

The Role of Time Release Study (Trs) in Uzbekistan's Accession to the Wto and the Reform of the "New Customs" of New Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article examines the concept and significance of time-release studies (TRS) as an important tool for improving the efficiency of production and logistics processes. It also explores relevant issues related to the stages of TRS implementation, including data collection and analysis, process mapping, identifying bottlenecks, and developing optimization measures. Reforms of the customs system in New Uzbekistan, including the digitalization of processes and their harmonization with international standards, are analyzed. The key role of TRS in reducing turnover time, improving quality, simplifying procedures, and minimizing costs is noted. The conclusion offers recommendations for modernizing customs infrastructure, successfully implementing the study, and enhancing the security of customs and logistics processes.

Key words: New Uzbekistan, time release study (TRS), international standards, global trade facilitation, bottlenecks, quality improvement, monitoring, TRS for export, release of goods, authorized economic operator (AEO).



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1. Introduction

In the context of the rapidly transforming economy of New Uzbekistan, characterized by modernization, technological progress, and institutional reform, the Time Release Study (TRS) has emerged as a vital instrument for improving the efficiency of trade logistics and customs procedures. As Uzbekistan moves toward deeper integration into global markets and prepares for accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), optimizing trade processes and minimizing procedural delays at borders have become strategic national priorities.

The Time Release Study (TRS) is defined as a systematic process for analyzing and measuring the time required for goods to pass through all stages of their release, including production, customs clearance and control, warehousing, and shipment. The TRS provides customs authorities and other stakeholders with data-driven insights into the performance of each stage of the clearance

process—from the moment goods are ready for release to their delivery to clients or the next link in the supply chain.

By identifying bottlenecks and sources of delay, TRS enables policymakers and customs administrations to optimize border-crossing procedures, reduce transaction costs, increase transparency, and improve the competitiveness of the national economy. It also strengthens the manageability of trade processes and ensures better control over the movement of goods, contributing to supply chain security and risk mitigation.

Within Uzbekistan's national development framework, the Strategy for the Development of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 places a high priority on improving the throughput capacity of border control checkpoints through reconstruction and expansion, thereby aligning customs modernization with international best practices and digitalization goals. The TRS thus plays an instrumental role in achieving these objectives by providing evidence-based insights into customs efficiency and trade facilitation performance.

2. Methods

2.1. Conceptual Framework of the Time Release Study (TRS)

The **Time Release Study (TRS)**, developed under the framework of the **World Customs Organization (WCO)**, is a standardized and internationally recognized methodology used to **measure the actual time required for the release and/or clearance of goods**. The TRS evaluates every stage from the arrival of goods to their physical release, identifying procedural delays and structural inefficiencies that hinder trade facilitation.

