

Original Paper

doi [10.15826/recon.2026.12.1.007](https://doi.org/10.15826/recon.2026.12.1.007)

UDC 330.3; 339.5

JEL F13, F14, F53



China in the WTO: a quarter-century of transformations in the global trading system

O. V. Biryukova^a ✉, I. V. Kupalov^b, W. Zhang^a^a HSE University, Moscow, Russia; ✉ obiryukova@hse.ru^b Greater Caspian Association, Geneva, Switzerland**ABSTRACT**

Relevance. Twenty-five years after China's accession to the WTO, the multilateral trading system faces unprecedented challenges, including institutional paralysis, geopolitical fragmentation, and rising protectionism. Against this backdrop, China's trajectory offers a critical case study of how a major non-Western economy can simultaneously integrate into, adapt to, and reshape global trade governance. Yet existing literature often overlooks the systemic implications of China's "socialist market economy" model within the WTO framework, particularly the interplay between national sovereignty, state-led industrial policy, and commitments. Reassessing China's experience is thus essential not only for understanding the past evolution of global trade but also for envisioning its future architecture.

Research Objective. This study examines the multifaceted impact of China's WTO membership over the past 25 years, analyzing its trade growth, structural adjustments, and regulatory adaptations.

Data and Methods. The study is based on archival documents about China's accession, and draws on empirical evidence from WTO, UN Comtrade, and OECD datasets. Quantitative analyses are employed to track trends in trade volume, partner diversification, and tariff reductions. A comparative analysis highlights differences between goods and services sectors.

Results. China has emerged as the world's leading exporter and second-largest importer, achieving robust growth in trade value and market share. Tariff reductions have facilitated industrial upgrading and integration into global value chains. Structural shifts include a move from labor-intensive to high-tech exports, supported by strategic government policies. Liberalization in the service sector has proceeded at a slower pace than in manufacturing, though recent measures signal a renewed focus.

Conclusion. China's journey in the WTO demonstrates its capacity for adaptability and leadership, as it has effectively balanced its rule-based commitments with sovereign interests. Future developments will be shaped by both national priorities and continued collaboration with global partners.

KEYWORDS

China, GATT, WTO, trade, commitments, liberalization, tariffs, services

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article uses the results of the project "Analysis and assessment of the business reputation index of business entities in the BRICS member states", carried out within the framework of the HSE Fundamental Research Program.

FOR CITATION

Biryukova, O. V., Kupalov, I. V., Zhang, W. (2026). China in the WTO: a quarter-century of transformations in the global trading system. *R-Economy*, 12(1), 109–125. doi: 10.15826/recon.2026.12.1.007

Китай в ВТО: четверть века преобразований в глобальной торговой системе

О. В. Бирюкова^a ✉, И. В. Купалов^b, В. Чжан^a^a НИУ ВШЭ, Москва, Россия; ✉ obiryukova@hse.ru^b Некоммерческая организация «Большая Каспийская Ассоциация», Женева, Швейцария**АННОТАЦИЯ**

Актуальность. Спустя 25 лет после присоединения Китая в ВТО многосторонняя торговая система сталкивается с беспрецедентными вызовами, включая институциональный паралич, геополитическую раздробленность и растущий протекционизм. На этом фоне траектория развития Ки-

© Biryukova O. V., Kupalov I. V., Zhang W., 2026

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

Китай, ГАТТ, ВТО, торговля, обязательства, либерализация, тарифы, услуги

тая представляет собой важнейший пример того, как крупная незападная экономика может одновременно интегрироваться в глобальную торговую систему, адаптироваться к ней и менять ее. Переосмысление опыта Китая необходимо не только для понимания эволюции мировой торговли в прошлом, но и для прогнозирования ее будущей архитектуры.

Цель исследования. В данном исследовании рассматривается комплексное влияние членства Китая в ВТО за прошедшие 25 лет на многостороннюю торговую систему, анализируется рост торговли, структурные изменения и адаптация нормативно-правовой базы.

Данные и методология. Исследование основано на архивных документах о присоединении Китая, а также эмпирических данных, полученных из баз данных ВТО, UN Comtrade и ОЭСР. Количественный анализ используется для отслеживания тенденций в объеме торговли, диверсификации партнеров и снижении тарифов. Сравнительный анализ выявляет различия между секторами товаров и услуг.

Результаты. В результате исследования выявлено возрастающее влияние членства Китая в ВТО на глобальную торговую архитектуру: страна достигла статуса крупнейшего мирового экспортера и второго по величине импортера, обеспечив устойчивый рост товарооборота. Получено количественное подтверждение снижения тарифных барьеров как ключевого фактора модернизации промышленной базы Китая и его глубокой интеграции в глобальные цепочки создания стоимости. Полученные результаты показывают, что в сфере услуг либерализация осуществлялась более сдержанными темпами. Показано, что Китай осуществил адаптацию своей нормативно-правовой базы к требованиям ВТО, одновременно сохраняя пространство для реализации суверенных экономических приоритетов, что продемонстрировало баланс между правилами многосторонней системы и национальной стратегией развития.

Выводы. Членство Китая в ВТО продемонстрировало его способность к адаптации и лидерству, поскольку он эффективно сбалансировал свои обязательства, основанные на правилах, с суверенными интересами. Будущее развитие событий будет определяться как национальными приоритетами, так и продолжающимся сотрудничеством с глобальными партнерами.

БЛАГОДАРНОСТИ

В статье использованы результаты проекта «Анализ и оценка индекса деловой репутации субъектов предпринимательской деятельности в государствах — участниках БРИКС», выполненного в рамках Программы фундаментальных исследований НИУ ВШЭ.

ДЛЯ ЦИТИРОВАНИЯ

Biryukova, O. V., Kupalov, I. V., Zhang, W. (2026). China in the WTO: a quarter-century of transformations in the global trading system. *R-Economy*, 12(1), 109–125. doi: 10.15826/recon.2026.12.1.007

中国加入世贸组织：全球贸易体系中的二十五年变革

比留科娃^a ✉, 库帕洛夫^b, 张文瑞^a

^a 高等经济大学, 莫斯科, 俄罗斯; ✉ obiryukova@hse.ru

^b 非营利组织“大里海协会”, 日内瓦, 瑞士

摘要

现实性: 中国加入世贸组织25年后, 多边贸易体系正面临着前所未有的挑战, 包括制度性瘫痪、地缘政治分裂和日益抬头的保护主义。在此背景下, 中国的发展轨迹成为了一个至关重要的范例, 展示了一个大型非西方经济体如何在融入全球贸易体系的同时, 对其进行适应和改变。重新审视中国的经验, 不仅对于理解过去世界贸易的演变至关重要, 对于预见其未来的架构同样不可或缺。

研究目标: 本研究探讨了过去25年中国加入世贸组织对多边贸易体系的综合影响, 分析了其贸易增长、结构性变革以及监管框架的演变过程。

数据与方法: 本研究基于中国加入世贸组织的档案文件以及从世贸组织、联合国商品贸易统计数据库和经合组织数据库中获取的实证数据。通过定量分析, 追踪了贸易额、贸易伙伴多元化以及关税下调的趋势。比较分析揭示了货物和服务部门之间的差异。

研究结果: 研究结果显示, 中国加入世贸组织对全球贸易架构的影响日益增强: 中国已成为全球最大出口国和第二大进口国, 实现了贸易额的持续增长。研究通过量化数据证实, 关税壁垒的降低是推动中国工业基础现代化及其深度融入全球价值链的关键因素。研究结果表明, 服务贸易领域的自由化进程则相对更为缓慢。研究表明, 中国根据世贸组织要

关键词

中国、关贸总协定、世贸组织、贸易、承诺、自由化、关税、服务

供引用

Biryukova, O. V., Kupalov, I. V., Zhang, W. (2026). China in the WTO: a quarter-century of transformations in the global trading system. *R-Economy*, 12(1), 109–125. doi: 10.15826/recon.2026.12.1.007

求调整了其监管框架，同时保留了实现主权经济优先事项的空间，这体现了多边体系规则与国家发展战略之间的平衡。

结论：中国加入世贸组织后展现了其适应能力和领导力，因为它在基于规则的承诺与国家主权利益之间实现了有效平衡。未来的发展将既取决于其国家优先事项，也取决于与全球伙伴的持续合作水平。

Introduction

China's 2001 accession to the WTO marked a pivotal shift in the global trading system. Over the following 25 years, it rose from a marginal trader to the world's largest exporter and second-largest importer, fueling rapid economic growth. This trajectory has profoundly reshaped global trade flows, production networks, and value chains, while also raising concerns in some countries over China's expanding economic influence.

