-struggle-to-make-voice-heard-331154/>; RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service. (2020, February 24). Kyrgyz government cancels \$275 million Chinese project amid protests. *Radio Free Europe*. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyz-government-cancels-275-million-chinese-project-amid-protests/30451825.html>; Umarov, T. (2019, October 30). *What's behind protests against China in Kazakhstan?* Carnegie. <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/80229>; Abdurasulov, A. (2016, April 28). *Kazakhstan's land reform protests explained*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36163103>; RFE/RL's Kazakh Service. (2021, March 27). *Anti-China protests staged across Kazakhstan*. Radio Free Europe; Reuters Staff. (2019, September 4). *Dozens protest against Chinese influence in Kazakhstan*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kazakhstan-china-protests/dozens-protest-against-chinese-influence-in-kazakhstan-idUSKCN1VPIBO>.

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For researchers, the insights provided by the CABS data represent a valuable resource when it comes to analyzing the shifting dynamics of China's influence in Central Asia. The data not only reveal changing public perceptions of China across the region, but also point to broader geopolitical and economic transformations that are ongoing. Scholars can leverage these findings to investigate key issues such as regional security, economic interdependence, and migration trends, especially in light of China's growing presence and how it is reshaping the traditional power structures in Central Asia.

Given the unique circumstances and specificities of each Central Asian republic, it is essential to evaluate individual nuances alongside broader regional trends. The findings show a diversity of views among and within Central Asian countries. While China's favorability is seeing a resurgence in some countries, such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, a decline or even negative favorability is visible in other countries, like Uzbekistan.

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**Indeed, in all states except Uzbekistan, over 50% of respondents have a favorable opinion of China when last surveyed in 2023. Favorability toward China only sometimes reflects broader sentiments and is often similar to feeling regarding other major powers (Russia and the US).**

In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the CABS data indicate that favorability toward China has varied over time, while Russia's favorability has been in steady decline in all states at different rates, compared to the US, favorability toward which has been lower but relatively stable in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Meanwhile, in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, trends in perceptions of the three major powers have been more similar than for any other pairs of Central Asian states.

This report highlights the complexities of public sentiment toward China, shaped by regional and demographic differences, and underscores the need for further research to understand the evolving dynamics of China's presence in Central Asia. Public opinion varies across the region and over time, influenced by factors such as ethnicity, media consumption, as well as concerns over potential 'land grabs,' labor competition, and debt dependency. Traditional and social media play a critical role in molding these perceptions, with content from platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Odnoklassniki, and local news sources improving attitudes toward Chinese energy and infrastructure projects, workers, and technology. Issues that often dominate the conversation on Sinophobia, like debt and land acquisition, tend to have a negative impact on perceptions as well. Overall, the report's multi-year findings related to perceptions of China might offer some indications about globalization, media, geopolitics, and the tightening relationship between China and Central Asia.

Understanding how different respondents perceive China is the key contribution of these data, building upon other studies in the region.<sup>2</sup> Overall, across Central Asia, ethnicity as well as traditional and social media sources have the most robust impacts across the models, suggesting that these three variables affect perceptions of China the most. However, age, gender, urbanicity, and employment are also found to play a role in changing perceptions. The report unpacks these variables in detail. While it would be difficult to explain all drivers of perceptions definitively, it is nevertheless possible to guide researchers seeking data on Central Asia and local leaders trying to find support for their foreign policy strategies at home by understanding public perceptions.

The sub-section below briefly introduces the relationship between Central Asia and China followed by the research methods used by the Central Asia Barometer (CAB) institution. Thereafter, the first section provides a descriptive analysis of the following main questions of interest in this study:

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<sup>2</sup> Primiano, C. B., & Kudebayeva, A. (2022). *A bumpy ride for China's Belt and Road Initiative in Kazakhstan: Findings from a university survey*; Chen, Y. W., & Günther, O. (2020). Back to normalization or conflict with China in greater Central Asia?: Evidence from local students' perceptions. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 67(3), 228–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2018.1474716>; Neafie, J. (2022). Anti-Chinese sentiment, the BRI, and COVID-19: Kazakhstanian perceptions of China in Central Asia. In J. F. Caron & H. Thibault (Eds.), *Central Asia and the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Steppe and Beyond: Studies on Central Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-7586-7\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-7586-7_5); Primiano, C. B., Rice, D., & Kudebayeva, A. (2022). Perceptions of China in Central Asia: Findings from an elite university in Bishkek. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 7(4), 957–970; Burkhanov, A., & Chen, Y. W. (2016). Kazakh perspective on China, the Chinese, and Chinese migration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(12), 2129–2148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1139155>; Land, S., Neafie, J., & Courtney, M. G. R. (2024). The role of identity and strategic narratives on public perceptions of China: The case of the New Silk Road in Kazakhstan. *Area Development and Policy*.

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- **Do respondents have a favorable opinion of China?**
  - **Do respondents support China's development of energy and infrastructure projects in their country?**
  - **Do respondents support the practice of China bringing workers to their country for energy and infrastructure projects?**
  - **Do respondents support the use of Chinese technology in their country?**

The second section then describes the five variables affecting beliefs or stereotypes with regard to investment and shows the results of five sets of regressions at the regional level, and for each of the four countries in the dataset, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. In the third section, we discuss our findings and their implications for studies of globalization, media, geopolitics, and other areas. Overall, the findings are nuanced and reveal a diversity of perceptions across the region, which disproves simplistic imaginaries of regional homogeneity.





## Background: China in Central Asia

Central Asia's strategic importance for China – politically and economically – is growing. Initially, in the early years of the post-Soviet period, China was not actively involved in intra-regional processes in Central Asia and did not wield the same influence it does today, limiting itself to selective bilateral contacts and cooperation within the SCO framework. However, Central Asia has now become a region where significant Chinese investments are concentrated, particularly in the modernization and development of infrastructure, the exploitation of natural resources, and, increasingly, manufacturing and agriculture.

China's growing presence and influence in the region are driven largely by its geographical location and transit potential. The key terrestrial route of China's BRI, launched in 2013, passes through the territories of all five Central Asian countries, making the region a crucial bridge linking the markets of Europe and China. Indeed, the BRI has become the cornerstone of China's relations with Central Asian countries, providing the latter with much-needed infrastructure investments, thereby enhancing the connectivity of the entire region.

China has become a leading strategic partner for Central Asian countries over the course of the three decades of their independence, investing significant sums within the region. By strengthening and deepening their ties with China, Central Asian countries have pursued political and economic interests, which are of significant relevance to research on the impact of Chinese investment. Consequently, policymakers and experts on both sides are currently exploring questions related to the impact of these trends on local populations and their perceptions. In particular, how does the Central Asian public perceive China? And, what factors influence public perceptions of China in Central Asia?

Furthermore, China's interest in the region is influenced by its vast reserves of energy resources, representing a viable supply for the country's growing energy needs. China seeks to present its strategy as "win-win," providing Central Asian states with critical infrastructure development while securing its own access to essential energy resources and new markets.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Neafie, J. (2022). "No one stole anyone else's cheese": The politics of infrastructural competition in Kazakhstan. In S. Schindler & J. DiCarlo (Eds.), *The rise of the infrastructure state: How US-China rivalry shapes politics and place worldwide*. Bristol University Press.

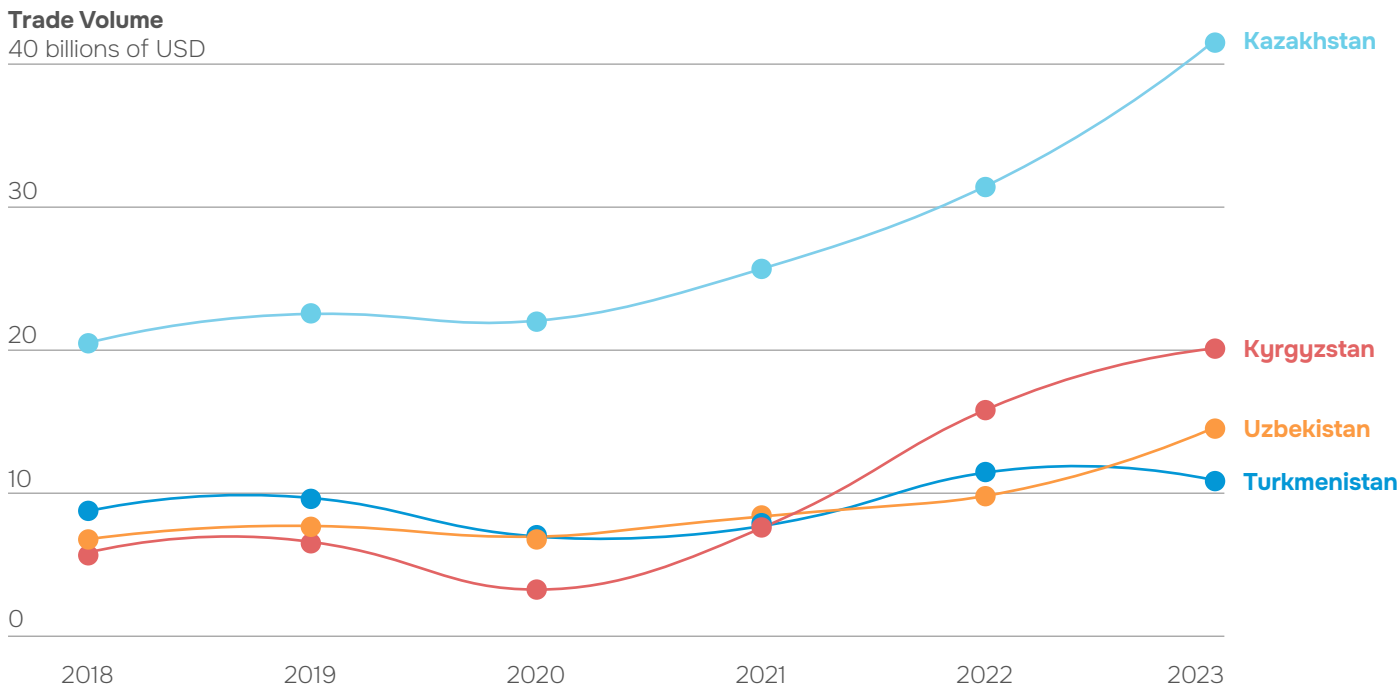
Central Asian governments see this strategy as beneficial too as they aim to reduce their dependence on Russia by expanding multifaceted relations with China.<sup>4</sup> Presently, China is viewed in the region as a significant actor capable of counterbalancing the influence of other global powers.

For Central Asia, deepening relations with China—especially in trade and economic domains—promises significant benefits from the sale of their hydrocarbons. Exporting energy resources to China is a crucial source of budget revenue for countries in the region, particularly for Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. It is also important to consider that the financing of the construction of roads, railways, and new energy pipelines throughout the region, under the BRI, allows Central Asian states to enhance their connectivity. For these landlocked countries, the development of transport infrastructure is critically important in gaining access to global markets. Today, China’s investment is even more appealing as it moves beyond infrastructure and traditional energy to invest in sectors fundamental to Central Asian economic development, such as clean energy projects, manufacturing,

and agriculture.<sup>5</sup> The influx of Chinese capital provides Central Asia with significant opportunities to stimulate economic growth, modernize infrastructure, and develop new industries. Overall, access to the Chinese market, along with its investments, helps these nations to diversify their exports—from agricultural products to industrial goods and natural resources.

As of 2024, China has surpassed Russia as the top trading partner for most countries in the region. China is now one of the leading trading partners (Figure 1) and one of the largest sources of foreign investments and loans, which undoubtedly contributes to developing the region’s economic potential. However, the growing presence of China raises significant concerns (e.g. ‘debt traps’ and ‘land grabs’) and numerous questions that are often difficult to answer due to the lack of transparency in Chinese investments, which inevitably causes some anxiety among the region’s populations. These fears are especially relevant given that some countries in the region have already accumulated substantial debts to China.

**FIGURE 1: TRADE VOLUME IN BILLIONS OF US\$ BETWEEN CHINA AND CENTRAL ASIAN STATES**



Data from General Administration of Customs of the People’s Republic of China (GACC) statistics, prepared by the authors.

<sup>4</sup> Neafie, J. (2022). “No one stole anyone else’s cheese”: The politics of infrastructural competition in Kazakhstan. In S. Schindler & J. DiCarlo (Eds.), *The rise of the infrastructure state: How US-China rivalry shapes politics and place worldwide*. Bristol University Press; Neafie, J. (2023). Producing the Eurasian land bridge: A case study of the geoeconomic contestation in Kazakhstan. *International Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-022-00386-9>; Vanderhill, R., Joireman, S. F., & Tulepbayeva, R. (2020). Between the bear and the dragon: Multivectorism in Kazakhstan as a model strategy for secondary powers. *International Affairs*, 96(4), 975–993. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa061>.

<sup>5</sup> Van der Kley, D., & Yau, N. (2021). *How Central Asians pushed Chinese firms to localize*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Maracchione, F. (2023). Licorice and leather: Spotting Chinese soft power in rural Uzbekistan. *Eurasianet*.

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Central Asia's engagement with China is influenced by China's economic, political, and cultural diplomacy, resulting in mixed perceptions across the region. While political elites largely view China's deepening involvement positively – thanks to significant investments in infrastructure, energy, and key sectors like clean energy and agriculture – the general public remains cautious. The BRI has provided much-needed connectivity for these landlocked nations, enhancing access to global markets and boosting economic diversification, as well as opening up new directions for the export of hydrocarbons.

However, concerns about growing economic dependency, large debts, environmental impacts, and cultural influence create public unease. Despite these apprehensions, China's presence has become ubiquitous, with its influence likely to grow as Central Asian states balance the benefits of development with the challenges of managing sovereignty and economic expansion.



## Methods

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The survey for this report was performed using CABS data. The target population included all residents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan aged 18 and over. Prior to 2020, data collection was primarily conducted through face-to-face (f2f) interviews, ensuring thorough representation of populations.<sup>6</sup> Since 2020, the survey has relied on phone interviews using random-digit dialing (RDD) of mobile phone numbers, in turn reflecting the increased access to mobile networks across the region and the need for remote data collection due to pandemic-related restrictions. The survey was performed in all national languages (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and Uzbek) as well as Russian. Simple random sampling was used in each country to select representative samples – the selection strategy aimed to secure balanced representation of demographic variables and representative variables (gender, age group, region, urbanicity and sometimes ethnicity) Sample sizes ranged from 1,500 to 2,000 respondents in each wave, which provided sufficient statistical power to identify trends and differences across the region, with some years missing for the Turkmenistan data (see Table 1 in the Appendix).<sup>7</sup>

The analysis uses descriptive statistics and advanced inference techniques to explore the relationships between and among key variables. While the CABS includes both open-ended and closed-ended questions, the study focused solely on the latter type. These questions were specifically related to China, including topics such as media usage, economic perceptions, political views, and attitudes toward Chinese investments and influence. This report specifically analyzes the following four variables used to measure public opinion on China from the CABS: favorability of China; support for Chinese investment in infrastructure and energy projects; support for Chinese workers; and support for Chinese technology. After an overview of the CABS data, the pooled cross-sectional data regression analysis deepens our understanding of which social characteristics, political opinions, and geographical aspects influence specific Central Asian publics and their favorability toward China's role in the region. Pooled data analysis methods using time period variables (wave dummies) in the modeling have also been applied to assess changes in public perceptions over time since the dataset is pooled from survey wave to survey wave.

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<sup>6</sup> Additional information on survey methods, wave to wave weights, and response rates can be found on the CABS website: <https://ca-barometer.org/en/cab-database>

<sup>7</sup> The statistics of the CABS data can be found in the Appendix Table 1.

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The CABS results were interpreted taking into consideration the socio-political context in which the data were collected, which ensured that the results obtained were firmly rooted in the regional realities of Central Asia. Given the political contexts in which the surveys were conducted, respondents' answers were scrutinized carefully, especially when dealing with politically sensitive topics. It has been well documented in survey research, particularly in authoritarian regimes, that respondents are likely to provide socially desirable responses, particularly when discussing topics such as foreign relations or government performance. This phenomenon, often referred to as authoritarian bias,<sup>8</sup> can manifest itself in reluctance to express critical opinions about China, especially in countries with strong political or economic ties with China, or where respondents may fear surveillance of, or repercussions for, their answers.

During the data processing, a decision was made to remove the 'Don't know,' 'Refused,' and 'NAs' from the data. As the 'Don't know' response option only accommodates those that do not have an opinion, its inclusion would not have improved the data quality.<sup>9</sup>

Although the report provides valuable information about the public perceptions of China in Central Asia, several limitations should be noted in addition to potential authoritarian bias, as discussed above. One such limitation is that, after 2020, the need to conduct phone surveys could have excluded specific segments of the population, especially those without access to mobile phones. It should also be noted that the switch in mode of data collection from face-to-face interviews before 2020 to phone interviews thereafter may have affected results. Research elsewhere has previously found that telephone surveys may lead to more socially desirable responses compared to face-to-face interviews.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Turkmenistan's dataset is notably less extensive than that of the three other covered states, encompassing only about half the data available for other countries as the survey was only performed in certain years (see Table 1 in the Appendix). Nevertheless, the findings remain insightful and provide valuable opportunities for comparison with neighboring states.

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<sup>8</sup> Kuran, T. (1995). *Private truths, public lies: The social consequences of preference falsification*. Harvard University Press; Truex, R. (2016). *Making autocracy work: Representation and responsiveness in modern China*. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>9</sup> Krosnick, J. A., Holbrook, A. L., Berent, M. K., Carson, R. T., & et al. (2002). The impact of "no opinion" response options on data quality: Non-attitude reduction or an invitation to satisfice? *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 66(3), 371-403.

<sup>10</sup> Holbrook, A. L., Green, M. C., & Krosnick, J. A. (2003). Telephone versus face-to-face interviewing of national probability samples with long questionnaires. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 67, 79-125.



# Section 1

## **Opinions of China in Central Asia**

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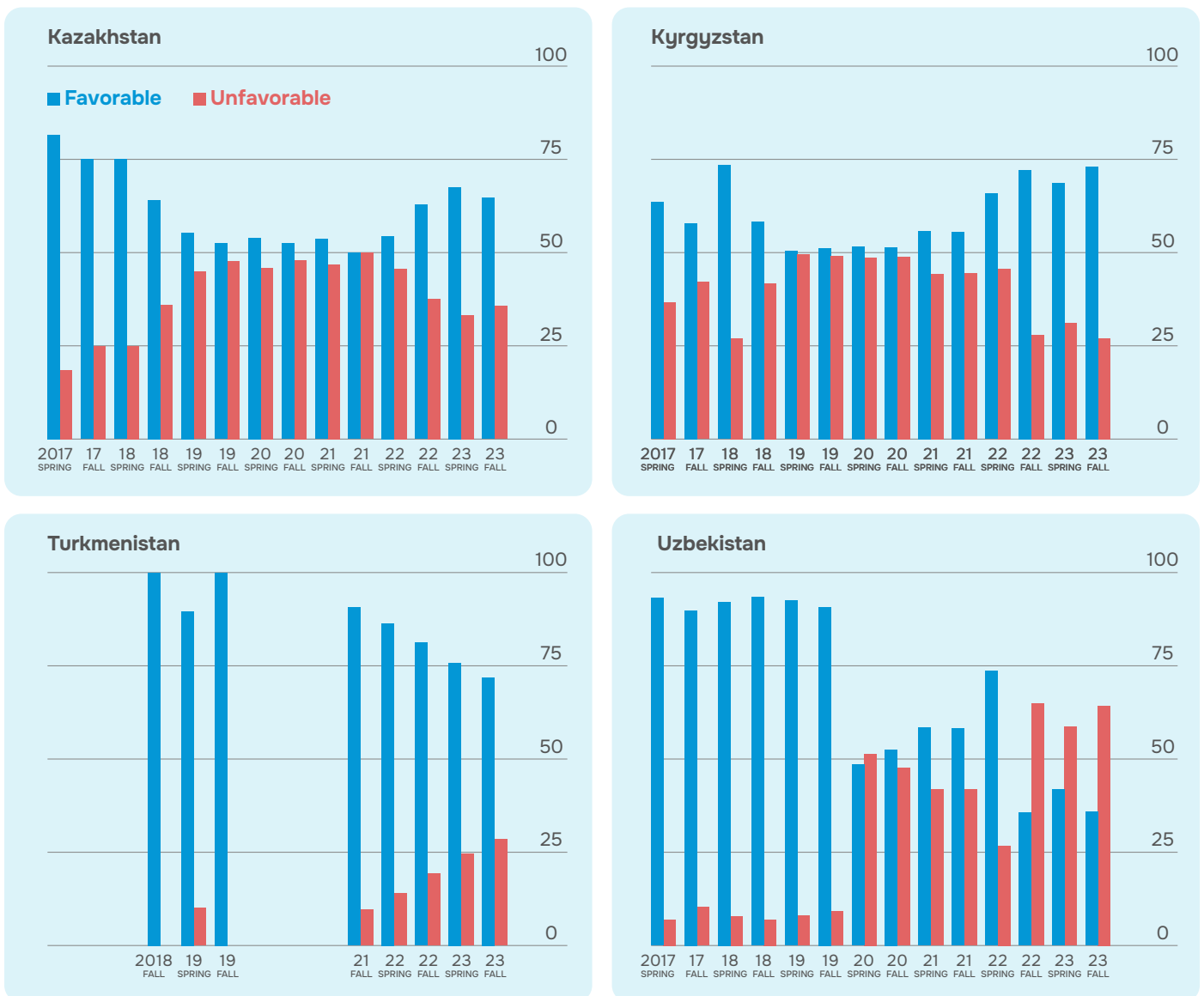
# Favorability Toward China

The perceptions of China in Central Asia vary significantly across different countries (see the questions in Table 1 in the Appendix). Figure 2 shows public opinion trends, indicating how favorability toward China has evolved in these nations over time.

In Kazakhstan, public opinion toward China has remained favorable, however it went from a high of 81.7% in spring 2017 down to 50.1% in fall 2021.

There have been shifts in favorability over time here, with a decrease in the earlier years of the survey period and subsequent increases in the last four waves. However, the overall trend through the survey waves indicates a consistently positive perception of China. Unfavorable opinions increased from 2017 to 2021 but did not outnumber favorable views.

**FIGURE 2: FAVORABILITY TOWARD CHINA OF RESPONDENTS FROM CENTRAL ASIA**



% of total; CABS data

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Kyrgyzstan has displayed a trend similar to Kazakhstan, albeit starting with a lower level of favorability in spring 2017 (63.5%). There were notable shifts in favorable and unfavorable opinions in Kyrgyzstan, increasing to 73.4% favorability in spring 2018. Initially, favorable opinions were high, but never quite as high as those seen in Kazakhstan. In Kyrgyzstan, there was a significant decline in favorability from 2019 to 2021, hitting a low of 50.3% in spring 2019. In 2021, favorable opinions rebounded, indicating a recovery in China's image about citizens of Kyrgyzstan, although unfavorable opinions remained significant (ranging from 26.9% to 31.3%).