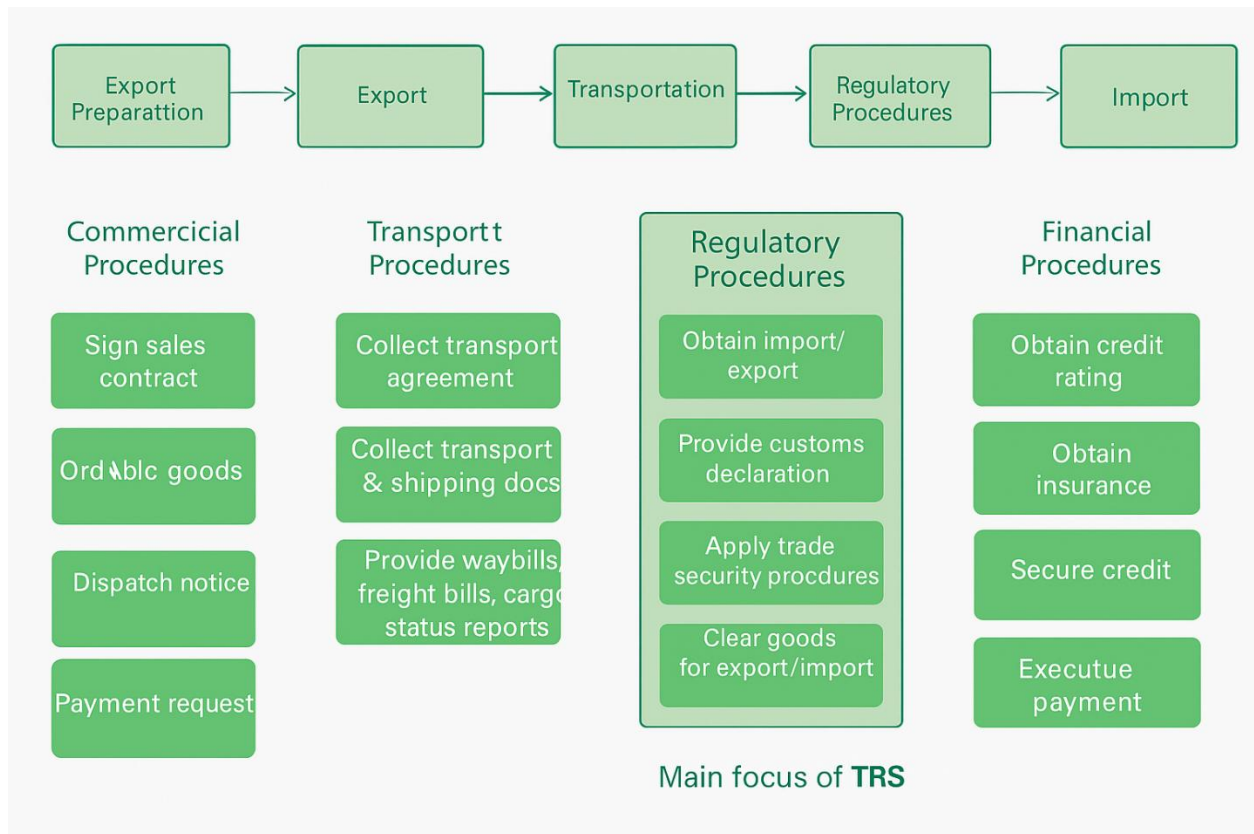
In Uzbekistan, the TRS serves as a **strategic instrument** for assessing the effectiveness of customs administration and border management. It is designed to capture **objective, quantitative data** on the duration of each procedural step—ranging from document preparation to inspection and clearance—allowing for a data-driven approach to reform.

2.2. Stages of the TRS Implementation

The methodology of TRS implementation involves several critical stages:

1. **Data Collection and Sampling:** Gathering information from customs declarations, logistics systems, and other relevant databases. This includes quantitative data on processing times, physical inspections, and clearance steps.
2. **Process Mapping:** Visualizing the entire customs and logistics chain—from arrival to release—highlighting interdependencies between stakeholders (customs authorities, border agencies, traders, and transport operators).
3. **Identification of Bottlenecks:** Analyzing the collected data to determine procedural or operational bottlenecks that delay goods release. These may involve document verification, inspection inefficiencies, or coordination gaps among agencies.
4. **Development of Optimization Measures:** Based on the analysis, recommendations are formulated to streamline processes, such as introducing automation, risk management systems, and simplified clearance procedures.

This approach aligns with the WCO's standards and supports **continuous process improvement cycles**, where TRS findings are used to evaluate the impact of reforms and identify further improvement opportunities.