Despite ongoing tariff disputes and concerns over trade imbalances tied to state practices (Wolff, 2023), China continues to expand its role in global trade. This is evident in rising trade flows, sustained foreign investment, and institutional adaptations to meet WTO requirements. China's WTO engagement is defined by a distinct "Chinese specificity" — blending market mechanisms with state regulation and a hybrid public-private ownership model (Hu, 2019; Li & Tu, 2018; Zhang, 2023). These features require flexible institutional adjustments to align with WTO rules while preserving economic autonomy.

Despite a growing body of literature on China's WTO accession, significant gaps remain. Research rooted in neoclassical frameworks often underestimates China's institutional influence within the WTO and dismisses the relevance of "Chinese specificity". Other studies overlook the accession processes of China's subnational entities or rely on narrative accounts without incorporating dynamic statistical analysis of post-accession trends.

This article addresses these gaps by examining China's trade policy under WTO membership and its implications for the country's foreign economic strategy. Drawing on official WTO documents and academic scholarship, it analyzes the accession processes of both China and its subnational entities, traces the evolution of China's institutional role in the WTO, and presents statistical evidence on trade structure, tariffs, and market access over the past 25 years.

The results indicate that WTO accession served as a catalyst for China's economic ascent, reflected in sustained growth in trade volume and global market share. Reductions in tar-

iffs and gradual liberalization of the services sector underscore China's progress toward an open socialist market economy. The composition of exports has shifted decisively from labor-intensive to capital- and technology-intensive goods. More importantly, China has evolved from a passive rule-taker to an active participant in global trade governance, successfully balancing WTO commitments with the distinctive requirements of its socialist market system.

The academic contribution of this article lies in its comprehensive analysis of China's accession process to the WTO, encompassing both the national and sub-national entities, as well as the evolution of China's trade policies over the 25 years since its accession and their profound impact on trade structures. The article's insights can be of interest to policymakers and industry professionals seeking to understand China's balancing of socialist characteristics with WTO commitments and its evolving trade liberalization.

To achieve the stated objective, the following tasks were formulated:

- to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the accession processes of China and its subnational entities (Hong Kong, China; Macao, China; Chinese Taipei) to the WTO, and to trace the evolution of China's institutional role within the organization — from passive rule-taker to active participant in global trade governance;

- to quantitatively assess the dynamics of China's foreign trade flows over 2000–2024, including growth in trade volumes, diversification of trading partners, and structural shifts from labor-intensive to technology-intensive export industries;

- to examine China's regulatory adaptation to WTO requirements through analysis of tariff liberalization and services sector opening, identifying mechanisms that balance international commitments with the preservation of socialist market economy characteristics.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews theoretical literature and elaborates on research gaps. Section 3 outlines the materials and methods employed in the analysis.

Section 4 examines the process of China's accession to the WTO, including its sub-national entities, and presents a statistical analysis of trade data. Section 5 discusses China's evolving role in the WTO and the characteristics of its participation. Section 6 provides the conclusions.

Theoretical Framework

A substantial body of literature, both Russian and international, examines China's role in the global trading system. It should be noted, however, that in some Western scholarship, China's role *within the WTO as an institution* has often been underestimated (Pandit, 2016), while its trade participation is frequently framed through the lens of various imbalances, such as labor-market or welfare effects (Fan et al., 2020).

Some Western scholars and economists, drawing on neoclassical theoretical frameworks, initially anticipated that China's accession to the WTO would expose systemic weaknesses of its centrally coordinated economy and ultimately precipitate its collapse (Pandit, 2016). Subsequent developments, however, have demonstrated that such predictions were overly pessimistic: China proved to be a far more adaptive and influential economic actor than expected. Rather than re-examining the limitations of neoclassical approaches (Biryukova, 2024) or exploring the feasibility of alternative liberalization pathways, much of the Western literature continues to interpret China's "rebalancing" as resulting primarily from unilateral gains derived from incomplete compliance with WTO commitments (Hsueh, 2011; Tan, 2020). Moreover, the engagement of Chinese subnational entities, particularly Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), Macao SAR and Taiwan (Province of China), in the multilateral trading system remains markedly underexplored.

Analytical scholarship reflecting the traditional Western conception of the WTO, as an institution fundamentally designed for market-oriented economies, has frequently overlooked the distinctive *Chinese specificity*: the coexistence of market-based and non-market elements within its economic system, and, in particular, the constructive role played by state-owned enterprises (SOEs) (Hu, 2019; Li & Tu, 2018; Zhang, Zhuoyuan, 2023). As a result, the transformative impact of China's membership in the WTO's institutional structure and operational regime has often been underestimated.

China's success can be attributed to its adoption of a hybrid modernization model that effectively integrates socialism with a market economy, while pursuing an export-oriented growth strategy grounded in the theory of comparative advantage (Borokh & Lomanov, 2024). Chinese leadership identified as its primary objective the transformation of the country into a leading exporter of *highly processed* goods, which are characterized by high value-added content and advanced technological sophistication (Namozov, 2002).

While China initially adhered to international trade rules in a largely reactive manner, it has since shifted toward actively shaping global economic governance. This proactive stance manifests not only in formal multilateral negotiations but also in plurilateral initiatives, many of which would lack substantive feasibility or scale without China's economic weight and institutional engagement (Biryukova & Tikhonovskiy, 2025).

A persistently underexplored dimension is the *comprehensive* nature of China's institutional participation, not limited to the central government, but extending to subnational entities, including Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. For example, Taiwan acceded to the WTO in 2001, immediately following the People's Republic of China (PRC), as the "*Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu*", a special status formally recognized under WTO protocols.

China's WTO accession significantly reduced trade policy uncertainty, thereby stimulating foreign and domestic investment and fueling export expansion, particularly in labor-intensive industries and coastal regions (Handley & Limão, 2017). Prior to 2004, small domestically owned Chinese firms with registered capital below a statutory threshold were legally barred from direct exporting (Bai et al., 2017); they were compelled to channel exports through authorized intermediaries. These restrictions were fully lifted by 2004 as part of China's WTO accession commitments. This institutional liberalization catalyzed employment growth, enhanced production capacity, broadened the resource base of domestic enterprises, and markedly strengthened the competitiveness of the Chinese economy in global markets (Yuan & Ouyang, 2025).

Materials and Methods

The study employed three complementary methodological approaches. Historical-legal anal-

ysis reconstructed accession processes of China and its subnational entities using WTO archival documents, relying on records from GATT negotiations and United Nations meetings in order to ensure precise chronology of institutional commitments. Quantitative time-series analysis processed bilateral trade flows (2000–2024) from WTO Stats¹, UN Comtrade², and World Bank databases³ to measure tariff liberalization effects and structural shifts. Comparative-institutional analysis evaluated China's evolving WTO role by contrasting rule-taking versus rule-making behaviors across dispute settlement, plurilateral initiatives, and services liberalization. This methodology enabled robust assessment of both quantitative outcomes (trade volumes, tariff reductions) and qualitative transformations (institutional adaptation, policy evolution).

The research was conducted in three sequential phases: (1) collection and systematic classification of data from publicly available official sources; (2) quantitative processing and visualization of trade and tariff indicators; and (3) comparative-institutional analysis of policy developments across time and actors. This multi-stage methodology ensured the internal validity, objectivity, and replicability of the findings.

Results

Historical-legal analysis

China's path to WTO membership involves a dramatic and complex history, beginning in 1948 when the Republic of China (ROC) joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) as a founding member. However, following the conclusion of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the Communist Party of China assumed power and proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), while the defeated Kuomintang (KMT) regime retreated to the Taiwan region. On 6 March 1950, this KMT-led regime notified the United Nations Secretary-General of its intention to withdraw from GATT; two days later, on 8 March 1950, the UN Secretary-General transmitted this notification

to the Executive Secretary of GATT⁴, leading to the formal termination of the ROC's GATT membership on 5 May 1950. Crucially, the PRC government has never recognized the validity of this withdrawal. Decades later, on 14 July 1986, Beijing submitted a formal request to the GATT Director-General "for the resumption of its status as a Contracting Party to GATT"⁵, thereby initiating a new chapter in China's engagement with the multilateral trading system.