In Turkmenistan, a consistent and sharp divide persisted between favorable and unfavorable opinions. Favorable opinions remained overwhelmingly high, only dropping below 75% in fall 2023. Unfavorable opinions stayed relatively low, indicating a stable positive perception of China within the country. However, the waves from 2021 to 2023 show that favorability toward China has been declining steadily, dropping from over 80.5% in fall 2021 to less than 71.6% by the end of 2023.

In Uzbekistan, the trends have been more complex. Initially, Uzbekistani respondents were largely favorable toward China, with unfavorable views under 11%. Before fall 2019, the lowest favorability rating was 89.7% in fall 2017.

However, the data show a significant shift in spring 2020 as favorability plummeted to 48.8%. From spring 2020 onwards, there was an upward trend, recovering to 73.2% by spring 2022. However, in Fall 2022, favorable opinions sharply declined to 35.2%. This trend has continued since, going in the opposite direction of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where increases in favorable perceptions were recorded during the same period.

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**In summary, while perceptions of China in Central Asia have more often been positive over time, they have not been uniform across the region. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan typically display favorable views toward China with varying trends, thereby reflecting successful impact of enhanced bilateral relations under the BRI.**

However, Uzbekistan exhibits more fluctuating and complex sentiments, suggesting that public opinion there is more sensitive to specific events and developments in their relations with China. These variations underscore the nuanced and evolving nature of China's influence in Central Asia, shaped by domestic factors and the broader global context.



## Support for Chinese Projects, Workers, and Technology

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China is a leading investor in infrastructure projects across Central Asia. Through the BRI, Central Asians interact with China and its investment projects, workers, and technology. These energy and infrastructure investments often lead to an increase in Chinese migration and technology transfer, producing mixed feelings among local populations. In fall 2018, in Kazakhstan, a slight majority of respondents supported Chinese projects (51.3%), however over time opinions grew more mixed on Chinese energy and infrastructure projects (see Figure 3.1).

**Indeed, opposition to Chinese projects increased until fall 2020 when it hit 67.9%, and that remained the majority view until spring 2023 when it dropped to 45.6%.**

That marked the first point since 2018 when there was overall support for these projects. Similarly, a majority of Kyrgyzstanis showed a relatively high level of support in fall 2018 (57.1%) and spring 2019, but opposition to these new investments was more dominant from 2019 until 2022.

The highest level of such opposition was recorded in fall 2020 (as was the case in Kazakhstan) at 65.6% after which the trend started to reverse. By fall 2023, support for such investments had recovered to 64.1%. Meanwhile, favorability toward Chinese projects in energy and infrastructure displayed similar patterns. In Uzbekistan, a more

stable level of support was recorded, with a consistent and decisive majority in favor of new Chinese projects despite generally unfavorable sentiment toward China. In Turkmenistan, support remained overwhelmingly high, with minimal opposition, reflecting the country's consistently favorable view of China.

**FIGURE 3: SUPPORT FOR CHINESE PROJECTS IN ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE, WORKERS, AND TECHNOLOGY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

**FIGURE 3.1: SUPPORT FOR CHINESE PROJECTS IN ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN CENTRAL ASIA**



% of total; CABS data

Figure 3.2 focuses on support for the employment of Chinese workers in energy and infrastructure projects in Central Asia. Again, opinions were mixed here, with strong opposition in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and relatively robust support in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

In Kazakhstan, opposition to the employment of Chinese workers has remained constantly high, starting at 70.6% in fall 2019 and then staying above 75% through spring 2022. Thereafter, a slight decrease in opposition was recorded in fall 2023, dropping to 70.1%.

Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan, the opposition was high at 76.6% in fall 2019 and remained at least that high until spring 2022 when it dipped to 72.8%. In general, since fall 2020, there has been a slight increase in support across the region. This suggests that favorability toward China in general does not correlate with support for employment of Chinese workers. Uzbekistan presents a complex picture here, as it started with strong support for workers (73.3% in fall 2019) before dropping to 53.7% by spring 2020.

However, the downward trend was subsequently reversed and by spring 2022 had recovered to 61.1%. The trends in terms of support for Chinese workers in Uzbekistan were more similar to their general favorability trends, with support dipping in fall 2022 (50.9%) and fall 2023 (49%). Initially, in 2019, Turkmenistan showed opposition to Chinese workers, but since 2021 demonstrated strong support for them, which aligns with the consistently positive perceptions of China in the country.

**FIGURE 3.2: SUPPORT FOR CHINESE WORKERS IN CENTRAL ASIA**



*% of total; CABS data*

Figure 3.3 examines support for using Chinese technology in the covered Central Asian countries. The exact types of technology were not specified in the survey question and could thus be interpreted as either everyday high-tech products, such as smartphones and computers, or security technology such as smart city tools

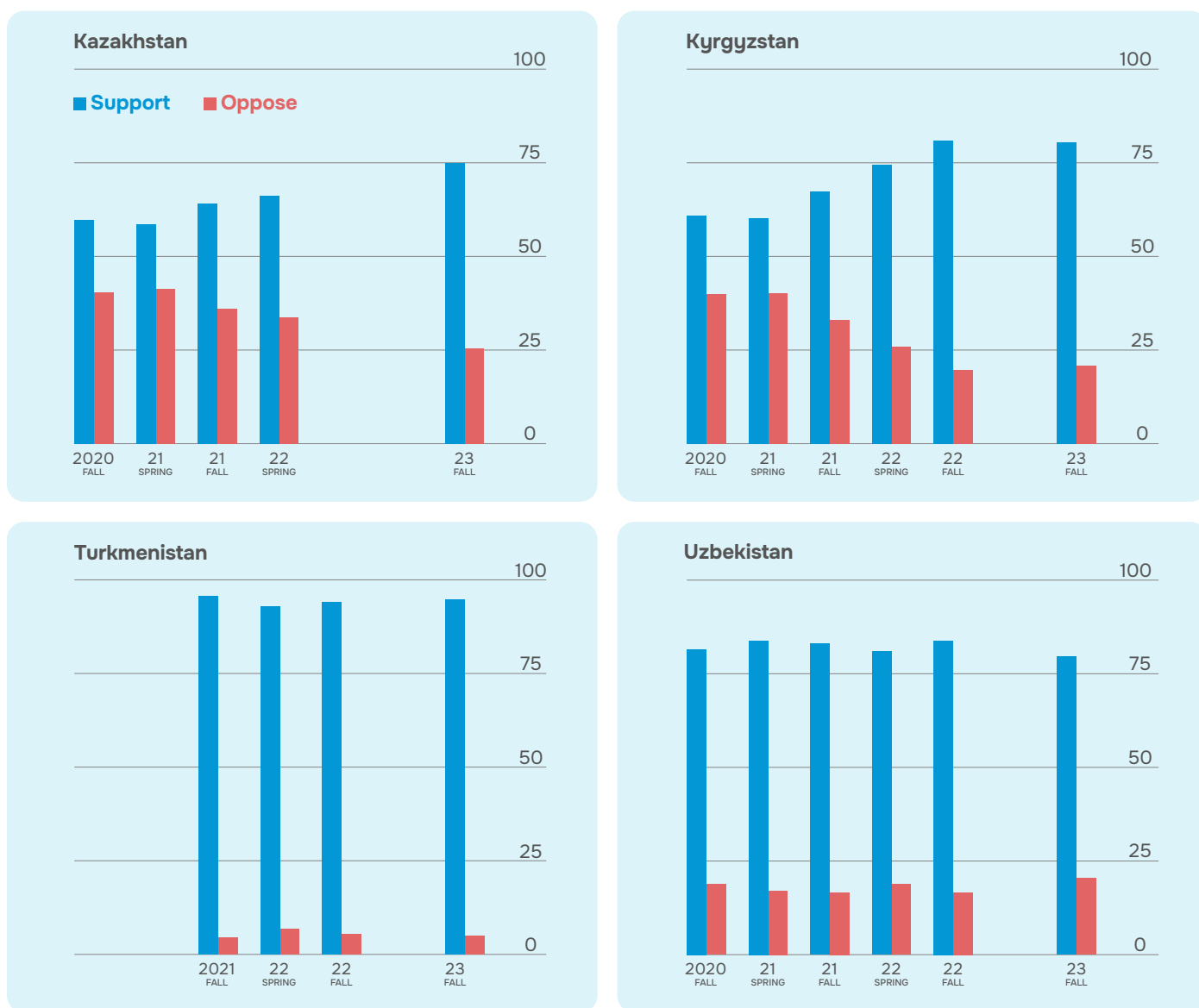
including face recognition, which are routinely used by security forces. While we cannot determine precisely the type of technology that respondents had in mind here, similar research suggests that everyday technology is generally more welcomed than security-related tools.<sup>11</sup>

Across all countries, there has been strong and stable support for the use of Chinese technology through the years. In Kazakhstan, support for Chinese technology was generally high over the reporting period (greater than 50% favorability), with an increasing trend, despite a comparatively moderate favorability rating with regard to China. Kyrgyzstan also showed a notable increase in support for Chinese technology, which contrasts with its fluctuating favorability toward China during the same period. Uzbekistan and

Turkmenistan maintained steady support for Chinese technology usage (over 75%) despite changes in favorability toward China.

Across the covered Central Asian countries, favorability toward China does not seem to be strongly related to support for its projects, workers, and technology. Overall, support for Chinese initiatives is complex, and specific factors such as the employment of Chinese workers and technology adoption are viewed independently of overall favorability.

**FIGURE 3.3: SUPPORT FOR CHINESE TECHNOLOGY IN CENTRAL ASIA, FROM FALL 2020**



% of total; CABS data

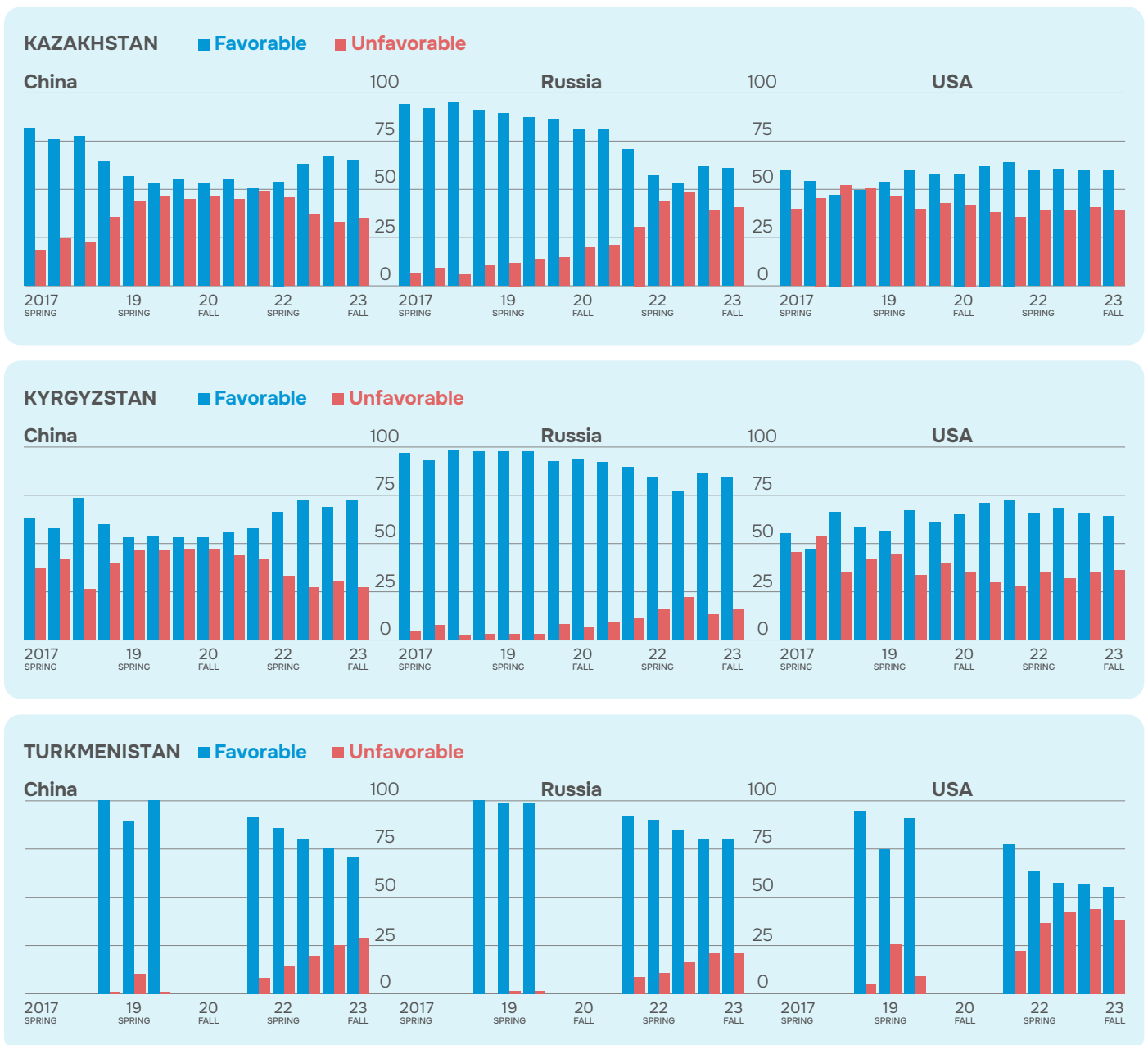
<sup>11</sup> Jardine, B. (2023, October 26). The smart city where everybody knows your name. *Coda*. <https://www.codastory.com/authoritarian-tech/kazakhstan-smart-city-surveillance/>; Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, Azattyk TV. (2023, September 12). «Я люблю свой город, но ничего “умного” здесь нет»; Yau, N. (2019, August 7). Smart cities or surveillance? Huawei in Central Asia. *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/08/smart-cities-or-surveillance-huawei-in-central-asia/>; Sukhankin, S. (2021). Tracking the digital component of the BRI in Central Asia, Part One: Exporting “Safe Cities” to Uzbekistan. *China Brief*, 21(3). The Jamestown Foundation; Dukeev, B., & Mirzakhmedova, D. (2024, January 27). Huawei усиливает позиции в телекоммуникационном секторе Центральной Азии. *Anhor*. <https://anhor.uz/vzglyad-iznutri/huawei/>.

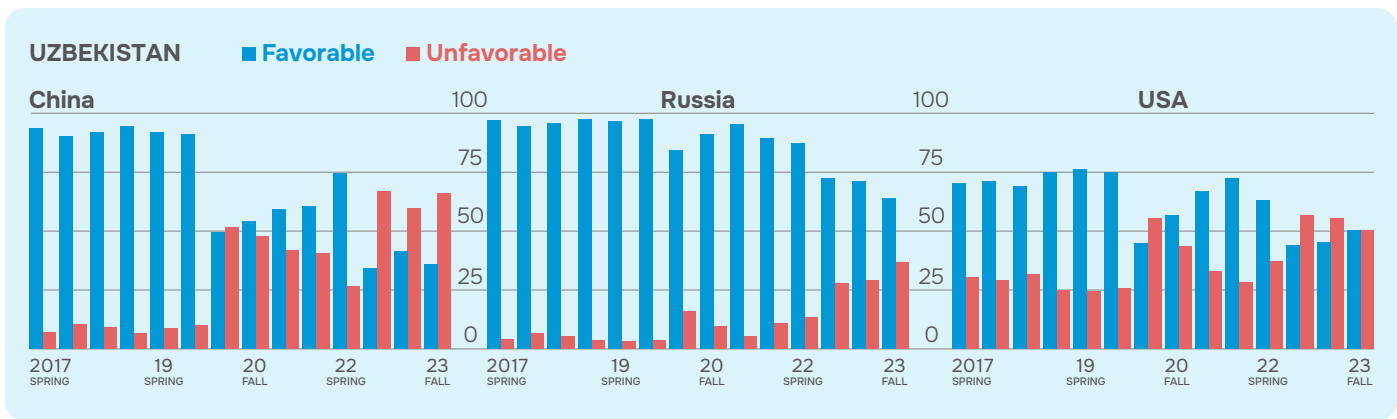
# How does favorability toward China, Russia, and the US compare in Central Asia?

Figure 4 illustrates the percentages of respondents in four Central Asian countries – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan – with either a favorable or unfavorable opinion of China, Russia, and the US over time.

These trends provide insights into how public opinion in these countries has evolved.

**FIGURE 4: FAVORABLE VIEWS OF CHINA, RUSSIA, AND THE US IN CENTRAL ASIA**





% of total; CABS data

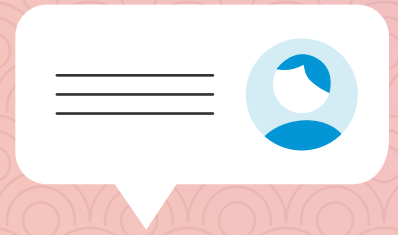
In Kazakhstan, the trend of favorable opinions of China differs from that of Russia and the US. Favorability toward Russia is greater than that of the US or China. However, since the first wave of the survey in 2017, public opinion of Russia has experienced a downward trend, reaching an all-time low in 2022 before rebounding slightly. The US has remained relatively steady, with favorability above 50% since 2019. Over time, there has been a convergence, with favorability increasing toward China, decreasing toward Russia, and a staying relatively stable toward the US in recent years. Since 2022, there has been a noticeable increase in favorability toward China (from 54.4% in spring 2022 to over 60% in spring and fall 2023) and Russia (from 54.2% in fall 2022 to over 60% in spring and fall 2023).

Kyrgyzstan displayed a different trend in public opinion with Russia consistently holding higher favorability than China and the US. The favorability toward Russia in Kyrgyzstan (no lower than 78.9%) was much higher than in Kazakhstan, where it dropped as low as 54.2% or Uzbekistan (lowest 64.7%). Meanwhile, public opinion on the US has been consistently favorable in Kyrgyzstan (56-72%) since 2017. As of wave 14, favorability toward China (73%) and the US (63.8%) had become more similar, and favorability toward Russia (85%) remained high.

Turkmenistan shows a consistent pattern, with all three countries (China, Russia, and the US) enjoying high favorability in the first iterations of the survey but declining over time. The most significant decline in favorability was towards the US, but remained higher than 50%. The US has consistently lagged behind China and Russia in recent years in terms of favorability ratings in Turkmenistan.

Finally, Uzbekistan presents a complex and fluctuating picture. Until spring 2020, China and Russia had similarly high favorability ratings but, after 2020, while Russia continued to have high favorability, China's favorability dropped. Russia has long held the highest level of favorability here, but in fall 2022 it dropped below 75% for the first time and while its favorability is still higher than that of other major powers, at the latest figure of 64.7% is the lowest in the reporting period. Favorability toward China and the US in Uzbekistan has been unstable, with significant dips and recoveries, particularly around 2020 and 2022.

**In summary, the favorability trends across Central Asian states reflect the region's complex and evolving political dynamics. Russia generally maintains the highest favorability across the region but this has declined over time in all countries except Kyrgyzstan. Meanwhile, China's favorability has been subject to greater fluctuation than Russia or the US. This indicates that unique events and circumstances affected perceptions of China during this time.**



## Section 2

# Drivers and Motivations of Perceptions of China

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In this section, we unpack key concerns and expectations that could influence perceptions of China, including critical practices and stereotypes such as ‘land grabs,’ ‘debt traps,’ and the perceived low quality of Chinese goods that drive negative perceptions of China.<sup>12</sup> ‘Land grabbing’<sup>13</sup> refers to the prospect of China acquiring large tracts of land, particularly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and is connected to fears of sovereignty loss and economic control. Indeed, these countries have witnessed public protests against Chinese land deals.<sup>14</sup>

The ‘debt trap’ narrative, which is especially prominent in Kyrgyzstan, suggests that China’s infrastructure loans through the BRI are intended to create unsustainable debt, giving China leverage over indebted countries. The perception that Chinese goods are of inferior quality persists in Central Asia, impacting local markets.<sup>15</sup>

Here, we also introduce the regression analysis, incorporating socio-economic factors and the concerns and expectations of Chinese investment across Central Asia and within individual countries.

## Concerns and Expectations in Relation to Developing Relations with China

Further inquiries into people’s expectations and fears vis-à-vis China’s engagement in Central Asia reflect common positive and negative stereotypes about China and its investments. The first group of questions tests the confidence of Central Asian respondents about the potential positive results of Chinese involvement in the region, including effects on the labor market and creation of new jobs, as well as the improvement of infrastructure, including in the energy sector. The second set examine the concerns of Central Asians arising from China’s entry into the region. Such concerns include potential indebtedness to China, the potential of Chinese investors buying land in Central Asia, and the quality of goods imported from China.

The CABS measures Central Asians’ opinions on two common expectations about China’s role in the region’s infrastructure and the employment opportunities arising from Chinese projects. Starting with infrastructure, as is noticeable in Figure 5, a clear division was observed in terms of opinions between people from countries that border China (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) and the other two countries (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). When this set of queries was introduced in autumn 2019, around 60% of respondents from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were not confident that Chinese investment would improve their countries’ infrastructure and energy sectors.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Primiano, C. B., & Kudebayeva, A. (2023). *A bumpy ride for China’s Belt and Road Initiative in Kazakhstan: Findings from a university survey*. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18681026231211354>; Chen, Y. W., & Günther, O. (2020). Back to normalization or conflict with China in greater Central Asia?: Evidence from local students’ perceptions. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 67(3), 228–240. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2018.1474716>; Neafie, J. (2022). Anti-Chinese sentiment, the BRI, and COVID-19: Kazakhstani perceptions of China in Central Asia. In J. F. Caron & H. Thibault (Eds.), *Central Asia and the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Steppe and Beyond: Studies on Central Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-7586-7\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-7586-7_5).

<sup>13</sup> Hofman, I., & Ho, P. (2012). China’s ‘developmental outsourcing’: A critical examination of Chinese global ‘land grabs’ discourse. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(1), 1–48.