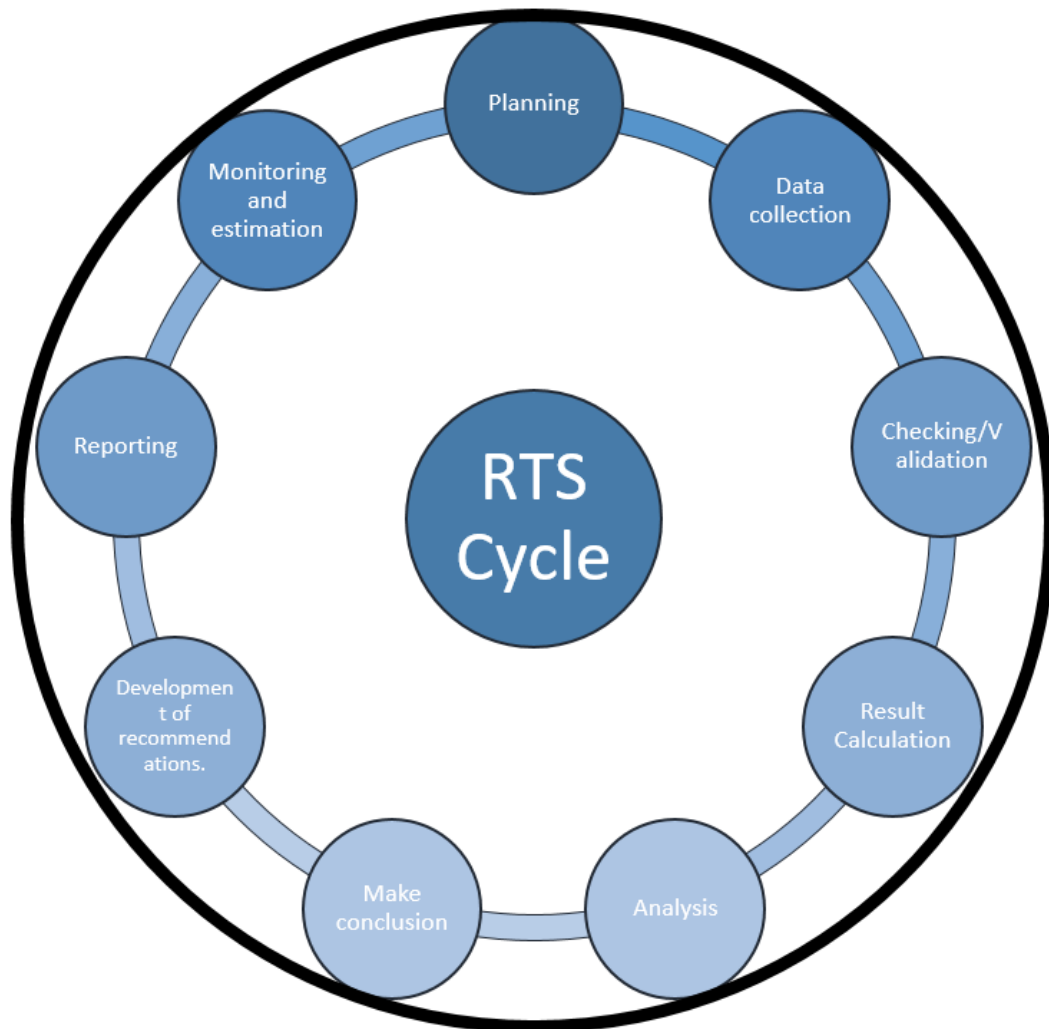


Pic.1

2.3. International and Legal Context

Uzbekistan has been a member of the **World Customs Organization (WCO)** since **1992** and has acceded to several major international conventions and agreements aimed at trade facilitation and customs modernization. Among these is the **Revised Kyoto Convention** on the simplification and harmonization of customs procedures (Kyoto, 1973, revised in 2006), which Uzbekistan joined under **Law No. ZRU-654 (December 21, 2020)**. The country accepted all annexes and chapters of the Convention except Chapter 3 of Special Annex E concerning cabotage transportation.

These international commitments form the **legal foundation** for implementing TRS and harmonizing national customs procedures with global standards. Furthermore, Uzbekistan's forthcoming **accession to the WTO**—a central objective of the government's strategy through **2026**—requires the full adoption of international trade facilitation practices, including TRS.