On 18 February 1987, China presented its Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime, the principal document required to initiate accession negotiations under GATT⁶. This memorandum was reviewed by the Council of Representatives (GATT's highest decision-making body) on 30 March 1987. Subsequently, the Council's Chairman was instructed to undertake consultations with a view to establishing a Working Party on China's status as a Contracting Party⁷. The Working Party was officially created on 10 October 1987⁸, marking the beginning of a protracted negotiation phase. A decisive institutional shift occurred in December 1995, when the Chinese government officially declared its intention to accede to the newly established WTO, thus transitioning its application from the GATT framework to the WTO accession process (Gao, 2011, p. 145; Sally, 2011, p. 7).

The accession negotiations consisted of a multilateral review of China's trade regime alongside over 30 bilateral market-access talks. These negotiations ultimately resulted in a series of agreements with major trading partners. The U.S.–China bilateral agreement, concluded on 15 November 1999, was particularly important: it resolved longstanding disputes over agricultural subsidies, intellectual property rights, and services liberalization (Jefferies, 2020; Lardy, 2005).

⁴ General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Communication from Secretary-General of United Nations regarding China. GATT/CP/54, 8 March 1950.

⁵ General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. China's Status as a Contracting Party. Communication from the People's Republic of China. L/6017, 14 July 1986.

⁶ General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. China's Status as a Contracting Party. Memorandum on China's Foreign Trade Regime. L/6125, 18 February 1987.

⁷ General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Minutes of meeting. Council. C/M/207, 30 March 1987.

⁸ General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Working Party on China's Status as a Contracting Party. L/6191, 19 June 1987.

¹ The WTO Stats portal. Retrieved from: <https://stats.wto.org/> (date of access: 08.02.2026).

² UN Comtrade database. Retrieved from: <https://comtradeplus.un.org/> (date of access: 08.02.2026).

³ World Bank databases. Retrieved from: <https://data.worldbank.org/> (date of access: 08.02.2026).

However, due to the continued applicability of the Jackson–Vanik Amendment, which conditioned non-market economies’ access to U. S. markets on compliance with freedom-of-emigration criteria, the granting of Permanent Normal Trade Relations status to China required legislative action by the U. S. Congress. After intense debate, the U. S.–China Relations Act of 2000 was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bill Clinton on 10 October 2000. This legislation granted China PNTR status contingent upon its formal WTO accession (Handley & Limão, 2017).

The accession process reached its culmination at the WTO’s Fourth Ministerial Conference in Doha on 10 November 2001, when the General Council adopted China’s Protocol of Accession⁹ and the Report of the Working Party¹⁰, China deposited its instrument of acceptance on 11 November 2001¹¹ and formally became the 143rd WTO member on December 11, 2001, marking its full integration into the rules-based multilateral trading system (Gao, 2007; Zhu & Wei, 2022). The terms of China’s accession to the WTO, enshrined in its unique Accession Protocol and Working Party Report, entailed commitments of exceptional magnitude (Sa, 2024). The Protocol on the Accession of the People’s Republic of China stands apart from all other WTO accession agreements, both in its comprehensive detail and its incorporation of numerous “WTO-plus” obligations that transcend the standard requirements for WTO Members.

Accession to the WTO of Chinese Taipei.

Shortly after the Communist Party of China proclaimed the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the defeated regime, in the name of the Republic of China (ROC), led by the Kuomintang, relocated its seat to the Taiwan region.

On 6 March 1950, the KMT regime, in the name of the ROC, notified the United Nations Secretary-General of its decision to withdraw from GATT. This decision was motivated by sev-

eral interrelated considerations. First, the majority of goods benefiting from GATT tariff concessions originated from Chinese mainland, whereas only a negligible share came from Taiwan. Consequently, continued GATT membership conferred little economic advantage to Taiwan’s trade regime. Second, the ROC had been informed by GATT contracting parties that preferential tariff treatment would not be extended to Taiwan-specific trade flows, given the absence of effective control over Chinese mainland customs territory. Third, Taiwan’s trade volume in the early 1950s remained extremely modest; even without GATT membership, it could secure favorable market access through bilateral trade agreements with key partners, particularly the United States and Japan, under which de facto most-favored-nation (MFN) treatment was routinely granted. Finally, and most critically, the ROC regime no longer exercised authority over Chinese mainland and was thus unable to fulfill GATT obligations on behalf of the entire Chinese customs territory. Accepting legal responsibility for a territory beyond its effective jurisdiction would have entailed disproportionate liability and reputational risk¹² (Hsieh, 2005, p. 1199).

However, in early 1965, the Kuomintang-led regime of the Republic of China once again approached the GATT Executive Secretary, requesting observer status at sessions of the Contracting Parties. Taking into account that the Republic of China had been one of the founding parties to GATT, and given the existence of relevant precedents (Liberia, Lebanon, and Syria had also signed the Havana Charter but later withdrew from GATT), the Session of the Contracting Parties adopted a decision on 8 March 1965 granting the ROC observer status. At the same time, it was explicitly emphasized that, on political matters, GATT would continue to follow the decisions and positions of the United Nations.

On 25 October 1971, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 2758, which resolved that “the restoration of the People’s Republic of China in all its rights, and the recognition of the representatives of its Government as the only legiti-

⁹ World Trade Organization. Accession of the People’s Republic of China. Decision of 10 November 2001. WT/L/432, 23 November 2001.

¹⁰ World Trade Organization. Accession of the People’s Republic of China. Report of the Working Party on the accession of the China. WT/ACC/CHN/49. 1 October 2001.

¹¹ World Trade Organization. Protocol on Accession of the Peoples Republic of China done at Doha on 10 November 2001. Notification of Acceptance. WLI/100, 20 November 2001.

¹² Hsieh, P.L. (2005). Facing China: Taiwan’s status as a separate customs territory in the World Trade Organization. *Journal of World Trade*, 39 (6), 1195–1221. Retrieved from: https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/sol_research/526 (date of access: 08.02.2026).

mate representatives of China to the United Nations, and to expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations and in all the organizations related to it”¹³. In accordance with this resolution, the Republic of China was stripped of its observer status in GATT. In addition, China strongly demands that the term “Republic of China” no longer be used to refer to Taiwan, but rather as Taiwan (Province of China).

On 10 July 1986, the People’s Republic of China formally requested the GATT Director-General to “resume its status as an original contracting party”— a formulation explicitly invoking continuity with the ROC’s 1948 accession (Gao, 2011; Zhu & Wei, 2022).

In parallel, on 1 January 1990, Taiwan submitted their own application for GATT membership under Article XXXIII of the Agreement, designating themselves as the “Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu” (abbreviated as TPKM). This nomenclature served two critical purposes. First, it circumvented the sovereignty dispute encapsulated in the One-China Principle, thereby enabling participation without challenging the PRC’s claim to represent China as a whole. Second, it underscored the de facto administrative autonomy of the island and its adjacent regions, affirming the effective independence of their external trade policy and customs administration (Hsieh, 2005, pp. 1204–1206).

China’s central government reacted negatively to Taiwan’s initiative. Chinese representatives insisted on the *legal nullity* of the move, arguing that any representation of Taiwan in international institutions must be authorized exclusively by the central government of China. Under Beijing’s interpretation, Taiwan is either a province of the PRC or a special administrative region akin to Hong Kong and Macao. Consequently, any attempt to join international trade bodies independently was viewed as a violation of China’s internal sovereignty and a threat to national reunification. Subsequent diplomatic efforts sought a compromise on Taiwan’s GATT status.

At the GATT Council of Representatives meeting on 29 September 1992, the Chairman declared:

¹³ General Assembly-Twenty-sixth Session. 2758 (XXVI). Restoration of the lawful rights of the People’s Republic of China in the United Nations. 1976th plenary meeting, 25 October 1977.