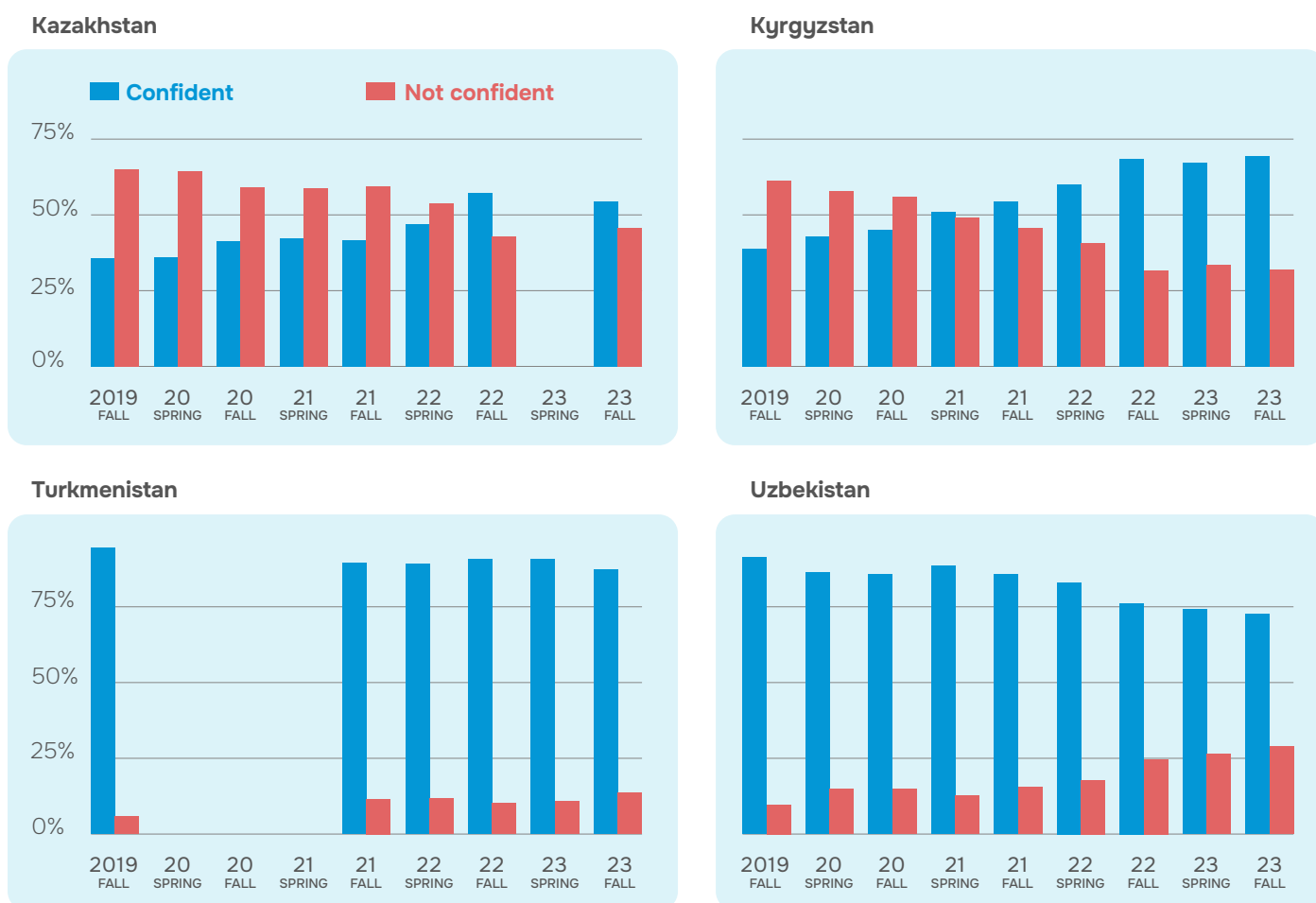
<sup>14</sup> RFE/RL’s Kyrgyz Service. (2020, February 24). Kyrgyz government cancels \$275 million Chinese project amid protests. *Radio Free Europe*. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyz-government-cancels-275-million-chinese-project-amid-protests/30451825.html>; Umarov, T. (2019, October 30). *What’s behind protests against China in Kazakhstan?* Carnegie. <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/80229>; Abdurasulov, A. (2016, April 28). *Kazakhstan’s land reform protests explained*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36163103>; RFE/RL’s Kazakh Service. (2021, March 27). *Anti-China protests staged across Kazakhstan*. *Radio Free Europe*; Reuters Staff. (2019, September 4). *Dozens protest against Chinese influence in Kazakhstan*. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kazakhstan-china-protests/dozens-protest-against-chinese-influence-in-kazakhstan-idUSKCN1VP1B0>.

<sup>15</sup> Uyar, A. (2018). A study on consumers’ perception about Chinese products and their willingness to buy. *International Journal of Eurasia Social Sciences*, 9(32).

<sup>16</sup> Please note that the ‘Confident’ percentage includes the responses ‘a great deal of confidence’ and ‘some confidence’, while the ‘Non confident’ percentage includes the responses ‘not very much confidence’ and ‘no confidence at all’.

**At the same time, in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, more than 80% of respondents trusted that China's involvement in developing infrastructure, including in the energy sector, would benefit their countries.**

**FIGURE 5: CONFIDENCE ABOUT CHINESE INVESTMENT IN IMPROVING ENERGY AND INFRASTRUCTURE**



*% of total; CABS data*

However, opinions in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan changed significantly around 2022, and in the latest waves (11-14), slightly more than 50% of Kazakhstani respondents and around 60% of Kyrgyzstani respondents believed that Chinese involvement would improve local infrastructure. This almost perfectly aligns with the discussion above on Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani support for Chinese investment in infrastructure, where the percentage of support also grew at the same time (around late 2021 and early 2022) as the majority of respondents started showing more support for Chinese investment, particularly in Kyrgyzstan. While the opinions of respondents from Turkmenistan on the matter stayed constantly positive, public opinion in Uzbekistan saw a slight inflection.

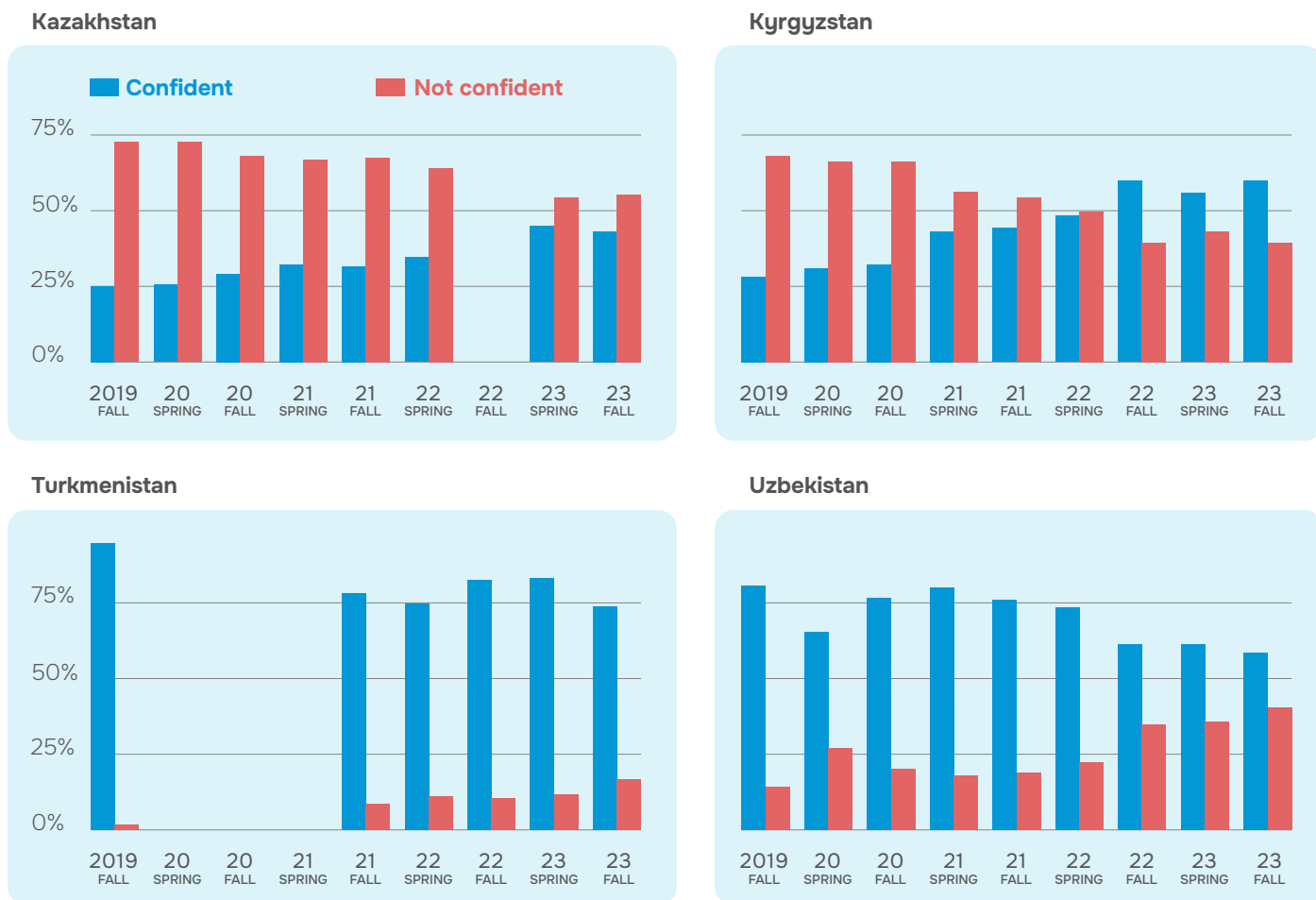
In fall of 2019, more than 80% of Uzbekistani citizens were confident in the value of infrastructure development through Chinese investors, but this dropped to just over 70% by fall 2023.

A similar divergence in public opinion can be seen in the responses to the question on their confidence in Chinese investment bringing new employment opportunities (see Figure 6). Again, respondents from Turkmenistan were the most positive, as more than 70% of respondents were consistently confident that Chinese investment would bring more jobs to the country. Similarly, most respondents in Uzbekistan trusted that Chinese companies and investment projects would offer new employment opportunities.

However, since spring 2021, a slight downward trend in confidence towards China-driven employment in Uzbekistan has been recorded. By fall 2023, the percentage of respondents who were not confident in the creation of new job opportunities surpassed 35%, rising from just over 10% in fall 2019. This negative trend in Uzbekistan is even more noticeable in the support for the employment of Chinese workers.

Just as confidence in Chinese investment leading to job opportunities was waning, the support for employing Chinese workers in Uzbekistan dropped, and in fall 2022 for the first time in the reporting period the majority of respondents in Uzbekistan did not support China sending workers to their country.

**FIGURE 6: CONFIDENCE IN CHINESE INVESTMENT CREATING JOBS IN CENTRAL ASIA**



*% of total; CABS data*

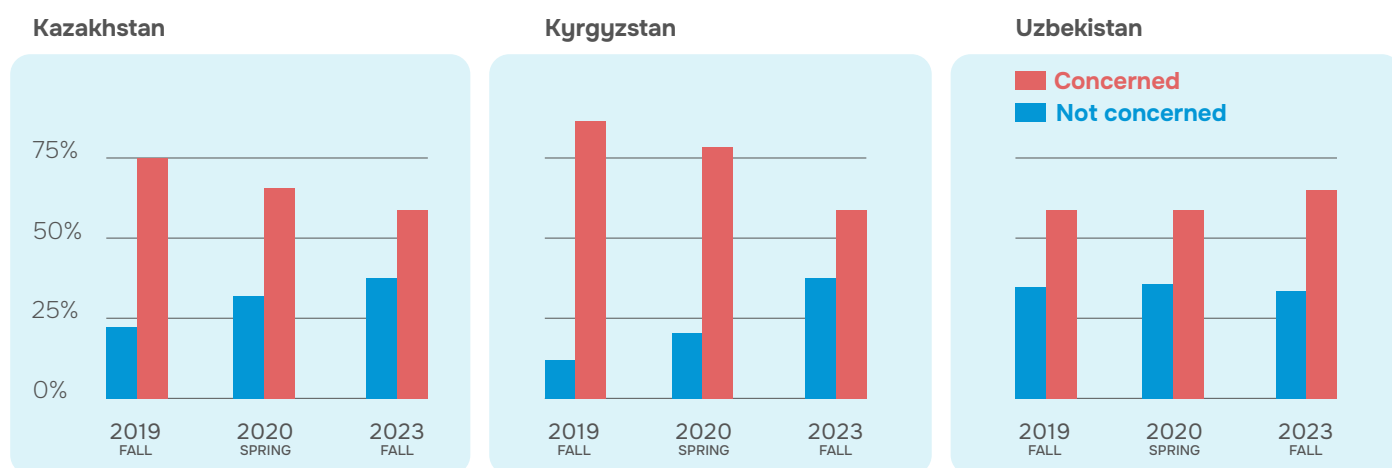
Respondents from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan shared similar views, generally expressing skepticism about Chinese investment leading to job creation. However, people from both countries are gradually becoming more optimistic about such investment generating jobs in the future. Notably, the outlook in Kyrgyzstan has become more positive, with more people now confident than not (waves 12-14). This is generally the case across our findings, which show that public opinion with regard to China has been improving in these two countries, particularly since 2020. In fall 2019, just over 25% of Kazakhstani respondents believed

that employment opportunities would arise from Chinese investment, and by spring 2023, this percentage had grown to about 40%. Meanwhile, an even more dramatic increase was observed in respondents from Kyrgyzstan in terms of confidence that Chinese investment would bring new employment opportunities, climbing from less than 30% in fall 2019 to a majority of just under 60% by fall 2023. The turning point occurred in 2022, when a majority of respondents were confident in Chinese investment bringing employment for the first time, although the increase has been gradual, with no dramatic peaks or plunges.

Regarding Central Asian concerns about China, the oldest source of anxiety associated with economic relations with China is imported consumer goods from China being of poor quality.<sup>17</sup> For many, the brand ‘Made in China’ has become synonymous with cheap and faulty products. While we do not have data from earlier waves, as the question on this issue was first asked only in 2019, we find that

this assumption is still strong in Central Asia (see Figure 7). In Kyrgyzstan, respondents are especially wary of Chinese goods, with between 75-80% of respondents being concerned about perceived low quality. Such views are less prominent in Kazakhstan (60-75%) and Uzbekistan (55% to just over 60%).

**FIGURE 7: CONCERN THAT CHINESE GOODS ARE OF LOWER QUALITY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

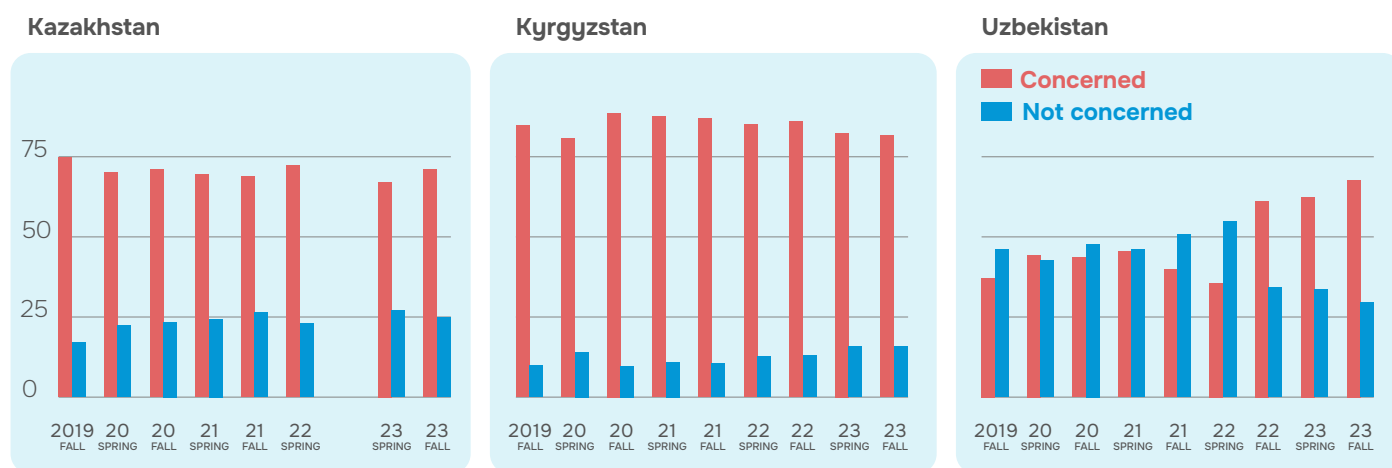


% of total; CABS data

With respect to macroeconomic subjects, the ‘debt trap’ narrative is a central aspect in discussions about China in the Global South, as outlined in the introduction. This is particularly relevant when discussing countries like Kyrgyzstan, whose national debt primarily comprises loans from Chinese banks. Hence, the CABS asked respondents whether they were concerned about their country accepting more development loans and increasing their debt to China. Yet again, concerns

were most prevalent among respondents in Kyrgyzstan, where around 80% of respondents were worried about the effects of increased debt. This is perhaps not surprising as around 40% of Kyrgyzstan debt is owed to China, and particularly to the Chinese Eximbank.<sup>18</sup> However, a similar opinion can be found in Kazakhstan, where the debt situation is not comparable to that of Kyrgyzstan, implying a more general mistrust about the possibility of taking loans from China.

**FIGURE 8: CONCERN THAT CHINESE INVESTMENT WILL LEAD TO INCREASED NATIONAL DEBT IN CENTRAL ASIA**



% of total; CABS data

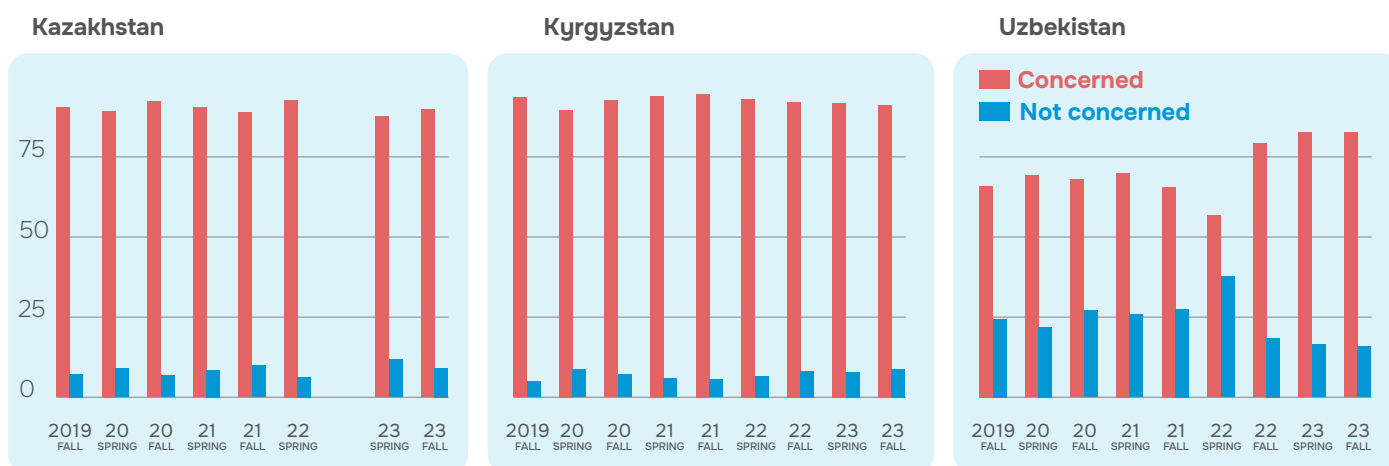
<sup>17</sup> Peyrouse, S. (2016). Discussing China: Sinophilia and sinophobia in Central Asia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 7(1), 14-23.  
<sup>18</sup> Pannier, B. (2023, October 31). Central Asia in focus: Kyrgyzstan falling deeper in debt to China. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. <https://about.rferl.org/article/central-asia-in-focus-kyrgyzstan-falling-deeper-in-debt-to-china/>

Fear of excessive national debt has intensified over the years, while land ownership has always been a controversial topic in Central Asia since the establishment of relations between China and the independent states of Central Asia in the 1990s. Together, this results in perceptions on the matter being highly skewed towards fear and concern.

**In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, where the CABS asked the respondents whether they were concerned about Chinese buyers acquiring land in their respective countries, an overwhelming majority answered affirmatively, reaching peaks of more than 90% in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.**

Respondents from these two countries were consistently more pessimistic than Uzbekistani respondents. This may be because Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan both share a long border with China, and thus territorial integrity and sovereignty issues have generally influenced discussions on land ownership there. In Uzbekistan, where private land ownership is much more limited, particularly in agriculture, and where the state had owned most of the land until recent rounds of partial liberalization,<sup>19</sup> concerns of ‘land grabs’ are weaker. However, since fall 2022, fear of land acquisitions has grown in Uzbekistan, with more than 75% of respondents now concerned about the Chinese purchasing land.

**FIGURE 9: CONCERN THAT CHINESE BUYERS WANT TO PURCHASE LAND IN CENTRAL ASIA**



% of total; CABS data

<sup>19</sup> For more information on agricultural land in Uzbekistan see Lombardozi, L. (2020). Patterns of accumulation and social differentiation through a slow-paced agrarian market transition in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 20, 637–658; Galdini, F. (2023). Rise of the surplus population? Land decollectivization, class stratification, and labor precarization in Uzbekistan. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 103, 147–161; Trevisani, T. (2010). *Land and power in Khorezm: Farmers, communities, and the state in Uzbekistan’s decollectivization*. Lit: Berlin.

# Regressions

This section consists of six sets of models: one overarching model of Central Asian states using a pooled data model with year dummy variables and robust standard errors,<sup>20</sup> and another five country-level pooled data models with year dummy variables that include a variable to control for regional variations. It is important to note here that respondents from Turkmenistan did not answer these questions and were thus dropped from the data for the Central Asia-wide models that included those variables.

In the regressions, a stepwise approach was applied to discern the effect of stereotypes (both positive and negative) that persist regarding China's engagement in Central Asia. These variables, as discussed earlier, examine the expectations and concerns about China based on stereotypes that could affect public opinion (e.g., 'land grabs,' 'debt traps,' and geopolitical competition).

Across all models where data were available, the following five variables are applied to measure confidence and concern:

- **confidence** that Chinese investment will create better infrastructures;
- **confidence** that Chinese investment will create more job opportunities;
- **concern** that Chinese investment will increase national debt owed to China ('debt trap');
- **concern** that Chinese investment will create a rift with Russia (geopolitical concern); and
- **concern** that Chinese investment will allow the Chinese to buy more land ('land grabs').

As expected, some of these variables are strong predictors of favorability vis-à-vis China, its projects, its workers, and its technology based on historical stereotypes and beliefs. The country-specific regressions include the same independent variables used in the general regressions in addition to a variable to measure regional differences in public opinion.

## Regional Perspective

Overall, the key findings of the regression looking at the socio-economic drivers of perception of China in Central Asia are as follows:

- Age is a moderately robust factor in public opinion on China, and older respondents are more likely to be less supportive, particularly in relation to Chinese projects and workers.
- Respondents who identify as men tend to be less supportive of Chinese projects and favor China less, but show more support for Chinese workers and technology.
- The results show evidence of the influence of traditional and social media on public opinion towards China in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

These findings are based on variables exploring how exposure to, and engagement with, media platforms differs across respondents.

- Social media platforms TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and Odnoklassniki all have robust and significantly positive effects on favorability toward China. Moreover, negative opinions regarding Chinese workers are only marginal when Turkmenistan is included in the data.