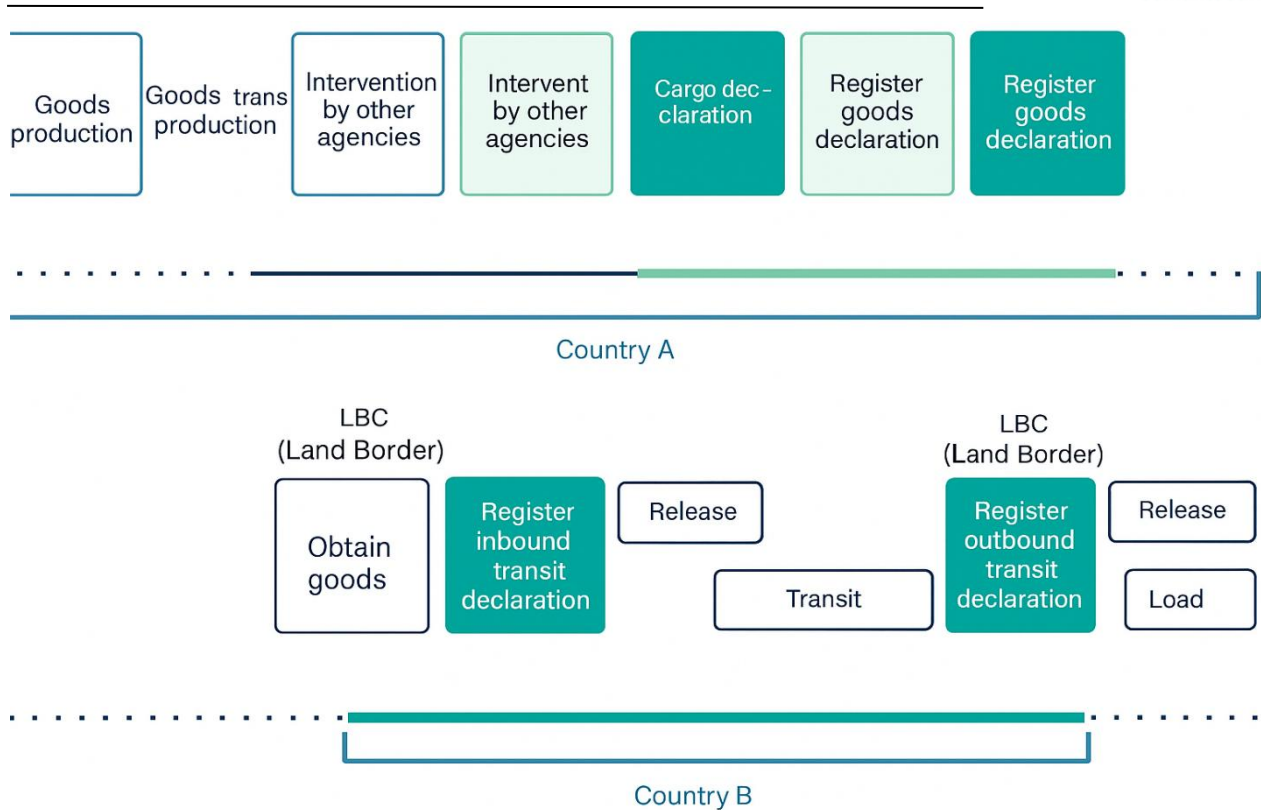


Pic. 2

2.4. National Policy Alignment

The TRS is directly linked with the objectives of the **Presidential Decree No. UP-158 (September 11, 2023)**, approving the “**Uzbekistan – 2030**” Strategy, which emphasizes sustainable economic growth and the establishment of efficient **transport and logistics corridors** connecting Uzbekistan to international markets.

Additionally, TRS implementation supports the **WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)** by creating performance benchmarks, evaluating customs modernization progress, and promoting coordinated border management through systems such as the “**Single Window**” mechanism. (Pic.1)



(Pic.3)

3. Results

3.1. Outcomes of Customs Modernization and TRS Implementation

The implementation of the **Time Release Study (TRS)** in Uzbekistan has become a cornerstone of customs modernization within the framework of the **New Uzbekistan reforms**. It has provided customs authorities with the capacity to measure and evaluate the efficiency of border procedures, identify systemic weaknesses, and develop targeted strategies for improvement.