“All contracting parties acknowledged the view that there is only one China, and accordingly concurred with the PRC’s position that Chinese Taipei, as a separate customs territory, should not accede to GATT prior to the PRC itself”. The Council accordingly approved the establishment of a Working Party on the accession of the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu (“Chinese Taipei”), while simultaneously resolving: (1) to accelerate the work of the Working Party on China’s status as a Contracting Party; and (2) that the Working Party report on China would be adopted *before* the report on Taiwan¹⁴.

Following the establishment of the World Trade Organization, Taiwan submitted its application to accede to the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the WTO on 7 December 1995, pursuant to Article XII of the Agreement¹⁵. The GATT Working Party on Taiwan’s accession was accordingly converted into a WTO Working Party on the accession of the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu (also known as Chinese Taipei).

Over the ensuing 12-year period, Chinese Taipei concluded bilateral market-access negotiations with 30 WTO members, and its Working Party held eleven formal meetings. Although substantive work was largely completed by 1994, the final formal meeting of the Working Party was delayed until 18 September 2001, pending the conclusion of China’s own accession process. On 11 November 2001, the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar, adopted the Protocol of Accession of the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu¹⁶. Chinese Taipei formally became the 144th WTO member on 1 January 2002.

Accession to the WTO of Hong Kong, China.

On 23 April 1986, the United Kingdom notified the GATT Director-General that Hong Kong, as a separate customs territory for which the UK had accepted the GATT, exercised full autonomy in the conduct of its external trade relations and in all other matters governed by the Agreement.

¹⁴ General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Minutes of meeting. Council. C/M/259, 27 October 1992.

¹⁵ World Trade Organization. Communication from the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu. WT/ACC/TPKM/1, 7 December 1995.

¹⁶ World Trade Organization. Accession of the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu. Decision of 11 November 2001. WT/L/433, 23 November 2001.

On 24 April 1986, the GATT Director-General confirmed that the requirements of Article XXVI:5 (c) had been fulfilled. Consequently, Hong Kong became a Contracting Party to GATT effective 23 April 1986¹⁷.

Pursuant to the Sino-British Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong, signed in Beijing on 19 December 1984, the People's Republic of China resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong on 1 July 1997, at which point Hong Kong became the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of China. In accordance with the Declaration, Hong Kong retained its status as a separate customs territory, operating under the designation "Hong Kong, China". Section VI of Annex I to the Joint Declaration explicitly affirms that the HKSAR "shall be entitled to participate in international organizations and international trade agreements, such as GATT, in an appropriate capacity".

Subsequently, Hong Kong participated in the Uruguay Round negotiations and signed the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization on 15 April 1994. Under Article XI of the Marrakesh Agreement, Hong Kong was thus a founding member of the WTO. On 30 May 1997, Hong Kong formally confirmed its WTO membership status beyond 1 July 1997¹⁸.

Accession to the WTO of Macao, China. On 11 January 1991, Portugal notified the GATT Director-General that Macao, as a separate customs territory for which Portugal had accepted the GATT under the Protocol on the Accession of Portugal of 6 April 1962, exercised full autonomy in the conduct of its external trade relations and in all other matters governed by the Agreement.

On 14 January 1991, the GATT Director-General confirmed that the requirements of Article XXVI:5 (c) had been fulfilled. Accordingly, Macao became a Contracting Party to GATT effective 11 January 1991¹⁹.

Pursuant to the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on the Question of Macao, signed in Beijing on 13 April 1987, the People's Republic of Chi-

na resumed sovereignty over Macao on 20 December 1999, at which point Macao became the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) of China. In accordance with the Declaration, Macao retained its status as a separate customs territory under the designation "Macao, China". Article 2 of the Joint Declaration and Annex I explicitly affirm that the MSAR "shall be entitled to participate in relevant international organizations and international trade agreements, such as GATT".

Subsequently, Macao participated in the Uruguay Round negotiations and signed the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization on 15 April 1994. Under Article XI of the Marrakesh Agreement, Macao thus became a founding member of the WTO. On 27 October 1999, Macao formally confirmed its WTO membership status beyond 20 December 1999²⁰.

Analysis of trade flows

China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 was a critical milestone marking a significant shift in the trajectory of globalization. This event concluded China's transformation from a command-driven economy to one characterized by market-based pricing mechanisms. Consequently, China evolved into the core of an interconnected manufacturing ecosystem that dramatically altered the landscape of international commerce and industrial dynamics over the next twenty years (Jefferies, 2020).

China's economy has experienced rapid growth over the past few decades, accompanied by a sustained expansion in international trade — a trajectory significantly facilitated by its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Du & Lu, 2018). The WTO provides China with a stable and non-discriminatory international market environment. At the same time, it acts as a catalyst for profound reforms in China's economic and legal systems by requiring the country to align with international rules and standards (Qin, 2007). These reforms, in turn, have promoted China's deep integration into global value chains, thereby unleashing its latent trade potential (Zhang et al., 2013).

Figure 1 shows China's imports and exports value and market share for goods trade from 2000 to 2024. Prior to its accession to the

¹⁷ General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Admission of Hong Kong as a Contracting Party. Certification by the Director-General. L/5986, 24 April 1986.

¹⁸ World Trade Organization. Communication from Hong Kong. WT/L/218, 3 June 1997.

¹⁹ General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Admission of Macao as a Contracting Party. Certification of the Director-General. L/6806, 17 January 1991.

²⁰ World Trade Organization. Communication from Macau. WT/L/333, 8 November 1999.



Figure 1. China's imports and exports value and market share for trade in goods

Note: data for China do not include Chinese Taipei; Hong Kong, China; or Macao, China.

Source: authors' calculations based on WTO STATS (Retrieved from: <https://stats.wto.org/> (date of access: 22.11.2025)).

WTO, China's imports value in 2000 was approximately USD 225B (accounting for a 3.4 % global share), while its exports value stood at USD 249B (3.9 %). By 2024, these values had risen to USD 2.59T in imports (10.5 %) and USD 3.58T in exports (14.6 %). This growth corresponds to a compound annual growth rate of 10.7 % for imports and 11.7 % for exports. Following a quarter-century of WTO membership, China now ranks as the top one global exporter (since 2009) and the second-largest importer. Furthermore, China has consistently maintained a trade surplus in goods over the past 25 years, which has boosted employment and economic growth. Undoubtedly, WTO accession has served as a fundamental institutional catalyst, transforming China into a global trade powerhouse and acting as a pivotal driver of its historic economic expansion (Zhang et al., 2013).

Moreover, WTO accession dramatically expanded China's network of trading partners. By granting it Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) status with all members, it enabled a shift from limited bilateral ties to full global engagement and greater diversification of its trade relationships.

China is the dominant trading partner for many countries (Kheyfets & Chernova, 2022). Figure 2 shows that while ASEAN, the EU, the

U.S., Japan, and South Korea have remained China's top five trading partners over the past 25 years, their collective share has declined significantly. The proportion of China's imports from these partners fell from 62.9 % (in 2000) to 47.3 % (in 2024), while the share of exports dropped from 63.1 % to 53.8 % over the same period. Furthermore, China is rebalancing its trade portfolio, strengthening ties with emerging and developing economies (such as ASEAN, Russia, Brazil, and India) under the framework of the BRICS and the Belt and Road Initiative. It can be partially attributed to the restructuring of global value chains triggered by the Sino-U.S. trade war. However, it also corroborates a broader strategic reorientation by China, aimed at cultivating a more diversified network of trade partners and mitigating over-reliance on traditional markets.

Figure 3 shows the major commodity categories and shares of China's imports and exports. China's export structure underwent a fundamental shift, moving from labor-intensive to capital and technology-intensive dominance. This is evidenced by a sharp decline in textiles from 19.8 % (in 2000) to 8.4 % (in 2024), contrasted with the rise of machinery and electrical equipment from 29.2 % to 41.8 %, as well as transportation equipment from 3.7 % to 8.2 % over the same period.

