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THE FIRST FORMAT OF INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION WITH CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES: THE CASE OF THE ARAB GULF COUNTRIES

ELDANIZ GUSSEINOV



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The First Format Of Interregional Cooperation With Central Asian Countries: The Case Of The Arab Gulf Countries

Eldaniz Gusseinov

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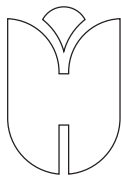
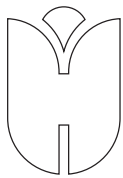


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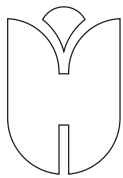
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the emerging model of interregional cooperation between the Central Asian states and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries, using the first GCC–Central Asia summit held in Jeddah in July 2023 as a case study. The analysis demonstrates how this format fosters the expansion of economic, energy, transport, and cultural ties between the regions, thereby contributing to the diversification of external economic and political partners for Central Asian states. Key areas of collaboration are highlighted, including joint infrastructure projects, the development of the Trans-Afghan Railway, the “Green Corridor” initiative, and the integration of energy networks, as well as the establishment of multilateral meeting formats (e.g., GCC–Central Asia, C5+) that facilitate prompt decision-making and strengthen collective security.

Special attention is given to the examination of trade relations between Kazakhstan and the UAE through a gravity model, which confirms that economic scale—represented by GDP—plays a crucial role, while distance and infrastructural barriers remain significant challenges. The study also underscores the influence of external actors, such as Russia and Pakistan, and emphasizes the importance of institutionalizing regional dialogue for sustainable development and enhancing global competitiveness.



INTRODUCTION: THE FIRST GCC-CENTRAL ASIA SUMMIT AS THE DAWN OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

Cooperation between the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Central Asia has reached several significant milestones that have contributed to strengthening ties between these two regions. The First GCC–Central Asia Summit, held in Jeddah in July 2023, marked a historic milestone in the institutionalization of relations between the two regions. The summit resulted in the adoption of a comprehensive Joint Action Plan for Strategic Dialogue and Cooperation (2023–2027) aimed at deepening political, economic, and sectoral cooperation. Since then, both sides have launched a series of initiatives to expand economic collaboration and trade relations. While the total trade volume between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Central Asian states stood at approximately USD 3.1 billion in 2021, recent data indicates a significant increase, with total trade reaching around USD 10 billion by 2025, reflecting the growing strategic and economic engagement between the two regions (GCC Secretariat 2025). The plan also envisages strengthening links between financial and economic institutions, promoting joint investments, improving sustainable supply chains, and developing transport communications.

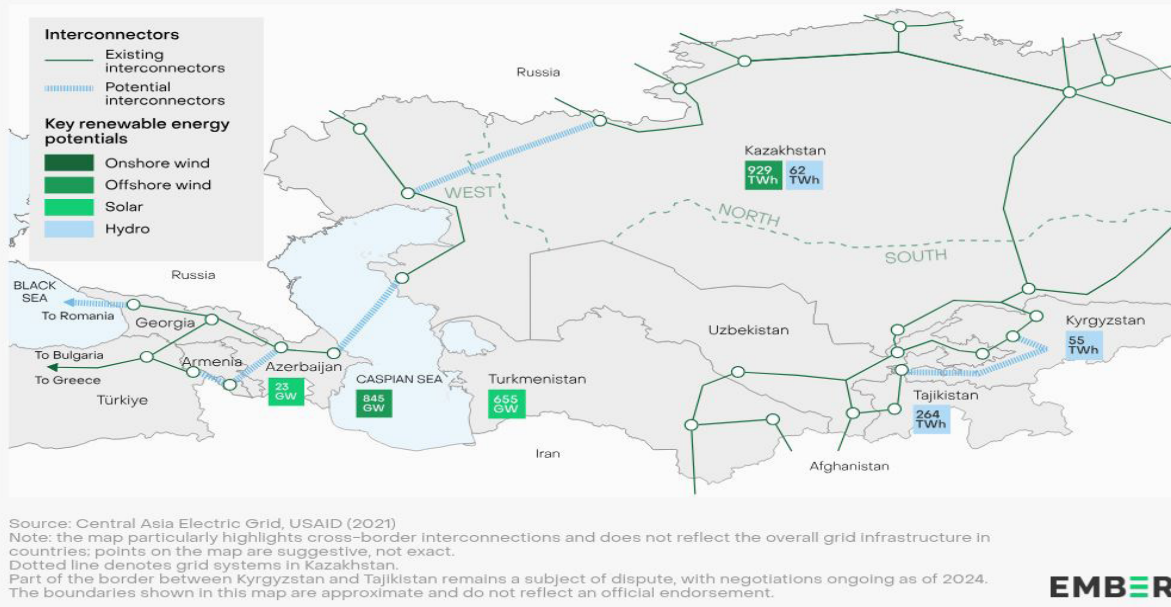
Furthermore, the Gulf countries have increasingly engaged in projects aimed at expanding the global interconnectedness of Central Asia—one of the world’s most closed regions. For example, Qatar actively participated in discussions on the Trans-Afghan Railway project, which is being vigorously promoted by Uzbekistan.¹ As part of this project,

including a four-party meeting in Tashkent, the transport ministers of Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Qatar approved the main routes and implementation conditions.² Qatar expressed its full support for the railway’s construction and is actively discussing ways to ensure its participation in the project.

Saudi Arabia, in turn, has shown interest in other projects, such as the Green Corridor, which will facilitate the expansion of green energy exports from Central Asian countries through the South Caucasus to Europe. The Saudi Electricity Company (SEC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Kazakhstan-based electric grid operating company, the National Electric Network of Uzbekistan, and Azerenerji at COP29.³ This agreement aims to develop projects for the regional interconnection of the “Green Corridor” in the areas of the Black and Caspian Seas.⁴ Saudi Arabia’s ACWA Power plays a significant role by constructing a 240 MW wind farm in Khizi-Absheron in Azerbaijan,⁵ signing agreements for the development of large-scale energy storage systems in Uzbekistan,⁶ and participating in renewable energy projects in other states of Central Asia and the South Caucasus. In addition, Saudi Arabia has reinforced its commitment by joining the Cooperation Implementation Program for the development and transmission of green energy together with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. The country also supports the integration of energy grids to facilitate the transmission of green energy from Central Asia to Europe.

Regional power connectivity could unlock Central Asia and the Caucasus's high-potential renewable mix

Existing and potential cross-border electricity interconnectors and renewables potential



EMBER

Figure 1. Existing and potential cross-border electricity interconnectors and renewables potential in Central Asian and the South Caucasus⁷

These are just a few examples of how the GCC countries are striving to expand their involvement in integrating Central Asian states into global supply chains. In the field of environmental cooperation, both regions have made significant progress by supporting the “UAE Consensus” reached at the COP28 conference, backing the Saudi-initiated “Middle East Green Initiative,” and participating in the implementation of hydroelectric projects in Central Asia, including the Rogun Hydroelectric Power Plant in Tajikistan and the Kambaratinskaya HPP-1 in Kyrgyzstan.⁸ In education and culture, conditions have been created for active interaction between universities and research centers, the expansion of educational opportunities in technical universities, and the promotion of cooperation in culture, media, youth policy, and sports.

Further steps toward deepening cooperation have been anticipated, including the second GCC–Central Asia Summit scheduled to be held in Samarkand (Uzbekistan) in 2025, although the meeting was later postponed. Parallel efforts have also focused on developing the “Middle Corridor,” a

strategic trade route connecting Türkiye and Central Asia. At the same time, mechanisms for political and defense dialogue are gradually being established. For instance, Kazakhstan has actively expanded its military cooperation with the United Arab Emirates and Qatar through the signing of several bilateral agreements. This growing partnership benefits both regions by opening new economic opportunities for the Gulf countries while enabling Central Asian states to diversify their international partnerships, thereby underscoring the strategic importance of this emerging model of interregional cooperation.

Against the backdrop of the emergence of new cooperation formats such as “C5+” with the Central Asian countries, interaction with the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf takes on special significance, as it is primarily based on interregional engagement. Some experts might argue that the European Union is the pioneer in this area; however, this is not the case for several reasons. First, the European Union has not held a full-fledged “EU–Central Asia” summit involving not only the President of the European Council but also the President of the European Commission.