<sup>20</sup> Clustered standard errors were also run but there was no significant difference between the robust (Eicker-White (EHW)) standard errors, and the clustered standard errors (known as Liang-Zeger or LZ standard errors).

- There is a significant and positive effect on support for Chinese workers across those who read local news. However, consumption of international news has a particularly positive and more robust effect on public opinion on China, which is particularly strong when acquired through local media sources, other sources (including foreign sources), or other internet sources (besides social media).
- The findings suggest that ethnicity impacts support for Chinese workers and technology. Respondents from the majority ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan harbor stronger reservations or skepticism toward Chinese workers and technology. These findings underscore the importance of ethnic identity in shaping public opinion regarding foreign powers.
- Opinions on China are marginally affected by whether respondent resides in an urban or rural area. Those from urban areas are more likely to be favorable toward China and support its workers and technology;

however, the opinions of those in urban and rural areas regarding support for Chinese projects in infrastructure and energy projects are not significantly different.

- When it comes to stereotypes and beliefs, the variables measuring the strength of concerns on ‘debt traps’ and on geopolitical competition with Russia are the most robust. However, the geopolitical variable is substantively small. Both variables have negative effects on favorability toward, and support for workers and technology from, China.
- Concerns over ‘land grabs’ only have a significantly negative effect on favorability and support for Chinese technology. Similarly, concerns about Chinese investment causing unsustainable debt negatively affect support for investment and technology.
- Both variables measuring positive expectations of China are robust and have a significant and positive effect on public opinion regarding China.<sup>21</sup>

## Kazakhstan

For Central Asia’s largest economy, Kazakhstan, the trend in terms of effects of socio-economic characteristics on public opinion follows the regional trend and the key findings here are as follows:

- Younger Kazakhstanis generally have a more positive attitude towards China and its investment projects, particularly on the migration of Chinese workers to work in Chinese companies in Central Asia and the use of Chinese technology. Those 50 and above are particularly negative about new Chinese investment projects and workers. However, when it comes to confidence in the role of Chinese investments in bringing benefits and jobs to Central Asians, age becomes a less relevant predictor.
- Gender only seems to have marginal effects. Identifying as a man has robust negative effects on support for employing Chinese workers and robust positive effects on support for technology. But while there gender has some positive effects on support for Chinese projects, that disappears when controlling for more polarized views of China.

Furthermore, the effect on favorability only seems to appear when controlling for expectations and concerns, where there is a greater chance of Kazakhstanis being negative about China if they identify as a man.

- Urban and economically secure respondents (i.e., employed, housewives/househusbands, and/or retired) tend to have more positive opinions on China.
- Respondents who are students have the highest opinion of China, which correlates well with the effect of the age variable.
- People who read international news tend to be slightly more positive about China and its projects and technology than respondents who are not interested in media, particularly foreign media. Meanwhile, consuming local media is not a good predictor of public opinion on China.

<sup>21</sup> For full results of the regressions see Table 2 in the Appendix.

- The use of specific social media variable is not particularly significant. It only tells us that people who use social media platforms other than Facebook, Instagram, Odnoklassniki, and TikTok have marginally greater favorability toward China and more support for its projects and technology compared to those who do not use social media.
- The predominant ethnicity variable is significant in each regression, and it shows that ethnic Kazakhs, representing the majority of Kazakhstani respondents, are much more likely to hold negative opinions about China than minorities.
- Our predictors measure how much being from a specific region affects public opinion on China. Respondents from southern and western regions, namely Turkistan/South Kazakhstan, Shymkent, Almaty region, Kyzylorda, Mangystau, and Atyrau, all express significantly more negative viewpoints of China than those from Astana, the capital city. People from eastern and northern regions have more positive perceptions, including Akmola, Pavlodar, East Kazakhstan, and North Kazakhstan.<sup>22</sup>

## Kyrgyzstan

Our findings for Kyrgyzstan are generally in line with public opinion in Kazakhstan, albeit with several peculiarities and variations.<sup>23</sup> The key findings are listed below:

- Like Kazakhstan, age influences public opinion significantly in Kyrgyzstan, with older respondents generally more wary of China. However, in the case of Kyrgyzstan, the effect is more robust in the variables about support for new Chinese projects (only when not controlled for concerns and expectations related to China) and support for employing more Chinese workers and the use of Chinese technology.
- Unlike in the other examined countries, respondents who identify as men generally favor China slightly more and support its projects and technology. However, in line with the trend in other countries, men have more negative opinions on Chinese economic migration.
- Again, positive opinions on China are slightly stronger for respondents based in urban areas.
- The significant employment variable shows how students and people with secure economic conditions support China's role in the country more than unemployed people. Yet, among such respondents, only students are slightly more optimistic about accepting the employment of more Chinese workers.
- The variable accounting for consumption of local media is not statistically significant overall. Respondents who read international news tend to have more positive opinions on China, particularly when they read such news in foreign media. Interestingly, learning about international news from the family, as opposed to formal media or the internet, has a very positive effect on support for Chinese projects, workers, and technology.
- Those who use Facebook or Instagram have a better opinion of China than those who do not use social media.
- As for favorability toward China, respondents from Jalal-Abad, Naryn, Talas, Issyk-Kul, Batken, and Osh region have more negative views of China compared to residents of Bishkek. Yet, the only regions whose respondents are overall more negative about new infrastructure developments are those from the Kyrgyzstani section of the Fergana Valley (Jalal-Abad, Batken, and Osh city, but not Osh region). Those from Batken and Osh city are similarly negative about Chinese workers and technology, as are those from the Osh and Talas regions. Finally, respondents from the Jalal-Abad region are more pessimistic about using Chinese technology.

<sup>22</sup> For full results of the regressions see Table 3 in the Appendix.

<sup>23</sup> For full results of the regressions see Table 4 in the Appendix.

## Turkmenistan

The data for Turkmenistan are missing the concerns variables, but do contain those on expectations. As also displayed in Table 5 in the Appendix, the key findings are as follows:

- Age is not as strong a predictor for favorability toward China in Turkmenistan as elsewhere. Yet, unlike in the other countries assessed, older people in Turkmenistan seem slightly more positive about China, particularly in terms of support for new development projects and the employment of new Chinese workers in the country. Yet, people in their 40s seem slightly less positive about Chinese technology.
- Identifying as a man has a slightly negative impact on favorability toward China.
- Urban respondents tend to be slightly more optimistic about China, which aligns with the general trend across Central Asia.
- Employment is not a strong predictor of public opinion on China, as is also the case in other countries.
- People who read the news are more positive about China than those who do not. This is particularly true for people who read the news from foreign media and other online sources.
- The variables reflecting people's expectations of China are limited to confidence in Chinese projects bringing economic benefits and new employment opportunities. Still, they significantly affect our dependent variables, which means that more substantial confidence in Chinese projects and employment opportunities is a good predictor of more positive public opinion on China in Turkmenistan.
- Respondents from the Mary region are slightly more positive about China overall. Meanwhile, respondents from the Dasoguz and Lebap regions are more positive about employing new Chinese workers.

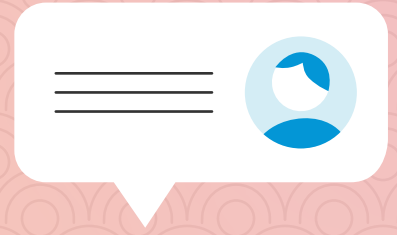
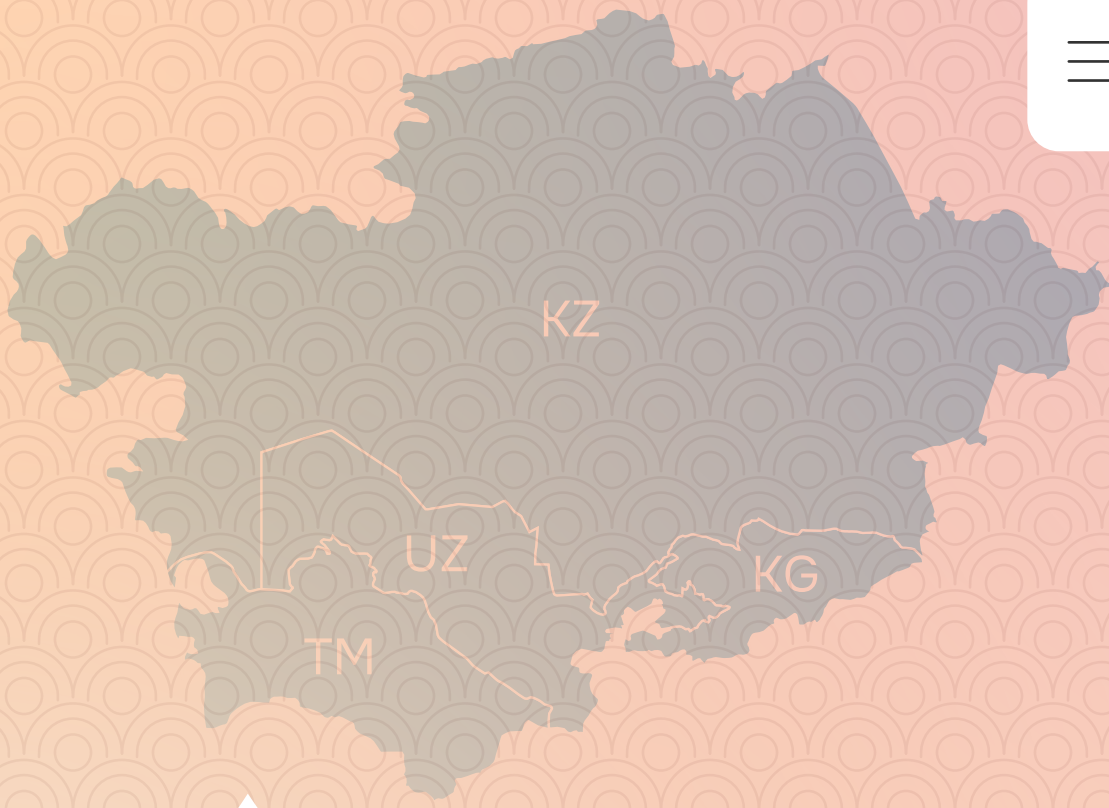
## Uzbekistan

The case of Uzbekistan is relatively intricate, as seen in the treatment of general statistics, revealing a trend in the most recent waves of the survey towards a more negative perception of China. Having sought to understand more about the country's public opinion on its eastern neighbor,<sup>24</sup> the key findings are as follows:

- Age is a weaker predictor of favorability toward China than elsewhere in Central Asia. Still, it does have a statistical effect on support for Chinese energy and infrastructure projects and Chinese migrants working in those projects, where older respondents seem to favor such developments less, which is in line with the regional trend.
- Unlike in Kazakhstan, identifying as a man and being from an urban environment does not robustly affect public opinion on China. Yet, respondents who identify as men are more prone to be critical of accepting new workers from China.
- People who read domestic news from local media, social media, and the internet are more positive about China, its projects, and technology than people who do not read local news.
- People who are not interested in international news are more negative about China, while those who read international news from foreign media seem more positive. Meanwhile, reading international news in local media boosts positivity towards using Chinese technology.

<sup>24</sup> For full results of the regressions see Table 5 in the Appendix.

- Respondents who use Facebook and Instagram seem to be more positive about China but more negative about new Chinese development projects and the number of Chinese workers employed in them (here, users of Odnoklassniki are also more negative about such new projects). Instagram users are the exception here, with the effect also being positive on those variables.
- The findings regarding employment align with the general regional trend of employed and financially secure people being more positive about China than unemployed people.
- Being retired is a robust predictor of favorability toward accepting new Chinese workers. Still, it loses relevance when we account for our variables on expectations and concerns about China's role in the country.
- As for concerns and expectations, we find that only confidence in China's ability to bring about development and employment opportunities significantly affects favorability toward China. The variables that measure concerns about debt and 'land grabs' have a slightly negative effect on support for the employment of Chinese workers. However, the possibility of greater engagement with China causing a rift with Russia has no effect.
- Respondents from almost all regions have less favorability toward China than their counterparts in Tashkent, the capital city. The only exception here is the Navoiy region (yet its coefficients are not statistically significant). However, these results are only robust across some models. In certain regions, respondents are more willing to accept Chinese energy and infrastructure investment, technology, and even Chinese workers.
- People from some regions support Chinese investment in energy and infrastructure projects and the migration of Chinese workers, namely the Samarkand, Qashqadaryo, Suxandaryo, and Bukhara regions.



# Section 3

## Discussion

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# Chinese Globalization

Research on Chinese globalization in Central Asia often highlights the complex nature of China's influence on local economies. Scholars have noted that Chinese economic engagement, particularly in infrastructure projects, can create both perceptions of opportunities and challenges.<sup>25</sup> On the one hand, Chinese investments through the BRI provide much-needed infrastructure improvements and boost employment, especially in underdeveloped regions. However, concerns about dependency, loss of sovereignty, and labor competition persist across various countries.<sup>26</sup> Sinophobia, especially in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, is a significant theme in the literature, with Chinese workers being seen as symbols of economic and demographic threats.<sup>27</sup>

**This study shows that Central Asians see China's involvement in Central Asia as having both positive and negative aspects. However, the CABS data suggest that the majority of people across Central Asia favor China, even if they are sometimes concerned about the employment of Chinese workers or investment in infrastructure and energy.**

**Overall, our findings indicate that Central Asian respondents who were aware of increased development as a result of China's investment and employment opportunities had more favorable opinions of China.**

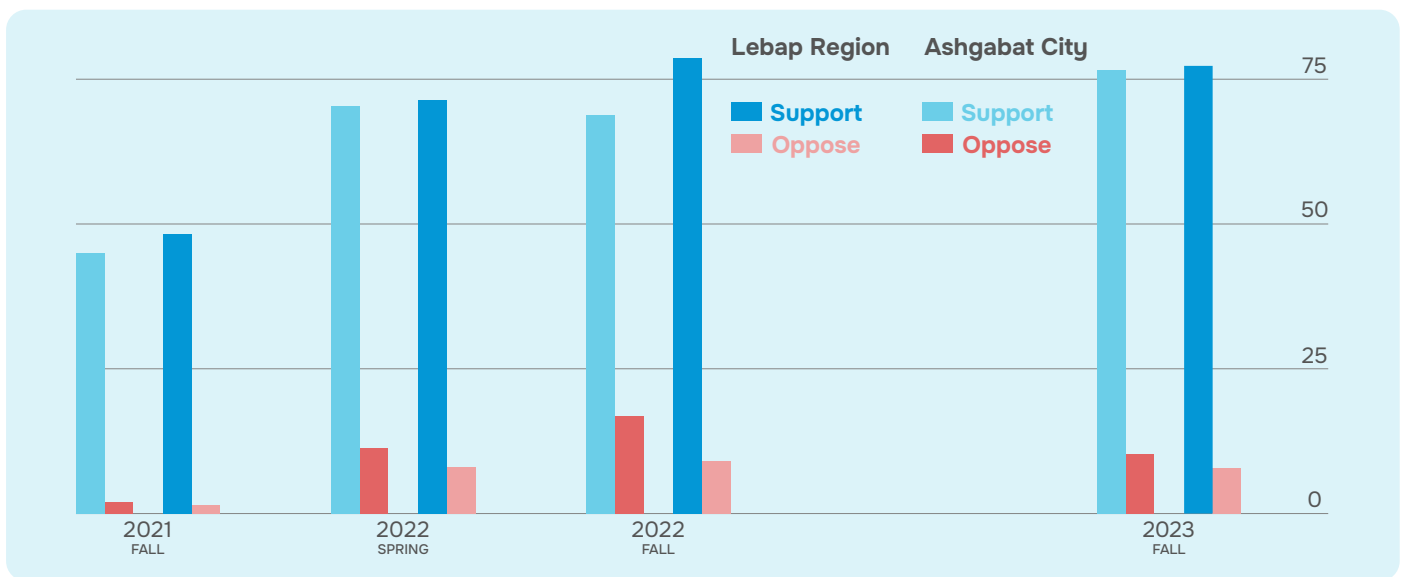
A notable example of this dynamic is found in Turkmenistan, where the Lebap region has become a center of China-led development. The Central Asia–China gas pipeline was China's first and most crucial infrastructure project in Central Asia in the mid-to-late 2000s, which permanently changed the political economy of energy in the country, boosting Turkmenistan's exports of gas to China, which in many years represented the totality of Turkmenistan's gas exports (in 2022, 95.9% of its gas exports went to China, representing 72.3% of Turkmenistan's total exports). The respondents from Lebap region are more optimistic about accepting new Chinese workers into the country (see Figure 10), as Chinese workers have been pivotal to infrastructural development in this part of the country. This may serve as evidence that successful infrastructure projects lead to other potential avenues of integration.

<sup>25</sup> Primiano, C. B., & Kudebayeva, A. (2023). A bumpy ride for China's Belt and Road Initiative in Kazakhstan: Findings from a university survey; Chen, Y. W., & Günther, O. (2020). Back to normalization or conflict with China in greater Central Asia?: Evidence from local students' perceptions. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 67(3), 228–240; Neafie, J. (2022). Anti-Chinese sentiment, the BRI, and COVID-19: Kazakhstani perceptions of China in Central Asia.

<sup>26</sup> See for example, Taylor, I., & Xiao, Y. (2009). A case of mistaken identity: "China Inc." and its "imperialism" in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Asian Politics and Policy*, 1(4), 709–725; Land, S., Neafie, J., & Courtney, M. G. R. (2024). The role of identity and strategic narratives on public perceptions of China: The case of the New Silk Road in Kazakhstan. *Area Development and Policy*.

<sup>27</sup> Burkhanov, A., & Chen, Y. W. (2016). Kazakh perspective on China, the Chinese, and Chinese migration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(12), 2129–2148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1139155>; Sadovskaya, E. (2008). Chinese migration to Kazakhstan: Causes, key trends, and prospects. *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 1(49), 160–168; Brown, R. (2015). Where will the New Silk Road lead? The effects of Chinese investment and migration in Xinjiang and Central Asia. *Columbia University Journal of Politics & Society*. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/161454017.pdf>.

**FIGURE 10: SUPPORT FOR CHINESE WORKERS COMPARING LEBAP REGION AND ASHGABAT CITY IN TURKMENISTAN**



% of total; CABS data

However, this opinion is not shared by respondents in other countries.

**Respondents from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan strongly oppose the employment of Chinese workers, and those from Uzbekistan show growing opposition to Chinese workers coming to work on Chinese investment projects in the country.**

Those from western Kazakhstan have a negative view of China, specifically when it comes to support for new projects and inviting new Chinese workers. This may be connected to common perceptions of China not providing anything in exchange for investment and not creating new jobs.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, respondents from Uzbekistan show more confidence in Chinese investment creating jobs, and there is also growing confidence in that regard in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. This coincides with the growing support for Chinese investment. Ultimately, this suggests that (1) attempts to localize Chinese companies are having a positive impact on perceptions of China<sup>29</sup> and (2) the belief that Chinese investment companies only hire Chinese

workers<sup>30</sup> may still exist but is slowly being diluted due to changes in the local labor requirements.

Moreover, in 2023, at least 75% of the respondents across all countries supported using Chinese technology. Previous studies suggested that goods from China were seen as inferior. That prejudice might be related to the flooding of Central Asian bazaars with cheap consumer goods such as clothes, accessories, and home appliances. In addition, shuttle trade often represents an unaccounted part of Chinese trade to Central Asia, where individual buyers (frequently women) travel across borders to buy goods, which are then sold in Central Asian bazaars. While, at times, there may not be favorability toward China as a whole, it is evident that locals are increasingly recognizing the role that Chinese technology is playing in local development.<sup>31</sup>

However, some dissent towards Chinese technology was observed. In Uzbekistan, people from Karakalpakstan, Jizzakh, and Tashkent regions are more distrustful of Chinese technology. Tashkent and Jizzakh regions are noteworthy as China’s most recent and most relevant high-tech investment project are ongoing here.<sup>32</sup> Distrust of Chinese technology may also be related to security concerns, particularly smart city technology.

<sup>28</sup> Umarov, T. (2019, October 30). What’s behind protests against China in Kazakhstan? *Carnegie*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2019/10/whats-behind-protests-against-china-in-kazakhstan?lang=en>  
<sup>29</sup> Van Der Kley, D., & Yau, N. (2021). *How Central Asians pushed Chinese firms to localize*. Carnegie Endowment. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/10/15/how-central-asians-pushed-chinese-firms-to-localize-pub-85561>  
<sup>30</sup> For an example of this phenomenon see Wegenast, T., Krauser, M., Struver, G., & Giesen, J. (2019). At Africa’s expense? Disaggregating the employment effects of Chinese mining operations in sub-Saharan Africa. *World Development*, 118, 39–51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.02.007>  
<sup>31</sup> For more information on the topic see, for example, Dall’Agnola, J. (2024). Chinese smartphones: China’s image-boosting tools in Central Asia. *ASIAC – Studies on Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 1, 141–160. <https://doi.org/10.36253/asiac-2415>  
<sup>32</sup> We refer here to the establishment of production facilities for electric vehicles in Jizzakh and Tashkent region by a joint venture between the Chinese company BYD and Uzbekistan’s monopolist SOE, Uzauto.

This is a more relevant issue in places where political conflicts are more common.<sup>33</sup>

### **National debt is also a vital issue in the conversation about globalization. In Uzbekistan, respondents' views were significantly affected by perceptions of China's investment being a 'debt trap.'**

According to the survey, such concerns have increased over time. Until fall 2022, Uzbekistani respondents were less wary of incurring national debt owed to China. Under Islam Karimov (1991-2016), the country was relatively protectionist and less prone to accept foreign financing. Its economic policy subsequently changed during the presidency of Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who liberalized many aspects of the economy; however, the debt policy remained somewhat balanced and cautious.<sup>34</sup> As a result, Uzbekistan only owes around 10% of its national debt to China. While China is the country's largest bilateral creditor, most of the country's debt is connected to loans from multilateral banks, notably the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. This might explain the initial relative lack of concern among Uzbekistani respondents vis-à-vis national debt to Chinese banks. However, this is changing, as since fall 2022, around 60% of respondents have been worried about increasing national debt to China. While this might be linked to the general worsening of Uzbekistani public opinion towards China, the change cannot be attributed to any increase in debt to China, which remained relatively stable in 2022 and 2023.