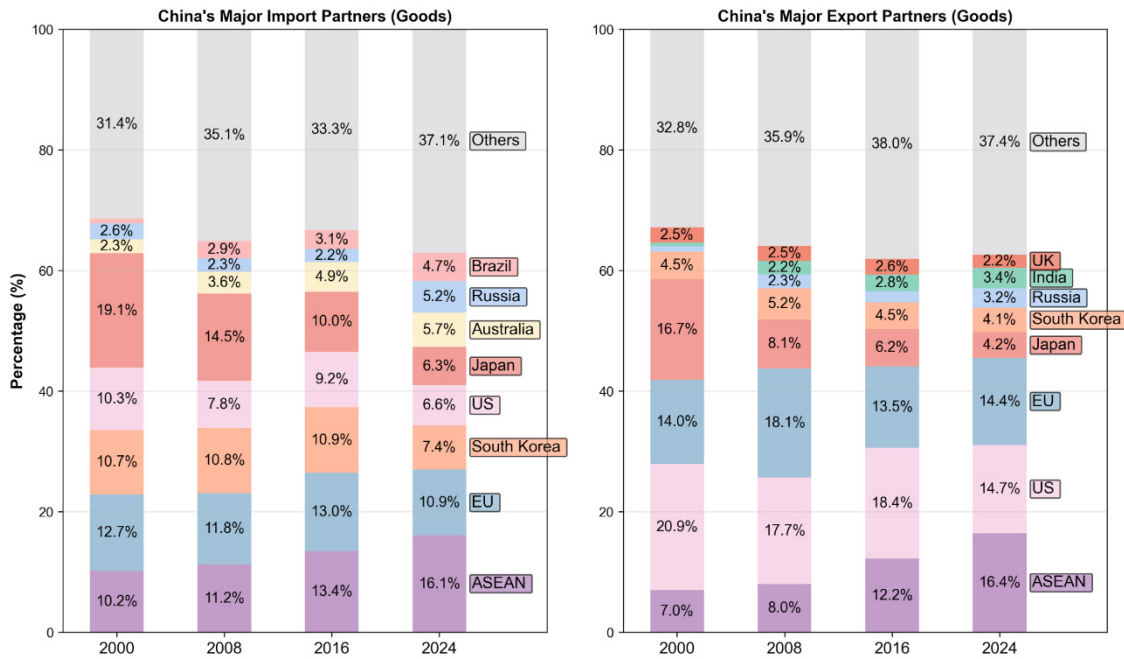


Figure 2. China's major imports and exports partners for trade in goods

Note: data for China do not include Chinese Taipei; Hong Kong, China; or Macao, China.

Source: authors' calculations based on WTO IDB and UN Comtrade (Retrieved from: <https://ttd.wto.org/en>; <https://comtradeplus.un.org/> (date of access: 22.11.2025)).

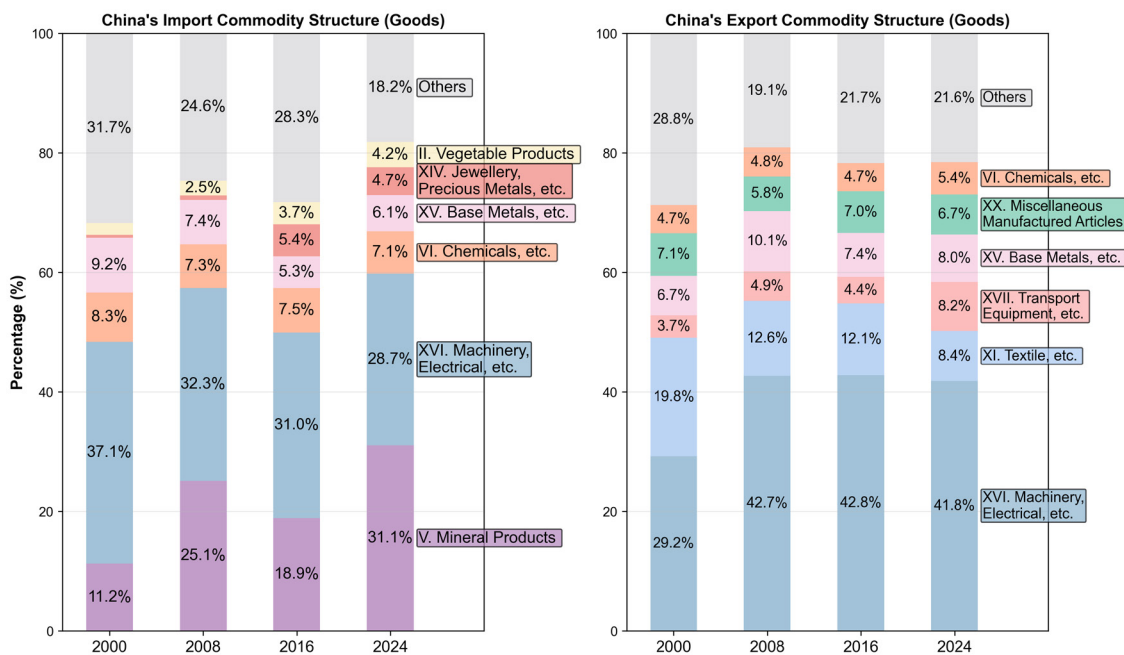


Figure 3. China's imports and exports commodity structure (trade in goods)

Note: data for China do not include Chinese Taipei; Hong Kong, China; or Macao, China.

Source: authors' calculations based on UN Comtrade (Retrieved from: <https://comtradeplus.un.org/> (date of access: 22.11.2025)).

China's import profile has also undergone a qualitative change, characterized by a relative decline in advanced manufactured goods, a grow-

ing significance of intermediate goods for production, and a marked increase in primary products and resources.

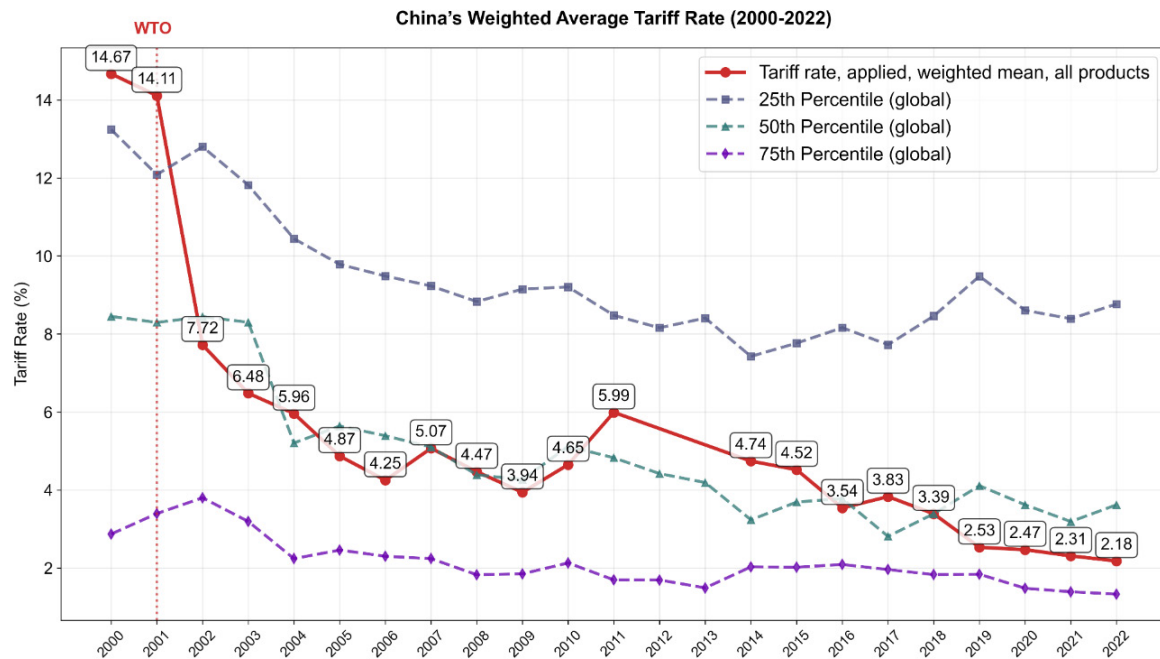


Figure 4. China's weighted average tariff rate

Note: data for China do not include Chinese Taipei; Hong Kong, China; or Macao, China.

Source: authors' calculations based on World Bank (Retrieved from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/TM.TAX.MRCH.WM.AR.ZS> (date of access: 22.11.2025)).

The shift in China's trade structure shows how WTO entry catalyzed internal reforms and competition, which in turn fueled industrial upgrading, integration into global value chains, and technological progress.