Although such a summit format was promised, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf already held such a meeting on July 19, 2023, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Often, the first “EU–Central Asia” summit is thought to refer to the meeting of the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, with the leaders of Central Asia on June 2, 2023, but in fact, that was an “EU Council – Central Asia” summit. Even the European Union bodies describe this event as “the First EU-Central Asia summit”⁹

Second, as a supranational organization, the European Union requires the presence of two representatives to officially designate an event as an “EU–Central Asia” summit, even though some formats of regional interaction include leaders from all 27 EU countries (EU summits with the African Union may be considered as an example). At the first “GCC–Central Asia” summit, leaders from all six GCC countries (or representatives authorized to represent these countries) and five Central Asian states were present.

Accordingly, this study aims to achieve the following objectives to analyze the trends in the development of relations between the two regions:

- To identify the factors affecting the advancement of relationships between the two regions;
- To evaluate the current state of cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, energy, and transport;
- To project potential future development scenarios.

In this study, the author puts forward three key theses:

- 1.

1. The GCC countries have become more active in promoting a regional format in foreign policy due to global crises, such as the war in Ukraine, which has created the need to advance a “region-to-region” format in Central Asia.
2. The rapprochement of the two regions depends on the interests of external powers such as Russia, Afghanistan, Iran, India, and Pakistan. Russia plays a key role in bringing the two regions closer, as Central Asia serves as a connecting link.
3. Distance and infrastructure are the key factors that influence the development of trade and economic relations between the two regions.

Literature Review and Existing Data

Since cooperation between the GCC and Central Asia is a relatively recent trend, there are not many publications on this topic. Analyzing sources in Russian, English, and the languages of Central Asian countries, one can find separate works related to bilateral cooperation between Central Asian states and the GCC countries (for example, cooperation between Kazakhstan and Qatar)¹⁰. There are also individual analytical documents that further underscore the main problem in studying the cooperation between the two regions – the presence of cooperation prospects, but so far a lack of significant tangible results. This can be seen, for instance, in the share of regional trade based on data from the Trademap website.

Year	GCC Imports from CAR (%)	CAR Exports to GCC (%)	GCC Exports to CAR (%)	CAR Imports from GCC (%)
2021	0.16%	1.19%	0.23%	2.60%
2022	0.12%	0.80%	0.43%	6.73%
2023	0.20%	1.34%	0.71%	6.75%

Table 1. Mutual Trade between the GCC and Central Asia: Analysis as % of Total Trade¹¹

In general, it should be noted that there are some online publications written on the topic of cooperation between the two regions, and it was surprising that more publications were devoted to this topic abroad than in the Central Asian countries themselves. Literature review on published sources can be categorized into: Diplomatic Relations, Economic Trade, Geostrategic Implications, Security, Cultural Ties, and Future Challenges.

Diplomatic Engagements and Political Relations

Diplomatic engagement between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Central Asian states has intensified in recent years through high-level summits and strategic dialogue mechanisms. As noted by Asna Wajid of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the inaugural GCC–C5 Summit held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on 19 July 2023 represented a significant milestone in institutionalizing relations between the two regions. Leaders from both regions convened to explore enhanced cooperation across political, economic, and security sectors. Subsequent high-level meetings, including the Foreign Ministers’ meeting in Tashkent in April 2024, further strengthened these emerging ties. Although the second GCC–Central Asia summit planned to take place in Samarkand in 2025 was later postponed, diplomatic engagement between the two regions has continued through ongoing consultations and cooperation initiatives under the framework of the 2023–2027 Joint Action Plan. As Toghrul Ali from the Caspian Policy Center notes, these diplomatic initiatives contribute to the development of a multi-vector foreign policy among Central Asian states, enabling them to balance relations with major global actors such as Russia, China, the European Union, and the United States.

Economic and Trade Relations

Economic cooperation forms the backbone of GCC–Central Asia relations. The Gulf International Forum, represented by Dr. Diana Galeeva, notes that the GCC’s interest in diversifying their economies beyond oil has led to increased investments in Central Asia’s burgeoning sectors.¹² The UAE’s Masdar and Saudi Arabia’s ACWA Power are prominent examples, having committed significant funds to renewable energy projects in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.¹³ Additionally, investments in gas-powered infrastructure by Qatar and UAE-based TAQA,¹⁴ as detailed additionally by Florence Coumbe, underscore the GCC’s strategic interest in Central Asia’s energy markets.¹⁵ Nader Habibi argues that economic ties are growing but remain underdeveloped. In 2022, GCC countries accounted for only 0.8% of Central Asia’s total exports. However, both regions have been working to expand trade through joint action plans and high-level summits. By the mid-2020s, trade relations have continued to grow gradually, although the GCC still represents a relatively small share of Central Asia’s overall export structure (Eurasian Development Bank 2025).

Geostrategic Implications

The geostrategic importance of Central Asia is amplified by its location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia and its vast natural resources. The Special Eurasia Unit from the IISS notes that the GCC’s engagement is partly motivated by a desire to counterbalance the influence of regional rivals like Iran and Türkiye, as well as major powers such as Russia and China.¹⁶ The strategic dialogues and infrastructural projects, including the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (Middle Corridor), are designed to enhance connectivity and create alternative trade routes that bypass traditional Russian-dominated pathways. Ayjaz Wani from the Observer Research Foundation underscores that these initiatives are strategic moves to mitigate the impact of great power competition and ensure regional stability amidst global geopolitical uncertainties.¹⁷

Security Cooperation

Security concerns, particularly the rise of extremist groups like the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), have necessitated enhanced security cooperation between the GCC and Central Asian states. The joint statements from summits, as analyzed by Ayjaz Wani and Layla Ali, emphasize the commitment to combating terrorism and extremism, reflecting a shared priority for regional and global security.¹⁸ This cooperation is further complicated by the shifting alliances and the re-emergence of traditional security threats in a post-US withdrawal Afghanistan and amidst the ongoing Ukraine conflict. The GCC's role in supporting Central Asia's security frameworks is viewed as essential for maintaining regional stability and safeguarding economic interests, as highlighted by the Gulf Research Center and the Gulf International Forum.¹⁹

Challenges and Future Prospects

Despite the promising trajectory, several challenges impede the full realization of GCC-Central Asia relations. Challenges to cooperation include connectivity issues, where limited transport infrastructure increases trade costs and proposed routes like the North-South Transport Corridor face geopolitical hurdles due to their reliance on third-party countries such as Iran or Afghanistan.²⁰ Economic disparities further complicate efforts, as the relatively small trade volume between the regions requires significant scaling up to meet mutual aspirations. Additionally, a lack of regional unity exacerbates the situation, with Central Asian states often competing with each other for investments rather than presenting a unified front as seen in the GCC bloc.²¹

The second GCC-CS Summit, originally scheduled to take place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in 2025, was later postponed. Nevertheless, the growing convergence of economic, strategic, and cultural interests continues to point toward the development of a robust and evolving partnership between the two regions. Strategic recommendations in the literature emphasize the importance of

leveraging existing transport corridors, expanding joint investments in sustainable energy, and strengthening comprehensive security cooperation frameworks. These initiatives highlight the considerable potential of GCC-Central Asia relations to contribute to both regions' socio-economic development and broader regional integration.

Based on the analysis of the existing literature, several gaps in the current research on GCC-Central Asia relations can be identified.

First, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that clearly explain why the GCC prefers a multilateral framework of cooperation with the Central Asian states rather than relying primarily on bilateral partnerships.

Second, the overall scope and depth of relations between the two regions remain insufficiently examined in the existing scholarship.

Third, the influence of external geopolitical and structural factors on the development of GCC-Central Asia relations has not been adequately explored. These factors include, for example, the availability of transport connectivity and logistical infrastructure between the two regions.

Moreover, the phenomenon of interregional cooperation itself remains under-studied. As discussed earlier, the region-to-region cooperation format is relatively unique for Central Asia, as it involves interaction not merely between Central Asia and a single external partner but among six states at the heads-of-state level. According to the joint declarations adopted in recent summits, the participating countries have expressed their intention to further institutionalize this cooperation format. It is also noteworthy that the GCC possesses established mechanisms for coordinating common positions on foreign policy issues, whereas the Central Asian states lack a comparable institutional framework that regularly brings together all five countries, apart from occasional consultative meetings of heads of state.

parties adopted a Joint Action Plan for 2023–2027, which serves as the main framework for expanding cooperation between the two regions. Subsequent discussions on further collaboration have largely been conducted within the framework of this document. For instance, during the second meeting of the GCC–Central Asia Foreign Ministers held

in Tashkent in April 2024, the parties issued a joint statement that repeatedly referred to the implementation of the Joint Action Plan. The statement also indicated that the participating countries agreed to establish a contact group tasked with coordinating preparations for a future GCC–Central Asia summit planned to take place in Uzbekistan in 2025.