In Kyrgyzstan, public discussion of national debt owed to China gained new momentum amid the 2020 coup in Bishkek. Following the presidential elections in January 2021, then-newly elected

President Sadyr Japarov stressed the necessity to repay the country's debts on time,<sup>35</sup> and has since promised to repay all debts by 2035.<sup>36</sup> The national debt issue continues to haunt Japarov, however, as newly proposed infrastructure projects, such as the construction of hydroelectric power plants and the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan (CKU) railroad, would require further borrowing on top of the existing loans. In an interview in 2024, he urged the public to "forget" about the external debt, stressing that even if it was to grow to US\$15 billion, there would be nothing to worry about.<sup>37</sup> The relative decline in public concern about national debt owed to China in Kyrgyzstan could thus be linked to Japarov's optimistic narrative. Overall, concern over Chinese investment leading to more national debt is a moderately strong indicator across all but one model of public opinion on China in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

Regional concerns about China vary, which may highlight differences based on the perceived costs and benefits of Chinese infrastructure projects. It is worth exploring whether existing or potential infrastructure investment in specific regions corresponds to greater favorability toward China. For example, in Kyrgyzstan, people from Naryn and Jalal-Abad regions, through which the CKU railway is planned to pass, have more negative opinions of China. However, while they still tend to be more negative compared to Bishkek, the capital city, more recently (like much of Kyrgyzstan) opinions toward China have been getting more positive possibly because of the increase in public works projects (see Figure 11). It is also important to note that there is a historic lack of favorability toward China in the Osh and Naryn regions of Kyrgyzstan, and respondents from there tend to hold significantly lower opinions than those from Bishkek (see regression in Table 4 of the Appendix). According to Nargiza Muratalieva:<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The Republic of Karakalpakstan has faced significant challenges in its relations with the central government since 2022, when a proposed constitutional reform aimed at reducing Karakalpak sovereignty sparked widespread protests that were violently suppressed. Since then, Karakalpak citizens and activists have been arrested, prosecuted, and even persecuted abroad. A total of 64 people have been convicted, 61 of whom are Karakalpaks. For further details, see: Pannier, B. (2024, June 25). Two years on from Karakalpakstan violence, activists struggle to make their voices heard. *BNE Intellinews*. <https://www.intellinews.com/pannier-two-years-on-from-karakalpakstan-violence-activists-struggle-to-make-voice-heard-331154/>.

<sup>34</sup> Lemon, E., & Maracchione, F. (2023). Chinese-Russian engagement in Central Asia amidst the Ukraine conflict. *Global Partners Governance*. (Internal report).

<sup>35</sup> Standish, R. (2021, February 27). How will Kyrgyzstan repay its huge debts to China? Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty <https://www.rferl.org/a/how-will-kyrgyzstan-repay-its-huge-debts-to-china-/31124848.html>

<sup>36</sup> Shermetaliev, M. (2024). Садыр Жапаров высказался о внешнем долге страны, строительстве «Камбар-Аты-1» и водных проблемах ЦА. *Кабар*, <https://kabar.kg/news/sadyr-zhaparov-vyskazalsia-o-vneshnem-dolge-strany-stroitel-stve-kambar-aty-1-i-vodnykh-problemakh-tca/>

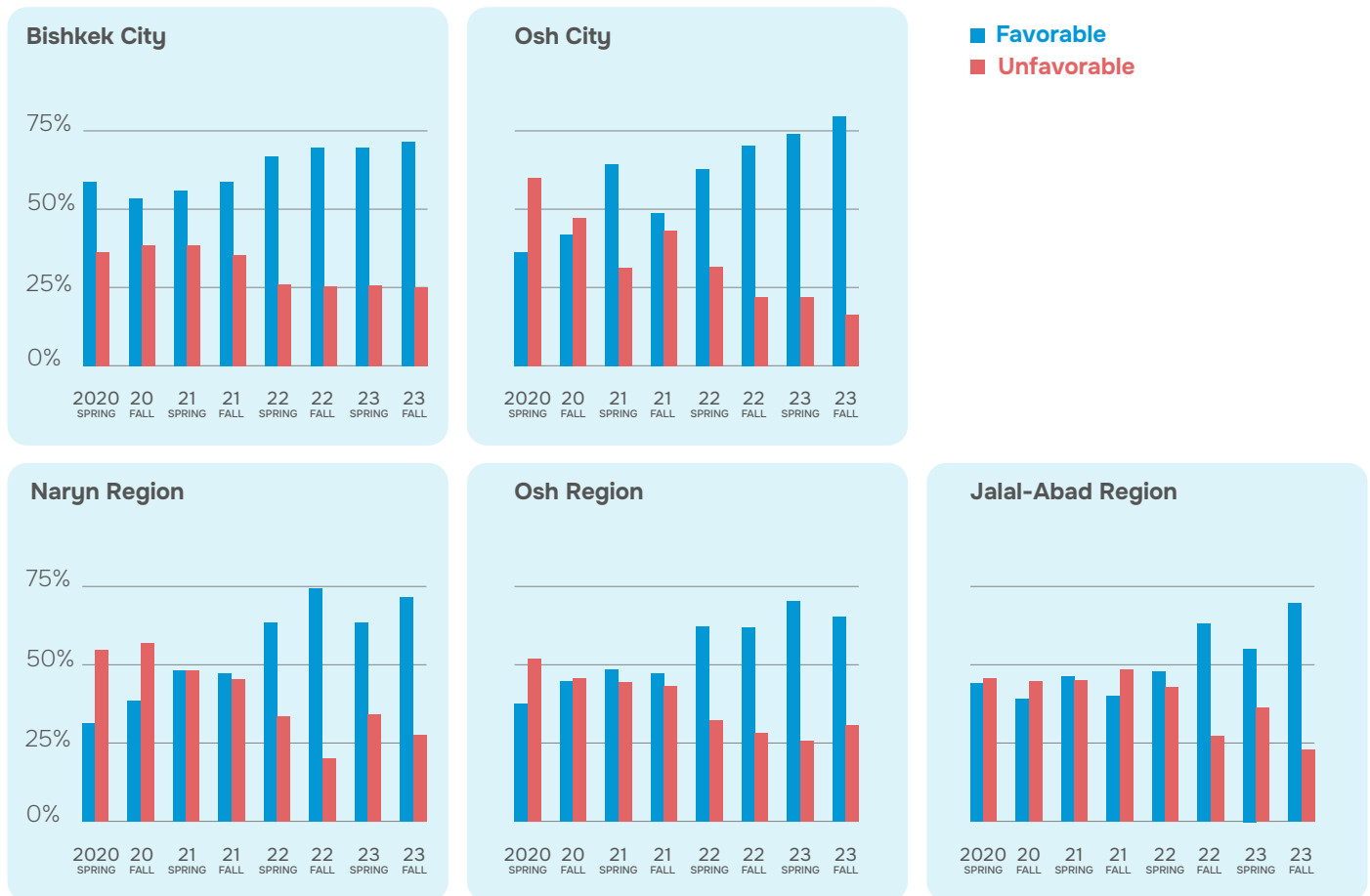
<sup>37</sup> Voice of America. (2024, April 18). Debt to China fuels anxiety in Kyrgyzstan. <https://www.voanews.com/a/debt-to-china-fuels-anxiety-in-kyrgyzstan/7575825.html>

<sup>38</sup> Associate Professor in the International and Comparative Politics Department at the American University of Central Asia (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan). Comments provided in reaction to this report.

“ One assumption could be connected with the location of cross border points – Torugart in Naryn region and Irkeshtam in Osh region – where there can tend to be more negative opinions on China. This explanation supports the argument that countries bordering China are becoming increasingly wary of its influence.

Overall, in Kyrgyzstan, people from some regions have consistently had greater favorability toward China, and other regions have also shifted toward more positive opinions recently.

**FIGURE 11: FAVORABILITY TOWARD CHINA BY SELECTED REGIONS IN KYRGYZSTAN**



% of total; CABS data

In addition, we see regional variation in Uzbekistan, particularly in the regions of Andijan, Namangan, Khorazm, Sirdaryo, Jizzakh and Karakalpakstan, where opinions on China are more negative compared to Tashkent, where favorability was very high before fall 2022 (see Figure 12). In the Fergana Valley, there has been a large amount of Chinese textile and agricultural investment,

and one of China’s signature infrastructure projects, the Kamchiq Tunnel, is also located here. However, the regressions show lower favorability in the Fergana Valley than in Tashkent on average (see Table 6 in the Appendix). Despite the infrastructure investment, local tensions may be rising. According to Nargiza Umarova:<sup>39</sup>

“ The three regions of Uzbekistan occupying the territory of the Fergana Valley – Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana – have dozens of joint ventures with Chinese capital, which, in theory, should contribute to the creation of new jobs, and economic and technological growth at the local level.

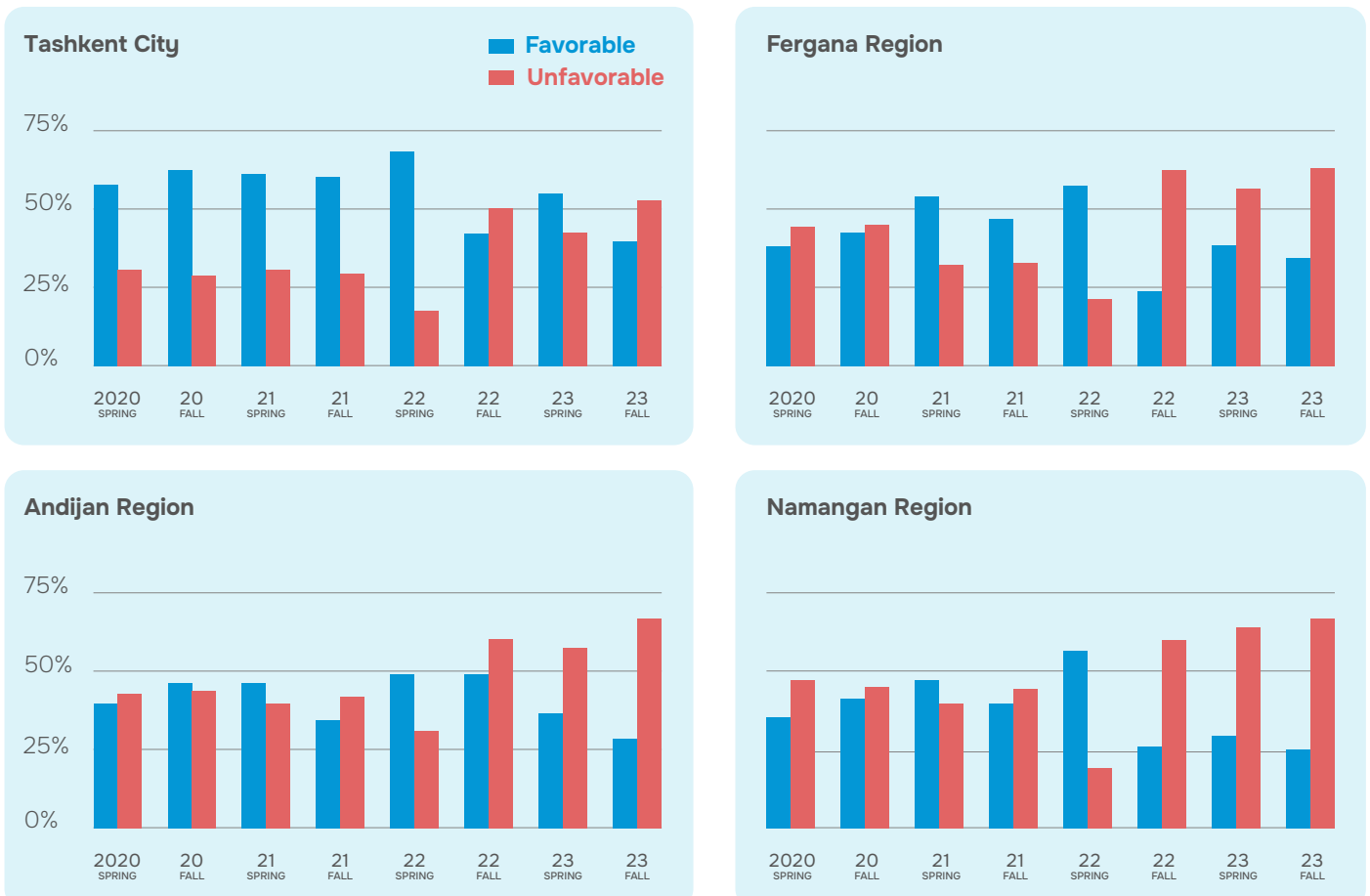
<sup>39</sup> Research Fellow at the Institute for Advanced International Studies (IAIS), University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED), and analyst at the non-state scientific institution “Bilim Karvoni” (Tashkent, Uzbekistan). Comments provided in reaction to this report.

“ However, in reality, everything is not so smooth. There are known cases in which Chinese enterprises became a source of serious problems for residents and entrepreneurs. In the summer of 2024, the Competition Committee of Uzbekistan took out a case against the Uzbek-Chinese cement plant Shangfeng – Bridge of Friendship, which opened in late April in the Bulakbashi district of the Andijan region. The basis was a collective complaint from several cement plants in the Fergana Valley about unfair competition from the new enterprise, by selling cement below cost. There have also been previous cases of environmental and public health damage caused by some cement plants located in the Fergana Valley, which also contributes to forming a negative image of China.

However, perspectives on Chinese investment, workers, and technology in infrastructure and energy projects are similar in these regions to those from the capital city.

These findings are enlightening for those familiar with the literature on Sinophobia in areas where the Chinese have become the target of several demographic and economic phobias.<sup>40</sup>

**FIGURE 12: FAVORABILITY TOWARD CHINA BY SELECTED REGIONS IN UZBEKISTAN**



% of total; CABS data

<sup>40</sup> Adnan, M. (2020, June 5). Rise of anti-China public sentiments in Central Asia. *ICS Research Blog*. <https://icsin.org/blogs/2020/06/01/rise-of-anti-china-public-sentiments-in-central-asia/>; Peyrouse, S. (2016). Discussing China: Sinophilia and sinophobia in Central Asia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 7(1), 14–23.

# Traditional and Social Media

When it comes to overall media engagement across Central Asia, consumption of any media has a positive effect on favorability toward China. Several concepts regarding the nature of news consumption (from traditional, social, local, and international news sources) have been addressed within the scope of this research. Due to the nature of the survey questions, traditional and social media were treated separately, based on the rationale that the content on the above-mentioned sources are not presented on television and in newspapers. In contrast, social media outlets allow audience members to create and promote their own narratives.

While there is growing scholarly interest in foreign information manipulation and interference, when it comes to Central Asia, there are numerous research gaps in this domain. Scholarly focus here needs to be both wider, covering all states of the region, and deeper, looking into granular nuances of media influences and impacts.

The few existing studies in this area have predominantly focused on Kyrgyzstan. For instance, a report on Russian propaganda and its reception on the ground across Kyrgyzstan stressed the colossal influence of Russia in the media domain, both on traditional and social media channels.<sup>41</sup> With respect to the role of China in influencing public opinion, Niva Yau offered a comprehensive overview of outlets, content, and strategies in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>42</sup>

**In particular, Yau’s research showed that Chinese media strategies include training Kyrgyzstani journalists, and posting content on Kyrgyzstani media via traditional and social media outlets. These media tend to focus on the positive role of China and, according to Yau “help advance the geopolitical interests and positions of the PRC.”<sup>43</sup>**

## Local vs. International News

**The regressions reveal that, in Central Asia, the consumption of news contributes to greater favorability toward China and support for its investments, workers, and technology. However, local news consumption may have marginal positive effects on favorability toward China and support for its technology, whether it comes from local news sources, foreign news sources, or even social media and the internet.**

Looking more closely at the sources of news, those associated with the most extreme favorability throughout the entire survey, see Figures 13 and 14 are family (30% consider family a source of local news inducing high favorability toward Chinanews, while 35% consider it a source of foreign news inducing high favorability toward China) and other news sources (including foreign media) (30.5% consider a source of foreign news inducing high favorability toward China, while 28.2% consider them sources of foreign news inducing high favorability toward China).

<sup>41</sup> Narratives and perceptions of Russian propaganda in Kyrgyzstan. (2023, July 5). *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*. <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/print-publications/russian-propaganda-kyrgyzstan>

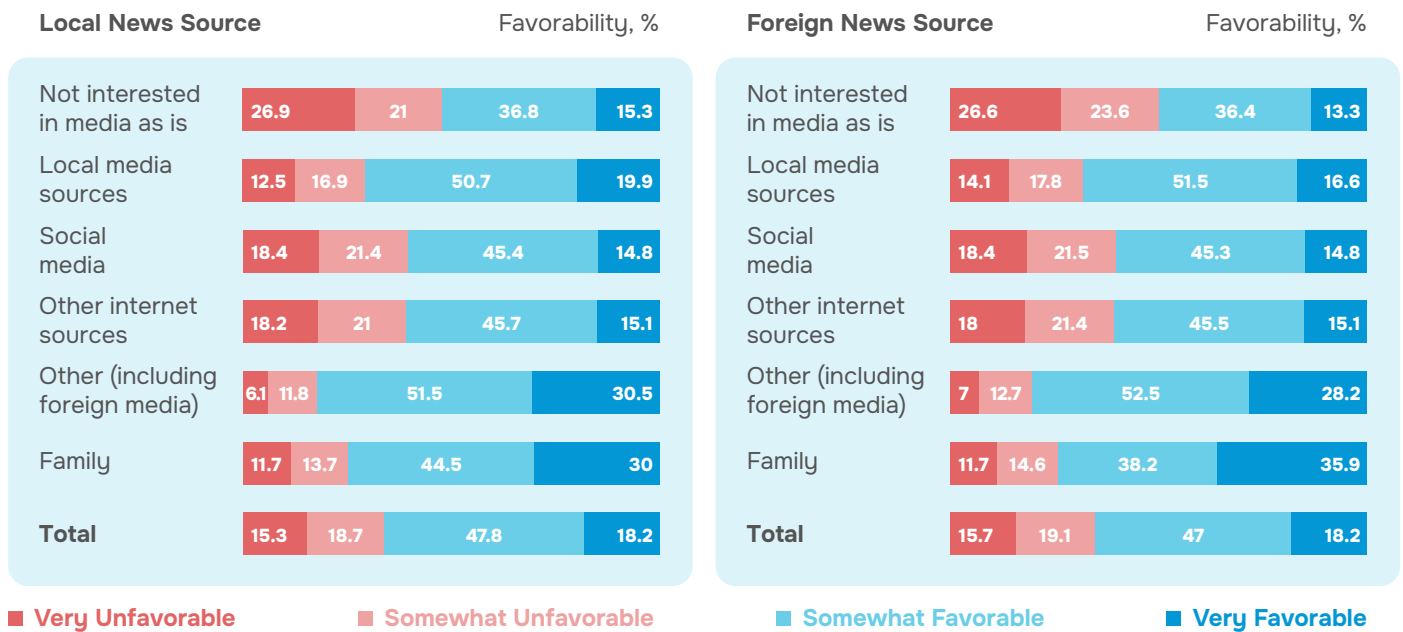
<sup>42</sup> Yau, N. (2022). Managing sentiments in the western periphery: Chinese information operations in the Kyrgyz Republic. *OSCE Academy in Bishkek*.

<sup>43</sup> Yau, N. (2022). Managing sentiments in the western periphery: Chinese information operations in the Kyrgyz Republic.

Local media outlets across Central Asia are viewed relatively positively (60.6% associate these with greater favorability toward China as sources of local news, while 68.1% positively view them as sources of foreign news).

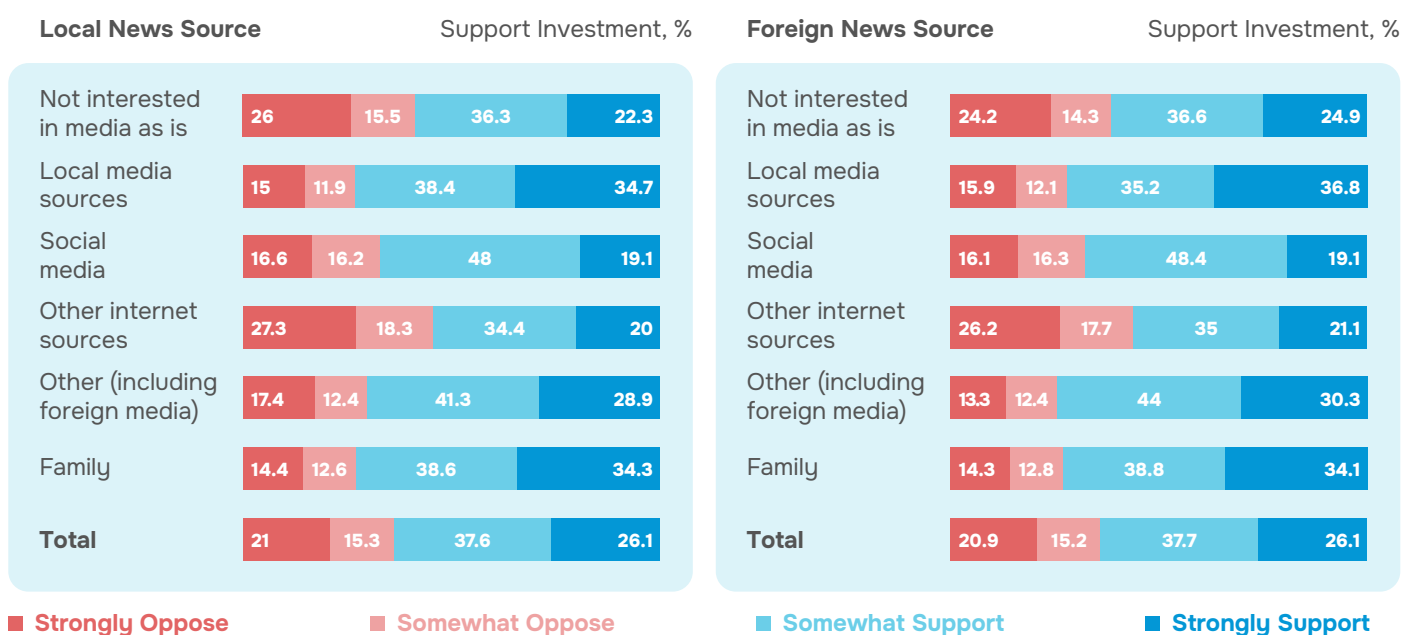
This latter perception might be because they tend to reflect state positions and address topics such as technological advancement and smart cities.<sup>44</sup> Those uninterested in the news tend to be more unfavorable toward Chinese investment.

**FIGURE 13: FAVORABILITY TOWARD CHINA BY NEWS SOURCE IN CENTRAL ASIA**



% of total; CABS data

**FIGURE 14: SUPPORT FOR CHINESE PROJECTS BY NEWS SOURCE IN CENTRAL ASIA**



% of total; CABS data

<sup>44</sup> For example, Donaev, M. (2022, November 28). China in Uzbek media: Friend or foe? *Global Voices*. <https://globalvoices.org/2022/11/28/china-in-uzbek-media-friend-or-foe/>; Burkhanov, A., & Chen, Y. W. (2016). Kazakh perspective on China, the Chinese, and Chinese migration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(12), 2129–2148.