Following its accession to the WTO, China experienced a substantial, sustained, and strategically significant decline in its tariff levels. This was not merely a fulfillment of its entry commitments but also a crucial strategy through which China proactively integrated into the global economy and compelled the upgrading of its domestic industries (Du & Lu, 2018; Kebede, 2025).

Figure 4 shows the trajectory of China's weighted average tariff rate from 2000 to 2022. Prior to WTO accession, the tariff rate stood at 14.11% in 2001, placing it within the top 25th percentile globally. In the year following its WTO accession, the rate dropped markedly to 7.72% and subsequently followed a general downward trend, with a brief interruption during the 2009–2011 global recession. By 2022, the rate had fallen to 2.18%, a level below the global median.

In contrast to the remarkable progress in China's trade in goods, its performance in trade in services, while positive, has been relatively moderate (Jiang & Lin, 2019).

As illustrated in Figure 5, China's share in global service imports increased from 3.03% (in 2005) to 5.73% (in 2023), with the trade value registering a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.9%. Meanwhile, its share in service exports saw a more modest rise from 3.25% to 4.13%, with a CAGR of 7.5% over the same period. While China maintained a surplus in its services trade from 2005 to 2008, it transitioned into a deficit position from 2009 onward. This deficit peaked just before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. However, beginning in 2020, China's trade in services witnessed a resurgence in both imports and exports, accompanied by a narrowing deficit. This improvement can be largely attributed to a deliberate strategic shift that placed greater emphasis on the services sector (Liao, 2020), facilitated by a series of supportive policies such as the annual China International Fair for Trade in Services.

To achieve deeper integration into the global services market, China has not only strengthened its service exports but also, starting in 2023, begun to relax its restrictions on services trade. This liberalization is reflected in a decline of its Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI) from 0.277 (in 2022) to 0.225 (in 2023) (see Figure 6), demonstrating its strategic commitment to the

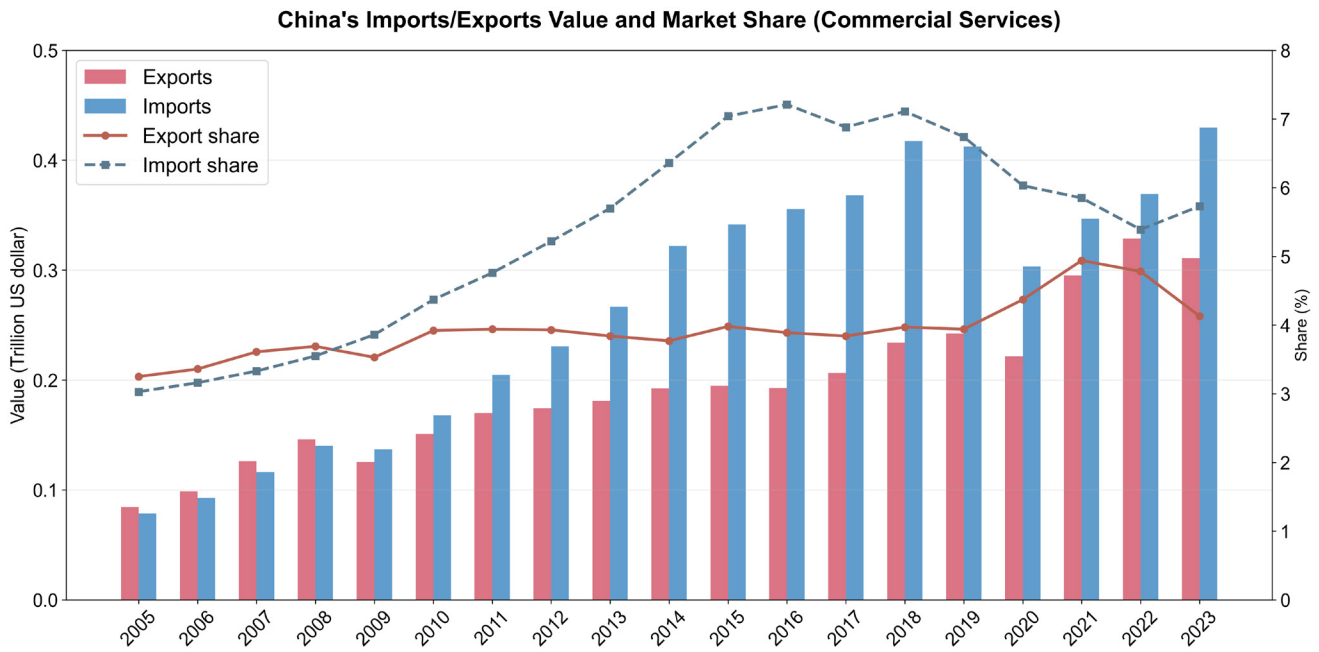


Figure 5. China's imports and exports value and market share for trade in services

Note: data for China do not include Chinese Taipei; Hong Kong, China; or Macao, China.

Source: authors' calculations based on WTO-OECD Balanced Trade in Services dataset (Retrieved from: https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/status_e/gstdh_batis_e.htm (date of access: 22.11.2025)).

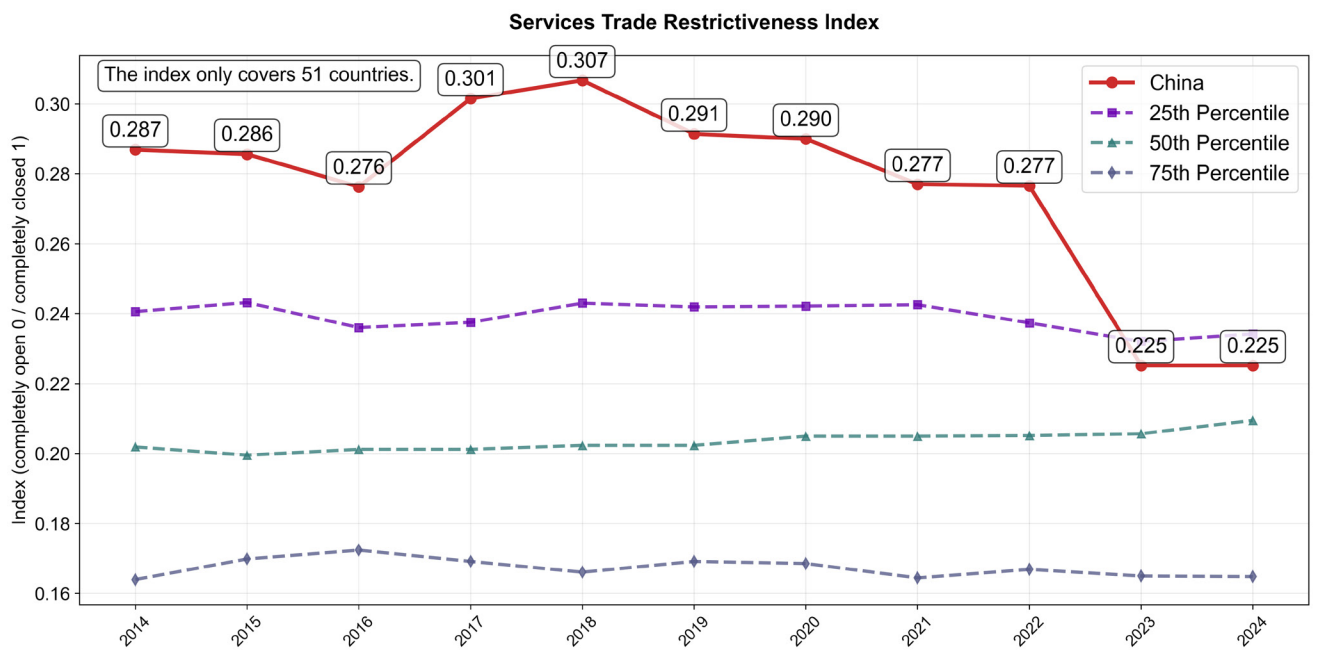


Figure 6. China's services trade restrictiveness index

Note: data for China do not include Chinese Taipei; Hong Kong, China; or Macao, China.

Source: authors' calculations based on OECD STRI (Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/services-trade-restrictiveness-index.html> (date of access: 22.11.2025)).

steady and orderly opening of its services sector. The above underscores the official view that services trade is being cultivated as a cornerstone for China's next phase of economic development.