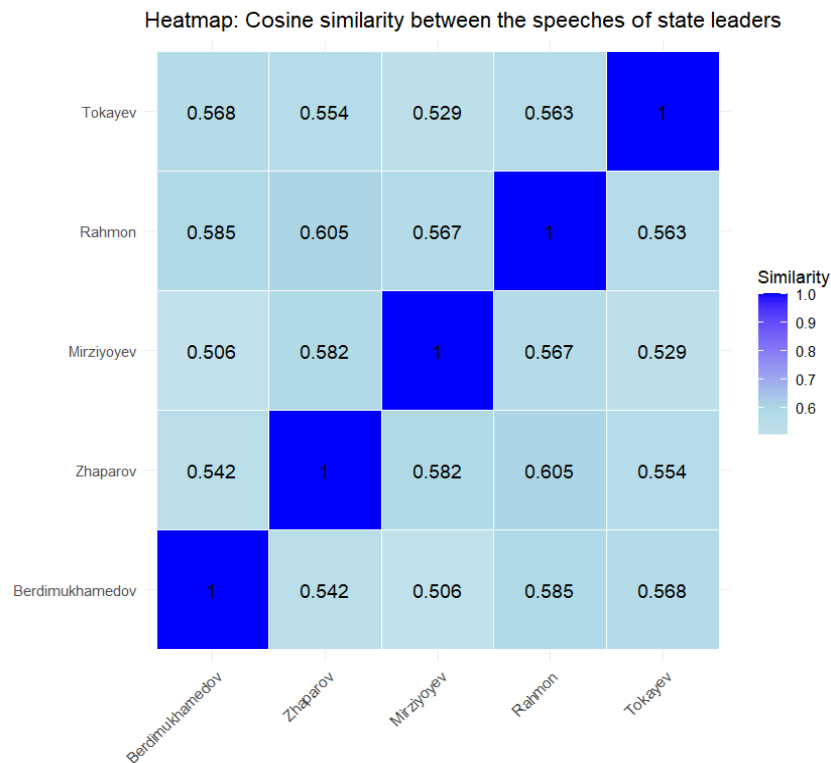


Figure 3. Heatmap: cosine similarity between the speeches of Central Asian state leaders

Apart from the GCC-Central Asia cooperation format, there is also a summit format with the European Union and ASEAN, but trade between the GCC and Central Asia lags far behind trade with the latter two.

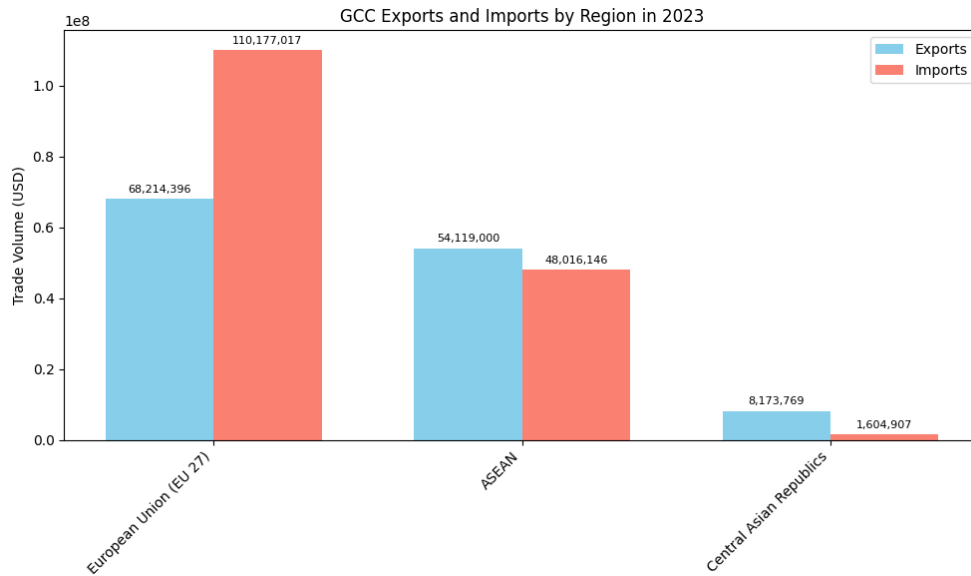


Figure 4. GCC Exports and Imports with the EU, ASEAN and Central Asian Republics²²

In addition, the GCC has also signed Joint Action Plans with the EU²³ and ASEAN²⁴, which differ in the volume and number of directions covered. However, despite the gap in trade relations, the GCC still shows interest in developing cooperation with the Central Asian countries, as can be observed when comparing the joint statements of the GCC with the European Union,²⁵ ASEAN,²⁶ and Central Asia²⁷—the comparative table is included in the appendix to the paper. Against this backdrop, one might assume that the religious closeness of the regions could serve as a bridge. There is even some basis for this, as many Central Asian leaders expressed interest at the last summit.

The GCC–Central Asia Declaration stands out in that it focuses on strengthening regional political and strategic ties aimed at combating extremism, ensuring water security, and adapting to climate change. In this format, the partners unite around common challenges characteristic of their region and strive for sustainable development through joint projects and support for multilateral initiatives, such as Expo 2030.

In comparison, ASEAN–GCC cooperation is oriented toward ensuring maritime security, developing digital technologies, and modernizing infrastructure, which corresponds to the needs of regions with advanced maritime trade and dynamic

economic growth. In contrast, the EU–GCC format has a global focus: it is based on resolving international conflicts, upholding human rights, and forming strategic economic and energy partnerships.

Thus, the uniqueness of GCC–Central Asia cooperation is manifested in its regional specificity, where the emphasis is on adapting to local challenges and achieving sustainable development, as opposed to ASEAN–GCC, which is focused on technological and infrastructural transformations, and EU–GCC, which strives for global integration and the resolution of international issues.

At this stage, it is strategically important to understand why the GCC is actively promoting the region-to-region meeting format, which remains relatively unique in world politics. The GCC has increasingly institutionalized its engagement with Central Asia through the C5+ framework. Although a second GCC–Central Asia summit was scheduled to be held in 2025 in Uzbekistan, the meeting was later postponed, while diplomatic consultations between the two regions have continued. Within this evolving format, the GCC has emerged as one of the most active external partners engaging Central Asia through the C5+ mechanism, alongside actors such as China and Germany, both of which have already held multiple summits with the Central Asian countries.

CHANGES IN GCC FOREIGN POLICY FOLLOWING THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND THE ROLE OF THE REGIONAL APPROACH IN CENTRAL ASIA

As noted by Muhammed Saleh Al-Musfir in 2001, there are several factors that prompted the GCC to actively pursue regionalization and strive to consolidate its political course in the 1970s and 1980s. Among the reasons, he cited several major changes in global politics during that period:

1. the insecurity generated by the world energy crisis,
2. the anxiety resulting from the new wealth of the Gulf countries,
3. the epoch-making 1979 Iranian revolution,
4. the December 1979 Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan,
5. the rise of “Islamic militancy” in several countries,
6. the start of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980, and
7. the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, especially the repercussions of Israeli power throughout the Middle East, painfully displayed in Lebanon.²⁸

That is, in many respects, the process of consolidation of the parties’ efforts is taking place in response to external challenges and threats. In addition, it is worth noting that the GCC began to hold

the first multilateral meetings with many key actors precisely after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. More recent works also note that GCC countries face common security challenges in an environment marked by rivalry (notably with Iran), terrorism, and external geopolitical competition.²⁹ By promoting a regional approach, these states seek to pool their military and intelligence resources—for example, through initiatives like the Peninsula Shield Force—to counter external threats and enhance mutual defense.³⁰ This collective strategy is seen as crucial for preserving national sovereignty and ensuring stability in an unpredictable neighborhood.³¹ At the same time, analysts note that within the GCC there is room for competition between states, but they nevertheless seek to actively unite in the face of challenges or opportunities.³²

At the same time, it was shown above that for the Central Asian countries the key is the development of investment and economic relations with the GCC, but in the declaration itself the situation looks a little different. The joint declaration seriously prioritizes the work of strategic and political cooperation. The document clearly emphasizes security, which can also be demonstrated through the word cloud in the joint declaration.

format was emphasized by the Turkmen side. Although the approach may seem unexpected at first glance, closer examination reveals that it serves the strategic interests of the country.