In Uzbekistan, people reading domestic news in local media and social media tend to be more positive about China, its projects, and technology, but more wary of Chinese workers coming to the country. This might be in part attributable to local media's positive portrayal of technological cooperation with China, for example in the field of car manufacturing with the involvement of Uzbekistan in China-led electrical vehicles (EVs) production chains,<sup>45</sup> or telecommunication companies like Huawei, ZTE, or Oppo supporting the country's telecommunication infrastructure and selling a large number of mobile phones to the population.<sup>46</sup> The general Chinese presence, its investment, and the use of technology are portrayed positively in the media, but the issue of Chinese workers remains sensitive among people who are more informed and read/watch the news.<sup>47</sup> However, in Uzbekistan, international news consumption only seems to affect favorability positively and has no effect on support for project investment, workers, or technology. This might be driven by the nature of international news reports, which are less likely to focus on the specificities of Chinese investment projects in the country, or its workers or technology. Moreover, direct experiences with the above-mentioned initiatives might counterbalance any positive reports in the international news.

## Social Media

Tracking the 'true sources' of information on social media is a challenging task. A Facebook group or a Telegram channel dedicated to a particular or innocuous theme can promote the interests of foreign governments. Kyrgyzstan's Radio Liberty branch 'Azattyk' investigated Chinese influence operations in the country and brought up the example of 'Salam Kyrgyzstan,' a public page on Facebook, which tends to promote the positive role of China in Kyrgyzstan and in Central Asia more broadly.<sup>51</sup> According to the investigation, there are several such public pages that inconspicuously promote China as a benefactor in the region. Curiously, oftentimes pro-Chinese narratives are intertwined with pro-Russian and anti-Western discourse on such pages.<sup>52</sup>

Kazakhstani respondents, like those from Kyrgyzstan, are only marginally affected by domestic news, with local sources and internet sources having a positive effect on favorability toward China and social media having a negative effect on support for workers. International news consumption, while still having marginal effects, has the most robust effect on support for investment projects across all sources. Obtaining international news from social media or other sources (including foreign media) have the most robust and positive effect on perceptions of China in all categories except for support for Chinese workers. Indeed, no source of international news affects support for workers. As is the case in other contexts, this might indicate that real-life experiences and concerns over the presence of Chinese workers in the country counterbalance positive reports in media sources. Chinese workers have often had tensions with local workers, as was seen in 2014 when two Kyrgyz workers were held hostage by Chinese workers,<sup>48</sup> and in 2015 when fights broke out at the Aktogay mine between Chinese workers and local Kazakh workers.<sup>49</sup> On a different note, local media has been found to be more positive, particularly state-owned outlets.<sup>50</sup>

As such, social media platforms contain spaces where diverse opinions and narratives about China can be found. In terms of nuances, using the most prominent platforms in Central Asia, namely TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and Odnoklassniki, seems to have a marginally positive effect on favorability toward China (see the regressions in Table 2 of the Appendix). However, despite increased favorability, users of the same apps tend to be more negative about Chinese investment and technology, as well as having marginally negative opinions about Chinese workers. The use of other social media sources appears to have a marginally positive impact on favorability toward China and its investments and workers, particularly in Kazakhstan.

<sup>45</sup> Gazeta.Uz. (2024, June 27). Завод BYD в Джизакской области выпустил первые автомобили. <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2024/06/27/byd-uzbekistan-factory/>

<sup>46</sup> Gazeta.Uz. (2020, December 23). Бренд смартфонов OPPO выходит на рынок Узбекистана. <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2020/12/23/oppo/>; Uzdaily. (2016, April 28). Huawei признан самым инновационным брендом в Узбекистане. <https://www.uzdaily.uz/ru/post/28481/>

<sup>47</sup> It is to be noted however that the variable "Not interested in domestic media" also shows some significant negative effect on the support for Chinese workers coming to Uzbekistan. This variable is difficult to interpret without further qualitative work.

<sup>48</sup> Umuraliyeva, T. (2014, July 2). Tokmok: Chinese workers deported after "unrest in the factory." *Kloop Media*.

<sup>49</sup> Mass brawl between workers in the Aktogay field because of portions of food, see Tengri News. (2015, July 9). 145-men fight between Chinese and Kazakh miners in Kazakhstan, 65 injured. *Tengri News*. <https://en.tengrinews.kz/emergencies/145-men-fight-between-chinese-and-kazakh-miners-in-261159/>

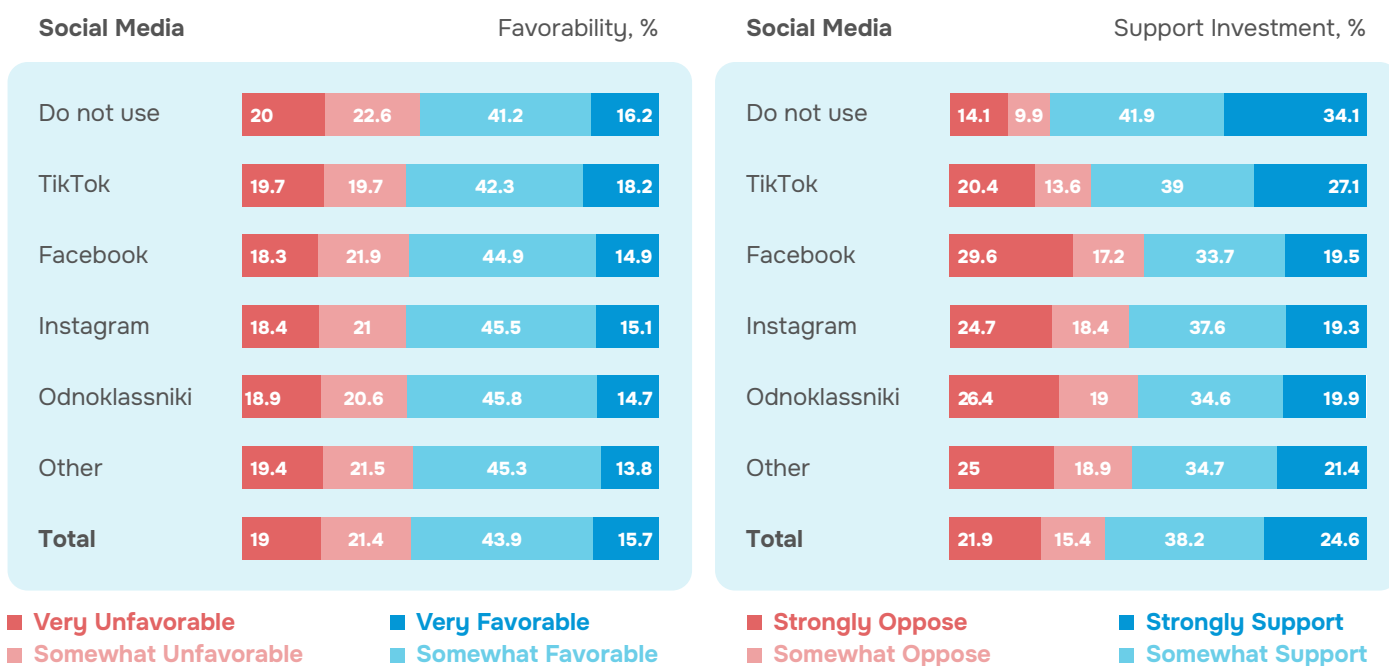
<sup>50</sup> Burkhanov, A., & Chen, Y. W. (2016). Kazakh perspective on China, the Chinese, and Chinese migration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(12), 2129–2148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1139155>

<sup>51</sup> Nurmatov, E. (2023, December 7). Как работает китайская пропаганда в Кыргызстане. *Радио Азаттык* (Кыргызская Служба Радио Свободная Европа/Радио Свобода). <https://rus.azattyk.org/a/32719749.html>

In theory, different platforms and spaces within them (e.g., thematic groups, pages, and chats) may serve as spaces for the promotion of particular views. Each platform also has its own offerings, hosting specific types of content, be it predominantly images, videos, text, or a combination thereof. The categorization of social media is complicated as certain lines are blurred between what can qualify as social media in broader terms and what merely constitutes a messaging app. The data show that all of the different apps (TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Odnoklassniki, and

others) – share similar effects with few differences in their effect on public opinion, often having positive effects on favorability toward China and negative effects on opinions of Chinese projects, workers, and technology. A similar issue is visible in the common categorization of social media apps as ‘Western,’ ‘Russian,’ and ‘Chinese’ outlets (see Figures 15. Here, all social media apps demonstrate similar effects across all questions, showing that there is no apparent favoritism or any difference in effect between apps from different countries.

**FIGURE 15: FAVORABILITY TOWARD CHINA BY SOCIAL MEDIA SOURCE IN CENTRAL ASIA**



% of total; CABS data

The nature of content-sharing practices on social media platforms can explain differences in perception, however. While some China-related content may be platform-specific, traditional media outlets undergo convergence and are vastly present across social media, penetrating users’ feeds with news items thereby blurring the lines between conventional and social media. Media convergence is the process of merging traditional and digital media platforms (e.g. television, newspapers, and radio are available on various digital and social media platforms and are accessible from a smartphone).<sup>53</sup> Certain information events might be intertextual and related to broader issues such as state visits, the global economy, security issues, and global affairs.

However, granular news pieces addressing individual Chinese infrastructure projects in Central Asia and elaborating on the presence of Chinese workers in the region may contribute to more negative perceptions and attitudes.

**The findings suggest that both traditional and social media play crucial roles in shaping public opinion on China in Central Asia. Yet, each broader cluster has its own nuances, both in terms of the capacity for shaping public opinion and the subsequent impact.**

<sup>52</sup> Nurmatov, E. (2023, December 7). Как работает китайская пропаганда в Кыргызстане.

Depending on how content is portrayed, traditional media can either bolster or moderate public support for China and its initiatives. In contrast, social media amplifies positive and negative opinions, often leading to more polarized views. Understanding the media landscape and the disseminated narratives should be focused on in future research. In some ways, different media sources have different effects than might be expected.

While it is vital to investigate traditional media narratives generated by local, regional, and international media outlets, narratives are also spread via social media channels, and these should be equally scrutinized.

## Geopolitical Competition: Russia vs. China

Historically, Russia has been the dominant power in Central Asia for over two centuries, especially during the imperial and Soviet periods. Numerous studies examining Russo-Central Asian interactions point out that the region is viewed as a traditional sphere of Russian influence,<sup>54</sup> often considered Russia's "soft underbelly" or its "backyard." Carrying such perceptions runs the risk of neglecting local anti-colonial voices urging for a reevaluation of Western-dominated Russia-centric scholarly prisms.<sup>55</sup>

Russia's ambition to maintain influence in the former Soviet space is especially relevant amid Russia's ongoing war with Ukraine as Central Asian regimes try to maneuver through the associated geopolitical challenges. Many analyses have noted that Russia exerts its influence through security partnerships such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), as well as through economic integration in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and labor migration.<sup>56</sup> Central Asian countries, particularly Kyrgyzstan, are highly dependent on remittances from labor migrants working in Russia, which may influence Kyrgyzstani people's feelings toward Russia and possibly how they perceive other foreign powers, including China.

The CABS data offer empirical insights into the shifting public opinion on Russia in the region.

**The data reveal a notable decline in favorable views of Russia, particularly in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. This downward shift in favorability has run parallel alongside changes in feelings about China. In 2022, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, an upward shift in favorability toward China in Kazakhstan was observed while at the same time a pronounced drop in Russia's favorability was noted.**

However, this noticeable move to greater favorability toward China in 2022 was also evident in Kyrgyzstan, which saw a significant increase in support for Chinese technology and investment as well in that period. This could be attributable to respondents reacting to concerns about Russia's economic trajectory and uncertain political future related to the invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing war.

<sup>53</sup> Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.

<sup>54</sup> Supyaldiyarov, I. (2024). Central Asia's geopolitical crossroads: The dynamics of 'coopetition' between Russia and China. *Central Asia Forum*.

<sup>55</sup> Kassymbekova, B. (2023, January 24). How Western scholars overlooked Russian imperialism. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/1/24/how-western-scholars-overlooked-russian-imperialism>

<sup>56</sup> Culp, W. (2022, January 15). Russia leveraging CSTO to bolster influence in Eurasia. *Diplomatic Courier*. <https://www.diplomaticcourier.com/posts/russia-leveraging-csto-to-bolster-influence-in-eurasia>; Cooley, A. (2017, June 30). Whose rules, whose sphere? Russian governance and influence in post-Soviet states. *Carnegie*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2017/06/whose-rules-whose-sphere-russian-governance-and-influence-in-post-soviet-states?lang=en>

Concerns about competition between China and Russia do not hold as much weight as other factors among respondents. Those who are more concerned that Chinese investment will harm economic relations with Russia are less favorable toward China and show less support for Chinese investment and technology (Table 2 of the Appendix). However, these coefficients are substantively small compared to other factors, meaning that while they do have a significant effect on opinions, the effect is not very large. The findings are similar in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, while in Uzbekistan

concern about Russia being harmed has a significantly negative relationship only with favorability toward China, with no effect on support for investment or technology and a positive effect on support for Chinese workers. In all three of these countries, the effect is similarly small compared to other factors. There may be some unease that economic engagement with China may come at the expense of longstanding relations with Russia, but it is practically insignificant.

## Socio-cultural Dynamics and Health Crises

The COVID-19 pandemic, youth preferences, ethnic dynamics, and concerns over religious treatment and human rights in China have all influenced public attitudes toward China in the region, adding complexity to an already multifaceted relationship.

These factors have been reflected regional responses to Chinese influence and highlight the broader socio-political dynamics at play within Central Asian states. Below, we deal with these three societal factors.

### COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic allowed China to reassert its leadership in Central Asia, particularly in terms of health and development. Despite initial fears and growing prejudices toward China, Beijing quickly responded by providing humanitarian aid, medical supplies, and technology to assist the region. Except for Turkmenistan, where the pandemic was not recognized officially, all Central Asian republics received Chinese medical support during the crisis.<sup>57</sup> While not acknowledging the virus, Turkmenistan still mandated vaccination, with supplies coming from Russia and China.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have also fueled certain prejudices and discontent toward China in Central Asia, but it does not appear to have played a decisive role in affecting opinions on China, with the possible exception of Uzbekistan. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were already on downward trends regarding favorability toward China before 2020 when there were now additional fluctuations in public opinion.<sup>58</sup> However, in Uzbekistan, China's favorability significantly declined in the survey wave of spring 2020.

<sup>57</sup> Maracchione, F. (2020, April 13). COVID-19 and aid to Central Asia: China shows off and the US hiccups. *ISPI Commentary*. <https://www.ispi-online.it/en/publication/covid-19-and-aid-central-asia-china-shows-and-us-hiccups-25758>; Pantucci, R. (2020). How COVID-19 is deepening China's relationship with Central Asia. *IERES, George Washington University*. <https://ieres.elliott.gwu.edu/project/how-covid-19-is-deepening-chinas-relationship-with-central-asia/>; Xinhua. (2020, April 24). China sends medical experts to Uzbekistan to help fight COVID-19. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-04/17/c\\_138985377\\_2](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-04/17/c_138985377_2)

<sup>58</sup> Additionally, student surveys at the time indicated that many thought the relationship with China was not altered by COVID-19. Neafie, "Anti-Chinese Sentiment, the BRI, and COVID-19: Kazakhstani Perceptions of Central Asia,"

While favorability declined, the support for investment in projects and Chinese workers in energy and infrastructure did not. It would be worth exploring whether this was influenced by the portrayal of China in Uzbekistani media (both traditional and social), or whether this could be linked to the conflation of public opinion on China with perceptions of Uzbekistan's government, which was also widely unpopular among citizens due to its COVID-19 response.<sup>59</sup>

For example, Uzbekistan worked with China to test and co-produce a vaccine that vaccinated most of the Uzbekistani population.<sup>60</sup> The production of a Chinese vaccine in Uzbekistan under the seal of the two nations' flags side-by-side was more than a medical or humanitarian strategy for both countries – it was primarily a political and diplomatic strategy. The opinion of Uzbekistani respondents marginally improved during this period.

## Youth Preferences

One of the phenomena observed in our data is the preference among youth for Chinese investment, which reflects the findings of other studies in the region.<sup>61</sup> Such a preference is most apparent in the data on Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, but is also apparent in the data on Uzbekistan albeit not to the same robust degree across all age groups and questions.

There are two key reasons that may explain this: (1) social media and (2) educational opportunities. China expert Ruslan Izimov<sup>62</sup> pointed out why educational opportunities may be influential in this regard:

“ Today, more Kazakhstani schoolchildren and university applicants are choosing Chinese educational institutions. According to recent data, China is now the second most popular country after Russia for young Kazakhstanis seeking higher education. In the post-pandemic period, the number of Kazakhstanis studying in China is approaching 20,000.

This development has changed perceptions by allowing more Kazakh-Chinese interactions, which Izimov claims may also continue to grow in the future as more individuals from Central Asia engage with the Chinese, particularly in Kazakhstan where a new visa free regime has been introduced with China.

This report has also explored the positive impact of social media, particularly for those who obtain their international news from social media. As youth tend to engage more with social media, this may have the influence of China being perceived in a more positive light in the region.

## Ethnicity

Ethnic identity plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of China across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. In Kazakhstan, where Russian nationals form the second-largest ethnic group, ethnicity is a strong predictor of attitudes toward China. Russian communities tend to be more optimistic about Chinese relations,

which aligns with public opinion in Russia.<sup>63</sup> We see evidence here of division in Kazakhstan courtesy of the regional makeup, and in the opinions of the predominant ethnic group and those of others. Kazakh respondents have significantly lower favorability toward China and less support for Chinese investment, technology, and workers.

<sup>59</sup> Ubaydullaeva, D. (2021). Student online protests in Uzbekistan: Democratization of higher education as concomitant to the COVID-19 crisis? *Central Asian Survey*, 40(3), 382–399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2021.1922358>; Hanks, R., & Achilov, D. (2022). COVID-19 policy in Uzbekistan: Slipping back toward authoritarianism? In *COVID-19 and a world of ad hoc geographies* (pp. 185–195). Cham: Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94350-9\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94350-9_12).

<sup>60</sup> Maracchione, F. (2021, March 29). Our vaccine: The political significance of the Uzbek-Chinese vaccine. *ISPI - Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale*. <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/our-vaccine-political-significance-uzbek-chinese-vaccine-29801>. *Gazeta.Uz*. (2021). Статистика: как проходит вакцинация и сколько стоят вакцины, 29 July. <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2021/07/29/vaccination/>

<sup>61</sup> Land, S., Neafie, J., & Courtney, M. G. R. (2024). The role of identity and strategic narratives on public perceptions of China: The case of the New Silk Road in Kazakhstan. *Area Development and Policy*.

<sup>62</sup> Sinologist, head of the “Eurasian Studies Program” of the Institute for World Economics and Politics under the Foundation of First President of Kazakhstan, director of the Center for China Studies in Central Asia “Synopsys.”

<sup>63</sup> Zapryanova, G., & Vigers, B. (2023, December 7). Russians continue to warm to China. *Gallup*. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/545267/russians-continue-warm-china.aspx>

The regional divide – between the more optimistic views in the north and east, home to larger Russian communities, and the more skeptical perceptions in the south and west, which is predominantly Kazakh – also evidences the importance of ethnicity in shaping public opinion.

In our regressions for Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, ethnicity is a marginally significant predictor of support for Chinese endeavors. Kyrgyzstan, similar to Kazakhstan, has a strong nationalistic framework around its titular ethnic group.<sup>64</sup> Such frameworks have the potential to influence how media in different languages frame relations with China, leading predominant ethnic groups to see any foreign investment, or actors, in a less favorable light than other ethnic groups.

## Human Rights, Culture and Religion

Cultural and religious factors, particularly concerning human rights and the treatment of ethnic minorities in China, also shape public perceptions. Answers to questions in this area were only collected in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and show how public opinion of China may be influenced by perceptions of state policies in the cultural sphere. The responses from those in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where public protests related to China have been most frequent in the region, illustrate how deeply these issues resonate.<sup>65</sup> Protests in these countries have covered a wide array of themes, from opposition to China's economic expansion to solidarity with Kazakhs and Kyrgyz allegedly detained in Xinjiang's internment camps. Additional concerns here include the presence of illegal Chinese workers, ecological degradation, and fears of 'land grabs' by Chinese enterprises. Protestors have been detained,<sup>66</sup> fined, accused of being provokers hired by third parties,<sup>67</sup> and warned of legal prosecution for "trying to disrupt the Kyrgyz-Chinese partnership."<sup>68</sup> The absence or scarcity of protests in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan can be explained by several factors, including severe restrictions on public assembly, insignificant numbers of ethnic Turkmen and Uzbeks living in Xinjiang, and the lack of a shared border with China.

In contrast, ethnicity has a less pronounced impact on Uzbekistani respondent's perceptions of China. The comparatively more homogeneous Uzbekistani population shows fewer ethnic-driven divergences in attitudes toward China. This suggests that ethnic identity is less central in Uzbekistan's relationship with China than in Kazakhstan, where ethnic and regional divisions are more pronounced. Beyond Kazakhstan, more research is needed to explore the reasons behind the relevance of ethnicity in favorability toward China in the rest of the region, particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

Survey data collected in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan indicate that human rights, the treatment of Uighurs, and the protection of Muslim minorities in China remain significant concerns for many respondents. In Kazakhstan, concern about human rights in China is relatively balanced (in fall 2021, 48% were not concerned and 52% were concerned). At that time, concern about the treatment of Uighur populations was slightly lower among Kazakhstani respondents (53% were not concerned and 47% were concerned), but concern about the treatment of Muslims in both fall 2021 and spring 2023 was higher (more than 65% in both waves). In Kyrgyzstan, there was no such variation as respondents were consistently concerned about the treatment of Muslims (more than 80% in every wave), and about the treatment of Uighurs (more than 65% in every wave), and about human rights in China (more than 60% in every wave). In most cases, the number of individuals expressing concern over these issues far exceeds those who are indifferent, suggesting that China's domestic policies continue to weigh heavily on its public image in these countries.

<sup>64</sup> Laurell, M. (2012). The paradigm of nationalism in Kyrgyzstan: Evolving narrative, the sovereignty issue, and political agenda. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 45(1–2), 39–49.