Discussion

China's engagement with the WTO reflects a complex evolution, from passive compliance toward active participation in shaping the governance of global trade, a shift that yields both constructive contributions and challenges to the multilateral trading system. Empirical evidence points to fundamental transformations in China's role across multiple dimensions of WTO activity. Initially characterized as a reluctant and largely passive observer, hesitant to engage with the WTO's core mechanisms (Gao, 2007), China has since emerged as a proactive participant, increasingly influencing the development and interpretation of WTO rules (Gao, 2011). Its involvement has also expanded into informal WTO negotiations, particularly within "club-based" plurilateral initiatives, such as domestic regulation in services, investment facilitation for development, and e-commerce.

Nevertheless, this transformation has been uneven across different functional domains of WTO engagement. The heterogeneity in China's behavioural patterns within the organization can be attributed to several contextual factors, including the interplay of domestic institutional constraints, evolving economic interests, and the adaptive nature of its state-market hybrid model (Hsueh, 2011; Zhu & Wei, 2022).

First, the pace of China's institutional activation correlates directly with the trajectory of its economic development. The turning point in its engagement with the WTO dispute settlement system in 2007 coincided with China's emergence as a major trading power, while the 2008 global financial crisis intensified its resolve to defend its interests through WTO mechanisms (Sa, 2024).

Second, different WTO mechanisms hold distinct strategic value for China. Regional trade agreements offer foreign policy leverage and enable *selective liberalization*, whereas multilateral negotiations entail higher stakes, particularly concerning China's status as a *developing country* and the international recognition of its *market economy* status (Sally, 2011; Tan, 2020).

Third, domestic political-economic considerations increasingly shape China's priorities. Its WTO participation is closely tied to the preserva-

tion of *economic sovereignty* and the protection of state-owned enterprises' interests, a core component of its hybrid governance model (Hsueh, 2011).

China exerts significant influence on the WTO's functioning, embodying a dual role. On the one hand, it demonstrates strong commitment to the rules-based dispute settlement system, thereby contributing to the legitimacy and resilience of the multilateral trading order. China's accession has reinforced domestic reform processes, enhanced regulatory transparency, and reduced systemic uncertainty in global trade (Handley & Limão, 2017; Jefferies, 2020).

On the other hand, the slowdown in *autonomous trade liberalization* and the expansion of industrial support measures, documented in OECD's report²¹ and Wolff (2023), suggest that China increasingly instrumentalizes its WTO membership to advance strategic, rather than purely rule-compliant, objectives. The apparent tension between norm adherence and potentially destabilizing practices becomes more intelligible once a clear distinction is drawn between *formal compliance* with WTO disciplines and the *substantive depth* of economic liberalization (Pandit, 2016).

China fulfills its WTO commitments by strictly adhering to established procedures and implementing prescribed measures in a timely manner. Nevertheless, in certain sectors, such as telecommunications, China has employed methods of "*creative adaptation*" over its 25-year engagement with the WTO, and full compliance with the Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) remained problematic for an extended period (Sally, 2011). This underscores China's perception of WTO commitments less as a foundation for comprehensive integration into the global trading system and more as constraints to be managed within the bounds of national interest. Consequently, China strikes a balance between active participation in international trade and the preservation of national sovereignty.

Moreover, China's WTO membership is complemented by multiple alternative formats of trade integration: regional trade agreements, such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP); infrastructure-driven

²¹ OECD. (2023). Government support in industrial sectors: A synthesis report (OECD Trade Policy Papers, No. 270). OECD Publishing. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1787/1d-28d9c299-en> (date of access: 22.11.2025).

trade connectivity via the Belt and Road Initiative (W. Zhang, 2025; X. Zhang, 2019); and targeted cooperation projects within the BRICS framework (Biryukova & Tikhonovskiy, 2025).

Conclusion

Over the past 25 years since China's accession to the WTO, the Chinese economy has undergone a dramatic expansion in merchandise trade. As a result, goods exports surged from less than USD 250B in 2000 to over USD 3.5T in 2024, nearly a fifteenfold increase. Imports expanded comparably, establishing China as the world's largest exporter and second-largest importer of goods. These achievements underscore the pivotal role of WTO membership in catalyzing domestic institutional modernization and deepening China's integration into global value chains.

Beyond quantitative growth, the structure of China's exports has evolved, from labor-intensive toward capital- and technology-intensive products. Trade patterns have also diversified: dependence on traditional developed economies in the West has declined, while trade with developing countries has risen markedly. Nevertheless, growth in trade in services remains modest, despite notable improvements since the early 2020s, driven by targeted initiatives to liberalize the services sector.

Thus, China's WTO integration has served as a cornerstone in the transformation of its foreign economic strategy and the consolidation of its position in the global economy.

Theoretical analysis points to certain doubts that were raised about the scale and duration of the transformations tied to China's WTO accession, as well as a tendency to downplay the significance of fully integrating all Chinese territories, namely the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR, and Chinese Taipei, within the organization. Understanding these factors is essential for reframing China's role, not simply as a major participant in global trade, but as a core agent of institutional change within the WTO.

Looking ahead, China's journey in the WTO points toward a path of *cautious evolution*: it aims to assume a more proactive leadership role while resisting mounting pressure from the United States and the European Union. Domestically, policy priorities remain oriented toward ensuring social stability rather than pursuing radical market liberalization. Accordingly, China is likely to gradually intensify its engagement in shaping the terms of global trade, yet it remains improbable, at least in the short term, that it will emerge as the *primary architect* of new systemic rules and foundational principles. This strategic posture may instead encourage China to cultivate *ad hoc coalitions* and deepen cooperation with countries of the Global South.

For China, enhancing the openness and legal institutionalization of government regulation, along with improving transparency in support policies for state-owned enterprises and key industries, would help align its unique socialist market economy system with WTO rules, thereby mitigating associated trade frictions. As for the WTO, strengthening its monitoring mechanisms, improving the functioning of the dispute settlement system, and expanding inclusive multilateral frameworks would enable the organization to maintain its essential role in an increasingly fragmented global trading landscape.

This article is subject to certain limitations. First, the statistical analysis primarily relies on macro-level trade and tariff data. While these data can capture broad trends, they may overlook industry heterogeneity and the nuanced effects of non-tariff measures. Second, although the article highlights China's evolving role within the WTO, it does not provide a comparative analysis with other major economies. Future research could conduct comparative studies of different economic models within the WTO framework, which would also contribute to a deeper understanding of the institutional diversity in global trade governance.

References

- Bai, X., Krishna, K. & Ma, H. (2017). How you export matters: Export mode, learning and productivity in China. *Journal of International Economics*, 104, 122–137. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinteco.2016.10.009> (date of access: 11.05.2025).
- Biryukova, O. V. (2024). Transformatsiya paradigmy torgovoy politiki: teoreticheskiy i institucional'nyy aspekty [Transformation of the trade policy paradigm: Theoretical and institutional aspects]. *Voprosy Ekonomiki*, 10, 142–152. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.32609/0042-8736-2024-10-142-155> (date of access: 11.05.2025). (In Russ.).

Biryukova, O.V. & Tikhonovskiy, G.A. (2025). “Klubnye” dogovornosti v VTO i uchastie v nikh stran BRICS v usloviyakh ekonomicheskikh sanktsiy [“Club” arrangements in the WTO and BRICS countries’ participation under economic sanctions]. *Analiz i Prognoz: Zhurnal IMEMO RAN*, 1, 13–26. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.20542/afj-2025-1-13-26> (date of access: 11.05.2025). (In Russ.).

Borokh, O. & Lomanov, A. (2024). Chinese-style modernization: Evolution of the concept. *World Economy and International Relations*, 68 (1), 31–47. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.20542/0131-2227-2024-68-1-31-47> (date of access: 11.05.2025). (In Russ.).