First, the “Central Asia +” format automatically includes Turkmenistan in regional initiatives due to its geographical location. This allows the country to enhance its significance on the international stage without the need to join formal unions or organizations, which aligns with its policy of neutrality.

Participation in this format provides Turkmenistan with the opportunity to engage on an equal footing with other countries in the region in dialogue with key external actors.

Second, such a format broadens the horizons for interaction with states with which contacts might otherwise be less intensive. Through “Central Asia +,” Turkmenistan is establishing closer ties with the European Union, Japan, Germany, and other countries. This opens access to new markets, technologies, and investments, which is important for the development of the national economy and the diversification of external economic ties.

Third, participation in multilateral meetings enhances Turkmenistan’s prestige among its neighbors and international partners. The country demonstrates its readiness to contribute to solving regional problems, such as improving the situation in Afghanistan, and to participate in collective initiatives.

Overall, the “Central Asia +” format allows Central Asian countries—in particular, Turkmenistan, and arguably also Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—to further enhance their appeal by providing opportunities for multilateral dialogue and cooperation with other key external players.

Moreover, organizing multilateral meeting formats is quite convenient and practical; this also exemplifies the interaction of Central Asian countries with the GCC in Brussels.³⁷ We often think of C5+ as a format for cooperation among the heads of state of Central Asian countries during summits. In reality, the development of this format began even earlier, with meetings between various specialized ministries.

In addition, there is also a C5+ meeting format at the ambassadorial level. For example, in Brussels, ambassadors from Central Asian countries participate in meetings with ambassadors from other regions. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, on May 15, 2024, at the initiative of the group of ambassadors from Central Asian countries and Mongolia accredited in Belgium, the first joint informal meeting of the heads of diplomatic missions of the Central Asian states, Mongolia, and a group of ambassadors from the Caribbean region took place.³⁸

According to information from the Embassy of Turkmenistan in Brussels, similar meetings are being held with the heads of diplomatic missions of Central Asian states with ASEAN and with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In such meetings, the Ambassador of Mongolia also participates.³⁹

This also explains the C5+ phenomenon—the convenience of the format. It provides the opportunity to gather several countries under the aegis of regional cooperation and discuss the most interesting areas of interaction all at once. Furthermore, meetings of the heads of diplomatic missions provide the opportunity to discuss cooperation in a specific country, for example, in Belgium, or to collaborate on matters related to an organization such as the European Union.

Similarly, the GCC is actively promoting the GCC+ format to create conditions for responding to global challenges. As noted by authors of Oman’s foreign policy studies, smaller states are increasingly turning to multilateral structures, as it is more difficult for them to promote their own initiatives compared to larger states.⁴⁰ The GCC recognizes the importance of collective security in addressing regional tensions, especially regarding Iran. The creation of the GCC Regional Security Concept reflects the intention to develop dialogue and cooperation on common problems, including environmental issues and food security.⁴¹ By strengthening ties with organizations such as the EU—which in its recent contacts with the GCC has paid special attention to security cooperation—these countries strive to create a more stable regional environment that contributes to achieving their development goals.⁴²

In conclusion, the following five reasons can be noted for why the parties are increasingly adopting the “region-to-region” cooperation format:

1. **Response to External Challenges and Threats:** The “region-to-region” format allows the GCC and Central Asian countries to join forces to counter global and regional challenges (e.g., geopolitical instability, terrorism, extremism) in a changing global environment.
2. **Strengthening Collective Security and Political Coordination:** Joint actions contribute to reinforcing regional security, which is especially important in conditions of declining trust in traditional security guarantors such as the United States. Coordinating political efforts helps more effectively resist external pressure and competition from other global actors.
3. **Economic Benefits and Attraction of Investments:** Regional integration opens additional opportunities for the development of trade and investment projects, stimulating the development of the transport and infrastructure sectors. Central Asian countries and the GCC see this format as a chance to diversify their economic ties and enhance competitiveness on the international stage.
4. **Institutionalization of Relations and Increased International Influence:** Creating structured meeting formats (summits, Joint Action Plans, multilateral dialogues) helps formalize cooperation, thereby strengthening the authority and weight of both sides in global politics. This approach allows the countries in the region to build stronger and more long-term strategic partnerships.
5. **Convenience and Practicality of Regional Formats:** The “region-to-region” format simplifies the organization of multilateral meetings, allowing several countries to be effectively gathered at once to discuss common interests. This facilitates rapid exchange of views and prompt decision-making, which is crucial in the context of dynamically changing international relations.

THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL POWERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GCC AND CENTRAL ASIA

The two regions are significantly distant from each other, and the space between them is fraught with numerous conflicts. Two main options are being considered as routes for connecting them: one through Iran and the other through Afghanistan and Pakistan. Against the backdrop of evolving situations in the Middle East and South Asia, both regions are experiencing substantial upheavals. The situation around the Pakistan-Afghanistan border remains tense, compounded by terrorist attacks near strategically important Pakistani ports for Central Asia.⁴³ Thus, the influence of external powers in the development of relations between the two regions is evident. On the other hand, the GCC countries are actively developing relations with Russia, and this factor is becoming one of the key elements in shaping the interaction between Central Asia and the Gulf countries—largely thanks to the establishment of relations with the Russian Federation.

As shown in the figure, bilateral trade between Russia and the GCC countries has increased significantly in recent years. Over the past decade, the volume of trade between Russia and the Persian Gulf states has grown substantially, exceeding USD 11 billion in 2022. This upward trend continued in subsequent years, driven largely by the rapid expansion of trade between Russia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Russia–UAE trade reached approximately USD 11–12 billion in 2023 and continued to grow in 2024, approaching USD 13 billion, further consolidating the UAE’s position as Russia’s largest trading partner in the Arab world. Under these conditions, Russia has sought to expand its economic presence in the region, including through increased participation in energy, logistics, and agricultural cooperation projects.

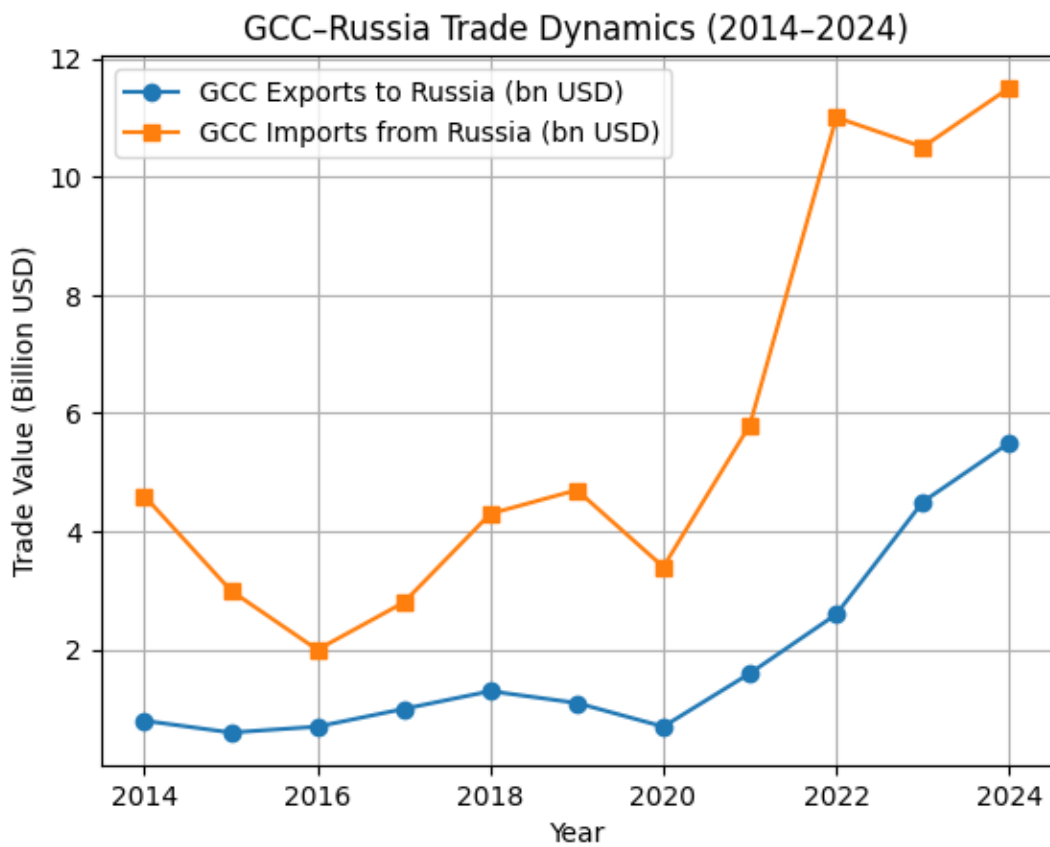


Figure 6: Trade volume between Russia and GCC from 2014 until 2024⁴⁴

An important historical context is that cooperation between the parties was not always as successful as it is now. The strategic dialogue between Russia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) began to take shape as early as 2011.⁴⁵ However, in the initial stages, the level of contacts diminished due to internal conflicts within the Persian Gulf states as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁶ It is only in the past two years that a noticeable intensification of cooperation has been observed, facilitated by the restoration of political and economic dialogue. In 2023, the parties adopted an action plan for the period up to 2028, which provides for deepening cooperation in key sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, and environmental protection.⁴⁷