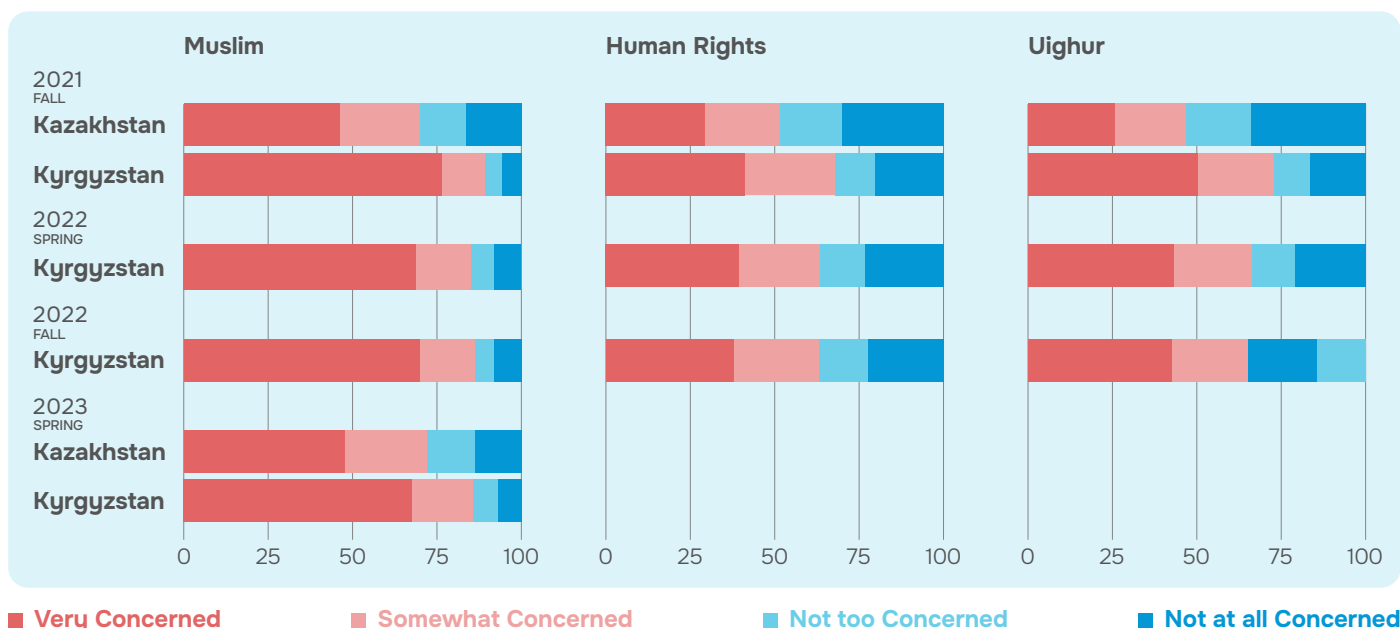
<sup>65</sup> Oxus Society. (2021). Protest tracker. <https://oxussociety.org/viz/protest-tracker/>; Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. (February 08, 2024) Kazakhstan Xinjiang Chinese consulate protest Almaty. <https://www.rferl.org/a/kazakhstan-xinjiang-chinese-consulate-protest-almaty/32810854.html>; Azattyq. (2023, May 1). Almaty detains park visitors who speak out against visa regime with China. <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/32386909.html>

<sup>66</sup> Kaysar, A. (2021, May 18). Полиция задержала протестующих у консульства Китая [Police detain protesters outside Chinese consulate]. *Vlast.kz*. <https://vlast.kz/novosti/45046-policia-zaderzala-protestuushih-u-konsulstva-kitaa.html>

<sup>67</sup> Toiken, S. (2019, September 9). Kazakhstan Zhanaozen China protests: Zhanaozen residents protesting against "Chinese projects" took to the square again. *Azattyq*. <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-zhanaozen-china-protests/30155328.html>

<sup>68</sup> RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service. (2019, January 18). Anti-China protesters fined in Kyrgyzstan. *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*. <https://www.rferl.org/a/anti-china-protesters-fined-in-kyrgyzstan/29717288.html>

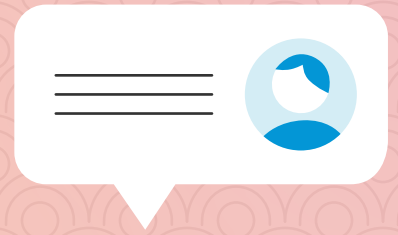
**FIGURE 16: CONCERN ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS, TREATMENT OF MUSLIMS, AND TREATMENT OF UIGHURS**



% of total; CABS data

While religion and religiosity is not covered in questions asked in the CABS, it is important to note that it might be a significant contributor to the feelings described above. Expert Nargiza Muratalieva noted that:

“ Additionally, the level of religiosity in each region of Kyrgyzstan can explain the level of negative or positive perceptions of China. The general level of xenophobia in society can also help to understand the dynamics of perceptions of China in the country.



# Conclusions

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This report on various waves of the CABS conducted between 2017 and 2023 unveils several key findings about perceptions of China in Central Asia.

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**Favorability towards China varies widely across countries, with younger generations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan generally viewing China's involvement more positively, particularly in areas like technology and investment. Older generations in these countries tend to be more skeptical though. In Turkmenistan, the older population is more optimistic about China's role, especially with regard to Chinese workers and investment.**

Gender also plays a role in shaping perceptions, particularly in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, where men are more critical of Chinese migration despite being more positive about China overall. Regional differences are evident within all countries, with certain areas showing higher support for China's investments and workers. Interestingly, support for Chinese projects, workers, and technology does not always align with overall favorability toward China. For instance, even where favorability may decline, support for Chinese technology remains strong, especially in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, suggesting that public opinion on China's role is nuanced and influenced by specific regional and demographic factors.

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**The report also finds that favorability toward China does not necessarily equate to support for Chinese investment in energy and infrastructure, support for the employment of workers from China, and/or support for Chinese technology.**

The results suggest that while respondents may hold a favorable opinion on China, this only sometimes means that they are interested in new Chinese investments or would support Chinese workers operating in their country, and vice versa. However, across the countries surveyed, most respondents supported the use of Chinese technology in their countries.

Future studies could use the CABS data to examine the role of China's economic and cultural diplomacy in reshaping regional attitudes. As China increases its economic presence in Central Asia, it will be essential to analyze how infrastructure development, technology transfer, and cultural exchanges influence public perceptions. For example, China's growing influence in Central Asia, particularly in the aftermath of its COVID-19 diplomacy, should be explored further. In particular, the extent to which medical aid has served as a diplomatic tool, and how collaboration between the Uzbekistani government and China have influenced public perceptions of China ought to be investigated. Data gleaned therefrom can be used to shed light on the broader impact of such interventions in shaping geopolitical relationships. As this survey takes place twice a year, fluctuations can be tracked, including changes in foreign policy strategy and media narratives. Understanding public diplomacy strategies will help to explain how China balances its economic ambitions with regional public relations.

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**Other critical avenues worthy of study in this context include ethnicity, culture, religion, and human rights. Protests in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan over China's treatment of Uighurs and Muslims in Xinjiang highlight the role of cultural and religious concerns in shaping public opinion.**

Therefore, future research should examine how these concerns influence public sentiment and government policies. The roles of ethnicity and regional differences also remain important areas of inquiry. In Kazakhstan, for instance, anti-China sentiment is significantly shaped by ethnic identity, particularly in regions with large Kazakh-majority populations. Future research should thus compare these areas with regions where there are bigger populations of Russian nationals, who tend to be more optimistic about China.

In addition, future research should focus on the long-term effects of Chinese investments on local economies, particularly in regions where the direct benefits could be more evident. Exploring how infrastructure projects, economic aid, and investment in manufacturing and agriculture influence

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regional development, especially in rural or underdeveloped areas, would provide a clearer picture of the geopolitical consequences of Chinese globalization. Here, the CABS data can be used alongside investment statistics to draw a clearer picture of how public opinion, media narratives, and regional government policies intersect with economic investment, thereby gaining a comprehensive view of China's impact on Central Asia.

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**Lastly, the influence of traditional and social media on shaping public opinion toward China warrants deeper exploration. Given the regional variability in attitudes, research in this area could examine how local and international news coverage and social media narratives have bolstered or undermined China's image in different Central Asian states.**

A thorough study of the media's role in shaping public perceptions of Chinese investments, health diplomacy, and human rights would provide valuable insights into the evolving nature of Sino-Central Asian relations.



# Appendix 1

**TABLE 1.1: SURVEY SIZE BY COUNTRY-SEASON AND YEAR, CENTRAL ASIAN BAROMETER WAVES 1-14**

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Wave # (Months)	#	Wave # (Months)	#	Wave # (Months)	#	Wave # (Months)	#	Wave # (Months)	#	Wave # (Months)	#	Wave # (Months)	#
<b>Kazakhstan</b> Spring	Wave 1 (June-July)	1500	Wave 3 (April-May)	1500	Wave 5 (April-June)	1500	Wave 7 (June-July)	2000	Wave 9 (May-June)	1500	Wave 11 (June)	1511	Wave 13 (April-May)	1500
<b>Kazakhstan</b> Fall	Wave 2 (Oct-Dec)	1500	Wave 4 (Nov-Dec)	1500	Wave 6 (Oct-Dec)	1500	Wave 8 (Oct-Nov)	1500	Wave 10 (Sept.-Nov.)	2000	Wave 12 (Nov)	1509	Wave 14 (Sept-Nov)	1500
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b> Spring	Wave 1 June	1500	Wave 3 (April-May)	1500	Wave 5 (April-May)	1500	Wave 7 (June-July)	2000	Wave 9 (May-June)	1506	Wave 11 (June)	1518	Wave 13 (April-May)	1509
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b> Fall	Wave 2 (Oct-Nov)	1500	Wave 4 (Nov-Dec)	1500	Wave 6 (Nov)	1500	Wave 8 (Oct-Nov)	1467	Wave 10 (October)	2000	Wave 12 (Nov-Dec)	1510	Wave 14 (Sept-Oct)	1513
<b>Turkmeni- stan</b> Spring	(n/a)	(n/a)	Wave 3 (n/a)	(n/a)	Wave 5 (April-May)	1500	(n/a)	(n/a)	Wave 9 (n/a)	(n/a)	Wave 11 (June)	1621	Wave 13 (April-May)	1528
<b>Turkmeni- stan</b> Fall	(n/a)	(n/a)	Wave 4 (Nov)	1500	Wave 6 (Nov-Dec)	1500	(n/a)	(n/a)	Wave 10 (Oct-Nov)	1500	Wave 12 (Nov)	1500	Wave 14 (Sept-Oct)	1514
<b>Uzbekistan</b> Spring	Wave 1 (June-July)	1500	Wave 3 (April-May)	1500	Wave 5 (April-May)	1500	Wave 7 (June-July)	2000	Wave 9 (May-June)	1505	Wave 11 (May-June)	1500	Wave 13 (April-May)	1508
<b>Uzbekistan</b> Fall	Wave 2 (Oct-Nov) (Telephone: Oct-Dec)	1500	Wave 4 (Nov-Dec)	1500	Wave 6 (Nov-Dec)	1500	Wave 8 (Oct-Nov)	1500	Wave 10 (Oct-Nov)	2000	Wave 12 (Nov)	1504	Wave 14 (Sept-Oct)	1511

**TABLE 1.2: SURVEY QUESTIONS IN STUDY BY WAVE, CENTRAL ASIAN BAROMETER WAVES 1-14**

Question in Survey: <sup>69</sup>	Waves:	Variables in Text:
Thinking about other countries, please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of China	7-14	Favorable: favorable + somewhat favorable Unfavorable: unfavorable + somewhat unfavorable <sup>70</sup>
Please tell me if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the following: China developing energy and infrastructure projects in our country	4-14	Support: strongly support + somewhat support Oppose: strongly oppose + somewhat oppose
How much confidence do you have that China's investment in our country will Create jobs in our country for our citizens? Would you say you have a great deal of confidence, some confidence, not very much confidence, or no confidence at all?	6-14	Confident: great deal of confidence + some confidence Not confident: no confidence at all + not very much confidence
How much confidence do you have that China's investment in our country will Improve energy and infrastructure in our country? Would you say you have a great deal of confidence, some confidence, not very much confidence, or no confidence at all?	6-14	Confident: great deal of confidence + some confidence Not confident: no confidence at all + not very much confidence
How concerned, if at all, are you that Chinese development projects could lead to an increase of national debt with China.	6-14	Concerned: somewhat concerned + very concerned Not Concerned: not too concerned+not concerned at all
How concerned, if at all, are you that our country's economic relationship with China could harm our country's economic relationship with Russia.	6-14	Concerned: somewhat concerned + very concerned Not Concerned: not too concerned+not concerned at all

<sup>69</sup> These are the questions as they appear in wave 14, some questions (particularly the media questions) vary by wave and different responses options were indicated, which lead to collating the response options so they were comparable over time.

<sup>70</sup> These groups appear in the descriptive analysis, in the regressions the questions are used as 4-point likert scales.

Question in Survey:	Waves:	Variables in Text:
How concerned, if at all, are you that Chinese buyers want to purchase land in our country.	6-14	Concerned: somewhat concerned + very concerned Not Concerned: not too concerned+not concerned at all
How concerned, if at all, are you about the treatment of Muslims in China	10-13	1500
How concerned, if at all, are you about the treatment of Uighurs in China	10-12	
How concerned, if at all, are you about human rights in China	10-12	
Please tell me if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the following: China bringing in Chinese workers for energy and infrastructure projects in our country.	4-14	Support: strongly support + somewhat support Oppose: strongly oppose + somewhat oppose
Please tell me if you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose the following Chinese technology being used in our country.	8-14	Support: strongly support + somewhat support Oppose: strongly oppose + somewhat oppose
How concerned, if at all, are you that in general, goods from China are of lower quality than goods from other countries	6-7,14	Concerned: somewhat concerned + very concerned Not Concerned: not too concerned+not concerned at all
What would you say is your main source of media about what is going on inside of [country]? <sup>71</sup>	1-14	Not Interested in Local News Local media sources Social media Other internet sources Other (including foreign media) <sup>72</sup> Family
<input type="radio"/> Family, friends, or neighbors <input type="radio"/> Religious services or literature <input type="radio"/> Our country's national television stations <input type="radio"/> Russian Television Stations <input type="radio"/> Local Radio <input type="radio"/> Russian Radio <input type="radio"/> Our government's newspapers <input type="radio"/> Non-government newspapers published in our country <input type="radio"/> Russian newspapers <input type="radio"/> Other foreign news sources <input type="radio"/> Internet: News website (newspaper, TV, magazine) <input type="radio"/> Other television stations <input type="radio"/> Social media sites or messengers <input type="radio"/> Internet: blogs, other		
What would you say is your main source of media about what is going on outside of [country]?	1-14	Not Interested in Foreign News Local media sources Social media Other internet sources Other (including foreign media) Family
<input type="radio"/> Family, friends, or neighbors <input type="radio"/> Religious services or literature <input type="radio"/> Our country's national television stations <input type="radio"/> Russian Television Stations <input type="radio"/> Local Radio <input type="radio"/> Russian Radio <input type="radio"/> Our government's newspapers <input type="radio"/> Non-government newspapers published in our country <input type="radio"/> Russian newspapers <input type="radio"/> Other foreign news sources <input type="radio"/> Internet: News website (newspaper, TV, magazine) <input type="radio"/> Other television stations <input type="radio"/> Social media sites or messengers <input type="radio"/> Internet: blogs, other		
Out of the following social media sites, could you please tell me the one you use most often?	7-14	TikTok Facebook Instagram Odnoklassniki Other
<input type="radio"/> Facebook <input type="radio"/> Odnoklassniki <input type="radio"/> V Kontakte <input type="radio"/> Instagram <input type="radio"/> Mail.ru and Moi Mir <input type="radio"/> Twitter		

<sup>71</sup> These are grouped together because not all answers appeared in all waves and many of the groups were chosen by less than 1% of the respondents (because this would bias the results we grouped them together more succinctly). The dominant groups in all waves and countries were national television stations and the internet, with no distinction between government/non-government, and public versus private.

<sup>72</sup> Predominantly Russian but in most instances this is less than 2% of the survey respondents who answered Russian media, and less than .5% answered other foreign media.

# Appendix 2: Regression Tables

**TABLE 2: REGRESSION TABLE,<sup>73</sup> CENTRAL ASIAN PUBLIC OPINION ON CHINA (CABS DATA)**

ALL CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES	Favorability		Projects		Workers		Technology	
<b>Age (18-29)</b>								
30-39	-0.13 **	-0.01	-0.36 ***	-0.13 ***	-0.17 ***	-0.04 ***	-0.28 ***	-0.08 **
40-49	-0.16 **	0.03	-0.56 ***	-0.17 ***	-0.34 ***	-0.12 ***	-0.44 ***	-0.13 *
50-59	-0.22 **	0.02	-0.77 ***	-0.22 ***	-0.45 ***	-0.15 **	-0.59 ***	-0.13
60+	-0.14	0.20	-0.91 ***	-0.19 **	-0.47 ***	-0.07 *	-0.67 **	-0.11
<b>Male</b>	-0.02	-0.07 **	-0.07 ***	-0.13 ***	0.14 ***	0.13 **	0.13 **	0.04 **
<b>Urban</b>	0.18 ***	0.14 ***	0.10	0.04	0.08	0.05 *	0.02	-0.04
<b>Employment (No Job)</b>								
Housewife/househusband	0.07	0.04 **	0.03	-0.03	0.09 ***	0.05	0.11 ***	0.05
Student	0.24 ***	0.17 ***	0.21 ***	0.13 ***	0.17 **	0.10	0.20 ***	0.01
Working part-time	0.02	0.01	-0.10	-0.00	0.05	0.09	-0.01	0.01
Working full-time	0.15 *	0.15 ***	-0.05	-0.04	0.11 *	0.08	0.05	-0.01
Retired	0.10	0.03	0.10	0.02	0.09	-0.02	0.17 *	0.10
<b>Local News Media (Not Interested)</b>								
Local media sources	0.20 **	0.01	0.35 ***	0.06	0.34 ***	0.11	0.43 ***	0.11
Social media	0.10	0.11 *	-0.21	0.00	0.20	0.25 **	0.07	0.10
Other internet sources	0.17 **	0.11 *	-0.04	-0.03	0.19 ***	0.15 *	0.11	0.04
Other (including foreign media)	0.36 ***	0.08 *	0.34 ***	0.09	0.33 ***	0.18 *	0.28 ***	0.11
Family	0.22 ***	0.12	0.11	-0.02	0.17 ***	0.06	0.19 ***	0.08 *
<b>International News Media (Not Interested)</b>								
Local media sources	0.25 ***	0.14 **	0.25 ***	0.14 *	0.20 ***	0.16 **	0.27 ***	0.13 **
Social media	0.19 ***	0.18 ***	-0.13	0.03	0.05	0.10	0.03	0.06
Other internet sources	0.29 ***	0.20 ***	0.04	0.06 ***	0.14	0.16 ***	0.12	0.11 **
Other (including foreign media)	0.67 ***	0.41 ***	0.38 ***	0.12 ***	0.34 ***	0.24 ***	0.36 ***	0.15 **
Family	0.25 ***	0.07	0.24 ***	0.16 *	0.21 *	0.16	0.35 ***	0.27 ***
<b>Ethnicity: Predominant ethnic group</b>	-0.32	-0.31	-0.14	-0.11	-0.14	-0.18 *	-0.11	-0.06 ***
<b>Social Media (No Social Media)</b>								
TikTok	0.03	0.17 **	-0.36 ***	-0.14 ***	-0.18 ***	-0.00	-0.37 ***	-0.15 *
Facebook	0.14	0.26 ***	-0.56 ***	-0.19 ***	-0.15 **	0.04	-0.41 ***	-0.14 *
Instagram	0.07	0.23 ***	-0.57 ***	-0.18 ***	-0.24 ***	0.01	-0.52 ***	-0.20 *
Odnoklassniki	0.06	0.20 ***	-0.45 ***	-0.18 *	-0.18 ***	0.01	-0.41 ***	-0.18 ***
Other	0.08 **	0.23 ***	-0.41 ***	-0.08	-0.16 **	-0.04	-0.41 ***	-0.13
<b>Concerned that Chinese investment:</b>								
Increases debt with China		0.00		-0.13 ***		-0.02		-0.11 ***
Harm Economic Relations with Russian		-0.08 ***		-0.00		-0.08 ***		-0.02 ***
Purchase land in the country		-0.00		-0.26 ***		-0.01		-0.14 **
<b>Confident that Chinese investment:</b>								
Creates Jobs in the country		0.28 ***		0.32 ***		0.40 ***		0.40 ***
Improve energy and Infrastructure		0.24 ***		0.30 ***		0.37 ***		0.55 ***
<b>Intercept</b>	-0.47 *	-0.91 ***	-0.05	-0.39 ***	0.31	-0.70 ***	0.25	-0.64 ***
<b>Adj. R^2</b>	0.05	0.12	0.13	0.25	0.05	0.21	0.11	0.32
<b>Num. obs.</b>	37363	20667	33020	18996	29993	16646	37616	21223

<sup>73</sup> Wave dummy variables were included in the regression but only social characteristics of interest are reported here. Waves were marginally significant but did not indicate any significant unique changes dictated by any particular shift in a single year. Education was also tested but was not significant and did not improve the models so was dropped from the regressions.