Du, Y. & Lu, Y. (2018). The great opening up and the roadmap for the future: The story of China’s international trade. *China & World Economy*, 26 (2), 68–93. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/cwe.12237> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Fan, H., Lin, F. & Lin, S. (2020). The hidden cost of trade liberalization: Input tariff shocks and worker health in China. *Journal of International Economics*, 126, 103349. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinteco.2020.103349> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Gao, H.S. (2007). Taming the dragon: China’s experience in the WTO dispute settlement system. *Legal Issues of Economic Integration*, 34 (2), 173–190. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.54648/LEIE2007022> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Gao, H.S. (2011). Elephant in the room: Challenges of integrating China into the WTO system. *Asian Journal of WTO & International Health Law and Policy*, 6 (1), 137–168. Retrieved from: <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/232392> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Handley, K. & Limão, N. (2017). Policy uncertainty, trade, and welfare: Theory and evidence for China and the United States. *American Economic Review*, 107 (9), 2731–2783. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20141419> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Hsueh, R. (2011). *China’s regulatory state: A new strategy for globalization*. Cornell University Press. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.7591/cornell/9780801449956.001.0001> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Hu, J. (2019). Analysis of the innovation and development of the socialist market economy theory. *China Political Economy*, 2 (1), 85–97. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1108/CPE-04-2019-0006> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Jefferies, W. (2020). China’s accession to the WTO and the collapse that never was. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 53 (2), 300–319. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613420948968> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Jiang, L. & Lin, C. (2019). Analysis on the International Competitiveness of China’s Trade in Services. *Emerging Markets Finance and Trade*, 56 (13), 3033–3043. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1540496X.2019.1611558> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Kebede, H. (2025). Import trade liberalization and structural transformation: Evidence from China. *The World Bank Economic Review*, lhaf011. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1093/wber/lhaf011> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Kheyfets, B.A. & Chernova, V. Yu. (2022). Impact of external and internal factors on China’s economic growth. *R-Economy*, 8 (2), 94–105. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.15826/recon.2022.8.2.008> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Lardy, N.R. (2005). Trade Liberalization and Its Role in Chinese Economic Growth. Tseng, W., Cowen, D. (Eds.). *India’s and China’s Recent Experience with Reform and Growth*. 158–169. London : Palgrave Macmillan. Retrieved from: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230505759_7 (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Li, S. & Tu, X. (2018). Impact of Chinese Characteristics on the World Trade Organization: Challenges and Strategies. *China & World Economy*, 26 (2), 107–126. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/cwe.12239> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Liao, J. (2020). The rise of the service sector in China. *China Economic Review*, 59, 101389. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chieco.2019.101385> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Namozov, O. (2002). China, WTO and world economy. *World Economy and International Relations*, 11, 77–83. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.20542/0131-2227-2002-11-77-83> (date of access: 11.05.2025). (In Russ.).

Pandit, P. (2016). China and the World Trade Organization: Questioning the ‘revisionist’ hypothesis. *International Studies*, 50 (3), 255–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020881716654412> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Sa, Q. (2024). Impact of China’s accession protocol on its participation in the WTO dispute settlement mechanism: An analysis of eleven cases involving China’s accession protocol. *Heliyon*, 11 (1), e39886. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e39886> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Qin, J. Y. (2007). Trade, investment and beyond: The impact of WTO accession on China’s legal system. *The China Quarterly*, 191, 720–741. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0305741007001695> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Sally, R. (2011). Chinese trade policy after (almost) ten years in the WTO: A post-crisis stocktake (ECIPE Occasional Paper No. 2/2011). European Centre for International Political Economy. Retrieved from: <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/174712/1/ecipe-op-2011-2.pdf> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Tan, Y. (2020). Disaggregating “China, Inc.”: The hierarchical politics of WTO entry. *Comparative Political Studies*, 53 (13), 2118–2152. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020912267> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Wolff, A. (2023). *Revitalizing the world trading system*. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009289290> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Yuan, W. & Ouyang, D. (2025). Industrial development and trade policy uncertainty: Evidence from China’s WTO accession. *Journal of International Economics*, 134, 104106. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jinteco.2025.104106> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Zhang, W. (2025). The Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union: Why cooperation not confrontation? *Frontiers in Political Science*, 7, 1721059. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2025.1721059> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Zhang, X. (2019). Facilities connectivity in eastern regions of China and Russia and the “Belt and Road” initiative. *R-Economy*, 5 (3), 144–150. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.15826/recon.2019.5.3.015> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Zhang, Zhiming, Zhang, X. & Cui, R. (2013). Research on the effects of WTO accession on China’s economic growth: Path analysis and empirical study. *Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies*, 6 (2), 70–84. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCEFTS-04-2013-0018> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Zhang, Zhuoyuan. (2023). The Establishment and Development of the Socialist Market Economy Theory. *Handbook of Chinese Economics*. 39–72. Singapore : Springer. Retrieved from: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-0420-4_2 (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Zhu, J. & Wei, Y. (2022). China and the WTO: From difficult access to partial leadership. *International Organisations Research Journal*, 17 (3), 7–22. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.17323/1996-7845-2022-03-01> (date of access: 11.05.2025).

Information about the authors

Olga V. Biryukova — PhD, Academic Supervisor for “World Economy” Master’s Programme, Associate Professor of the Department of World Economy, Senior Researcher of Laboratory of Responsible Business, HSE University (17 Malaya Ordynka Str., Moscow, 119017, Russia); Scopus ID: [56440311700](https://orcid.org/56440311700); ORCID: 0000-0002-4845-6897; Researcher ID: [K-9685-2015](https://orcid.org/K-9685-2015); e-mail: obiryukova@hse.ru

Igor V. Kupalov — PhD, Expert in international relations and trade policy; Manager for External Relations, Greater Caspian Association (Geneva, Switzerland); ORCID: 0009-0006-3331-784X; e-mail: kupalov@bluewin.ch

Wenrui Zhang — Graduate Student, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, HSE University (17 Malaya Ordynka Str., Moscow, 119017, Russia); Scopus ID: [59708255800](https://orcid.org/59708255800); ORCID: 0000-0001-7059-3866; Researcher ID: [HNQ-5693-2023](https://orcid.org/HNQ-5693-2023); e-mail: wenrui.zhang@aliyun.com

Информация об авторах

Бирюкова Ольга Владимировна — кандидат экономических наук, академический руководитель магистерской программы “Мировая экономика”, доцент департамента мировой экономики, старший научный сотрудник Лаборатории ответственного бизнеса НИУ ВШЭ (ул. Малая Ордынка, 17, Москва, 119017, Россия); Scopus ID: 56440311700; ORCID: 0000-0002-4845-6897; Researcher ID: K-9685-2015; e-mail: obiryukova@hse.ru

Купалов Игорь Владимирович — кандидат экономических наук, эксперт в области международных отношений и торговой политики; менеджер по внешним связям в Некоммерческой организации «Большая Каспийская Ассоциация» (Женева, Швейцария); ORCID: 0009-0006-3331-784X; e-mail: kupalov@bluewin.ch

Чжан Вэньжуй — аспирант, факультет мировой экономики и мировой политики НИУ ВШЭ (ул. Малая Ордынка, д. 17, Москва, 119017, Россия); Scopus ID: 59708255800; ORCID: 0000-0001-7059-3866; Researcher ID: HNQ-5693-2023; e-mail: wenrui.zhang@aliyun.com

作者信息

比留科娃·奥尔加·弗拉基米罗夫娜——经济学博士，高等经济大学“世界经济”硕士研究生项目学术主管、世界经济系副教授、负责任商业实验室高级研究员（马拉亚·奥尔丁卡路17号，莫斯科，邮编：119017，俄罗斯）； Scopus ID: 56440311700; ORCID: 0000-0002-4845-6897; Researcher ID: K-9685-2015; 邮箱：obiryukova@hse.ru

库帕洛夫·伊戈尔·弗拉基米罗维奇——经济学博士，国际关系与贸易政策领域专家；非营利组织“大里海协会”对外联络经理（日内瓦，瑞士）；ORCID: 0009-0006-3331-784X; 邮箱：kupalov@bluewin.ch

张文瑞——在读博士，高等经济大学世界经济与国际事务学院（邮编：119017，莫斯科，马拉亚·奥尔丁卡路17号）； Scopus ID: 59708255800; ORCID: 0000-0001-7059-3866; Researcher ID: HNQ-5693-2023; 邮箱：wenrui.zhang@aliyun.com

ARTICLE INFO: received December 09, 2025; accepted February 16, 2026

ИНФОРМАЦИЯ О СТАТЬЕ: дата поступления 9 декабря 2025 г.; дата принятия к печати 16 февраля 2026