Continuing these initiatives, the seventh round of strategic dialogue took place in Riyadh in September 2024, during which issues of regional security, stability in the Gulf, and the possibilities of building trust between the parties were discussed.⁴⁸ In addition, Russia is actively utilizing bilateral formats of

interaction with all the Gulf monarchies and is participating in consultations within the framework of international events (for example, during sessions of the UN General Assembly). Furthermore, Russia is offering its assistance in ensuring freedom of navigation in the region and in creating a new security architecture in the Gulf.⁴⁹ In the context of these contacts, the issue of energy has also become relevant: Russia seeks to increase its LNG exports, while the Gulf countries aim to reduce the dependence of their energy sectors on crude oil and strengthen their positions in the global liquefied natural gas market.⁵⁰

To achieve these goals, it is extremely important to establish critical infrastructure that will strengthen transport and logistics connections with the GCC countries. At this stage, there are three potential branches of the international “North–South” transport corridor that Russia is actively developing. The first is the Western branch, which runs along the western coast of the Caspian Sea through Russia and Azerbaijan. The second is the Eastern branch, which

runs along the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The third is the Trans-Caspian branch, which utilizes ferry and container lines across the Caspian Sea. In this context, two directions become key for Russia in Central Asia: security and transport development.

The role of Central Asian countries for Russia was enshrined in the Joint Declaration of the Heads of State of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan following the Central Asia-Russia Meeting on October 14, 2022:

“Considering the importance of Central Asia as a natural ‘bridge’ between the regions of the South and the North, the East and the West in the Eurasian space, contributing to the formation of more progressive, equitable models of economic development on the continent, compatible with the objective processes of the formation of a multipolar world.” (GCC Secretariat 2023)⁵¹

In the development of this concept, Trans-Afghan projects by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are also being added, which could potentially connect Russia to the southern seas via Afghanistan and Pakistan, and then to the GCC countries. At the initial stage, there is some competition between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for Russia’s attention—one of the key partners in promoting transport projects. Both states are developing different routes through Afghanistan in an effort to secure a strategic advantage in international transit.

Kazakhstan is promoting two projects. The first, in cooperation with Uzbekistan, follows the route “Termiz – Mazar-i-Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar.” The second, in cooperation with Turkmenistan, follows the route “Herat – Kandahar – Spin Boldak.” The latter, running through western Afghanistan, allows Kazakhstan, in the event of conflicts on the Afghanistan–Pakistan border, to reroute part of its cargo flows to Iranian ports, as well as to support the export of agricultural products, including from strategically important Beyneu in the Mangystau region.⁵² Uzbekistan, in turn, is betting on an eastern

route connecting Termiz, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kabul, and Peshawar. This project, which is part of efforts to expand transit potential, attracts the attention of international investors, including representatives from the Gulf countries. However, high costs (the construction cost has increased from USD 4.6 to 7 billion) and political instability in Afghanistan create serious obstacles for the implementation of the Uzbek initiative.⁵³ In any case, both projects largely depend on how effectively Russia will be able to utilize these routes for export and import. This underscores the importance of Russian support and participation in the development of transport corridors in Central Asia.⁵⁴

At the same time, the implementation of transport projects in Central Asia is inextricably linked to the influence of regional politics and investment activity. Under conditions of increasing Pakistani control over Afghan transit trade (with higher tariffs and requirements for bank guarantees), Afghanistan is forced to seek alternative routes for export and import. For example, investments in the development of the Chabahar port in Iran (USD 35 million) help reduce dependence on the Pakistani port of Karachi. This, in turn, opens up opportunities for Central Asian countries to use routes through Iran within the “North–South” corridor, which is becoming an increasingly attractive option given the prospects for further integration of regional infrastructure.

Against this background, the key logistical hub for the implementation of both projects could become the city of Beyneu in Kazakhstan’s Mangystau region, which contributes to attracting investments and strengthening the region’s transport network. At the same time, coordinating efforts between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to ensure security and optimize tariff policies could theoretically enhance the viability of both routes. In this context, the importance of external investors is growing: the Gulf countries, especially the UAE and Qatar, are showing significant interest in investing in Pakistani ports and infrastructure assets. Examples include major investments in the development of terminals in Karachi, aimed at modernizing port infrastructure and increasing throughput capacity, as well as creating an alternative trade route for the region’s states with access to the Persian Gulf ports.

In parallel, a strategic bloc is being formed by India and Iran, aimed at developing the Chabahar port. A decade-long agreement between these countries on port operations allows India to access trade with Central Asian countries that do not have a seaport, thereby bypassing Pakistan as a competitor. However, the implementation of this initiative requires further development of transport communications within Iran to ensure the full functionality of the corridor.

In contrast, the team of Persian Gulf countries, led by Pakistan, is building its strategy around the Trans-Afghan Railway, which will connect Central Asia with ports such as Gwadar, ensuring access to Middle Eastern markets. Here, investments in Pakistani port infrastructure, as well as the creation of efficient transport corridors, enable the Gulf countries to strengthen their influence in the region and gain access to strategically important resources, including rare earth elements.

The GCC states, particularly the UAE, are increasingly investing in Pakistani ports due to their strategic importance. Abu Dhabi Ports has a 50-year concession with Karachi Port Trust to manage and develop Karachi Gateway Terminal Limited.⁵⁵ They plan to invest USD 102 million over five years in a terminal for bulk and general cargo.⁵⁶ Additionally, a joint venture between AD Ports and Kaheel Terminals intends to invest USD 220 million over the next ten years in the management, operation, and expansion of the terminal. Another 25-year concession with KPT involves initial investments of USD 75 million over two years and an additional USD 100 million over five years, which will increase the terminal's capacity by 75%.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the UAE is considering the possibility of investing an additional USD 2 billion in Pakistan's maritime sector, including the potential construction of a railway link between major ports.⁵⁸

In a broader context, Pakistan and Dubai have signed agreements to expand cooperation in the maritime and logistics sectors, including the creation of an economic zone at the Kasim port. It is expected that this will attract over USD 3 billion in direct foreign investments.⁵⁹ Moreover, in September 2023, a preliminary free trade agreement (FTA) was signed between the GCC and Pakistan, which further stimulates regional integration processes.⁶⁰ Pakistan, in turn, is actively seeking foreign investments to improve its economy. The creation of a Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), aimed at streamlining investment procedures and improving the country's investment climate, is contributing to this effort.⁶¹

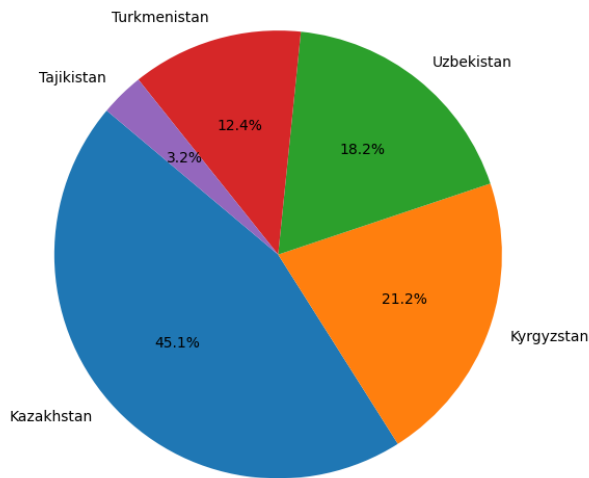
Thus, the development of transport corridors in Central Asia, including the Trans-Afghan routes, depends on a combination of political factors, economic feasibility, and the involvement of external players. On one hand, Russia's presence is aimed at expanding energy cooperation with the Gulf states and strengthening ties with Central Asia. On the other hand, the investment activity of the Gulf countries in Pakistani ports demonstrates their desire to establish a foothold in the region, ensure access to strategic resources, and form new transit routes. At the same time, India and Iran are developing their own infrastructure agendas to bypass Pakistan. All these processes are interconnected and form a complex nexus of interests that will determine the future of transport corridors and economic interactions in Eurasia.

DISTANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE AS A KEY CHALLENGE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN CENTRAL ASIA AND THE GCC

Russia can access the GCC countries through Azerbaijan and Iran as part of the international “North-South” transport corridor, independently of Central Asia. The Baku–Rasht railway line is a key element in connecting Russia and Iran by rail within the framework of the “North–South” transport corridor. It is planned that the agreement on the implementation of the construction project for the Rasht–Astara railway branch will be signed by March 2025. After the completion of the Rasht–Astara branch, Russia will be effectively connected to Iran by rail, which will significantly simplify and reduce the cost of cargo transportation.⁶² However, due to the vast territory of Russia, developing access to the southern seas via Central Asia is also critically important for it. This is evident from the fact that Russian companies are participating in the development of the feasibility study for the Trans-Afghan

Railway, which is being actively promoted by Uzbekistan.⁶³ Central Asian countries also stand to benefit from the development of this economic direction, as they seek to expand potential markets for their goods. At the same time, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has emerged as the most active trading partner of the Central Asian states within the GCC framework. In 2023, the UAE accounted for nearly 99.6% of all exports from the GCC to Central Asia and approximately 94.4% of all imports from the region to the GCC. Although consolidated data for 2024–2025 are not yet fully available, recent trade statistics indicate that the UAE continues to dominate GCC–Central Asia trade flows, maintaining its position as the primary commercial gateway between the two regions.⁶⁴

Share of Central Asian Countries in Exports to GCC (2023)



Share of Central Asian Countries in Imports from GCC (2023)

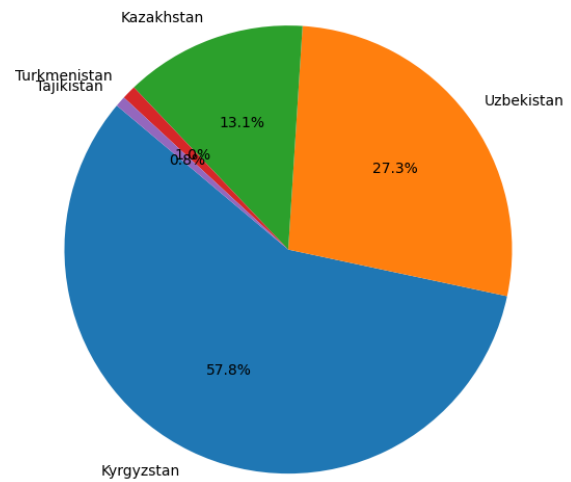


Figure 7: Central Asian states' share of total exports and imports with GCC states.⁶⁵

Against this background, there is a need to conduct an economic gravity model that could help explain the impact of distance on trade and economic relations between two major trade centers of the GCC and Central Asia - Kazakhstan and the UAE.

The gravity model of trade is one of the most widely used tools in international economics to explain the volume of trade flows between countries. The idea was originally proposed in the works of Paul Tinbergen and later developed by researchers such as Jason Anderson and others. The basic idea of the model is that the volume of trade between two countries depends positively on their economic "size" (e.g. GDP) and negatively on the distance between them, which serves as a proxy for transportation costs, cultural differences and other barriers.

The basic specification of the gravity model is as follows:

$$T_{ij} = G \cdot \frac{(GDP_i)^\alpha \cdot (GDP_j)^\beta}{(D_{ij})^\gamma},$$

T_{ij} - trade flow between countries i and j ;
 GDP_i and GDP_j - indicators of economic mass of i and j

D_{ij} - distance between countries, often measured as the distance between capitals or economic centers;

G is a constant of proportionality;

α , β and γ are parameters to be estimated.⁶⁶

Since the distance between capitals does not vary over time, it is not possible to include it directly in the estimation of the regression model. However, to demonstrate the effect of distance on trade, we will conduct an additional scenario analysis where we vary the hypothetical value of distance and estimate how the theoretical trade volume changes.

We apply classical least squares (OLS) regression to estimate the model. Since the distance variable is constant, including $\ln(\text{Distance})\ln(\text{Distance})$ does not allow us to estimate its coefficient, so we exclude it from the model. The model for exports is as follows:

$$\ln(\text{Exports}) = \beta_0 + \alpha \ln(\text{GDP_Kaz}) + \beta \ln(\text{GDP_UAE}) + \epsilon.$$

$$\ln(\text{Exports}) = \beta_0 + \alpha \ln(\text{GDP_Kaz}) + \beta \ln(\text{GDP_UAE}) + \epsilon.^{67}$$

Model Estimation Results:

Intercept (Constant): The value is -198.5668 . Despite its seemingly extreme value, it should be noted that in a logarithmic model, the constant often

compensates for the scale coefficients of the logarithms of the explanatory variables.

Coefficient for $\ln(\text{GDP_Kaz})$: Estimated at 0.5523 with a p-value of approximately 0.719, indicating that Kazakhstan's GDP does not have a statistically significant impact on exports.

Coefficient for $\ln(\text{GDP_UAE})$: Estimated at 7.3644 and is statistically significant (p-value ≈ 0.01007). This means that changes in the UAE's GDP have a substantial impact on the trade flow: an increase in GDP by 1% leads to an increase in the logarithm of exports by approximately 7.36%.

The model's coefficients can be interpreted as follows: the strong influence of the UAE's GDP confirms the hypothesis that the economic size of the importing country—or, in this case, the trading partner—is an important factor. The model has a relatively high R^2 (about 0.72), indicating that 72% of the variation in the trade flow is explained by changes in the economic scales.

Since the distance variable does not vary over time (always 3306 km), its effect cannot be isolated within the standard regression framework. However, to demonstrate the theoretical effect of distance, we conduct a scenario analysis using a hypothetical value for the coefficient γ . Based on the works of

Tinbergen and subsequent research, γ is assumed to be approximately 0.8.

We introduce the following formula to calculate the predicted logarithm of trade, taking distance into account:

$$\ln(\text{Trade_pred}) = \text{base_log_trade} - \gamma \cdot \ln(\text{Distance}),$$

where base_log_trade is the base level of trade calculated from the estimated model coefficients and the average GDP values:

$$\text{base_log_trade} = \beta_0 + \alpha \ln(\text{GDP_Kaz}) + \beta \ln(\text{GDP_UAE}).$$

In our analysis, we obtained $\text{base_log_trade} \approx 12.76856$.

Next, we create a vector of distance values ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 km and, for each value, calculate the predicted trade volume using the formula:

$$\ln(\text{Trade_pred}) = 12.76856 - 0.8 \cdot \ln(\text{Distance}).$$

After exponentiating (applying the exponential function), we obtain the level values of trade. For example, for a distance of 1,000 km, the predicted trade volume is approximately USD 1,397,000, and for 10,000 km, it is about USD 221,000.

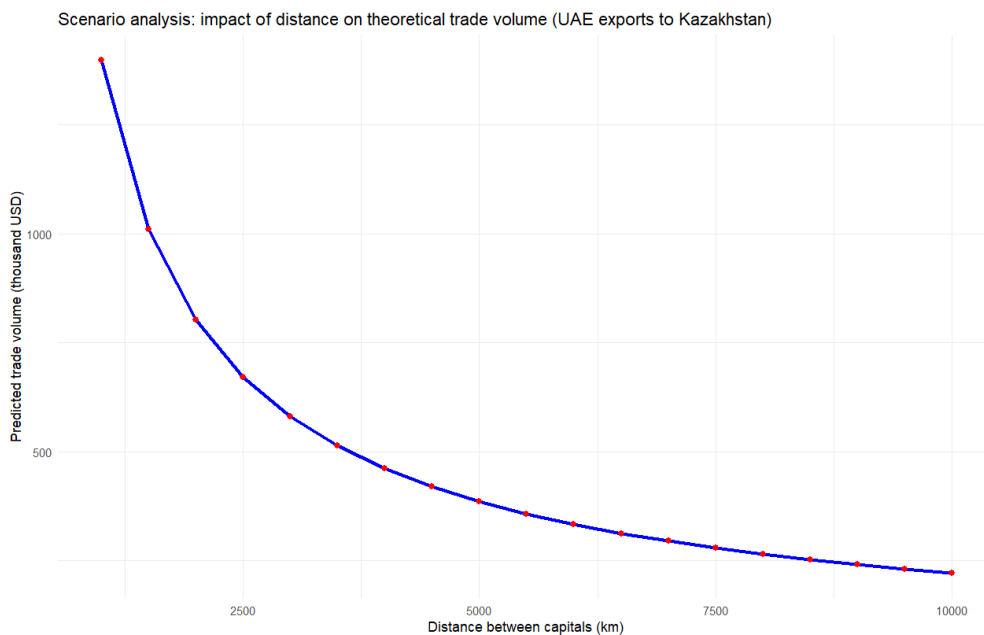


Figure 8: Scenario analysis to estimate impact of distance on theoretical trade volume of the UAE exports to Kazakhstan