The TRS findings reveal that **modernization of customs checkpoints** and **digitalization of administrative processes** significantly contribute to the reduction of release times for goods. Specifically, the introduction of automated clearance systems, the expansion of electronic documentation, and the use of risk management technologies have streamlined customs control procedures and enhanced overall trade efficiency.

The study has also demonstrated the importance of TRS as a feedback mechanism that allows for **continuous performance monitoring** and **data-based decision-making**. Customs authorities can now quantify how reforms affect average release times, procedural compliance, and trade costs—thereby improving policy transparency and accountability.

3.2. Application of TRS to Export Procedures

While the TRS is traditionally used to evaluate import procedures, its applicability extends to **export operations** as well. In countries that have not yet fully implemented modern export procedures, TRS for export can be used to assess the duration of processes from the registration of export declarations to the final release of goods.

In Uzbekistan, this approach has proven valuable in monitoring the efficiency of export processes, especially where customs duties or risk management assessments may prolong clearance times. The concept of **“TRS for Export”** allows for identifying areas of delay in export logistics, such as document handling, inspection, or inter-agency coordination.

Uzbekistan has implemented advanced digital systems designed to simplify export operations, including:

- **“Export in Three Steps”** — a program that streamlines customs formalities for exporters through automation and simplified procedures.
- **“Auto Release”** — an automated system that enables the clearance of goods within minutes after declaration submission.

These initiatives are practical outcomes of TRS recommendations and represent a significant shift toward **smart customs administration**.

3.3. Institutional and Economic Impact

The correct application of TRS yields several **systemic and economic benefits**, including:

- Enhanced efficiency of customs and other state agencies involved in import, export, and transit operations.
- Improved coordination between governmental bodies, minimizing duplication of control and inspection functions.
- Reduction of operational costs for trading companies, thus fostering a more favorable business environment.
- Increased labor productivity in the production and logistics sectors, contributing to national competitiveness in the global market.
- Attraction of domestic and foreign investment through improved trade facilitation and predictable customs processes.

These findings align with Uzbekistan’s broader macroeconomic objectives of ensuring sustainable economic growth, enhancing supply chain transparency, and integrating into international trade systems.

3.4. Institutionalization of International Instruments

In accordance with the **Resolution of the State Customs Committee (June 30, 2020, No. 3264)**, Uzbekistan has adopted the **Convention on Temporary Admission (Istanbul, June 26, 1990)**, defining the procedures for the temporary import and export of goods under customs control. This framework enables the use of **ATA and CPD carnets**, allowing the temporary import of goods without the need for separate customs documents or payment guarantees.

The implementation of this mechanism has enhanced the efficiency of international exhibitions, fairs, and cultural exchanges, aligning Uzbekistan’s practices with global trade facilitation standards. It also ensures compliance with the **Presidential Resolution No. PP-4694 (April 24, 2020)** on accession to international treaties, reinforcing the country’s commitment to modernizing border management.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Strategic Role of TRS in Trade Facilitation and WTO Accession

The results of implementing the **Time Release Study (TRS)** underscore its strategic relevance to Uzbekistan’s broader economic and institutional reforms. As the country moves toward **accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO)**, TRS provides the empirical foundation necessary for demonstrating progress in **trade facilitation, transparency, and customs efficiency**—all key benchmarks of WTO membership.

By systematically identifying procedural inefficiencies and quantifying delays, TRS enables Uzbekistan to align its border management practices with **Article 7 of the WTO Trade**

Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which emphasizes the need to expedite the release and clearance of goods. The TRS serves as both a diagnostic and evaluative instrument, providing baseline data for performance monitoring and reform assessment.

Furthermore, TRS findings support the implementation of **coordinated border management** and the “**Single Window**” system, which are essential for streamlining inter-agency operations. This approach promotes interdepartmental cooperation, minimizes redundant control measures, and enhances the overall predictability of cross-border trade processes.