**TABLE 3: REGRESSION TABLE, PUBLIC OPINION ON CHINA IN KAZAKHSTAN (CABS DATA)**

KAZAKHSTAN	Favorability		Projects		Workers		Technology	
<b>Age (18-29)</b>								
30-39	-0.13***	-0.02	-0.21***	-0.02	-0.22***	-0.06	-0.15***	-0.02
40-49	-0.16***	-0.02	-0.30***	0.03	-0.36***	-0.11**	-0.29***	-0.09
50-59	-0.27***	-0.03	-0.44***	0.01	-0.54***	-0.19***	-0.45***	-0.16**
60+	-0.17*	0.02	-0.48***	-0.11	-0.43***	-0.14	-0.28**	0.02
<b>Male</b>	-0.03	-0.11***	0.07*	0.02	-0.08**	-0.12***	0.14***	0.07*
<b>Urban</b>	0.21***	0.16***	0.07	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.13**	0.08*
<b>Employment (No Job)</b>								
Housewife/househusband	0.10	0.03	0.10	0.06	0.06	0.01	0.07	0.01
Student	0.38***	0.24**	0.40***	0.12	0.44***	0.23**	0.34***	0.13
Working part-time	0.14**	0.06	0.07	0.05	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.02
Working full-time	0.25***	0.16**	0.18***	0.07	0.04	-0.04	0.12*	0.02
Retired	0.15	0.07	0.19	0.15	0.00	-0.02	0.05	-0.13
<b>Local News Media (Not Interested)</b>								
Local media sources	0.18*	0.16	-0.06	-0.13	-0.02	-0.03	0.07	-0.02
Social media	0.13	0.10	-0.11	-0.18*	-0.02	-0.02	0.11	-0.01
Other internet sources	0.18*	0.17*	-0.06	-0.13	-0.07	-0.07	0.09	-0.01
Other (including foreign media)	0.24	0.14	-0.04	-0.25	0.10	-0.01	0.19	-0.05
Family	0.27*	0.26	0.04	0.14	-0.08	0.01	0.09	0.00
<b>International News Media (Not Interested)</b>								
Local media sources	0.13*	0.02	0.25***	0.12*	0.04	-0.02	0.16*	0.13
Social media	0.17**	0.15*	0.26***	0.23***	-0.02	-0.01	0.25*	0.22*
Other internet sources	0.18***	0.07	0.26***	0.17***	0.07	0.02	0.25***	0.17**
Other (including foreign media)	0.37***	0.22**	0.34***	0.24***	0.11	0.06	0.37***	0.25**
Family	0.18	0.00	0.46***	0.25	0.07	-0.02	0.13	0.05
<b>Ethnicity: Predominant ethnic group</b>	-0.68***	-0.48***	-0.53***	-0.19***	-0.46***	-0.18***	-0.57***	-0.30***
<b>Social Media (No Social Media)</b>								
TikTok	-0.07	-0.03	-0.10	-0.01	-0.06	-0.03	0.03	0.12
Facebook	-0.03	-0.04	-0.03	0.01	-0.08	-0.06	0.06	0.09
Instagram	0.03	0.02	-0.03	-0.01	-0.06	-0.06	0.05	0.06
Odnoklassniki	0.04	0.08	-0.10	-0.06	-0.07	0.02	-0.01	0.02
Other	0.13*	0.10	0.13*	0.08	0.02	0.01	0.17*	0.09
<b>Regions(Astana)</b>								
Akmola	0.18*	0.11	0.07	0.04	-0.02	-0.02	0.09	-0.04
Aktobe	-0.19*	-0.22*	-0.10	-0.02	-0.12	-0.09	-0.23*	-0.21*
Almaty Region	-0.15*	-0.12	-0.09	-0.04	-0.14*	-0.08	-0.05	-0.08
Almaty City	-0.03	-0.04	0.07	0.06	-0.07	-0.07	-0.04	-0.09
Atyrau	-0.29**	-0.22*	-0.21*	-0.13	-0.03	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01
East Kazakhstan	0.10	0.08	0.04	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.03	-0.07
Jambyl	-0.04	-0.06	-0.03	0.03	-0.25**	-0.18*	-0.20*	-0.23*
Kostanay	0.14	0.08	0.11	0.07	0.05	-0.01	0.16	0.07
Kyzylorda	-0.41***	-0.33***	-0.05	0.05	-0.05	0.00	-0.17	-0.17
Mangystau	-0.37***	-0.29**	-0.20	-0.07	-0.11	-0.03	-0.13	-0.14
North Kazakhstan	0.13	0.02	0.17	0.03	0.23**	0.12	0.18	0.07
Pavlodar	0.15	0.17	-0.08	-0.09	-0.04	-0.04	0.12	0.05

<b>KAZAKHSTAN</b>	<b>Favorability</b>		<b>Projects</b>		<b>Workers</b>		<b>Technology</b>	
Shymkent City	-0.35***	-0.36***	-0.04	0.03	-0.07	-0.03	-0.17	-0.19*
Turkistan (South.Kazakhstan)	-0.46***	-0.34***	-0.20**	-0.06	-0.18**	-0.09	-0.17	-0.17*
West Kazakhstan	0.00	-0.02	-0.24*	-0.21*	-0.28**	-0.24**	-0.17	-0.14
Karaganda	0.06	-0.05	0.14	0.05	0.05	-0.00	0.07	-0.06
<b>Confident that Chinese investment:</b>								
Creates Jobs in Country		0.16***		0.27***		0.20***		0.22***
Improve energy and Infrastructure		0.17***		0.29***		0.16***		0.28***
<b>Concerned that Chinese investment:</b>								
Increases debt with China		-0.03**		-0.06***		-0.08***		-0.04**
Harm Economic Relations with Russian		-0.09***		-0.04***		-0.00		-0.08***
Purchase Land in Country		-0.03		-0.14***		-0.22***		-0.01
<b>Intercept</b>	0.02	0.23	-0.27*	0.05	-0.46***	-0.12	0.27*	0.50***
<b>R2</b>	10410	7935	9363	8109	8368	7226	7196	6197
<b>Num.Obs.</b>	0.126	0.237	0.089	0.365	0.079	0.283	0.084	0.287

**TABLE 4: REGRESSION TABLE, PUBLIC OPINION ON CHINA IN KYRGYZSTAN (CABS DATA)**

KYRGYZSTAN	Favorability		Projects		Workers		Technology	
<b>Age (18-29)</b>								
30-39	-0.06	-0.01	-0.16***	-0.08*	-0.20***	-0.12***	-0.07	-0.02
40-49	-0.10*	-0.02	-0.19***	-0.07	-0.27***	-0.15***	-0.23***	-0.15**
50-59	-0.13*	-0.06	-0.14*	-0.03	-0.25***	-0.13**	-0.28***	-0.18**
60+	-0.07	0.01	0.12	0.15*	-0.13	-0.03	-0.11	-0.08
<b>Male</b>	0.06*	0.004	0.13***	0.05	-0.06*	-0.13***	0.26***	0.20***
<b>Urban</b>	0.09*	0.06	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.10*	0.09*
<b>Employment (No Job)</b>								
Housewife / househusband	-0.01	-0.01	0.15**	0.12*	-0.06	-0.05	0.13*	0.12*
Student	0.26***	0.20**	0.24***	0.09	0.18**	0.14*	0.24**	0.17*
Working part-time	-0.02	-0.04	0.07	0.04	-0.03	-0.005	0.15*	0.14*
Working full-time	0.09*	0.08	0.14**	0.09*	-0.03	-0.02	0.21***	0.20***
Retired	0.08	0.05	0.22**	0.24**	0.05	0.06	0.13	0.16
<b>Local News Media (Not Interested)</b>								
Local media sources	0.03	0.05	0.08	0.09	-0.15	-0.14	0.15	0.14
Social media	-0.0009	0.08	0.01	0.09	-0.20*	-0.17	0.29**	0.29**
Other internet sources	0.02	0.05	0.07	0.09	-0.14	-0.1	0.18	0.18
Other (including foreign media)	0.26	0.24	0.24	0.37*	0.13	0.19	0.32	0.34
Family	0.02	0.04	0.09	0.1	-0.14	-0.16	0.07	0.06
<b>International News Media (Not Interested)</b>								
Local media sources	0.30***	0.19**	0.20**	0.07	0.20**	0.12	0.30***	0.22**
Social media	0.21***	0.11	0.17*	0.06	0.09	0.04	0.18*	0.11
Other internet sources	0.26***	0.18***	0.13*	0.04	0.06	0.03	0.26***	0.19***
Other (including foreign media)	0.44***	0.33***	0.25***	0.13	0.18**	0.14*	0.35***	0.25***
Family	0.01	-0.07	0.44**	0.32*	0.30*	0.28*	0.47**	0.39*
<b>Ethnicity: Predominant ethnic group</b>	-0.04	0.04	-0.17***	-0.05	-0.37***	-0.26***	-0.23***	-0.19***
<b>Social Media (No Social Media)</b>								
TikTok	-0.05	-0.07	0.04	0.03	-0.02	-0.03	-0.01	0.01
Facebook	0.16**	0.12*	0.02	-0.01	-0.06	-0.04	0.14*	0.1
Instagram	0.10*	0.06	0.04	-0.0004	-0.04	-0.03	0.1	0.1
Odnoklassniki	-0.07	-0.07	-0.09	-0.07	-0.06	-0.02	0.06	0.07
Other	-0.04	-0.03	-0.02	0.002	0.07	0.14*	0.13	0.11
<b>Regions (Bishkek)</b>								
Chu	0.05	0.04	0.01	0.0003	-0.0001	-0.03	0.01	-0.02
Talas	-0.20**	-0.12	-0.14	-0.03	-0.21**	-0.16*	-0.12	-0.03
Issyk Kul	-0.12*	-0.12*	0.05	0.05	-0.02	-0.03	0.06	0.07
Osh	-0.13**	-0.10*	-0.08	-0.06	-0.16**	-0.17***	-0.11	-0.06
Jalal Abad	-0.20***	-0.16***	-0.11*	-0.08	-0.11*	-0.10*	-0.26***	-0.24***
Batken	-0.15*	-0.11	-0.17*	-0.15*	-0.13*	-0.16**	-0.20**	-0.15*
Osh City	-0.07	-0.03	-0.23**	-0.13	-0.19**	-0.12	-0.20**	-0.16*
Naryn	-0.20**	-0.15*	-0.07	0.01	-0.03	0.03	-0.15	-0.08
<b>Confident that Chinese investment:</b>								
Creates Jobs in Country		0.18***		0.25***		0.18***		0.24***
Improve energy and Infrastructure		0.16***		0.32***		0.15***		0.18***

KYRGYZSTAN	Favorability		Projects	Workers		Technology		
<b>Concerned that Chinese investment:</b>								
Increases debt with China		-0.04***		-0.06***		-0.07***		0.01
Harm Economic Relations with Russian		-0.06***		-0.03**		0.0009		-0.07***
Purchase Land in Country		0.03		-0.05**		-0.11***		0.04*
<b>Intercept</b>	-0.08	0.01	-0.22	-0.05	-0.36***	-0.2	0.08	0.08
<b>Num.Obs.</b>	11441	10396	11794	10709	10594	9549	9345	8480
<b>R2 Adj.</b>	0.051	0.156	0.072	0.291	0.063	0.178	0.072	0.203

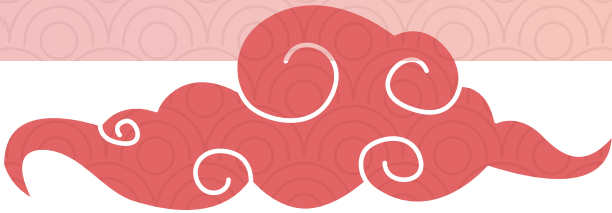
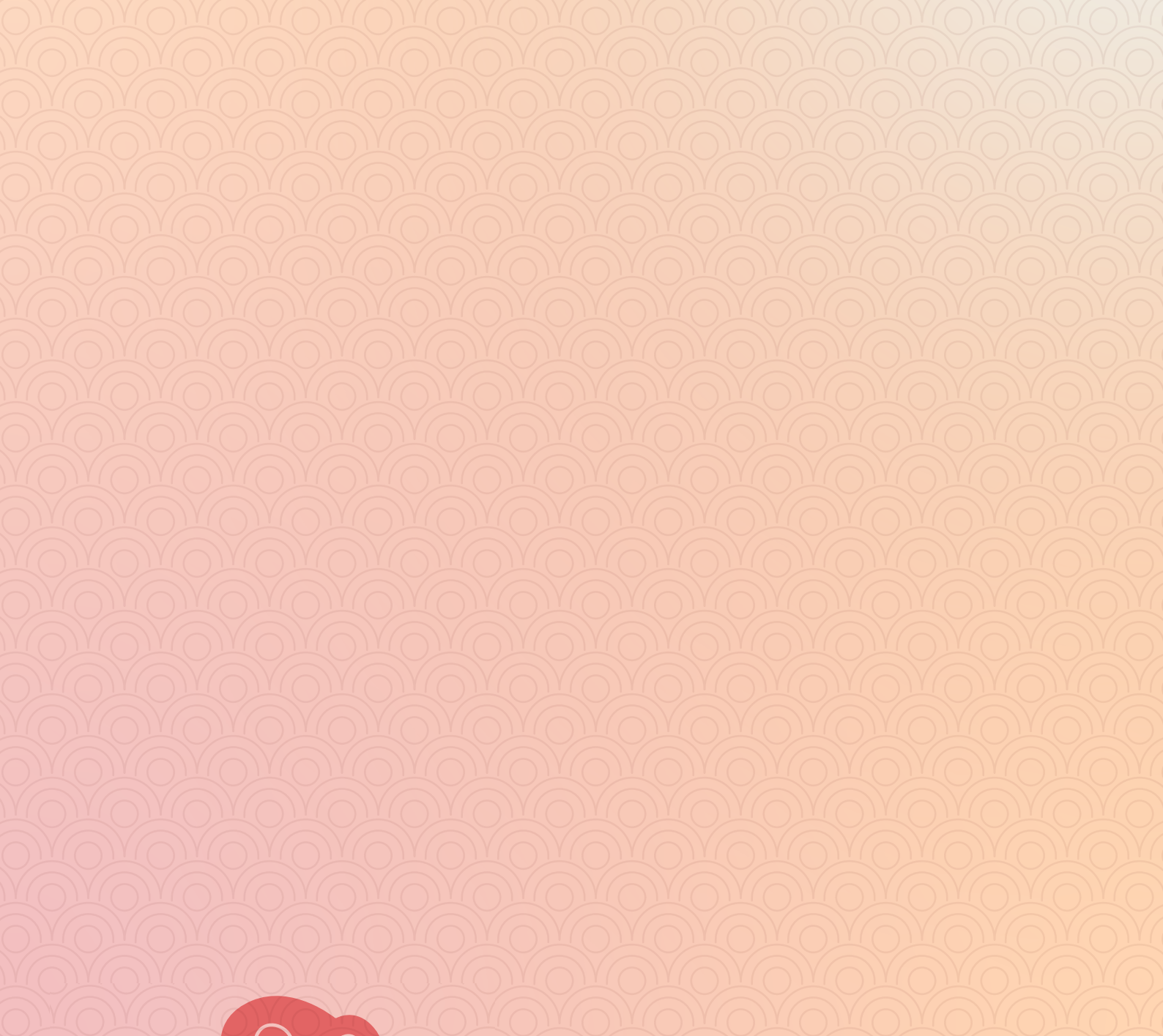
**TABLE 5: REGRESSION TABLE, PUBLIC OPINION ON CHINA IN TURKMENISTAN (CABS DATA)**

TURKMENISTAN	Favorability		Projects		Workers	Technology		
<b>Age (18-29)</b>								
30-39	-0.05	-0.06	0.02	0.03	-0.03	-0.01	-0.05	-0.04
40-49	-0.02	-0.1	0.01	-0.02	0.04	0.02	-0.11*	-0.15**
50-59	0.06	0.01	0.10*	0.10*	0.07	0.03	-0.03	-0.01
60+	-0.03	0.02	0.11	0.11	0.14	0.09	0.12	0.14
<b>Male</b>	-0.10**	-0.14***	0.08***	0.06*	0.03	-0.02	0.05	0.01
<b>Urban</b>	0.10**	0.09*	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.03	-0.01	0.02
<b>Employment (No Job)</b>								
Housewife / househusband	-0.02	-0.02	0.05	0.02	0.03	0.004	0.08	0.06
Student	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.04	-0.04	-0.05	0.02	0.02
Working part-time	-0.02	-0.01	0.06	0.08	-0.09	-0.05	0.1	0.11
Working full-time	-0.07	-0.04	0.06	0.04	-0.01	-0.01	0.05	0.05
Retired	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.15	0.19	-0.02	-0.03
<b>Local News Media (Not Interested)</b>								
Local media sources	0.1	0.13	0.12*	0.11	0.01	0.03	0.14*	0.16*
Social media	0.12	0.19	0.01	0.05	0.005	0.18	0.02	0.08
Other internet sources	0.18	0.24*	0.02	0.01	-0.01	0.02	0.07	0.1
Other (including foreign media)	0.33**	0.35**	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.16	0.15
Family	0.17	0.22	0.08	0.11	-0.08	0.04	0.08	0.07
<b>International News Media (Not Interested)</b>								
Local media sources	0.29***	0.26***	0.03	0.004	0.09	0.04	0.06	0.02
Social media	0.30*	0.26*	0.001	0.03	-0.08	-0.12	0.16	0.16
Other internet sources	0.39***	0.33***	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.03	0.04	0.02
Other (including foreign media)	0.45***	0.39***	0.03	0.01	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.04
Family	0.17	0.14	0.07	0.08	0.12	0.14	0.13	0.14
<b>Ethnicity: Predominant ethnic group</b>	-0.09	-0.13*	0.04	-0.01	0.26***	0.13*	0.17***	0.11*
<b>Social Media (No Social Media)</b>								
TikTok	0.11*	0.12*	0.05	0.07*	0.12*	0.12*	0.07	0.05
Facebook	0.04	0.16	0.002	0.07	-0.03	0.04	0.02	0.21
Instagram	0.23***	0.22***	0.02	0.04	0.08	0.09	0.10*	0.08*
Odnoklassniki	0.11	0.23*	-0.14	-0.08	-0.36***	-0.2	-0.13	-0.11
Other	0.24**	0.23*	-0.17**	-0.14*	0.04	0.05	0.03	-0.002
<b>Regions(Ashgabat)</b>								
Ahal.Region	-0.05	-0.05	-0.003	-0.02	0.03	0.004	-0.02	-0.02
Dasoguz.Region	-0.1	-0.13	0.08	0.05	0.17*	0.11	0.09	0.08
Lebap.Region	0.01	-0.03	0.05	0.03	0.21***	0.16*	0.03	0.01
Mary.Region	0.13*	0.11	0.03	0.02	0.05	0.01	0.01	0.01
Balkan.Region	-0.1	-0.09	-0.06	-0.07	0.04	0.03	-0.04	-0.01
<b>Confident that Chinese investment:</b>								
Creates Jobs in Country		0.11***		0.13***		0.17***		0.12***
Improve energy and Infrastructure		0.11***		0.11***		0.16***		0.11***
<b>Intercept</b>	0.41***	0.21	1.10***	0.88***	0.81***	0.54***	1.04***	0.82***
<b>Num.Obs.</b>	4715	4158	5317	4626	3998	3485	4385	3638
<b>R2 Adj.</b>	0.087	0.11	0.036	0.118	0.051	0.149	0.049	0.12

**TABLE 6: REGRESSION TABLE, PUBLIC OPINION ON CHINA IN UZBEKISTAN (CABS DATA)**

UZBEKISTAN	Favorability		Projects		Workers		Technology	
<b>Age (18-29)</b>								
30-39	-0.12**	-0.07	-0.10***	-0.09**	-0.19***	-0.13**	-0.06	-0.07
40-49	-0.03	0.04	-0.08*	-0.09*	-0.19***	-0.12*	-0.07	-0.08
50-59	-0.06	0.02	-0.21***	-0.16**	-0.36***	-0.18**	-0.06	0.01
60+	0.11	0.26*	-0.17	-0.11	-0.38**	-0.17	-0.24*	-0.21
<b>Male</b>	0.02	0.02	0.06*	0.04	-0.29***	-0.26***	0.02	-0.001
<b>Urban</b>	0.04	0.05	-0.04	-0.04	0.03	0.06	-0.04	-0.04
<b>Employment (No Job)</b>								
Housewife / househusband	0.10*	0.04	0.13**	0.06	0.13*	0.08	0.04	-0.04
Student	0.28***	0.22***	-0.002	-0.05	0.07	0.03	0.06	0.03
Working part-time	0.06	-0.003	0.03	-0.03	-0.04	-0.07	0.05	0.01
Working full-time	0.23***	0.14**	0.09*	0.01	0.04	-0.05	0.10*	0.01
Retired	0.13	-0.07	0.18*	0.05	0.29**	0.06	0.16	-0.02
<b>Local News Media (Not Interested)</b>								
Local media sources	0.35***	0.24*	0.35***	0.28***	0.15	0.1	0.20*	0.13
Social media	0.46***	0.40***	0.33***	0.32***	0.06	0.07	0.27**	0.26**
Other internet sources	0.36***	0.27**	0.23**	0.22**	0.09	0.07	0.22**	0.17
Other (including foreign media)	0.01	-0.06	0.08	0.23	0.16	0.57*	0.05	0.21
Family	0.17	0.02	0.16	0.13	0.27	0.23	-0.03	-0.02
<b>International News Media (Not Interested)</b>								
Local media sources	0.18***	0.21***	0.11*	0.12*	0.13*	0.16**	0.02	0.02
Social media	0.14*	0.18**	-0.02	0.01	-0.06	0.03	-0.04	-0.01
Other internet sources	0.18***	0.25***	0.0008	0.06	-0.03	0.05	-0.04	0.02
Other (including foreign media)	0.49***	0.56***	-0.002	0.05	-0.06	0.05	-0.02	0.05
Family	0.25	0.31*	0.08	0.14	0.06	0.15	-0.14	-0.17
<b>Ethnicity: Predominant ethnic group</b>	-0.03	-0.08	-0.04	-0.11**	0.003	-0.08	0.08	0.05
<b>Social Media (No Social Media)</b>								
TikTok	-0.03	-0.003	-0.13**	-0.09*	-0.04	-0.03	-0.12*	-0.11*
Facebook	0.24***	0.25***	-0.13**	-0.06	-0.20***	-0.13*	-0.02	0.03
Instagram	0.11**	0.10*	-0.002	-0.01	0.11**	0.08	0.05	0.01
Odnoklassniki	0.11	0.12	-0.15**	-0.09	-0.18**	-0.21**	-0.08	-0.01
Other	-0.04	-0.01	-0.07	0.01	-0.04	-0.01	-0.16	-0.12
<b>Regions(Tashkent)</b>								
Andijan	-0.31***	-0.28***	-0.01	0.02	0.1	0.09	0.03	0.01
Samarkand	-0.12*	-0.15*	0.15**	0.09	0.22**	0.09	0.1	-0.03
Karakalpakstan Republic	-0.36***	-0.38***	0.0009	0.02	-0.08	-0.11	-0.21**	-0.27***
Fergana	-0.24***	-0.26***	0.06	0.06	0.09	0.04	-0.01	-0.1
Navoiy	0.06	0.04	0.05	0.01	0.2	0.08	-0.14	-0.19
Qashqadaryo	-0.17*	-0.19*	0.1	0.12*	0.06	-0.005	-0.03	-0.11
Namangan	-0.38***	-0.40***	0.08	0.06	0.09	0.03	-0.02	-0.08
Tashkent Region	-0.17**	-0.18**	-0.05	-0.02	-0.02	-0.03	-0.18**	-0.21***
Xorazm	-0.32***	-0.32***	0.06	0.06	0.15	0.06	0.02	0.001
Jizzakh	-0.30**	-0.20*	-0.11	-0.07	-0.09	-0.08	-0.18*	-0.19*
Surxandaryo	-0.26***	-0.27***	0.13*	0.09	0.14	0.07	-0.003	-0.11
Bukhara	-0.24**	-0.28***	0.16*	0.11	0.1	-0.01	0.05	-0.1
Sirdaryo	-0.33***	-0.37***	0.03	0.04	-0.05	-0.14	0.07	-0.002

UZBEKISTAN	Favorability		Projects	Workers		Technology		
<b>Confident that Chinese investment:</b>								
Creates Jobs in Country		0.11***		0.30***		0.24***		0.18***
Improve energy and Infrastructure		0.17***		0.18***		0.23***		0.25***
<b>Concerned that Chinese investment:</b>								
Increases debt with China		-0.03*		-0.06***		-0.10***		-0.05***
Harm Economic Relations with Russian		-0.04***		-0.004		0.02*		-0.01
Purchase Land in Country		-0.05***		-0.02**		-0.14***		-0.02
<b>Intercept</b>	-0.58***	0.52***	0.28**	0.11	-0.04	0.66***	0.52***	-0.57***
<b>Num.Obs.</b>	10703	8804	11050	9077	9977	8016	9002	7193
<b>R2 Adj.</b>	0.084	0.142	0.029	0.216	0.038	0.2	0.026	0.181



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