The presented analysis demonstrates that while distance and infrastructure challenges remain significant barriers to the development of trade and economic relations between Central Asia and the GCC countries, economic scale, in particular importers' GDP (using the UAE as an example), plays a key role in determining the volume of trade. The gravity model emphasizes that increasing distance reduces trade flows, but the development of transport corridors (e.g., rail links through Azerbaijan and Iran) can offset these effects, opening up new opportunities for expanding markets and strengthening interconnections between the regions. In general, the results obtained at this stage are in line with the experts' assessments regarding the impact of distance on cooperation between the two regions.⁶⁸ In addition, investment cooperation plays an important role in trade and economic relations between the two regions, which shows positive aspects on the one hand and room for improvement on the other. This can also be seen in the example of investment relations between Kazakhstan and Qatar, as last year the parties signed an agreement worth 20 billion US dollars.⁶⁹

PROSPECTS AND PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT OF INVESTMENT RELATIONS BETWEEN CA-GCC ON THE EXAMPLE OF KAZAKHSTAN-QATAR INVESTMENT RELATIONS

Qatar has made several attempts to enter the Kazakh market in recent years. For example, on June 8, 2023, during a visit to Kazakhstan, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, held a roundtable in Astana with leading Qatari business representatives, resulting in the signing of five agreements worth more than USD 500 million. Earlier, on October 13, 2022, a high-level Kazakhstan–Qatar Investment Forum in Astana led to the signing of 13 agreements worth over USD 625 million. In addition, a 2021 delegation led by Kazakhstan’s First Deputy Prime Minister visited Doha, where discussions focused on potential investments in mining, agriculture, banking, and tourism. Despite these initiatives,

economic cooperation has developed slowly. Even earlier projects, such as a USD 200 million investment agreement signed in 2015, failed to materialize. Recent statistics indicate that Qatari investments in Kazakhstan remain modest, with bilateral trade historically limited to approximately USD 6–10 million and only a small number of Qatari-affiliated companies registered in Kazakhstan. In 2024–2025, bilateral engagement has continued primarily through diplomatic consultations and investment discussions in sectors such as logistics, transport infrastructure, and energy, although the overall scale of economic cooperation remains relatively limited.⁷⁰

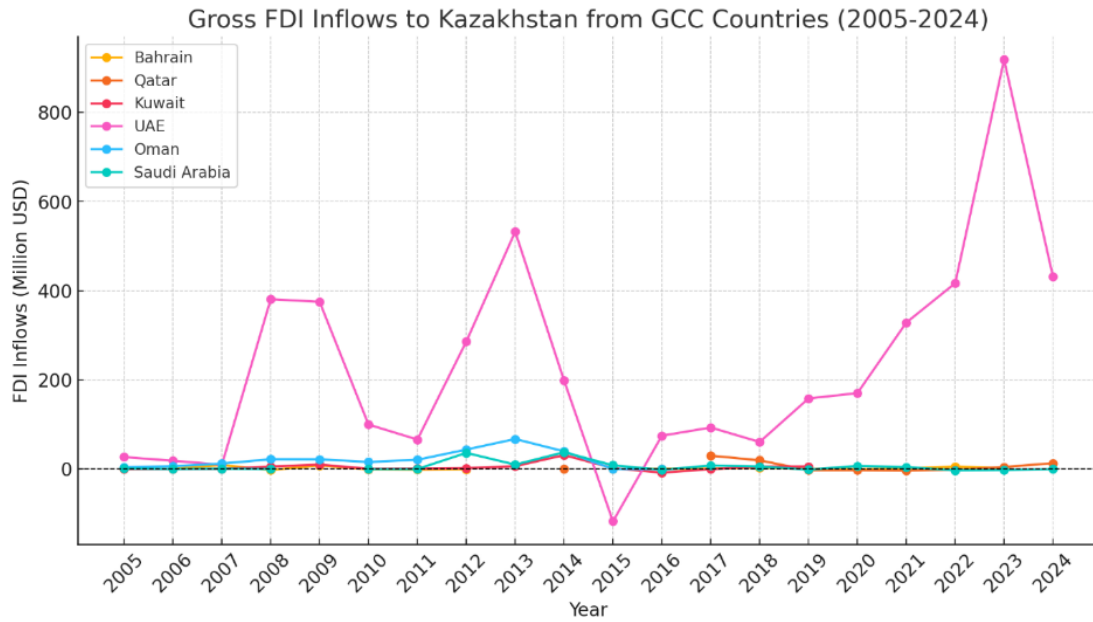


Figure 9: Gross FDI inflows to Kazakhstan from GCC countries from 2005 to 2024⁷¹

External actors appear to play a significant role in these agreements. While experts doubt a major role for Russia at present, many of the registered Kazakh companies involved are small or operate in sectors like financial services, fisheries, and construction. In contrast, foreign direct investment from other Gulf countries varies widely. The UAE leads as the largest investor—despite sharp fluctuations—while Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia show more stable or episodic patterns.⁷²

Key obstacles for foreign investors in Kazakhstan include inconsistent law enforcement, chronic underinvestment in infrastructure, and shortages of skilled personnel. These challenges have recently contributed to a dramatic decline in FDI, as seen in 2024 following the conclusion of large-scale projects like the Tengizchevroil Future Growth Project.⁷³

The Kazakhstan-Qatar High-Level Joint Commission, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Serik Zhumangarin and Sheikh Mohammed Al Thani, offers tax and customs incentives to boost strategic investment projects. This is based on the Agreement between Kazakhstan and Qatar for developing projects in priority industries. These benefits include exemptions on customs duties and tax, plus a 20-year suspension of transfer pricing rules for investors.⁷⁴ Although Qatari investments, which

started in 2018, remain modest compared to the UAE and Oman, a recent recovery in investment levels (growing from negative figures in 2020–2022 to USD 13.1 million in 2024) suggests the potential for gradual expansion.

In terms of major projects, discussions are underway for several large-scale initiatives, such as gas processing plants, gas pipeline networks, energy facilities, and deep processing plants for agricultural products. Notably, there are also challenges—like those involving the gas processing plant at Kashagan and the postponed asset deal of Kazakhtelecom’s subsidiary—that highlight the complex nature of these investments.

Recognizing the strategic potential of their partnership, Kazakhstan and Qatar have recently expanded cooperation to the military sector. A military cooperation agreement—ratified in November 2024—covers joint training, military education, cultural exchanges, and shared use of training grounds. The agreement, which will last five years with possible automatic renewals, is designed to enhance the professional capabilities of Kazakh military personnel and further strengthen the overall bilateral relationship.⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that the emerging model of interregional cooperation between the GCC and Central Asian states is reshaping the regional landscape by expanding economic, energy, transport, and cultural ties. The first GCC–Central Asia summit in Jeddah in July 2023 has marked a historic turning point in formalizing cooperation, resulting in the adoption of a comprehensive Joint Action Plan for 2023–2027. This initiative, along with subsequent high-level dialogues and multilateral frameworks such as the C5+ format, not only underscores the commitment of both regions to addressing common challenges but also highlights their mutual interest in diversifying economic ties and strengthening global competitiveness.

A key finding of the analysis is the critical role of economic scale—especially as evidenced by the UAE’s significant GDP influence—in driving trade between the regions. The gravity model applied in this study confirms that while infrastructural barriers and distance present substantial challenges, these obstacles can be mitigated through strategic investments in transport corridors, such as rail links through Azerbaijan and Iran. Such infrastructure projects are pivotal in not only lowering transportation costs but also in facilitating market expansion and greater interregional integration.