4.2. Continuous Improvement and Policy Feedback Loops

One of the essential contributions of TRS is its role in fostering a **cycle of continuous improvement**. The methodology operates as a feedback mechanism—by periodically repeating TRS assessments, customs authorities can monitor the long-term impact of reforms and ensure their alignment with global standards.

This iterative process allows for the **calibration of administrative decisions**, particularly in response to new technologies, legislative changes, or emerging trade challenges. It ensures that customs modernization remains dynamic and responsive, rather than static and procedural. Through this cycle, Uzbekistan’s customs administration can progressively reduce release times, strengthen process integrity, and increase compliance while simultaneously improving the business environment.

4.3. Development of the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) System

A central element of Uzbekistan’s trade facilitation policy is the **institutionalization of the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO)** framework, which complements the objectives of TRS. The AEO system is designed to grant simplified customs procedures to compliant and trusted businesses, thereby reducing inspection frequency and facilitating faster clearance.

Uzbekistan has already taken significant steps in this direction by signing **mutual recognition agreements** for AEO status with the **Russian Federation, the Republic of Belarus, and the Republic of Azerbaijan**. Expanding this network to additional trade partners will strengthen the country’s integration into global supply chains and enhance mutual trust between customs administrations.

Integrating AEO practices with TRS data provides an advanced mechanism for monitoring trader performance, ensuring supply chain security, and maintaining high compliance levels. Together, these initiatives form the foundation of a modern, risk-based, and intelligence-driven customs system.

4.4. The Role of Artificial Intelligence and Digitalization

The **Presidential Resolution No. PP-122 (March 25, 2025)**, “*On Additional Measures for Organizing the Activities of the State Customs Service and Further Improving Customs Administration*,” establishes the **integration of artificial intelligence (AI)** into customs operations as a national priority.

AI tools—such as predictive analytics, automated risk assessment, and real-time monitoring—are increasingly being applied to optimize customs decision-making and enhance TRS accuracy. This digital transformation supports the transition to **smart customs administration**, enabling rapid data processing, anomaly detection, and automated policy evaluation.

The synergy between TRS, AI, and digital platforms enhances not only efficiency but also the **security and transparency** of border processes, ultimately positioning Uzbekistan as a competitive and technologically advanced participant in global trade.

5. Conclusion

The **Time Release Study (TRS)** has proven to be an essential analytical tool for evaluating and enhancing the performance of customs operations in **New Uzbekistan**. It enables a comprehensive understanding of trade processes, helps identify procedural inefficiencies, and guides evidence-based reforms aimed at accelerating the release of goods and improving overall trade facilitation.

As Uzbekistan continues its journey toward **WTO accession**, TRS plays a crucial role in aligning national practices with international standards of the **World Customs Organization (WCO)** and the **WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)**. The systematic implementation of TRS ensures transparency, accountability, and data-driven decision-making within customs administration, strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable economic development.

The study highlights that TRS contributes not only to the **optimization of customs procedures** but also to the **broader modernization of the trade ecosystem**, including logistics, infrastructure, and interagency coordination. Furthermore, the integration of **artificial intelligence (AI)** and digital technologies into customs operations will accelerate these improvements, enhancing both efficiency and security.

To sustain these positive trends, the following policy directions are recommended:

1. **Regular institutionalization of TRS** as part of national customs performance evaluation.
2. **Expansion of the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO)** program through international mutual recognition agreements to foster trusted trade partnerships.
3. **Investment in digital customs technologies**, including AI and big data analytics, to enhance real-time monitoring and predictive assessment.
4. **Further harmonization of customs procedures** with WCO and WTO standards to ensure compliance and strengthen Uzbekistan's global trade competitiveness.
5. **Capacity building and training** for customs personnel to ensure the effective application of modern analytical and technological tools.

Ultimately, the combination of TRS-based analytics, digitalization, and international cooperation forms the foundation for a **modern, transparent, and efficient customs administration**—one that reflects the goals of the *Strategy for the Development of New Uzbekistan (2022–2026)* and supports the country's economic transformation.

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