The research also reveals that the strategic and political dimensions of this cooperation extend beyond simple economic transactions. The region-to-region format, unique to Central Asia, reflects a deeper commitment to building long-term partnerships that institutionalize dialogue, harmonize

foreign policy stances, and foster collective security. In this context, external actors like Russia and Pakistan play a decisive role, as their engagement further bolsters the development of robust transport, energy, and logistical networks that underpin regional connectivity.

Furthermore, the study identifies several gaps in existing literature, particularly the limited exploration of why multilateral frameworks is favored over bilateral approaches and how external geopolitical factors, such as the impact of global crises, influence these emerging cooperation formats. The institutionalization of interregional dialogue appears to be essential for addressing both economic disparities and strategic challenges, thereby ensuring a stable and resilient regional environment.

In addition, GCC countries are increasingly active in other areas of cooperation in Central Asia, such as providing humanitarian aid for development, where GCC countries can take the lead while Western countries are winding down their aid programs.⁷⁶ Between 2018 and 2021, GCC countries such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait provided financial aid to Central Asian nations for development projects.⁷⁷ This aid supports sectors like agriculture, water management, and energy security. From the late 2010s onward, the influence of Gulf Cooperation Council countries has grown steadily. In 2021, for example, contributions from four GCC members—the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar—collectively surpassed US \$100 million. While Kuwait led the way in 2018, the UAE emerged as the leading donor between 2019 and 2023.⁷⁸

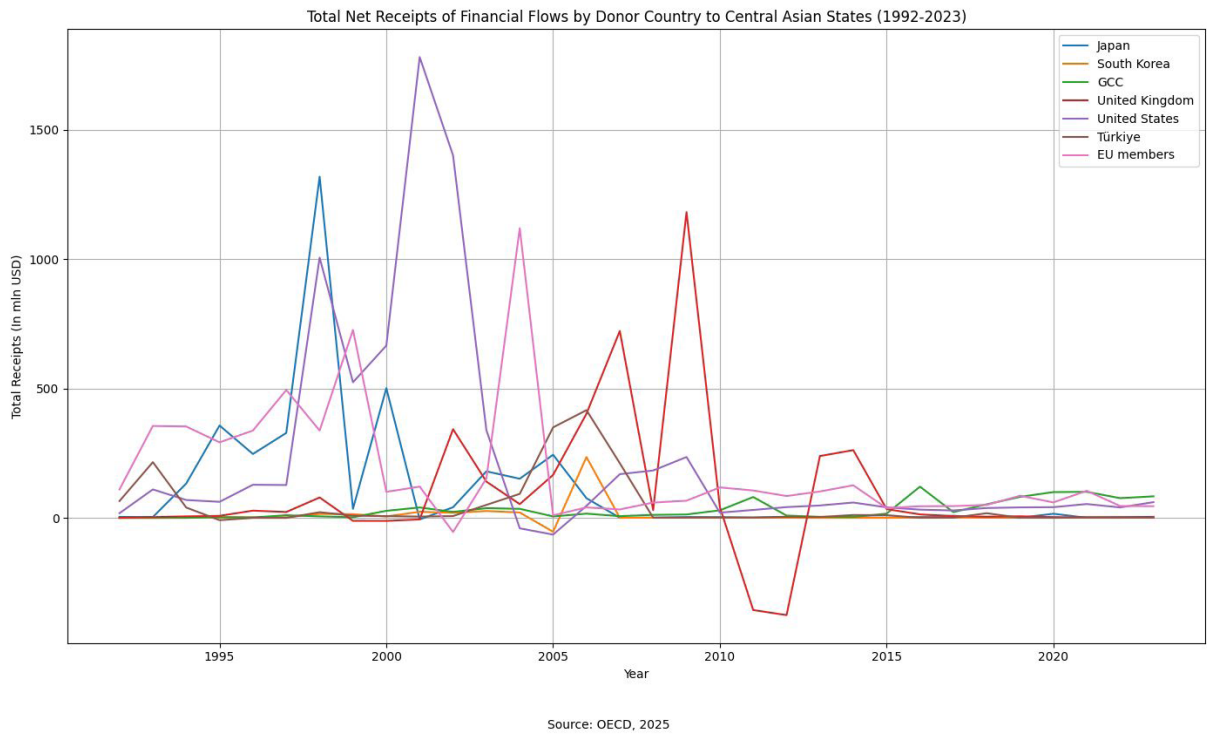


Figure 10: Total net receipts of financial flows by donor country to Central Asian States from 1992 to 2023⁷⁹

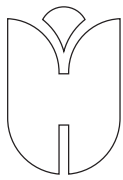
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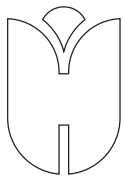
APPENDIX

Comparative analysis of the meeting with Central Asian countries with ASEAN and the European Union

Theme	GCC-Central Asia Summit (July 19, 2023)	ASEAN-GCC Summit (October 20, 2023)	1st EU-GCC Summit (October 16, 2024)
Date and Location	July 19, 2023, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	October 20, 2023, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia	October 16, 2024, Brussels, Belgium
Peace, Security, Stability	Strengthening political and strategic relations	Emphasis on maritime security and freedom of navigation	Addressing regional conflicts (e.g., Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, Iran)
	Combating racism, Islamophobia, and extremism	Combating transnational crime and extremism	Enhanced cooperation on counter-terrorism and organized crime
Economic Cooperation	Enhancing trade and investment	Promoting trade and investment flows	Strategic trade and investment partnership
	Developing green and renewable energy sources	Sustainable infrastructure development	Exploration of Free Trade Agreements
	Increasing trade exchange	Digital economy and innovation	Enhancing joint investments and economic diversification
Energy Collaboration	Developing green and renewable energy technologies	Collaboration on green and renewable energy	Intensifying energy cooperation
	Ensuring energy security	Energy grids and hydrogen transportation	Focus on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable energy markets

Climate Change	Combating climate change	Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Joint efforts to combat climate change
	Supporting COP28	Climate resilience and sustainable growth	Support for Paris Agreement and global environmental frameworks
	Sustainable energy initiatives		Commitment to biodiversity and water security initiatives
Connectivity and Infrastructure	Developing transportation routes	Enhancing maritime and digital connectivity	Strengthening telecommunication and digital infrastructure
	Building logistical and commercial networks	Smart cities and technological infrastructure	Promoting sustainable transport and climate-resilient infrastructure
People-to-People Exchanges	Promoting cultural diversity and tolerance	Cultural festivals and student exchanges	Enhancing academic collaborations (e.g., Erasmus+)
	Educational opportunities	Capacity-building programs	Promoting human rights dialogues
	Health field cooperation	Promoting gender equality and empowerment	Fostering mutual understanding through cultural and educational exchanges
Support for Major Initiatives	Support for Expo 2030 Riyadh	Support for Expo 2030 Riyadh	Support for hosting Expo 2030 Riyadh
	Hosting major forums and investment conferences	Hosting ASEAN-GCC Economic and Investment Conference	Hosting COP events and other major global initiatives
Geopolitical Conflict Resolution	Focus on regional security and combating extremism	Limited focus on direct conflict resolution	Direct engagement with global conflicts (Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, Iran)
Health and Biosafety	Health cooperation and biosafety initiatives	Health cooperation and addressing pandemics	Joint responses to health emergencies and pandemics
	Support for Kazakhstan's International Agency for Biosafety		Collaboration on digital health technologies

Human Rights and International Law	Promotion of tolerance and coexistence	Respect for UN Charter and international law	Strong emphasis on human rights and international law
	Condemnation of hate speech and discrimination	Promotion of tolerance and intercultural dialogue	Promotion and protection of universal human rights
Specific Regional Issues	Central Asia's water security	Maritime safety and security	Conflicts in Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, Lebanon, Iran, Red Sea security
	Addressing hate speech and extremism	Digital transformation and smart cities	Yemen, Iraq-Kuwait maritime borders
	Investment in water resources and climate adaptation	Addressing labor mobility and trafficking	Syria, Sudan, Somalia
Sustainable Development Leadership	Focus on sustainable energy and environmental initiatives	Achieving SDGs through economic, environmental, and social initiatives	Promoting sustainable and circular economies
			Commitment to global climate agreements and environmental frameworks
Global Influence and Multilateralism	Supporting international frameworks like the UN and combating global threats	Engaging in multilateral forums and promoting international standards	Strengthening the role in global governance
			Active participation in multilateral initiatives and supporting international law

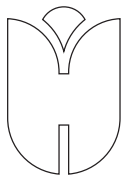


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